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The Costume Society of America (CSA) Scholars' Roundtable Honor recognizes scholars who exemplify high standards in dress scholarship. At the annual symposium they choose, present, and lead a discussion on a complex or potentially contentious topic to stimulate new thinking on the study of dress. This paper records the Scholars' Roundtable at the 2019 CSA national symposium in Seattle, Washington.

Scholars' Roundtable Presentation

Do We Study Diversity in Dress?

KELLY L. REDDY-BEST, CARMEN KEIST, TAMEKA N. ELLINGTON, NANCY DEIHL, MICHAEL MAMP

In 2019, four CSA Scholars' Roundtable Honorees (Kelly Reddy-Best—Iowa State University, Carmen Keist—Bradley University, Tameka N. Ellington—Kent State University, and Nancy Deihl—New York University) discussed “do we study diversity in dress?” Dr. Michael Mamp (Central Michigan University), a 2018 honoree, moderated the 90-minute session. He started by asking the panelists questions such as “Do we study diversity in dress?” “How does your positionality influence your own research?” and “What suggestions would you provide to CSA members to incorporate diversity when studying dress?” Following these questions, individuals from the 200-person audience offered comments and questions to the panel. In this paper, we provide a verbatim transcription of the session, which took place in Seattle, Washington.

Keywords fashion, inclusion, equity, social justice, research, teaching

SINCE 1997, the Costume Society of America (CSA) Scholars' Roundtable Honor committee has nominated top scholars in the discipline who “exemplify high standards in

costume scholarship.” These scholars are charged with leading a stimulating discussion on a chosen theme at the national symposium. The format and resulting



publications of the Scholars' Roundtable have varied since its first development. In the Scholars' Roundtable current format, the chosen theme relates to a "complex or potentially contentious topic related to the field of costume studies." In 2019, four scholars were nominated and selected for the honor including: Nancy Deihl, Tameka N. Ellington, Carmen Keist, and Kelly L. Reddy-Best. Michael Mamp, who was a 2018 CSA Scholars' Roundtable Honor awardee, moderated the 90-minute plenary session, which about 200 people attended. Dr. Mamp introduced the session, asked the scholars a few pre-prepared questions relating to the topic, and then opened the session up to audience participation and questions. In this paper, we provide a verbatim transcription of the session so that all CSA members can become aware of the topic and ideas discussed. The panelists, moderator, and known audience members have edited parts of the transcription for clarity, yet we purposefully left the transcription virtually verbatim to reflect the reality of the session.

Michael Mamp: I'm very privileged and honored to have the opportunity to moderate the 2019 Scholars' Roundtable. Before we begin I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that we are here at the annual meeting of the Costume Society of America on the unceded ancestral lands of the Duwamish people and other indigenous persons, a people that are still here, continuing to honor and bring light to their ancient heritage, and we attempt to do so as well.

I would like to begin by giving you a more in-depth bio of each of our esteemed scholars that were nominated nationally to be a part of today's presentation including Carmen Keist, Tameka Ellington, Nancy Deihl, and Kelly Reddy-Best (FIGURE 1).

Starting directly to my right and across the panel, we first have Carmen Keist. Carmen Keist PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. Her research interests include twentieth-century dress history, specifically exploring plus-sized women's ready-to-wear fashions. She wants to bring visibility to this diverse and often marginalized group,

which by 2030 is projected to comprise half of the American population. She has published articles in the *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, the *Journal of Family and Consumer Science*, *Dress*, and *Fashion, Style and Popular Culture*. Welcome, Carmen.

Also, on the panel today is Dr. Tameka Ellington. Dr. Ellington is an Associate Professor of Fashion Design and Associate Dean of the College of the Arts at Kent State University. She began her journey of studying African-American dress and beauty in 2002 and in 2013 added the study of disability and beauty to her line of inquiry. She is currently working on editing an anthology entitled *Navigating the Black Hair Phenomenon in A White World* and a museum exhibition entitled "Textures, The History and Art of Black Hair"—which will open at the Kent State University Museum in fall 2020. Welcome, Tameka.

Next is Nancy Deihl. Nancy Deihl is the director of the Costume Studies MA program at New York University. She has a particular interest in the American fashion industry and is co-author of *The History of Modern Fashion: From 1850 to 2010* and editor of *The Hidden History of American Fashion: Rediscovering 20th-Century Women Designers*. In her teaching and research, she is committed to expanding the existing narrative to include lesser-known designers and brands and the consumers they serve. One manifestation of this focus is ensuring that black Americans are represented as full participants in the history of American fashion. Welcome, Nancy.

And last but not least is Dr. Kelly Reddy-Best. Dr. Reddy-Best is an Assistant Professor in the Apparel, Merchandising, and Design program at Iowa State University. She has taught courses in culture, history, design, and product development, and she researches in the area of identity and dress, with an emphasis on queer identities.

Today as a part of our Scholars' Roundtable, we are exploring the topic, previously stated, of do we really study diversity in dress? And to provide you some context for today's conversation, I'd like to read for you the call that was issued related to this roundtable: "gender, age, sexuality, race, ability, religion, class, national origin,

FIGURE 1 Participants and moderator after the roundtable discussion. From left to right: Tameka N. Ellington, Kelly L. Reddy-Best, Michael Mamp, Nancy Deihl, and Carmen Keist.



and other intersectional aspects of identity are constructed, negotiated, and performed via sartorial choices. The fashion industry has particularly benefited from colonialism and imperialism, the labor of immigrants, women, African-Americans, Latinx, and appropriation from indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.”

This Roundtable seeks to shed light on the ways in which we are and are not fully exploring and expressing diversity and inclusion in our field. Our aim is to prompt rich and open dialog about how our organization can become more diverse and inclusive in practice, membership, scholarship, and conference attendance. We sought nominees of

individuals from across all aspects of our discipline—researchers, designers, curators, educators, etc.—to discuss ways in which they have incorporated diversity and inclusion into their dress studies practice and to perhaps challenge or provide insight into how all of us can more often do so. I also do want to recognize that two additional scholars were to be a part of today's conversation, that's Dr. Joanne Eicher and also Dr. Nazlı Alimen, both of whom were unable to be with us today.

So, in preparation for today's conversation, I served as the chair of the nominating committee for this year's Roundtable as a participant from last year and was fortunate to receive lots of feedback from lots of people about how this should happen today. And so, what we are doing is based on that feedback received. First, we will have a conversation with our scholars, based on some very general, foundational questions that I constructed. We'll spend some time hearing from them related to those topics. Then I will ask for questions from all of you. So, I hope that in the first part of our session, as we're hearing from our esteemed scholars, that if you have a question or an idea or a thought or any statement that comes to mind, please jot it down and think about it, and you'll have an opportunity to ask a question when we come down and pass around the microphone. So, to begin our conversation today, I pose this first question to our panelist scholars. **Do we study diversity in dress? Why or why not?**

Tameka Ellington: My answer to this is yes, but not enough. There are scholars that study body image, however it's limited to white female bodies mostly, regarding body BMI, eating disorders, or even at times disability studies. Most of this research is always talking about white bodies. A major component of this issue is the fact that there's not enough professors of color in the academy. People usually study what they're interested in, just like our Korean brothers and sisters; a lot of the research that they do is dedicated to the Korean customer market. If we can get more people of color in the academy, there will be more research focusing on people of color. This is not to say that you have to be in a

particular affiliation in order to study that particular affiliation, but let's just be real about it—most of the time researchers study what's the most important to them. If you're working with graduate students, especially graduate students of color, please support their decisions in wanting to study their culture. It is important that they learn more about their culture, as well as to help other people learn about the culture.

Nancy Deihl: I think what I would like to add to this, and I think that was really eloquent and we're off to such a great beginning, is that we do. But as Tameka says, we don't do it enough. And I think we're at this moment of transition, where one of the big steps that we've had to take is acknowledging that and doing the hard work of figuring out ways to break up existing patterns of teaching and existing patterns of scholarship to allow other voices to come into what we're doing.

Kelly Reddy-Best: Thanks, everybody. I agree with both of them. I wrote yes and no. I study mostly about queer women and queer women's identity and their dress. I'm going to give you an example to highlight exactly what both of my colleagues up here have just said. I did an exhibition called *Queer Women's Fashion and Styles: Stories from Heartland*. And in that exhibition, we recruited participants to be interviewed and to share their garments for display in the exhibition. And when we did that, I put out a public call. And I put in the call, this was the first time I had done this, and I said, "people of color and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply." Do you know how many people of color I had participate in the study for the exhibition? Zero, we had none, but I did have people with disabilities participate. After the exhibition we continued to do more interviews to continue the research, and more and more women of color began to participate.

But it's about telling people that even if we do "study diversity in dress," it's about being more inclusive and thinking more critically beyond what you are already doing. Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote in the nineties about the idea of intersectionality theory and thinking more critically [On

Intersectionality: Essential Writings of Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2017]. You can look at one intersection, for example, I look at queer identity, but how do the other intersections of marginalized identities come into what one person studies? Some of the scholars in our field are already studying diversity, but we need to think more critically about it more often.

Nancy Deihl: Can I just add one thing? I was thinking that it's not necessarily that we study diversity, but that we almost have to diversify our studies, right?

Michael Mamp: Can you explain that a little bit more?

Nancy Deihl: So, I think a lot of it depends on what you teach and where you teach and who your student body is. And as I'm teaching history and, whether we want to accept it or not, history is one thing that is in the past. But there's obviously lots of ways we can approach it. So, when I say we have to diversify our studies, I think that for me that consists in finding different paths to and through the past. And so, I'm not necessarily studying diversity in history, but I'm really trying to forge a more diverse approach to history. So that's what I mean by that.

Carmen Keist: I don't have any further insights.

Michael Mamp: So, one of the things that I hear all of you saying in regards to that question is that yes, but we need to do more. So, considering that the opinion is that we need to do more, within this platform and this audience, **what more specific suggestions would you provide to our organization of CSA, an organization that is committed to the study of dress, to incorporate diversity in our approach to the study of dress?**

Tameka Ellington: One example that I have, and this actually just recently happened with me. I got an opportunity to go to University of North Texas to do a lecture for the students. And the woman who was working there, she was the curator for the

massive clothing collection that they have there at the University of North Texas. And we were talking about how within the research that she's been doing, she specifically is trying to find cultural garments outside of just what we normally consider as western garments. And she's asked me if I taught a class on the history of clothing. I explained that the books that I use are all pretty much about what's happening in the West. There's nothing about Africa; there's nothing about other cultures. And so, my suggestion to her was don't just use the book. Don't just use the textbook because the textbook is going to be specifically about what's happening in the West and what's happening with white people. So, my suggestion to her was to use multiple venues of places to get the information. So of course, go ahead and use the textbook, but also to look at the *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*. The *Berg Encyclopedia* has a vast listing of information; I've written several articles for them regarding African-American dress. You can find lots of different other historical references to dress in that particular area. So as Nancy said, be a little bit more diversified in the approach. So, don't just take the textbook that you have been given; step outside the textbook to find what else is going on.

Kelly Reddy-Best: I think what we can do more of is continually educate ourselves. It's about continually educating ourselves about different ideas and different identities. For example, if you think about a research topic, you might ask yourself "how can I consider a queer perspective?" I think anyone's project arguably could consider this or could think through this or other marginalized identities. It's really about educating yourself. I'm the chair of one of the diversity committees in my university, and we run educational sessions on diversity. And most of the time the people who show up to these sessions are the folks who most oftentimes don't need the education. That's usually what happens, so I end up preaching to the choir in those kinds of situations.

Until we force someone or inspire people enough to know the value of thinking more about diversity and inclusion, then we have so much work to do. It's really about

opening yourself up to critical self-reflection. It's about educating and being open to the idea that you don't know or the idea that what you thought you knew might be wrong or you had to think about it in a new way that totally challenges your whole worldview or challenges past assumptions. It's about continually educating yourself and opening yourself up to critical self-reflection in your teaching, research, or other areas of work that you do.

Carmen Keist: Well when I thought what Nancy had said about diversifying how you study, again opening up your mind and being really reflective. If you have a student coming up with maybe an idea that hasn't been done before, or a method, or how they want to research or what they want to look at, to be very open. Even if you're uncomfortable, maybe it's a topic that is against some worldview that you have, by negating those projects is where we're really closing ourselves off to diversity. So, we need diverse people researching, and we need diverse ways to look at it as well.

Nancy Deihl: I think that's a huge part of it, and I think it's really significant that Michael put together a panel here of educators. And I strongly feel that encouraging students to do things that not necessarily make you uncomfortable but are into a realm that you might not necessarily understand yet—shouldn't be an obstacle. It shouldn't be an obstacle to encouraging them to pursue it.

Because you really have to think about enlarging the canon of what we teach and expanding what I would call the prevailing narrative. Some of us who are advanced in our careers, maybe we're not going to be doing tons of new research down the road, but our students are. So, we get them into a position where they're unafraid to explore subjects that previously might have been thought too trivial. I think that's a really important part of it.

So, I think a way to enlarge the existing story in terms of what is dress, what is appearance, fashion, is to pay attention to something that maybe someone hasn't noticed before and understand that that's an important detail or an important person.

Just because we might not have heard of that person, there's so many reasons why we haven't heard of someone in the past. And so, we need to encourage our students to really push forward with some of that acceleration.

Carmen Keist: I also wanted to add to Tameka's comment about if you're just using the book, that's all your students see in terms of people or ways to do research, and so by even incorporating a couple, start slowly, push yourself, to incorporate different views. It gets students to go, "Oh, I didn't even think that was even a thing," or "I didn't even think that I could study this," or "I didn't know that this . . ." And it really opens their mind because then they bring their experiences in, and then you can really work with topics of diversity that you can help the student teach you what you need to be focused on.

Michael Mamp: One of the things that impresses me so much about all of you, collectively and individually, is how prolific you've been in your careers, with the work that you've published, that you've designed, and you've exhibited. **And I'm wondering if you could comment on, since you have all often times focused on topics about marginalized communities, the process of submitting your work for peer review, for publication, for exhibition.** Many of us I think that study within the realm of diversity are doing so based on our own positionality. I'm particularly interested in queer people because I'm queer—I know you're shocked. But I'm wondering if you could give the group some sort of perspective on what it has been like for you to produce and submit work for publication within the realms that you examine.

Carmen Keist: Michael's queer, and I'm fat. Don't know if you knew that either, might be a shock to you. So, I study, and unfortunately it is a very white-centered focus right now, because I am but one person. But I've been interested in stout women, as we were called back at the turn of the century, at the early beginnings of the ready-to-wear industry. And one of the things that I have realized, because in my

undergrad I had a very narrow, thin-centered, white-perspective history class, I realized, and I don't know why it took me so long to realize, I thought, "Wait, where am I? If I lived one-hundred years ago, and I lived in the teens and the 20s, and I put that boyish silhouette on, I'd look terrible. Like drop waist? No thank you." And so, I really got interested that my people, the people that I identify with, weren't represented. And so, I got into my research topic. And going on to, as I published, one thing that I've gotten back in some of my feedback, I've gotten over and over, "I don't know why you're looking at this, this has been done before. It's already been talked about." And I'm like, "it literally hasn't." So, then it makes me feel even more marginalized, because then people are like, "Well we don't even want to hear about the fat women and what they were wearing." So, I think again that goes back to as being peer reviewers, to really then push yourself to open up. Maybe you might not find interest in what the fat women are wearing, but other people might find interest in what the fat women are wearing.

Tameka Ellington: For me, I grew up in Cleveland in the inner city. I grew up around all black people for the first half of my life. And when I went off to college was the first time that I realized that I was actually really in the minority. I had experienced when I went to college my first taste of what it's like to have overt discrimination placed in my lap. And when I was a freshman during my summer after my freshman year, I decided that I wanted to go and work at an amusement park. I just wasn't ready to go home—that taste of freedom was just too much to have to go back. And so, I decided that I wanted to go and work at an amusement park. And when we first go there all the new hires, they took us through this orientation, and of course gave us this pamphlet about what the dress code and everything had to be. And of course, it's an amusement park, they're going to want everyone to wear whatever the company's uniform is, and I absolutely had no issue with that. But the issue that I had was when they also told us that we had to look quote-unquote "all American." So, in

our presence coming to work, not only did we have to wear the uniform, but we also had to look all American. And in that they were talking about different hairstyles and things that you could not wear. And one of those was braids. You couldn't wear braids; you couldn't wear afros. And God forbid if you ever wore dreadlocks to work. I had to straighten my hair in order to work at that job. And needless to say, I only lasted about two months, and it was time for me to go.

But ever since then I've been very interested in discrimination around black-texture hair. Because there's still many, many issues going on in our world where people are getting discriminated against, they're not getting jobs, they're getting fired from their job. They're getting outcast. I'm sure you guys have probably heard the news just a few months ago, a young man on the wrestling team who had his dreadlocks cut in front of everybody, which is total discrimination. So, it's still a major problem, and it's been a problem situation that I've been looking at for a long time.

Nancy Deihl: With regard to my interest in what I call expanding the canon of fashion history, I would say I've always been interested in the American fashion industry, ever since I was in graduate school and had to do an assignment on the 1940s, in which I literally had to read ten years' worth of *Vogue* magazines. And I really discovered all these names that having thought I knew the history of fashion I had never heard of before and haven't heard of since.

So that's how that came about. And it really crystallized my commitment to getting some of these people out there again. But as far as my interest in black Americans' participation in the fashion industry, that came through just the commissioned article [in *The Hidden History of American Fashion*] that really fell into my lap on Zelda Wynn Valdes and just reading her story. And more accurately writing her story, I realized the amazing experience of researching in the Johnson publications, the company that published *Ebony* and *Jet* and *Hue*, and what an extraordinary resource that was, and how that could guide research. So that's something that I really am committed to sharing.

Kelly Reddy-Best: My positionality impacts every part of my scholarship. I research queer women, I am a queer woman. I'm heterosexual appearing, I'm married to a man, and I look very feminine. But I'm also thin, I'm middle class, I'm white. I'm in an interracial marriage; therefore, I live every day by a black man, and I see the oppressive experiences he has every single day. I'm also fully able-bodied and cis-gender. Therefore, I have a lot of privilege. All of these experiences impact the kinds of questions I ask or the criticism I have of the assumptions that might influence my teaching or research. I often ask myself many critical questions such as "how does my own bias influence my research?" For example, when examining a garment, I might ask "did a man wear this or did a woman wear this?" "what is my own bias in relation to these assumptions?" "how do we know a man wore that?" "how do we know it was for a woman?" or "how do I know how a black woman might have felt in this?"

I constantly am reflexive throughout the research process, and I think about the questions I ask and try to bracket my assumptions. I try to think, here's my own position, here's how my positionality might be impacting the questions I ask and my interpretations of that. But what is the assumption that I'm making based on my own experience? That's something I always ask myself throughout the research process.

I think having some of these everyday experiences of being married to a black person certainly influences a lot of my critical perspective, where I might make different assumptions because of those everyday things that I see related to the marginalization of people of color. I have a heightened awareness. But my positionality impacts everything, and it really brings it home for me in a lot of different ways. Bracketing is extremely important, though, as I'm moving through my different projects.

Michael Mamp: It's not that I'm asking for a pass, and we're working really hard to try to produce quality research. But I think that we have an opportunity as reviewers, whether it be within this organization or other organizations, to promote and

support and help develop those of us that are interested in pursuing research that falls outside of the norm of what it has been. So, having said that, many of you mentioned students and encouraging students and finding ways to engage students in topics related to diversity in dress. So, my question for you is, since all of you are teachers, **can you describe ways that your approach to instruction has created inclusive space for your students?**

Tameka Ellington: In my department, very similarly to I'm sure many of you guys' departments, that school is notorious for focusing on white female bodies. Several years ago, I had a young Asian male student come to my office, he was very upset. And he told me that his drawing teacher asked him or stated to him that he couldn't use dark skin tone markers to illustrate his fashion figures. He was a beginning illustrator and was learning the techniques in the very beginning stages of illustrating fashion figures. And his teacher told him that it's easier to learn how to draw with lighter skin tones. Now this particular woman was a very experienced illustrator, had been in the business for more than thirty-some odd years. She was probably one of the best illustrators that we had in our department. And you mean to tell me that she couldn't take fifteen minutes out of her time during class to show the students the differences between using dark skin tones and light skin tones and how they can render with those instead of just pivoting the students from using those colors? The students were given a list of colors, and of course, those dark skin tones were not on that list.

So, I try to allow my students a little bit more flexibility in the market stuff they choose. We are pretty heavy in working with women's wear. And so, I believe that students can get the same learning, they can do the same kinds of objective things that they need to do in their work, whether it's going to be women's wear or children's wear or men's wear, or even unisex or whatever they might want to do. As long as they're getting the skills, it doesn't matter to me if they're doing women's wear. And so, I try to leave it open to them.

Nancy Deihl: Again, since I'm teaching history, I feel like a lot of the knowledge of the history of dress is coming to us through images, and images that have been curated for our edification, whether we realize it or not. So, I would say, and I mostly teach graduate students in a small graduate program where people are very different at that level from a large, undergraduate population. But I'm increasingly teaching undergraduates, and so I'm really trying very, very hard to make sure that the images I'm showing every week are more inclusive in all these categories.

So, I'm not just repeating the tropes of, this is Parisian dominance, and this is Empress Eugenie, but that there are others. Especially with the advent of photography in the middle of the nineteenth century, which is where my class starts, there are images of lots of different kinds of people available, and I want my students to know that participation in fashion was wider than they might realize. So that's how I'm trying.

Kelly Reddy-Best: This is something I think about constantly before I build every single class. I critically look at everything such as the textbooks that we're reading. I teach a 100-level course about diversity and dress in society. It would be very easy for me to adopt a textbook and follow the chapters throughout the semester. But, I find some of the chapters to be lacking or not up to date, and I also find that I would like to have more diverse viewpoints than is available in some of the textbooks.

Therefore, while it's extra work, I often compile readings instead of using a textbook even at the lower course level.

I am also conscious about authors we're reading. Not only the topics, but the authors. Do I just read the one common author because they've been cited over and over again? Or do I introduce new authors and new ideas, perhaps authors who are from historically marginalized identities? I also include "safe space" guidelines in my syllabi, and it includes statements such as being respectful of gender pronouns in class, helping students avoid making assumptions, and avoiding spotlighting in the classroom. Spotlighting is when you might be talking about a specific group, for

example, black women, and then everyone "spotlights" or looks at the black person in the room, expecting them to answer the question or speak on behalf of all black people. Spotlighting can create a really isolating experience for people in the classroom.

I also create inclusive spaces by telling students that the classroom is an educational space for you to ask the hard question that you don't want to ask in a random space, for example in an Uber. You don't want to ask somebody about their identity in a space that's not designated an educational space. I create this space in the classroom and say this is where you're supposed to fumble through those hard questions, and you're supposed to ask the question that you don't know how to say, or you don't know how to phrase. Creating an inclusive environment is really important for students to feel like they can ask questions in a way that, maybe they say something "wrong," they're using some derogatory slur, because they don't know. That's the space that I may have to tell them what you said is oppressive, and you we unpack it in the classroom.

But you also have to, in many ways, think about creating that inclusive space, but then also opening yourself up to critical reflection as I mentioned before. An example that just happened this past semester in my doctoral theory course is we were reading about dress and identity, and there was a pretty bad example in one of our readings. One of my students brought it up in class. I overlooked it; it was an example of a white British man appropriating the idea of indigenous two-spirit identity. One of my students brought it up to me; they said, "I found this really offensive in your reading." I said, "Okay great, I missed that." I had the blinders on, I had those blinders on as I was picking the readings and thinking about the readings. In this example, it was really about listening to this student, opening myself up to critical reflection and allowing the students to share their experience. There's a huge power dynamic between students and faculty, where I'm in charge as I'm in charge of their grading. So, for students to be able to feel comfortable to challenge me, that is a critical moment demonstrating you are creating an inclusive

environment. So, if they can come to me and they feel comfortable telling me that they think, I chose something they feel needs to change—that’s pretty much the best thing that I think could happen in any class. That they feel comfortable enough that you’ve created that space. Therefore, thinking about the textbooks, thinking about the examples, and then lastly, just creating courses around diverse topics and pushing for those courses in your curriculum—those are just a few ways to create inclusive spaces in your curriculum.

Carmen Keist: I teach a course called “Survey of Fashion Designers,” and I got it, I’m fairly new at Bradley. And when I got it I thought, what? The topic, the description was really vague, and so I’m going to go through a lot of curriculum changes. But we talk about . . . I’m sure in the past it was taught about what we all know in a very textbook example. And I will not. We talked about famous designers that we all know. But then at the very beginning of the semester we sit down, and we brainstorm what topics we want to do on discussion days. So, it’s half lecture, half discussion. And so, they pick the topics, and we make sure that they’re very diverse, and that it’s topics that they want to focus on. So, it’s people of color, or it’s the plus size industry, or adaptive clothing, and really showcasing them. And it’s a lot more work for me, but students always come back and say it was very rewarding because I actually learned something that wasn’t just always what I see over and over.

So that’s one way. Reaching out to fellow scholars. I know I recently reached out to Kelly and said, “Hey, I’m trying to get articles for my students to read on LGBTQ,” and she was more than willing to provide those for me. And so, it kind of takes a village, but if you put together the work, it’s really helpful and eye-opening for everybody. Because every time I do this, I always get different articles, again, way more work for me. But I’m always like, “I want to learn something too.” So, we teach each other, and it’s that open space that students can feel like they can really have a conversation as opposed to teacher-student dynamic.

Nancy Deihl: This is just one more thing, and it’s really about flexibility in your curriculum, and we know that we all have things that we need to “cover” in a year or a semester. But if you look out at your group of students, or you have meetings with students, and you find that there’s a particular need or a particular interest in your group of students, I’m a believer in the case study addition to a syllabus. I think developing a case study to deal with a particular interest is a great way to add something to the classroom. And it might not work the following year because student interests might be really different. But I think that’s a good, practical level way to address something like that.

Michael Mamp: Thank you all so much. And it’s interesting to hear these scholars talk about the work associated with adding an additional unit to the class, thinking about the images that might be available outside of those that are readily achieved from the textbook and the resources associated to the textbook. So, I would just like to acknowledge and say thank you for the work that all of you, and for many of you in the room, have done to expand students’ perspective of the study of dress beyond just the resources that have been historically available.

So that having been said, I have one more question and then I’m going to open it up to the audience for questions, so get your questions ready. I may call on you. But my final question before we do that is, **as members of programs at various institutions, do you believe that our discipline as a whole embraces a diverse, inclusive and equitable approach to the preparation of students?**

Tameka Ellington: No. Actually, I have a lot to say about this one, so I’m just going to read what I wrote here. The first thing we can do about this is finding more diversity in our faculty. Students want to work with faculty who look like them. When people of color see another person of color, there’s an automatic connection. Especially when you’re at a PWI (predominantly white institutional) space. It’s so important to have diversity amongst your faculty and

your staff. It creates an environment where students feel more comfortable to be themselves. When you are looking for faculty of color, for those of you that are going to be in the future looking for faculties, you are not going to be able to do a national search to find a faculty of color because it's going to be difficult to do that. So, you're going to have to go and look in specific places, like for example going to HBCUs [historically black colleges and universities] to find professors that may be able to fill those spots. Recruiting in those kinds of environments will help you be able to fill the goal that you have.

I'm honored to say that I have been moving out of my department because I have been given a promotion as associate dean. I am the first African-American professor in my department and getting my job was not an easy feat. And now I'm the first African-American dean in my college, which is amazing. But when my dean had asked me to get into this position, the first thing I told him was, "The only way I'm going to do this is if you promise me that you're going to find another African-American professor to be in the school with the students if I'm not going to be able to be there." And he agreed, so I said, "Okay, let's do this." But it's so important for students to see people who look like them. Also, it's very important for faculty and staff to go through diversity training; we talked a little bit about that just earlier. There are agencies if your university doesn't have a diversity department or some other kinds of availability to get training; there are agencies out there that will do that. So, there's agencies that will train your team on micro-aggressive, discriminatory behaviors, and give strategies to combat that. There're also agencies that train on biases. We as human beings have biases against one another. If you can be up-front and be outspoken about those biases, we can better educate ourselves and be better people to our students. And not only to the students but also to colleagues.

I have one of my friends who happens to be a professor who came to me and asked how could she be more supportive. This particular person is a white woman. So, she came to me and she asked, "How can I be

more supportive of my black students in my class?" Now this particular person is an outstanding teacher, mentor, and has been good to all the students, no matter what the race, what ethnicity, whatever, but she's an amazing, amazing teacher. And I found that it was really interesting that, even though she's an amazing teacher, she still came to me and asked me how can she be supportive to her black students. And my advice to her was to continue to be sincere in your approach. Students have instincts just like we do. They can tell if you're supporting them or not. They feel it. If you don't like them for whatever particular reason, because maybe they are gay, or maybe they are an atheist, or there's so many different things, so many different reasons why someone may not be liking someone else. But students feel that, and if they don't feel that you're supportive, then it's automatically going to stagnate their learning. So just be supportive of the students, show them that you care about them. Open yourself up to be able to speak with them if they need to talk. And so that's what I have to say about that.

Kelly Reddy-Best: As a whole, does our discipline embrace diversity? No, I agree with Tameka one-hundred percent. Our discipline as a whole does not embrace it. Even if it's within the mission or the strategic plan. But usually there's some individuals who are planted in different areas, and I think that the folks that are up here right [on stage] now are some of those individuals in addition to many others, but not everyone embraces diversity. I think there are definitely individuals, I think there are groups, there are the communities within spaces. But as a whole our discipline, I think, certainly lacks in this area. But there are individuals.

But the standing up and saying something and what Michael was talking about earlier, the labor that is involved in talking about diversity. It's not only labor-intensive to find the articles or books, it's emotionally labor-intensive to constantly bring up diversity issues in different spaces. Especially if you're in a vulnerable position, pre-tenure, pre-promotion, whatever that is. If you're in a vulnerable position, to be able to stand up

and say, “I think this is wrong, I think you need to consider queer identities or people of color, I think you need to think about trans people.” Whatever it is, we need to have more folks who are cognizant and willing to stand out there and take a stance against oppression, white supremacy, homophobia.

Michael Mamp: I think I would sum that up also by saying that let’s also not make the assumption that you have to be queer to teach about queer fashion. Yes, my positionality afforded me a perfect alignment of the stars, I was in a position where I could write a class, where I did have an interest in a topic, where the labor of it was something I was willing to do because it was important to me. But on the flip side, what was interesting when I developed and started teaching that class, which I now have next semester sixty people registered for and is on the university’s general education program, is the number of students of color that came to that class. And so, then I started doing these book club groups for African-American women in the fashion program because we also learned that fifty-three percent of our students in the program identified as African-American. Fifty-three percent! And we don’t have a single African-American person on our staff. And so, I started doing these book club groups for women of color in my program, where we read books related to fashion and black identity, starting with Monica L. Miller’s *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity*. And I’d always been playing with this idea in the back of my mind of developing a black fashion course. Because I think there is so much to be said, and so much to be done. But I was scared being the white man. And even though I’m queer, I recognize the privilege that comes along with my positionality as a white, cisgendered male. The students tell me, Dr. Mamp, please do it. Because if you don’t, nobody else will.

Tameka Ellington: That’s right.

Michael Mamp: And so, it isn’t just about us as the queer person or the fat person or the black person or the woman developing

materials and content and research related to our own positionality. I think we can all embrace that in a more diverse and deeper way. So, at this time I’m going to open it up to questions. So, if you have a question, if you could please raise your hand, and I will come around, and please wait for the microphone. And say who you are, and then ask your question.

Audience Member 1: I wanted to ask the panel what was your opinion on if you see CSA promoting diversity and inclusion by inviting members to dress in theme for our keynote presentation [Conference theme was “Diffusion and Identity in Dress,” and the program invited attendees to “Wear an outfit to represent the theme of the conference.”] And to further that question, since you are all affiliated with a university, **how do you define the fine line between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation in your work?**

Kelly Reddy-Best: Thanks for that question. It’s a fine line between appropriation and appreciation. I think when we think about cultural appropriation versus cultural appreciation it’s hard and not appropriate for one person to speak for an entire group of people. I think that’s the first point to make. A lot of times as a person who teaches about and studies culture and dress at my university, I always get asked this for the student paper or the student magazine. The student or reporter always ask, for example, “is it okay for white people to wear dreads?” And I always say, you need to think about the longstanding history of oppressions for different aesthetics for some of these cultural signifiers and what that might mean for some people, and I’m not the person to ask. I am a white person. Therefore, it is not my opinion on this that matters. What does matter is that some people in these marginalized groups feel it is wrong that their community’s aesthetics and styles are being appropriated, and we should pay attention to and respect that. For so long, many of these communities that have experienced marginalization and genocide, including black people and indigenous people, are now having aesthetics

such as dreadlocks or different indigenous motifs and patterns worn by white people who do not have any knowledge of the history of oppression and sometimes sacred meaning of the objects. Therefore, I think that the organizers of CSA were going for appreciation when they requested these styles. Were some members of CSA engaging in appropriation, I would say so. I think we could all use a good reminder to be cautious when wearing styles or motifs of different cultures.

Nancy Deihl: I just want to ask you again. One part of your question was that you were asking us if we thought that the CSA's invitation to its members to dress somehow referring to the theme of the conference?

Audience Member 1: Reflecting the theme.

Nancy Deihl: Okay, thank you. So that was what was on the call, it was reflecting the theme. I would like to think that it is appreciation, given the knowledge in the room, and also that this whole organization is founded on understanding and appreciation. I would like to think that that was not an instance of appropriation. But that's just me weighing in. Anybody else want to address that?

Tameka Ellington: With my study of black hair for so many years, one of the things that constantly comes up is like Kelly was saying the issue of white people wearing black hairstyles. And knowing the history behind that, and what that has done as a culture. For instance, when a black person wears French braids or cornrows is what we call them. When we wear that hair style, we're looked at as ghetto, or gangster, or whatever. But then when a white person wears it, it's boxer braids. It's cute, it's very trendy. Those kinds of things. And so, it's always an issue when we think about appropriation because it's constantly happening. When a group of individuals can wear a particular hairstyle and it not be seen as discriminatory, like a way for that person to look down on someone else, then maybe I can feel a little more at ease with white women wearing cornrows. But because we're

still being discriminated against as black people when we wear that hairstyle, I just can't get over it, I'm sorry.

Audience Member 2: Hello. Mine isn't so much a question, but a suggestion. I think of the Costume Society of America having in its foundation and strong roots to be both a community and a resource. And I wonder, there's a lot of work that goes into putting together reading lists. And it seems futile for all of us to reinvent the wheel every time. **So, I wonder if there's a possibility for maybe a general reading list that they pump out.** And then the second thing also, I know the last institution I taught at had this talent pool, where you could identify yourself, your areas of research, and then put together where you were. So, if you were a student, you could say whether you were entry level, about to graduate, whether you wanted to collaborate, those kinds of things. **And I wonder if there's an opportunity to create an online resource like that.**

Carmen Keist: I was just going to say Kristen [Miller Zohn, CSA Executive Director], is there a way to hook up on our new MemberClicks website?

Kristen Miller Zohn: If people are willing to share resources, if you'll send it to us with the topic subject headers of where they can go, we can make that part of our resources page on the members-only site.

Carmen Keist: I was going to suggest that anyways after this.

Yayra Tamakloe: Hello. My name is Yayra. I'm a student at Kent State University, and Dr. Tameka Ellington is actually my mentor. **So, with any history of marginalized populations before the marginalization, how do you approach issues of students interested in that history of fashion?** And also, when students find a way, in my case my research was actually my ethnic group from Ghana, there is very little precolonial African history left. What does this organization do to support students? Because the next step I think in my research would be to go to the

field and actually interview people and the natives of the areas, the natives of my culture. **But in doing that I have to go there, and right now I don't even know how to find funding. So how would you navigate that situation?**

Carmen Keist: CSA has the Stella Blum Student Research Grant. That is one way, and I'm sure somebody would be happy to talk to you about how to apply. It's [the Stella Blum Research Grant] not a lot, but it's what we have. CSA does see that need for student research. And then the first question. Would you restate the first question?

Yayra Tamakloe: So, the first question is essentially asking, when students want to find out more about the history of marginalized populations before the marginalization. Because I guess we are aware that the history that we have was written by the conquerors, not the conquered. So how would you be able to assist a student interested in learning more about that history?

Tameka Ellington: It's really difficult to find that. I don't even know what to say. It's hard to find that because the history is not written. A lot of that history is oral history, and so finding written documentation would be very difficult. Specifically, for African-American or African diasporic kinds of research, a good place to start would be slave narratives. That would be a great place to start. And that's written, sometimes it's oral, and you may have to listen to a recording, but a lot of times they wrote it out. And so, you can find lots of information via slave narratives.

Audience Member 4: My question, I'm a theatrical designer, and **we have a recent charge to teach the history of costume in one semester, or maybe two semesters, so we don't get to have these individualized courses. So, I'm looking if you have any ideas about that.** The only thing I could come up with is, don't feel the obligation to cover each decade from the Egyptians to the present day, but

choose what you're doing. And a project and an idea of inspiration, because really that's what we're teaching, visual reference, and the diversity and the wealth of image that comes with every culture is just enormous. So, diversify it that way and not stick to period. So, I wonder if you have any ideas about that.

Nancy Deihl: Again, I think case studies are a great way to do it. Because that way you can kind of zigzag through history and around the world and not feel that you need to be really linear in your approach to one particular area. But it's all about research, and it's all about pointing your students to authoritative resources. And I'm just going to say it, don't let them go to Pinterest. Because it's utter nonsense, and it's so unauthoritative. So, I would say that's my approach.

Carmen Keist: I just had a thought that I actually want to do, too. In the age of the flipped classroom, put all of the basic stuff like the timelines of the decades and make them do the work. And look at the standard images, and that way you can focus your class time really talking about other groups. So, they might have to do a little more work on the forefront, but that could be one way too. Focus class time on diverse and online on the overall silhouette, the basics that they should know.

Audience Member 5: My question is from the design standpoint. I'm wondering, in studio classes for example, do you have recommendations for how we can better empower our students to think beyond the given, very slender dress form that we have, stocked for exhibitions or in studio classes. Think about degrees of ability per se or body types or backgrounds. Do you have any recommendations?

Carmen Keist: I was going to say make them do different things. Like with Tameka's comment about using the light color, make them use all skin colors. Every skin color. Make them use purple and green, whatever it is, make them draw a fat person. Bring in people, bring in images,

because not all fat people are light either. And so really looking at these different body types. Because my fat body is different from somebody else's. Get live models, people with, if they're comfortable, abilities, wheelchair, all sorts of people, and make them do it. And they're going to be really uncomfortable, and that's good.

Kelly Reddy-Best: I taught mostly design courses while I was a professor at San Francisco State University. And in those design courses, when we thought through gender, oftentimes we'd think about some things as simple as some of the closures. History has taught us that women's and men's garments close on different sides. In my design classes, we just rejected those ideas. I, of course, said to students that when you go into the industry, some of these oppressive traditions would be the standard. But know that if you challenge these traditions, that could make change in the future, and it has to start with the change agents in a department on the ground level.

For body sizes, I think you're going to be limited by the mannequins, the dress models that are available in your institution. But you could look for other ways of thinking about it, for example, how the language is shaped in an assignment. Some individuals who might identify as men or genderqueer might have a chest. Therefore, there's a variety of ways you can think about diversity and body size and shape and word it in your syllabus and assignment. The instructor can be inclusive in the assignment description language. The important thing to do is normalize the language around diverse bodies and diverse ideas. Don't make a big deal about it or make it the focus of the assignment; the instructor could just say, we're going to just design a garment for men, women, or gender non-confirming people, and you could not even make a big deal about it, you could just slip different genders right in there. And it would normalize the identity, and it would normalize the idea.

Carmen Keist: And going off with the mannequins, I just came up with this idea too. But being a fat person, buying clothes

that I like, that I feel good in, is quite difficult for me usually. So maybe you have your students bring in one of their friends that is not a standard body type that you guys usually work in, or fit the mannequin size, and practice on that person. And have your students make something for their friend that makes them feel good. And really challenge them with that. That could be another way. Because I would like that.

Nancy Martin: Hi, I wanted to just piggyback on what Carmen was saying about the flipped classroom and encourage teachers to allow their students at least to have one project where they bring in their own history. I come from a very diverse area and am a former student of Kelly Reddy-Best's at San Francisco State University. She had us do an oral-history project, and I found it really satisfying for myself, but also it allowed the students to share their own history and bring that to the front for all of us.

Lotta Yanong: Hi. I just wanted to make a comment to address something that you mentioned earlier. I am from Chicago. And I also would like to address some things that I heard over the weekend so far. I think it's great to hear you discuss promoting learning environments that are safe for students to speak out about being triggered or offended. But I just wanted to add that some people that don't speak out, who don't protest, can and do still feel triggered, and that silence can still mean pain. And silence does not mean acceptance. That's pretty much it. Thank you.

Ariele Elia: I just wanted to say thank you to Michael and to all of you for a truly thought-provoking conversation. About two years ago Jose Blanco, Petra Slinkard, Caroline Bellios, and I had spoken about diversity in curriculum. **One of the main takeaways that came out of our conversation was, how do we diversify CSA?** I don't think we have a good answer to that yet. So, I'm curious to hear your suggestions about how to fill half of the room with people of color from different backgrounds, so we can hear about their point of view and scholarship.

Carmen Keist: I'm simply going to quickly plug, as VP of Internal Relations, that is what I would really like to do. So, what I would like everybody in this room to do is to reach out to five of your friends. Because I would like to see CSA be diverse in all ways. Men, women, non-binary, old, young, everybody. All areas of diversity. And I know everybody in this room can think of two or three people that do not look like them that they can invite to be in CSA. And so, I just would recommend that that is one way that we can start including diversity, is just by reaching out to the people in our lives to tell them about CSA.

Nancy Deihl: I think that's great. And Carmen, you're in the position to really make that an initiative. But I'd also like to say the issue of *Dress* that, Kelly, you co-edited or edited, was really amazing. And also, the decolonization theme within [this year's CSA] conference. So, I think it's been kind of a banner year for the organization, and maybe it's a start of a trajectory.

Kelly Reddy-Best: Yeah. How do you diversify CSA, that's the question, right? How do we make it so that folks know that when they come here, they're going to not experience micro-aggressions and things like that? And I think it's a really good question, but I think having things like this on the program are really important, letting folks know. Even the list of topics, there were several topics this year on queerness and dress. But I think it goes beyond that. I think it goes, thinking about our reviewers, who our reviewers are. What kinds of comments you get back when you put through a paper that might be about non-binary folks. So, I think all of this goes back to education. It goes back to this idea of individuals taking agency and educating themselves about these ideas. And making sure we have diverse reviewers, making sure that we have this. What are the papers that they're accepting, and why are they being accepted?

I think maybe having, thinking back to your panel from two years ago ["Expanding the Wardrobe: Diversity in Costume Communities and Exhibitions," Caroline Bellios, Jose Blanco, Ariele Elia, Petra

Slinkard, CSA National Symposium, 2017], I would say like, great, this is great. CSA is moving along. Seeing those kinds of things on the program. So maybe just each year having something that might relate to this idea on the program. At least seeing it in a program can be inviting for people. And so, you have to tell people, you have to let them know that this space isn't just for rich, white people, who are straight and able-bodied. Maybe we think about ability, maybe it's like we need accommodations in some way. We don't have a sign language interpreter, there's lots of things that we don't have that we could incorporate. But letting people know and telling them, I think is one way to do it.

Tameka Ellington: Well I believe that CSA and any professional organization is not going to become more diverse until we diversify the academy. Once we diversify the academy and we have more people of color, more men, then we can really diversify. But when there's a handful of black PhD academics, you know?

Audience Member 9: So, what do you think we could be doing more of or better as an organization and a field to provide a point of entry for people who may encounter some sort of throwaway line in a history course or otherwise about fashion in marginalized communities, but who don't have a faculty member at their institution who's even associated with the CSA or is knowledgeable of us?

Kelly Reddy-Best: In my college we have a committee called Diversity, Equity and Community Committee. So maybe we need a diversity committee that has these initiatives. Perhaps we need this committee in CSA to really spearhead different initiatives.

José Blanco: It's also the strategic plan; it's one of the five goals of the strategic plan. So, we've been having these conversations.

Monica Sklar: So, trying to spin that upbeat. I'm trying to think of the most articulate way to say this. A bunch of the

questions about CSA have been posited almost adversarial, as in, “What’s CSA doing to change? And CSA is negative, and there’s all these ways it could be positive.”

However, I think I can speak for that there are at least three of us in the room that are presently, and I think we all identify as representing forms of diversity. And we would like very much to be welcoming to volunteers, welcoming to new reviewers, welcoming to people on our committees that represent new faces.

There’s lots of room for volunteering on everything we do. Whether it’s reviewing for *Dress* journal, reviewing manuscripts or abstracts. We’re always struggling so hard to find people to get engaged. And so, if you feel like your voice or the voice of a community that you may be a part of isn’t represented, tell any of us, because CSA is changing, and it’s representing. The leadership of CSA is really attempting to represent different forms of diversity, and your voice is welcome to be a part of that change. Rather than just saying, “Well, what’s CSA doing?” Well, you’re in CSA. So, do it with us, and we can change together.

Michael Mamp: I think we have time for one more question. And Kristen, I believe, has been waiting for a while.

Kristen Stewart: I’m Kristen, and I actually have a request of this group, and everyone in the room who is an educator, or everyone in this room. Museums are looking for artifacts that represent a more diverse narrative. So, I work in a large

collection in a small city history museum. And the urgency of acquiring objects that represent the history of people of color in my community weighs on me every day. Because the longer it’s in someone’s home or attic, the less likely it is that we will be able to chronicle it, capture it, and provide it to the next generation.

And I feel like you made the urgency of that very plain. So, I’m feeling that, as a city history-museum curator. And for my own community, I’m constantly projecting loud requests for a wide range of materials, but not everyone feels comfortable approaching me to offer materials. They don’t necessarily understand that the museum has a place for it. So please, speak to your constituents and send them to their museums with their materials. Or those materials will not be captured.

Michael Mamp: Thank you all so much for your thought-provoking questions. And I’d really like to extend a sincere thank you to our panel of Kelly, Nancy, Tameka, and Carmen. I think you honor us all with your input and your knowledge and your scholarship, and you personally honor me with your support and your friendship. And I’m proud to call you colleagues. So, thank you for your participation here today. I also want to say thank you to the other committee members. To Ariele Elia, who was a committee member and member of the Roundtable last year. And also Denise Green, who helped in the evaluation and nominations for this year’s Scholars’ Roundtable.