

# Production #3

By: Kimberly Chin

As a performing artist it is very common to be cast in a certain role not only for ones talents and ability, but also if they have the right 'look'. This assignment had me reflect on a few instances where I have been cast in dance roles predominately for my image. I identify as mixed race, my father is second generation Chinese and my mother is Scottish, which has had many people guessing what my culture and background is throughout my life. This particular story I'm about to share had me reflect on the film *Reel Injun* as I was put in a situation where my identity was falsely represented based on my appearance.

A few years ago I was cast last minute in a dance production company that hired only indigenous artists from the dancers, lighting designers, choreographers, costume designers etc. I was flown to Calgary and immediately was singled out by the director, as I was the 'only non indigenous person within the company'. At first I was taken a back, and had me wonder why they were targeting and segregating me; but through a critical postcolonial lens, I can now comprehend how important it was for the company to share the most honest portrayal of their art within their culture. As the weeks went on, I began to understand the company's mandate of creating original indigenous content through dance, music, and multi media images. From this weeks readings a quote resonated with me as I now begin to realize the importance of the indigenous voice, represented by the indigenous voice. "...we need to consider the perspectives and identities of populations who historically have not seen themselves as a part of American mainstream. (Appleman, 2009 pg. 86) Canada's indigenous have had their rights, culture, and history stripped away from them, and as a community, they decided to use the arts as a vehicle to reclaim their pride and heritage to share their story. After this weeks class discussion I was able

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to view this situation through a critical lens of postcolonial theory and understand how integral it is to highlight these issues within our classrooms and provide examples of indigenous role models. “Connections among all the domains of our experience-the psychological, ideological, social, political, intellectual, and aesthetic-in ways that show us just how inseparable these categories are in our lived experiences of ourselves and our world.” (Appleman 2009 pg. 87)

Yes, I had a false identity imposed on me, and yes I was upset for being singled out, but ultimately it was not about me, it was about a culture and way of life that the indigenous wanted to portray in a sincere and honest light. I was given the opportunity to dive into their culture and beliefs, and I am so thankful to have been involved in such a unique and important project that deepened my understanding to help reclaim their traditions.

## Resource

Appleman, D. (2009). Critical Encounters in The English Classroom. Teachers College Press. Chapter: Post-Colonial Theory in the English Classroom