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"Mad Hot" Multiculturalismo: Identidad cultural dominicana a través de la música y la danza
("Mad Hot" Multiculturalism: Dominican Cultural Identity Through Music and Dance)

Fernando Valerio-Holguín[1]

In 1994, a ballroom dance program for 5th graders was implemented in New York public schools. By 2005, more than 6,000 kids from 60 schools in Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn were required to take this 10-week course. The very same year, Marilyn Agrelo directed the documentary *Mad Hot Ballroom Dance* (2005). The documentary tells the story of the preparation, instruction, and rehearsal of various school teams for the Colors of the Rainbows final competition. New York is one of the most multicultural states in the United States with the student population coming from different countries and backgrounds. There are Dominicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, European Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans. Through the music used in this Public-School program (merengue, tango, rumba, and swing), students find an outlet for their feelings and a way to "construct their subjectivities", as Charles Keil would suggest. It is through dance that, a public school becomes a space of alterity or paratopia; a Korean boy dances a tango with a Dominican girl, whereas a Jewish-American boy dances a merengue with an African-American girl. In this essay, I will argue, among other things, that the ballroom dance program teaches students from different races, religions, and cultural backgrounds not only how to dance but also how to mingle and interact, thus reinforcing the possibility of greater multicultural integration. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2024 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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