



ISMETA

International Somatic Movement
Education & Therapy Association

The Use of the Adjective "Master" to Describe Advanced Practitioners of Our Work

A few years ago, ISMETA chose the adjective "master" to describe a new level of credentialing among Somatic Movement professionals who had over 1,000 hours of training and have made significant contributions to our field, for example, through publishing written works that help define our profession. This term seemed relevant, given that it is used in academia to indicate an advanced level of knowledge and professional skill.

While learning about decolonial approaches to Somatic Movement Education and Therapy, members of ISMETA's Board of Directors have recently become more aware of the historical association of the word "Master" with the oppressive and violent legacy of slavery in the United States (and other parts of the world). We researched the etymology of the word and according to etymonline.com, it seems that the word stems from "maestro/a - teacher" (12th century). In the 14th century it also came to mean "one who has power to control, use or dispose of at will" as in "master/servant."

Through extensive conversations in the Equity, Justice, and Accessibility Committee and the Executive Committee, it became clear that we are using the word as an adjective (a master educator or a master therapist) to describe a level of professional accomplishment rather than as a noun (a master), which refers more directly to the oppressor who owned slaves.

We acknowledge that the word carries both meanings, and we choose to use it as an adjective, in the context of the meaning "teacher," to convey a sense of the mastery that our most experienced Somatic Movement professionals bring to their teaching and therapeutic work.