

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: TIDES

Mariama “Ama” Law, Master of Fine Arts, 2019

Dissertation directed by: Head of Master of Fine Arts Dance Program,
Crystal Davis, School of Theater, Dance and
Performance Studies

This document explores the research and inspirations behind *TIDES*, a dance performance that employs a cyclical structure to incorporate personal experiences of Ama Law, the choreographer and director, as well as the cultural ancestry of its cast of thirteen women of African descent. Law shares her approach to developing *TIDES* that includes an anthropological perspective to investigate the personal histories of her cast and concepts of historical revisionism to bring awareness to black women on stage. This paper utilizes Knowledge (an important element of hip hop) as a methodology that brings healing to communities. Law also highlights stories of women in urban dance and histories of the African, modern and urban movement styles used in *TIDES* (Vogue, Chicago house, Dunham technique, movement from West African countries and more).

TIDES

by

Mariama “Ama” Law

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

2019

Advisory Committee:

Assistant Professor Crystal Davis, Chair

Lecturer Paul Jackson

Associate Professor Maura Keefe, PhD

Instructor Alvin Mayes

© Copyright by
Mariama “Ama” Law
2019

Foreword

Ama Law's *TIDES* begins with the presence of water. Thus, a seemingly neutral phenomenon becomes a meeting ground for Black women of the Diaspora. The Black women who occupy the ocean—both literally and figuratively—dance among the tides, the ever-changing flow of the water ushering them to connect with one another across geographical limitations. Simultaneously, the water also stands as a gravesite that represents the millions of Africans during the transatlantic slave trade that were thrown or jumped overboard due to the harsh and unpredictable conditions of their forced voyage. In this sense, Law's *TIDES* reminds us of the lives lost during the enslavement, as well as the ancestral ties that Black people have to the water. Even so, Law's *TIDES* is as much of a celebration as it is a mourning of those whose lives were lost during the middle passage.

The dances performed within *TIDES* serve as a site for resistance, renewal, and rebirth. From traditional West African dance movements and South African Gumboot Dance, to Black Greek Stepping, Contemporary African, voguing, breaking, to modern dance; the genealogy of Black dance reflects the rich movement that has travelled across space. It is through these diasporic movements that we ask: *How does one transgress grief and psychological bondage, yet stay connected and unified to one's past? How does memory delight us with its reflections while simultaneously haunting us with its images?* Through her choreography, Law illuminates the

while providing space for reunification and regeneration. Similar to the ocean, life binds and it separates. But it is through our ability to listen to the whispers and howls of the *TIDES* that we discover that freedom was never lost...for it is with the ancestors, and they, are within us.

–Leticia Ridley & Gianina Lockley

TIDES was presented at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, College Park during Black History Month on February 8-10th, 2019.

Dedication

TIDES is dedicated to the creator and to all of the ancestors who have paved the way for me to be here. More specifically, my mother, Marjorie Lawrence-Sargeant and father, Kombo Omolara who are now ancestors. They were community leaders and were always supportive of me following my dreams, finding my voice and taking risks. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my incredible husband, Chris Law and daughters Nyla and Nia for their love and support. My sister and brother-in-law Niani and Clyde for housing us, feeding us, taking care of our girls and teaching Chris and I how to be amazing parents. Lastly, to mom Sherry and our aunt Cindy, thank you for being part of our village. Without this incredible network of support, I could not pursue the arts and know that all who help to raise my daughters keep them safe in loving arms. Thank you.

To my friends Roxi, Nat and Harmony, thank you for being amazing women that I can look up to and always rely on for honest constructive criticism. My dramaturgs & the *Tides* Queens cast helped to propel this idea forward (especially Asia), without you all this project wouldn't exist. To Tomi, NyQwayah, Kima and Sandra for jumping in at the final hour to elevate these ideas to the next level, thank you. My real-life-powerhouse inspirations: Chitra, Kumari & Toyin, these women are all incredible fusionists that I emulate. Thank you to my ancestral inspirations: Katherine Dunham & Sherrill Berryman Johnson who shaped my personal journey in dance.

Special thank yous to my thesis committee as a whole! Crystal Davis, Paul Jackson, Maura Keefe, and Alvin Mayes... you each played a very special role in my journey and kept me in school when I wanted to quit. To Karen Bradley who encouraged me to begin this journey in the first place, thank you. To my dance

siblings: Christine, Stacey and Shawn, thanks for riding this roller coaster ride with me! Thank you to all the designers and crew who work so hard behind the scenes. To Cary Gillett & Jocelyn Callister, you both mean so much to me you have no idea!

Table of Contents

Foreword	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
Chapter 1: Riding the Cyclical Wave	1
Introduction	1
Dipping into the Ocean.....	4
The Spark for the Deep “fusion” Journey	4
Mentors and Movement Gurus	7
(Her)story: Lineage, Heritage, Home	12
Chapter 2: History: An Ocean of Knowledge.....	15
History of Hip Hop Culture	17
Women in Hip Hop Music History	19
Women in Hip Hop Dance History.....	22
Chapter 3: Inspirations: The Waves of Three Women	25
Mother	25
Mentor	27
Idol.....	29
Chapter 4: Research: Take a Deep Breath	33
Preparing for the Plunge	33
The Rehearsal Process	37
Identity Charts	37
Song Challenge.....	39
Think Bubbles.....	40
Teach Me Something	44
Anonymous Note.....	45
Chapter 5: Creative Decisions: Envisioning the TIDES	47
Pour One Out.....	47
Sounds of the Sea	52
Fluid Fashion	53
Walking Along the Shore.....	55
Waiting, Sharing and Weight Sharing.....	58
Female Presence in Design.....	61
Troubled Waters.....	63
Chapter 6: Looking Across the Ocean.....	66
Reactions	66
Future Studies	68
Interviews	68
	vii

Restage.....	69
Chapter 7: Conclusion	71
Appendices	73
Appendix A: Women in Hip Hop Dance Continued... ..	73
Appendix B: Identity Charts and Costume Renderings.....	76
Image 36: The final look.	80
Glossary	81
Bibliography	83

List of Figures

Image 1: Bottom of the Ocean	3
Images 2 & 3: “Dolphin dive”	9
Image 4: Dance Lineage	13
Image 5: Mother	26
Image 6: Mentor	28
Image 7: Idol	30
Images 8: Identity Chart #1	38
Image 9: Identity Chart #2	39
Image 10: Think Bubble	41
Images 11-14: Poetry by Nayyirah Waheed	44
Image 15: Libation	49
Image 16: Mokojumbie	50
Image 17: Libation with poem	51
Images 18-19: Sandra’s original poetry	52
Images 20-22: Merissa’s costume	55
Images 23-24: “Door of no Return”	57
Image 25: Vogue pose	58
Image 26: Nneka at “Door of no Return”	58
Images 27-28: Weight sharing	59
Image 29: Brandi supports Ama	60
Image 30: “ME!”	61
Images 31-34: Lighting and Projection Design	62
Image 35: Entire Cast of TIDES	72
Identity Charts 1 & 2: Michelle and Georgina’s initial charts	76
Identity Charts 3 & 4: Michelle and Georgina’s charts six months later	77
Identity Chart 5: Nneka’s chart	78
Renderings 1-3: Costume sketches based on charts	79
Image 36: The final look	80

Chapter 1: Riding the Cyclical Wave

Introduction

I've been thinking mostly about the ocean. The sea. The huge body of water that connects everything on our planet. These waters have significance to my personal history, movement history and the history of people of African descent. The ocean replenishes the earth. It refreshes and gives life. It is used in several rituals that celebrate life including baptisms and libations. In my work *TIDES*, the audience is taken on a cyclical journey just like the tides of the ocean. Do not expect anything less in this reading. Summoning legacy and memory to speak to the now, take this journey with me.

It starts by sitting on the beach. Imagine your body is sinking into the sand and the waves are gently lapping up over your legs. The beach reminds me of home. Although I was not born in the Caribbean, my family took trips to the Caribbean frequently throughout my childhood. Swimming in the ocean was the highlight of every trip. In the midst of the joy, I couldn't help but wonder about the history lessons I was taught throughout my youth. How during the middle passage, the ocean became a site of terrors and is still a space in which so many unclaimed bodies of enslaved Africans remain due to jumping or being thrown overboard. Imagine being claustrophobic in the depths of boats, starving and cold, sick and lonely, confused. Their journey to the Caribbean and the United States due to transatlantic enslavement has a psychological impact on my way of thinking to this day. Even as a child, when I

swam in the ocean, I thought of the tales of enslaved Africans who chose to jump overboard instead of enduring captivity. I imagined swimming with the spirits of my ancestors.

Throughout this past year, I've been thinking about my experiences with parents and other family members passing away. In January of 2018 I found my father expired in his apartment. His body was decomposed to the point where maggots were coming in and out of his eye sockets. During the rehearsal process for *TIDES*, I morbidly wanted to recreate that moment. Imagining that the bodies of my ancestors, who jumped ship to escape captivity, would probably look decomposed like that. My approach was to instruct my dancers to imagine they were lying on the floor of the ocean and they needed to find the air at the top. First I instructed a few dancers to try the gasp as everyone crawled off stage, and then we tried everyone gasping in unison. Eventually, we settled on a sporadic timing where each individual had the freedom to gasp in his or her own way. Gasping for a different kind of freedom.



Image 1: Bottom of the Ocean.
Photo courtesy of David Andrews

This all happened after a canon that traveled diagonally up stage left. The cast rested on the ocean floor. Miejo Dambita was given the task of starting the gasp moment. She needed to feel the moment, sensing when the stillness is getting uncomfortable for the audience. Miejo took a gasp. Everyone gasped sporadically after. This uncomfortable moment represents wanting so badly to see my father take a breath when I found him in his apartment. For me, death represents freedom. Just as many of the dance forms I've studied were, at their inception, created to escape the stressors of life during their inception.

Dipping into the Ocean

The Spark for the Deep “fusion” Journey

My movement is like the ocean. Constantly shifting because, I enjoy moving fluidly between movement styles. I seek to blend and layer various street dance styles and motifs with traditional West African movement. Since I am still uncovering what this blending and layering is, I will be referring to my approach to movement development as “fusion”. Although the media and mainstream has grouped all forms of dance that emerged from the streets of urban communities as “hip hop,” for the purposes of this paper, I refer to these styles as urban dance or urban movement. Similarly, I recognize that the same general grouping has been done to African dance. The term “West African dance” resonates with many participants, including myself, even though I am aware that Africa is an entire continent that has specific dances with cultural contexts unique to each country’s history and people living there.

For my work, *TIDES*, I draw upon traditional West African dances from Senegal, Mali and Gambia learned as a member of Kankouran West African Dance Company.¹ Under the tutelage of Assane Konte, founder and Artistic Director of Kankouran, in addition to many other African dance masters, I was immersed in a culture where the traditions of African villages were passed down. We learned high-energy dances and songs that accompany harvest season, wedding celebrations and rites of passage. We often danced to live *djembe* drums, *kituro* drums or a xylophone-

¹ Founded in 1983 to share traditional African dance with audiences of all ages, KanKouran West African Dance Company preserves and promotes traditional West African culture by providing quality entertainment and educational programs to local and national audiences in an effort to facilitate cross-cultural enrichment. From www.kankouran.org

like instrument called a *balaphone*. Through dance, drum and song I was taught to respect my elders and my ancestors by passing down tradition and learning from the past to know where I am going. Sankofa.

In this thesis, I am specifically using the term urban dance/movement to be all-inclusive of club and underground dance forms that are often associated with hip hop but, originate from different communities than Bronx, NY (where hip hop began).² My passion for urban dance was fostered during my involvement with Dynamic Dance Team as an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP). I discovered that there is more to the dance than I saw on television. Dynamic exposed me to various hip hop and urban movement styles that originate from underground urban communities in the United States.

While deepening my understanding for hip hop culture, I met teachers who consider themselves originators and listened to many personal experiences of what it was like growing up during the various eras where hip hop culture was gaining mainstream attention. I became involved in many other dance groups in the Washington, D.C. area, and in 2011 joined an all-female dance crew called KickRocks. Dancing with these ladies gave me the confidence to present my art unapologetically. KickRocks crew flourished because women presented aggressive choreography, something not typically seen from female dancers in the D.C. area at

² More specifically when I use the term urban dance, I am referring to breakdance, house dance, waacking, vogue, popping, locking, krump, tutting, flexing, turfing, beat your feet and many other dance styles that have emerged from urban communities in America.

the time. I began to notice that young girls saw us as role models; this is when I realized this new-found cultural knowledge came with responsibility.

As I became more invested in hip hop culture and started passing it on as a teacher, I began to develop my own questions about the dance and movement. Who has the authority to teach it? What is the best way to honor the culture? Where are the women in hip hop? Most importantly, what is the most effective methodology to promote positivity in my students? How can I show these young girls who look up to me that the culture is more than what they see on television? How do I guide them on their own path of love with hip hop? How do I help them dig deep and make their own personal roots in hip hop culture?

To consider and respond to these questions, I have begun incorporating historical and cultural perspectives of the movement I teach in my classes and rehearsals. I have utilized documentaries, lectures and guest teachers to provide historical content. Additionally, I've experimented with learning this knowledge while moving simultaneously. For example, the basis of House dance is the *jack*. A simple movement that allows your body to feel the steady *four-on-the-floor* bass beat in house music. As I was told by my mentors, the *jack* is a movement that evolved due to the clubs in Chicago being extremely crowded. When teaching the technique of the jack, I bring the participants in the room close and tell them to imagine that they are in a very crowded club. Explaining the history and context behind a movement, while simultaneously teaching the movement maximizes class time versus having the class watch a video that explains the historical context and then having

them try the movement. Much of my embodied research pedagogy has been to witness whether incorporation of this technique leads to a more informed dancer due to the immersive way of transferring the knowledge. I do believe that harnessing a deeper knowledge of the culture will lead to a more informed and more confident student.

Mentors and Movement Gurus

Chicago house is one of the many techniques I have been immersing myself in. It is a music and dance that emerged in the late 1970s where disco and funk records were layered to create a new sound. The movement can range from high energy to slow and subtle. I learned under the tutelage of various well-respected house dancers, such as Junious “House” Brickhouse. Brickhouse, founder of Urban Artistry, was the first to introduce me to the culture of Chicago house.³ His classes are a combination of historical lectures and movement practice. His pedagogy gave me insight on the importance of allowing students to get a sense of the “why” behind the movement. Under his tutelage, I felt a deeper connection to the movement when I understood the cultural contexts behind the movement. This pedagogical approach was important in *TIDES* as it allowed the dancers to grasp deeper meanings behind the movement, especially in the gasp moment mentioned earlier.

³ Urban Artistry, Inc., is an internationally recognized 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the performance and preservation of art forms inspired by the urban experience. Serving as cultural ambassadors for communities that are often unsung, the group fulfills their mission through effective collaborations that support artists’ past, present, and future. From <http://urbanartistry.org>

Daniel “Future” Kelley is a mentor who coached me closely during my internship at Broadway Dance Center (BDC) in New York.⁴ He not only cultivated a unique community amongst myself and my peers that fostered creativity, he also encouraged us to listen to music on a deeper level. He is the first teacher that showed me musicality in layers and took my unique vocabulary as a base to expand upon instead of forcing his aesthetic upon me. Freedom, fluidity and growth while maintaining legacy are an important notion that I want to keep exploring. Kelley allowed me to embrace my ability to freestyle using urban dance, versus just learning choreography and commercial hip hop. He was the first to introduce the concept of fusion to me. In his personal practice of fusion, he simultaneously performs fluid upper body movement utilizing techniques from the waving urban dance style and sharp vogue poses; as his legs are steady and grooving to the beat of the music with house dance foundation. I incorporated this technique several times in *TIDES* to build upon my “fusion” approach. For example, in a duet between Sheanice Hazen and Paetyn Lewis we fused Chicago house lofting floor work and threading of the legs, seen in breakin’, with modern dance arabesques and yoga positions.

⁴ Located in the heart of the New York City Theater District, Broadway Dance Center is a drop-in dance studio, that offers over 350 classes weekly, taught by some of the world's most renowned teachers and choreographers. From <https://broadwaydancecenter.com>



Images 2 & 3: Sheanice Hazen performing what we called the “dolphin dive” in a duet with Paetyn Lewis.

Photo courtesy of Thai Nugyen.

Brian “Footwork” Green, a legendary NY dancer, used to host parties once a month called House Dance International (HDI). Attending these parties is where I fell in love with house music on a deeper level. It became a critical part of my teaching pedagogy, artistic repertoire, and personal life. The messages of peace and inclusion in the music and atmosphere really saved me during a dark time in my life. Going to the parties, some of which lasted until 5am, allowed me to release through dance without judgment. Additionally, HDI was my first introduction to seeing Vogue, Waacking and many other urban dance freestyle genres that eventually captivated my heart and passion. Ejoy Wilson is another legendary house dancer from NY whom I admired. His classes at BDC involved fluid floorwork called “lofting” which at the time I struggled with.

After my NY internship, I moved back to DC and joined Culture Shock. Jojo Diggs and Joseph Nontanovan are two dancers from the DC area who were former

leaders of Culture Shock DC.⁵ These two continued to deepen my love for the house culture and movement through their master classes and lectures. Jojo Diggs especially made an impact on me being my only female house dance mentor. We often discussed topics of women in dance and what kind of gusto it takes to hold your own as a female urban dancer. Our discussions helped me to realize that one must believe in their journey no matter who is telling you that you can't or shouldn't do it, as long as you have good intentions and a sense of responsibility. Being a woman with a large following in urban dance often means you are representing for more than just yourself.

Other fusion styles I have been working on are Vogue and Waacking styles meshed with house and West African dance. Vogue is an urban dance style emerging in the late 1970s. As I was taught through word of mouth, Vogue emerged from Riker's Island in NY where prisoners used magazines to mimic the poses.⁶ They created contests to see who could mimic most authentically and would compete to pass the time. As the prisoners were released, they brought the culture to the underground NY club scene and created "Balls," dance contests to see who could be the "realest" in various categories including runway walking, posing, and bending in

⁵ Jojo Diggs crafted her skills in the clubs and ciphers. She has battled, judged, and taught all over the world in Freestyle and House competitions. She loves dance, community building, and the psychological impacts of the classroom and the theatre. Founder of Diggs Deeper, her goal in life is to bring people together to express freely their truest self, to uncover that the biggest dreams are always attainable, and to enjoy the ride. From <https://www.danceplug.com/jojo-diggs>

⁶ Much of hip hop culture is learned through word-of-mouth. Many of the oral traditions include knowledge passed down through storytelling and cannot be formally cited in the Western construct.

dramatic contorted ways. Waacking also emerged in the late 1970s but, on the west coast. It involves fast arm movement as well as dramatic soft posing and mimicking of lyrics of songs. As I also learned through word of mouth, inspirations were drawn from action film onomatopoeias (like “BAM”, “POW” & “WHACK”-thus the inspiration for the WHACKING foundational movement), body performance of silent films, as well as the uplifting vibe of disco music.⁷

In my personal practice of fusion, I am layering these urban movement styles using the Dunham technique. Katherine Dunham was a legendary dancer, choreographer, anthropologist and social activist who revolutionized American dance in the 1930s by researching roots and rituals of black dance and making choreography accessible to all⁸. She created a modern dance technique which infused African and Caribbean movements, circling of hips and fluid spines, with ballet and modern dance. I was originally introduced to this technique by taking a Dunham technique class at a school called Dance Place taught by the late Dr. Sherrill Berryman Johnson. She is the creator of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) dance program at Howard University, which until recently was the **only** historically black college to offer a BFA with a dance concentration.⁹ The depth of Dr. Johnson’s significance and contributions will be explored later in this document.

⁷ What is Waacking? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l62XRkUym2Q>.

⁸ To learn more about Katherine Dunham, please visit <http://kdcach.org>.

⁹ Alabama State University presented its first cohort of graduates with a BFA in dance in Spring of 2017. From <https://www.alabamaneews.net/2017/05/16/alabama-sates-bfa-dance-program-makes-history/>.

Dunham technique intrigues me due to its nature of harnessing isolations and embracing the fluidity of the spine. During the development of *TIDES*, I drew upon this movement knowledge to create the Ocean section that opened the piece. The dancers were led through movement which undulate the spine, engage core strength, and isolate specific body parts to creates ocean waves that eventually led to the morbid moment I opened with in the beginning of my introduction.

Lastly, it did not make it into the concert but, it is important to note that in preparation for *TIDES* we explored the legacy of Germaine Acogny, revered as the mother of contemporary African dance.¹⁰ Like Dunham, Acogny has taken traditional movement and made it palatable for the masses. The dancers and I utilized her book, *African Dance*, to build movement inspired by the photos just as the innovators of the Vogue culture did. The fusionist in me attempted to build choreography that layers African Dance with Vogue. Ultimately, it felt underdeveloped and I decided not to include it in this version of *TIDES*.

(Her)story: Lineage, Heritage, Home

Lineage and heritage are important to my creative process. I believe you are what you eat. That includes your dance training. At the root of my dance journey, I planted the seed of curiosity. It grew into a flourishing plant filled with questions about authenticity, home and responsibility. On this journey of self-discovery with the *TIDES* cast, I shared stories about my dance teachers; lessons they have taught me; as

¹⁰ To learn more about Germaine Acogny and her modern African technique, please visit <http://ecoledessables.org/en/germaine-acogny/technique/>.

well as personal connections they have to the movement we explored. In the below image, I have begun a map of my personal dance lineage.

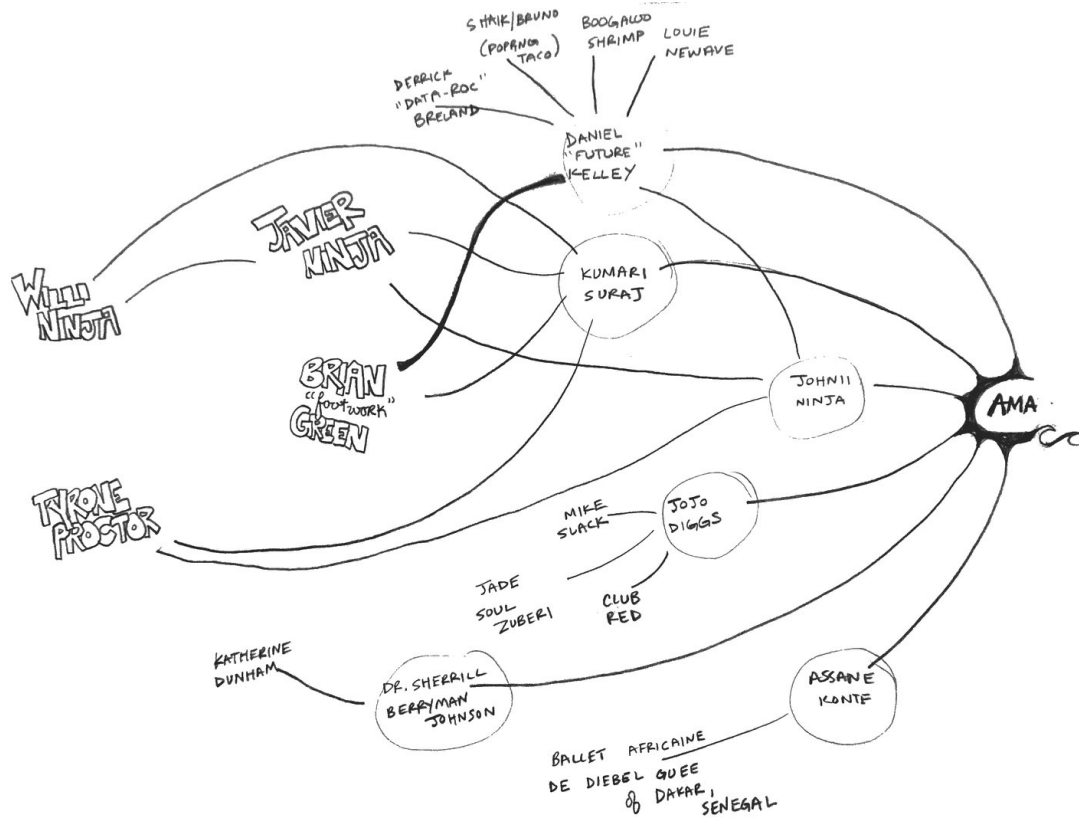


Image 4: Ama Law's Dance Lineage.
Image drawn by Ama

This image lists influential voices to my personal style of dance. As I shared this information with my cast, it deepened my understanding of movement styles that have been embedded in my personal history. It sparked dialogue in rehearsal about lineage and legacy. The cast members shared stories of their dance upbringing. Some were raised in classroom style studios, some explored movement on their own and did not seek formal training until their adult years. One dancer, Michelle Appiah shared stories of growing up in Ghana, witnessing dance being infused into all aspects of life

from cooking to playing with friends. She had no choice but learn it because dance was constantly surrounding and supporting her. These discussions led to enlightenment amongst ourselves in realizing that although we are all black women, we all have varying backgrounds and diverse dance training. My hope was to ignite an interest in each individual to dive deeper into the discovery of themselves and take pride in their training.

Remaining fluid like the ocean allowed me to create space for these moments. When the tide carried us toward a conversational rehearsal, I directed the flow in a way that informed innovation. I used the information learned about each individual to group them together either by similarities in heritage or by similarities in movement style/background to develop the small group sections toward the end of the work. I used these conversations to inspire a showcase of individuality, right before we came back together in unified choreography. Just as the ocean is comprised of unique waves of different sizes and strengths, it is still one body of water.

Chapter 2: History: An Ocean of Knowledge

Just as the ocean is vast, so is the concept of hip hop culture as a way of living. A quote that has stuck with me throughout time outlines why hip hop has been such an important medium for my personal self-expression and pedagogy. “The term ‘hip-hop’ actually encompasses five different forms of expression: rapping or MCing, DJing, breakdance, graffiti art, and the most important, knowledge. The inclusion of knowledge is paramount because it is the basis of the other elements and crucial to the artistic goal of finding meaning in life. These overlapping art forms arose from the need to unify predominantly African-American communities living in the South Bronx during the 1970s.”¹¹ The inclusion of knowledge as an element reinforces the importance of my pedagogical technique of including culture and context when teaching urban dance movement.

Knowledge of self and knowledge of the culture are two aspects I embedded deeply in my creative process. The sections that follow touch briefly on my research of the origins of hip hop and explorations of my personal query: “Where are the women in hip hop?” None of my urban dance mentors mentioned many female contributors to the culture. This question allowed for a deep dive into finding women’s history in urban dance, for bringing light to women’s presence in urban dance. A central importance in the study of women’s history is that female

¹¹ Russel Abad, “Hip-Hop: Music’s Most Powerful Political Platform,” *Georgia Political Review*, September 23rd, 2013, <http://georgiapoliticalreview.com/hip-hop-musics-most-powerful-political-platform/>.

perspectives in traditional historical records have been diminished, ignored and omitted. Due to this fact, much of women's history seeks to achieve historical revisionism, aiming to query what has been presented to us as "truth" and broaden consensus. I have yet to find scholarly research that seeks historical revisionism in urban dance, therefore I am challenging one consensus that men dominate the urban dance world by presenting women on stage doing urban dance fusion. I am not presenting new evidence that changes history in the sense that historical revisionism as a concept presents. Rather I am bringing more visibility to women in urban dance for those who may not have been taught or have not taken the time to seek this information like I had to.

Using historical revisionism as a methodology and lineage as a basis, I sought to enlighten the *TIDES* cast. I wanted to empower them to uncover personal truths by allowing expression and release through movement, just as our ancestors did. I needed the audience members to realize that performance of the female body involves more than sexuality. Honoring the female perspective in performance and fostering relationships between women on (and off) stage were essential to the creation of *TIDES*. In rehearsal we created a culture based on the principals of hip hop, exchanging ideas and creating the space to fail. The audience hopefully left the show with a discovery or an inquiry that they may not have been privy to before. My hope was that they too were empowered with the courage to dive deeper into a discovery. To harness a new cultural knowledge.

History of Hip Hop Culture

What does that even mean... culture? In this paper, I refer to hip hop as a community and a culture. It's kind of something you have to be in the know, to know. But, I will try to break it down for those who don't know. When I state the phrase "urban dance community", I am referring to events, classes, workshops, battles, jams, ciphers, balls and other happenings in which urban dancers are involved (for a deeper understanding, see Glossary). Classes and workshops include a student-teacher relationship that fosters an understanding for the technique, history, community or some combination of the above. Battles, balls, jams and ciphers typically showcase hip hop artists who are improvising with their craft while surrounded by fellow artists as well as hip-hoppers (see Glossary). While involved in such events, artists may compete for money, respect from the community or simply want to share their love of the craft with all those present.

The hip hop culture is an amalgamation of all of these elements plus fashion, language, practice and most importantly knowledge. Knowledge of self and for me, knowledge of the origin of the culture. What was the need for this culture to evolve?

In his seminal work, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, American journalist and music critic Jeff Chang explores the early days of hip hop. According to Chang's research and my own understanding from oral history, hip hop was birthed in postindustrial Bronx, New York during the early 1970s. The culture began due to a lack of resources for young adults during the time. House parties emerged playing hip hop music as an outlet from an otherwise dismal

existence. Construction of the seven mile Cross-Bronx Expressway left the Bronx in ruins, it demolished business and caused *white flight* (white and Asian communities migrating to other sections of New York after businesses and homes were destroyed).¹² Those who could not afford to leave, remained in the Bronx and were sardined into high-rise buildings whose view consisted of a “trash-filled East River, the gleaming suburbs of Queens to the east [and] the barbed wire and brutal towers of Riker’s Island to the west”¹³. Many landlords became slumlords, burning down their own buildings to collect insurance money since tenants could not afford to pay rent. The hip hop community was invented to keep a sense of sanity among the madness.

Hip hop music began as a fusion of existing mambo, funk and Jamaican dub tracks which repeated during the best instrumental sections of sampled songs in order to create a *breakbeat*. The community is expressed through DJs, MCs, Breakers and Graffiti artists (which became known as the four elements of hip hop) (for more details see Glossary). Slowly throughout the 1980s and 1990s hip hop was increasingly becoming sensationalized, the intentions behind the music and dance were altered to fulfill another need; entertainment. Today hip hop is seen as synonymous with Rap music but, there is a distinction. Mainstream hip hop often doesn’t honor what the culture was originally intended to do, bring community together for a positive purpose. Today, corporate media shapes celebrities’ art; some rappers intentionally cultivate menacing images; many exaggerate violence and

¹² Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008).

¹³ Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop*, 18.

record labels select, produce and market specific images to the youth intentionally.¹⁴ Additionally, the presence of women in mainstream rap music is almost non-existent when juxtaposed with the presence of men.

Women in Hip Hop Music History

Early presence of women in hip hop included Sha Rock, who began as a breakdancer in the Bronx. She is often deemed the first female MC as she was the “+1” of the legendary rap group Funky Four +1. Some of the first solo artists to emerge included rappers Roxanne Shaunte and Lady B, who both debuted in 1989. During the 1990s, Queen Latifah, MC Lyte and Monie Love provided powerful, uplifting lyrics that resisted racism and instilled a great sense of pride and confidence in being a woman of color. A rap group named Salt and Pepa included women who owned their sexual bodies and made it acceptable to address matters of sex and love in hip hop music. Although it’s rumored that they did not write their own lyrics, these women provided a contrast to many of the songs that portrayed women through a hyper sexualized lens, solely as an object of desire, a thing to gain as property. Their goal was to “present an alternative to the sexist depiction of woman as the object of male desire.”¹⁵ Especially because between 1987 and 1993, over 400 hip hop songs

¹⁴ Emery Petchauer, "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop Educational Research," *Review of Educational Research* 79, no. 2 (June 2009): 947.

¹⁵ Robin Roberts, "Music Videos, Performance and Resistance: Feminist Rappers," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2 (September 1991): 150-151.

had lyrics that described violence toward women including rape, assault, and murder.¹⁶

Throughout the late 1990s, other rappers emerged who took ownership of the hyper-sexualized lyrics and made it their own, including Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim. It seemed that in order to stay in the limelight, becoming a sexual being was a successful tactic. However, one of my personal favorites that diverged from this trend was Lauryn Hill. I remember listening to her with my older sister and thinking that she was a true lyricist, not just rapping to stay relevant but to spread knowledge about a certain sense of self/Black consciousness. Her album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" (released in 1998) was a positive influence on me as a young woman of color. It addressed issues with the educational system, racism, love and religion. I thank my sister for exposing me to her.

La Marr Jurelle Bruce, Assistant Professor at UMCP, discusses the hip hop album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill".¹⁷ Bruce explores how the media mysteriously deemed Lauryn Hill to be a mad woman after it was released; thus, resulting in Hill to drop out of the mainstream.¹⁸ One less positive female lyricist in the limelight. He states that "black womanhood is double-crossed by myths of female

¹⁶ Ronald Weitzer and Charis E. Kubrin, "Misogyny in Rap Music: A Content Analysis of Prevalence and Meanings," *Men and Masculinities* 12, no. 1 (October 2009): 3–29, doi: 10.1177/1097184X08327696.

¹⁷ La Marr Jurelle Bruce, "'The People Inside My Head, Too': Madness, Black Womanhood, And The Radical Performance Of Lauryn Hill," *African American Review* 45, no. 3 (2012).

¹⁸ Bruce, "The People Inside My Head, Too," 371.

hysteria and myths of black savagery and subrationality.”¹⁹ If this is how Black women are being portrayed in the media, then this reinforces the need for my research.

In present day, there is an extreme underrepresentation of female rappers in the mainstream. Nicki Minaj and Cardi B have been the only rappers in the limelight and, in my opinion, do not compare to Lauryn Hill, Salt N Pepa or any of the female rappers that Robin Roberts would refer to as *feminist rappers*.²⁰ This is why I feel the strong need to be the positive influence for young African-American women and promote placing value on the female body and increase self-awareness using hip hop dance and Urban movement as my vehicle.

On that same vein, I do appreciate how both Minaj and Cardi present themselves unapologetically. They carry the same ferocity that I harnessed as a member of KickRocks crew so many years back. That is probably why I ended up using Nicki Minaj’s song, “Pound the Alarm” in *TIDES*. This song is significant because the music video was banned from television for being lewd and too revealing. The video was a depiction of Caribbean Carnival. A tradition which blends folklore, African tradition and religion to celebrate culture through various forms

¹⁹ Bruce, “The People Inside My Head, Too,” 371.

²⁰ In “Music Videos, Performance and Resistance: Feminist Rappers”, Robin Roberts writes about female rappers who present themselves in a way that challenges the hyper sexualized view that is conventionally placed on women by men in rap music.

including masquerades, parades and the presence of *mokojumbies* like my father.²¹ I am fond of this tradition and Minaj is too since she has roots in Trinidad, the country where Caribbean Carnival began. I applaud her for leaving the video as is and not conforming to the double standards of the mainstream which depict what type of “sexy” can be displayed. A stripper in a video? Acceptable. Caribbean Carnival costumes and feathers? Too revealing!

Women in Hip Hop Dance History

The trend of underrepresentation doesn’t stop at the music. The first female street dancer I remember learning about was Toni Basil. She was **not** a stripper. Rather, she grew up in Las Vegas and was a professional dancer and choreographer before she produced the one-hit-wonder “Mickey.” Basil is one of the original seven Lockers, a group promoted by herself and Don “Campbellock” Campbell in the early 1970s. Basil is credited for exposing this style of street dance nation-wide because the group appeared on *Saturday Night Live* and *Soul Train* among other shows.²² As stated on The Lockers dance history website, “This was eight years before MTV, thirty-five years before YouTube, and decades before any television dance

²¹ Due to colonialism, as I have been told by family members in the Caribbean, French settlers brought the masquerade tradition to Trinidad in the late 18th century. These traditions were used originally for the enslaved to poke fun at their “masters”. It evolved into a blending of Catholic traditions with a celebration of emancipation using masquerade, song and dance.

²² "Saturday Night Live," is NBC's Emmy Award-winning late-night comedy showcase. From <https://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live>. Soul Train is an American music-dance television program that aired in syndication from October 2, 1971 to March 27, 2006. In its 35-year history, the show primarily featured performances by R&B, soul, dance/pop, and hip hop artists, although funk, jazz, disco, and gospel artists also appeared. Don Cornelius, who also served as its first host and executive producer, created the series. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_Train.

competition could give them a hand up”.²³ I can only assume that Basil used her connections and agency as a white woman to push for these dancers to be exposed. The initial push led to her fusion of locking with ballet, and members of The Lockers being featured in television shows like *What’s Happening* and movies like *Breakin’* that helped to further push the West-Coast style.²⁴

The only other female urban dancer I was exposed to growing up was Rosie Perez. With Puerto Rican roots, she grew up in Queens and Brooklyn, NY. She moved from New York to Los Angeles to study marine biology and frequented dance clubs to blow off steam. Perez was discovered by a *Soul Train* talent scout in the early 1980s while dancing in a club and decided to make dance her career. She choreographed for Bobby Brown, Heavy D and eventually The Fly Girls on *In Living Color*.²⁵ Perez was discovered by Spike Lee dancing on top of a speaker at a club called Funky Reggae.²⁶

²³ thelockersdance.com, Accessed November 28, 2016.

²⁴ From 1976 to 1979, the TV sitcom "What’s Happening!!" showcased the life a working class black single mother, her children and their neighborhood friends. It was a source for many black culture references today. From <https://tvone.tv/show/whats-happening/>. *Breakin’* was the first of the two break dancing films that were released in 1984 to open first. The other break dancing film, "Beat Street," was Orion Films' Beat Street (1984). *Breakin'* was released on May 4 and Beat Street on June 8. They brought brought attention to what “street dancing” actually encompasses. From <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086998/>.

²⁵ Mim Udovitch, “I, Latina.” *Vibe*, Dec 1993-Jan 1994, vol. 1, no. 4, 66, Accessed 27 Nov. 2016, <http://books.google.com/books?id=OygEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PT67&dq=rosie%20perez%20ismael%20Serrano%20puerto%20Orico&pg=PT23#v=onepage&q=rosie%20perez%20ismael%20Serrano%20puerto%20Orico&f=false>.

Keenan Ivory Wayans created *In Living Color*, and African-American focused sketch comedy show that aired on Fox from 1990-1994. From <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098830/>.

²⁶ Spike Lee is an African-American director, producer, writer and actor. His production company 40 acres and a mule has produced over 35 films since 1983 and they are almost always bringing an American social justice issue to light. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spike_Lee.

Lee asked her to get down off the speaker (it was his party and he didn't want to be sued) and she cursed him out! He was so enamored by her personality that he wrote a character just for her in *Do The Right Thing* as his love interest, and her career as an actress took off.²⁷

This knowledge wasn't enough for me. The concept of historical revisionism catapulted me into a quest, seeking to reclaim the stories of women in hip hop dance. I stumbled upon Marjory Smarth, a legendary house dancer who became revered as the "most respected female house dance teacher".²⁸ In an interview in 2011 she described her experience as an adolescent, "she ciphered to break up 'the testosterone circles' adding, 'you know, I love them. But, I just had to let them know sisters are in the room, too.'"²⁹ Smarth had an incredible journey through dance. Being of Haitian descent and incorporating her heritage into her dancing, she was able to support herself on teaching and dancing alone until she lost her battle with cancer in January of 2015.

See Appendix A for more on Women in hip hop dance.

²⁷ *Do The Right Thing* is an American comedy-drama written and produced by Spike Lee. It follows a Brooklyn neighborhood's racial tension that resulted in tragedy. It is a film that is still relevant with themes of police violence and racism. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_the_Right_Thing.

Hill, Logan, "How I made it: Spike Lee on 'Do The Right Thing'," *New York Magazine*, April 7, 2008, Accessed November 25, 2016, <https://shar.es/18q6l8>.

²⁸ "Marjory Smarth", Accessed March 25, 2019, <http://www.checkyourbodyatthedoor.com/page-m>.

²⁹ "Marjory Smarth"

Chapter 3: Inspirations: The Waves of Three Women

In my work, *TIDES*, I drew inspiration from three very specific women that manifested throughout the concert.

- My mother, Marjorie Lawrence-Sargeant
- My mentor, Sherrill Berryman Johnson
- My idol, Camille A. Brown

Mother

Dance has always been an integral part of my life. I was born into it. My parents were founding members of Kankouran West-African Dance Company, a DC based African Dance Company led by Assane Konte who is from Senegal. My mother Marjorie Lawrence-Sargeant, affectionately known as Marge, danced with the company from 1984 to 1996. She directed and choreographed for the youth company as well. I have heard stories of her dancing with me in her belly and after I was born, strapped to her back. When I was old enough, I too danced with the children's company. Because of her, I wanted to become a dance teacher. She was warm and welcoming while also effective in holding us accountable for knowing the choreography.



Image 5: My mother, Marjorie Lawrence-Sargeant seen here front middle.
Photo courtesy of Kankouran's instagram page @kankourandance

My mother was a jack of all trades. She graduated from Fashion Institute of Technology with experience in designing costumes and runway modeling.³⁰ Under the guidance and direction of "Sweet Honey in the Rock", she performed with the acapella singing group "In Process" based in Washington, DC.³¹ She wrote songs and performed with The Image Band of Washington DC as one of the lead vocalists.³² Through these experiences of being backstage, on stage and immersed in the creative process as a child, she instilled in me the importance of various African and

³⁰ One of New York City's premier public institutions, Fashion Institute of Technology is an internationally recognized college for design, fashion, art, communications, and business. From <https://www.fitnyc.edu/about/index.php>.

³¹ Sweet Honey In The Rock® is a performance ensemble rooted in African American history and culture. From <http://sweethoneyintherock.org/#mission>.

³² The Image Band is a Caribbean musical powerhouse representing Caribbean culture in Washington DC and beyond. From <https://www.facebook.com/Image-Band-318130559623/>.

Caribbean traditions. These included the use of incense for clearing and resetting energy in a space, as well as finding significance in the meanings behind music.

She would listen to everything ranging from Motown to hip hop. She adored Roberta Flack and Phyllis Hyman as well as Calypso Rose & many many more. Many of the musical choices in *TIDES* stemmed from music I listened to with her. My work opened with her voice emanating from a boom box on stage left as the audience entered. It was important for me to hear her soothing vocals at the top of the show. The solo I performed, served to evoke her spirit into the space. I chose Nina Simone's "Four Women" song as an ode to her love of the blues. While the dancers changed costumes, I incorporated Sweet Honey in the Rock's rendition of "Wade in the Water" leading into a long mix of calypso music and a Rihanna remix of "Work". She loved Rihanna for her performance quality, fashion and unique vocal style.

We danced together one last time in August of 2012 at my wedding. She lost her battle to Multiple Myeloma in May of 2013. As the audience entered the theater, I imagined myself dancing through the spiritual waters to get back to her.

Mentor

As mentioned before, my parents enrolled me in a Katherine Dunham technique classes at a school named Dance Place in DC. The instructor was Dr. Sherrill Berryman Johnson, a fierce mover and academic who led her classes with strict-yet-loving attention to detail, placement and technique. Dr. Johnson emphasized the importance of structure, physicality, and accountability. From 1992 until her untimely passing in 2010, Dr. Johnson was the only Full Professor of Dance and

Coordinator of the pioneering Howard University Dance Major Program, within the Department of Theatre Arts. I knew she was significant in the community but it wasn't until 2017 when I received the Sherrill Berryman Johnson Fellowship in Dance Scholarship, that I recognized how iconic Dr. Johnson was.³³



Image 6: Sherrill Berryman Johnson
Photo courtesy of Howard University

During the three-month fellowship, I conducted research investigating the personal papers of Dr. Sherrill Berryman Johnson, focusing upon curriculum development and courses taught under her direction. These records revealed the academic foundation for the **first** Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance to be offered at a

³³ This was a scholarship that I received during my year of research Fellowship at UMCP. It was an additional research experience in the archives at Moorland-Spingarn Research Center on Howard University's campus.

Historically Black College and University. My research culminated with a paper and a presentation highlighting the importance of dance arts within the academy and its impact on emerging artists. My presentation was delivered as part of a ceremony that unveiled Dr. Sherrill Berryman Johnson's personal papers to be added to the archives at Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

This ceremony was a mini-reunion for many of the dancers who attended the BFA program under her direction. I had flashbacks of myself as a young one in high school watching these dancers in awe (many of them now holding Masters of Fine Arts degrees and/or dancing with prestigious companies in NY). I tagged along to these classes as a high school student with special permission from Dr. Johnson to join dance major classes and attend the summer dance intensives. Dr. Johnson was passionate about her dancers' success and kept us in line. She encouraged me to seriously invest in my passion for dance. And here I am.

Idol

Camille A. Brown has been a dancer and choreographer I have always looked up to. She attended Howard University's summer intensives when Dr. Johnson scheduled Ronald K. Brown as a guest artist.³⁴ Ever since I was a young dancer, I admired her in class during the intensives and in performances she has held with her own company, Camille A. Brown & Dancers.³⁵ Her experience with Ronald K.

³⁴ Ronald K. Brown is a dancer and choreographer who founded the dance company Evidence in 1985. His movement is a fusion of African dance with contemporary choreography and storytelling. From <https://www.evidencedance.com>.

³⁵ Known for being dynamic and inventive, Camille A. Brown & Dancers soar through history, exploring issues of race, culture, and identity. From <https://www.camilleabrown.org/>

Brown's dance company Evidence, as a guest artist with Rennie Harris Puremovement and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is what draws me to her as an idol.³⁶ Brown's aesthetic and fusion of various urban dance and modern dance techniques is what really speaks to me. Many of the companies that Brown has danced with, including her own, incorporate the fusion concepts I am building upon in my own practice.



Image 7: Camille A. Brown. Black Girl Linguistic Play.
Photo courtesy of David Andrako, 2016.

³⁶ Founded in Philadelphia in 1992, Rennie Harris Puremovement is an American Street Dance Theater company that brings social dance to the stage. Lorenzo Rennie Harris founded the company and it is the first and longest running hip hop dance touring company in the United States. From www.rhpm.org.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was founded in 1958 by dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey. Their mission is to use the beauty and humanity of the African-American heritage and other cultures to unite people of all races, ages and backgrounds. From <https://www.alvinailey.org/about-us>.

Her piece *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play* (2015 debut) reminded me of childhood. I could relate to the games played on stage involving double-dutch, stepping, writing with chalk and more. This piece allowed me to see the perspective of a black woman on relationships in the community, between sisters, friends, mother & daughter, among others. Most of the show was performed with a playful nature. After seeing *ink* (2017 debut), which debuted at the Kennedy Center, I am intrigued by her exploration and fusion of hip hop with modern dance. *ink* was a beautiful display of social dance evolution and common gestural movements that have emerged from the black community. Additionally, in *ink*, Brown presented many relationships between members of the black community and portrayed these mini-narratives effectively only using movement, facial expression and body language. This seemed to be an expansion on *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play* because she not only revisited some of the relationships between black women but, she involved duets with a young male/female couple seeming to be in a new relationship, still infatuated with each other. Brown also presented what seemed to be an older couple at a different stage in their relationship, learning how to navigate a difficult time together. This couple seemed to be holding space for one another, allowing each person to express frustration, grieve and cry. By the end of the performance, each dancer was jumping into the air with all their might. I later learned by reading the program that Brown included this movement in the show to not only showcase athleticism but to show these dancers as super-heroes.

Camille's works inspired me to utilize polyrhythmic body percussion as a means to express anguish, black girl joy and as a means of communication between sisters. Nneka Onyima is a member of the cast who also teaches for Step Afrika! and was a member of the Lady Raiders at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, MD.³⁷ She crafted all of the stepping patterns & I manipulated the pacing, layering and staging. While backstage completing a quick change to enter the libation, I listened to the rhythms as a timer, waiting for the moment to enter. Just as my ancestors utilized dance and stepping to communicate in the cotton fields.

³⁷ Step Afrika! was founded in 1994 as the first professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping. It now ranks as one of the top ten African American dance companies in the United States. From <https://www.stepafrika.org/>.

Chapter 4: Research: Take a Deep Breath

Preparing for the Plunge

After being lost in my vast oceanic dance history, I was ready to plunge into someone else's deep water. I needed to deconstruct this thinking that all black women dance alike, a comment I received after presenting initial choreographic ideas to a panel of professors. Therefore, I approached *TIDES* with an anthropological perspective in mind, craving to discover details about my cast. I longed to know their history, inspirations, lineage, legacy and evolution. Being in rehearsal with the cast became a part of my methodology and as its own research.

Some questions I brought into the studio include: How can I collaborate with my dancers to represent a female perspective? I wanted to not only represent my story and choreographic explorations but, give the dancers agency to contribute to the story being told. Will the movement be too difficult for dancers who have not trained in urban dance styles extensively? Will I have to modify the forms I have been exploring to “fit” certain bodies in order to keep a specific aesthetic or will the dancers seek extra training and push themselves to rise to the occasion? Can the movement be adapted to multiple bodies and still portray its authentic energy?

The movement research I explore engages the individualistic energy from within oneself. It also explores energy transferred between dancers on stage as well as between performers and “audience.” During my creative process, I often thought of

ways to harness ancestral energy to portray the movement and allow it to be experienced in an authentic way.

In the midst of my scholarly research, I read a doctoral thesis paper written by Efia Dalili.³⁸ It outlines her research based on a notion that West African dance contributes to the well-being of women of African-descent.³⁹ She draws a connection to traditional West African beliefs that music and dance are healing elements. Her study parallels this with the modern practice of these traditions in an urban setting and examines the social relations between dancers and drummers. Dalili immersed herself in the Philadelphia African dance community participating with Ibeji Performing Arts Company and Eku Ijo egbe from 1993-1995.

Dalili draws from the academic research of notable modern dance pioneers Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus to reiterate the importance of fostering community in African dance forms.⁴⁰ She also draws from their research and choreography to present the importance of understanding traditional forms in order to make a connection to the African-American experience. Dalili proposes that through the power of music and dance, West African dancers and drummers can manifest and cultivate an energy flow. Traditionally, it is believed that healing is achieved when

³⁸ Efia Dalili is currently a faculty member of the English department and the director of diversity at the McDonough School in Owings Mills, MD.

³⁹ Efia N. Dalili, “‘More than a Sisterhood’: Traditional West African Dance in a Contemporary Urban Setting” (Doctoral diss., Ann Arbor: University of Pennsylvania, 1999).

⁴⁰ Pearl Primus was an African-American dancer, choreographer and anthropologist. She sought to change the way of thinking surrounding African dance from primitive to an art form worthy of study and performance. Her career spanned the 1940s to the 1970s. From http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/primus_essay_schwartz.pdf.

one has a balance or harmony between themselves and the spirit or energy flow. Dalili states that dancers and drummers try to achieve this when they become in-sync choreographically. Therefore, the healing can be achieved similarly in an urban setting if dancers and drummers involved are competent and willing to give-in to such energies.

Additionally, Dalili quotes Tam, a dancer with Ibeji on how community and family are reinforced through participation in African dance class. She writes,

A lot of times people see this “Philly Hardcore.” But we have to understand the type of environment these children are coming from. They are coming from an apartment complex or the projects where everything looks alike. You want to be seen. You want to have your own identity. Basically children want attention. And then I explain to them the concept of family. How when you represent yourself, you represent your family, neighborhood etc. And that in Africa its like that too. Even though a lot of times there is really something wrong going on in the house, they understand that the family thing really is about balance. And then I relate it to music, African dance and the family of dance, song and drum. And that yes you are born here but you’re from Africa.⁴¹

I believe that it is possible to cultivate self-awareness, self-confidence, independence and individuality through hip hop just as Dalili proved it is possible with the participation in African dance. Like Dalili, I want to create a “connection and dialogue between the music and dance [to] instruct African American women, teaching them how to be in tune with themselves, how to be with others and how to embrace their past”.⁴²

⁴¹ Dalili, "More than a Sisterhood," 70.

⁴² Dalili, "More than a Sisterhood," 205.

With this in mind, I decided to challenge myself by coordinating a large cast independently. I craved the recreation of community, a feeling that was familiar to me in both the West African dance world and the urban dance world. The *TIDES* cast consisted of thirteen black women, including myself, who attend a predominantly white institution.⁴³ Most were personally invited to rehearsals, others auditioned to get into the show. After working in competition studios and co-directing Project ChArma, I was not apprehensive about working with large numbers of dancers. However, this was my first time directing a show that I also danced in, without having a second (or third) pair of eyes to give feedback in the moment. Additionally, all of the cast members had varying levels of experience with movement. For some of them, it would be their first time being involved in a production of this magnitude.

The most important thing for me was to create a comfortable atmosphere between cast members, allowing each woman to feel free being themselves in rehearsal. I called upon my experiences within hip hop culture and community to foster this environment. My creative process relies so much on freestyle that I wanted to make sure the women in the cast would be open to contributing, failing, trusting and trying again. There are many exercises I incorporated to foster a community among us including ciphers, as well as various freestyle exercises listening to layers of beats in the music.

⁴³ According to the Undergraduate Student Profile at the University of Maryland in 2019, “White” students comprise 49.2% of the demographic while “Black or African American” comprise 11.6%. From www.irpa.umd.edu.

The Rehearsal Process

I am a water sign, so in rehearsal, I harnessed the energy of the water remaining as fluid as possible. I engaged with everyone in the room sensing when the time is right to move on to another activity. Being able to adjust to the moods in the room is important when I am in the collaboration process. My goal was to create a safe space for the cast in this whirlwind of a process. This in turn gave each dancer the confidence to try out my ideas unapologetically and make decisions when I gave the performers the opportunity to make choices on stage. Most of the choreographic developments were collaborations between myself and the dancers.

I implemented several exercises to honor the individual and the collective:

- Identity Charts
- Song Challenge
- Think Bubbles
- Teach Me Something
- Anonymous Note

Identity Charts

When creating an identity chart, I prompted the question “Who am I?” I instructed each dancer to think about physical characteristics, roles they may play, hobbies and cultural aspects that are important to them.⁴⁴ During the rehearsal process for *TIDES*, we began by exploring each individual’s personal history. Just as I have considered my own deeply, it was important for me to get to know each dancer’s identity and for them to get to know each other as people first. Many of them hadn’t danced with each other before.

⁴⁴ "Identity Charts", Facing History and Ourselves, Accessed November 12, 2016, <http://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/identity-charts>.

Initially during the rehearsal process, each member highlighted three words from the chart that encompasses their personality the most. They used those words to describe themselves to the group while seated in a circle. When I added more cast members, we did this exercise again and we passed our own charts around the circle as one person introduced themselves to the group. If someone wanted to ask a question to that person because they saw something intriguing on their chart, they had the freedom to do that. The dancers who were involved in the process early on were able to compare the originals to their updated version and see how much they have grown, changed, evolved. Here are the two that I completed.

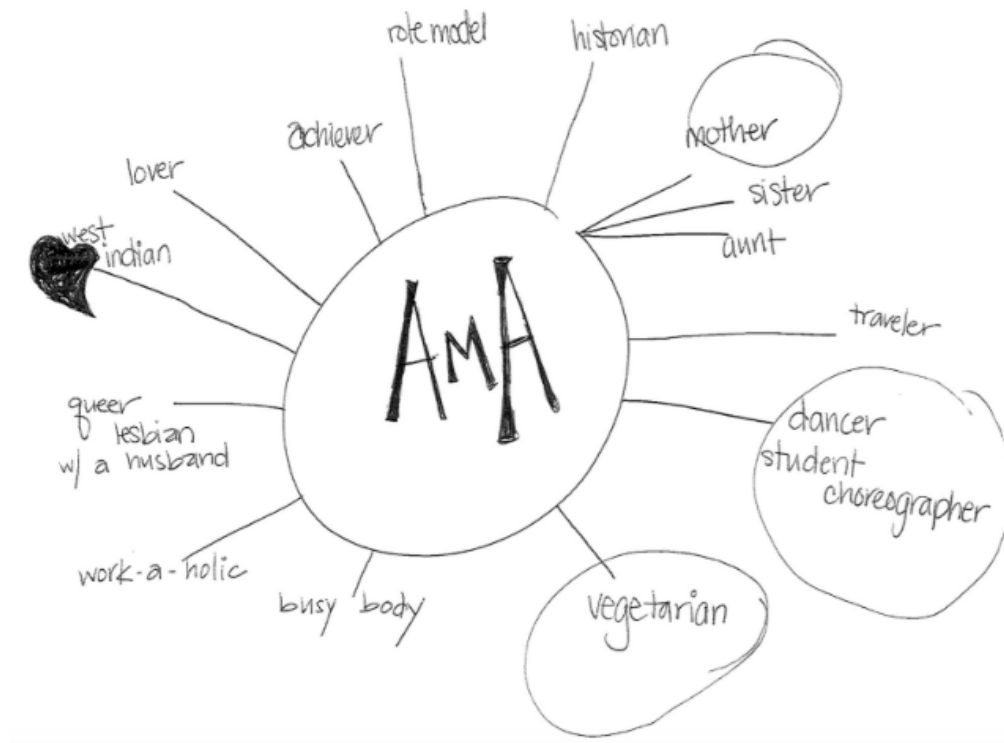


Image 8: Ama Law's initial identity chart at the beginning of the process.
Image drawn by Ama

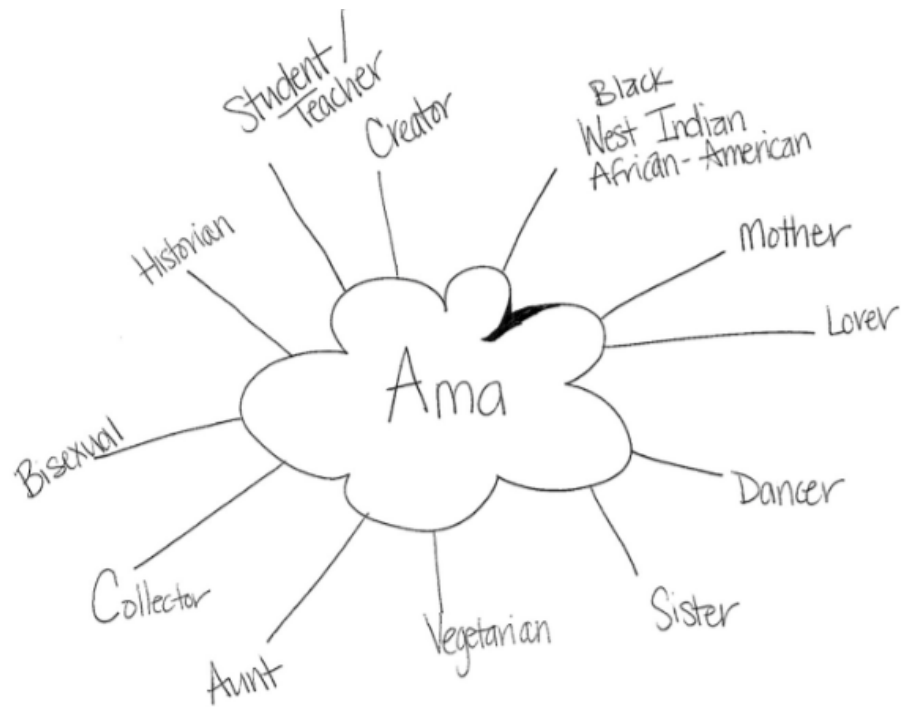


Image 9: Ama Law's identity chart a few months later in the process.
Image drawn by Ama

Song Challenge

This is an exercise adapted from international dance battle, Majid vs Mamson, I Love This Dance at La Cigale Paris: All Star Game.⁴⁵ The battle involved 20 dancers who were picked at the summit of Mont Hip Hop, with different styles Popping, Locking, Hip Hop, House, B-boying. This battle is unique because it is a one on one battle with music each dancer has chosen in advance. The first round is by the sound of the opponent, and the second round to his or her own music. No jury, no winners!

⁴⁵ CANAL STREET Dance, "Dance Battle: Majid vs Mamson - I Love This Dance 2012," YouTube, Video File, February 05, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPXIqueuQNE>.

I brought this technique into the studio by asking each dancer to bring a song that they love dancing to. We then stood in a circle and spun the bottle to determine pairs. Each pair had to dance to their partner's song first and after, they danced to their own song. It was fascinating to see how the cast members responded to their partner's song choice. Using freestyle and improvisation, the women embodied the songs with unique perspectives. They each drew from their own dance training and practice to interpret what they heard in the music through movement.

As each dancer moved to her own song, the motivations became clear. Everyone had such freedom and ease of spirit once the familiar song was playing. There was no evidence of thinking about moves, then executing them. Just pure light, fierce energy and confidence. We ended the exercise by forming an unintentional soul train line with Brandi Bertie's song, "September" by Earth Wind & Fire! This touched me deeply because many of my personal influences stem from urban dances that emerged on the Soul Train television show.

Think Bubbles

At times I rushed to the white board in the rehearsal space to organize our conversations into think bubbles. The image below shows a conversation that began by discussing race and ethnicity but, ended up being a swirl of issues that we felt we were all facing while experiencing life as a black woman.

took this opportunity to educate the dancers and share some of the histories I learned about African peoples.⁴⁶

We had an entire sidebar conversation defining “Caribbean American” versus “West Indian”, which led into an argument about the pronunciation of the food, plantain. It’s pronounced plan - tin by the way. We discussed sexuality and gender, noticing geographically which parents were more willing to have open conversations about sensitive topics. The topic then turned to black girl hair care. The avoidance of water for some, acceptance of water for the naturalistas who enjoyed a “wash and go” look and the interruption due to a confused look from Michelle Appiah, a native Ghanaian. She expressed that hair care isn’t such a big deal where she is from because everyone cut their hair short. “It’s too hot!” she said. Even in the states, she wears her hair in braids to avoid having to deal with it.

As the conversation continued, we craved to reconnect with our varying heritages. I asked the cast to draw upon genealogies of performance and themes of displacement to innovate choreography.⁴⁷ I used information from the identity charts

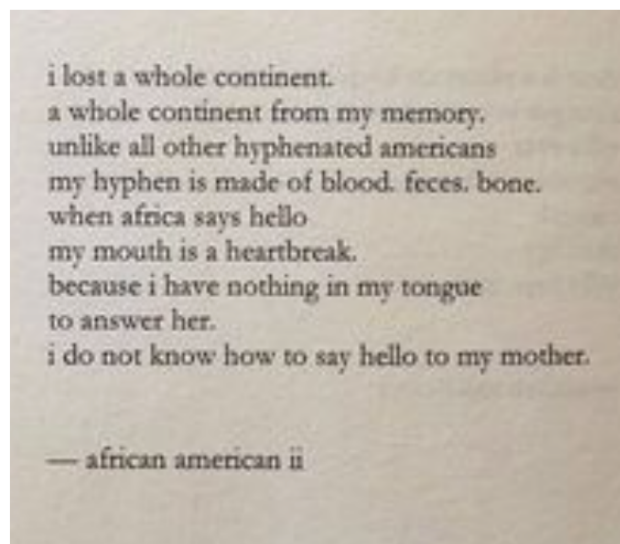
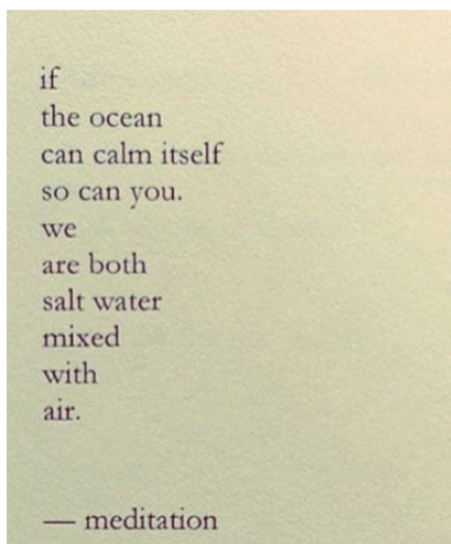
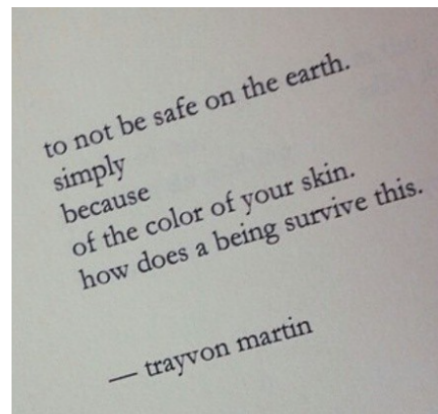
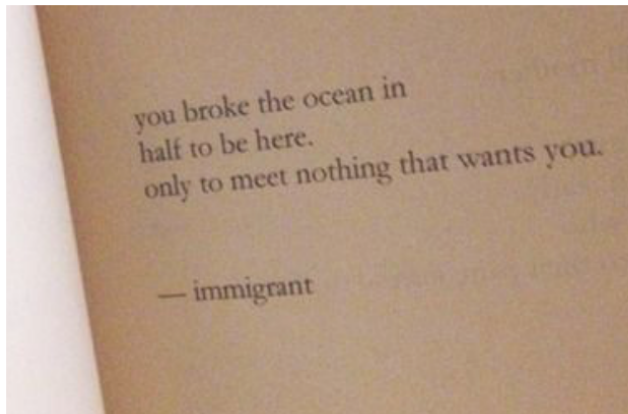
⁴⁶ *African peoples* refers to those who have roots in Africa despite time period and geographical location. It is an all-inclusive term that encompasses all displaced Africans according to the research of Carole Boyce Davies & Babacar M’Bow. Carole Boyce Davies & Babacar M’Bow, “Towards African diaspora citizenship : politicizing an existing global geography,” in *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, eds. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Adrian Woods, (Tonronto, Ont: South End Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ As researched by Joseph Roach, performance genealogies draw upon the idea that movement is a “pneumonic reserve” and includes patterned movements developed and recalled upon by physical bodies; residual movements preserved in images or words and imaginary movements which are a “psychic rehearsal for physical actions drawn from a repertoire that culture provides”. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, 26.

and our think bubble conversations to split the dancers into groups based on similarities in geographic origin or movement style. We utilized the techniques developed during the song challenge activity to dissect layers of music chosen. Each group incorporated freestyle and developed choreography to showcase their styles to the particular piece of music that was chosen for their group. With some tweaking and direction, many of the groups succeeded in establishing their routine early in the rehearsal process. We used technical rehearsals in the theater to improve and adjust those sections accordingly. This developed into the revolving small groups that would showcase everyone's individuality.

Sandra Bazubwabo became the audience's liaison into our world. Her poetry and anecdotes begin and end the journey. Sandra and I discussed a trip she took to the beach and how privilege had such an impact on her experience. She was with a friend who has never gone to the beach before, they wanted to stay and enjoy the scenery and smells while others on the same trip (who had been to the beach many times) were anxious to leave that "boring" scene.

Sandra and I bounced poetry inspirations back and forth too. Here are some examples of poems I sent to her written by Nayyirah Waheed, chosen for the topics addressed and the imposed rhythm of the writing.



Images 11-14: Poetry by Nayyirah Waheed.
All photos courtesy of Google image search of "Nayyirah Waheed".

Teach Me Something

Throughout the course of the rehearsal process, we began drawing names from a hat to allow for each person to share their expertise with the group. Witnessing each person's teaching style and movement choice was an enthralling experience. I was surprised because some of the songs and movement choices did not fall in line with what I categorized their movement style to be. It taught me to stop assuming,

that even with my amount of expertise I was still imposing my preferences and bias on others.

The feedback I received from the cast regarding their experience with this exercise had wide ranges. Some were super nervous to share and taught way too fast, some used the opportunity to try out new ideas and others taught movement they are experts in. Many agreed that it was a great opportunity and it helped to bring us closer as a cast.

Anonymous Note

After an interview session with the cast where I audio recorded our discussion on race, identity and perception, we implemented an exercise to keep the conversation going. I did this exercise once during a team-building retreat when I danced with Culture Shock DC. I gave them a prompt to write about a topic that they were too shy to share or maybe a topic they need help with but didn't want to ask out loud. I instructed them to fold up the paper, put it in a bag (which I held) and spread out into the space taking a comfortable position on the floor. I would then read each note aloud while everyone keeps their eyes closed. While reading the note, if someone felt they could relate or wants the person to know that they are available to talk to about this topic, they stand up. The author can then open their eyes, while everyone else keeps their eyes closed, and see who is standing.

Once I shared the instructions about reading each paper aloud, one cast member insisted that she take her paper out of the pile. After I reassured her that it is completely anonymous and even reinforced the rule for everyone to keep their eyes

closed, she insisted to remove it. She knew the specific way she folded her paper and plucked it out of the pile. To respect her wishes, I proceeded and asked her to stand if she felt she could relate but to keep her eyes closed the entire time.

After reading all of the notes aloud, I discovered that many of the topics that surfaced followed similar themes. They involved self-discovery, friendship, stress and loneliness. So many of the notes had themes of feeling alone, and yet, we all feel alone together. The session ended with many, many group hugs, tears and joy. To this day, I can't help but wonder what was on that particular note... but I never brought it up again.

Chapter 5: Creative Decisions: Envisioning the TIDES

Pour One Out

Theatrical visions for the concert evolved throughout the process. From dancers to designers to backstage crew, I had a vision and they all helped me to bring it to life! I knew I would always start with lighting incense and leading a libation. Libation is a ritual where there is pouring of a liquid to call upon a god, spirit or pay respect to those who have passed on. It is an African tradition that has been adapted throughout the Diaspora and even used in hip hop culture to *pour one out* for those who have passed on. The ancestor's presence was integral to *TIDES*. I needed to feel their guidance as we embarked on this journey together. To prepare for this ritual during the show, we conducted libation during rehearsals, calling upon ancestors that are important to invite into the space with us. I knew they were sharing the space with us when I felt emotional wave overcome my body and movement, as if I was not moving my own body anymore.

Traditionally during a libation with Kankouran, a *Yoruba* priestess would pour the water and call forth deities that harness specific energies. Among them is Mami Wata, a modern spirit embodying hybridity. The *Yoruba* people say she is like a “river that never rests.”⁴⁸ Mami Wata is a water divinity who is invoked to “maintain, refresh, and strengthen the spirit needed to endure the hardships and challenges of

⁴⁸ Henry John Drewal, Marilyn Houlberg, and Fowler Museum at UCLA, *Mami Wata : Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2008), 25.

lives scattered and shattered by... those who would enslave others for their benefit.”⁴⁹

I kept this specific deity in mind as I performed libation at the conclusion of *TIDES*.

During the performance run of my work *TIDES*, I first performed an energy clearing ritual called smudging by circling the space with burning sage incense. As the audience trickled in, each dancer brought shells to bury in the “sacred space”.⁵⁰ Each dancer was given agency to interact with their seashell. They helped me choreograph their entrances, exits and pathways walking with the audience to pass seashells to each other. It culminated in a complicated chain of events where one dancer activated another, eventually leading to each dancer going to the “sacred space” and burying the shell before holding a pose on stage. Utilizing these pathways is one method we utilized to turn the proscenium theater into a fully immersive experience.

Two former hip hop students who were non-dance majors, Tomi Okanlowan and NyQwayah Brown passed out seashells during intermission with instructions. The audience was prompted to allow the shell to represent a loved one that has passed on. As they enter the space, they can bury the shell in the “sacred space” or hold on to it during the performance.

⁴⁹ Drewal, Houlberg, and Fowler Museum at UCLA, *Mami Wata*, 141.

⁵⁰ The “sacred space” was sectioned off by cowrshell necklaces and shells on the downstage right section of the “sand”. This was done to ensure we didn’t dance on shells, preventing injury. Additionally, since we used the “sand” as a runway, we didn’t want to offend anyone by walking across graves.



Image 15: Ama Law in the “sacred space”, pours water into the “sand” to call upon the ancestors during libation.

Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

This space held deep personal significance. The statue in the sand is my father’s. He was a *mokojumbie*. A spirit guide that connects humanity to heaven. Many know them as stilt walkers seen at entertainment events or in the circus. However, the purpose of stilts being so tall is to physically connect the earth to sky and serve as a physical passageway for spirits to move between worlds. Traditionally, stilt walkers or *mokojumbies* cover their faces to remain anonymous. My father was one of the first to bring this tradition to the DC area. Many didn’t know he was the *mokojumbie* seen at so many events, until it was revealed at his funeral.

The talking drum, seen behind the statue in the photo above, was my mother’s. She played it while on Kankouran’s dance company. It is held under your armpit and played with a curved stick. When you squeeze the strings between your arms and ribs, it stretches the skin on the drum, therefore changing the notes when

played. In my experience, women do not play African drums often, if ever. The small *djembe* drum was given to my first daughter Nyla by my father. He taught her the *menjiani* drum rhythm. My mother never got to meet Nyla. Both parents never met my second daughter Nia.



Image 16: My father, the Mokojumbie, representing the US Virgin Islands at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival Summer of 2018.

Photo courtesy of @Smithsonianfolklikfe Facebook page

I danced with bells underneath my white dress as the audience entered to call the ancestors into the space. Through my experiences dancing with Kankouran, I've learned that white in many African traditions represents death in a sense that is renewing, pure, refreshing. It represents wholeness and completion. The bells call forth the ancestors. They are attached to drums sometimes and played in connection to the rhythm. Additionally, I've heard through oral tradition that the use of bells and

incense may have influenced African and Caribbean culture due to colonialism and the presence of Catholicism being forced upon African peoples.

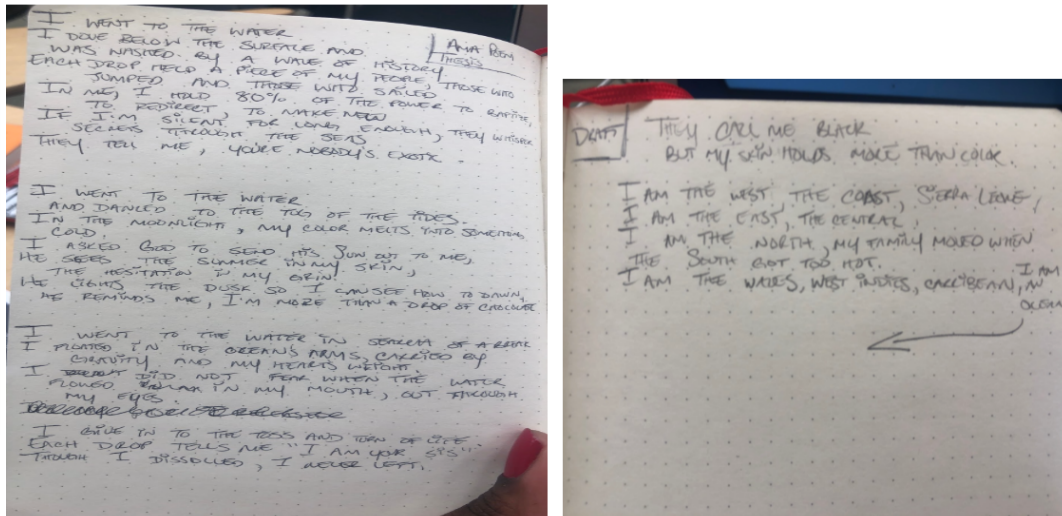
Sandra and I ended the show with a vocalized libation, using energy flow to feel pauses and intertwine pouring of water into the “sacred space”, with a poem written by Sandra Bazubwabo. It was an energy duet, unique every night.



Image 17: Ama Law and Sandra Bazubwabo pouring libation and reading an original poem.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

My collaboration with Sandra was essential to end the show with a new beginning. Her poem was inspired by our think bubble conversations in rehearsal. As the poem ended, projected names appeared on the “sails”, a scenic backdrop of thick white fabric. These names were ancestors of the cast and the audience, as well as prominent figures in black history and campus culture (from *the artist formerly*

known as Prince, and Rosa Park to Jordan McNair, a UMD football player who died during practice in June 2018).



Images 18 & 19: Sandra's original poem.
Photos courtesy of Sandra Bazubwabo

Sounds of the Sea

At the conclusion of *TIDES* a conch shell sounded three times. After a conversation with mentors Alvin Mayes, Head of Dance Performance and Scholarship at UMCP and Christopher K. Morgan, Executive Artistic Director of Dance Place, I learned of a Hawaiian tradition where the conch shell is sounded to call upon the spirits. This is a tradition that is done at weddings and funerals. According to Morgan, it is Hawaiian tradition to sound the shell four times symbolizing the north, south, east and west. I enjoyed the idea of three because I've been taught that three is a purposeful number. I remember hearing in my youth, "Once could be an accident; Two could be a coincidence; but Three... three is purposeful." However, there was a culmination of four total soundings over the course of the show because one single sound initiated our stepping section right

before libation began again. I remember trying to sound a conch shell as a young one on the beach. Not an easy task. I thought it was an innovative way to bring life to the shells some of the audience members received during intermission.

The soundscape throughout the show was purposeful. In the first half of *TIDES*, the audience is immersed into a beach environment. To achieve this my sound designer Veronica Lancaster layered ocean sounds in the left and right speakers to make the audience feel like they are truly surrounded by water. We also played music from a boom box to touch on a bit of hip hop nostalgia, and because my father loved listening to cassette tapes.

During tech week, I stayed up until 3am one night mixing music for the section we named the “revolve”. Veronica expressed that she was not a DJ and did not feel comfortable creating a mix that layered various genres of music while having to keep time. The mix included female Calypso and hip hop artists to bridge the journey of the middle passage through the Caribbean to the Americas. Every song chosen in the mix had a theme of “Work” to play on the feeling of exhaustion we discussed as a cast, that black women always have to work hard to push through difficult moments.

Fluid Fashion

During the “revolve” we changed into our second costume, customized to showcase our individual heritage and style by costume designer Channing Tucker. We consistently looped around the backstage cross-over. This created a continuous chain of dancers constantly moving from stage right to stage left as layers of clothes were taken off and put on. The collaboration with our backstage quick-change team

became a seamless process after a few tech rehearsals. Channing and I had a wonderful collaboration process, meeting often to discuss fabric choice, functionality and flow. We utilized the identity charts of the dancers to create an individualized look for each woman. See Appendix B for examples.

During this particular section, we ended up having a small disagreement around the quick change. I wanted the costumes to be put on piece by piece, showing a gradual change from one costume to the next. She expressed concern that her advisors may see the costume as incomplete without jewelry and everyone being in their finalized look. During tech rehearsal I insisted that we keep the gradual change. I wanted the final look to be complete by the time we approached the runway section, adding jewelry as an extra element that plays on fashion and accessorizing the female body. We are just as beautiful and powerful without all the extra layers. Seeing the eventual add-ons also added to the overarching theme of fluidity, fusion and layering.



Images 20-22: Merissa Collins is seen in her second costume while some dancers in the background are still in their first costume. Merissa's look was customized to feature traditional Caribbean madras print because she has roots in Grenada.
Photos courtesy of Thai Nguyen

Walking Along the Shore

Just as with the coordination of seashell giving entrances and exits between the cast members, the “revolve” also served as another moment to turn the proscenium stage into a site-specific work. To maintain the look of a constant flow, we had to feed off of the energy of one another; coordinate timing with each other

and the quick-change crew backstage; as well as maintain a high energy and stamina to quickly perform as soon as we stepped foot on stage. As we crossed the stage, each dancer had agency to freestyle accessing their strengths that we developed during the rehearsal process and from their own movement repertoire.

Another moment we used to break the fourth wall involved audience engagement. When the dancers were exhausted, the music faded out and Sandra prompted the audience to feel for a cassette tape that she left under someone's seat. It was essential to keep the show going. If they found the tape, Sandra and another dancer, Sheanice Hazen would put the tape in the boom box to initiate the next section. This moment was inserted purely to satisfy my curiosity of audience engagement. I wondered how we could make the audience work too! It was surprising to witness how Sheanice and Sandra would improvise on the nights that the audience never found a cassette tape. One night they decided to flip the existing tape over to the B side. Another night, Sandra engaged with the audience a bit longer initiating a call and response vocal exercise: Ago ... Ame... Ago... Ame... Ago... Ame⁵¹. Again three times because it's purposeful. Sandra even took a selfie with her old school wind-up camera. Bending the time continuum by bringing current culture to use with nostalgic items. Likewise, when the new tape (or side B) was played a song that may never be on a cassette tape radiated from the boom box. *NICE* by THE CARTERS eventually moved from the boom box to fill the room as Sheanice got closer and

⁵¹ Through oral tradition and my experience with Kankouran, I have been told Ago means something similar to "Do I have your attention?" and the proper response is Ame, "Yes, you have my attention."

closer to the dancers. Originally, I wanted to have 2-3 dances prepared so that the tape found would indicate which song to play for the dancers; thus allowing each night to feature a unique piece of choreography. Time constraints and snow cancellations didn't allow that layer for this version of *TIDES*.

The last experimentation of manipulating the space came when we literally walked along the shore line. Drawing on inspiration from my mother's time at Fashion Institute of Technology and my experience with Vogue urban movement, we created a runway that led from the "Door of no Return" across the sand into a unified group upstage left. In reality the Door of no Return is featured in a museum in Ghana on Gorée Island as one of the last stops before captured Africans were transported in ships away from Africa. I used the architecture of the theater to enhance the meaning of journey. Throughout the entirety of *TIDES* we traveled from this door to various sections of the stage, again to give a sense of journey.



Images 23 & 24: In these photos the dancers are leaving out of the "Door of no Return" and traveling across the sand, using it as a runway. The cast gathered upstage left to give energy to those dancing in the sand.

Photos courtesy of Thai Nguyen



Image 25: The cast accessing Vogue posing after the runway section concludes.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

Waiting, Sharing and Weight Sharing



Image 26: Nneka Onyima in front of the “Door of no Return” using stepping and body rhythms to summon us toward the next step of the journey while Brandi Bertie and Ama Law are holding each other up.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

In the rehearsal process, we first learned how to hold each other up as a sisterhood then began to hold each other physically. It took a few tries to build genuine trust amongst the cast to allow for a genuine release of weight knowing your sister would be there to catch you. I accessed Katherine Dunham technique to teach the cast the pelvic tilt, activating core strength to be able to hold your own weight; as well as spinal undulation to more accurately embody the waves moving through each cell.



Image 27: Tulani Ahmed giving weight to Miejo Dambita while also accessing the pelvic tilt.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen



Image 28: Merissa Collins and Georgina Gabbidon initiating weight sharing by pushing into each other's backs to stand up.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen



Image 29: Ama Law being supported by Brandi Bertie after sprinting toward her. Brandi maintains a sturdy flat back as a support for Ama's roll over top.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

I drew upon exercises practiced in Kendra Portier's advanced modern technique class to establish deeper trust while releasing weight.⁵² We embodied the tides by allowing our weight to sink into a group of dancers. They then lift one dancer into the air following an under curve that safely allowed them to gently surf the tide before returning them back to shore. Once trust and confidence were built, we tried the exercise again only knowing who was going to allow their weight to sink after they yelled, "ME!" Once heard, a group rushed to their aid, catching, releasing and bringing that dancer safely back to land.

⁵² Kendra Portier is a visiting Associate Professor for 2018-2020 at UMD. She is an NYC-based maker, teacher, and performer who utilizes her visual arts practice and transdisciplinary interests to inform her dance works. Visit <http://www.kendraportier.com> for more information.



Image 30: The choreography that resulted from the “ME!” exercise. Holding each other up in the tide and returning the dancer safely back to shore.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen.

Female Presence in Design

Through weight sharing, undulations, pelvic tilts and each dancer’s unique movement geography, we displayed waves within our bodies and between bodies. We embodied the ocean throughout the entire piece, moving as individuals and yet, seemingly unified as one body. These visuals were accentuated by the scenic, lighting and projection elements.



Images 31-34: Lighting designer Lauren Gallup and Projection designer Jeremy Bennett collaborated to achieve these looks. It brought the audience to an atmosphere that allowed our movement to be even more impactful.

Photos on the left courtesy of David Andrews

Photos on the right courtesy of Thai Nguyen

I knew from the outset that I wanted to work an all female cast and all female designers. It was very important to me to gain the women's perspective on all aspects of sparse for women, but to again represent a voice portraying dance genres that are often male-dominated. I was intrigued to discover the female presence in the design world as well. Is it male-dominated too? Will it be difficult to find an all female team in our school? In fact it was, because I ended up working with a male video designer, Jeremy Bennett.

Jeremy and I met several times to collaborate on video ideas. We discussed themes of memory and journey. It was his idea to use textures on the “sails” throughout the piece. During the “Four Women” section, there was a texture that resembled burlap fabric on the sails. It reminded us the bags enslaved Africans used to collect cotton in the fields. Bennett also utilized projection of ocean waves washing up onto cork used as sand and home videos of my family to resemble memories during Sandra’s anecdotes. Working with Bennett taught me that gender didn’t necessarily give a special insight to this process. We did have a special bond as black people being able to connect on cultural aspects that had to be explained a bit more to my other designers. All of the designers, although they were women, were white women.

Troubled Waters

Fighting against rip tides often leaves you in exhaustion. There were several moments where staying fluid like the ocean became so overwhelming that I felt myself drowning in the water. On particular moment that was poignant in the rehearsal process was coming to the realization that I was the only mother in the room. Being a mother of two, my time is extremely valuable and alone time is rare. Creative time? It’s like finding a pearl in a clam shell. There were several moments where dancers would inform me of conflicts at the very last minute. People’s schedules, lack of communication and over committing to everything caused interruptions in rehearsal when arriving late and unexcused. It led to my decision to let go of one of the dancers who displayed some of these habits. When I informed

everyone in the room of the decision, it ultimately reset a higher level of professionalism and honesty. However, I still felt alone.

Being the only mother in the room during our think bubble conversations often led me to a listening, receiving state rather than being able to vent about issues myself. No one else could understand the exhaustion of having to wake up multiple times in the night to soothe a newborn while still having the energy to do homework, prepare lesson plans to teach classes and have a part-time job. It became exhausting for me when conversations would loop around to television shows I never watched, current celebrity gossip or reality television shows I don't have time to watch because it airs during bath time. Trying to bring everyone back together in the rehearsal room after they have drifted so far away from me was a daunting task. One I had to do more often than I enjoyed.

Other times I found myself mothering the cast as if they were my own children. One moment in particular was during tech rehearsal. The first time we tried the quick change, there was a man who was stationed backstage to help us change. I noticed some of the cast members were uncomfortable with his presence. It was nothing against him. Just that our entire process has been encapsulated by female energy and to introduce a man, especially backstage where we would be taking off clothes didn't seem logical. When I brought up this point, I was challenged to provide a reason why he could not be backstage. I was told he needed the experience. I insisted that maybe this isn't the project for him to help with quick changes and he instead was tasked with adding my microphone during my final quick change

moment. That was a great compromise because in that moment I was the only one backstage.

Lastly, the importance and significance of tradition became clear when I noticed some of the stage crew setting up the “sacred space” as if the items were just props. As mentioned before, each item held special significance. They not only held personal memories but the *mokojumbie* statue served as one of the pathways in which the ancestors would visit us. I insisted on taking over this step of the changeover after intermission. It broke my heart to see the crew throw around the sacred items as if they were just props.

Chapter 6: Looking Across the Ocean

Reactions

I have a cast comprised exclusively of black women, so I was sensitive to putting across the message of exclusion toward women of other races. Instead I received comments from many young white dancers wishing they were “blessed with melanin.”

Some audience members told the cast they had moments of closure with a loved one that they didn’t know they needed. A leader in the African dance community attended the show and submitted this reaction: “Ama Law’s production was truly a commemoration to the ancestors in the purest sense. I loved how she blended the spiritual and the physical; the past and the present. It really moved me in a profound way because it was like a prayer in motion. This was an artistically created sacred space for healing and renewal. Can’t wait to see this again. Well done Ama!” by Eurica Huggins, Co-founder of African Diaspora Ancestral Commemoration Institute (ADACI).

Alternately, I received reaction papers from undergraduate students that stated my choreography wasn’t “risky”. Every day that I get up I’m taking risks to navigate this world as a black woman. *TIDES* served the purpose of creating community and creating a safe space. When people enter the space hearing the show infuses hip hop forms or even African dance forms, they tend to have very specific expectations based on their personal encounters with those styles. Our creation was rooted in self. Before

every show, we created a circle holding each other and reminded ourselves that this show is for us. We reminded each other of the work we put in to honor our individuality and to showcase cohesiveness. *TIDES* is about honoring your personal past and looking forward to the future, Sankofa, beginning again. Yes, many said the choreography was entertaining, but we were there to hold each other up and have fun! Not to entertain. Not to impress. The risk was really in how personal we became with the audience, revealing the names of our loved ones and allowing the audience to come along for the journey.

I asked several of the cast members to write a poem or short story reflecting on their role in the show and how it impacted them. Here is an entry from Mijejo Dambita, the dancer who was tasked with initiating the gasp moment.

There I lay, bare and vulnerable as the kindred few who can see through my eyes looked through me.
I let my insecurities flow in the water
I gasp for air and let worry wash away from me.

As I closed my eyes and gave in to the ritual I found hearthstone where I once saw glaciers and unlocked doors that I never knew were open to me.

I set my apprehension aside and fell into open arms ready to catch me and open hands ready to be held by mine.

They hold me, my sisters; they steady me. We set anchor in each other as we are pulled by the currents of life.

In motion we celebrate the moments of time we've been chosen to share with each other and trace the lines of the life we live.
In stillness we surrender to the movement of the spirits that brought us here.
Then we dance in the power we have created by simply being,
Mining magic in our hair and making music with our feet.

When I came to and stared at the breathtaking grandeur of the world we created, I felt nothing but pure love radiating from within me and into the hands holding mine.

Future Studies

Interviews

For the next chapter of *TIDES*, I plan to interview notable female hip hop artists/dancers/movers who I am aware are exploring similar fusion concepts. A further collaborative research approach, possibly for the next version of *TIDES*, would allow me to invite them to have a jam session (freestyle or improvisation in the studio) with myself and dancers in my cast. For example, Kumari Suraj, a respected west coast freestyler, choreographer on *So You Think You Can Dance* and founder of The Waackers, is currently developing a technique that involves fusion of Waacking and Bollywood hand gestures, called BollyWhack.⁵³ If other voices are brought into the rehearsal process early on, would it help inspire my cast to dive into a new exploration that they may not have considered previously?

Chitra Subramanian is another woman of interest. Chitra's dance foundation began with her training in Bharathanatyam, an Indian Classical Dance form. She has been exploring her unique "fusion style" via Bollywood Fusion, bringing together her training in and passion for urban dance styles and her dance foundation in classical

⁵³ The Waackers is a group of individuals from different walks of life brought together in unity for the love of dance. Each member of the group brings their culture and passion for dance and to the group. From <https://www.dancemogul.com/news/who-and-what-are-the-waackers/>.

So You Think You Can Dance is a televised dance competition that airs on Fox in the United States, originally released in 2005. From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/So_You_Think_You_Can_Dance_\(U.S._TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/So_You_Think_You_Can_Dance_(U.S._TV_series)).

Kumari Suraj created BollyWhack in 2009. For more information, visit <http://kumarisuraj.com/bollywhackinfo/>.

Indian dance. Her fusion practice is based in the simple grooves of old-school hip hop, layering flair and complexities of classical Indian dance.

Toyin Sogunro is another pioneer, not only as a black woman in dance but, a local leader in the DC community. Toyin is an Artistic Director of Urban Artistry and crew member of Assassins DC. She is a dancer, educator, and ambassador of culture who has performed, taught and battled nationally and internationally. She is perhaps most well-known for earning the distinction, along with fellow director Latasha Barnes, of being the first U.S. and the first female team to win the House Dance category in the 2011 Juste Debout Competition in France.⁵⁴ Her fusion style incorporates complicated Chicago House footwork with Afrobeat and West African dance motifs. She is well known for having a strong presence in the cipher and being able to hold her own battling men.

These three women are impacting hip hop community in profound ways. I want to acknowledge and track them on their path to success bringing their names into the forefront so they too are not left out of the history books.

Restage

Another goal is to present *TIDES* again (and again), extending the length for more opportunities of audience interaction. I am interested in exploring ideas of femininity not necessarily on the female body. Especially because I am drawn to Vogue culture, born of the black and Latino gay male scene, I am looking to include

⁵⁴ “Toyin Sogunro,” Accessed March 8, 2019, <https://www.and8.dance/en/artist/toyin.sogunro>.

the male perspective. How does femininity show in the male body? How does masculinity show in the female body? What does it mean to explore lineage and culture with a lens that focuses on masculinity, femininity, and the performance of gender in the black community?

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Like Marjory Smarth, legendary house dancer, I believe in being connected to the universe and to the water. Women harness a powerful energy. Mami Wata guides me. My father, the *mokojumbie* keeps me connected to the spirit world. My mother's voice resonates in my soul. Throughout this collaborative process, the dancers in *TIDES* now have a community of women that can hold each other and support each other always.

The movement forms I study emerge from Black and Brown communities. I believe it is important to use these forms as a vehicle to show young African-American women that there is more to hip hop than what they see on television and hear on the radio. The movement can be used to allow the youth to experience positivity although women have historically been marginalized, underrepresented and hyper-sexualized. I plan to decolonize thinking around urban dance and increase representation in higher education through my physical practice.

This is the first version/chapter/layer to these investigations. There are already parts of the choreography that I crave to expand upon, intersections of dance forms that can be explored, research to be done. However, the most important goal was met. I helped to create a community of young women who can now lean on each other in new ways. I know they are all talented in their unique beings and can perform dance movements that are extremely impressive. However, creating an atmosphere, a

feeling of trust in the rehearsal; a feeling of family, that is rare to create and hard to maintain. Now these sisters have a stronger network as they begin to create their own legacies.



Image 35: The entire cast of TIDES.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

Appendices

Appendix A: Women in Hip Hop Dance Continued...

Many urban street dancers found their way to the *Soul Train* stage, not looking for money, at first, just an outlet and a bit of fame. In general, television shows and movies became a rapid vehicle for pushing hip hop into the mainstream during the 1980s. One of the first female MCs Sha Rock, joined together with Lisa Lee and Debbie Dee forming “Us Girls.” Previously the ladies were receiving pressure to battle one another by the public but, in 1984 decided to join forces and became so popular that they appeared in *Beat Street* and even recorded one of the movie’s theme songs.⁵⁵ One of the most popular scenes in the movie features Rock Steady Crew (RSC), a group of male b-boys freestyling in an alley. RSC paved the way for many breakers and were some of the people who coined and categorized many of the movements. The crew is considered legendary in the hip hop dance world. As a young woman, I always wondered... why aren’t there any b-girls in that scene. Were there any women on RSC?

Daisy Castro AKA Baby Love is a 1st generation daughter of parents from Puerto Rico. She joined RSC around 1981 because she lived in close proximity to many of the guys involved in the crew at that time.⁵⁶ Female breakdancers come a

⁵⁵ Nancy Guevara, “women writin’ rappin’ breakin,” in *Droppin’ Science: critical essays on rap music and hip hop culture*, ed. William Eric Perkins, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 55.

⁵⁶ Guevara, “women writin’,” 57-58.

dime a dozen. Some people believe that women do not have the build and physique to compete with male breakdancers. This way of thinking may have even deterred some young women who were interested in the dance to pursue another style or discipline. However, Castro believe that “breakdancing has more to do with concentration, balance, practice, and precision than sheer physical strength”.⁵⁷ Although that may be true, female breakdancers still don't get as much recognition as their male counterparts. According to Castro, “[t]his neglect has itself conditioned the relation of women to breakdancing”.⁵⁸ She even admits that as a member of RSC she would often remain on the sideline cheering on her crewmates if the opposing crew didn't have a female for her to battle.

I am happy to report that this way of thinking has finally been shattered by one brave girl. In 2015, the first b-girl won a Red Bull BC One cipher battle. In a competition, and genre of dance, that is very much male-dominated an 18 year-old b-girl who goes by the alias Queen Mary became Bulgaria's cipher champion. During an interview with Red Bull she noted the mental and physical challenge when battling, “You need to first win that battle with yourself, against your exhaustion, then beat the other dancer”.⁵⁹ When asked if it's harder for women to be in the breakdance scene she replied, “yes, it's harder because you need to show everybody that you can

⁵⁷ Guevara, “women writin’,” 58.

⁵⁸ Guevara, “women writin’,” 58.

⁵⁹ “Meet the First Lady Champion: Spotlight on Queen Mary,” Red Bull BC One, Accessed November 28, 2016. <http://www.redbullbcone.com/en/blog/spotlight-queen-mary-first-red-bull-bc-one-b-girl-champ/>.

do it. It's of course physically harder... dancing with a female body...[but] The physical obstacles are not as hard as the mental ones".⁶⁰ Queen Mary has inspired an entire new generation of b-girls I am sure.

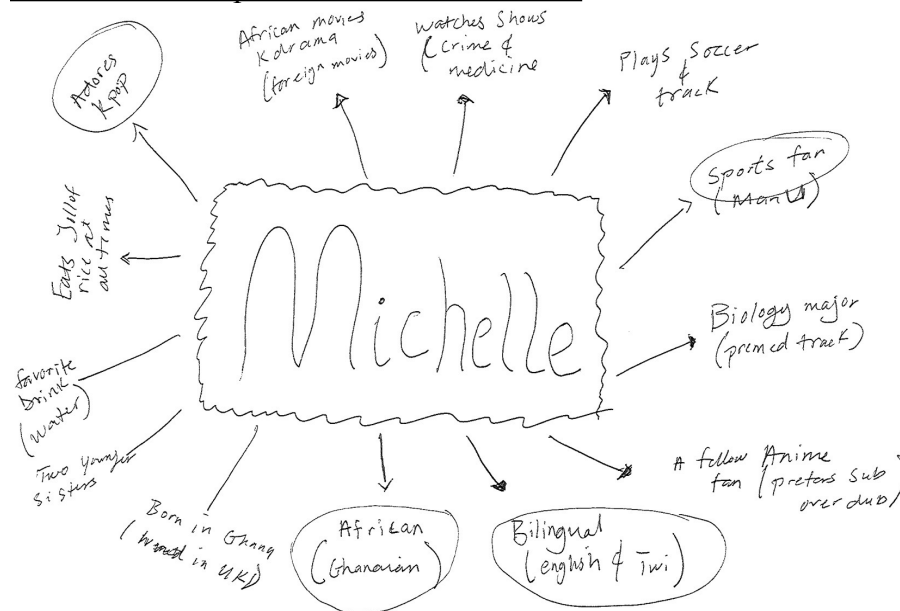
Ana "Rokafella" Garcia is another groundbreaking first generation woman from East Harlem, NY with Puerto Rican parents. After some urban dancers sparked her curiosity about breakin', she began to teach herself and jump into ciphers in the dance clubs. In 1991, she met and began to train with Kwikstep, another legendary b-boy, and his crew to hone her skills. She wanted to battle all the guys and show them they "don't have a hold on the word 'excellence'".⁶¹ Along with Kwikstep she formed "Full Circle", a nonprofit Hip Hop theater dance company in NY. These are female street dancers who are shifting the public's perception of what a hip hop dancer is. This is the work being done underground to create a long-lasting effect on the new generation.

⁶⁰ "Meet the First Lady Champion."

⁶¹ Carolina Moreno, "Ana 'Rokafella' Garcia, Pioneer Break Dancer, Talks Women In Hip Hop On Makers," *Huffington Post*, August 1, 2013, Accessed November 28, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/01/ana-rokafella-garcia-makers-interview-video_n_3691469.html.

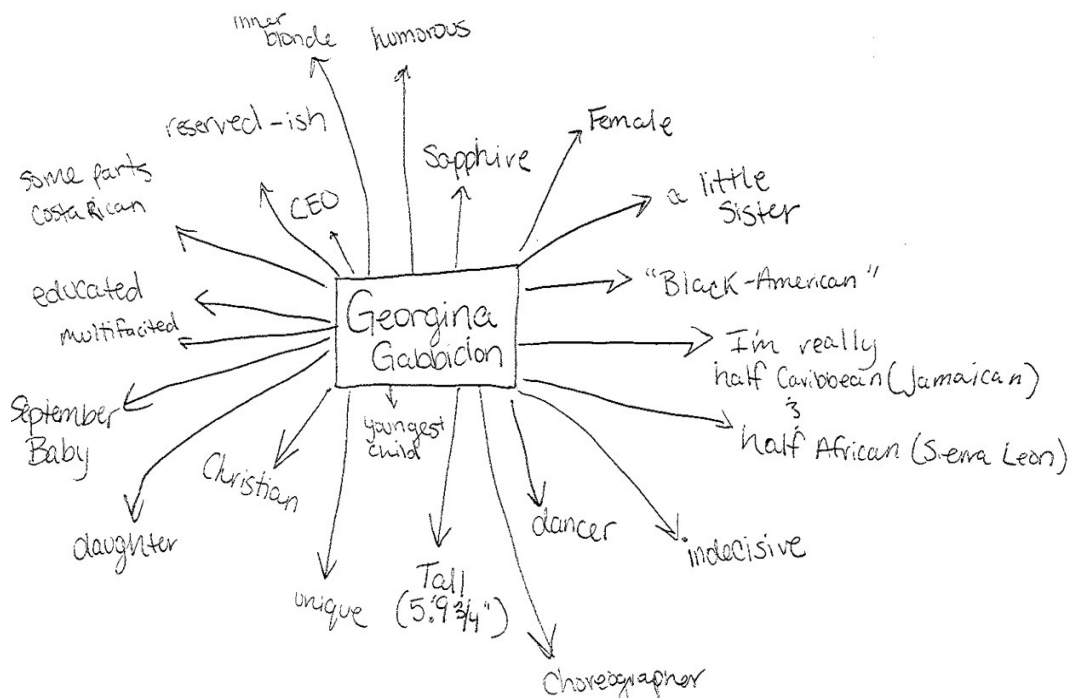
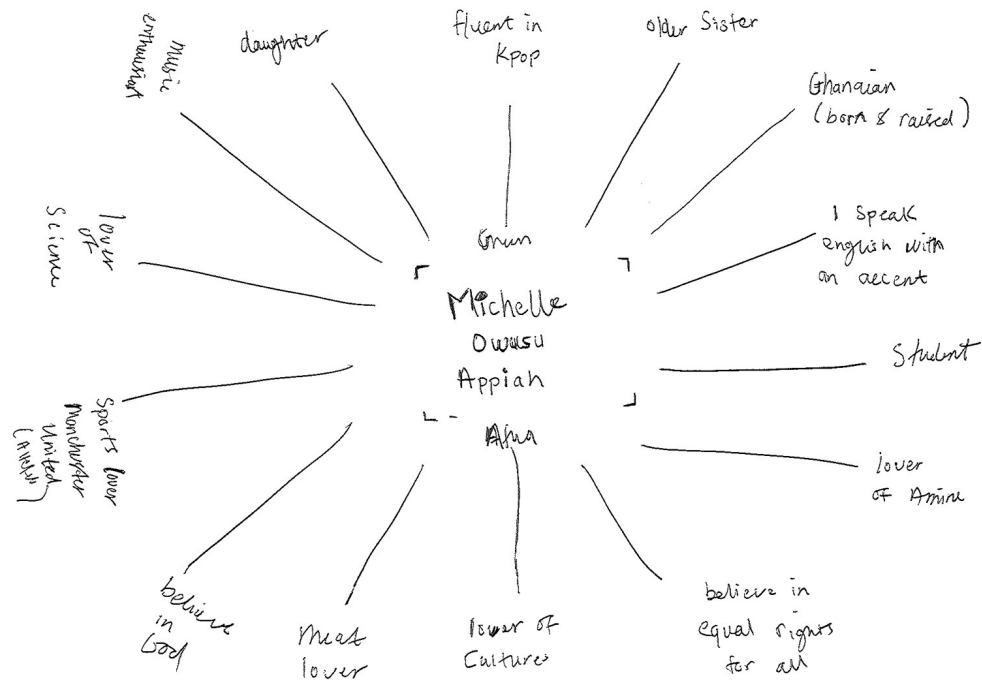
Appendix B: Identity Charts and Costume Renderings

Initial charts completed at the first rehearsal:

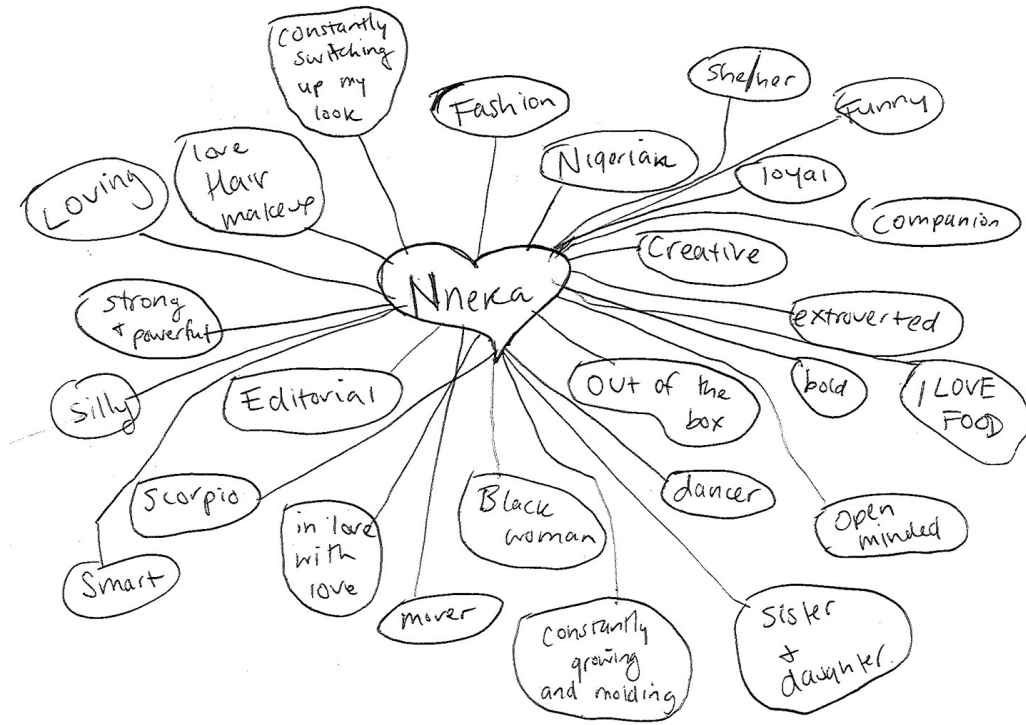


Identity Charts 1 & 2: Michelle Appiah & Georgina Gabbidon's initial charts. The cast was asked to circle the top three most important aspects of themselves.

Second charts completed six months into the process with the full cast:



Identity Charts 3 & 4: Michelle & Georgina's second charts. Channing Tucker, the costume designer, and I noticed that Michelle is very passionate about K-pop and Georgina added more details about her "bicultural" identity.



Identity Chart 5: Nneka Onyima was not in the original group that completed initial charts. Channing and I decided to highlight her love of “fashion”, “editorial” and “out of the box” descriptors. Note: She circled these words on her own, I gave no special instruction to highlight aspects during the second identity chart session.



Renderings 1-3: Michelle's rendering is specifically drawing inspiration from a K-pop style of fashion. All three costumes utilize African print fabric, with a modern twist to incorporate their African heritage.

The final look:



Image 36: The final look.
Photo courtesy of Thai Nguyen

Glossary

Ball: Balls are events in which people come as both spectators and participants, hosted by a particular house, to compete for cash prizes and trophies in a variety of competition categories. Anyone can walk a ball. Usually participants represent the HOUSE they belong to. Sometimes non-HOUSE members walk to promote themselves to possibly join a house.⁶²

Battle: Also known as competition. It is an exchange that can be face to face individually or between groups of dancers, sometimes improvised and sometimes presented through choreography. Usually it is a chance to earn respect from the community.

Breakin': A word used to describe the movement performed by street dancers, coined because the dancers originally danced to the instrumental breakbeats that the DJ played. Mainstream media labeled this and many other types of street dance "breakdance".

Cipher/Cypher: The communal, circular space where hip-hoppers often express themselves individually and collectively through dancing, rapping, or competing (i.e., battling) to music often played by an accompanying DJ.⁶³

Competition: Similarly to a battle, it is an exchange between dancers that is usually confined in a specific structure with rules, judges and sometimes monetary prizes, trophies and a chance to earn respect.

Crew: A group of friends that come together to practice skills with an end goal in mind that usually involved participating in a show, competition or battle.

DJ or Dee Jay: DJs play music, usually using two turntables playing wax records at parties and events.

Emcee or MC (Master of Ceremony): Person who energizes the crowd, initiating call-and-response to keep everyone engaged during the event. The MC eventually became the modern-day rapper as rhymes and lyrics developed in this role over generations.

⁶² "The House of Naphtali, Ballroom Q & A," Accessed April 1, 2019, <http://houseofnaphtali.tripod.com/id2.html>.

⁶³ Emery Petchauer, "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop Educational Research," Review of Educational Research 79, no. 2 (June 2009): 946-78, doi:10.3102/0034654308330967.

Graffiti Writing: Graffiti artists use spray paint to make art as expression, originally on the sides of subway trains so that the artwork could be seen in all five boroughs of New York (known as going all city).⁶⁴

Hip hop (culture): Expressive practices created in the postindustrial United States and that draw from Black and Latino cultural forms.⁶⁵

Hip hop Elements: Emceeing, DJing, breaking, and graffiti writing. Knowledge is often included too.⁶⁶

Hip-hopper: A participant and lover of the Hip-hop culture.⁶⁷

Youth-outreach program: Program developed to help youth in a community with various skills needed to place them in a better standing.

Competition studio: Studio that enrolls dancers to compete before judges performing accepted dance styles. Ranging from 4-18 years old, the dancers train year-round to compete.

⁶⁴ Petchauer, "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop".

⁶⁵ Petchauer, "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop".

⁶⁶ Petchauer, "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop".

⁶⁷ Petchauer, "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop".

Bibliography

- Abad, Russel. "Hip-Hop: Music's Most Powerful Political Platform." *Georgia Political Review*, September 23rd, 2013. Accessed March 7, 2016. <http://georgiapoliticalreview.com/hip-hop-musics-most-powerful-political-platform/>.
- Acgony, Germaine, F. C Gundlach, and Wolfgang Von Wangenheim. *AFRICAN DANCE*. Frankfurt: D. Fricke, 1980.
- Aschenbrenner, Joyce, and Lavinia Williams Yarborough. *Katherine Dunham : Reflections on the Social and Political Contexts of Afro-American Dance*. Dance Research Annual, 12. New York, N.Y. (35 West 4th St., Rm. 675, New York 10003): CORD, 1981.
- Bizas, Eleni. *Learning Senegalese Sabar : Dancers and Embodiment in New York and Dakar*. Dance and Performance Studies, Volume 6. New York: Berghahn Books, 2014.
- "Biography of MC Sha Rock." Accessed December 10, 2016. <http://mcscharockonline.com/Biography/biography.html>.
- Brown, Stacia L "It's Time to Tell the Stories of Women in Hip-Hop." *New Republic*, August 26, 2015. Accessed November 27, 2016. <https://newrepublic.com/article/122611/its-time-tell-stories-women-hip-hop>.
- Bruce, La Marr Jurelle. "'The People Inside My Head, Too': Madness, Black Womanhood, and the Radical Performance of Lauryn Hill." *African American Review* 45, no. 3 (2012): 371-89. doi:10.1353/afa.2012.0065.
- Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008.
- Check Your Body at the Door: The Elusive, Artful World of Club Dancing*. Directed by Films Media Group and Tendu TV, Inc. Tendu TV, 2015. Online Video. Accessed February 5, 2019. <https://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=107812&xtid=75362>.
- Dalili, Efi N. "'More than a Sisterhood': Traditional West African Dance in a Contemporary Urban Setting." Doctoral Diss. Ann Arbor: University of

- Pennsylvania, 1999. Accessed October 12, 2016. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304517193?accountid=14696>.
- Dance, CANAL STREET. "Dance Battle: Majid vs Mamson - I Love This Dance 2012." YouTube. February 05, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPXIqueuQNE>.
- Davies, Carole Boyce & Babacar M'Bow. "Towards African diaspora citizenship : politicizing an existing global geography." In *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, editors Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Adrian Woods, Tonronto, Ont: South End Press, 2007.
- DeFrantz, Thomas, and Philipa Rothfield, eds. *Choreography and Corporeality : Relay in Motion*. New World Choreographies. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- DeFrantz, Thomas. *Dancing Many Drums : Excavations in African American Dance. Studies in Dance History*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.
- Drewal, Henry John. *Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas*. Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2008.
- Guevara, Nancy. "women writin' rappin' breakin'." In *Droppin' Science: critical essays on rap music and hip hop culture*, edited by William Eric Perkins, 48-62. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.
- Hazzard-Donald, Katrina. "dance in hip hop culture." In *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*, edited by William Eric Perkins, 220-235. Temple University Press, 1996.
- Hazzard-Gordon, Katrina. *Jookin' : The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African-American Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010. 2010.
- Hill, Logan. "How I made it: Spike Lee on 'Do The Right Thing'." *New York Magazine*, April 7th, 2008. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://shar.es/18q6l8>.
- "Identity Charts." Facing History and Ourselves. Accessed November 12, 2016. <http://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/identity-charts>.

- Koslow, Jessica. "A Dance-Life Continuum, Rooted in Hip-Hop." *Dance Magazine* 86. 10 (2012): 60-62. International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance with Full Text. Accessed October 13, 2016.
- McKittrick, Katherine and Clyde Woods, eds. *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2007.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds : Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- "Meet the First Lady Champion: Spotlight on Queen Mary." Red Bull BC One. Modified April 11, 2015. Accessed November 28, 2016. <http://www.redbullbcone.com/en/blog/spotlight-queen-mary-first-red-bull-bc-one-b-girl-champ/>.
- Moreno, Carolina. "Ana 'Rokafella' Garcia, Pioneer Break Dancer, Talks Women In Hip Hop On Makers." *Huffington Post*, August 1, 2013. Accessed November 28, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/01/ana-rokafella-garcia-makers-interview-video_n_3691469.html.
- Needham, Maureen. *I See America Dancing : Selected Readings, 1685-2000*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
- Osumare, Halifu. "The Dance Archeology of Rennie Harris: Hip-Hop or Postmodern?". In *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader*, edited by Julie Malnig, 261-281. University of Illinois Press, 2009.
- Pabón-Colón, Jessica Nydia. "Writin', Breakin', Beatboxin': Strategically Performing "Women" in Hip-Hop." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 1 (09 2017): 175-200. doi:10.1086/692481.
- Paris Is Burning*. Directed by Dorian Corey, Pepper LaBeija, Willi Ninja, Freddie Pendavis, Jennie Livingston, Paul Gibson, (Cinematographer), Jonathan Oppenheim, Off White Productions, Inc, Miramax Home Entertainment (Firm), and Buena Vista Home Entertainment (Firm). Miramax Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.
- Perkins, William Eric, ed. *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*. Temple University Press, 1996.

- Petchauer, Emery. "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop Educational Research." *Review of Educational Research* 79, no. 2 (06 2009): 946-78. doi: 10.3102/0034654308330967.
- Roach, Joseph R. *Cities of the Dead : Circum-Atlantic Performance*. The Social Foundations of Aesthetic Forms. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Roberts, Robin. "Music Videos, Performance and Resistance: Feminist Rappers." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 2 (September 1991): 141-52. doi:10.1111/j.0022-3840.1991.2502_141.x.
- Sears, Stephanie D. *Imagining Black Womanhood: The Negotiation of Power and Identity within the Girls Empowerment Project*. State University of New York Press, 2010.
- Sommer, Sally R. "'C'mon to My House': Underground House Dancing." In *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader*, edited by Julie Malnig, 261-281. University of Illinois Press, 2009.
- Style Wars*. Public Art Films, Inc. Brooklyn, NY: Plexifilm, 2003. DVD.
- Suraj, Kumari. "What is Waacking? Queer history of Punking, Whacking, Waacking 1970-2003. PT 1" You Tube. July 3, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l62XRkUym2Q>.
- "The Lockers", Accessed November 28, 2016, www.thelockersdance.com.
- Udovitch, Mim. "I, Latina." *Vibe*, Dec 1993-Jan 1994, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 64-69. Accessed November 27, 2016. books.google.com/books?id=OygEAAAAMBAJ&lpg=PT67&dq=rosie%20perez%20ismael%20Serrano%20puerto%20rico&pg=PT23#v=onepage&q=rosie%20perez%20ismael%20Serrano%20puerto%20rico&f=false.
- UMD Undergraduate Student Profile, Accessed March 8, 2019. https://irpa.umd.edu/CampusCounts/Enrollments/stuprofile_allug.pdf.
- Vontress, Clemmont E. "Traditional Healing in Africa: Implications for Cross-Cultural Counseling." *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70, no. 1 (09, 1991): 242-49. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.1991.tb01590.x.

Weitzer, Ronald, and Charis E. Kubrin. "Misogyny in Rap Music: A Content Analysis of Prevalence and Meanings." *Men and Masculinities*, 12, no. 1 (October 2009): 3–29. doi:10.1177/1097184X08327696.