ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: FULL CIRCLE: BRIDGING THE GAP

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As an MFA candidate at the University of Maryland College Park's School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, I used Hip-Hop and Modern dance to address cycles that have been recurring throughout American history since Congress' abolishment of slavery in 1865. However, the events depicted were told from the perspective of Americans between the ages of 19 and 33. Each story served as a moment for the audience to assess themselves, this country, and the recent events that have shaped our experiences. The concert was performed in the round to pay homage to Hip-Hop's practice of the "Cypher" (performance exchange within a circular gathering of people). Within the cypher, my goal was to encourage dialogue concerning issues of race, gender, community, and police brutality. My thesis concert was entitled, "Full

Circle: Bridging the Gap," and was presented on December 9th, 10th, and 11th of 2016.

FULL CIRCLE: BRIDGING THE GAP

by

Christopher Phillip Law

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First and foremost, thank you to the Creator for life itself. Thank you to all of the ancestors, pioneers and community leaders who have helped to pave the way, making it possible for me to achieve this education and study this art form. This entire process wouldn't have been possible without the help of my outstanding cast, collaborating designers, incredible faculty committee, generous stage manager, the most innovative cohort imaginable, staff and facilities within the School of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies. I would like to give a special thanks to my family for their continual support while pursuing deeper knowledge in the art form I love. Especially my wife, Ama Law who supported me throughout the entire process and my daughter Nyla, who took her first steps as I was putting the final touches on this thesis paper. Last but not least, BIG UP TO ALL MY HATERS!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I grew up in Prince George's County (New Carrollton), Maryland, which is right outside of Washington DC. Growing up in PG County during the 1980's and 90's was complicated for someone who didn't quite fit into black or white inner circles. At the age of seven, I remember constantly having discussions with my parents regarding my appearance and why I don't look like my friends. I was a small, unassuming, fair skinned boy with thin hair that was typically parted down the upper right side of my head and combed over to resemble a white 1950's movie star like Cary Grant or John Wayne. Typically, whenever my peers asked me about my ethnicity, I told them "I'm black," because this is how my parents explained it to me. However, common responses to this explanation usually included comments like, "Why is your hair so straight and thin?" Or "You can't be completely black. You're mixed with something else, aren't you? Are you Spanish as well? You got a little bit of white in you, right?"

These labels that people wanted me to take on were confusing to me. Not that I didn't understand the concept of race or ethnicity. I just didn't understand why it was so important to others that they have an explanation of why I don't look like them. My refusal to entertain these conversations ultimately led to people forming conclusions about me and treating me accordingly. I was labeled "conceited" and taunted by my peers because they believed I felt I was better than them. Then I heard, "Have you ever heard of the brown paper bag test Chris? I'm sure you'd pass it if you tried". Or "How many white men raped your ancestors for you to get that hair, pretty boy?"

In elementary school, I felt like I was living between the two worlds of white- ness and black-ness. I became aware of how differently I was treated because of how I looked. My thinner straight hair was considered beautiful, my light skin was considered beautiful.

Because of this, I was perceived as a welcoming person, but I was also seen as someone who was outside the struggles of black people. If I was running around with a group of friends and we were caught doing something outside the school rules, I was punished in less extreme ways, because of my looks.

"I became interested in dance around 14 years old but before that, it was basketball. My parents divorced before I began attending middle school and I became angry and aggressive. I wanted to be more edgy and I wore darker clothing. I got into trouble at a basketball court one day after a kid yelled at me. I was in front of my cousin and other friends, therefore I could not be weak. I got the better of this kid. He ran off saying he was going to get a weapon; instead he got the police. I was arrested on assault and battery.

The school I went to at that time was under constant threat of being taken over by the State due to poor academic performance and violence, so the school officials simply expelled any kids who got into fights. Their way of dealing with black kids who fought was to "get them out of here." My mother decided what would be better than throwing ME away, was to send me to arts camp.

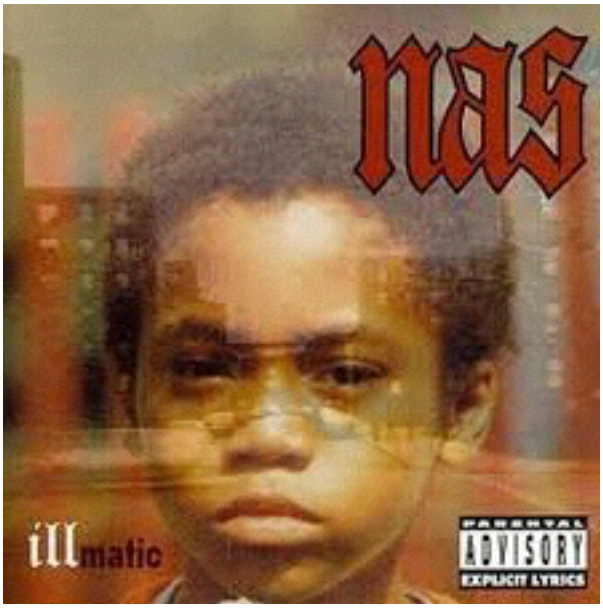
I was influenced by Hip-Hop culture during the 1990s, often mimicking dance moves performed by artists such as Kid-N-Play, Kriss Kross and TLC in my bedroom. Due to the fact that my siblings were much older than myself, I was exposed to many Hip-Hop artists at a young age. However, I didn't begin training in Hip-Hop dance seriously until my undergraduate years as a dance major (B.A. 2008) at the University of Maryland College Park.

I understood that if I was ever going to go to college, it would be to study dance. I auditioned for the dance scholarship but did not get it, nor was I accepted to the university. Instead, I took summer classes through the academic achievement program. I began the dance major in my third year, after completing the core classes.

In my modern dance class, I met Simone Jacobson, a fellow student who was beginning a Hip-Hop team on campus. The faculty at the time did not appreciate the Hip-Hop

movement that was taking hold. Nejla Yatkin was my modern dance teacher; from her global perspective she encouraged me to incorporate my movement into modern dance.

I was able to perform with three Hip-Hop teams that highly influenced my movement and perception of Urban Dance. These groups included Phunktions and Dynamic (both UMD based groups), along with Culture Shock D.C. (a non-profit community outreach program), all of which were developing groups that gave dancers of different ages and backgrounds the opportunity to train in Urban Movement while also preparing for community performances.



Nas featured as a young child on the cover of his debut album *Illmatic*.

I think there are moments when, as a black man, one realizes the harshness of the legal system, the judicial system and the power structures. The music I was listening to reinforced my own experiences: Public Enemy, N.W.A. (Niggas With Attitude), and Nas all told stories of the everyday struggles of living in a black community.

In my dancing to these lyrics and beats, I realized I was using the dancing as an expression of the reality of my life, even though my life was not an exact reflection of the

lyrics. As time went on, however, and I dove into the movement, I started to think about the motivation behind the movement and the lyrics.

I feel there is a need to examine the recurring cycles of American history now more than ever. We exist in a time where the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in comparison to any other country in the world. Through watching documentaries such as Ava DuVernay's "13th," I learned that the U.S. makes up five percent of the world's population and 25% of total incarcerated humans in the world. Furthermore, the U.S. Bureau of Justice currently projects that one out of three African Americans will serve prison sentences during a lifetime, while one out of seventeen white Americans were projected to do the same. Black men in particular, make up 6.5% of the U.S. population and 40.2% of the U.S. prison population. This fact brought me to question why we have the nerve to label ourselves the "Land of the Free"?

As our children continue to grow and become more aware of our country's dark past, it's important that we find avenues to spark conversation with them. The cypher provides that avenue. It is that bridge between old and young and creates a relation point between people of all races, genders, and religious backgrounds. It is my hope that "Full Circle: Bridging the Gap" will continue to encourage all viewers to look within themselves and find what it takes to be an effective community member for the greater good of all.

Obama's final Presidential address to America:

> "I am asking you to believe. Not in my ability to bring about change — but in yours." He said, "I am asking you to hold fast to that faith written into our founding documents; that idea whispered by slaves and abolitionists; that spirit sung by immigrants and homesteaders and those who marched for justice; that creed reaffirmed by those who planted flags from foreign battlefields to the surface of the moon; a creed at the core of every American whose story is not yet written:
> Yes, we can.
> Yes, we did.
> Yes, we can."

Chapter 2: The Process

Inspiration

The original inspiration for Full Circle was my interest in honoring both the Hip-Hop culture and my modern dance training. I wanted to honor the training I've had and the community I am a part of, and not mis-represent it. I have been investigating my own changing value systems as a Hip-Hop artist now that I am growing older. Therefore, I dove deeper into the disconnections between generations of Hip-Hop artists in the DANC600, Research Methods in Dance, course with Professor Miriam Phillips. Through that research, I came to understand various value systems concerning Hip-Hop culture and human behavior. I interviewed Hip-Hop artists, beginners and professionals in the DC area, New York and Los Angeles. It became clear to me that the younger generation, while having a great knowledge of current music and dances, knew little about the history.

The circle was my second decision. My first experience realizing the significance of the circle was at an audition. I was auditioning for Culture Shock's freestyle team and there were several professional and seasoned Hip-Hop freestylers judging the auditions. The format was thus: one dancer enters the circle, another follows and a "battle" ensues. In this case, the other dancer was dancing over me (dancing at the same time as me), interrupting the flow of the improvisation. Instead of taking turns, we got into what the judges called "a mess." The "Cypher" notion was unfamiliar, and I did not understand battle etiquette.

I avoided the circle for some time afterwards, based also on a judge who took me aside and told me I obviously didn't know a "damned thing" about the underground LGBTQ ballroom culture. Despite my poor audition, I was still accepted onto the team but, avoided

my freestyle training and the cypher in fear of offending others. I stayed with those who were choreographing Hip-Hop.

As my peers became more interested in the circle, however, so did I. There are two major Hip-Hop organizations in the DC area: Urban Artistry and Culture Shock. Urban Artistry was more about freestyling while Culture Shock's focus was for showcases, creating transitions and going for uniformity. At a club one night I came into a circle out of curiosity and battled a dancer from Urban Artistry. The battle fizzled out, but Junious Brickhouse, the director of Urban Artistry, took me aside and began to explain the social nature and cultural rules of the circle. He explained that the culture of Hip-Hop is how we interact, and the reason I was being challenged was that we hold each other accountable in the community. This helped me understand what happened but I still questioned the aggressive nature of the culture because, wherever I went, I was open to being taunted.

Eventually through my involvement in the Culture Shock organization we came to a period where we all agreed that we had to become more seasoned in cypher etiquette and freestyle rules. We realized that as a community outreach organization, we needed to be in the community in a more authentic way, and therefore, we had to train ourselves to be more than a performing arts organization, doing set shows.

The freestyle team began with focused styles that we wanted to gain more experience in. We wanted to know who were the first people to do these styles: House, Breaking, Locking, Popping, Vogue, Waacking, and Krump. Through personal research and asking questions of experienced dancers, I came to understand that knowing the history can lead to physical authenticity.

Preparation

I realized after I presented my thesis proposal that my ideas made sense when spoken, but didn't come across too clearly when I was asked to describe how it would all come together on stage. During my design meetings, my committee, designers, and Clarice

faculty seemed to connect with statements like, “I’m examining the idea of building strong communities and identifying the work that I feel is necessary to do within that process”. However, when I said things like “My cast will already be engaged in a cypher by the time the audiences enters," I would see looks of confusion throughout the room. Navigating this unexpected language barrier proved to be a challenge throughout the entire thesis process. There’s language that I’m just accustomed to using with my peers and fellow Hip-Hop dancers that I assumed others would understand, but they didn’t (see glossary for an example of terms).

I struggled to find common ground with some of my collaborators. I most notably remember the designers’ faces when I used the word “cypher.” It reminded me of the look I give people when they come up to me and speak Spanish, assuming I am Latino. I paused in that moment and asked, “Does anyone know what I mean when I use the word ‘cypher?’ “ They all shook their heads, no, but with a sense of relief that I had given them permission to admit that they had no idea what I was saying.

I explained, a cypher is a performance circle in which there is an exchange between and among performers and observers. Performers have a responsibility to jump in and dialogue through dance, spoken word and other expressions of artistic ability. It matters how one is holding one’s self in the circle. For example, in the Locking Urban Dance style, there are specific moves and gestures that correlate. Among the observers, if there’s someone who “reads” the form, they have the responsibility to jump in. The circle holds the performance and also provides the environment in which to relate. For a successful exchange to happen, it requires a certain energy for the participants to listen as well as contribute. There must be a balance.

When thinking of a cypher, there are certain scenarios that need consideration. Do others know the song? Do they know the style? Additionally, performers can call out observers and challenge them to show their abilities. Ultimately, it’s up to the observers to accept the challenge and participate in the exchange.

During this first meeting with my collaborators, after I explained this, some of the designers were relieved and understood. Some however, did not.

Storyboarding the piece

Over the summer prior to the performance, Ama suggested that I structure the sections of Full Circle and build a plan for rehearsing the piece. I agreed and she helped me realize where to begin. We decided to work with the men and women separately before bringing the entire cast together. Ama provoked me to think about each section's significance, meaning and flow. We used post-its to set out a linear through-line. Ama wanted to be able to change the post-its around when new ideas came into the scenarios. While I liked the fact that she came up with a method for structuring the work, I resisted it at the same time.

Throughout the process, Ama had a lot of patience with my visioning. She was also able to communicate information to the rest of the cast. She has a nurturing side and is dedicated to the people in the room. I like to just keep things moving along, and I don't like to plan very much in advance. Both of us are conscious of each other's wants and needs in a situation and she keeps me in check. When she is too chill (relaxed) in a situation, I add the urgency.

Casting and building the piece

Casting

From my first semester of teaching, I was searching for the right cast members. One of the first dancers I discovered was Sanya Oluwafemi. She wasn't a Hip-Hop dancer, but she dances unforgivingly, with a fierceness that I admire. Jared Porter, who I met in Culture Shock, is serious about choreography and freestyle, and I wanted to work with him (and his twin brother, Ryan, but Ryan moved to California!). They have an engaging energy.

Minilik Addis has danced in the same communities I have but is younger than me. We share common interests in music and dance styles. I invited him into this project early on. I worked with Nicole Sneed in Matt Reeves' Second Season production at UMD, Tom In the Machine. I was struck by how amazingly hardworking she is as a dancer. She is mature and focused.

Olivia Lynes took my Hip-Hop class and was curious, always asking me to unpack what I meant. Because of this, I was happy to use her inquiries as a way to clarify my own ideas. Jonathan Hsu brings it all. He is open to different opportunities and challenges; he is hungry. He's always working on some project, or new venture. I needed his energy and he inspired me.

Reyna Fox was the only dancer who asked to be a part of the project. She felt she could grow from participating in my process. Whereas most people expected me to invite them in, Reyna sought me out and convinced me to give her a shot. Reyna is a white female and I was embarrassed that it had not occurred to me to actually consider a white dancer. At first I was on the fence about her because, I had never gotten an opportunity to see her dance. I was concerned about her ability to perform physically demanding movement, but as it turned out, she grew a lot, as I will explain later.

My wife, Ama Law, was my sanity throughout the project. We have been creating and performing together for around fifteen years. Ama had a strong hand in the creation of the piece and was available to share her opinion at any point. I'm grateful that she supported the process, allowing it to be wholly mine.

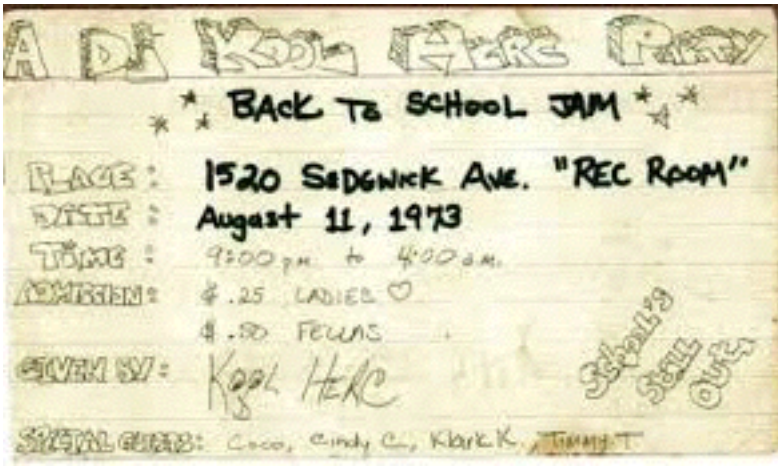
Building

The eventual sections in the order in which they occurred were:

1. Inviting the Audience in/Opening Cypher
2. Fela/Minilik's Dream
3. Minilik's Wakeup Call, aka Clipping
4. Bus Ride/Names of Fallen Hashtags
5. Vince Staples/Giving Up

6. Playground
7. Testimonies from the Women
8. Miss Amour
9. Testimonies from the Men/Basketball
10. Police Sirens/NY State of Mind
11. Gimme Some Mo'
12. Names of Fallen Hashtags, II
13. Be Free

Once the cast was arranged, I decided the first rehearsal would be taking the cast to a party. The event was called Four Hours of Funk and was hosted at a club/bar called The Windup Space, in Baltimore.



Hand written invitation from 1973 detailing a "Back to School Party" hosted by DJ Kool Herc.

Even though this was a brand new experience for everyone except Jared, Ama, and myself… the cast was excited. A friend, DJ Fleg hosts the party. It features four hours of funk music on the third Friday evening of every month. The scene is diverse: Hip-Hop dancers, hippies, and hipsters. The vibe is welcoming although it can get aggressive at times. The scene remains a battleground where people settle their differences and are held accountable for being present in the space. If you pull your phone out, for example, you will be pulled into the circle. No wallflowers allowed.

Grooving and taking in the scene, we noticed it got more energetic and crowded. Soon a circle formed around one dancer. I went into the circle soon after, Locking, and went over to someone I didn't know, holding out my hand for a "five," after which he came into the circle and I went out. Ama went in, then Jared, and surprisingly, Jonathan. By the end, everyone had gone into the circle.

The cast had a great time; they couldn't stop talking about it.

At the subsequent rehearsal, the ice had been broken by the club night, so we jumped right into the choreography. I had an arsenal of phrases of choreography from past work, but I had no plan. As the dancers worked the phrases, I was discovering how each one learned. I just wanted to see them move and have fun but I wanted them to feel productive as well (even though inside, I was not sure of anything I was doing). At some point, I ran out of choreography to draw on.

I had to make something new, on the spot, in real time. My sound designer, Jeff, gave me a song, "Get Up," by Clipping. The song has urgency, and so did I. Daveed Diggs, the rapper for Clipping is an artist who does not reference himself in his work. He presents situations; in this case, he references the lifestyle of a drug dealer without claiming he is of that culture.

It inspired me because my dancers and I are not of the drug culture, but he showed a way to address the drug culture and to comment on it. Minilik became the vehicle for this section (Minilik's WakeUp Call). When I was first introduced to Hip-Hop, I wanted to have all that came with it: money, popularity with women, respect from men. In this section, we explored the harsh lessons that come with those material things.

Minilik stands in the middle of the circle and the dancers bring him all the glamorized things we see in Hip-Hop mainstream: stacks of money, car keys, designer objects, and eventually, drugs, malt liquor, syringes, and ultimately, a pair of handcuffs.

This scenario felt right. I was so frustrated by the recent police brutality that I knew I could not make a cute Hip-Hop piece. Members of the cast agreed, confirming that this approach felt right, and good.

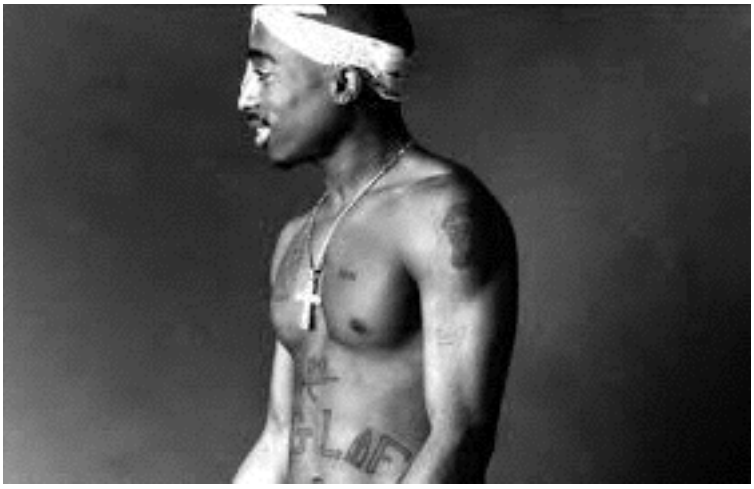
After creating this section, I worked on floor work (breakdance movement performed low to the ground) with the cast. It served multiple purposes. B-Boy culture uses the floor and my ideas featured challenging movement fusing modern dance and Hip-Hop. Additionally, the glass ceiling notion felt appropriate. Throughout my training as a Hip-Hop dancer, I've come to learn of how the grounded movement of B-boys was not only a response to the music, but also representative of a people who were systemically held to a certain level of living. People who were able to see opportunities of advancement, but prevented from obtaining them by those higher up. I felt it was important for us to experiment with that movement.

We began by improvising to a song by Kaytranada called "Bus Ride." It was an extremely physical session. Up until this moment, the dancers had primarily been trained in modern dance technique and I was asking them to muscle through. This type of grounded, muscled movement found its way into the section after Minilik is handcuffed (BusRide). Minilik strips away all of the items he thought he wanted and Jonathan and Jared appear to help him along his journey.

The challenges of this section are similar to my own experience in Colours, the performing arts troupe my mother found. Even though I was initially forced to join, as I grew older, I learned to love the arts. That program probably saved my life. The trio section of Jared, Jonathan, and Minilik was not a battle, but a crew session/practice; three guys challenging each other to grow.

I next began working with the women. They could do the challenging floor work but they did it with grace. Although this wasn't what I had in mind initially, I wanted to highlight this quality after taking notice of it.

Around this time (July 2016), the charges against the police officers in the Freddy Gray trial were dropped. I was feeling helpless and frustrated. I knew I needed to give voice to this, through my work. Some of the musical artists who have been meaningful to me over the years, including Tupac Shakur, kept appearing on my Facebook feed. Particularly, a clip where Tupac discusses who he intended his music to be for. Even though he knew his music was relatable on many different levels, his initial inspiration in making it was to provide sanctuary for those who were going through the same things he did. He also states his frustrations with recurring trends of discrimination and oppression in America.



2pac shakur

I've always looked for external confirmation for any actions. I tread lightly, and take care. Listening to Tupac, and from elders who I turn to for counsel, I understood that I could speak up, and that I needed to speak up. I had the idea to get the dancers into a line, as one community (Bus Ride). Up until this moment in the piece, the stories were small group pieces. In this moment, they backed up holding their hands in front of their faces, looking at the skin on the back of their hands. The line goes across the entire circle.

The score to the “Bus Ride/Names of Fallen Hashtags” section includes interviews of cast members, thesis research interviews of seasoned dancers, bits of Kaytranada’s music, and sounds that trigger responses from each dancer. At a cymbal crash moment, the dancers arch backwards and fall to the floor. Nicole looks up and she crawls from person to person. When she touches them, they melt into the floor (Names of Fallen Hashtags. Essentially, the audience understood the references to people dying.

As if it was not clear enough, Melissa Harris-Perry’s reading of the names of black men and boys who were killed, with the dates, made it very clear that we were referencing the political issues of the day. Nicole watches as white lines appear around each body. As Eric Garner’s name is mentioned, the dancers come up on their knees and make eye contact with the audience.

Vince Staples starts speaking “Sometimes I feel like giving up…” and the dancers begin to roll in one direction. The white outlines of the bodies remained. (Giving Up)

While I felt relief in getting these ideas out, I was also aware that this was going to happen again, and again…

For the first time in the piece, no one is in the circle, except for the gradually fading white lines.

I next created the Playground section, showing the playful and sometimes competitive nature of a community. Jonathan enters, carrying a crate, followed by Ama, also carrying a crate, and they start a race. The others enter, also carrying crates, and they set up a playground of sorts. Ama starts a stomping rhythm, which becomes a rhythm score using crates, claps, vocal cues, stomps, and uniting the community.

The section shows the resilience of the black community. I have witnessed violence, drugs, and tragedies, but the community keeps going, keeps celebrating itself. This juxtaposition was indicated and supported by the continual fading of the white outlines of bodies throughout the playground section.

The cast contributed significantly to the playground section. We used the crates rhythmically and spatially to highlight sports culture, competitions, and team building. I asked them about their background and experience in sports. Minilik had played soccer and basketball, Sanya and Olivia had run track, Nicole and Sanya had been on competitive Step teams, Jared has a karate background, Ama was a cheerleader and played volleyball, and I played basketball and football. Jonathan studied martial arts and Reyna played soccer and knew a lot of hand games.

Originally, the crates were reminiscent to me of summers spent in Philadelphia. When I would visit my cousins in West Philadelphia, we were not allowed to leave the block where their house was. We had to play creatively, using crates as a basketball hoop, stack them and play on them, sit on them for the many block parties, and they represented boundaries for the end zone for street football games.

I shared that story with the cast, and they understood that a part of this piece was that we were building something out of nothing, just as my family had, and many black families had.

The section ends in a circle, with each dancer doing a solo in the center of the circle. As rehearsals went along, these solos evolved, but were never established as set choreography. When something funny or revealing happened, I might say to keep it, but we kept the discovery going throughout the performances. The one consistent choreographic moment was Sanya dropping into a split at the end of her solo, after which the cast throws their hands up in shock and vacates the space entirely.

The women of the cast were recorded telling stories of identity, struggles and annoyances. (Testimonies of the Women) During this section of the concert, no one is in the circle. There is a projection of film from the Four Hours of Funk event, distorted. The stories end with Reyna describing how she feels being the only white woman in the piece. Bright lights come up and Reyna takes the space. The women follow her and they form a triangle. Reyna initiates a short solo, followed by Ama and Nicole, then Sanya and Olivia, building a

ripple or cannon. The section ends with each woman strutting along an imaginary runway, highlighting her personal identity with pride. The ending is interrupted by Minilik rolling a basketball onto the stage. The women roll their eyes and Nicole picks up the basketball and throws it at Jared, after which they leave the center and go to the audience, making comments to the audience about the guys.

Basketball: The basketball game that follows started off as a contrast to the revelations of the women. I wanted to show that guys do not generally share their experiences or feelings, but apply them to such games.

I thought about and researched the pickup basketball game culture. I wanted the guys to evolve a shared language of the game. In pickup games, people jump in and figure out the rules of the group, because the goal is being part of the team, while showing off skills. Everyone has to contribute, as in the cypher. The recorded stories of the men that go on while the basketball game is played, felt like they went on for a very long time. (Testimonies of the Men)

I wanted to get the audience involved at this point, not just as viewers, but to be called in to contribute. The game and the stories needed more input and energy. I had known from the very beginning that I wanted to play basketball with the audience. This was the moment. In the piece, I choose a member of the audience and handed them the ball. We did this three times per show. If they missed, we'd give them another chance or toss it in for them to show our support.

The next section is performed to "New York State of Mind," by Nas. He is a rapper who was brought up in Queens; the song was on his 1994 debut album. It describes the dangers of the neighborhood he grew up in. I used this as a way of bringing back the beginning of the piece, which we had sketched out but not yet detailed. Police sirens interrupt the basketball game and the men face the audience, each one facing a segment of the circle. Then a choreographed section involving simultaneous short phrases with moments of solos was performed. It was important to me that the movement highlighted' words.

New York State of Mind lyrics:

Rappers I monkey flip em with the funky rhythm I be kicking
Musician, inflicting composition
Of pain I'm like Scarface sniffing cocaine
Holding a M-16, see with the pen I'm extreme, now
Bullet holes left in my peepholes
I'm suited up in street clothes
Hand me a nine and I'll defeat foes
Y'all know my steelo with or without the airplay
I keep some E&J, sitting bent up in the stairway
Or either on the corner betting Grants with the celo champs
Laughing at base-heads, trying to sell some broken amps
G-Packs get off quick, forever niggas talk shit
Reminiscing about the last time the Task Force flipped
Niggas be running through the block shooting
Time to start the revolution, catch a body head for Houston
Once they caught us off guard, the Mac-10 was in the grass and
I ran like a cheetah with thoughts of an assassin
Pick the Mac up, told brothers, "Back up, " the Mac spit
Lead was hitting niggas one ran, I made him back flip
Heard a few chicks scream my arm shook, couldn't look
Gave another squeeze heard it click yo, my shit is stuck
Try to cock it, it wouldn't shoot now I'm in danger
Finally pulled it back and saw three bullets caught up in the chamber

Beyond the walls of intelligence, life is defined
I think of crime when I'm in a New York state of mind

This section is an ethnographic commentary, in which I am holding the audience accountable for being in the community, inside the circle with us. They get to see some harsh moments, including references to movements of the dancers shooting guns, demonstrating intravenous drug use, threatening behavior, all while dancing. In spite of the beauty of

community that the audience just saw, this section shows the dangers of daily life in the urban community.

The dancers are, in this moment, tour guides, showing the audience the realities of the positive and negative events that go on. In the process, this was the first dance I created with the guys.

After "New York State of Mind," the guys exit and I do a solo that reflects my own frustration with my own sense of stuckness and paralysis. I feel trapped in a cycle of constantly having to explain myself within the context of regular encounters. Blind authority, violence, unjust imprisonment and expectations of conforming to a society that wasn't built for me frustrate me. Additionally, I feel ongoing fatigue that comes along with having to navigate these complexities on a daily basis. The movement during my solo is sharp, violent and smooth yet painful. My image was of someone being suddenly yanked away, kicking and screaming. At the end, I am completely exhausted, but then Ama appears…

Gimme Some Mo': I notice something is wrong with her, but I can't quite figure it out. She enters backwards, bent over, clutching herself. I slowly approach her and put my hands on her shoulders, as to comfort her. She puts her hands up, with handcuffs on her right wrist. I realize she is battling with the same issues: frustration, anger, exhaustion.

I take the cuffs off, in an attempt to fix the situation. The women rush in at that point and I have to get out of their way. I exit.

At this point I took a step back and re-evaluated the opening section of the piece. (Inviting the Audience In) My committee presented questions that begged for clarification. Many of these questions were regarding how the audience would enter into the space and how the dancers would establish themselves as the cypher or circle. I had always known that I wanted the audience to enter and be automatically engaged in an ongoing party because, the audience becomes the cypher. However, there was a need to go back and detail these happenings.

Additionally, when revisiting the opening scene, I found the characters of each dancer becoming clearer:

Minilik's character is an ambitious and excited newcomer to the cypher, who is very much in love with all the glamor that it brings. He is a guy who wanted women, money, nice things, and a respectable reputation.

Jonathan and Jared are experienced dancers, who have been through struggle, and thus embody a seasoned representation of the culture.

Ama and I are also seasoned, but also leaders and guides for the guides.

Olivia and Sanya are unforgiving, strong, honest figures within the community. They are able to access their truth so easily, and they don't care about what others think about them.

Reyna, also a newcomer like Minilik. She battles with a significant distinguishing factor, one that is obvious, that she is the only white person. By the end of the concert, she became the humbled ally, but her process required her to put herself out there, bravely. Reyna is accepted because she knows the balance of what it takes to be in the community, while different from everyone else...she is strong enough to acknowledge her difference but she has a quiet dignity. She addresses the elephant in the room, and therefore gives permission for the audience to do so as well.

Nicole's is a wise voice for the group. She represents the women who have seen many changes in the community. She's also gone through all the same situations that her younger counterparts in the group have experienced, and she has seen how it plays out again and again.

The ending section was the last section we worked on. It follows the moment where the women rush onstage after I have taken the handcuffs off of Ama.

The men also enter. Everybody goes into frantic jittery possessed movement (which is how I described it the cast during the rehearsal process). The music is Busta Rhymes' "Gimme Some More, " which is a song with a repetitive theme. It is fast, upbeat, and

overwhelming. The lyrics say ”You people had enough? Gimme some mo.” The section goes on and represents the same feeling as my solo; I told them to give the movement everything they had, and to fall out near the edge of the circle. Only Ama remains standing.

Ama frantically checks on each fallen body. As I slowly make my way to the center, Nicole’s voice comes on, explaining that the recent election was reminiscent of the challenges her parents experienced in the 50s and 60s. She says it serves a reminder that such things will recur, circularly, in the cypher we all live in.

Following this moment, Ama and I perform a duet while Melissa Harris-Perry repeats the names of police brutality victims (Names of Fallen Hashtags II). We struggle, and the choreography of coming up behind each other and putting hands on shoulders, while the other raises arms with the “hands up, don’t shoot” gesture repeats.

At the end of the Melissa Harris-Perry section, a new track comes on featuring a section of the J. Cole song, “Be Free,” which is a Michael Brown tribute. We developed a duet incorporating B-Boy floor moves and West African dance influenced movement that felt restricting, almost as if the circle was closing in on us. The same image of outlined bodies appears and reappears, layering and filling out the whole circle so that one can no longer identify any one body.

The soundtrack shifted again, with each dancer’s voice giving their own definition of what “Full Circle” means to them. The dancers begin to roll slowly toward the center and Ama begins a solo that encircles me, laying on the ground in the center of the circle. Her movement is repetitive and accelerates as she moves around the circle. The lights go out quickly. The circle is done.

The piece grew as we found beauty in rough environments, and an embodied language that becomes understandable to all within the community. We built the rhythms from the contributions of each dancer, devising an unspoken code of inclusion.

Chapter 3: Background Research

Introduction

The process of researching for my thesis began upon arrival to TDPS. My interest in researching the history of Hip-Hop increased in the DANC 600 course with Professor Miriam Phillips. The paper I wrote in that course, served as background research for this project. The paper, called "Full Circle: Identifying the generational disconnects in American Hip-Hop culture," was an exploration of my own experiences in connection to the work of the scholarly research I was reading.

The ever evolving nature of Hip-Hop culture has brought about many advancements in today's American society as well as all over the world. More and more, K-12 schools, universities, and recreational facilities are incorporating this powerful art form into their academic curriculums as a means to educate and engage young people on a deeper level. However, the growing popularity of the culture and high demand for Hip-Hop educators has brought light to many disconnects that are preventing generations from relating to one another. Depending on the era of Hip-Hop in which they connected with the culture, older audiences may find themselves unable to relate to what may be Hip-Hop's evolved form. On the flip side of things, young people may be too eager to learn of the most current Hip-Hop culture instead of investing time in discovering Hip-Hop's foundation, the rich history and important figures that have shaped it into the art form that it is now. No matter which generation one may fit into, the definition of Hip-Hop seems to be highly dependent upon individual experience and the period of time in which one discovered their love for the culture.

During a freestyle portion of an audition for Culture Shock DC Hip-Hop troupe, I performed a couple moves that were taught to me by my friends on Dynamic. After

completing my freestyle set, I remember feeling such a strong sense of accomplishment. Up until that point, I had never had the confidence to overcome the insecurities which held me back from stepping into the cypher. The supportive cheers from my colleagues confirmed that my training was paying off and made that moment all the more satisfying.

However, in observing the reactions of the judging panel, it became evident to me that not everyone was happy about my dancing. In fact, my set ultimately resulted in me being lectured by one of the judges. This particular judge was a very well known freestyle dancer and teacher. He was idolized by many in the D.C. Hip-Hop dance community for his vast knowledge of Urban Movement styles and versatile dance ability. His exact words were something like, “I can tell by how you are doing these moves, you don't understand a damn thing about the culture and struggle of those who created the movement that you just received so many accolades for”. To think that I did something to offend him and presumably the entire panel made me feel so embarrassed that I strayed away from freestyle dancing for quite some time. I didn’t want to risk offending any other dancers I looked up to in the Hip-Hop community.

I trained with Culture Shock D.C. for a while because it was an environment that I was comfortable in. During my time with this company, I met and interacted with many prominent figures in the Hip-Hop dance community in D.C. and beyond. I began to take notice of how the value systems of each figure were extremely similar. Most still believed that you have to know the history of the movement and understand the roots of Hip-Hop culture in order to fully comprehend how it’s informing your movement. However, the approach that these other prominent figures took with me allowed for more of a conversation rather than dictation. It was more inviting and didn’t make me feel as if I was hurting the culture by simply expressing myself.

Origins

I began identifying the disconnects between older and younger generations through my research. Hip-Hop lovers usually separate the generations as being “Old School” & “New School”. The most current generation is always referred to as the “New School” as it tends to control what is deemed “hip” and “fresh” in Hip-Hop culture. The generations in this research paper will be broken down into the following categories: Old School (1977-1987) as defined by Mohanalakshmi Rajakumar in *Hip Hop Dance* (2012); Golden Age (1987-1996) as defined by Rajakumar; Capitalist Era (1996-2008) defined by myself and Post-Modern Era (2008-present day) as defined by Andrew Doscas in “The Future Is Now, and It Is Odd: A Retrospective on Hip-hop”. It is my hope that by dissecting the evolution of Hip-Hop into four specific categories I will be able to better portray the values and influences of each generation. I plan to present a more specific perspective of Hip-Hop’s progression because it is too vast to be summed up into two broad categories.

Through oral tradition I have learned about the key figures and events that sparked Hip-Hop culture. In the summer of 1973, Clive Campbell, originally born in Kingston, Jamaica, set up his father’s sound system in a recreational room located at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue (Bronx, NY). His main objective was to host a small back-to-school party for the young people who lived in his community. He never imagined at this time that this gathering would ultimately be the birth of a culture that now carries worldwide recognition. Campbell (AKA DJ Kool Herc) is credited as the godfather of Hip-Hop. He developed the musical concepts that have shaped the way rap artist and dancers perform today. Influenced by soul, rock, funk, reggae and dancehall, Herc used two copies of the same record to endlessly loop the beats, thus identifying the parts of the songs that kept dancers and party goers most excited and energized. To further excite the crowd, Herc’s crew of hype men, in the style of Jamaican dancehall “toasting," would recite rhymes over the microphone, pioneering the art of rapping (Perkins 10). Though these innovations would later be improved upon by his

predecessors, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash, Herc stands as the originator without whom an entire generation would lack a soundtrack.

DJ Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa

Self expression, earning respect and originality were key elements of the Hip-Hop culture according to Rajakumar. The youth dictated what was “in” or “hip”. DJ Kool Herc threw house parties, which eventually lead to the rise of block parties, bringing the community together. The creativity of DJs and MCs to keep the party going fueled dancer’s expression. Breakdance was a freestyle dance that embodied competition and allowed dancers to create a credible reputation for themselves in their community. It was an outlet for members of the youth to release frustrations built up by everyday economic hardships of South Bronx living.

As Hip-Hop dance gained popularity, the music followed suit. “Rapper’s Delight” by Sugarhill Gang is probably the most well-known original Hip-Hop track from the Old School

Era. This song was the first time that the MC was the sole focus of the recording instead of being the DJ's sidekick. In 1984, a Hip-Hop group from Queens emerged named Run DMC. They were represented by Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin who established Def Jam records, one of the most important recording labels for the Hip-Hop industry (Rajakumar xii). These events showcase the music and dance that ignited the spark which spread Hip-Hop from the Bronx to the United States and eventually world-wide.

Economic Hardships

Based on Mohanalakshmi Rajakumar's perspective in *Hip Hop Dance* (2012), the Old School Hip-Hop generation spans from 1977-1987. He expresses that the "Boogie-down Bronx," NY was the birthplace of Hip-Hop and touches on the origin by explaining the decline of the Bronx in the 1950s. The creation of the Cross-Bronx Expressway in 1948 allowed for the migration of more affluent NY residents to move from the inner city to the suburbs. Jeff Chang's chronicle *Can't Stop, Won't Stop, A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (2005) states that predominately white families moved to Westchester County, Northeast Bronx, Queens, Long Island, and New Jersey. Thus, leaving behind families who could not afford suburban mortgages to make due in the South Bronx. The inner city Bronx community consisted primarily of African American, Afro-Caribbean and Latino cultured people. The construction of above-ground subways caused demolishing of many homes and businesses. Therefore, tenant style housing (now called "projects") were constructed and populated by the remaining Bronx residents. The new close proximity of rival gangs in addition to economic hardship resulted in a rise of street violence, racial tension, riots and looting.

Robin D. G. Kelley further supports Rajakumar's notion of Hip-Hop's birth from suffrage by highlighting the events that led to the rise of West Coast gangsta rap. In "Kickin Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and post industrial Los Angeles," an article from *Droppin' Science* (1996), Kelley describes how the generation that came of age in the 1980's during the Reagan-Bush presidencies were products of devastating changes in the urban

economy that date back to the late 1960's (122). The communities of Watts and Compton experienced factory closures, deepening poverty as a result of increased unemployment and decreased city youth programs. Developers and city/county government infused massive capital into suburbanization while simultaneously decreasing funding for parks, recreation, and affordable housing in inner city communities (Kelley 122).

Police Brutality

Breaking was a form of improvised dance that embodied competition, domination, sexuality and reputation building (Rajakumar 1). Eventually breaking was used as a non-violent way for gangs to settle disputes and compete on the dance floor. It replaced the physical gang warfare in the community, though the impulse to commit violent acts against one another was still an option (Rajakumar 2).

While the youth were embracing this transfer of street violence to street dance, the adults in the community felt that Hip-Hop was still producing the same outcome (meeting on the street corner and posturing against rivals). Even though the popularity was spreading, there were still accounts of violence from police toward the youth in many sources. One example of the early confusion between breaking and fighting is the story of the arrest of the High Times Crew. Police accused them of starting a riot in a subway in Washington Heights. The B-boys tried to explain that they were engaging in a dance off. The police officers, (in a skeptical state of mind) decided to call their bluff and ordered them to come forward one by one and perform their moves. The dancers kindly obliged and were released from custody after successfully impressing the officers (Rajakumar 8).

Unfortunately, not all misunderstandings ended so peacefully. For example, in Jeff Chang's chronicle *Can't Stop, Won't Stop, A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (2005), he recounts the early morning of September 18th, 1983 when Brookland native Michael Stewart was beaten by six NYC police officers for tagging "ROS" in a subway station at First Ave and 14th St in the East Village (194). Thirteen days later, Stewart who never regained

consciousness, died in his hospital bed. All six officers were acquitted of all charges brought against them.

March 3rd 1991, Rodney King was beaten by five police officers at the entrance to Hansen Dam Park in Lake View Terrace. He had led a police chase in his battered old Hyundai before finally stopping there. He had just served time for trying to rob a Korean American-owned store. He was released early for good behavior and found work as a construction laborer. During the night of the incident, he was pulled over for driving drunk, but ended up hogtied and suffered from 56 baton blows along with stomps and kicks to the head and body. Two video tapes appeared from both an amateur cameraman and a local store surveillance camera. Within 24 hours, the footage from the beating was being viewed on every major news channel across the United States and Americans of all races and backgrounds bared witness to the harsh tactics of the California state police force (Chang 338). Again, all officers were acquitted of the charges and riots ensued in Los Angeles as a direct result of the court decision. Many Hip-Hop artists retaliated by releasing songs that raise awareness about police injustice. For example, "Fuck the Police" by gangster rap group N.W.A. helped to emphasize that police repression is no longer a simple matter of white racists with a badge, for black cops are just as bad, if not worse, than white cops (Kelley 131).

Media Influence

On Hip-Hop Dance

William Eric Perkins' article "The Rap Attack: An Introduction" in *Droppin Science*, Rajakumar's *Hip Hop Dance* and Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop* reference how breakdancing spread from solely being represented in the Bronx community to being represented in the media. Perkins states that the breakdancing craze swept through America in 1983. South Bronx Puerto Rican adults used St. Martin Catholic Church as a venue and battleground for breakdance competitions. Out of these contests emerged many notable crews such as the

Disco Kids, The Apache Crew, Starchild La Rock, and Rock Steady Crew. Rock Steady Crew was the first breakdancing group to gain mainstream attention by appearing on a number of late night television shows as well as being featured in Hip-Hop's first films Breakin' and Beat Street (Perkins 14). Mandalit Del Barco's article "Rap's Latino Sabor" in Droppin Science expands on the exploitation of breakdancers in the media. He references Crazy Legs of Rock Steady Crew, recalling how he achieved "ghetto celebrity status" but didn't make any real money at first. Crazy Legs describes himself as feeling like "an animal in a zoo" while dancing for audiences ranging from young Japanese teenagers to the queen of England. Though he noticed that people abroad had a deeper appreciation for Hip-Hop culture than people in the United States, he still felt like a "spectacle" (Del Barco 69). Del Barco mentions how dancers were relegated to background "color" in concerts and in videos (69). Thomas Guzman-Sanchez notes in table 10.1 of *Underground Dance Masters, Final History of a Forgotten Era* the decline of breaking between 1984 and 1995 (146). Bboying was replaced by "fad" dances (i.e. the Reebok, the Wop, the Cabbage Patch), but each disappeared faster than breaking ever had. Perkins supports this notion by stating that as Hip-Hop matured, breakdancers were replaced by "Video Hoes," Fly Girls, and Fly Boys (14).

As Hip-Hop entered the 1990s, it was continuing the output of innovative ideas that ultimately pushed the culture into the households of white upper-class Americans. In the documentary, Tanning of America Episode Two "Fight The Power: Hip-Hop Goes Mainstream," it references artists such as Vanilla Ice and MC Hammer. These two rap artists presented a friendlier, more inviting face for middle and upper-class America to associate with Hip-Hop. They capitalized on the fad dances and spread popularity of specific moves such as the Running Man and the Typewriter.

On Hip-Hop Image and Fashion

During the end of the Golden Age and during the height of the Capitalist Era, the image of the Gangster Rapper was made popular by artists such as N.W.A., Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre and DMX. Baggy jeans were worn with underwear showing along with Timberland

boots. The Tanning of America Episode Three “Gimmie the Loot: Getting Rich with Hip-Hop” mentions how fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger capitalized on the image of the gangster rappers. He noticed that all the rappers were sagging their jeans in videos and decided to put his name brand on the waistband of his underwear to further promote his label. Hilfiger even invited popular rap artists such as Coolio and Sean P.Diddy Combs to walk in his fashion shows. The documentary mentioned the popularity of “bling bling” and the use of Jacob the Jeweler to make customized jewelry for well-established artists (although often times artists would spend their money from their first record’s advance to keep up the image of being well-off).

In “The Future Is Now, and It Is Odd: A Retrospective on Hip-hop” by Andrew Doscas, a new era of Hip-Hop is described where there are no rules. In 2008, the drop of 808s and Heartbreak by Kanye West marked the beginning of the Post-Modern Era of Hip-Hop. West made way for artists that no longer had to uphold the images that were so highly respected in generations before. Doscas mentions the increase of popularity in neon colors and snapbacks. He states that Hip-Hop artists no longer have to “hang out with no shirt on, smothered in chains or wear fitted hats with all the price tags still on just to show its authentic.” Hip-Hop artists no longer have to uphold the image of the street credible gangster rapper. The music shifted from the popularity of artists like 50 Cent, who gained his credibility because he was shot nine times and survived, to the popularity of Kanye West as a high fashion icon who showed that Hip-Hop is about “doing what you want with it”.

Kanye West featured on the cover of his album 808s and heartbreak

Parallels to Capoeira

In my DANC 784 course, I was already exploring Yvonne Daniel's book, *Dancing Wisdom, Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomble*. Concentrating on the Caribbean Basin and the coastal area of northeast South America, Daniel considers three African-derived religious systems that rely heavily on dance behavior: Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahamian Candomble. She combined her knowledge of movement and anthropology to parallel three religious practices through an ethnographic lens. She found that the strongest commonalities that each of these practices have is their African derived roots and methods for worshiping Divinities through movement and body extensions. Originally I chose this ethnography because my father and brother accused me of practicing Vodou and expressed concern for my spiritual well-being. I bring this up because I feel that African-derived practices are often misinterpreted as evil and false conclusions are drawn due to this misunderstanding. I regularly take part in family gatherings in which libation and other African derived practices take place and I felt the need to learn more about the culture and practices through an ethnographic lens. .

Additionally, I feel that Hip-Hop is often cast in a negative light as well. Although Hip-Hop culture is now seen as mainstream, both the practitioners and the practices are still

seen as outside the norm of acceptable social practices in the US by some people. The practices, because they are born of urban environments that people look down on, and the practitioners because they are of color.

As I was creating the piece, I did not think of it as an ethnographic work even though I invited the audience into a situation with which most were unfamiliar. Daniel painted a vivid picture of her travels to beautiful and exotic locations around the world where she was invited into ceremonies. Daniel wanted to understand the basis of her African past and in a way, that's what I wanted to do as well while inviting the audience to participate in the culture by becoming immersed in the concert experience.

I'm also particularly fascinated by movement practices, like many that are African derived, birthed in times of struggle and tyranny. This is why Hip-Hop has always been close to my heart. I've been an avid fan of Hip-Hop culture and movement ever since the age of seven and have danced in the Washington D.C. Hip-Hop community since age fourteen. Now, at the age of thirty-three while studying for my Masters in dance, I was given an assignment to interact in a community of movers that is outside of my comfort zone. This experience required me to attend at least five classes in a selected practice that I've never experienced. Given my background in Hip-Hop and interest in misunderstood movement practices, I felt it was important to find an environment that was both structured, improvisational and enlightening. I chose to participate in Capoeira classes.

All during this research, I felt that the circle was haunting me. Going to the Capoeira classes helped me to become aware of the fact that the form required the same type of individualized and community-based experiences. In the initial warmups, we were each doing our own thing throughout the studio, however, during the group work, we convened in a circle and took turns playing an instrument or dancing with a partner in the circle. I noticed many similarities to Hip-Hop, for example, it was also competitive at times.

As one navigates the circle in Capoeira, one looks for weaknesses in the partner, because unlike dance, this is movement is based on the practice of self-defense. Rhythms are

different and we had to produce them ourselves. But one needs to know all of the rules for the form, including a variety of rhythmic structures.

In my thesis concert, I wanted to utilize some of these principles, including knowing the people in your circle, the music, and the form. Thus, reinforcing the sense of community required. Despite being a form of martial arts and competition, I learned in the Capoeira class that there was a deep sense of importance to know the history of the form. I respected this aspect. The experienced class participants were all knowledgeable of Capoeira history and respected the pioneers of the art form. My experiences have shown me that experienced Hip-Hop practitioners also embrace the history and former aspects of the culture. In both Capoeira and Hip-Hop culture, there is a sense of importance behind setting the record straight and acknowledging the proper cultural context of the movement.

Daniel (2005) in *Dancing Wisdom* points out that in Haitian Vodou, anyone is capable of receiving spiritual energies. This reigns true for the initiated and uninitiated. However, those who are regularly immersed within the practice prepare themselves to receive the Lwas (spirits). There is an energy that must be harnessed and taken on with a sense of responsibility. Thus it is not encouraged for the uninitiated to take part in certain portions of Haitian ceremonies (Daniel 151). I find this fact to be very similar to Hip-Hop culture and the responsibilities that comes with being a part of a cypher. The surrounding community is welcome to take part in the exchange. However, there is a responsibility for all participants to remain conscious of the performative dialogue that is taking place within the center of the circle. It is encouraged to know the social rules of the cypher to be able to fully engage. Certain behaviors, such as forcing your presence into the circle in a way that is not in line with someone who wants to share but rather someone who wants to show-off, are typically looked down upon.

In a party atmosphere where all are welcome, participants who are unaware of or choose to purposely ignore cypher etiquette are subject to conflict within the surrounding community. I feel this relates strongly to Daniel's experiences. She had some background

knowledge of the practices but wasn't fully knowledgeable of the cultures. For example, she asked to take still shots of a ceremony with her camera while in Haiti and was originally given permission but, later realized that she was being looked down upon by some of the ceremony leaders. She had to learn the social rules in order to be fully accepted and be able to participate in the ceremony.

In the thesis concert, the section utilizing milk crates to create rhythms was probably the time when the cast found common spiritual energies. I created that section while playing the music, "Diggable Planets," over and over for the two hours that we were working. I found that more and more as I played that music, it felt like the cast was becoming more adjusted to each other. At the end of that rehearsal, one dancer came up and said how much he was enjoying the process.

Interviews

Through interviews with many Hip-Hop artists, I gained an understanding of their personal experience within Hip-Hop culture past and present. How did they become interested in the culture? What kind of community events did they attend and how did they learn of them? What did they value in terms of Hip-Hop image and fashion? How did they learn a Hip-Hop move? Who were the prominent figures in their era? Who were their favorite artists? Who influenced the popular culture of their day (movies, music, cinema, etc.)? Which were the hottest clubs and Hip-Hop venues? What ties them to a specific generation and why? What is their opinion on the most current era of Hip-Hop? Why, if at all, do they feel younger and older Hip-Hop figures/artists/lovers have difficulty relating? What generational disconnects can they identify? What similarities or differences do they see between Hip-Hop generations?

The stories and answers to the above questions were remarkably similar, no matter the age, background, or dance style of those I interviewed. In their initial exposure to the dance, each one started off feeling romantic about the form. They were in love with

everything and they wanted to learn more, but they had no idea about the values, rules, or history when they began. Each one described a significant event that shifted them into wanting to take more ownership over the art form. Some described the moment involving a club or a crew they were part of. Some even admitted that they took ownership because they were presented an opportunity to become more professional and to be paid for their work.

The older generation of dancers were street and club dancers. Many of them were sneaking into clubs when they were underage and they look back on this period with a sadness that it's not like that anymore. Opportunities from the internet shifted the dance scene away from clubs and into seeing battles and jams online, whereas the older guys personally knew the dancers with whom they were battling or jamming.

Some interviewees discussed Hip-Hip in dance studios. They commented on how studio owners saw the potential in teaching Hip-Hop to youth, particularly, so the training became competitive among studios and every dance studio was adding Hip-Hop to the curricular offerings. Therefore, almost every prospective dance studio teacher claimed to be able to teach Hip-Hop (although some may not have experienced practitioners or teachers immersed in the culture).

Performed cohesive pre-choreographed Hip-Hop routines began to appear on the competition circuit and in recitals. Young dancers, even ballet-trained dancers, wanted to learn the form. The dancers I interviewed described these pieces as "watered-down regurgitated routines." One B-Boy described it as a copy of a copy of a copy, with each version more distorted.

The route dancers take now is different. Battles take place in studios, with more qualified instructors, specifically those who had a good reputation from the clubs and street battles.

And then came America's Best Dance Crew and So You Think You Can Dance, tv shows where the audience has the ability to cast votes for the best dancers while the panel offers direct feedback. My interviewees think these shows are trash. If the dancers are good,

they are often exploited, underpaid and underrepresented. If they are not successful, they are forgotten. The smart and lucky dancers can shift to choreographing for online videos and/or opening a dance studio, or move into the academy and become dance scholars and educators, but they are no longer in the industry the way they were.

A lot of the people I interviewed are working hard to stay in the industry; hustling to find paid gigs, running from one rehearsal to another session, to a battle, a jam, an audition; they are all over the place, living in an apartment they share with several other people. They stay in it because they love what they do. It takes a toll however; because, seeing their families or having healthy relationships is a huge challenge.

Gangs

Before there were dance crews, there were gangs. When the Cross-Bronx Expressway was built, around 1955, it sent the wealthier people into the suburbs and the rest of the people into "affordable" housing, aka "the projects." Gangs formed primarily to protect what little turf they had. One of the Bronx gangs was the Ghetto Brothers, but by 1970 they were trying to end the violence between the gangs. According to Wikipedia, they were "more politically minded and less vengeful" than other gangs.

The designated peacemaker for the group was Cornell "Black Benjy" Benjamin. He was killed in 1971 and his death led to a meeting called by the Ghetto Brothers for all of New York city's most prominently known gangs to settle their differences. It was basically agreed that gangs fighting each other was counter productive in the mission of uplifting community and creating an environment well suited for growth and the next generation's advancement. "The Man" was the real enemy: those in higher positions of power who capitalize in economic status at the expense of those in lower standing.

One of the gangs that participated in the meeting that followed Benjy's death was the Black Spades, and the "enforcer" of that gang was Afrika Bambaataa. As a result of the meeting, he made it his mission to be an instrumental figure in creating outlets for gangs to

settle differences in other ways besides violence. He created "The Zulu Nation". To this day, the Zulu Nation promotes the ideals of Hip-Hop as a way of uplifting the culture and all communities through events he DJ'd, using music and dance to inspire community building.

Trends

During the decades that followed Hip-Hop's birth, one very prominent trend that was established is that the culture has always been the voice of the youth. Hip-Hop is the constantly evolving spirit and consciousness of urban youth that keeps recreating itself in a never-ending cycle. This culture was originally made popular by young people of underserved communities and has now transcended and transformed into something greater that spans all cultures, races and classes globally. In the earlier years of Hip-Hop's development, one would learn of block parties and events by word-of-mouth or invite from local Bronx natives. In our present day, all one has to do is pull up a search on YouTube for movement or look for events over social media networks. Performance venues have evolved as well. Audiences have gone from listening to MC Coke La Rock in the community park along side DJ Kool Herc, to attending Jay-Z's concerts at Madison Square Garden as well as other major arenas worldwide.

Through my research so far, some trends I have identified throughout all Hip-Hop generations include: economic hardship, police brutality and the influence of media on Hip-Hop dance and pop culture.

During a Hip-Hop panel discussion that I attended at UMD as a part of the Subversive Artist Festival, these trends were discussed and more. When I came into the university, value systems such as what popular Hip-Hop culture deems to be "whack" mattered to me. Whack is sub-par dancing, usually ascribed to a newbie. The discussion of this by Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Goldie Patrick reinforced the idea that members of different generations might have different perspectives. Joseph and Patrick are from what I call the "Golden Age" of Hip-Hop. During the panel, Patrick actually stated that all whack

artists should be taken out and jumped. Joseph said he understood why she said that, but he also said we need whack artists to establish what is actually good artistry. One starts off as whack and evolves to become dope. I was reminded that there is a process of evolution in each dancer.

The current generation of Hip-Hop dancers is often seen as entitled and narcissistic, constantly requiring instant-gratification. They want the respect of the elders without being willing to work to the degree of concentration needed. They feel they have advantages because of their access to YouTube and other social media. In my experience, the young dancers are information hungry, and even though they want the history and context, they also seem to want the delivery of that information to be on their own terms and they never want to make a mistake or lose a battle.

Specific Influences on the concert

I had to put this research into action in the rehearsal process. First of all, I had to lead by example and to share the painful processes and struggles I was going through. This gave them permission to be vulnerable, to struggle, and sometimes, to fail.

Additional stories I shared with them from my research also helped us to understand each other and to engage in some hard discussions. One example I brought up was a story I heard about from a documentary.

Blondie was a pop star in the 1980s who was friends with a popular Hip-Hop mogul named Fab Five Freddy. She was interested in learning about the developing fad of Hip-Hop and so Fab Five Freddy took her around to an event in the Bronx. After these events, Blondie used Fab Five Freddy in a music video, The Rapture. This was the first time rap was featured on MTV and it's significant that it was a white woman who initiated it.

I brought this story up when Reyna was learning about the history of Hip-Hop and it led to a discussion about the racial fatigue black people feel when we have to set the record straight, explaining oneself and the culture. I've always felt the fatigue on my own end but

really began understanding that many white people have a different version of fatigue. They don't immediately understand anything about the culture yet, they have to endorse the fatigue of black people and also endure the relentless topic of white privilege.

In the piece, as the choreographer, I had to acknowledge Reyna's role as the only white person in the cast. Telling her story reminded me of the story of Blondie and Fab Five Freddy. That story helped us all to understand that sometimes white privilege is a gateway to access and that we all are responsible for making sure authenticity and truth are evident.

Another influence on my thesis was the work of Charles "Lil Buck" Riley. In February of 2015, I was given the opportunity to write an article for Ngoma Reader (a DC local dance magazine). The article was entitled "Hip-Hop's Fusion in Classical Dance," and detailed Lil Buck's growth from being a Memphis area street dancer to now one of the most prominent mainstream dancers seen today. Lil' Buck specializes in a dance style called "Jookin" and studied ballet for two years, on scholarship, with the New Ballet Ensemble in Memphis, Tennessee. He originally accepted the scholarship under the condition that he would not have to wear tights, but later warmed up to the required attire so as not to be excluded from potential performances. Lil' Buck is most notably known for his appearance on the Ellen Degeneres Show and his performance of "The Dying Swan" alongside Yo-Yo Ma. In 2015, he was featured dancing & modeling the "Rag and Bone" Men's line with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Most recently, he was also featured in the iPhone 7 ad as well as a popular advertisement for Audi. Lil Buck is an inspiring performer and artist that has been pushing the envelope by showcasing Hip-Hop movement to classical music. His path symbolizes a trend where Hip-Hop becomes the gateway for young dancers to become enlightened by a formal performance arena.

As a subculture that developed in the Bronx during the 1970s, Hip-Hop culture and the dance form that evolved out of this culture continues to evolve in the present day. In the article "The Future Is Now, and It Is Odd: A Retrospective on Hip-hop" by Andrew Doscas, the author describes a new era of Hip-Hop where there are no rules. In 2008, the drop of

“808s and Heartbreak” by Kanye West marked the beginning of the Post-Modern Era of Hip-Hop, where artists no longer had to uphold the images that were so highly respected in generations before. Doscas states that artists no longer have to portray the gangster stereotype, “hang out with no shirt on, smothered in chains or wear fitted hats with all the price tags still on just to show its authentic.” Doscas cites how music shifted from the popularity of artists like 50 Cent, who gained his credibility because he was shot nine times and survived, to the popularity of Kanye West a high fashion icon who showed that Hip-Hop is about “doing what you want with it”.

This concert has allowed me the opportunity to examine ideas of building strong communities and identifying the work that I feel is necessary to do within that process. "Full Circle” is a culmination of experiences, music, movement and conflicts that I’ve had the pleasure of revisiting throughout my MFA process. I’m now part of what I call the bridging generation. A generation that was introduced to Hip-Hop culture during the golden age (late 80’s and early 90’s), and is now embracing the responsibility of guiding youthful Hip-Hop artists.

The term “Bridging” speaks to the process of me witnessing Hip-Hop culture evolve into realms that have far surpassed the project buildings of the Bronx where it was born. I feel it’s necessary to share my knowledge/experiences of the culture’s rich history in order to find a common ground with the evolved artistry that attracts the youth today. Trends and cycles within Hip-Hop culture and history seem to be resurfacing and evolving to fit the youth of today. I’d like to identify these trends and parallel them with my experiences in order to create dialogue through movement. Hip-Hop seems to be getting so much attention and it’s inspiring people now more than ever to express themselves.

History can be made by an individual. But a confluence of factors contribute to historical events happening. Some of those factors include the social context of the time, the economic context of the time, and the individual dream.

Chapter 4: About the Process: Designers, Rehearsals, Challenges, Triumphs

Collaborators

In my first big meeting with the design team, I brought in several images of what Hip-Hop culture meant to me. These included artists that inspired me in addition to a historical progression of my understanding of the culture. Some of the designers looked worried. My projections designer, Mark Costello, was excited and we agreed on almost everything. From the beginning, he was easy to talk to and ready to go.

Jeff Dorfman, my sound designer, was amazing to work with. Every talk I had with him was inspiring. I made him a list of the top ten songs that inspired me growing up and this became around fifty songs. He was OK with that, in fact he said that the playlist he made from my list was one he would listen to on his own, for pleasure. He was able to identify my vision, my sounds, and to build a score that worked beautifully. Jeff thinks of sound in profound ways; I learned that sound is more than loud or quiet, it can have specific qualities that help to tell the story.

I had already been conducting interviews with Hip-Hop artists and dancers, including the cast members. It was Jeff who said to me, "Why not use some of these in the piece?" I loved that idea, and the interviews became an important part of the sound score.

Tyler Herald was my set designer. I shared him with my colleague, Sarah Oppenheim, and this was tough for him. I was much more relaxed in the beginning about the set, whereas Sarah was minutely specific. I paid a price for this later on, when I realized that my requests were not clear to him. When it came time to look at the first rendering, what I told him was that I was interested in researching things about inner city community that are

prevalent, such as crates, and other readily available items. Tyler only heard crates. So the first rendering was sparse. Tyler wanted to paint the crates, and this was completely not what I wanted. I wanted a set that supported the idea of an inner city environment but wasn't too specific.

Eventually, I had to arrange more meetings, giving him specific images that inspired me, and he did the same. The more specific I was with Tyler, the better the results. This was different from my experience with Mark, the projection designer, and Jeff, the sound designer, both of whom were able to riff off of my ideas with some ease.

Alexa Duimstra was assigned to be my costume designer. After the first design meeting, she approached me, nervously explaining she did not have much experience in "this area." She knew little about Hip-Hop culture and even less about the clothing people wear. The clothing matters in the cyphers. In many cases, people wear clothes that represent an idea, a particular rap group, or an historic period in rap. But overall, the idea is making something out of nothing. I wanted to show that when people who have very little leave the house, they want to dress like they have everything. And they want to be fresh, in the sense that they are successful and have status.

Eventually, it became clear to me that Alexa did not appear to be connected to the project. She did not understand what I meant or needed. We agreed that she would not be the designer and that in fact, Ama and I would shop for the items we felt were appropriate and that the costume shop would help us to alter, add, or construct what we wanted.

For example, the jacket Jonathan wore was reminiscent of the 1970s New York City gangs. It represented the gang influence on Hip-Hop culture. It was important to include because, during the emergence of Hip-Hop, gangs demonstrated the ability to come together as a community promoting positivity instead of violence. I purchased a denim jacket that had an image of an American flag on the back of it. I had the shop cut off the sleeves to make it into a vest. I asked them to sketch across the flag on the back, as graffiti: "Land of the free?" and distress the denim look of the vest to age it.

The lighting designer actually came in last, after the staging was done, and the costumes, set, projections and color scheme was delineated. Brandi Martin and I were able to talk about the feel of each scene, rather than my requesting a specific spot, for example. From the very beginning, I told her I wanted the feel of a party, but also isolated moments so it wasn't active, energetic lighting throughout but the occasional feel of a streetlight illuminating a block or the notion of how a city bridge is lit, passing cars, etc.

I had a lot of feelings about how I was being addressed during the process of building the work. I felt exhausted from explaining the vocabulary of Hip-Hop to everyone on the design and production team and as I have said, several of them seemed anxious about being part of a Hip-Hop work. Khalid Long, my dramaturg, was a great translator for me. I could tell him what I was trying to do and he could translate it into the type of language theatre people use.

Khalid had already done a lot of research on Hip-Hop culture, including studying the book, *It's Bigger Than Hip Hop* by M. K. Asante Jr. He also pointed out that I had not researched women in Hip-Hop much up to that point. After this chat, I wanted to dive more deeply into the issues, beyond the cypher I was creating.

He sat in on my meetings as extra support. If he felt the conversation was deviating from what we had previously discussed, he was willing to jump in and refocus the discussion back to what I wanted.

My stage manager, Tarythe Albrecht, was simply amazing. We had a beginning meeting to discuss what she could do to support the process. My main concern was communication among the dancers, designers, shop, faculty on my committee, and myself. Tarythe was very quick and efficient about sending out daily emails about what the rehearsal process was revealing to all involved. She ran the music in rehearsals and identified potential problem areas I needed to think about and address. She made agendas for me to keep an efficient schedule leading up to showings, design meetings, technical runs, and the performances themselves.

On another level, Tarythe became a sort-of mediator between Ama and me whenever the family concerns interfered with the rehearsal process. For example, we did not always have child care and we had a 7-8 month old infant. Tarythe was more than a stage manager; she became an adjunct family member.

Marketing

The first marketing meeting was shared by Sarah and I with the marketing team for the Clarice. The first written description of my piece was not what I had hoped for. I wanted to point out the bridging of community, and they seemed to want to write about the Clarice bringing in Hip-Hop. The first flyer had me in the foreground, Ama in the background and both of us outlined in white. The description was "freestyle hip-hop expression" (See below or Appendix II). I freaked out a little because I already felt pressure from my Hip-Hop community to represent something more authentic than that picture or description revealed. I was already under that pressure because many in the community don't believe Hip-Hop should be part of a concert stage performance.

My response to the marketing team was as follows:

> Thank you for this first image. It's a great starting point.
> I like the incorporation of the crate as it really captures elements of the show.
>
> Things I'm concerned about:
> The image depicted places men in the front and women in the back. I'm concerned about how this will read to the campus and surrounding community, and the idea of foreground/background doesn't give the essence of inclusivity that I'm hoping for.
> I'm also concerned about outlining black bodies in white lining.
>
> We can't see any of Sarah's information very clearly, which concerns me that the poster doesn't fully capture the idea of this being a shared evening.
> "Freestyle Hip-Hop Expression" doesn't quite convey what I'm hoping to get across. It's my fear that it's boxing in the performance into one particular idea.

Suggestions:

I really like the shot where Ama and I were pointing to our heads. It's a strong image and emotes cohesive understanding. It is also an important gesture within the work and audience will see the relationship between poster and performance.

Ama had an idea to encase us with an open door (Sarah mentioned in our production meetings that the audience could see into a different realm when the door on her wall is opened during her portion of the show) and keep the brick surrounding but make Sarah's name and blurb more prominent.

I'd love to hear your thoughts and discuss my concerns and suggestions further. Thank you for all your hard work on promoting our show!

-Chris

Image 1: Initial render

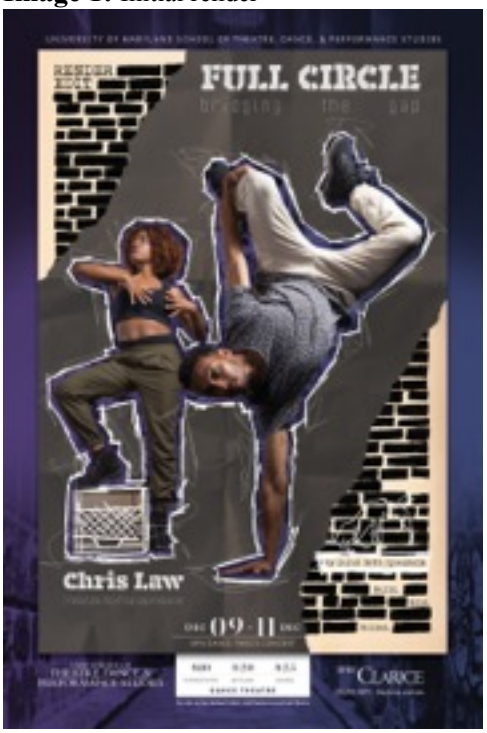


Image 2: Final render

Committee

The committee helped me by observing rehearsals, offering suggestions for approaches and guidance, identifying places where my attention needed to go. Alvin Mayes has an extremely detailed eye and was really helpful in providing notes after each of the rehearsals he attended. He also has such a strong cultural understanding of inner city practices as he hails from Detroit, Michigan. I very much enjoyed his personal stories he shared in watching my choreography and was happy that he was able to parallel his life experiences with the material.

Sara Pearson, having seen a lot of the material in her choreography class, gave me space and time to make sense of my decisions, always remaining available for check-ins if needed. Her feedback was especially helpful during viewings. I appreciate her clarity on the spacing and facings as the piece developed.

Artists-in-residence Christopher K. Morgan, an un-official committee member, also provided some much needed detailed observations. He encouraged me to dive deeper into the intentions of my choreography and dancers. He asked questions like… How does the movement support the stories depicted and how is this being communicated to the dancers? How can I play with the choreography to support the idea of circular viewing vs proscenium?

Miriam Phillips was a key figure in the overall research of my process. Her expertise in Kathak and Flamenco and our conversations about it revealed that there were lots of similarities among all the art forms. I noticed that Hip-Hop culture has recently been subject to many discussions regarding authenticity. We particularly discussed the ways that these dance forms could be presented on stage and still maintain their authentic origins. She was also an instrumental figure in the development of the rhythmic section my cast and I performed. Miriam attended a rehearsal and helped to layer the rhythms in the crate section. She challenged us to make our beats more complex and count them in a way that allowed us to memorize them at a muscular level.

My chair, Karen Bradley, was amazingly aware of the statements I was trying to convey. She pushed me to really examine and dissect each dancer's movement and observed and guided my process of communicating the intent of the movement to my cast. She helped me remain accountable to the message of the overall piece and never hesitated to question my choreographic decisions for the sake of getting me to practice speaking on my process. Karen also supported me with my writing throughout this entire process, always stressing the importance of documenting and communicating to my audience why this topic is a significant issue. I have always been confident in my ability to build movement. However, Karen gave me the extra push needed to feel just as confident in writing and communicating my thoughts.

Bringing it all together: As the rehearsals progressed, the designers added their components, and the Clarice got on board with marketing, the piece became satisfying. Everyone involved was able to unpack my ideas and even though I could not see the final product clearly yet, I began to trust the community of people around me to help bring the concert into fruition.

Chapter 5: Results: Feedback, Critical Reflection

In the end, I was really excited about what we had been able to put together. Several aspects were particularly successful.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the final results was the interviews. Audience members said they connected with a lot of the issues identified, specifically how it feels to navigate the world as a woman, particularly an African American woman. However, the successes did not come without challenges.

Challenges

Performing a devised cypher when these are usually participatory and spontaneous made for some interesting challenges. For example, we were challenged about how to transition the audience from partying to observing. We first tried having the dancers actually move people out of the space. To welcome them in and then push them around seemed wrong. We had had the experience of dancing in a club with someone who then goes off into doing their own thing, so we thought to try that. After a specific sound cue, the dancers knew to slow down the tempo of their movement, and to move toward the outside of the circle, leaving whomever they had been dancing with. The music also slowed down, and the audience got the message that something was happening and they were not part of it. The circle formed fluidly.

Another challenge was about the issue of where the "front" was. In rehearsals, we had to change studios and spaces a lot, and that was disorienting. Getting the cast used to the fact that every end of the circle was the "front" was a challenge. I found myself defining front in each space, just so they could have a reference. But as rehearsals evolved, I kept hearing that we were still orienting toward a specific front, and I had to choreograph specific

orientations toward specific parts of the circle in order to break the focus on a "front". I also told them to develop curved pathways within the circle and to open their focus to pan the entire circle to help combat this issue.

Critical Reflection & Feedback

Despite some early bumps, the costuming was, in the end, successful. Jonathan's costume was a solid success, and it allowed Jonathan to embody the character he was playing. All of the costumes helped the dancers feel more authentically in character and in the cypher.

I was most excited about the set, in the end. We began with only crates and ended with an environment that could have been any urban community. I heard from audience members, "This felt just like my summers in …" Pittsburgh, New York City, Los Angeles, D.C., Atlanta, Baltimore….

I was successfully able to translate my choreography from being devised to being organic in appearance and feel. I was satisfied with the process and the results.

The dancers evolved through the process of performing the work. In the beginning, they had questioned the motivations for the movement, but once we were able to develop the characters, and also to address each one's issues within the work, clarity resulted. They had started off trying to be characters unlike themselves; in the end, they realized they were the characters.

One of my interviewees, a B-Boy, said that Hip-Hop is about etiquette; it's about how you carry yourself, period. It's important to keep assessing yourself and being aware as the first step to making changes. Full Circle allowed the dancers, the audiences, myself to own the process and the product. There's a part of the power structures that remains blind to the struggles that produce Hip-Hop, but these audiences were engaged. In the world of Hip-Hop, when people leave the cypher, that's when it fizzles out, but the audience for Full Circle was there for the uncomfortable parts as well. We invited them to stay and to learn, and they did.

Chapter 6: Future Considerations

I have always been involved in groups that promote social change or encourage awareness of issues. As a result of this work, I'm aware that this is how I like to make work; I am a social activist. I feel like it's my job to make people do not forget. I want the people who see my work to remember the names of the fallen, to understand the historical context of these happenings, and to find the parallels with their own situations.

The biggest challenge remains: What actions do we take to right the wrongs in our society?

Full Circle has been selected for the 2017-2018 season at Dance Place in Washington, DC and is scheduled for February 17-18, 2018. I'm very interested to see how the times will affect this piece. I plan to continue to address and update audiences on social issues that we face repetitively.

I'm also most interested in staying in touch with my dancers to see how the issues we addressed affect them and their own approaches to addressing the issues on a daily basis. I've invited all of them to be a part of the Dance Place version of the piece and to contribute to the evolution of the work.

I'm aware that I developed this piece within the context of a safe space, at the University of Maryland, where I was supported fully in every aspect. How will this work fare in a more critical world with less creative support?

I'm concerned about the desensitization around these issues; that we will all be so used to the horror stories that the work will just be seen as another political statement with no solutions. I want people to take responsibility, like the dancers do, and to empower themselves to do what they can in their own lives, to dialogue more about the issues, being present in community, remaining available.

Glossary

Breaking/B-boy: B-boying or breaking, also called breakdancing, is a style of street dance that originated primarily among Puerto Rican and African American youths during the mid-1970s in the Bronx New York.

Cypher: a performance circle in which there is an exchange between and among performers and observers. Performers have a responsibility to jump in and dialogue through dance, spoken word and other expressions of artistic ability.

Freestyling: Improvised self expression most commonly performed verbally (rapping or spoken word) or in dance form.

Hip-Hop: A subculture and art movement developed by African Americans and Latinos from the inner-city South Bronx area of New York during the late 1960s to early 1970s.

House Dance: is a social dance primarily danced to house music that has roots in the clubs of Chicago and of New York. The main elements of House dance include "Footwork," "Jacking," and “Lofting". House dance is often improvised and emphasizes fast and complex foot-oriented steps combined with fluid movements in the torso, as well as foot work.

Krump: An acronym for Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise. It is a dance form that was pioneered by Tight Eyez aka Ceasare Willis and Big Mijo. It is an aggressive, and spiritual form of dance with christian roots. Its movements include Chest Pops, Stomps, Arm-swings, Syncs, Puzzles, Bangs, and Kill-Offs. There are supposedly 3 Levels to krumping. Krump, Buckness, and Ampness. While some (clowns) mistakingly claim that Tommy the Clown created krumping this is not the case.

Locking: A street dance originating from the funk era of music and invented by a popular soul train dancer called Don "Campbellock" Campbell. Famously known as being created by accident, Don Campbell attempted to perform a popular social dance called the “Funky Chicken”. Instead of moving his arms fluidly, he locked them into a winged position and held this pose. He created more moves and patterns and called his new dance "Campbellocking" or just “Locking”.

Popping: A street dance and one of the original funk styles that came from Fresno, California during the late 1960s–1970s. The quick tensing and releasing of muscles, which creates a POP effect, designed initially to be done on beat to Funk Music.

Urban Movement: Movement developed in a specific urban or inner-city setting and influenced by street dance culture.

Vogue: Inspired by *Vogue* magazine, voguing is characterized by model-like poses integrated with angular, linear, and rigid arm, leg, and body movements. This style of dance arose from Harlem ballrooms by African American drag queens in the early 1960s. It was originally called "presentation" and later "performance". Over the years, the dance evolved into the more intricate and illusory form that is now called "vogue". Voguing is continually developed further as an established dance form that is practiced in the underground LGBTQ ballroom scene and clubs in major cities throughout the United States—mainly New York City- competing for trophies and prizes.

Waacking/Punk A form of dance created in the LGBTQ clubs of Los Angeles, during the 1970s disco era. This dance style was named punking because "punk" was a derogatory term for gay men in the 1970s. Naming the style punking was a way of turning this negative term into something positive. Within punking, a whack was a specific movement within the punking style. Although the heterosexual dance community enjoyed punking, they did not want to associate themselves with the negative, violent, and sexual connotations of punking and therefore called the dance genre "waackin". Later, Tyrone Proctor added the "g" to waackin to make it "waacking".

Waacking consists of moving the arms to the music beat, typically in a movement of the arms over and behind the shoulder. Waacking also contains other elements such as posing and footwork. Waacking puts a strong emphasis on musicality and interpretation of the music and its rhythm. It also took inspiration stylistically from movie stars such as Lauren Bacall, Marlene Dietrich, Bette Davis and James Dean.

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