SPRING 2025

indance

DISCOURSE + DIALOGUE TO UNIFY, STRENGTHEN + AMPLIFY

CONTENTS

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***By Our Hands*, Georgia Incarceration Performance Project (2020), photo by Clay Chastain (Page 12)**

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Cover: Left to right: Bhumi Patel, Stephanie Heit, and Raven Malouf-Renning, Queer Mad Electrics at Township Commons Park, Oakland

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WELCOME SPRING

by Bhumi B Patel, Guest Editor

HOPE IS A PRACTICE, I tell myself over and over again these days in the early months of 2025 when every news update indicates more upheaval and violence from the US Federal government, funding bodies across the US, and between individuals following the lead of those in power. These days, I feel simultaneously inconsolable and lit up by a willful fire to continue fighting for liberation. I write to friends, I attend actions, and very often, I cry as I ingest the state of the world.

When I began the process of curating this issue of *In Dance* for Spring 2025, I reached out to artists, scholars, writers, movers with whom I feel deeply Judith Butler's provocation that we must be "undone by each other."[1] Butler writes, "if we're not, we're missing something."[2] I am undone by the writers brought together in this issue: undone by their capacity to see the world and imagine otherwise; undone by their trust in me to bring something into the world; undone by their artistic practices and willful choices to keep making art.

None of us here have come up with utopia, but each of the writers, I believe, has found ways to be with what Anna Tsing calls an "impossible present, this time of rupture, a world haunted with the threat of extinction"[3] and to make it more bearable, more alive. As I reached out to folks, this issue became an issue highlighting women or women-adjacent writers, many of whom are queer-identifying, many of whom are of color, and when I noticed this about this group, I realised that we are the people who have historically had to dream other futures. And to borrow from June Jordan, we are the ones we've been waiting for. Our survival(s) have always depended upon our capacity for connection and dreaming that another world is possible.

Each of these authors have considered what it means to them or how they are able to imagine the world or dance or the arts otherwise and into the future. In 2000, Octavia Butler wrote a piece for Essence magazine titled, "A Few Rules for Predicting the Future." She wrote: "Of course, writing novels about the future doesn't give me any special ability to foretell the future. But it does encourage me to use our past and present behaviors as guides to the kind of world we seem to be creating. The past, for example, is filled with repeating cycles of strength and weakness, wisdom and stupidity, empire and ashes."[4] The past for me is a way to look for those who have repeatedly been left out. I continue to look for us and know we are out there. In this world where words like "activism," "bias," "BIPOC," "disabilities," "gender," "LGBTQ," "race," and "women" (just to name a few) show up on a leaked list of "banned" words from the National Science Foundation, that is informed by the Executive Order 14151, "Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing," we need to hone our skills of imagination now more than ever.

In "The Future is Behind Us, Too," Julie B. Johnson orients us toward the imperative of memory work and visioning forward and backward "leap over the time between then and now to find connection, clarity, and understanding." Hannah Schwadron and Ivanna Pengelley write that "Like birds migrating, we don't have a map, but we have practices to personally return to and to share with others," carving pathways toward liberation through improvisation. Veronica Jiao encourages us to consider the importance of booty shaking so that we can be "with childlike wonder that somehow still flourishes within colonialism before capitalism has the chance to squash it out." Raissa Simpson takes on the "economics of dance through empirical studies on Black dance" to challenge and reimagine how Black leaders in dance forge pathways forward for the field. Rebecca Fitton brings together the past to inform the future in a moment of upheaval in the arts funding landscape to "share some mutual calls to action as we DREAM toward a more creative solution than the current philanthropic approach." Stephanie Heit utilizes the metaphor of conduction to improvise through dancing and writing to "keep weaving these connections that slowly and with care are a pulsing thing, a web of antennaed knowing, so many strings, vibrating in song." Yayoi Kambara comes home to her body as a way to face "the risk of living." And finally, Norah Zuniga Shaw speaks through the Climate Banshee to engage with the questions of what makes (our) futures "livable."

Each of these writers dreams, by way of past, present, and future to make and remake the world at every turn. Let us remember that Mariame Kaba writes, "everything that is worthwhile is done with other people."[5] This group of writers represents a window into the type of people with whom I hope to do worthwhile things in this world. So I ask you this now: Do you feel like you have the ability and capacity to imagine that the world around you could be different? What does that look like?

in solidarity and community,
Bhumi

1 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2005), 19.
2 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2005), 19.
3 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), G6.

4 Octavia E. Butler, "A Few Rules for Predicting the Future," *Essence Magazine*, May 2000, 166.

5 Mariame Kaba, We Do this 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice (Haymarket Books, 2021), 178.

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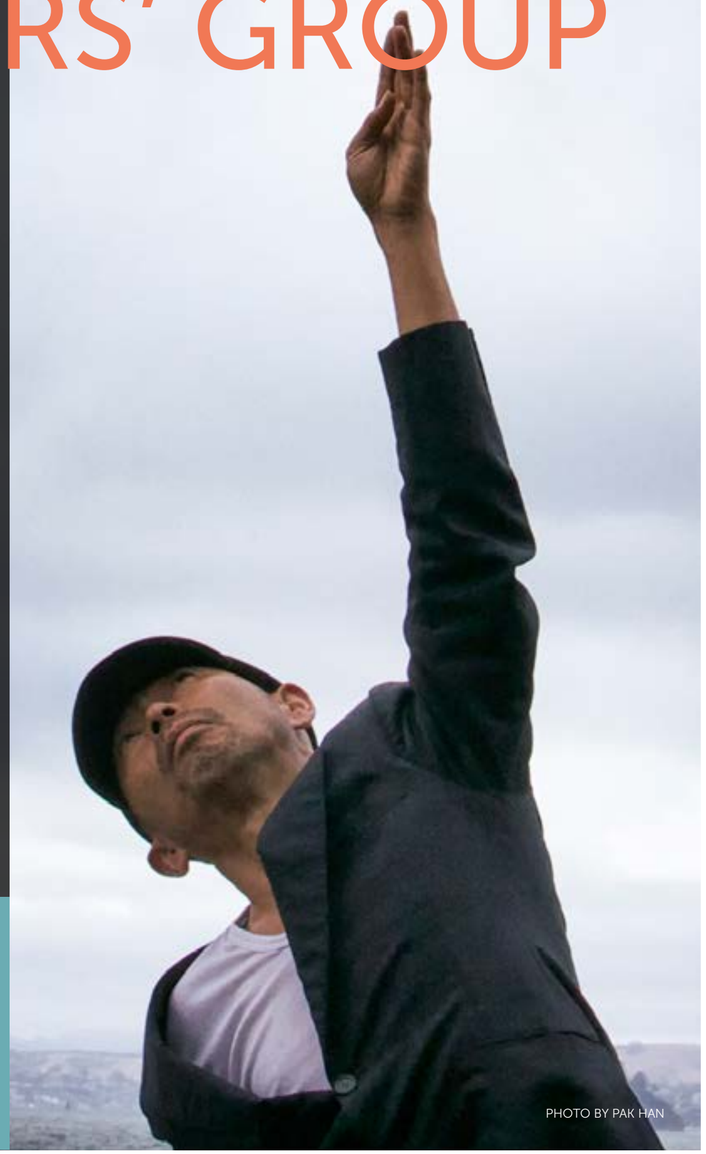

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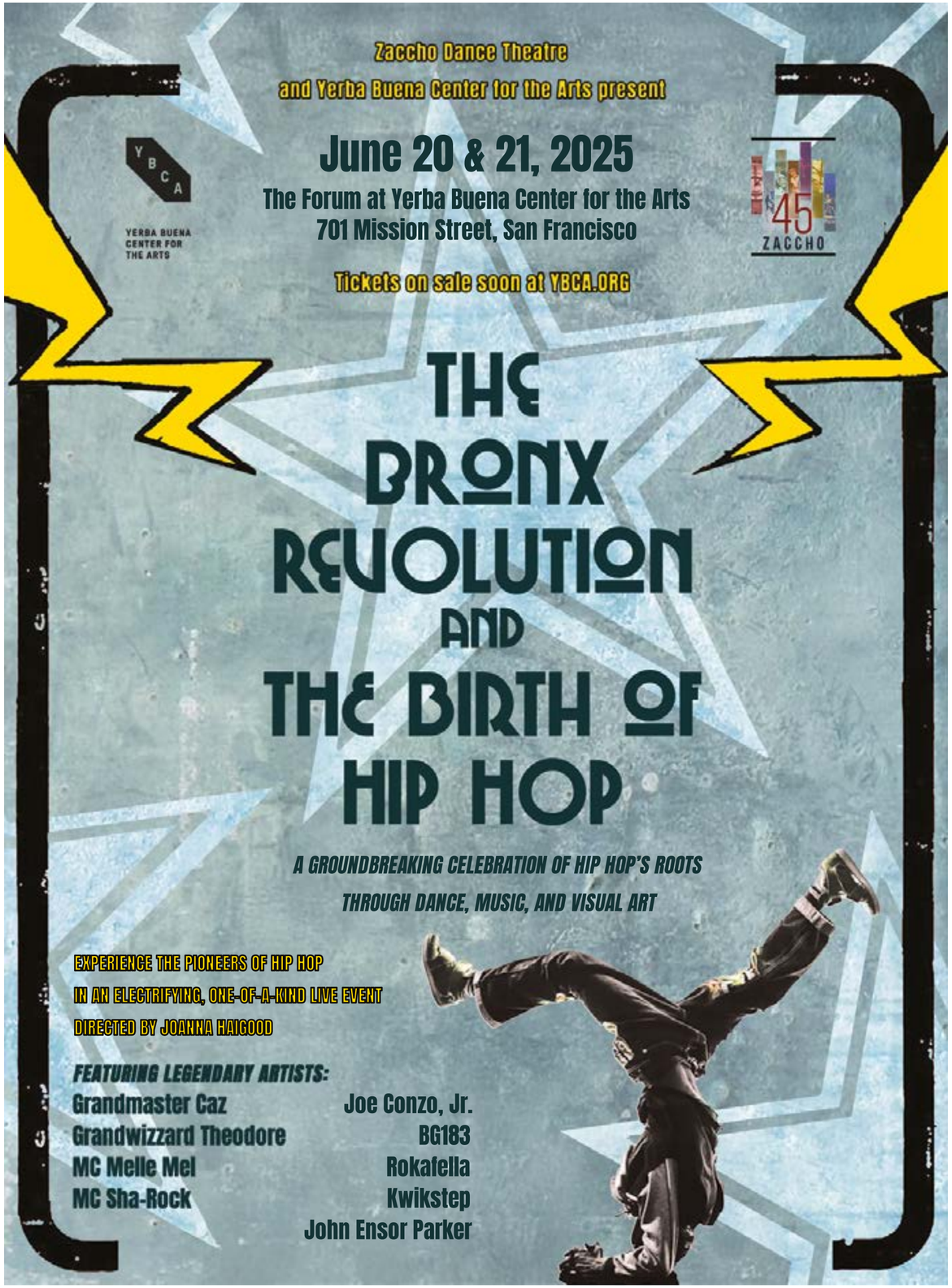

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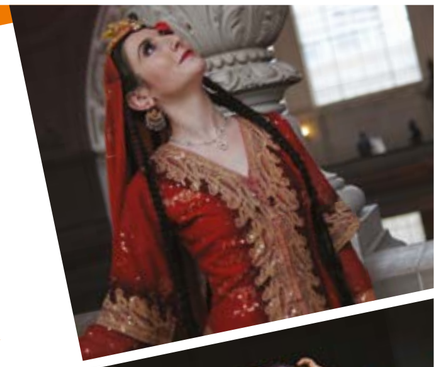

ALL DANCE • ALL FREE • ALL WEEK

Clockwise from top: 1) Natalie Nayun, photo provided by Nayun Dance; 2) Koozi, photo by Artful Eye Photography; 3) Photo provided by SjDANCEco; 4) Archana Raja, Photo by Stories by Sreeja; 5) Bay Area Dance Week Kickoff, photo by James Watkins; 6) Samara Atkins at BANDALOOP studios, photo by Brooke Anderson; 7) Photo provided by Project Commotion

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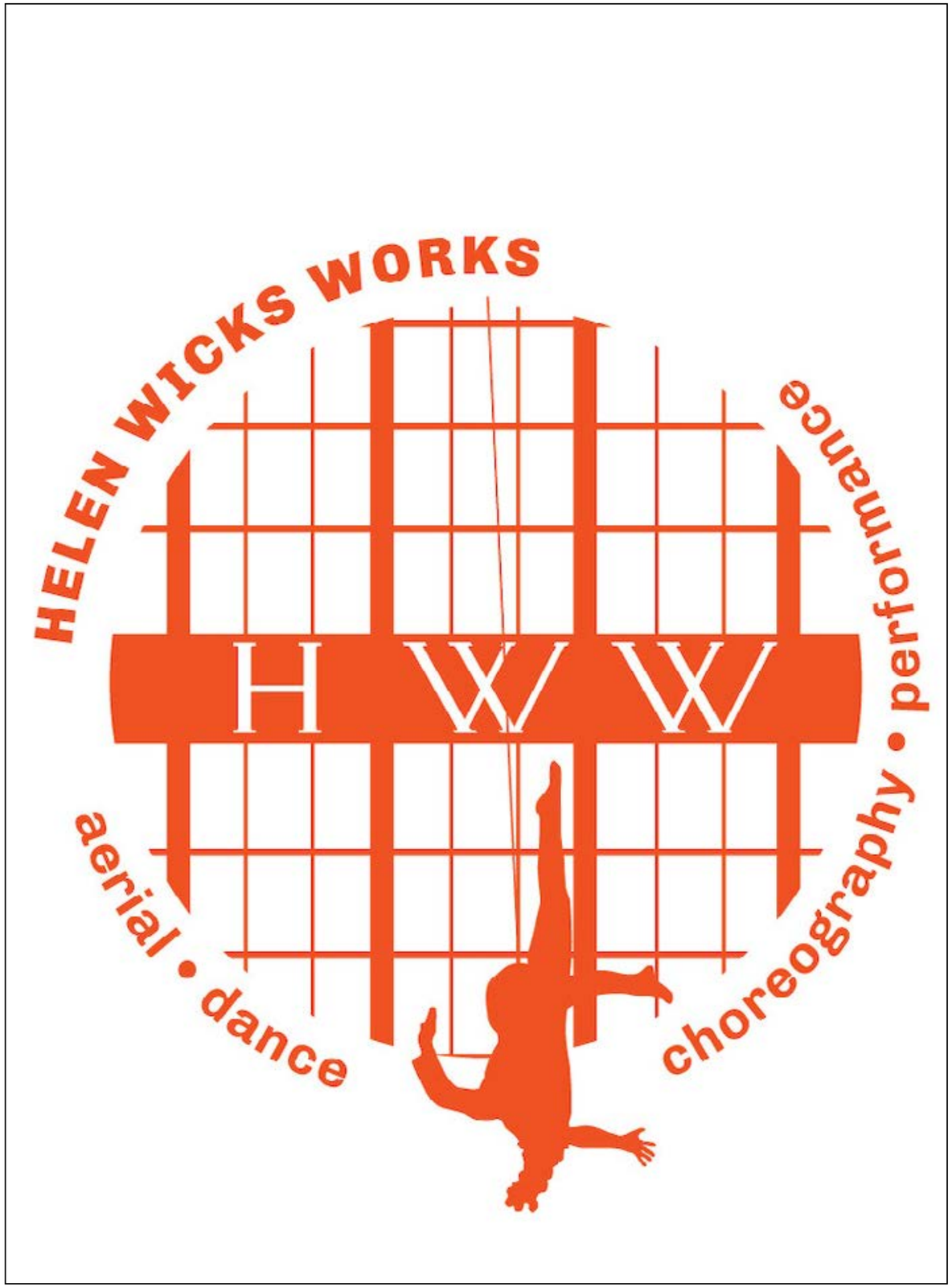
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The future is behind us, too

by JULIE B. JOHNSON, PHD

PHOTO BY CLAY CHASTAIN

By Our Hands, Georgia Incarceration Performance Project (2020)

Idle Crimes & Heavy Work **site responsive performance at Whittier Mill (2021), featuring Moving Our Stories and Giwayen Mata**

PHOTO BY KEVIN L. PARKER / CREATIV IMAGES

I think there are many ways to be a Visionary, but I often associate it with foresight… the kind of foresight that enables seeing and thinking about the world many years from now. I think about a Visionary as someone who is able to spend time in the murky, unknown void that is our "future," to see possibility and build a world there. They leap over the time between *now* and *then* and generate potential strategies and technologies, perhaps well before we have the means to make it so.

When I spend time in the unknown, I am more often dreaming about the past. Who came before me? What did they create? Who did they love? What wisdom did they generate? How did they dance? What stories remain untold, and why? I believe that the answers to these questions might help me understand how we arrived at this moment now, where we go from here, and what strategies we need to build the future worlds that the Visionaries are dreaming up. In this sense, I understand myself as a Memory Worker. I leap over the time between *then* and *now* to find connection, clarity, and understanding.

I don't mean to suggest that one can't work both in the past and the future. In fact, I think many people do. I am simply reflecting on hindsight as an intentional mode of visioning. I have come to deeply appreciate mindful facilitation to explore memory, perhaps because I have so many gaps in my own past (likely trauma-related dissociation that created chasms of lost time in the archive of my experience). Sense perception – sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, and movement, to name a few – serve as "happy helpers" to reintroduce myself to past experiences by focusing my attention on the past through my body.

Remember a time when you experienced or witnessed joy. What sights do you see when you recall this memory? What colors, what faces, what shapes? Are there pools of light or shadows? In this memory, what sounds do you hear? Are there voices, is there music? Sounds of nature or industry? What scents do you notice in this memory? What textures do you feel against your skin, under your feet, or in your palms? How do you move in this memory? Where do you feel this memory in your body?

An Embodied Memory Framework

It was 2015 when I first thought about making this sort of memory work an intentional part of my creative practice. A year prior, I attended Urban Bush Women's Summer Leadership Institute in New Orleans and witnessed each member of the company present what they referred to as an "embodied history," an intimate sharing of their dance journey through gesture, movement, and voice. It seemed to open a portal to the past so that we the audience could see/hear/feel the events unfold that resulted in them becoming a UBW company member and performing for us, in that place, at that time. After the Institute, when I returned to Philadelphia where I was pursuing a PhD in Dance Studies at Temple University, I thought about how significant embodied memory was to my own journey through doctoral studies. I was researching meanings and experiences of 'community' in Philadelphia-area West African dance classes. Research participants (an intergenerational group of Black women and men who either danced or played percussion in the classes) expressed inherent connections between their sense of communal belonging and African dance classes as sites of personal and cultural memory. My field notes were full of embodied reflections of experiences on the dance floor that elicit kinesthetic responses every time I reread them.

My knees are bent. My torso is pitched forward with my chest almost parallel to the floor. A rhythmic pulse is riding up my spine like a wave. I shift my weight side to side with a slight shuffle step from right foot to left. I dip my head and, as each foot returns from its shuffle, I thrust my hips back. My arms push out over each step, as if shooing away some invisible nuisance. Right and left, right and left, a constant rhythmic bob. The air is thick but I cannot smell it; I feel immersed in the musty dampness collectively created by the moving bodies in the room. The heat of effort opens my pores, I can feel the sweat beading on the surface of my skin. The thirty minute warmup at the beginning of class prepared me for this moment, raising my heart rate and pumping the blood through my body… I am swimming in a sensation of 'aliveness.' In my periphery, I see a few of my classmates dipping their heads and pushing their arms, riding the same wave. The dim floodlights hanging from the ceiling and the pencil-colored wooden floor work together to cast a golden hue around this old dance space. Splashes of bright colors and patterns enter my view as I turn my head and see all the lapas, the wrap skirts we usually wear to this West African dance class, tied around the waists of the women bobbing along with me. Syncopated movement of colors - greens, golds, and pinks, deep indigos and corals - offer visual layers of rhythm driving our dance.[1]

This experience helped deepen my understanding of the role that the body's sense perception can play in memory work. From there, I developed a framework for embodied memory mapping that draws on a long lineage of memory workers – artists, scholars, culture keepers – who uphold the idea that our personal and cultural histories are stored in our bodies.[2] This work is based on four premises:

1. Our memories live and move in our bodies;
2. Through dancing, observing, writing, and discussing, we can draw on sense perception (what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and how we move) to locate and access embodied memory;
3. By mapping, moving, and sharing our stories, we can more deeply understand ourselves, each other, and the ways in which we operate in the world;
4. This understanding creates empathic connections that can effect personal and social change – starting at the level of the body (juliebjohnson.com)[3]

In 2015, I established a creative practice, Moving Our Stories, that would become the mechanism for exploring this framework. Moving Our Stories uses participatory dance and embodied memory mapping to amplify the histories, lived experiences, and bodily knowledge of Black women as a strategy towards collective liberation and

1 Julie B. Johnson, *Dancing Down the Floor: Experiences & Meanings of 'Community' in a West African Dance Class in Philadelphia* (Phd. diss., Temple University, 2016), xiii.

2 In particular, I draw from Kariamu Welsh's theories on epic memory; Carrie Nolan's work on memory and gesture in Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*. Harvard University Press, 2009; and Alvin Ailey's concept of blood memory.

3 This paragraph on the four premises of embodied memory mapping appears verbatim on the author's website, juliebjohnson.com, and in previous publications.

Dr. Julie B. Johnson at the *Idle Crimes & Heavy Work* archival & visual media installation, 7 Stages Theatre (2022)

PHOTO BY JULIE B. JOHNSON

restoration *for all*. I am grateful that the ten years since its inception have been full of generative collaborations with individuals, grassroots organizations, and cultural institutions. Together, we honor dancing bodies as a vital mode of research, community connection, and social change. I learn so much from each encounter, and strive to carry this knowledge into every new experience. Whether facilitating workshops, community dinners, video chat wellness check-ins, abolition study groups[4], dance films, or site responsive performances, MOS projects invite inquiry about the relationship between our dancing bodies, the land on which we dance, the social and cultural structures that inform our dancing, and the experiences of those who came before us.

4 In 2020, collaborators and I found ourselves situated in national conversations about police and prison abolition since our work focused on exploring carceral histories. We decided to host abolition study groups to learn more and grapple with some complex ideas around art-making and justice. Since then, I have been exploring how my dance practice might align with the praxis of Abolition Feminism, drawing from the work of Mariam Kaba, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Angela Davis, and Critical Resistance, to name just a few organizers and collectives in the movement.

Encountering Material Archives

My earliest encounter with an archival collection that I can recall was in the basement of our family home in White Plains, NY. We had moved from Baltimore in 1986 when I was 7 years old, and my older sister and I helped the family settle into our new home by removing all the stickers that the moving company had placed on every single piece of furniture. The lowest level of the house became the storage space for all the things that were never unpacked. Down the basement stairs felt like another world. I could barely fit my little body between the mountains of cardboard moving boxes marked "memorabilia." My sister and I carved narrow pathways, nooks and crannies as we explored these mystery boxes full of old family photographs, dad's highschool sports trophies, documents, school papers, toys, yearbooks, tattered books, and more. Before this, I didn't know what "memorabilia" meant, but this experience, looking through this treasure trove of memories, the word became magical to me.

Some years later (in the early 90s), my dad embarked on a journey to discover our family's ancestral roots. He took several road trips down south to search through libraries, county and state archives, and to conduct oral history interviews with family elders. I remember how excited he was to come back with printouts of U.S. census records, wills, marriage licenses, and death certificates that collectively told the story of our family from generations before. This was before the era of Ancestry.com, so he had learned a lot about how to put the pieces together himself. He shared conversations with archivists and family members that would reveal a clue that would lead to the next clue and on and on. "Look, this record shows that your great great grandmother lived at this address!" He talked about genealogical research like an Indiana Jones story – but replaced the boulders, spiders, and Nazis with his embodied memories of what it was like to drive through the south as a Black man, imagining the ghosts of ancestors lurking in the swampy forests as he traveled towards what he hoped would be answers to the questions about his past. He captured embodied reflections in his book, *Who Came Before Me? A Story of the Search for my Tomes and Lightfoot Roots and What I Found,*

"I was scared to death. The murky waters of the Great Dismal Swamp came right up to the shoulders of the narrow winding road as I drove past Suffolk, Virginia… The ghosts of the past were all around, and they seemed to be summoning me… I had palpitations; my heart was in my throat. I could not catch my breath. And, it was getting dark."[5]

My father transitioned in 2009. Those who didn't know him well likely perceived him as reserved and stoic... maybe even distant or unfeeling. He was pragmatic, methodical, and chose his moments to emote very carefully, so I understand this perception of him. But the rest of us, his family and close friends, knew that he had great capacity to feel things very deeply. He was sensitive and kind, thoughtful and contemplative, generous with his love, and he could be ridiculously silly. But his reflections on the Great Dismal Swamp caught me off guard. It let me know he could be vulnerable and afraid, and despite that, willing to face his fears to uncover the past – it was that important to him. I imagine he felt it was the least he could do to honor his ancestors who had sacrificed so much. It let me know what was at stake.

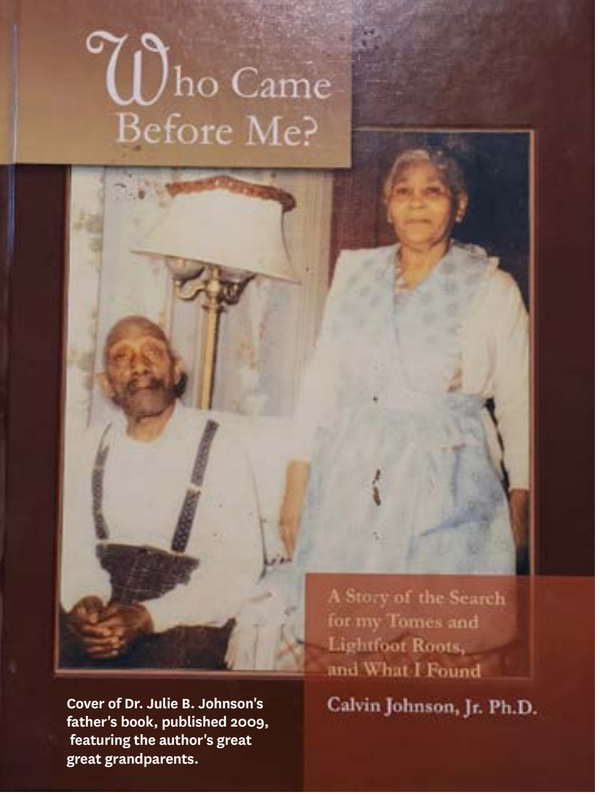
My father's curiosity and commitment to unearthing our ancestors' stories stand out in stark contrast to my memories of teenage drama and angst. His excitement for archival research eventually became my own. The deeper I delved into archival collections, the more I realized that ancestral voices aren't always documented in written records. Many collections were initiated and stewarded by white men in power who either had no knowledge of/interest in/access to experiences other than their own, or they were actively committed to excluding/erasing/revising those histories. So, when conducting my doctoral research from 2014–2016, it felt vital to include as many of those experiences as I could. I culled through the archives at the Philadelphia Folklore Project (PFP) searching for voices of elders and leaders within the city's West African dance and drum community. I found oral history interviews, transcripts, and program notes that offered insights into how this community emerged, took shape, and thrived for decades. Paired with the embodied research on the dance floor, and the interviews with other West African dance class participants in the community, my dissertation experience helped me figure out how to integrate the research of archival materials with the research of embodied memory. I continue this practice here in Atlanta every chance I get.

5 Calvin Johnson, Jr. *Who Came Before Me?* A Story of the Search for my Tomes and Lightfoot Roots and What I Found (Baltimore, MD, Gateway Press Inc., 2009), 1.

Making a Way Back to Go Forward

In 2019, I had the honor of serving as a co-director and choreographer for *The Georgia Incarceration Performance Project* (GAIPP) alongside some amazing faculty members from Spelman College (Kathleen Wessel and Keith Bolden) and The University of Georgia (Dr. Amma Y. Ghartey-Tagoe Kootin and Dr. Emily Sahakian). This cross-institutional collaboration centered archival research and interdisciplinary creative devising. Together with students, faculty, librarians, and archivists from both institutions, along with Atlanta-based artists and designers and justice-impacted students enrolled in college courses at Georgia-area prisons, we explored Georgia's history of convict leasing.[6] As UGA archivists pulled out box after box full of memories, it brought me back to the basement of my childhood home. The feel of tattered, old paper; the smell of weathered, crumbly leather book bindings; the yellowish hue of stained black and white photographs all felt familiar to me. The nostalgia, however, quickly turned heavy as we studied city records, police reports, whipping logs, photographs, and letters from elected officials in other states seeking guidance from Georgia's leaders about how to grow their own convict leasing system. Dr. Amma arranged for the archivists to bring the materials into our creative space. Collaboratively, we reviewed the materials, reflected, and moved our bodies - not always in that order. The year-long process culminated in a full-length production called *By Our Hands* which brought the archives to life through dance, theater, music, spoken word and visual media technology to shed light on the development of Georgia's carceral system from the turn of the twentieth century to today. This transformational experience taught me more about the lingering impact of slavery through the country's prison industrial complex than I could have ever hoped to learn by just reading about it or listening to a lecture. For example, it is one thing to read about the burgeoning railroad system in the mid 1800s and its role in proliferating convict leasing which disproportionately impacted Black men, women, and children, but it is quite another thing to hold a pair of 100 year old prison shackles in your hand, see photos of chain gangs driving the railroad spikes into the Georgia red clay, and then deepen the inquiry through the body using collaborative choreographic devices. One of my favorite scenes was a dance created by Spelman students that drew on archival evidence of Black women's resistance

6 Sarah Haley, author of *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*, explains convict leasing as a system of labor exploitation and state violence that builds on the legacy of slavery through "captivity, abjection, and gendered capitalism," (2016, p 4). According to Talitha LeFlouria, author of *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South*, Georgia's convict leasing system began in 1868 as a form of punishment in which able-bodied men and women were "legally parceled out to a series of private industries and farms… Georgia's state penitentiary… was composed of independently operated lease camps, governed by a syndicate of private contractors, 'whipping bosses,' and guards at the behest of the state" (2015, p 9-10).



Cover of Dr. Julie B. Johnson's father's book, published 2009, featuring the author's great great grandparents.

in the labor camps by sabotaging equipment, burning prison uniforms, and protesting corporeal punishment (whippings). Working on GAIPP changed me at a cellular level, I will never see this country the same way again.

In conjunction with my participation in GAIPP, I initiated *Idle Crimes & Heavy Work* through my creative practice, Moving Our Stories and worked with key Atlanta-based community partners such as Giwayen Mata (an "all-sistah, dance, percussion, and vocal ensemble") and The Chattahoochee Brick Company Descendants Coalition (a grassroots organization working to honor and preserve sites built by convict labor), to name a few.[7] *Idle Crimes & Heavy Work* (ICHW) is a collaborative dance research endeavor that explores Georgia's history of incarcerated labor through the lens of Black women's experiences. Driven by archival research (material and embodied) and site-responsive performance, and grounded in the principles of community-based participatory dance research, ICHW collaborators connect the stories of women past and present to sites in Atlanta embedded with their carceral labor. Like GAIPP, our collective is made up of dance artists, archivists, activists, educators, architects, historians, and justice-impacted citizens who endeavor together to understand our own relationship to the U.S. carceral system – how it has impacted us and our communities as citizens of this country built on forced labor and entangled in the prison industrial complex. We use embodied memory mapping, archival research, interactive performance, workshops, dance films, and community gatherings to build empathic bridges of connection between past and present. We dedicate our own creative labor to restoring erased histories and emblazoning the experiences of incarcerated Black women on the cityscapes of our community as an act of resistance through communal dances of love, liberation, and joy.[8] We look backwards to reckon with the past, and along the way, we discover ancestors' strategies of survival that may be the key to our future liberation.

As I write this, the Trump administration is conducting rapid, wide-sweeping, and devastating policy changes and budget cuts to federal institutions like the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Parks Service, the Department of Education, and the National Archives and Records Administration to name a few. They introduced a long list of words and phrases used to review federally funded programs like the NSF, including "women," "race," "black," "diversity," "historically," "cultural differences," and many more.[9] These words allow us to name our experience and hold institutions accountable to the way they treat us. By using these words to flag and dismantle programs, the Trump administration has now weaponized these words in the effort to erase the experiences of anyone that is not like them. When systems of oppression attempt to disembody us from our experiences, past and present, it puts our future in jeopardy. Dance keeps us in our bodies. It lets us connect. It is a way to remember who we are. I am grateful for every collaborator, mentor, and ancestor who has helped cultivate embodied memory work practices as modes of visioning. Now, more than ever, I understand what my father knew, we need to look back to move forward.

JULIE B. JOHNSON, PHD, is a dance artist and educator whose work centers on participatory dance and embodied memory mapping to amplify the histories, lived experiences, and bodily knowledge of Black women as a strategy towards collective liberation for all. She does this work joyfully with community partners through her creative practice, Moving Our Stories (established in 2015), and at Spelman College where she serves as an Assistant Professor of the Department of Dance Performance & Choreography. She brings this work to the publishing realm as a Co-Founder/Consulting Editor of The Dancer-Citizen, an online open-access scholarly dance journal exploring the work of socially engaged artists. Julie earned a PhD in Dance Studies at Temple University's Boyer College of Music and Dance.

7 I give thanks to these wonderful thought partners and collaborators; Tambra Omiyale Harris, Artistic Director of Giwayan Mata; Donna Stephens and Genia Billingsley who created the Chattachoochee Brick Company Descendants Coalition; Victoria Lemos, historian, tour guide, and host of the Archive Atlanta Podcast; Robert Thompson, historian and tour guide with Insight Cultural Tourism; and the team of Community Visioners, including: Lauren Neefe, Holly Smith, Dr. shady Radical, Dr. Vernelle Noel, Hawkins, and Christiana McLeod Horn.

8 This sentence also appears on the author's website, www.juliebjohnson.com, www.idlecrimes.com, and in previous publications.

9 Joel Achenbach, "Here are the Words Putting Science in the Crosshairs of Trump's Orders." *Washington Post*. Feb 4, 2025; Karen Yourish, Annie Daniel, et al. "These Words are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration." *The New York Times*. Mar 7, 2025.

PHOTO BY JULIE B. JOHNSON

A word collage of thought processing the question "What does it mean to you to imagine into the future?"

COLLAGE BY VERONICA JIAO

A Daily Booty Shake, Morning Doodles, and Whimsy

by VERONICA JIAO

How do you imagine worlds/dance/the arts/otherwise into the future— "how" as in what do I imagine, or "how" as in the actual practice of imagining? As I continue to heal my inner child and various traumas while navigating the current state of the world, I've found myself revisiting processing practices (the healthy ones, teehee) of my childhood and younger adulthood. In middle school, I would draw word-collages of inside jokes with my friends, much like the one included here (probably more intricate and exciting back then though), and in young adulthood—and now, although less often—I would open discussion on social media on nuanced topics via micro-essays on my Instagram Close Friends Stories. Because I am constantly being stimulated, answering big questions like, "How do you imagine THE FUTURE?" is more easily digestible when I connect the inner child to the present adult human. Please envision these paragraphs as a "tap / hold to read" IG Story post, white text on a black screen, and that privileged little green-highlighted white star in the top corner.

tap
hold to read

When I imagine worlds into the future, I've realized that descriptively, none of the anti-isms are the first things that pop into my head. Of course I imagine a world of anti-racism, anti-capitalism, accessibility, trans and queer as f*ck existence— but I'm not using those descriptors as the main foundation of the world I imagine.

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Anti-racism, anti-ableism, anti-capitalism, anti-sexism, etc. only exist because of the systems of oppression that they aim to dismantle. Though they are in opposition to these systems of power, they are still created constructs and spaces that ultimately *center* the oppressive systems because the systems must first be defined in order to defy.

In my imagined future, all of that goodness is already inherent to basic living. The "how" I'm caught up on at the moment is whether or not we arrive there linearly, or if we'll have taken a quantum leap across perceptions of time. Likely the latter, as my imagined future is grounded in practices of community building, shared leadership, and humanity and art-centered living, imagined through *my* personal lens of Filipino indigeneity. Ways of life typically associated with "developing" and "impoverished" countries, ancestral knowledge that existed before colonialism, but also ways of life associated with childlike wonder that somehow still flourishes *within* colonialism before capitalism has the chance to squash it out. When I imagine this global Wakanda, it's less heightened— liberation is expected and understood universally, in a common-sense way of, "Well, of course. Well, yes."

The term "embodied liberation" is nearly unheard of because it's so inherent to everyday life at this point in the future. (Right now it is nearly unheard of because only artists and activists are really using this language regularly.) Pace of life is easy-going, free from the need to produce goods for consumption in order to survive. The looming air of "The Administration" and "Politics" is nonexistent. It is a very tranquil state where society's needs of food, shelter, water, preventative health practices are all met easily, willingly, and through community-sourcing (mutual aid as the standard, as opposed to mutual aid out of last-resort).

The kids on the internet would call this tranquility of being "whimsy," or "delusion." The older kids on the internet would refer to that as "toxic positivity." The activist/organizer circles call it "radical dreaming for the future." I am at the intersection of all three of these pockets so I use all those terms interchangeably and within this context of an imagined future.

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More of my "how," as in rooted in what has existed for ages:

We are at a period of time where those who are just now awakening to the systems of oppression through which we're forced to move have finally arrived at trying out the vocabulary of "white supremacy," "dismantle," or "colonialism" in their every-other-day language. Whereas those of us who have understood these truths for a while are now at, "DON'T LOSE YOUR FUCKING WHIMSY BRO, DAYDREAM 25/8," an understanding that reaching back to our inner-child, inherent indigeneity as humans and not only geographical ancestors (hat tip to j. bouey for that concept), and creative wonder will fuel the abolition of all oppressive systems.

That's not a dig on those who have lived life privileged enough to thrive in these systems that it takes a gentle crescendo into fascism for them to awaken. Truly, it's not. But I do think we need to put them in little incubators of art therapy so that they can arrive with us at this dreamy state.

tap
hold to read

We cannot create a future we haven't imagined, and imagination takes creativity and dreaming.

More of my "how," as in *what* I imagine:

Imagine if every single human on the earth woke up with a little booty shake, a whole glass of water, a little food treat, and some doodling/painting/scribbling before doing anything else. That's radical and anti-capitalist as f*ck already, and that's only the first 45 minutes of the day. A little booty shake to reclaim the body outside of physical labor and awaken serotonin and joy; a whole glass of water and a little food treat as pleasurable nourishment outside of just food for survival; some doodling/painting/scribbling as tangible art not simply made for consumerism or money.

The only way I've been able to wake up remotely similarly to a little booty shake, water, treat, and art-therapy was on the tail-end of a debilitating depression. I was only able to have time for these things because my mental health had declined so badly in the months prior that I had no choice but to slow down. Even as I slowed down, I didn't have other sources of income, so I was still working, as much as I could manage between depressive episodes.

And this is speaking as someone with drinkable water, a grocery store within a block, a conscious practice of desocializing the pelvis over the past few years through dance and discussion, and access to financial support from friends, family, and mutual aid.

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More of my "how," as in what I imagine, cont'd:

Also, money doesn't exist in my future. Our currency exchange is Exchange itself. Example: my community has clean water, and we've figured out how to filter our water. We'll teach you how to do this, and in exchange, we'd love for y'all to teach us your particular way of writing and speaking. And we'll dance and sing together.

At its core, this is just cultural exchange, pre-capitalism and pre-colonialism/imperialism. It's not that the *value* of services and goods did not exist; it's that each community's well-being and genuine curiosity was the centerpiece to Exchange, and neither community's knowledge was deemed as superior or more valuable than the others. I've been fortunate to have friends in the present already building this future of barter, rooted in the past. Example: I performed in a benefit for my friend under a short rehearsal process, and in exchange they took my headshots. (High quality headshots cost about $300 edited.) I have another friend who provides astrology readings in exchange for having guests on a podcast.

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Cultural exchange and community-building outside of superiority and money, childlike wonder and whimsy, and bodies without social constructs all sounds *so basic*, and *is*, at its roots. The part where imagination comes in is how to get back to that from the point we're at now. We need every single person in on this thought process and brainstorm. For example: cultural exchange happens— everyone is trying their best on their DuoLingo streaks, and Gen Z is very interested in Mykonos, Greece all of a sudden; childlike wonder and whimsy exists in adults– I'm picturing all the sunset content and "I wish I was a fairy in a forest" content on the internet; and bodies without social constructs– well, we're all still working on that one…but line dances and TikTok dance challenges are out there.

I fully acknowledge and feel that I'm not sharing any new knowledge.

And I love that. We cannot create a future we haven't imagined, and imagination takes creativity and dreaming. Pieces of my imagined future exist in the present, but we are stuck in such a cycle of survival mode that even though we are shaking our hips, exchanging time and services for other time and services and friendship, and staying whimsical at the first sign fireflies in Central Park every year, we still have bills to pay and mouths to feed.

Liberation is happening on a micro-level, but it will take more people brave enough–or more delusion and toxic positivity–to really push us over the edge to embodied liberation on a macro-level.

Born on the traditional land of the Edisto Natchez-Kusso, Etiwan, & Kiawah peoples (Charleston, SC), **VERONICA JIAO** is a Filipino-American dance creative, educator, and administrator. As the grandchild of immigrants, she is engaged in the work of dismantling white supremacist structures as they exist in the arts. Her creative practice renders this work by archiving the embodied Asian-American experience through the mediums of dance improvisation, facilitating critical conversation, writing, collaborative community building, and teaching youth of marginalized backgrounds. She also co-hosts The Dance Union Podcast with j. bouey. As a performer, she has danced with Designated Movement Company, BABEL Movement, Josh Pacheco Dance Theater, Virgin Voyages Cruise Line, The Tallahassee Ballet, and on the National Tour of the Broadway musical Anastasia. As an administrator, she supports Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, founder of Urban Bush Women, and assists planning and team-building at CREA Interactivity.

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A BEAUTIFUL FUTURE: MOVING TOGETHER WHEN THE JOURNEY GETS BUMPY

by **HANNAH SCHWADRON & IVANNA PENGELLEY**

WE HEAD OUTSIDE in single file for the second half of class to be in the sun. One student flattens herself on the asphalt, chest down, hands folded under her head. Another slips socked feet out of laceless shoes, warming her toes on the hot court floor. A third moves against the concrete wall and into the shade, her back against the coolness with knees pulled up, and a group of us five stand and then sit as we draft the lyrics to our emerging song.

"Destiny is a calling that makes a beautiful journey."[1]

It's the line from the text we've been discussing all afternoon; a passage from adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy* on the art of flocking and the migratory patterns of birds, which then opens up to other profundities like the underground reaching of oak trees, who "grow such that their roots are intertwined and create a system of strength that is as resilient on a sunny day that it is in a hurricane."[2] And dandelions who "don't know whether they are a weed or a brilliance".[3] And cells, who "grow until they split and complexify" and in doing so, "interact and intersect and discover their purpose… and they serve it".[4] What emerges from these cycles are complex organisms, systems, movements, and societies, brown teaches, and like birds, they respond to destiny together. The destiny line stands out. It perks heads off desks and up out of sweatshirts, it invites the wise words of the female detention officer, until then silent behind her mask, who describes a kind of predestined force bigger than what we know.

Once in the sunny courtyard, we set the destiny line to a melody that etches into a groove the more we repeat it together, a kind of iterative development that tries on different pitches until it finds its tonal agreement. Snaps, head bobs, and shoulder sways keep time, and other lines layer in, inspired by the text. "Nothing is wasted, never a failure." Then: "From worm to butterfly". And last: "There's a purpose to it always, always, always", each "always" creeping up to the highest notes the group of us can hit. This gets a laugh each time and the song sort of explodes by the end in loud sounds and smiles. There's something contagious about making fun of the seriousness while reaching underneath to make sure the meaning counts.

We perform the song for Coach Hall, detention center lead educator, and the rest of the group who have been our seated witnesses in the chairs away from our small circle. Applause and a sense of accomplishment has us search for a name for the song. "Beautiful Journey" gets a few likes, but it's K whose idea gets the vote. "Nah" she says, "I like Beautiful Future" she waits a beat as others turn toward her, "Beautiful Future is better because the journey can get super bumpy….like these rocks in my shoes after sitting out here."

K is the most vocal in group discussion that day. It's her input that guides the move toward songwriting, since she liked to sing but hadn't done it in a while. Her memory of chorus resonated with the "cohesive," "shared direction" of emergence brown described, the recollection of which spurred others to bring in comparisons to basketball and dance team.

Inviting in movement, we try to flock together, a dance improvisation us co-facilitators introduce which raises eyebrows and seems to cement some deeper into desks. Eyes move around the circle of chairs like, is this for real. Some egg on others, come on, get up. We find this together and in different ways. I ground in and take

1 adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (AK Press), 12. Full text available here: https://ia803401.us.archive.org/20/items/brown-emergent-strategyfullbook/brown%20Emergent%2BStrategy%2Bfull%2Bbook.pdf. For readers who want to follow along with us, we cite pages from this copy of the book.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

INVITING IN MOVEMENT, WE TRY TO PHYSICALLY FLOCK TOGETHER, A DANCE IMPROVISATION US CO-FACILITATORS INTRODUCE WHICH RAISES EYEBROWS AND SEEMS TO CEMENT SOME DEEPER INTO DESKS.

flight: "Some of us can be the birds, some the bird watchers…" This lets out air and a small handful of us move into position, like brown writes, "staying separate not to crowd each other",[5] following the one in front, modulating our speed to keep the group together. A couple rounds in, through the false starts and giggles, we stop to ask the bird watchers what they notice. "Teamwork" one says, "Sync" another says and heads nod. We take it back to the text. "Birds don't make a plan to migrate, raising resources to fund their way, packing for scarce times, mapping out their pit stops." We read and discuss each line. "They feel a call in their bodies that they must go, and they follow it, responding to each other, each bringing their adaptations".[6]

This inspires the next thought. I, Hannah, call back the goofy backbend I did in the first minutes of circling up, teasing-bragging-confessing I am turning 43 yrs old and still like to play. "Like more than ever before! The way I do it is my own thing, my own adaptation!" Eyes on me, I continue, "What do I know now at 43 yrs old? That I'd willingly negotiate a lot in my life, my contract, my schedule, my work-life balance, but *not* my uniqueness." Yes, I add, this place insists on a certain kind of cohesion; same clothes, same food, same schedule, same everything, seemingly, and there is a logic to that too, a concept of consequences, a concept of structure., But this flocking art reminds that even and maybe especially here, we can find something in our sync that -- far from punishment -- is a kind of emergence, a kind of system that asks each of us to find our own way through. "Emergence is beyond what the sum of its parts could even imagine," brown writes and we then discuss. After all, as she goes on, " A group of caterpillars or nymphs might not see flight in their future, but it's inevitable. It's destiny."[7]

5 brown, 12.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.

The session was the third in this month's return to the youth detention center in our North Florida town. The earlier two sessions were with the boy's group, about half of whom were present both days. With them, we spend the time exploring brown's core principles in the study and practice of emergent strategy, copied here to ignite something in the reader, too:

Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)
Change is constant. (Be like water).
There is always enough time for the right work.
There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.
Never a failure, always a lesson.
Trust the People. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy).
Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass—build the resilience by building the relationships.
Less prep, more presence.
What you pay attention to grows.[8]

The rap-poem that emerged from group discussion then found its rhythmic accompaniment in the drumming call and response pounded on desks. The hollow middle of the bathroom door rattled a deep base type heart beat, while short pencils on metal table legs added a bell. Some used the meaty part of the hand to build the musical changes while others joined in with palm slaps for accents. Across the circle danced fast fingertips for a high-toned tap. Finding rhythm together seemed to make more room for active participation than discussion, and the cohesion of the group sound (a collective groove of polyrhythms that found even fleeting pockets of head nodding relatability) noticeably helped shift the reception of us female guests in the room about whom the multiple authorities present made several reminders to respect and obey. For the majority of boys in the session who have to take heavy psychotropics daily at the center, the drumming appeared to create a kind of contagious mood that made it more possible to be present and at the least, stay awake.

8 brown, 27.

We leaned actively on the words of brown as we faced an unknown experience, seeking primarily to connect and support the groups of beautiful teens in front of us, whom we were warned "came from deeply troubled homes" and that were "very difficult." brown's "Less prep, more presence" guided us to "move at the speed of trust" as we explained that we came to talk about a book that we found personally helpful and wanted to share, and that we found personal joy and freedom through dance and music, so that was how we wanted to connect and play with them. We introduced ourselves, the text, and each activity amidst a near constant stream of jokes, between the teens, and also, distractingly, from the officers in the room.

On day 1, an officer joined our circle to support the music making and conversation, and the result was something gorgeously connective, but on day 2, several new officers lingered in the back and walked through the circle as they focused on their tasks (and teasing jokes). One joke eventually escalated as a teen took the bait an officer laid for him, grabbing a forbidden pen, inviting physical retribution that cascaded into a full fight as other officers and teens jumped in. Concern was high in the room because we were present throughout the provocation, and the teens were visibly and verbally upset about the fairness of this experience. Leaving room for breath, we moved slowly as staff instructed us to continue the lesson. Guided by brown to be present, and that "change is constant, be like water", we shifted back to the text, which offered us a framework for what was unfolding in the room. "Trust the people and they become trustworthy." This concept had played out painfully clear just moments before: a taunt became a fight that ended after the facility's Captain came in to reassure the group that he understood what happened and was dealing with the offending officer. He brought the fighter back in and thanked him for his calmness after such an experience. The contrast between his respect shown to the Captain or the officers with rapport, prompted our group reflection on trust. brown helped us flip the traditional script around "earning" trust with giving trust, and that seemed useful for us to explore and to establish some understanding. Most people in the room resonated with this idea, even though it went in the face of what some might have previously thought or said. Not only did we talk through how this could be true, we had witnessed it.

The choice to work with brown's text was an organic one between us co-facilitators as a kind of extension of other themes and source materials we have worked with in the past. Sessions together here during past visits engaged Robin G. Kelly's *Freedom Dreams*, and Black feminist abolitionist anthems of "We keep us safe". These were guiding texts for our own life and movement explorations, and they supported us in the invitation to "lead a dance workshop" at the youth detention center. The juxtaposition of themes around freedom, safety, and radical imagination seemed big and ambitious, but we and the youth found them to be a logical place to begin. What else could be more relevant in such a place?

We like that brown calls us readers to create focus groups of all kinds, building/mapping/creating in all the ways we can imagine, and especially encourages us to underline the text and pass it to younger generations.[9] For teens sitting in jail as for the two of us, this capacity to continue imagining, continue "re-rooting" in the earth, in creativity, and in community… having visions that are longterm" as brown does seems especially important.[10] We could not "plan" for these workshops any more than we can plan for life in this world. We can only face it with the skills we have, like birds preparing to migrate. brown reminds us that birds do this incredible feat without packing or maps, with simply a lifetime of learning and a legacy of experience built into our bodies. We remind ourselves and the youth of this [our] capacity as we spend a few hours with them, leading a "dance class."

We learn that these youth spend an average of twenty-one days at the center. There they take classes in Math, Language Arts, and Life Skills while waiting to meet with a judge to assess their case. Some are formally adjudicated, receiving probation, a mandatory diversion program, or a move to a residential program for evidence-based treatments. Others receive designation as "adjudication withheld", the judge absolving

9 brown, 9. She invites readers to "play with all of these observations and their own, add to it, discard what doesn't serve, and keep innovating."
10 ibid.

the charge from their record. In severe cases, youth are moved to the adult jail to be tried as adults. We know that in Florida, incarceration rates are higher than most countries, and that youth detention has been part of that story since the beginning.[11] Some of these youth will be assigned to adult jails where they will be tried as adults. Currently, six fourteen-year olds sit in our adult detention center.

Lead educator Eugene Hall teaches three 100-minute classes a day, divided into two genders. Volunteers are welcome to offer programming in a range of disciplines, and he is especially glad to have us volunteers present to get the kids moving. For the hundred minutes we are together, laughter, music, movement, sweat, brings life back into a room young people enter and exit with hands bound in invisible cuffs behind their backs; our circle which includes staff educators, guards, team leaders and youth offers an altogether reshaping of the single file lines whose visual legacy embodies chain gang choreographies still haunting the country, and especially the American South.[12] It is clear enough that dancing, laughing, being loud, playful and creative together powers up a something like the "hope discipline" abolitionist Mariame Kaba describes.[13] As prison dance activist Suchi Branfman reminds,"To witness and be with people who are dancing while living in a cage is a direct antithesis to confinement."[14]

Ironically, the pleasure of speaking freely with kids at the center defies much of the current moment when it comes to teaching and learning in Florida schools. At the time of writing, Florida statutes in K-12 have eradicated the very possibilities of circles like this one, with cancellations of "WOKE" locally leading the charge for the Department of Education and the dismantling of DEI nationally.[15] For us researchers and educators within higher ed, the scene is equally bleak. Email to faculty this semester has set the conditions for classroom teaching under new censorship laws. Course instructors are required to confer that all course materials have been read and vetted in alignment with state policy, with subtext stunningly aligning with the governor's newly instituted import of a statewide DOGE, promising to audit Florida universities and cut the stated waste of state spending.

As we face this experience, the words of brown re-emerge as powerful and helpful guidance. She writes that "emergent strategy is about shifting the way we see and feel the world and each other. If we begin to understand ourselves as practice ground for transformation, we can transform the world".[16] She asks us to consider what practices can unlock the emergent potential we hold. I, Ivanna, have personally migrated from a place of paralyzing fear around dancing and singing, to find myself leading a call and response song while dancing with this group of high school boys. I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey. It happened over many years and also in an instant, as Hannah, my friend and co-facilitator, shifted from singing, to holding down the beat for us. I didn't have time for conscious thought before I found myself in a surreal moment of leading others in something that previously felt impossible for me.

During the darkest years of my life, I took dance and singing lessons. It's hard to say why I would choose to add something so challenging to my life when everything else felt overwhelming, but maybe that is the reason. I needed to find my way somehow, and despite the fear, I did enjoy dance and music. I wanted to no longer be afraid. My journey started with a West African dance class, and then when I found contact improvisation, I knew I was where I needed to be for several years: experimenting with self expression and vulnerability in community. I felt deeply uncomfortable, but I understood most others in the room with me felt similarly. I was in classes with trained dancers but finding our own unique ways to dance together, to navigate each moment together, was new to us all. Through movement exploration AND discussion, we built trust over time. It was a sensitive space where we were asked to be very mindful of each other's responses, to notice and listen carefully, to hold our own boundaries, to think about how we would do this. We discussed race and gender, noticing differences and points of connection. Contact improv asked us to connect, listen, and communicate deeply. By the time singing lessons emerged for me a few years later, I was ready for its lessons: to try making sounds until I found the notes I was looking for. It felt so terrifying and then, so rewarding. Such helpful life lessons.

I didn't decide to become a facilitator of dance and music with detained youth, but I followed others in a direction that felt life-giving and found myself happily here. As a science educator and scholar, this pathway into art practices aligns with my goals of supporting creative and generative thinking, as scientists are faced with countless challenges and puzzles to solve. Academics from seemingly opposite ends of the spectrum, Hannah and I enjoy a long history of working together and thinking expansively about "science" and "art" ed as not mutually exclusive. We find brown's text(s) to be a incredible example of this. The lessons brown illustrates from the natural world around us in *Emergent Strategy* offers us support that we find ourselves sharing. Currently, we work alongside many others who feel scared and hopeless in the face of our political climate and with the massive threats of climate change. A colleague who teaches in the college of medicine shared that she does not know how to do her job with the current restrictions. How can she instruct ethically and effectively if she cannot talk about medical conditions and needs unique to various communities? Our colleagues in dance, theater, music, visual art, as in so many disciplines, wonder what in fact is meant by the so-called Western Canon now enforced as curricular emphasis as if devoid of racism or sexism, let alone the myriad questions of identity and experience that make and remake our fields everyday. In Florida as increasingly across the US, all working for the kinds of teaching and learning that invites instead of restrains find ourselves in need of strategies for how to move forward in a time like this. Like birds migrating, we don't have a map, but we have practices to personally return to and to share with others. Presence and freedom dreaming can lead us into an era of improvisation that requires deep listening, compassionate communication, and radical imagination as we create new pathways for ourselves and our communities. Dancing, singing, and syncing together is a helpful step for us, and we wonder how this sounds to you?

ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN WRITES THAT "EMERGENT STRATEGY IS ABOUT SHIFTING THE WAY WE SEE AND FEEL THE WORLD AND EACH OTHER. IF WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND OURSELVES AS PRACTICE GROUND FOR TRANSFORMATION, WE CAN TRANSFORM THE WORLD."

HANNAH SCHWADRON (MFA, PhD) is Associate Professor of Dance at Florida State University where she teaches dance history, improvisation, and the cultural politics of performance. Her writing and performance explore themes of Jewishness, dance, humor, migration, and decarceration, is published in *Choreographic Practices*, *Shofar, PARtake, Liminalities, International Journal of Screendance*, the *Oxford Handbook on Dance and Politics*, the *Oxford Handbooks Online in Music*, the *Oxford Handbook on Jewishness and Dance*, *American Perspectives in Dance II*, and *Dancer Citizen* among other places. She is cofounder of the Tallahassee Bail Fund which pays bail for people who cannot afford it and helps access needed services upon release.

IVANNA PENGELLEY earned her Doctoral degree in Science Education at Florida State University, her Master's Degree in Agricultural Education at the University of Florida, and her Bachelor's degree in Educational Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. Ivanna's career has centered around supporting the education of marginalized youth, with a focus on those who have experienced the foster care system. Through this work, she studied and practiced the skill of empathetic communication, as a tool to facilitate understanding and connection. Ivanna is also actively engaged in developing intentional community centered around empathetic communication and sustainable designs.

11 Father Dustin Feddon's research on "Florida's First Seven" reveals that since the beginning of jails and prisons in the state, youth imprisonment has been a regular practice, a finding that used historical documents, incarceration ledgers, birth certificates, and personal journal accounts to correct public records listing a number of incarnated individuals listed in their thirties as in fact, sixteen years old. His study of North Florida prison history, and in particular the ties between convict leasing and the continued legacy of slavery is outlined as rationale for the Refuge House he runs for men coming out of prison. See https://www.josephhouseus.org/why-we-exist.

12 Suchi Branfman writes of this phenomenon, too: "We danced in circle after circle, acknowledging the power of being in proximity to one another, seeing each other, and being seen by everyone. We acknowledged the ways that the cypher, the circle, the roda, and the ring actually held us together as a community of movers and makers." Suchi Branfman, "Things to Remember from Virtual Teaching and Learning Through Prison Walls During a Pandemic," *Dance Education in Practice*, 8:1, 16, DOI: 10.1080/23734833.2022.2027168

13 Mariame Kaba, "Hope is a Discipline" Sept 17. 2020, Toward Freedom. https://towardfreedom.org/story/archives/activism/hope-is-a-discipline/

14 Sophie Bress, "How Dance Artists are Addressing the US Prison System in Their Work, Both Onstage and on the Inside," *Dance Magazine* 7 November 2022. https://www.dancemagazine.com/dance-and-incarceration/?utm_source=The+Dance+Edit&utm_campaign=06bdeecd40-TheDanceEdit2020119_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_71d672be74-06bdeecd40-70139222

15 For those not yet familiar, see the Feb 14, 2025 United States Department of Education letter Office of Civil Rights letter to us colleagues in higher ed ensuring compliance with "an educational environment that is free of race, color, or national origin discrimination" by way of immediate eradication of racial diversity as college admissions factor.

16 brown, 110.

Instability & Intermediaries: How Major Funders Continue to Fail the Arts Ecosystem

by REBECCA FITTON

"The oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future." – AUDRE LORDE, "SISTER OUTSIDER," 1984.

"A revolution that is based on the people exercising their creativity in the midst of devastation is one of the great historical contributions of humankind." – GRACE LEE BOGGS, 2014

I OPENED MY EMAIL LATE ON TUESDAY, *February 26th to an email from The Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation with news that they are phasing out their Legacy Grant, a small but impactful fund for organizations that support individual artists in the Bay Area. Both organizations I currently co-direct (Bridge Live Arts and Jess Curtis/Gravity), would each receive one exit grant before the program's closure. Wattis sustains our staff infrastructure and programming, after this year, what's next? 2026 feels far away as I scan my list of upcoming grant deadlines. At least the news is partnered with a positive update. In their email, Wattis indicates that they will open their New Work grant up to former Legacy Grantees which was previously not an option. I sigh, somewhat unsurprised.*

Rewind almost a year ago to almost the same scene, but with a different funder. Over Zoom, the program officer with the Walter & Elise Haas Fund let us know that they will pause their funding to the arts as the Board and staff re-evaluate priorities with a goal to integrate several of their programs. Bridge Live Arts' received an exit grant. At the time, the general operating support B.L.A. received from Haas covered almost 30% of the annual budget.

In between these two moments, I loosely tracked how many national grants that supported dance terminated their programs. With some helpful, internal insights into philanthropy trends from a group chat with two arts administrator friends, the updates were almost weekly.

The funding landscape that supports the nonprofit and nonprofit-adjacent dance field in the United States irrevocably changed in 2024. As an arts administrator I often found myself on the leading edge of the updates, tasked with ferrying bad news to arts workers who support the dance ecosystem. Now, faced with devastating cuts to both private and public funding opportunities, we must dedicate precious time to think about the future. But **how do we move forward when the groundwork of grantmaking in the arts as we know it is so destabilized?**

Bhumi's provocation about future dreaming was the impetus to put words on a page, but in practice, I've been researching what is happening, why and what to do next for the past few years. I am an arts administrator and researcher whose eight-year career is inextricably woven into the pockets of philanthropists who support arts and culture in what is now called the United States. I can't escape the torrent of news about philanthropic changes in my work. I might not be able to provide any answers by the end of this reflection. But, at the very least I hope to share what has been swimming around in my brain, offer forward other's reflections in which I find solace, and share some calls to action as we work toward a more creative, worker-led solution to a sustainable arts ecosystem.

When I began to write, I found myself turning towards the immediate and more distant pasts, with a focus on fiscal sponsors and re-granting organizations, intermediaries, to ground my speculative visioning. This essay hopes to linger briefly there and trace trends perhaps only realized through hindsight. I lean upon recent, more robust reflections that analyze current funding's tructures including "Creating New Futures" (2020–2023), *Funding Bodies* (2021), and Artists on *Creative Administration* (2024), and find solace in facts, personal experiences and community solidarity. I aim to write towards a radical future that eliminates foundations and redistributes wealth in BIPOC, queer, disabled, and immigrant communities. After all, as many of my mentors describe, we are the experts of our experiences.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED

From 2020-2023, the arts field experienced a major shift in philanthropy. Funds flowed relatively easily into the pockets of Black, brown, queer, trans, and disabled folks and the organizations that support their creative endeavors. While not everyone experienced bounty, those who did, generally redistributed the funds judicially. The beginning moves required of trust-based philanthropy (TBP) gained momentum. Grant applications shortened, program officers offered transparent assessments of their resources, and relief funds (even if highly inaccessible) floated venues, organizations and a few individuals into the present. It seemed, on a surface level, that the glacier of philanthropy was in fact rotating to show a new, more efficient side.

We were still far from true trust-based philanthropy, which calls for a radical redistribution of money, power and decision-making to historically under-resourced artists and local communities. In the recently published workbook, Artists on Creative Administration, administrator Maura Cuffie-Peterson was prompted by artist Yanira Castro to reflect on her experiences with philanthropy. Cuffie-Peterson is the Director of Strategic Initiatives, Guaranteed Income at Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) and was Program Officer for ArtPlace America. Castro is a working artist and met Cuffie-Peterson through CRNY's work toward a Guaranteed Income program in 2021. Cuffie-Peterson experienced trust-based philanthropic practices at ArtPlace America where artists and their communities led the grant making process based on their needs and desires. In contrast, when working in support of CRNY to cajole other funders to reconsider their methods, she met challenges to the idea of redistributing funds quickly and effectively. In Cuffie-Peterson's opinion "Money is tied up in endowments, in infrastructure, in investments. There's money everywhere. It needs to move. Money doesn't belong to philanthropies in the first place" (Lockyer 57).

In 2020, the quickest and more effective way to make this change was to challenge the 5% rule, or the annual percentage foundations are required to spend in line with their mission (be it on staff time, grantmaking, or infrastructural support). Some foundations followed this heed, though it was largely not sustained in subsequent years. As philanthropy professional Edgar Villanueva, asks in his 2018 book, Decolonizing Wealth, "What about the 95%?!" [emphasis original], as the investments of these funds often compound on inequities. Out of the ten biggest foundations in the world, only the MacArthur Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation disclosed their investment returns on their remaining 95% of total assets (Villanueva 151).[1] This leaves communities they supposedly support through their grantmaking in the dark, with slim resources, and often impacted by the very investments foundations profit from such as fossil fuels, real estate, poor labor conditions, and more.

Building upon this culture of secrecy, arts workers are now experiencing yet another retraction and re-entrenchment disguised with language like evaluation, priorities, assessment, and alignment. Unfortunately, this shouldn't be that surprising. When efforts to redistribute wealth from historic sources of power (foundations, police) to communities of culture (artists, Black communities) happen, there

We were still far from true trust-based philanthropy, which calls for a radical redistribution of money, power and decision-making to historically under-resourced artists and local communities.

tends to be a racist and classist backlash, often with additional claims of corruption, misuse of funds, and a general sense of distrust. This is made visible through advocacy like national Defund the Police movements or more locally San Francisco's Dreamkeeper Initiative (DKI). DKI aimed to "reinvest $60 million annually into San Francisco's diverse Black communities." Now in 2025, the program is publicly misunderstood and funding is indefinitely paused. Artists and community advocates call for reimplementation and trust in the process. City officials and mainstream media point out potential misuse of funds and signs of corruption. Castro described the dynamic simply after reading an initial draft of this essay. While philanthropic bodies attempted to redistribute funds equitability in the wake of multiplying crises in 2020, they are now retreating to a "cultural mindset of protectionism, hierarchy, and control as a way to maintain a perceived sense of security."

1 To listen to a conversation between Villanueva and choreographer Miguel Gutierrez about the interplay between money and artmaking, visit bridgelivearts.org/media.

dancersgroup unity strengthen amplify

Multiplying the impact is Trump 2.0 with devastating changes at numerous grant-making federal agencies, a destabilized market, rising inflation, and fears of an economic recession. The community demand that foundations would release more than 5% of their assets is now even more a pipe dream. Economic instability means foundations are hesitant to take big risks which includes investing in artists at the level of an emergency as they did from 2020-2023, thus reducing their power and control over their money. So how did we get here and where do we go from here?

INTERMEDIARIES & CONTROL

If I am going to boil down my curiosities of the moment to one word, it would be intermediaries. In the nonprofit dance ecosystem, I define intermediaries as the nonprofits that ferry funds from foundations to individuals, such as fiscal sponsorship and re-granting organizations. I focus on these entities because I think they reveal a lot about funders' larger goals and the impact on artists embedded within their communities.

Philanthropy in general is obsessed with the idea of risk. None of their actions can be too risky; no funded entity can seem like a risky investment. In practice, this means foundations are slow to distribute grants to individuals (which alternatively could be done through forgivable, zero interest program-related investments vs grants). Instead foundations use the various intermediaries described below to shield their assets from the "risky" artist. As the use of intermediaries became more popular in the late nineties (post NEA Four), the intermediaries rewarded by mitigating risks were often white-led nonprofits that are now at the center of the field. At its core, this process replicates trickle-down economics. This economic theory favors the rich and their security and assumes that the benefits of a stable wealthy class will ultimately 'trickle down,' benefiting all parties along the way. We are seeing this conservative approach now more than ever. Recently, the team at Justice Funders, a partner and guide for philanthropy in reimagining practices that advance a thriving and just world, put out an Open Letter on the response to Trump's current administration and his reinforcement of trickle down economics (among many other oppressive policies).

> *Unfortunately, the larger, field-wide response is inadequate and discouraging, even from the seemingly most progressive segments of philanthropy. Many foundations are either taking a "wait and see" approach or retracting all together, cowering to authoritarianism by "obeying in advance" and removing language about race-explicit grantmaking from their website or shutting down those programs entirely, and shifting to the center with their grantmaking strategies rather than holding the line to continue resourcing the social justice movement ecosystem.* – OPEN LETTER, FEBRUARY 26, 2025

So, who are the intermediaries foundations consider when evaluating their risk assessments and how has this changed over the years?

From the late 1990s, post-NEA Four (which I'll briefly discuss later), to the present, fiscal sponsorship has become an increasingly necessary intermediary in the field. Incorporating as a 501(c)(3) was and continues to be an infrastructural challenge for artists due to financial and personnel requirements. Fiscal sponsorship became a relatively easy way to access the nonprofit umbrella without managing your own board, local/state/federal compliance, and more. Critical to this specific historical account, private foundations are legally barred from giving grants to individuals. Fiscal sponsorship became the go-to method for pass-through granting and has grown in popularity exponentially since then, though with little research and oversight.

A few years ago, I dedicated two years to gathering and analyzing the existing data and anecdotal evidence on fiscal sponsorship's implementation in the arts. I'll spoil the 100-page thesis for you now. From my vantage point, there is little evidence that fiscal sponsorship builds long term financial equity for individual artists and overwhelming proof that the fiscal sponsorship to

Economic instability means foundations are hesitant to take big risks which includes investing in artists at the level of an emergency as they did from 2020–2023, thus reducing their power and control over money.

nonprofit pipeline is no longer realistic. Instead, historically artists embedded within nonprofit cultures now turn to for-profit business structures such as LLCs and S-Corps to diversify their income streams and somewhat detach from funding.[2] However, in all the examples I've witnessed of this "for-profit" move, very few entities are turning a profit and still work on a net-zero profit leading me to believe that philanthropic funds are still floating their bottom lines. Despite this zero income, even the usage of for-profit models reveals a dramatic change from the early 2000s when creating nonprofits was more the norm.

2 There was a recent move by two state arts agencies, California Arts Council and New York State Council on the Arts, to stop LLCs and S-Corps using fiscal sponsors to apply for grants. CA advocates managed to strike this eligibility requirement from California Arts Council's guidelines, but the New York State Council on the Arts continues to restrict any for-profit entity (save sole proprietors with a fiscal sponsorship) from accessing funds.

However, when faced with the realities of today's arts ecosystem, I understand why fiscal sponsorship is necessary. In light of this, I generally advocate for artists to deeply consider why fiscal sponsorship is right for them at the moment and encourage them to form meaningful fiscal sponsorship relationships with community partners over more transactional entities like Fractured Atlas. I will note that the under-the-radar nature of fiscal sponsorship can be helpful in moments of political conflict when artists' often progressive values conflict with more conservative foundations as nonprofits are not required to report fiscal sponsorship activities on their tax form 990s (though many do).[3]

Beyond fiscal sponsors, I include the aforementioned re-granting organizations like Creative Capital, National Performance Network, United States Artists, MAP Fund, and New England Foundation for the Arts (which is also one of six Regional Arts Organizations). All these organizations do much more than re-grant private foundation and public funding, but this work is a major part of their missions. Some still require fiscal sponsorship despite not being foundations, though many have eliminated that requirement after feedback on the practice's exclusionary nature. However, it seems like regranting intermediaries have lost the favor of foundations as they began to listen to and implement artists' demands in alignment with trust-based philanthropy and more radical resource distribution.

CONSULT ARTISTS FIRST (again, please!)

So why the focus on intermediaries and their role in this major funding shift? In short, I believe that foundations realized that these intermediaries, especially the re-granting organizations, were increasingly effective at distributing their long sequestered funds. Art workers' advocacy toward trust-based philanthropy (minimal reports, short applications, conversations over writing), was eliminating the dependence on philanthropy to steer the field at large. In some cases, artists didn't even need cultural validation from the intermediaries in order to receive funds as some intermediaries began selecting artists via lottery systems or reducing fiscal sponsorship fees for BIPOC artists. Recently reflected in a conversation I had with Dr. Michelle Ramos, is the reality that artists' work always is dynamic and prolific, even without funding. This realization for foundations can be disempowering because in that dynamic; art will always be more powerful than money.

3 For example, the Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC) in the Bay Area is fiscally sponsored by the Tides Center. AROC's mission is to "envision powerful and liberated Arab communities living with freedom and self-determination from the Bay Area to our homelands" and is supported by Tides' mission to "advance social justice by shifting resources and power to historically excluded communities" alongside community partners. This expansive mission and umbrella support under 501(c)(3) Tides, means that AROC can organize pro-Palestinian protests, provide legal services and other progressive, community centered activities that may otherwise not receive philanthropic funds largely governed by more conservative boards. AROC's direct expenses are also not visible as part of Tides' annual 990 or financial audit. In this case, I think fiscal sponsorship is a productive way to play the system and move forward a political agenda.

To me, this fear is made most clear by the Mellon Foundation's recent move to defund a number of these intermediaries and instead to direct their monies straight to artists they chose.[4] While this is not a blanket move– many organizations still receive Mellon support–the shift has been dramatic such as these two notable changes which mean that touring support for dance in the United States has lost substantial funding support.[5]

- New England Foundation for the Arts ends the National Theater Project and National Dance Project grants in their current iterations due a conclusion of Mellon Funding. (September 6, 2024)

- MAP Fund ends national grantmaking due to funding changes at Mellon and Duke Foundations. (December 12, 2024)

By highlighting these (public) changes, I don't mean to diminish the work of all the staff at each respective institution or the work of many brilliant artists who are on the other side of the Mellon funding. Instead, I hope to highlight trends and ask questions. AND, I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the cessation of these kinds of funds, especially those that supported national touring initiatives like NEFA's NTP and NDP and MAP Fund, will irrecoverably change the field. For me, it brings up two critical questions:

- How will post-emerging artists receive funding for the next stage of their development if they are too small to be noticed by the major foundations like Mellon, Duke and Ford, three critical funders of dance in the last twenty years?

- If intermediaries turn to solely focus on artists' services (like MAP Fund plans to through the continuation of its Scaffolding for Practicing Artists (SPA) program) or "pay-to-play" programs like many fiscal sponsorship, residencies or professionalization efforts, will this reduce the number of artists who have the resources to invest in their practice (and therefore create a sustainable career), thus perpetuating an existing lack of equity in the field?

I am especially concerned by the way the news of this funding shift seeped out into the broader community. Peer funders likely knew first, then intermediaries, and finally it began to flow into my administrator/artist

4 Disclosure: Until recently, one of my many part-time jobs was funded by Mellon's direct-to-artist grants from 2022-2025. As an indirect recipient and witness of this change, I believe that many individual artists were not/art not equipped to take on the scale of these grants especially in terms of their tax burden and ability to redistribute funds. Many artists who received the funds also are now conducting projects that make them the new intermediaries as they pass Mellon monies to other artists in their communities, creating a closed network often with a singular decision maker. I think this approach somewhat negates all the great work organizations like NEFA and NPN did over the past decade in making their grantmaking processes more equitable. This reflection deserves more conversation and research in the future.

5 Visit this webpage and filter for "Arts & Culture" to see a recent list of all Mellon's grants.

networks. Administrators toe the line between artist and institutions, our peer administrators shuttle news down from the proverbial mountaintop of white-led philanthropy bodies, but we too are largely reliant on the public press release which lands in our overflowing inboxes, months (or years) after the funding source has already been eliminated. Last to know, in my experience, were the artists who are the direct recipients of these funds. The ripple effect is immediate yet delayed as grantees finish out their previous year's funds only to realize as they craft next year's budgets, that the pool of resources is dry.

With chagrin, I ask, after all we "learned" from 2020, should not the artists with the least amount of relative power have been consulted first? Creating

With chagrin, I ask, after all we "learned" from 2020, should not the artists with the least amount of relative power have been consulted first?

New Futures (CNF) emphasized the same query in its 2021 Phase 2 document, "Notes for Equitable Funding from Arts Workers," which was shared with funders at large. My experience as a reader of CNF at the time, was that the cumulative writing, organizing work and relationship building done by CNF contributors was publicized widely and shared among peers and organizations alike. Some changes occurred, in general applications became more accessible and certain requirements and acknowledgements became more inclusive. But overall, the document and related advocacy still could not break through philanthropy's gates to radically transform systems, drive increased partnership and center collaboration in the way that artists deserve.

This choice is now reverberating throughout our community as we face yet another economic emergency fueled again by Trump. Averse to risk and artist-led efforts, foundations instead chose to maintain hierarchy and hoard power. And here we are, forecasting into 2026 and committed to still embodying and dancing through alternatives. As amara tabor-smith invoked in a recent work-in-progress show, "this is endurance work."

Here, I'll touch briefly on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Public funding outlets have largely escaped my line of questioning in this essay. But recent (unconstitutional) changes at the NEA regarding DEI, "gender ideology," and an "encouragement" to celebrate "American 250" only add to the tenuous funding landscape. While news of those changes was distributed fairly quickly and was followed by subsequent injunctions that paused the impact, there are infinite questions about what is next and how to proceed. Organizations and administrators are dealing with the impact now; artists may not experience a shift until later this year when NEA-funded projects were meant to occur.

In November 2024 (pre-election), I called Christy Bolingbroke at the National Center of Choreography – Akron (the commissioner of *Artists on Creative Administration*), to ask her perspective on what felt like a major tide change to me. Bolingbroke reminded me of the post NEA Four era when foundations responded to the conservative turn of the agency.[6] Artists and their support systems created nonprofits and applied for funding with NEA-eligible infrastructures. Administrators (largely white and cis-male) helped form the intermediaries previously mentioned, but then became gatekeepers to the subsequently emerging resources, entities and the relative power as part of their actions. However, as Bolingbroke and I talked, we both acknowledged the major changing of the guard in terms of the artists, administrators, and advocates whose perspectives will shape the future of the arts in the US.

Many individuals and the entities they work within are now passing on leadership (whether it's voluntary or not) largely to femme, queer, disabled, immigrants or folks of color. I joyfully and humbly include myself in this mix. But, this transference of power however is not without its pitfalls. Many leaders of color were thrust into positions of power in the nonprofit response to historic racism–from interpersonal to police violence – without the resources or sources really needed to sustain programming, staff careers, and community support.

IMPROVISING THE FUTURE

So what next? The history and trends I laid out only scratch the surface of how we got here. Each footnote and link deserves its own reflection.This work is undoubtedly under-researched. And, tracing the administrative footprints of the nonprofit dance ecosystem is not exactly fundable work, especially when the thesis of the work is a critique of the funding bodies themselves.[7] But I'm willing to believe in Christy Bolingbroke's optimism, Dr. Michelle Ramos' unwavering trust in community, and Creating New Future's call to "build slower and commune and dance together more." We have to keep thinking outside of systems that exist in white structures because as the brilliant Audre Lorde invoked, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."

Now is the time to look instability in the face and turn toward another path. I know not everyone can afford this route, but for those arts administrators who can, we must (again) advocate for what we need, desire, and deserve. We can dream toward a funding future that is unrestricted, does not require reporting and extends beyond the 501(c)(3) model and its lackey, fiscal sponsorship. Let's believe in a service economy, one that is hinged on exchange and camaraderie. As Dr. Valerie Luzadis describes in "The Serviceberry" (2022), an article by Indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer, "economics is how we organize ourselves to sustain life and enhance its quality."

The conclusion of this essay hopes to spark dance makers' collective imagination regarding the future. I propose alternative, people-centered, non-capitalist economies. I ask:

- What small moves, or micro choreographies, can advance financial equity and promote the participation of all dance makers in funding decisions?

- How might acknowledging and redistributing power from foundations and nonprofits through macro choreographies support the development of financial equity for dance artists?

- And, if the field moves past the immediate future and instead leans upon queer, Black, speculative theories, what or alternative economic models (such as land trusts, worker-owned cooperatives, mutual aid, etc.), may better serve the long-term financial stability of artists historically under-funded by current systems?

The day before the final draft of this essay was due, I went to see amara tabor-smith's offering, "to break with care: A Parable of NOW," or "an oracle working in process. a performance (practice) of communal care amidst uncertainty." I walked into the space, the ritual already begun, deep bass thrums through my body. I received a cotton bag for my phone, a notebook and a pen. The message is clear. The work has already begun; I better take notes. amara begins to run in a circle, her collaborators follow behind, she yells,

"THIS IS ENDURANCE WORK. THIS IS A PRACTICE OF ENDURANCE."

She beckons with her arms, her feet keeping pace against the sprung floor. I witness all the pairs of feet that follow in her wake. I think about this writing, how

Many individuals and the entities they work within are now passing on leadership (whether it's voluntary or not) largely to femme, queer, disabled, immigrants or folks of color.

incomplete it feels and yet still so full. How much is unwritten, how imperfectly I've portrayed a complicated network of people, art, and money. But this is endurance work. We are in the marathon and it requires a community of individuals who join together to tell their story, one piece at a time.

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REBECCA FITTON (she/they) is a queer, mixed race asian american, disabled immigrant. Their work as an artist, administrator, and advocate focuses on arts infrastructure, asian american identity, and disability justice and takes form through community gatherings, score-based dance works, essays, and improvisational quilts. They have been an artist-in-residence at the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography, the National Center for Choreography – Akron, SPACE 124 @ Project Artaud, Center, LEIMAY/CAVE, EMERGENYC, and The Croft. Her writing has been published by Triskelion Arts, In Dance, The Dancer-Citizen, Etudes, Critical Correspondence, and Dance Research Journal.

Currently, they serve as a Co-Director at Bridge Live Arts and as Co-Executive Director of Jess Curtis/Gravity. She holds a BFA in Dance from Florida State University and an MA in Performance as Public Practice from the University of Texas at Austin. rebeccafittonprojects.com

6 Four artists, Karen Finley, Tim Miller, John Fleck, and Holly Hughes, sued the NEA in 1990 after their previously accepted peer-reviewed grants were terminated by the agency due to pressure from Congress. They won their case in 1993, but the agency was required to implement decency clauses that remain today and ceased to fund individual artists directly (save for their creative writing program).

7 If you got this far, you should read Sarah Wilbur's EXCELLENT book on the history of the NEA, Funding Bodies, which is available OPEN ACCESS because she deeply understands how important it is to account for administrative labor within arts institutions. https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/items/f61d057a-f0f5-43fd-a2ed-53050077362d

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Gongsters in San Francisco, May 3

Parangal's 17th Anniversary, May 23

Pista Sa Nayon in Vallejo, June 7

Legacy FMA's Anniversary in Daly City, June 14

Pistahan, Yerba Buena Garden in San Francisco, August 9

Adhika, Yerba Buena Garden's Festival in San Francisco, October 4

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FINANCE YOUR FREEDOM:

A 20 year Critical Examination of Arts Management and Black San Francisco

***by* RAISSA SIMPSON**

A moment from Raissa Simpson's *House of Rashad*.
Dancers: Erik K Raymond Lee, Marc Chappelle, Ehan Dennis

PHOTO BY ALAN KIMARA DIXON

For years Black scholars have been studying the meaning, cultural impact and social tenacity of Black dance. Despite defensible evidence of Black dance culture's influence on American society – its function to the identifiable continuity for passing on tradition, both classical and contemporary – these findings can oftentimes go relatively underdiscovered by mainstream dance researchers seeking to establish numerical evidence in dance's economic benefits. Through approaching what extant literature has provided us on Black dance,[1] we can begin to conceptualize how to measure the types of economic impact dance as a whole has on American society – Black dance as a type of calculator. Whereas neuroscientist study of dance dates back around the 1990s, Black dance is concerned with issues like the generational wealth gap which results in turnstile access to funding in the nonprofit arts management sphere.

1 Katrina Hazzard-Gordon, Afro-American core culture social dance: An examination of four aspects of meaning, Dance Research Journal, 1983
Thomas F. Defrantz, "The Black Beat Made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power," Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory. Ed. Andre Lepecki. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.
Brenda Dixon Gottschild, The Black Dancing Body: A Geography From Coon to Cool, Springer, 2003

More artists are starting to understand arts administration as a way to navigate budget complexity, how to market themselves, and project management; and out of that is a mere step away to sustaining their creative practices. This article offers considerations for studying the economics of dance through empirical studies on Black dance and numerical data, it identifies current trends, and advocates for the inclusion of Black experience in creative business approaches.

BARRIER ONE
Access to Arts Administration

Access to the arts administration field is a privilege brought on by the ability to access education and raise capital for Black arts administrators and organizations. As mentioned, Black dance demonstrates their success through communal expansion of culture and proves their intrinsic worth through social capital. The National Center for Choreography – Akron (NCCAkron) described creative business as intermingling the humanistic principles found in the choreographic process as a basis for changing how choreographers approach arts administration business. As my group PUSH Dance Company (PUSH) enters into its 20th anniversary, we're at a crossroads of managing a new dance sanctuary that centers the experiences of global majority artists. For our organization, the combination of Black dance analysis and business frameworks blends well together in a tapestry of wellness and restorative dance practices. This journey combines Afro-wellness, professional development and business led us to an "ask first, then create" process for developing our programs and residencies. By polling the participants who look to our organization for services, we've developed a trustworthy relationship in many cases which in turn allows us to bridge the business nonprofit model in tandem with our communities.

Similar to finding arts administration opportunities to NCCAkron's[2] virtual study groups, I found creative business frameworks through then Executive Director of CounterPulse, Jessica Robinson, the Foundation Center (now Candid) and business class during my undergraduate at SUNY Purchase. Young performing artists are oftentimes encouraged to think of themselves as entrepreneurs. While to be a dancer is to be a business owner, Black dance artists own the distinction for overcoming interpersonal, systemic and familial issues associated with race. Like many Black choreographers, the power of Black collective culture started to transcend into my administrative life as an arts leader. As a continued examination of organizational behavior in the cultural sector, I have found arts administration has become a focus to bridge a siloed world into dance practices. However, as a Black woman of mixed heritage, I have found professional development opportunities for arts leaders a far and few in between.

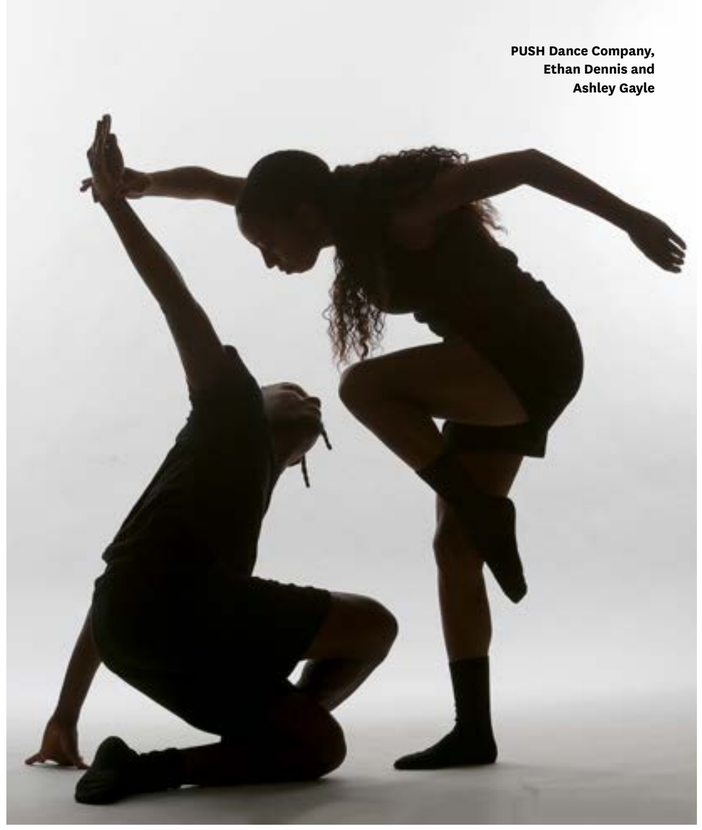
Both the Arts Administrators of Color (AAC) founded in 2016 and Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA) founded in 2010 are more recent examples of associations formed to take on the issues of diversity in the arts. However, Echoing Green (EG) found that even when Black women leaders in their EG portfolios consistently had the same education level as other arts leaders, they consistently received less funding and financial support than other groups. The paradox facing Black arts leaders is a desire and self-efficacy to sustain Black culture includes enduring discrimination set forth by funding disparities, deeply entrenched post-racial overtones and colorblind mindsets in San Francisco. The San Francisco Bay Area tendencies towards displacement of global majority people raises serious questions about its commitment to cultural diversity.

HOW TO LISTEN: While writing articles such as these or expressing experiences of being Black, my white counterparts will oftentimes perceive this as a bellyaching complaint. To have space to express discontentment on an racial issue is paramount to change, and therefore opens a discourse in order to adequately identify the problem; without an oversimplification or quick fix solutions. Perhaps by measuring bellyaching complaints (polling) of racism in the arts, we can measure these inequalities,

Economic instability means foundations are hesitant to take big risks which includes investing in artists at the level of an emergency as they did from 2020–2023, thus reducing their power and control over money.

draw up visualizations of identifying it as a problem in need of more informed policies. The importance of deepening communicability in order to strip away the discursive greige of manipulative gaslighting can erase the ambiguity around disputes of race's existence in the arts field, particularly in dance. Much has happened in the new millennium, and the expansion of Black contemporary dance credit in San Francisco goes to Joanna Haigood and Robert Moses. Both choreographers have furthered Black dance in particular by blending topical issues and historical Black figures into their dances. Black choreographers are found or even asked to remain silent about social events concerning Black people. While silence can be a powerful statement of survival for Black artists, we also need spaces to air grievances or just speak in drafts without judgment or punitive retaliation from listeners.

2 Artists On Creative Administration: A Workbook from the National Center for Choreography, University of Akron, 2004



PUSH Dance Company, Ethan Dennis and Ashley Gayle

PHOTO BY MAT HABER

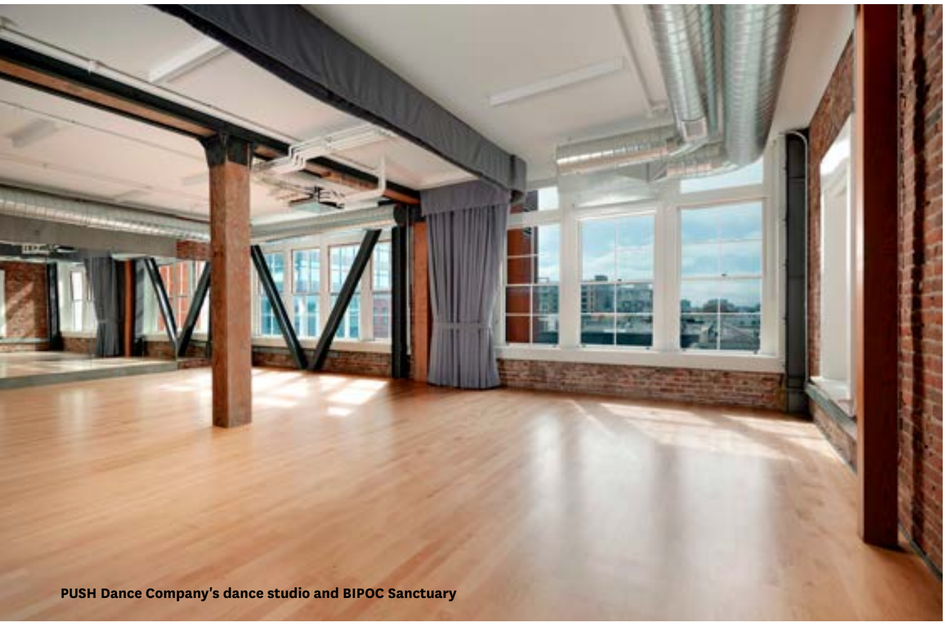
BARRIER TWO
Overcoming Racial Bias

Perhaps there's a circular phenomenon for Black dance artists for which the cycle plays out in perpetuity with a lack of finance due to the stigma placed Black entrepreneurs. As producer and founder of Black Choreographers Moving (BCM) Towards the 21st Century, Halifu Osumare gave considerable intellectual and artistic commitment to broadening and futuring the definition of Black dance here in San Francisco and beyond. Despite most Black scholars' focus on the Deep South and Eastern states, Osumare, a scholar, choreographer and teacher, offers us an extensive portrayal of Black dance in California and Hawaii. In her most recent memoir, *Dancing the Afrofuture: Hula, Hip Hop, and the Dunham Legacy (2024)*,[3] Osumare delves into Black dance as a roadmap of the future. BCM changed the landscape as to what Black dance could potentially be and portrayed as, which was later furthered by Kendra Kimbrough Barnes and Laura Elaine Ellis through the Black Choreographers Festival. That being said, it would be hard to ignore Black dance in California or for that matter, its place on the national stage.

3 Halifu Osumare, Dancing the Afrofuture: Hula, Hip Hop, and the Dunham Legacy, University of Florida, 2024

For Black choreographers the intersection between racial bias economics has them financing a type of creative freedom of creativity in tandem with arts administration. Delving into creative administration brought me such joy to study the best practices for developing a mindful nonprofit work. Around 2016, the then executive director of the African American Arts & Cultural Center, Mohammed Bilal invited me to participate in business arts residency. It was there that the director of Cultural Odyssey, Idris Ackamoor asked me to join the African American Theater Alliance for Independence (AATAIN!) whose members included Afrosolo, Lorraine Hansberry Theater, the San Francisco Theater Bay Area Company African American Shakespeare Company and PUSH. AATAIN! Additionally I was fortunate enough to have consultation from Ted Russell, who later went on to the Kenneth Rainin Foundation. Later, the co-interrogators of Dancing Around Race, Gerald Casel, David Herrera, Yayoi Kambara, Bhumi B Patel, and myself began providing racial equity workshops. We wrote our own grants, tracked our own budgets, and collaborated with each other to fortify our entities only because we knew there was no one there to save us.

WHAT'S TO UNDERSTAND: To fully understand emergent strategies in motion to determine Black dance's influence on the study of economics, look no further than techniques to combat the nonprofit model's alignment with capitalism's boom and bust economy. Capitalism and other forms of economies (i.e. socialism, communism, etc) determine how resources are dispersed while simultaneously race amplifies the disquieting magnitude of income inequality. Significant differences remain between capitalism and nonprofits, however the latter is subject to capitalism's rules, regulations and policies. Despite nonprofits being mission driven, they are still purposely limited in their efforts to carry it out those fundamental values by trickle down economics. More specifically, extant data shines a light on how funding is dispersed and to which demographics. As an educator, I'm reminded how the study of economics oftentimes excludes elements of sociology and historical context. The nuances of the sociohistorical context in the African diaspora provide implications for the capitulations of 1950's redevelopment, redlining, suburban mass incarceration, and gentrification. From this perspective Black dance artists have a layered understanding of the racial dilemma found in economic survival of the arts and culture sector.



PUSH Dance Company's dance studio and BIPOC Sanctuary

BARRIER THREE:
Counting Black Dance's Impact

There's plenty of informative case studies and recent evaluations such as how only 5.9% of individual donations and 11% of California private foundations awards are distributed to BIPOC-centered organizations Wolf Brown[4]. Why is this amount so low? The obvious answer is because merely 18% of nonprofit organizations in California are BIPOC-led. *Why is this number so low?* While these numbers may not be completely accurate, it is indefensible that BIPOC-led arts organizations face disparities in funding and representation in the arts management field. Researchers and arts management educators like Antonio Cuyler of the University of Michigan hope to answer questions such as how do Black arts organizations operate. During our move into our BIPOC Sanctuary and new dance home at 447 Minna Street *(see image above)* in San Francisco, Cuyler gathered a national group of Black arts leaders including myself to study our creative business practice. In his study of the cultural sector, Cuyler posits there's a better way to understand how funding flows in-and-out of Black arts organizations by focusing on diversity in arts management.

Cuyler measures adversity through quantitative and qualitative research as a means for exploratory study of demographics of the arts workforce. While current funding trends offer white-led arts organizations the ability to learn how to diversify their majority white audiences, Dr. Cuyler is working off the Black arts' cultural rich inclusiveness. In his book *Arts Management, Cultural Policy, & the African Diaspora*,[5] Cuyler takes care to dispel the widely circulated myth that Black cultural leaders do not know how to preserve their culture and puts forward a way to count and measure their contributions to the arts ecosystem. At UMich, his *Leading & Managing US Global Majority Cultural Organizations* class provides placement of the students in the course into internship programs with arts organizations of different disciplines. By bridging theorization of Black dance, an especially strong relationship to practical arts management skills are formed in the program.

WHAT CAN BE DONE: Antonio Cuyler's research harkens to a similar method deployed by Harvard Review's usage of BlackQuantCrit, a qualitative critical theory framework for measuring student outcomes in academia. ***Hang in there with me for a moment, I know this is dense, but it's essential to revealing how to tangible measure the impact of Blackness on cultural institutions!*** Whereas critical race theory or QuantCrit is used to measure general outcomes, it therefore doesn't fully provide the nuanced scope of how anti-Blackness impacts the gathering of data in the way we find in BlackQuantCrit. What BlackQuantCrit compels us to consider is that while there will be factors other than race for why Black arts organizations struggle, it doesn't mean anti-Black motive and impacts are absent. The harm done by economics to not account for the social harm done by anti-Blackness results in a suppression of the patterns from colonization and slavery. Along with the perpetual control and divergent resources away from Black communities, the upward mobility of Black enterprise is constantly under harm from racial bias. Modern day researchers and funding institutions are now just recently capturing demographic information which has produced unexpected results such revealing a great deal of numerical evidence of inequitable patterns of racial disparities in the philanthropic system.

4 John Carnwath, Alan Brown, Salvador Acevedo, Anh Thang Dao-Shah, Shalini Agrawal, Wolf Brown Report, California Arts Council: Grantmaking Evaluation, 2023

5 Antonio Cuyler, Arts Management, Cultural Policy, & The African Diaspora, Palgrave MacMillan, 2022

PHOTO BY CAESAR RUBIO

BARRIER FOUR:
Success Doesn't Equal Equity

As a global majority arts leader who guides a professional dance group with a twenty year track history of making dances in San Francisco — one of the most economically inequitable cities – I'm uniquely positioned to provide perspective on the economics of dance. In its two decade old existence, PUSH has survived the Great Recession, a global pandemic, post-George Floyd Uprising. We're currently surviving hyper-gentrification and whatever we can call this post-pandemic recovery. After the George Floyd Uprising, our formalization of a postdisciplinary dialogic process was developed to examine barter economies, municipal policies and a multitude of collective leadership business models. During a good work period, we have 6 weeks to develop a new piece of choreography, otherwise the process of making dances is carried over a two year period, as more resources are gathered. Through T*echnoculture* and *Performable Posthumanism*, a radical sense of choreographing of citizenship emerges as disruption to how black bodies are perceived on stage. Proverbial wisdom from Black dance scholars and authors offered stepping stones to navigating San Francisco's constant and ergo instrumental anti-Black aggression. Over the past five years, we've raised over $850,000 in funding with $250,000 of those dollars going to emerging artists to produce their own art. With a mantra "Art to the People," a tagline yielding free dance classes for children, affordable open classes, small grant programs and artist residencies.

HOW TO IDENTIFY PATTERNS: During an arts town hall meeting in 2010, the then mayor of San Francisco, Ed Lee made a major revelation to the arts community about a plan to invite big tech giants like Twitter and Google to the financially congealed city by waiving many of their taxes. Lee's reasoning at that time acknowledged how tech workers wanted to live in San Francisco due to its vibrant and diverse arts community. The address came with many promises to hire those who already lived in the city and how tech workers would patronize local businesses, additionally how the artist's economy would benefit from those affluent donors. The declaration had all the dubious makings of an eminent plan already in motion – if you have the financial means to participate in society or Pay-to-Play strategy – with backroom deals siloed behind closed doors. Lee didn't invent gentrification but the decision on tax breaks to private companies set the stage for solidifying its infrastructure. At a time when San Francisco was in a type of post-recession era, it was clear how the appeal didn't sit well with many in the audience. As one attendee questioned, "If they want to be here so badly, why don't they pay their taxes?"

Perspectives on Financing Your Own Future

Gentrification doesn't work due to its industrious nature to produce income inequality. Over ten years later, the influx of affluent households alongside the monolithic tech worker culture placed metropolitan areas in a state of surest due to neoliberal trickle-down policies. Nonprofits are designed to support the arts and cultural heritage with the caveat to not express political ideology, proselytize religion, and among other rules. After the 2024 Election, Silicon Valley took its turn in Washington D.C. with the neoliberal privatization of government and what was to be the rollback of DEI, Women's Rights and Civil Rights. The clear backstepping of racial reckoning and systems change is a pattern of reduction, which primarily affects Black creators. That is to say, we can measure equity in the arts as opposed to struggling to understand how economic policies affect vulnerable populations. What if we could better understand the generational wealth gap the same way we track the ephemeralness of dance?

What I propose in this article is without vanity but in a manner to shine a light on understanding of how Black choreographers may develop their work in California's economic climate. While adapting to changing economic times is worthwhile for survival, I find that the coming problem of tokenization with the impossibility of assimilation leaves myself and other Black choreographers on the periphery of arts administration; without the throughline to human dignity or monetary gain. ***As an arts administrator, educator, and Black choreographer, I tend to fall into the trap of trusting the nonprofit arts model as a plausible way to create my art.*** When intersectionality of Black entrepreneurship and choreography intermingles with historical theorization I find there's a type of daily racial economic embodiment. I think we are incorporating colorblind approaches to economics – intentional or not – and other bootstrap theories that place the onus on Black people to pull themselves out of their own subjugation. However, the paradox of race and economics is that financial measures are divided along racial lines. In order to set the stage for liberation, I believe that access to arts administration, overcoming racial bias, measuring adversity, and understanding token phases are debiasing techniques needed to go beyond the promises of diversity, equity and inclusion.

RAISSA SIMPSON Is a post-disciplinary artist, choreographer, scholar, and storyteller whose dances are at the intersection of complex racial and cultural identities. She values choreography as a form of academic scholarship and research as demonstrated in her book chapter *Writings On Dance: Artistic Reframing for Celestial Black Bodies* (Palgrave MacMillan 2021), which offers considerations on how Afrofuturism can be staged in contemporary theater. Celebrating its 20th Anniversary, PUSH Dance Company places the continuation of its social impact with the creation of Sanctuary, a dance studio centering global majority artists.

CONDUCTING THE FUTURE:

How Disability and Improvisation Prepare Us To Be Unprepared

***by* STEPHANIE HEIT**

Left to right: Bhumi B Patel, Stephanie Heit, and Raven Malouf-Renning, Queer Mad Electrics at Township Commons Park, Oakland

PHOTO BY PETRA KUPPERS

QUEER ELECTRICAL FIELDS

We gather in the shade under the metal structures of the old shipping facility in Township Commons Park in Oakland. It is an unusually hot October day in 2023 forecast to reach nearly 90 degrees; several participants have already bowed out due to the heat. The small group present is eager to play. After we do an access check-in, talk about temperature accommodations, and make sure everyone has enough water, we begin.

I invite people to experiment with what grounds them. Gestures. Stims – a term that originates in autistic and neurodiverse cultures referring to repetitive soothing actions. Touch. Movement patterns. Sound. Each person harvests a repeatable phrase to bring back and share with the group.

Hands touch the heart, brush down the front of the torso
and legs to contact cement.
Gentle jiggle of the whole body.
Slow intentional twirl of a strand of hair.
Loose-jawed sigh.

We slowly build a collective grounding vocabulary. This will be a resource for the next part. This may be a resource for the future.

Now we work with the following score: Take charges and currents from the environment and move them through your body. Where do they enter? Where do they exit? How do you direct the energy? Return to the grounding vocabulary whenever you'd like.

We dance next to the Bay, that watery conductor, and play with changing the volume of the charge as it moves through our bodies and out knees, hands, zapping out top of head, bouncing off a shoulder blade. We send currents to each other, back to the water, feeling our own conductive properties. Eventually, we reinscribe our own electrical fields, peripheries vibrating quicker due to the heat.

This offering, "Queer Mad Electrics," was an early exploration of what would become *Mad Conductors*, a participatory performance I co-direct with disabled interdisciplinary artist and dramaturg, Alexis Riley. *Mad Conductors* arises out of a desire to transmute and transform personal experiences of electroshocks and psychiatric memory loss. It is an exploration of electricity, shock, connection, memory (loss), and collective mad ways of being. "Mad" in this context is being used as the reclaimed slur (similar to queer) for madness rooted in the Mad Pride Movement.

On this particular day, we experimented with electricity and connection. The engagement was also shaped by being next to and in dialogue with the Bay and its inherent dangers, kindnesses, fluidity, and conduit properties. This was the culmination of the Co-Dreaming: Improvisation Toward Liberatory Worlding Symposium

dancersgroup

organized by Bhumi Patel and Petra Kuppers. I want to take a beat and invite you to read the symposium title again: Co-Dreaming: Improvisation Toward Liberatory Worlding. I experience these words as portals and as power vortexes into imagining ways to create and be with the present and the future. This symposium's aim was to "bring together queer artists to create new worlds through our embodied connection with the land and ecosystem." I don't know about you, but I'd love to inhabit and be part of that future world.

TUNING INTO THE KNOWN & UNKNOWN

Before I continue, I am going to pause, and welcome you to pause as well, to tune into our individual embodiment in this specific moment.

Notice sensations.
Run tongue over teeth. Listen
to the sound of breathing.

I have a bit of unease in my belly, nerves about what is or isn't coming out in this writing. The blank page, another engagement with the unknown, with all of its possibilities. This is practice. The return to space, beautiful space, and the return to time with its linear metronome and inexact past, present, future. I'm also aware of writing in this moment, March 2025, while the United States is in a coup and so many of our livelihoods, resources, and lives are at stake. This reality is also balled up in the pit of my stomach, a sensation of disgust. The invitation to write about the future, to imagine a future, feels like a welcome balm, a practice of hope. Imagination and dream practices feel integral to this moment.

Exist. Survive. Thrive.

Participants in Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice, Turtle Disco

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE HEIT

To dream, to imagine, I draw on my orientation as a queer disabled person and the shapes I take in the world, in my days, and how those shift depending on inner and outer weather. I draw on the power and tenderness of disability culture and all the gorgeous beings that make up that culture – the disabled artists who figure out how to adapt, to invent, and to create alternative ways of making, being, and existing.

In my own life, as someone with mental health difference, as someone bipolar and with traumatic brain injury from electroshocks, I am in a constant improvisation to meet the day and bend it to my current capacities, which can vary wildly. One of my adaptations has been shapeshifting between disciplines, usually movement and writing. As a young dancer, I had to reinvent my life when movement wasn't available due to depression. Writing offered another space to choreograph with words.

Now the edges of these two disciplines often blur and act more as a support to each other rather than as a replacement. I love the qualitative differences – the ephemerality of a move, the there-ness of a word on the page. I regularly investigate and play in these mediums in a form based on and developed as an adaptation of Barbara Dilley's Contemplative Dance Practice, which I was introduced to while a dance student at Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado in the late 90's. About a decade ago I started offering Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice, which includes – in addition to meditation, personal awareness practice, and open space improvisation – two additional periods dedicated to writing (or drawing, mark-making, etc.) with prompts offered based on the umbrella word/theme evoked at the opening of the session.

For the last eight years, this practice has happened out of Turtle Disco, a somatic writing space I codirect with my spouse, community arts practitioner and disability culture activist, Petra Kuppers. Turtle Disco operates out of our living room on Anishinaabe land in what is colonially called Ypsilanti, Michigan and in the zoom(shell). It began, in part, as a response to Trump taking the presidency in 2017 and our desire to embed ourselves in community and cultivate stronger

Left to right: Sarah Dean, Beth Currans, Ashwini Bhasi, and Slade Billew, *Mad Conductors*, Turtle Disco garden

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE HEIT

connections, especially with queer and disabled people, on a local level.

Something that feels salient in these times of so much uncertainty and fear is how contemplative and improvisational practices strengthen the ability to be with the unknown and to be with discomfort. I remember offering Contemplative Dance & Writing Practice on zoom during the early days of Covid lockdown. We had to figure out how connection and communication could happen in this new medium, and we did that together. I've noticed in the practice, whether on zoom or in person, that making space for not knowing, and for being ok with not knowing, results in unexpected play and laughter. There is room to be surprised, whether that is a strange close-up of a lobster stuffie in a zoom square or a raucous round of drumming on the floor and body parts that spreads across the room. Perhaps there is some information here about the importance of not predetermining the future.

I'm reminded of the line from the essay "Woolf's Darkness: Embracing the Inexplicable" by Rebecca Solnit that I used to have taped on the wall near my bed: "To me, the grounds for hope are simply that we don't know what will happen next, and that the unlikely and the unimaginable transpire quite regularly." This line accompanied and supported me through many years of psychiatric hospitalizations, treatments, and bipolar extremes. I may need to put this quote up by my bed again. It is easy to get overwhelmed within news cycles and doom scrolling and executive orders. I need a reminder – whether that be in words or in images or a specific sound – of being at a threshold, a gateway. Company for the between time, that liminal space where the future hasn't happened yet but there is a somatic knowing and opening towards what is to come.

I wholeheartedly believe that improvisational training that includes deep listening to the bodymindspirit and tuning into community (humans, more-than-human, larger environments) offers good preparation for meeting the future. With that said, it feels as I'm writing this that failure, whatever that might mean, or not being prepared or ready, also needs to be included as we dream into the future. Or perhaps that is another way of saying, multiple ways of engaging are possible. Or in another iteration, perhaps it is impossible to be prepared. In improvisational spaces we often talk about working with whatever is available in the moment. Maybe this moment calls for doing the best we can and making that *we* as diverse and queer and beautiful as possible.

MAD CONDUCTORS

I want to return to *Mad Conductors*, the project whose seeds were activated in that workshop by the Bay in Oakland. Alexis and I have continued to develop this work through collaboration between the two of us and through performances in university settings, conferences, and community workshops. Our core questions have been: What happens when energy is transferred? Who or what conducts the ensemble? How can we hold memory as a community? How can we hold the gaps? What resources do mad ancestors and archives offer? I think these queries may offer potential infrastructures into the future.

Please join me at a performance that happened on a spring Saturday morning in the Turtle Disco garden. Lounge in one of the red camping chairs or a zero gravity chair. Choose to stretch out on a towel on the grass. There are multiple options to accommodate comfort needs. Today we are going to experiment with holding memory and memory gaps as a community. We each call up a memory of a place associated with pleasure and positive feelings. In a meditation, we focus on and experience the qualities and sensorial details of that place, then distill them into a few words that we write (or draw, always multiple access options) on strips of paper. As a group, we experiment enacting memories for each other using gestures, voices, words, and any of the instruments – tambourine, wind chime, shakers, to name a few – spread out on the ground. We act as conductors for our own memories, tweaking the score as we see fit: more bells, quieter at the end, everyone reach arms to the sky.

My interest in this query was how we might collectively hold memory. As a shock survivor with profound memory loss, I've had to rely on loved ones to fill in and recall the blanks. This has often felt like a deficit, with shame or frustration attached, grief for the missing. On this morning, I had a gestalt-like experience of my memory becoming more luminous held by the collective. We all entered into a contract to create and embody each other's memory place; it didn't feel like a favor or disability service, but rather an opportunity to rub against someone else's experience and feel it as vibration, word, gesture, with forgotten or unrealized parts just part of the fabric.

I want to highlight some of the elements in this performance that may be useful for being into the future. I say "being" into the future because the present moment and inhabiting that present moment, in whatever way that looks like for you, for us, feels critical for the future. So does the collective. How do we collectively hold and create this moment? The next? And onward, until the next becomes future? In the instance of our small exchanges in the garden, consent and explicit contracts were important. We verbally exchanged:

Will you hold my memory?
Yes, I will hold your memory.

Words can act as invocation and sharpen the focus of action. When I say action, this also can mean yielding, receiving. The backbody sinking into soft spring earth. When I was asked to hold someone's memory I felt myself become more attentive, aware of the vulnerability and tenderness with which I was being entrusted. This softening into the moment and into exchange is improvisational practice. We are at play inside this small memory score while simultaneously being inside the larger score of the world with its stressors, constraints, openings, and delights. Sometimes the unexpected shows up. Sometimes we are lucky enough to be aware and tuned in to receive it fully. And when I say fully, I mean in whatever way registers for, and honors, your body-mindspirit in that moment.

I want to end with some questions as invitations that you are welcome to engage with through writing, movement, or whatever medium resonates or is available. Within these questions, as scaffold, inherently lies the need for space to rest, to shore up for what comes next, as well as to grieve for what has been lost, whether that be memory, job, home, or loved one.

What does "collective" mean
in your worlds?
How do you shore up lifelines
and connections?
What are your questions for
the future?
What bodily shapes will support the
shift from here to there?
How can your existing resources be
amplified in community?

In the Turtle Disco garden, we came up with responses for how to hold each others' memories and also how to hold each other. Multiply this within a group. Include the Blue Flag Iris and Cardinal flower in the garden. White Pine that towers above us from the neighbor's yard. Extend to a larger community. Make sure to call in the mycelium, the four-leggeds, and all the waters. The unseen, the ghosts. Keep weaving these connections that slowly and with care are a pulsing thing, a web of antennaed knowing, so many strings, vibrating in song.

STEPHANIE HEIT (she/her) is a queer disabled poet, dancer, teacher, and codirector of Turtle Disco, a somatic writing space on Anishinaabe land where she is a white settler in Ypsilanti, Michigan. She is bipolar, a shock/psych system survivor, a mad activist, and a member of the Olimpias, an international disability performance collective. Her award-winning book of hybrid memoir poems, PSYCH MURDERS (Wayne State University Press,2022), invites readers inside psychiatric wards and shock treatments toward new futures of care. Her poetry collection, The Color She Gave Gravity (Operating System, 2017), explores the seams of language, movement, and mental health difference. Website:https://stephanie-heit.com

Talleres dictados por
Mujeres Poderosas

Compartiremos saberes y los transformaremos en expresiones artisticas. Ven a conversar, crear poesia, bailar, bordar, practica el autocuidado y a reafirmar nuestra lucha diaria por los derechos de la mujer.
Bienvenides!

Nos reuniremos dos veces al mes, presencial cuarto sabado y virtural segundo Lunes de cada mes.

Horario presencial Sabados 10am -1 pm
Lugar: Estudio NAKA
900 E.11th Oakland, CA 94606

Horario Virtual Lunes 6pm - 7:30 pm
para mas informacion comunicate con Luciana en Instagram @luciana.rodriguez.orense

MOVEMENT MAPPING CARE

by YAYOI KAMBARA

TRUTH. I come home in my body through movement, landing after falling is essential. Holding myself for partnering, I create shelves and fulcrums, knowing my movement is a rigorous form of identity. I recognize myself in the constants of formations, walking my dogs and tracing neighborhoods in San Francisco, dancing in circles with friends again and again, moving over borders, states, and years. When my MFA studies took me to extreme heat I slowed physically and accelerated mentally simultaneously. Last May, as I was completing my yoga teacher training, I was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer, and with a sharp inhale, everything froze.

ON CARE:

Technique. How could my body betray me? After years of understanding the body as the brain, as Hope Mohr shares, how come I didn't recognize or know something was wrong? I stumbled through my days in a fog; a grey had cast its shadow on everything. Parenting and partnering are steps I know how to perform "full out with feeling" suddenly dulled; I couldn't feel the cathartic high of these routines I knew by heart. I couldn't extend my limbs to create the virtual lines of care and connection I knew as technique.

Patience. As I waited for long weeks to see a doctor, sharing this news felt irresponsible. How could I answer the barrage and multitudes of questions from my tight inner circle? What stage is it? Do you have to go through chemo? How bad is it? Are you going to be okay? Trust me, I will tell you when I know more.

What do we dance in the face of uncertainty? Trust me, I will tell you when I know more.

Connection. I still had a sense of purpose in May 2024: a scholarship from Core Power for 200-hour yoga teacher training. I initially scoffed at the training as corporate but then fell into the people and teachers around me, connecting through spiritual learning and a purpose quest. So, one of the first people I told was Ashle, my lead teacher, who encouraged me to complete the program. While I was in a sea of uncertainty, yoga was a place I could forget for moments when I was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease and prioritize being, and trying to be present. At that exact moment, moving largely in transitions and finding the smallest of movements in balance, I was OKAY. My manic brain wasn't seeking answers I didn't have because I was so focused on my body's choreographies, combining strength and twists with props. I was one of many people in the room. On my mat, I wasn't dying or suffering; I was trying to get into postures – well, maybe living is the ability to have conditions for dying and suffering, but on my mat, I was okay in my dying and suffering towards an asana. I'm not sure what the other students were going through, but it's reasonable to assume we are all going through something. Studying Ashtanga Yoga, the eight-limb path, I practiced the step-by-step approach to the realization of yoga, or the yoke, with the universal self. Through the ethical guidelines of the Yamas and Niyamas, the limbs progress from the external to the internal and are the foundations of living an integrated life. As choreographies of being intentional with movement cultivated by focus, this differed from what I know as a dancer - movement as metaphor. My need for my mat began to change my perspective.

Ahimsa, nonviolence. Brutality, as in cruelty toward myself, the forces were thoughts in a constant wheel of worry, and I noticed the ferocity of energy against my body. How could my body betray me? As time and tests passed, I learned my body was saving me. My cancer was localized and hadn't spread. Body still knew what to do even though my consciousness wasn't aware. Softening, I accepted and began to move from the discomfort of uncertainty to knowing.

Gratitude. Often the theme in my cohort of yoga teacher trainees, a multigenerational group from all kinds of work and family lives, shifted my practice. I was able to practice. I didn't care that I was getting better; the idea was not just to get into a press-up handstand in my mid-40s or get into the most intricate binds, but when we practice regularly, we grow our practice. So I grew with fellow yogis who may or may not practice teaching, but we attended to the philosophies of yoga, thinking about Patajali's writings, and began to share our sankulpas, our reason for existing; I shared secrets and reconnected. My sankulpa: I exist to share intentional movement to create peaceful thoughts and actions. It wasn't new, but hadn't been articulated before; this intention has always been a part of my dancing.

Brahmacharya or moderation. As I began to share my diagnosis more openly, I recognized sweet gestures from near and far and maneuvers that stung. Suddenly, I would go from opening a care package with soft socks, snacks, and flowers to having to hold space for a conversation about another person's anxiety around cancer, illness, and dying. I greeted friends through thoughtful texts and daily haiku emojis with Wordle stats. The abatement of conversations with agendas allowed me to notice compassionate actions that offered rituals for loss. Those who would witness me by flying into town for 36 hours, encouraging me to wonder about the guaranteed better times ahead through writing, make me laugh and not interrogate my conditions. These big hearts passed through state and international borders to lift me, and I welcomed them. In sharing this diagnosis, dancers called me from their busy lives and various tours. They held me and shared how they had made their decisions through breast cancer and other life-threatening illnesses, helping transition me from unknowing diagnosis into being in the season of breast cancer.

Santosha or contentment. Breast cancer season was filled with the heaviness of surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation. They were also filled with long chats with my neighbor Sue, her cats, London and Boston, discussing opera narratives, art making, politics, and shared dreams and visions. The steadiness of a long marriage with first sips of morning coffee, friends, and dancers I've been directed or partnered by diligently kept me company. At the same time, nurses poked and prodded me, taking blood and trying to find veins during the long hours of sitting during chemo. I learned to move in place, exercising ideas while grasping to understand how the toxicity of the yew plant, one of the chemotherapies I received, was reducing my chance of cancer recurrence.

Svādhyāya or self-study. The choreographies of being in my historic neighborhood, the Castro, became a site for critical study as I didn't need to go far to practice moving. I walked my pups, practiced yoga, and still danced. I also made shorter dances for Rhythm & Motion. My former company ballet teacher at ODC/Dance, Ms. Liz Gravelle, teaches at the Academy of Ballet on Market Street. Through unison steps shared with classmates, my friends and I would take on these needed movement exercises. When glissades showed up, we would get dinner. These steps of settling in my neighborhood, at the barre, on the mat, became my third space - where I could have another identity formed by the in-betweens. I wasn't a patient undergoing treatment or a parent on the Parent Guardian Association; I didn't have to be the Yayoi who was producing or researching a new work, or have people ask me what I was working on, or, even worse, how I was feeling. I could dance. My back could hurt in arabesque, and simultaneously, the speed returned in my legs and I occasionally regained a double pirouette.

AS I BEGAN TO SHARE MY DIAGNOSIS MORE OPENLY, I RECOGNIZED SWEET GESTURES FROM NEAR AND FAR AND MANEUVERS THAT STUNG.

Saturdays. I looked forward to going to the boxing gym once a week, even when neutropenic, and had to be careful about catching colds and viruses. Led by my dancer friend Kelly Del Rosario, I simply pushed and pulled. I wasn't working out for fitness gains, but again, I could connect with my body through movement and my body's capacity to heal my surgeries appropriately. Surrounded by a bunch of silent boxers who rarely speak and electronic dance music, I could be all of me, in those moments — bald and sweaty. No one asked me about my lack of eyebrows, why, or how I felt — EVER, and I was discharged from being labeled as a patient. The spaces and edges we rarely dance in until we have to live in them, allowing our movements to verb a comfortable identity of ourselves. Movement is my immediate and natural identity in flux, and by finding opacity alongside the wings, ducking in and out of the light, I was okay, maybe even more than fine. My third spaces are open, wide spaces where I could be left alone to move in unison and in time with friends and strangers who cared enough about my being there, not about the conditions I was dancing through.

Asteya or Non-stealing. How quickly we forget. I speak of movement and forget the stillness. They could be just balances, moving so microscopically it's barely detectable. But it's in the moving I revive the body's memories and heal. As I write and put words together and order them, I reveal my process, moments becoming a frame for understanding the choreographies of grief and care, relinquishing the last of my fears to open up to opportunity.

ON GRIEF:

Aparigraha or freedom from grasping. My triceps touch my knees;

I LEARNED COMING HOME TO THE BODY THROUGH THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF GRIEF THAT THERE IS NO OTHER SIDE; IT'S A CONTINUATION OF AMASSED STEPS WE CARRY WITH CARE.

I almost knock off an injectable medication on my arm. Rolling in the dark, unsure of my pain levels, a soft blanket confines me to wonder without action. An inability to focus, a fog, a dampening of acuity. I lean into rest and watch my thoughts but can't get attached to them because I lack energy. Is this grief?

Iśvara-pranidhānā or surrender. I've learned trust and resilience by learning the choreography of a heavy body. Radiation treatments require a patient to be still; my dance skills of helping my partner by holding my own weight interferes with the work of my radiation team who moves me with a sterile accuracy. The physicist I have never met exacts precision, triple-checking every day of treatments so I don't endure unnecessary harm. I'm on stage atop the cold table with a giant rotating machine beaming on me. The physicist is not lit, but we are performing together for a run of 15 days. Oncologists and teams of specialists, nurses, physical therapists, and nutritionists with constant eye contact are signatures of caring; they glow superhuman as they recite exact percentages from long research. The whys and hows of cancer research reveal the benefits of systemic chemo, nutrition guidelines, radiation, and endocrine therapy and how they can blast rapidly reproducing cancer cells, differentiating their reproduction from healthy cells. As tests and measurements are taken, fidelity to my life becomes paramount. Why this allegiance now? Because the time to move is now.

Śauca or cleanliness. Unnameable but feelable, I return. What is the new normal? I'm prepared that it will take a full year to understand the new normal, and formations are already changing. I go beyond my neighborhood across the country as I write this piece, and I've been in multiple rehearsals, including making *YES!* a new dance on consent whose budding is felt like wrestling in the desire to premier and tour. As I've identified the steps to consent for *YES!* recognition, discernment, and action without attachment— I learned from dancers, doctors, therapists, and teachers during my cancer season. We make decisions for our bodies and hope we are making the best choices. If my medication makes me sick, I demand another choice. When I bought my family daruma dolls for the new year, I hadn't thought thoroughly about the meaning of daruma. Daruma dolls are traditional Japanese wishing dolls that keep you focused on your goals. Using black ink, you fill in the daruma's right eye while thinking of a wish. Should the wish later come true the left eye is filled in. Daruma dolls are modeled after Bodhidharma the founder and first patriarch of Zen Buddhism. Traveling from San Francisco to Chicago to Middlebury, Bennington, and finally to Albany, I took these dolls with me and shared them with friends and colleagues as I shared my work. As I write from Middlebury, Vermont, where dancer, and Professor Christal Brown reminded me we all need the daruma, or the vision to enact the steps I identified for consent: recognition, discernment, and action without attachment.

Tapas or Self Discipline. During treatment, I was visioning with my choreographic collaborator, Loni Landon, as we prepared for a commission with Robert Moses' Kin's New Legacies project. What would it mean not to do it all? Limit ourselves to not self-produce, teach, dance, while fulfilling our roles as partners and parents. These thoughts lingered into a mentorship exchange with Deborah Slater Dance Theater's Winter Studio 210 Residency resident artists, Tracey Lindsey Chan and Cyrah L Ward. I struggled with the word mentorship, wanting to refine or remove the word mentor altogether. Instead, I considered my work with these artists to serve their art-making as an aid or connector.

Exploration. The storms pass, seasons change, and dancing continues. I've been focusing my time on my choreographic research on consent for YES! Identifying actions — the ability to recognize choices, and as I keep choosing dance again and again, becomes a strategy as I get through the melancholy of a transition to a new unknown normalcy. With collaboration and relationships, I enjoy the process of unwinding the tension my body has endured during this season of cancer. Bare knuckling isn't a movement option; it freezes you into fear. I learned coming home to the body through the choreography of grief that there is no other side; it's a continuation of amassed steps we carry with care. Maybe dancing together is the spiritual preparedness we need to face the risk of living — a willingness to see the truth of what is living and the knowledge that the transmutation of suffering is possible through dance as a liberatory skill. When dancing exudes a non-violent habitus, we enact our interconnectedness and learn to shift with one another. Not left to right or right to wrong; instead, I find myself defining virtues we collectively value through the choreographies of grief and care.

YAYOI KAMBARA is a multi-hyphenate artist working in dance as a critical form of expression. Kambara started her career as a professional dancer and currently directs and produces multimedia performance works, including film and XR, and was recognized as a stage director by Opera America in 2023. Kambara is a co-interrogator of Dancing Around Race, a 200-hour CYT, and is completing a restorative yoga certification.

LIVABLE FUTURES, CLIMATE BANSHEES, AND OTHER SCORES FOR DANCING ON UNSTABLE GROUND

by
Norah Zuniga Shaw

The following is a series of short meditations and improvisation scores for living in turbulent times. Words and ideas are drawn from the resources of *Livable Futures*, a social practice project I have been co-creating over the past 10 years, these words are offered as embodied acts of resistance, connection, and imagining (I often write in community and am integrating here some language co-created with Michael J. Morris, Bhumi B Patel, and LROD). *Livable Futures* fosters creative responses to conditions of crisis and uncertainty on a planet in need. Our work together has generated and supported 100s of artistic and scholarly projects, field courses, community workshops, performances and exhibitions, and a public idea archive. Our Substack community newsletter and podcast offer actionable ideas, focusing on artistic tactics in response to the intersectional issues of ecological, social, and algorithmic justice and foregrounding Black, indigenous, and queer feminist projects and practices. Our transmedia performance rituals offer immersive environments for healing, community connection, and facing into the magnitude of the issues with creative intention and support. Centering livability encompasses social justice and ecological ethics. It invites critically rethinking about who survives and who gets to thrive in our communities, including all biological and artificial life now and in the future. De-centering the human reframes progress in favor of a posthumanism that is neither anti-human nor solely about sustaining human life as we currently know it. I bring to these meditations my experience as an interdisciplinary artist, writer, dance improviser, teacher, and creative director for performance and technology projects grounded in practices of liberation and collaboration.

ARRIVING

As the tectonic forces of political extremism collide with the extreme events of climate change, we are left without any remaining illusion of stability. We are all literally dancing on unstable ground. Of course this is not the first time this has happened, and many in the world have already been living in abject societies and conditions far worse than what is now happening in the U.S. but that does not mean it doesn't matter. It means we move in solidarity. We fight, we resist, and we learn how to make lives amidst the crumbling foundations. We take solace in the fact that we do not know the future. And we seek to make futures together through practical skills and poetic interventions, through sharing and gathering, and seeking peace in any of the ways we know how. We ask with each other; how do we locate resilience even as we fight the forces requiring it of us? What is a future? And how might we continue to imagine arriving at the unarrivable horizons of carbon drawdown, radical tenderness,[1] and humane technologies? What do we already know as artists? Might we enter the unknown of this moment with a powerful willingness to do what needs to be done? I sometimes have the privilege of working as a birth justice doula helping birthing parents prepare for the unknown of labor and we always start with one question: What do you do when you don't know what to do? No answers. No list of prescriptions but instead, how can I support you in accessing your own deep wells of capacity and capability?

So many of our experiences exceed our ability to comprehend them, articulate them, or even fully grieve them. What if you simply put these things together: memory, strengths, your sensory awareness of what's at stake, and your creative practices? In the days that are here and, in the days, to come, all your talents and strengths and capacities are needed.

Score: Radical Juxtaposition

What do you do when you don't know what to do? How have you already navigated the unknown in your life?

What are you particularly good at doing?

Now take the leap of assuming that whatever you are good at—dancing, managing projects, decluttering, nurturing—whatever your greatest skills, they are exactly what is needed right now. Take the leap of putting your super- powers together with the issues at hand and listen for what happens next.

What if you move from there? Make from there.

TURNING TOWARD

In 2015, in response to the uptick in violence and vitriol of the first Trump campaign combined with cascading extreme climate events, I felt called into facing the things that were most frightening for me instead of turning away or tuning out. I made the perhaps absurd leap of assuming that dance could do something about climate change, about misogyny, anti-blackness, about overlapping crises. Not dancing about those things (that would be instrumentalizing dance which is also good but not my thing) but using the intrinsic practices of dance improvisation and intermedia directly to address the issues at hand. Over the years of facing into the climate crisis, we have been developing a kind of score for moving out of paralysis and into action, arriving again and again into the current moment, turning toward what is, sensing what wants to be known, re-centering around voices that have long been offering alternatives, and feeling our way into motion.

Score: Softening

Turning toward the fear, the insurmountable problems, the crises

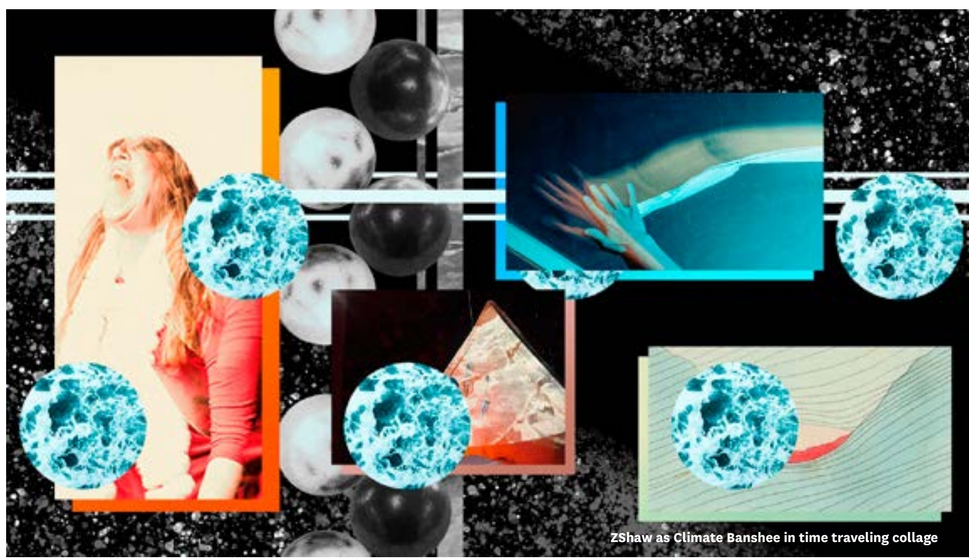
The first action is non-action, breathe, sense, pausing, pacing

Softening into the magnitudes, sensing

What if you took this moment right now to accept the immensity of these feelings?
What wants to be said, moved, sounded, felt, heard?

Sense what wants to be moved and move from there. Feeling into action, power, poetics, prose, intention, offering, voice, motion

What if you already know everything you need to know in your body now?



COLLAGE BY T OLSEN

ZShaw as Climate Banshee in time traveling collage

THE BANSHEE DEMANDS THE IMPOSSIBLE OF HERSELF, ATTEMPTING TO STAY PRESENT WITH BOTH HER IMMEDIATE SENSATION AND THE PLANETARY REALITIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE, VIOLENCE, EXTINCTION, SUFFERING OF PLANT AND ANIMAL AND FRIEND.

The first performances to emerge from this process were a series of rituals that we've come to call *Climate Gatherings*. *Climate Gatherings* offer a poetic means of turning toward crisis and feeling into action and intention. In the live work, small groups are brought together in an interactive installation of sound, light and video that comes alive through the charged, charismatic presence and fleeting interventions of performers including the *tuning twins* whose unison movements provide ground, *sound benders* who are spatializing and processing all the sound, and the *Climate Banshee*. Participants are guided into different interactions, tasks or prompts, such as placing objects in the space, making offerings in sound or gesture, working together to solve a small problem, reflecting, writing messages in ice or chalk on the floor. Using consensual practices of interactive and participatory performance, we locate contemporary rituals that exceed established religious traditions and that move people out of stasis and into intention, the ground of ethical being. They work, in part, the way ritual has always worked, because they help us bring the issues into scale of the body, our bodies while activating the mysteries. We create these experiences live but also, because this is arts activism, we seek a larger reach, with a version that's an online installation you can visit on your own time and in your own space to practice turning toward the issues at hand: https://climategatheringredux.webflow.io. We also share the scores as social media posts and other offerings.

Score: An Issue of Scale

Now if you can, take a deep breath with me and turn toward the darkness, the fears, the rage that are either central in your awareness or playing in the background as you are trying to do something else. Place those monsters somewhere in the space at a slight remove from you. A world on fire, fascism unmasked and flexing its violence all around us, increasing impacts of the climate crisis, fires, floods, transphobia run rampant, the sickening instability and uncertainty and confusion of the current moment. Turn toward it and as you tense against the magnitude of the issues, breath, move, place it in the space and move around it, observing it, understanding it as a thought, a moment in the vast eternity of time and space, something you can re-scale as big and overwhelming or tiny like an ant. Arrive into the moment as it is. People have been living in abject societies before this and we are not the first nor the last, but we are the ones that are here now and can become the ancestors we want to be, can be the resistance we will be proud to tell future generations about, can be our own guides and healers and heroes. Move with this, make noise, notice the sensations that arise as you bring your attention to the crises around us, the grief, the rage and let the words and sounds and utterances escape from your voice and body in any way you want. See what it is like not to edit them. Groaning is good. Manifestos, rants, and diatribes are welcome. Awkward, ugly, silly, transcendent, joyful in the liberation of accepting what is…share what you say.

This is a climate gathering. This is a performance ritual. At the heart of the ritual is the *Climate Banshee*. She's a prophetic figure in a trance state not unlike a priestess or shaman--but coming instead from my own lineages in dance and sonic improvisation, non-traditional Jewish practices, and Irish traditions of community grieving and collective ritual. Bebe Miller and Simone Forti's mentoring of my early process guide me and I feel the presence of Eiko Otake, Joan Jonas, Diamanda Galas, and Pauline Oliveros in this work as well although I claim no connection to their lineages beyond being chosen ancestors and guides. The banshee is expressing the inexpressible in the tradition of the prophetic, but she doesn't know the future. The *Banshee* shakes things up, literally creating vibration in the room and creating space for ritual participants to experience their own feelings. In my most recent performance of the *Banshee* with audiences at a religious studies conference in Germany and again at a symposium in the UK, audiences, Irish women in the audience, women who know the banshee figure deep in their bones, have called out for more, for workshops, for collective keening rituals and utterances so that we may all become banshee.

Score: Becoming Banshee

The Banshee demands the impossible of herself, attempting to stay present with both her immediate sensation and the planetary realities of climate change, violence, extinction, suffering of plant and animal and friend. It's a constant battle to stay present. As you perform the banshee, allow the vocalizations issue forth from that state of being. Don't fake it. Don't allow the drift of attention toward autopilot. Don't let yourself do the things you typically do as a performer to feel secure on stage. Work without a net. To become banshee is to seek to remain in flux, unstable, refusing the illusion of stability, refusing artifice. Her vocalizations erupt from bodily sensation and the deep wells of input she has received from others: memories of changing ecologies, personal strengths and stories, hope, grief, recovery, loss, and intention. This keening, raging, raw humanity is a state of being, awkward, sometimes ugly, cathartic.

Musician Byron Au Yong works with audience to gather water and sounds during a Climate Gathering performance

PHOTO BY GUY DELANCEY

GATHERING

This is a climate gathering. The *Climate Banshee* enters the space where you have been gathering. Gentle guides have been offering ways into sharing with the 20 or so people in the space and small tasks to prepare the space, a tray with bits of chalk to pass around, piles of stones and vintage brass objects, animals, bells, and boxes to arrange. You are offered glass jars of melting ice and guided to add your water to the bowls on the floor creating pouring and dripping and clanging sounds that reverberate in the room and are picked up by several microphones running to laptops guided by custom software patches that other gentle guides use to bend and granulate and move your sounds viscerally in the room through an array of speakers echoing back the sensation of melting, ringing bells, and objects of extraction. Creaking sounds, quiet and whispered memories are interrupted by the Climate Banshee entering the space barefoot, long red hair flying around her face. She is focused internally and begins to mutter into a mic, at times speaking, at times groaning, keening, generating an environment of urgent presence and failure to achieve the impossible, facing the magnitudes in her own body so that you can face them in yours. Like the bells and bowls and water, her sounds are bent and thrown through the space and the room vibrates rotating through the community that has gathered, hearts and blood and bodies of those present, stasis and catharsis mingling to generate intention.

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The Banshee's words are mostly illegible but at times crystalize into messages, stories, recollections:

I went to my teachers and asked them:
What do you do when you don't know what to do?
Crawl into the room

What do you do when you don't know what to do?
Invite your friends into the process, bring materials, make a mess.

Create arbitrary structure to support you.

I have three things to say.

One, two. three. I have one thing to say. One, one, one, one. three.

You already know everything you need to know
in your body now.
This is a lecture on crisis. This is a climate gathering. This is a crisis.

Breathe. Bring attention to sensation.

Ohhhhhhhhhh. No. Stay present. Don't fake it. Fire, fire, fiiiiiiiiiire. Rising waters.

500 years of colonialism burning in the skies. Floating in fetid flood waters. Soaking into our skin. Suffocating atmospheres. A history of anti-environment and anti- and anti- and anti-Blackness.

What's your earliest memory of climate change?

Sense what remembering feels like.

What's your earliest memory of climate change?

The Banshee already knows your memories and as she moves, responding to sensation and awareness of crisis, she recites your collective memories: *I was in college in my environmentalism class… It doesn't snow anymore, not regularly like it used to, and then sometimes it snows too much… A Sunday drive with my family as a girl, new highways being constructed through farmlands and forests. Even then, as a child, I was alarmed… Watching our local brook erode and disappear… The Earth is getting warmer and the ice caps are melting… Experiencing summer on the West Coast become "fire season"… My first memories of climate change are the constant deforestation that happened in my city from when I was a kid until I was 18 and the resulting change in temperatures that occurred over the years… Seeing the hole in the ozone during science class in 8th grade… Expanding desert in China… Tornadoes in the wrong month… I saw ducklings ensnared with plastic can rings. A storm about 10 years ago that blew out the power in my neighborhood…Listening to Rabbi Arthur Waskow speak…Parents' accounts of colder and drier winters in the area where we lived before the hydropower station and a giant artificial water reservoir were built… An Inconvenient Truth… Later seasons, migratory birds arriving later…The Brisbane floods…Hurricane Sandy…*

The Banshee retreats into a tent in the space, lit from within and amplified muttering…rising fear, rising temperatures, rising waters, rapid losses, rapid extinctions, rapid events, uncertainty unmasked…

Ritual attendants in the space give you tasks scrawled on bits of recycled paper and invite you into creating a trace of your experience in the space. The Banshee continues muttering from within the tent, but something has shifted. Now she knows your names and she knows your deepest secret superpowers, and she weaves them into the room in a sing song voice…*Empathy… diving in and starting something from scratch… bringing different ideas together… I can read bodies… visioning a reality unknowingly needed… unexpected encounters – collaborative power with plants… reading a room… I am a connector…I'm a chameleon, I adapt well in new environments… making something out of nothing… patient strategic optimism… my superpower is my imagination… cool, calm, collected, and organized… introducing people who share common goals… forging brilliant connections… able to create happenings… complex problem solving, communicated simply… thoughtful diplomat leads with gut… holding space, words, and listening… facilitating safer spaces… spontaneous translation of feelings to words… deep listening…*

You already know everything you need to know to get started.

Score: Resilience Motions

Take time today to simply notice where you observe cycles, repeated processes, and endings that are also beginnings in the world around you. How might you participate in these oscillations in a way that is both again and for the first time?

There is no single, final solution to climate change nor to fascist uprisings and unstable lifeworlds. Rather, there are countless processes that we repeat, reiterate, begin again, to which we return. Each repetition is also an opportunity to do it differently.

Take a walk and gather images or resilience around you. Create your own movement loops: A hula hoop goes round and round, a child bouncing on a trampoline, bells swinging in the wind, bubbling water and rising fireflies, the tapping of a woodpecker…

Resilience creates its own momentum, it is repetitive and oscillating motion, rocking, shaking, bouncing, the oscillation of sound as a microphone feeds back through the speakers, video loops, fractals unfolding, seasons.

ZShaw (left) as the banshee during a Climate Gathering performance in New York City

PHOTO BY GUY DELANCEY.

CLOSING

Livable Futures reverberates with questions at the heart of present conditions, questions about futures, livability, instability, resilience, and connection. What are we called to do now? And as many have asked before me, how might we become better ancestors? We welcome you into our practices as podcast listeners, newsletter readers and online community members, as contributing artists, and friends. We hope the scores we have shared are helpful and can be taken up, adapted or serve as catalysts for creating your own. And the question we like to ask at the end of our performance rituals: What resources are you taking away from this experience today? How can you share them?

Livable Futures:
https://livablefuturesNow.org

Interactive Online Version of Climate Banshee / Climate Gathering:
https://climategatheringredux.webflow.io/

Wexner Center for the Arts Interview about Climate Banshee and Livable Futures:
https://wexarts.org/read-watch-listen/qa-norah-zuniga-shaw

[1] Dani D'Emilia

NORAH ZUNIGA SHAW is an artist, writer, and director for performance and technology projects at the intersection of body, ecology, collaboration, and liberation. As Professor and Director for Dance and Technology at The Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD) at Ohio State University ZShaw co-founded the Motion Lab for performance and technology research and leads its residency program. ZShaw's major projects include interactive media scores *Synchronous Objects* with William Forsythe and *TWO* with Bebe Miller and the *Livable Futures* social practice project, newsletter/podcast, and performance rituals including *Climate Gathering*, *Upwelling* and *Oasis XR*. She is co-editor for the new Routledge Companion on Performance and Technology (forthcoming 2025).

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