

## Street Dance Activism Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation Radical Embodied Dialogue August 19, 2020 Recorded over Zoom

Dianne McIntyre, Marlies Yearby, Host: grace shinhae jun, Shamell Bell, and Moderator: MiRi Park

**S**treet Dance Activism Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation began with Dr. Shamell Bell's dream—a clear vision of people around the world heeding a call, at the same time, to the same rhythm, in a collective resonance. It's grown into a conversation, a community, a journey, and a call to action ([www.streetdanceactivism.com](http://www.streetdanceactivism.com)).

This Radical Embodied Dialogue was created to honor Black dance artists and their legacies. As part of the Street Dance Activism Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation twenty-eight-day collective healing project, we invited Marlies Yearby and Dianne McIntyre to share their stories and their shared histories. The pandemic, coupled with use of technology, opened up and provided alternative methods to host a gathering to listen to their experiences that too often have been excluded from dance history texts. This resulting documentation of some of the work of these artists restores the significance of their work to American dance history.

In planning for this dialogue, we shared sentiments of exclusion from parts of the dance world and desired to reclaim our practices and embodied training. Our mantra for the week was “Ancestral and Cosmic Wisdom is Available to Us Today and Every Day,” and we asked Marlies and Dianne to share their wisdom and their connection to each other to give us insight. We are honored to share their voices here. Please refer to the end of the conversation for biographies of all participants.

**grace shinhae jun:** Welcome everyone. Hello, my name is grace jun, and I'm part of the Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation family. We are gathered here today to listen to two amazing artists and leaders of our community. We are so, so honored to have them here to share with us their wisdom. I wanted to take a moment to do a movement and breath land acknowledgement. I reside here on the unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation in San Diego. In taking a breath together, we acknowledge the indigenous and ancestral lands that we are on. If you can take out your hands, take an inhale and exhale. Inhale: bring your hands to your hearts, just sharing a lot of love and compassion for Marlies and Dianne today. Exhale. Inhale: bring your hands to your mind, just opening our headspace for the wisdom that we are about to listen to. Exhale. And inhale: taking all of that energy and love, bringing our hands together to our heart, and sharing this energy back to our wonderful esteemed guests today. Thank you.

We are excited for you to be here with us. The Global Dance Meditation Street Activation community is an embodied meditation and movement community, led by Black, Indigenous, people of color, and queer guides from multiple wisdoms, traditions, and healing practices. We recognize the value and beauty of all abilities and all bodies. You are all cherished. You are all welcome.

Remember, Black liberation comes in so many forms, but ultimately it seeks to be a space where Black love and joy flourish because, at its root, that is what white supremacy seeks to destroy. Our only goal is to truly heal and uplift our communities so that we may reimagine the world being a place where everyone can feel seen, heard, held space for, loved, and respected. Thank you for being here.

**Shamell Bell:** Hello y'all. I just wanted to honor you. Marlies, you know I am absolutely in complete awe and love and just so honored that you would bring to us such an incredible legend, as you are a legend yourself. And our mantra for this week is that "Ancestral and Cosmic Wisdom is Available to Us Today and Every Day," and you all are the personification of that. And so I just wanted to let you know how honored we are. Like grace said, it began with a dream. I literally had a dream, and so for you all to be here is just an honor and a privilege.

You are a text, an actual text; you've already been a text for us. But now we get to put our own embodied knowledge as text. We are being written about by ourselves through our bodily knowledge and embodied knowledge. And then we're also going to be able to teach exactly what we want to teach. I'm so honored and I'm grateful and that's all I had to say. Just thank everyone for being here.

**Marlies Yearby:** Thank you, Shamell. Always beautiful to hear your voice, and I'm glad to see your vision and dream growing and growing and growing. That's what it was about, right? Drop a seed and let it sprout.

**SB:** Right, and then to have MiRi and grace, for me to step back and just say hey, this is all our vision now, you know, this is what we're doing. It's not about one person. It's a family and community that we've created. It's something that I could have never imagined, and I just want everyone to get a taste of being in relationship and connection with you. Thank you so much.

I hope people see that in a genuine way, that this is not something we created. I literally see us . . . I told grace earlier: You're giving me not even hope, not even optimism. I know that we can live differently because you're showing me that we are living differently. My life has shifted in a way that I'm loved and supported and doing something collectively and birthing things collectively, like you all being our doulas, and that is possible! We can live differently, y'all!

[*Shamell, Dianne, Marlies, grace, and MiRi all smile and laugh together.*]

**SB:** Can you imagine?! We're living differently. So, I'm going to shut up 'cuz you know I can just talk and just welcome everybody to Street Dance Activism. Welcome to the Global Dance Meditation for Black Liberation. Take it away . . .

**MiRi Park:** Hi, and thank you for the welcome, everyone. I wanted to say that it's an honor to be sitting with you both. I am Marlies's associate choreographer on the twentieth anniversary tour of the musical *RENT*. Prior to that, she hired me as her dance captain to be Alexi Darling (and dance captain) on the final Broadway tour. Prior to that, she hired me to be in Movin' Spirits Dance Theater's production of *Wōōmən*, and then prior to that I actually met Marlies when I was a freshman in college at UMass Amherst—a long time ago. It was an honor to meet her then and continue to work with her. She has shaped a lot of my understanding of art making, particularly from relying on the knowledge in our bodies.

And I could talk about that for a long time, but I'm not going to. So, I'm going to actually segue into a little bit of information about Marlies, who is an artist, activist, choreographer, and director with a global perspective. And she creates original works across various platforms, including theater, film, and diverse multimedia. She's developed her "In Our Bones Creative Process" as an acknowledgement of legacies, lived experiences, memories, and day-to-day energies ever present in the moving bodies at work.

She is the choreographer of the musical *RENT*, which has shaped—changed—what musical theater is in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Her work has been featured in nearly all of the productions that you all know and love. She also gained critical acclaim for her role as director and choreographer of Craig Harris's *Brown Butterfly*, which was a multimedia celebration of the life and times of Muhammad Ali, which I totally wanted to be a part of, but then I wasn't, but that's okay.

[*MiRi and Marlies laugh together.*]

**MP:** She is the founder and director of Movin' Spirits Dance Theater (1989–2007) and has presented her works on all of the global stages. Her work has been Tony [Award]–nominated, won a Drama Desk Award, a Helen Hayes Nomination for Oedipus Plays at the Washington Shakespeare Theater, and Audelco nominations for



Fig. 1. Street Dance Activism Social Media Flyer for Radical Embodied Dialogue. Flyer design by Melanie D'Andrea.

*The A Tempest*, directed by Robbie McCauley. She received a Bessie Award as part of the collaborating team for Lisa Jones and Alva Rogers's *Stained*, and she has had the pleasure of directing and/or choreographing works from writers Laurie Carlos, Sekou Sundiata, Carl Hancock Rux, Rita Dove, Shay Youngblood, and Nadine Mozon. And she's recently worked in collaboration with Aku Kadogo on Jessica Care Moore's *Salt City*, an Afro-futuristic fantasy inspired by the salt mines of Detroit. That was last summer, and it was performed at the Charles H. Wright museum in Detroit, Michigan. She's currently musing on her newest project, *Seed Awakening on the Eve of Blue*, which addresses the crisis in real food, environment, and health as a commodity in disenfranchised communities globally and right here at home.

Now, it's my immense honor to introduce our next guest, Dianne McIntyre, who I've heard personal stories from Marlies about her work with this person. It's a true honor to introduce a 2020 United States Artist Fellow and 2016 Doris Duke Artist, who choreographs in the fields of concert dance, theater, and film. From 1972 to 1988, Ms. McIntyre, with Sounds in Motion, her first company of dancers and musicians, toured internationally and at home, taught classes and presented innumerable dance, music, [and] theater artists in her Harlem studio. Her companies have performed in, again, all of the stages.

[MiRi, Dianne, and Marlies smile and laugh.]



Fig. 2. Screenshot of Marlies, Dianne, MiRi, grace, and Shamell sharing gratitude prior to the dialogue.

**MP:** And some of the things that you may know of—she has choreographed *Beloved*, *Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper*, and *Miss Evers' Boys*, for which she received an Emmy nomination. In theater choreography, she has choreographed four Broadway shows, forty New York and regional theaters, including Center Stage, La Jolla Playhouse, dot dot dot . . .

[MiRi moves her hand going down a line, indicating the extensive list of credits.]

[MiRi, Dianne, and Marlies laugh.]

**MP:** You could go to her website and read her full bio at [diannemcintyre.com](http://diannemcintyre.com). She is the co-director of Jacob's Pillow Ann and Weston Hicks Choreography Fellows Program. She has numerous other awards, and I'm so, so excited to hear about all of your influences, collectively together.

And so, I will segue into our first topic, which is, if you can speak a little bit—primarily because our week in the twenty-eight-day Dance Meditation is to acknowledge legacy and ancestral legacy specifically—if you can discuss a little bit about your influences. Like I said, this here, the three of us, to me is legacy, as I've worked with Marlies profoundly, and Marlies has worked with Dianne. So, if we can start there, and then we'll just keep the conversation going . . . I'm excited to hear what you all think.

**MY:** Woooo. Dianne, I'm going to give to you first because I want to hear the legacy of your influences and how you came to be. Because I found out about Dianne McIntyre from one of my influences, Bobbie Bolden, who was Bobbie Wynn of Bobbie Wynn and Dance Company at that time. And it was because of her that I found out about Dianne in New York and came to New York and found home. So, I want to hear hers first because I was so attracted to her way of working when I came to New York. And when I saw what she was doing, it just inspired a deep seed that had already sparked in me, but it was like the possibility of doing. . . . When I hit New York, I found Dianne. So, I want to give to Dianne first and hear that legacy.

**Dianne McIntyre:** Okay. So, thank you. And thank you for the introduction, and I'll say that I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. And in Cleveland, I studied dance as a little girl. I went to a studio that was actually all-Black, even though we lived in what you call an integrated neighborhood. I found out later that we were all-Black in that dance school as children because we weren't really encouraged or invited to be in the white studios. So, I got a very good foundation there in ballet and tap and all like that.

And then I also studied in an after-school program with a teacher named Virginia Dryansky. My other teacher was named Elaine Gibbs, and she is ninety-two/ninety-one right now. Her full name now is Elaine Gibbs Redmond. We still keep in touch. So, Virginia was a modern dancer and she danced with the Karamu Dancers, and Karamu is the oldest producing African American cultural theater center in the country. It was started in 1915—so, when we were children studying with Virginia and she danced with the Karamu dancers. They were doing civil rights and activist dances, as adults, and she had us doing the same thing. So, when I was nine and ten years old, we were doing freedom song dances. So, I was growing up with that already as a child.

And then, when I went to Ohio State as a dance major, I was encouraged to choreograph because I always love[d] choreographing, and I also was inspired there by two people who were our guest artists. One was a jazz trumpeter named Bill Dixon, and the other was a dancer from the Judson Church Movement, Judith Dunn. They work a lot in improvisation, and that just caught me. I was like, whoa, I really love this. And I also was inspired because of my age, when I was in school in the late sixties and early seventies, by the Black Arts Movement. I was influenced by the poetry, the theater, the music. When I came to New York, all I did was dive into experiencing all of those great artists in those areas that I had read about when I was a younger person. And then I, over time, became connected with them and came very close in working improvisationally and choreographically with live music.

And then, at a young age, I started my own company, and a lot of people started gravitating to my work because I gave them structure and also gave them freedom to dance and express themselves at the same time while they were getting technique. So, a lot of people, beautiful people like Marlies Yearby, the people who came to me were already very ingenious folks [*laughs*]. Marlies, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, who is the director of Urban Bush Women; one of my early associates and students was Ntozake Shange, who is the writer of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. And I just, over time, gravitated completely to artists who had that freedom, that daring, that activist—that yes! We have this power, this consciousness, and that's what we're doing in our work. So those are my influences. And early on, I was just choreographing, had my own studio. What made me do that on my own, I can't exactly tell you, but that's [*laughs*] that's what I did.

[*Dianne and Marlies laugh.*]

**DM:** So that's a little bit about me. Yeah.

**MY:** I love that. I love it. You know, I started off with my mother wanting me to take dance classes. And so she brought me to what I call mom-and-pop studios at that time. And I studied tap, a little ballet, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, a little bit of everything. And then she wanted me to take piano, and so then I was taking piano and doing these dance classes, and all I kept thinking was I just want to go outside and play. So, at one point, I rebelled completely against any of that. And in the course of that she stopped making me do it. So, then I stopped. But I used to follow her around or be dragged around by her to live jazz music clubs everywhere. And she used to be, before she had us, she was what was called an interpretive dancer, which meant that she was a dance improviser and she was a singer to jazz music. So, she gigged. And when I came along, she dragged me along to hear all these masters, which I, at that time, did not connect nor appreciate. I just again felt like, oh god, there's this thing I'm being taken to go see, and I would watch her dance all the time. But, again, still did not connect how much it was impacting me.

And then somewhere before high school age, suddenly I got the bug and I wanted to dance, and my mother told me, you know what, I gave you all those lessons, you fought me every step along the way, you know, find your own way. And so when she said that, I found some courses over at the YWCA and I started taking classes there.

In the meantime, in between time, disco dancing came into the scene, and my sister and I used to love hanging out in the basement making up dances to disco music. She was older than me by

about four years and she would sneak me into disco clubs. I wasn't supposed to be there. But I would go up into those clubs, and we would disco dance and compete. . . . Got paid, so it was our first gig. We'd spend hours just making up our routines.

Then I fell into African dancing, and I don't even remember the teacher's name who I took from, but I was taking African dance, and it spoke to me on a deep level—the music, the drums. I kept hearing the drums and the intricate talking, the notes between the notes in the drums, which reminded me of being in those jazz music environments where the instruments were talking to each other. I started having awareness that I had this thing for live music.

And then I did study modern dance in high school. I went to Holy Names High School and I studied modern dance, and then from there decided to go on and go to college and was going to do something that was safe. I was going to do biological sciences. I had an interest in science but decided a semester into my first year to take one dance class, and then next thing I knew I had all dance classes and no science. I loved to go to festivals and hear live music and found myself dancing on the street often with live music. I found myself taking all the choreography classes at San José State University where I went to college, all the production classes, everything that I needed to make work for the stage. But I was not a good student and faded away from the other things that I was supposed to do. But I was encouraged by the department, and I was really embraced by the faculty at San José State University at that time. We had a lot of guest artists that would come in and would inspire and who challenged me inside of my own authentic way of working to expand it and consider it from different perspectives. And that made a huge difference. I got to take graduate study choreography courses as an undergraduate. I got to choreograph on the faculty concerts.

So, I really then became engaged with choreography, which is how I met Bobbie Wynn then, and then Bobbie Wynn, she had a company called Bobbie Wynn and Dance Company, and she worked with live music and/or canned music, original stories that she was telling through the body. And that really inspired me. And I got to choreograph on the company, and that was a huge thing. [I] ran her dance studio so I got a sense of producing, if you will, when I was with her.

And it was Bobbie, at one point, who said you know Marlies, I know you're talking about going to New York. . . . I felt like the area that we were in did not support artists—period! Their idea of supporting the arts was going out and seeking already established companies and/or choreographers and bringing them in and not acknowledging what was present there right in front of them, no matter what the color. We were predominantly a Black company with a speckle of colors, rainbow of colors inside of it. But again, we were not supported well to do our work. We survived by audiences coming to see us.

So, I said I need to go to another area; I think I need to go to New York. And she told me at the point, that [if] I was going to New York . . . it's all about Dianne McIntyre. And you need to go meet Dianne because the way you want to do work with live music and the way your body is telling the story, she said Dianne is where you're gonna grow next from. And I love Bobbie—we spent hours just talking about our creative process, and so Dianne was where I needed to go and I knew that. I called Dianne, and Dianne said I'm not auditioning at this time, but I will audition you, I will look at you; come on through. And so I told myself, you know what, if I go and I get a dance home in New York, I'm going to stay. I'm going to come back just to get my stuff and I'm going to stay.

And sure enough, I got with Dianne in that room, and she worked me for hours on a piece that I had begun to develop called "The Sometimes Crazy's," and she had me do it over and over again. And in that time frame, it was more than an audition, it was a mentorship. I felt like my work was growing inside of me. I was exhausted. I was challenged but I was learning at the same time, and it just sparked something inside of me. And then she told me at the end, she said you know, I don't

have space in my company right now, but you can come and internship with the company, and you can teach some courses at the studio, and you have an opportunity to choreograph something on one of my dancers, or some of my dancers. That was it. And at that time, she had a small stipend to support and I made this commitment. So, I went back home, joyed that I had found a home and came back to work with Dianne.

And in the course of that, I developed that piece; I completed that piece “The Sometimes Crazy’s” that went on to perform Off-Broadway at the Douglas Fairbanks Theater. In the course of that I’m . . . taking courses in other places, and Clark Center was one of the places that I took courses at. And [I] was able to finish choreographing that work, which along the way had me meet Jawole, and she saw me both improvising on the streets, doing that the thing I did; wherever there was live music, I was on the streets dancing. And that’s how I made real relationships with composers and then develop work with those composers, from that connection. So Jawole saw one of those sessions, and then she saw me on stage at the Douglas Fairbanks Theater Clark Center’s Choreographers Showcase. And that’s how I wound up inside of Urban Bush Women, which then I left them four years later and started my own company, Movin’ Spirits Dance Theater, as a place to grow my choreography, which I had never stopped.

I had always been choreographing since before I came here; even my first piece of choreography I used to audition for a theater piece when I was in high school. That was how I got into the theater production. And, actually, my choreography was used inside of the body of the work. So, choreography was my love and I came to New York for that, and Dianne gave me a home to spark that. Jawole was more of a performance touring stop, and we did develop material with her. I then met Laurie Carlos through her, which is actually also how I met Craig Harris. And also, then, through Laurie Carlos [I] met Robbie McCauley. Now, Laurie Carlos is no longer on this plane. Laurie Carlos, you should research and know something about her. She’s an amazing writer, director, and performer. She was one of the original *For Colored Girls*, but she’s an amazing writer and director. And through her, I found the specificness of story and emotion in my body. I began to understand what I was doing from a different place. That really sparked something in me about the histories and the stories that I wanted to share.

All along, still improvising in the streets—never giving up that—and in the course of that, *RENT* came along. I sent in a tape of my company’s work (Movin’ Spirits Dance Theater) for interest, and somebody called with interest. Linda Chapman over at New York Theater Workshop had gotten my name from Mark Russell of PS 122. She handed it in to Michael Grief and Jonathan Larson of *RENT*, and then I found myself on this other journey. But in the course of touring for *RENT*, I still choreographed and directed works for Movin’ Spirits Dance Theater. I just continued to work cross-collaboratively. I’ve always worked in different mediums in relationship to my work. I’ve always found collaborations as a place to grow from. Be it visual artists, writers, composers, I always conduct improvisations and then find the journey of the work in relationship to the performers from there, which I believe is very much a part of who we are. The first time I saw myself on tape improvising with Ralph Peterson Jr., I realized at that time that I was dancing my mother’s feet, and from then on my understanding of my legacies deepened. My folks live in the way I move and [it] informs me beyond my training. So, I say, I’m not going to say anymore, I done said a lot! [laughs]

**MP:** Thanks, Marlies. You mentioned meeting or going to see Dianne when you got to New York. Was that at . . . the Sounds in Motion space?

**MY:** It was. It was at the Sounds in Motion studio, and Dianne was already vibrating at a high level. She had high regard. I don’t know if you knew this, Dianne, but you had high regard. I mean, everybody was like, Dianne McIntyre, that was Black in particular, it was Dianne. So, I felt like I was in the space watching a master at work in her own home, which was huge for me because Bobbie Bolden, who was Bobbie Wynn then, had her own studio, and then I came to New York to see Dianne have her own space, and both were Black women,

and that was huge for me at that time. It was huge and remains huge in my heart. So, which makes me want to hear the story of how that space came to be because it was a sacred space. It was a sacred dancing ground. It was a sacred dancing ground. And Dianne, you were a beautiful taskmaster, and because you were a taskmaster, the freedom that you gave us was freeing.

**DM:** Mm-hmm.

**MY:** You required everyone to listen and to understand where they were at every moment in time. And that was huge; it shaped something in me. It deepened something in me that Bobbie Wynn had planted. Bobbie and I used to talk for hours on concepts and creative processes. With you, I learned how to be specific. Every movement is language; everything I said, every movement, every eye glance, everything had meaning—had purpose—even in the course of just taking your class. So . . .

**DM:** Wow.

[*Marlies gestures a movement of thanks with her hands clasped together and bows.*]

**DM:** Okay. Oh, my goodness! That is beautiful! I'm glad this is being recorded.

[*Marlies and Dianne laugh together.*]

**DM:** Me hearing about myself. Okay, so . . .

**gsj:** Dianne, also a comment in the chat says, "I'm finding that we need safe and cultured brick-and-mortar space in our communities again." So, can you speak about your space?

[*Marlies raises both her arms up and down in affirmation.*]

**DM:** Yes, I'll tell you how, I suppose I was in, during the early seventies, when I started my company in 1972, it started just as . . . I always loved choreographing from childhood. And then, when I got to New York, I did a solo at Clark Center, which Marlies mentioned. Clark Center of the Performing Arts—that's another thing for people to look up. It's an historical institution that doesn't exist anymore. However . . . the legacy of it continues. You can find it on Facebook, in fact.

So, I did a solo presentation there, and then I decided I wanted to do a concert—not to have a company. I auditioned some people. [*Marlies smiles in response.*] I asked the head of Clark Center named Louise Roberts . . . (and I am forever indebted to Louise Roberts, director of Clark Center, whom I count as one of my mentors). I asked Louise . . .

**MY:** Yes, yes.

**DM:** I asked, "Why will people come to my audition? They don't know me. I'm brand new here in New York." She said, "The people will come to your audition because they are hungry to dance." I'll never forget that. She said, "People are hungry to dance." And she was right. These people came out to my audition.

One thing I wanted to find [were] people who were able to connect with the live music. As Marlies said, I was connected with working with music live, called free jazz, avant-garde jazz, new music. I had these musicians in the audition, and some of the dancers couldn't hear the music. And some were right inside of the music, and that gave them an edge for me. So, we did this concert at a small place called the Cubiculo on Fifty-First, near Ninth Avenue in New York. I shared that concert with another choreographer. And then somebody said oh, you should start a company. [*Both chuckle.*] I said, "Really?!" So, I said okay.

It's good for you all to know, historically, it was not hard to start a company at that time and have a 501(c)3 where you can have donations given to you, and you're tax exempt. So, I took the steps to do that through the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, and then I had another concert. I always was



trying to have the next concert that I was going to do for the dancers . . . so the dancers would not spread, would not gravitate away from our center. My original concert was called *Sounds in Motion*. My thought was “dance as moving music.” And then that became the name of my company and my school. Sounds in Motion! So, Clark Center and Louise Roberts let us rehearse there for a while, then I decided I wanted to be like the other dance companies. I’m not talking about any color. Say like, if this was Paul Taylor and he had his own studio. Why shouldn’t I have my own studio?! Okay!

[*Dianne and Marlies joyously laugh and bow in agreement.*]

**MY:** Yes.

**DM:** So, don’t put yourself in a box people.

**MY:** That’s right.

**DM:** Don’t put yourself in a box because you don’t see another person of color doing that particular type of thing. Okay, well, you be the first person to do that.

**MY:** That’s right.

**DM:** So, I had spaces that I was allowed to work in for several times, one was by a woman who was Amiri Baraka’s sister, Kimako. She had a place in Harlem. And I was for a little while at a place on the East Side. The church members of the Ministerial Interfaith Association of Harlem owned that, and they let me rehearse there throughout the week except when they had meetings. And then we were in rehearsal and having classes at the Studio Museum in Harlem. I was in residence there for a few years. However, by ten o’clock, we had to be out because the security people would leave at that time. I’m like, okay, I understand that. That’s understandable. [But] I’m thinking, I want to be able to stay as long as I want.

[*Dianne and Marlies laugh together.*]

**DM:** Marlies, that’s what inspired me.

**MY:** Wow! Yes, yes! Control.

**DM:** I want to be able to come in on the weekend. If we’re here after 10:30 p.m. or we’re here at seven in the morning. So, my inspiration was freedom.

**MY:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** My inspiration was freedom. Having the freedom to have my own space is not so encouraged nowadays—to have your own space.

**MY:** Or your company.

**DM:** Or your . . . own company. But at that time, because I had the space, there were other companies that rehearsed there as well.

**MY:** Yeah.

**DM:** So that was my inspiration. We had both dance classes and a place to rehearse. And I could afford that because for a number of years we toured a lot, and the touring income, the excess touring income, allowed [for] that. And a lot of our touring came from the excitement that we were a Black company that had both live music and dancers together. We toured together. We did a lot of work in HBCU colleges and universities and a lot of other colleges and universities around the country, performance venues and everything—and I used that money to build a studio on 125th and Lenox Avenue!

**MY:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** So, at night time, especially, you can see us dancing from the street through the gigantic picture windows. You didn't even have to go inside and watch us.

[*Dianne and Marlies joyously laugh together*]

**DM:** We didn't have to dance *on* the street. You could watch us *from* the street. We did dance on the street as well; we did that. We'd tour around to Europe, the US, and then we'd come back home and we'd dance around town, in the streets, in what was called Dancemobile. So Marlies, that's how I got to have this studio. And I renovated the place, like I was building a home.

**MY:** Wow. Yes.

**DM:** And that studio was something like what you'd call a cauldron of creative activity . . .

**MY:** Yes.

**DM:** . . . a place where musicians, dancers, playwrights, poets, people just gathered there. Even if we weren't having a special event, the people just came, and the dancers and the musicians, and the dancers and poets—they connected. It was just a space. It had a Harlem Renaissance type of feeling.

**MY:** Yeah, yeah. Yes, it was a hub; it was a hub.

**DM:** It was a hub.

**MY:** Yeah, when I came in, there was a lot of talk of downtown dancers and uptown dancers and whatever, whatever. When you were in Dianne's space, you weren't thinking about whether you were uptown [or] downtown, it was just . . . it was vibrant. It was like you were constantly being inspired. And remember Hank? Was that his name?

**DM:** Hank Johnson.

**MY:** Yes! On the piano keys.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** On the piano keys and just, you know, Olu coming through.

**DM:** Olu Dara.

**MY:** With his horn up, you know. I mean it was just like, in the moment. Everything was in the moment and yet everything was very structured. I mean, she ran a tight . . . a tight ship to make everything happen. But at the same time it felt like a gathering, like a gathering of minds. And it didn't matter whether you were new or have been seasoned or whatever; it was just like, it was like music, it was like instruments talking to each other. Everybody was learning from each other and being inspired by each other, and I know it was not an easy thing to maintain.

**DM:** No, it wasn't that easy to maintain, but it was a lot of fun. One thing I was gonna say: Harlem—it wasn't the Harlem that you might know today. I don't know where all of you live who are online here, but there were . . . it was very rarely that there were white people at the studio. It wasn't that we said don't come to the studio, white people. In that time, a lot of people who are not people of color were afraid to come to Harlem.

**MY:** That's right.

**DM:** Harlem had a reputation, especially if you were gonna be there after dark.

**MY:** Right

**DM:** So, it was a . . . primarily a Black thing.

[*Marlies and Dianne laugh together.*]

**DM:** . . . and people of color. Sometimes a person would have to bring their own group to rehearse or perform at the studio, and they might have had people of different ethnicities. However, it was predominantly, it was predominantly Black, and so that's how it was.

**MY:** Yeah.

**DM:** So somebody asked me—it was Nia Love—on the chat.

**MY:** Nia! Oh my!

**DM:** She asked about a process.

**Nia Love:** Hi, y'all.

**MY:** Hey Nia.

**NL:** I'm so grateful to be here, you know . . .

**MY:** Wow.

**NL:** I didn't know y'all were on until Marjani [Forté-Saunders] hit me up and I was like, let me stop whatever I'm doing. I gotta hear y'all. I'm so . . . I love you so much.

**MY:** Wow. You know, Nia and I are cousins, Dianne.

**DM:** In real life?

**NL:** In real life! In real life!

**MY:** Real life.

**DM:** Oh really?

[*Dianne, Marlies, and Nia laugh together.*]

**MY:** Dianne, you don't know Nia, but Nia is an amazing artist. She's an amazing choreographer and . . .

**NL:** Dianne knows me!

**MY:** . . . a beautiful mother, and a doula . . .

**DM:** We know each other.

**MY:** You know each other?

**NL:** Yeah, of course we know each other.

**MY:** All right.

**DM:** We go way back.

[*All three smile.*]

**DM:** Yes. Yes. And she said to talk about . . . you want to know about my process with Olu Dara.

**NL:** Yes, I mean generally Olu Dara, but in musicians in your general process. Yes.

**MY:** Okay.

**DM:** So usually, when I'm working with music, I have, you know, the lead musician or the composer and myself, we decide, oh, we gonna do something. Yeah, let's come into the studio. So first, we have a seed of an idea, a theme, okay. We, together, come up with a theme, and then I'm telling you, I'm a bit spoiled by this, but it's the way it is. So, then we go into the studio and we begin. This is with Olu or with anybody else. We begin.

**MY:** Together.

**DM:** I hear the music, the composer sees the dance, and something comes out. Back and forth. I hear some more music; I create this. The musician sees some more dance and creates that. Back and forth, back and forth. Does that make sense?

**NL:** Yes.

**DM:** It comes out together. It's hard to even tell who created what. And it comes like this [*she raises her hands apart and parallel to each other and brings her hands together and raises them up*] and builds. Then we'll pause . . . say . . . without . . . Everybody's there. Sometimes, at first, there's just the lead musician, and they might add other musicians later. Sometimes the whole ensemble is there, and the whole ensemble of dancers is there. And then we have moments that are improvisational. We have the structured and improv and da, da, da like that. [*She gestures with her hands mixing together.*] And its set and its cues, and the dance, the musicians—the whole ensemble of musicians has to learn to always play with their eyes open.

**MY:** Open. Yeah.

**DM:** So, they can be inspired by the dancers, or they can get their cues. And nobody is the lead. The dance and the music are equal. The music is not accompaniment. And the other thing is that then the dancers have to learn to hear the music. Not just the rhythm.

**MY:** Rhythm, yes.

**DM:** Just like, sometimes you'll see a piece that's choreographed to very intricate so-called jazz music, and the dancers throughout it, they're dancing on the beat. They do not hear the solo, the solo line. The whole intention of that beat is to support the soloist, soaring over top. Now that's not a complaint of mine, it's just if you're doing that on purpose, on purpose, but do you actually hear that there are more people playing than the rhythm, than the rhythm section? Look, if I'm associated with dancers, they have to learn to hear all the parts . . .

**NL:** Right.

**DM:** . . . of the ensemble at the same time and can relate to it or not. You don't have to. And the musicians have to see all the dance, and then we have the complete set part and the complete free, free, free, like that. Does that answer your question?

**NL:** Yes, ma'am. Thank you so much. I ask the same question to Marlies. I've worked with Marlies when she worked with live musicians, but I'd like to hear . . . your answer to that or your queries.

**MY:** Yeah, yeah. Well, first of all, Dianne and I sit in the same space—that there definitely is a give and take that's happening in the same way that live music, especially real live jazz music, has a conversation with each other. The instruments are in dialogue with each other. So, in the same way, it's been a training process to get the dancer's ear to hear more than the drum or more than the rhythm or more than the one and to stop the counting. I want them to stop counting.

**DM:** STOP COUNTING!

**MY:** I don't want them to count.

**DM:** STOP COUNTING!

**NL:** Yes!

**MY:** STOP COUNTING!

[*All three laugh.*]

**MY:** So, it's all about breathing in the inner spaces, listening, knowing whether you're having an argument or—you're joining in harmony? Are you in discourse with the instrument? Are you chattering back? Are you in an argument? Are you in agreement? Is it a love story? What relationship are you having with that body, with that instrument? So, some of the time is to initially take the time to just play, to get familiar with each other in the way that a band would come together or a group of musicians would come together, and they have to learn to hear each other in the way that they are playing and how they may inspire each other. I do the same thing with the dancers. Get them in space and let them hear each other and hear the music and let the musicians hear each other with the dancers; let the dancer's body be an instrument.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** Not necessarily be dancing along but be the instrument.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** You know, how we added members to the band.

**DM:** You are the instrument.

**MY:** You are the instrument.

**DM:** I think I saw a text from Sadie. Sadie, are you there?

**Sadie Yarrington:** I am here. Hi, Dianne.

**DM:** Hi.

**MY:** Hi, Sadie.

**SY:** My heart's exploding.

**DM:** I'm so happy to see you.

**SY:** I know, me too.

**DM:** The reason I want to point out this young lady: I've met her, probably a bunch of you know her too. I met her when she was a student at University of Michigan. And we worked on a piece there with live music, which was amazing. And we had a whole ensemble of musicians, and I insisted in parts of it that the dancers improvise, even though I didn't have that long a time to work with them. The thing is that Sadie got it! She was one of two or three dancers and of that whole . . . I don't know, like twenty of them or something. She got it. She connected. She became the instrument with the music.

**MY:** Yes. Yes.

**DM:** That's why, when I saw your text, Sadie, so yes!

**SY:** I love you; I can't even speak. I can't even speak; I'm overwhelmed.

**DM:** Yes! Then I brought her to New York when we did a piece there.

**MY:** Beautiful.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** Yes. Beautiful because it really is about that and I think it changes you. Live music, dancing to live music where you're allowed to experience the music as another musician in the band . . .

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** . . . changes you. It changes how you breathe, how you connect. It allows you to find the silence. It allows you to find real relationships, real relationships on that stage and in that room, and it's golden. And, yeah, because live music, you know, musicians can be unpredictable sometimes.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** You get up there on that stage, and the heat gets up under them, and that tempo may just kick up.

**DM:** It could kick up.

**MY:** It could just kick up. And the only thing that saves it, is that you know how to listen. You know how to be up inside of it. It's very important to not count. If anything, the voice may become the scat in your head or sometimes the scat out loud while you're playing with that music. So, if that music kicks up or it takes a turn or they drop a whole section and go on to something, you're right with them. It's not [that] you don't have to think about that, and it's not only because you've improvised with them, but you're living with them. So, it could be that you're in the set, part of the choreography, and something shifts; you now know how to take that choreography, that movement, and be present and still live inside of all of the collective moments to still be where you need to be and please whatever the choreographer has made up in that moment, right? You can live both.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** Don't you find that, Dianne?

**DM:** Yeah, the thing is, so for everybody who's attending this. But what I wanted to say is, in a practical world, it's not always possible to be working with live music. Though sometimes . . . it can be two of you, it could be you dancing and one musician. That's how I started. Or it can be recorded music that you use, where you become part of the band. You go inside the music. So, there are challenges, mostly economically with that. However, if you find a partner—a music partner—then you can find a way.

**MY:** Yeah.

**DM:** And, so, I wanted to share; I wanted to say that.

**MY:** Yeah, well, you know, when I first . . . founded Movin' Spirits Dance Theater, I was dancing on the street a lot at that time and came across a group called the Spirit Ensemble. Do you know the Spirit Ensemble, Dianne?

**DM:** I remember that name.

**MY:** Yeah, the Spirit, Kevin Nathaniel. Oh god, I forgot all the men's names.

**DM:** Yes, yes.

**MY:** He says, you know, you've got to read so you can remember [*laughs*]. But anyway, I was dancing on the street with them. And this was a situation where I was sharing a bill, we coproduced an evening at Marymount Manhattan College called "The Pot, A Performance Collective" with . . . Marshall Swiney; [she] was working with me and Ray Tadio. Ray Tadio I met over at Ailey's space and Alvin Ailey American Dance Studio, where I used to take some courses. And, you know, dancing in the street with them, they got to know me. They got to the place where they were like "Marlies—we're gigging here, can you come and hang out with us" there. And I would go hang out because it filled me. It filled me right.

But then it came to a place where I wanted to have that music on the stage. And do you know, I didn't have real money then, and at all. And that group, they loved working with me so much that they agreed to come into the studio and work with us, and then they did the performance and I just paid them a small gig fee at that time. So sometimes, building the relationships outside of the space with the musicians allows for that. But we're in a day and age where it's electronic music because it has also been about music dropping out of the schools, they were no longer supporting music in schools. The funding was being cut for all of this so that our natural growth of new musicians into the world was being sabotaged, I felt, on so many levels. And so, they found their own way into the music electronically so that you could make the whole world with just one person and a rig, you know. So now I hear, I'm beginning to hear live music come back into, even all genres. I'm beginning to hear that live music coming back, but that live music is a part of our legacy. It is from our African source. It is how we survived here in the Americas. It's an important part of who we are. So, yeah, that's all I have to say on that. Yeah.

**MP:** Thank you so much. I hate jumping in here, but we have about five minutes left and I know Dianne has to run. So [are] there last offerings, last thoughts that you want to share or, before we have to go?

**MY:** This whole conversation began because Shamell mentioned at one point, struggling to feel connected, to find home, and to have a space as a street dancer to come to, and be supported and valued. And I want to say, Dianne and I were talking about this in our preparation for this moment, and that is, never let that stop you. Find and cultivate your own stage, be it in the street or be it in a space that maybe nobody else is going. Stay away from trying to always be connected to the powers that be and go find home, make home, make it your home. And stand strong in that so that you can... The freedom that Dianne talks about... [it] is so important that we keep that freedom in our creative process. And whatever that means in your development stage, find home, make homes, make homes in galleries, make homes on streets, make homes in cafés, make homes in colleges—wherever you can make a home. And now we got cameras, so you can make a home anywhere you want.

**DM:** Right.

**MY:** The whole world is listening. So, don't take the opportunity not to feel the loss that I know we all feel right now in the dance world, but to find ways to be creative and get your voice out there. If you are a creator, create.

**SB:** Oh my god, I love. Thank you so much.

**DM:** Yes.

**MY:** Dianne, I want you to say last words.

**DM:** Oh. Okay. So, I agree with Marlies. You can all create your own platforms. I'm talking about whether it's during the pandemic or nonpandemic period. You can create your own space. You have to have that passion. You have an idea for a project or dance for something on the street or something in a university for something; that passion will drive you to understand how to make it possible. You speak about the meditation. If you go deep inside your heart and have that time of quiet every day, it will come to you—how to make it happen. It can happen, and when it's happening in that way, the people will be drawn there. You don't have to be going out to "Oh, let me go to this place, it's the most well-known dance center in the whole country or in the whole state." Look, start in your area. Get your fabulous performers connected. Talk to your relatives, your friends, de da, de da, de da. Start with that core and then they will expand it, expand it, expand it, expand it, expand it, expand, and this is social media time.

**MY:** Yep.

**DM:** My niece had a concert over Facebook at the beginning of the pandemic... She had more people than could've fit in a club. She's a singer. When we... when I first started, I had such passion about doing a concert, I passed out flyers on the subway to strangers. Come to my concert! [*Both laugh.*] I mean, I had little flyers, hundreds of flyers. I'm just passin' them to people, come to this dance concert. We're doin' avant-garde movement with music that's out there and there's like Black consciousness music. Come to the concert! I'm giving to every person on the subway. You find a way, and at least two of those people came to the concert. [*Both*

*joyously laugh.*] You start with that seed. If you have that passion, it's gonna work. It's gonna work. That's my ... that's what I want to close with. Yes.

**MY:** Yes.

**DM:** And then love to everybody.

**MY:** Thank you, Dianne.

[*MiRi Park, Shamell Bell, and grace shinhae jun enter the Zoom room.*]

**MP:** Thank you so much. I know we've got forty; we had forty-three participants here, and many, many people are dance makers I'm sure that you know. I also want to send love to Nia as well. Nia Love is someone that I feel is part of this whole energy here for sure, so I'm glad that you popped on Nia. Thank you so much. This is dance history ... we are witnessing the sharing and legacy of dance.

**DM:** This is for dance history [*delighted*].

[*Everyone smiles and enjoys the moment.*]

**SB:** This is an archive. This is dance history. We're here, we're witnessing it. So just thank you so much. I just popped in to say thank you so much and for believing in the vision. Thank you, grace. Thank you, MiRi. Thank you everyone that's here. Thank you so much, and yes, everyone let's turn our cameras back on so we can give our love.

**MY:** Wow.

**SB:** Anyone want to do a final breath or something? You know we're breath folks up in here.

**gsj:** I just want to share that our theme for today and this week is "Ancestral and Cosmic Wisdom is Available to Me Today and Every Day," and I know we're all honored to have your living ancestral wisdom shared with us today. This is amazing ...

**SB:** Listen!

**gsj:** ... how everybody on this call is feeling that. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for being the pillars for us to follow along and paving ways that didn't go a route that you should take. And I know we're all just going to take this moment to ingest this wisdom and manifest it and continue to manifest it. Marlies, you've been so instrumental in a lot of this planning, and Dianne, just for hopping on with such short notice, we can't thank you enough.

**DM:** Oh, you're very welcome.

**MY:** Thank you so much, grace. Yeah, it's been a nice blessing to be with all of you all today, and Dianne [*brings her hands together in front of her face and bows*], much love.

**DM:** Same, Marlies.

**MY:** Yeah.

**SB:** All right, so if we can just take a collective breath in. Let's breathe it in. Breathe it out. At least we got one breath conspiring together. All right, y'all. I love y'all.

**MY:** Love you all too. Bye.

[*Everyone on the call waves and says goodbye.*]

**SB:** Marlies, I want to give you something. I don't know what to give you that I have. Is there anything that little ol' me has to give to you?



**MY:** Just keep doing. Just keep doing, Shamell. That's all. Just keep doing, yeah? That's the gift.

**SB:** I've been thinking about that since your first offering. I want to give a gift, but I don't even know . . . I can't articulate.

**MY:** Just keep doing.

**Dianne McIntyre** ([dimc@netzero.net](mailto:dimc@netzero.net)) a 2020 United States Artist Fellow and 2016 Doris Duke Artist, choreographs in the fields of concert dance, theater, and film. From 1972 to 1988, McIntyre, with Sounds in Motion, her first company of dancers and musicians, toured internationally, and at home taught classes and presented innumerable dance, music, theater artists in concert at her Harlem studio.

McIntyre and her companies have performed at the Joyce Theater, Kennedy Center, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Walker Arts Center, Wexner Center, Lincoln Center, American Dance Festival, New York Live Arts, and countless more venues. Commissions include Dance Theatre of Harlem, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, Dancing Wheels, Def Dance Jam Workshop, GroundWorks Dance Theater, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, and with recent residencies at Spelman College, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Dance Place DC, and several university dance programs. Her collaborations have been with music icons Olu Dara, Hannibal Lokumbe, Cecil Taylor, Butch Morris, Amina Claudine Myers, Don Pullen, Max Roach, Lester Bowie, and Sharon Freeman. For the screen, she choreographed *Beloved*, *Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper*, and *Miss Evers' Boys*, for which she received an Emmy nomination.

In theater choreography: four Broadway shows, and forty New York and regional theaters, including Center Stage, La Jolla Playhouse, Karamu House, Syracuse Stage, New Federal Theatre, Cleveland Play House, New York Public Theater, Crossroads Theatre Company, Arena Stage, McCarter Theatre, and Negro Ensemble Company. Directors and playwrights with whom she has worked include: Marion McClinton, Regina Taylor, Des McAnuff, Jonathan Demme, Douglas Turner Ward, Barlett Sher, August Wilson, OyamO, Ntozake Shange, Avery Brooks, Rita Dove, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Joe Sargent, Glenda Dickerson, Woodie King Jr., Irene Lewis, Oz Scott, and Rick Khan. As well, McIntyre has conceived and directed her own dance-driven dramas: *I Could Stop on a Dime and Get Ten Cents Change* and *Open the Door, Virginia!*, which have been produced in regional theaters.

She is the co-director of Jacob's Pillow Ann and Weston Hicks Choreography Fellows Program.

Other awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, Creative Workforce Fellowship, three Bessies (NY Dance and Performance Award), ADF Endowed Chair for Distinguished Teaching, Helen Hayes Theatre Award, Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees from SUNY Purchase and Cleveland State University, two AUDELCO awards, IABD Legendary Artist Award, National Black Theatre Teer Pioneer Award, and numerous grants. Mentors include Gus Solomons Jr., dance faculty of The Ohio State University, Louise Roberts of Clark Center, and theater producer Richard Davis. ([www.diannemcintyre.com](http://www.diannemcintyre.com))

**Marlies Yearby** ([myearby@gmail.com](mailto:myearby@gmail.com)) is an artist activist, choreographer, and director with a global perspective. She creates original works across various platforms, including theater, film, and diverse multimedia. Yearby developed her "In Our Bones Creative Process" as an acknowledgment of the legacies, lived experiences, memories, and day-to-day energies ever present in the moving bodies at work. Yearby's work is internationally recognized. She is the Tony Award-nominated and Dora Award-nominated choreographer of the musical *RENT*, and she received the Drama League Award for the Los Angeles production of *RENT*. Her work was licensed for the movie production *RENT*, and she is the choreographer of the Cinecast of *RENT*'s final Broadway

performance. Currently she has remounted the twentieth anniversary tour of *RENT*, which is now in its fifth year. She has gained critical acclaim for her role as director and choreographer of composer Craig Harris's *Brown Butterfly*, a multimedia celebration of the life and times of Muhammad Ali's *The Greatest*. Yearby was the founder and director of Movin' Spirits Dance Theater and received commissions, while the company was active, from Harlem Stages, Kansas Lied Center for the Performing Arts, MASS MoCa, The Exit Festival France, PS 122, The American Dance Festival, Lincoln Center Out Of Doors, and Jacob's Pillow, to name a few. Yearby has had the pleasure of directing works from writers Laurie Carlos, Sekou Sundiata, Carl Hancock Rux, and Nadine Mozon. Yearby is the director and founder of the project DanceHackIt, a virtual performance space of dancers livestreamed. Recently, Yearby directed and choreographed, in collaboration with Aku Kadogo, poet Jessica Care Moore's "Salt City," an Afro-futuristic fantasy inspired by the salt mines of Detroit. Yearby adapted Moore's "Salt City" poems, through her role as dramaturg, into the script for "Salt City" in order to prepare it for the stage. This adaptation was performed at the Charles H. Wright Museum in Detroit, Michigan. Currently, Yearby is musing her newest project, *Seed Awakening on the Eve of Blue*, addressing the crisis in real food, environment, and health as commodity in disenfranchised communities globally and right here at home.

**grace shinhae jun** ([drgracejun@gmail.com](mailto:drgracejun@gmail.com)) is a mother, wife, artist, scholar, organizer, and mover who creates and educates on the traditional and unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. A child of a South Korean immigrant, a North Korean refugee, and hip-hop culture, she values a movement practice that is infused with historical and contextual education and focuses on community, compassion, and empowerment to encourage rhythm and expression. She is a choreographer who directs bkSOUL, an award-winning performance company that merges movement, poetry, and live music, and a founding core member of Asian Solidarity Collective and collaborator with Street Dance Activism. She received an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and a PhD through the joint doctoral program at UCSD/UCI. Her scholarship on Asian Americans and hip-hop dance is forthcoming in the *Oxford Handbook of Hip Hop Dance Studies*. She teaches at UCSD, San Diego City College, and with transcenDANCE Youth Arts Project.

**MiRi "seoulsonyk" Park** ([miri.park@gmail.com](mailto:miri.park@gmail.com)) is a b-girl, choreographer, performer, producer, scholar, activist, teacher, and mother based in Southern California. She reps New York City, where she spent her formative adult years and learned the art of b-girling and other underground dance forms. MiRi is the associate choreographer of the twentieth anniversary tour of *RENT* and a lecturer in the newly formed CSUCI dance studies program, where she teaches dance history and hip-hop dance. She is currently a doctoral student at UCLA WAC/D, focusing on Asian American corporealities in hip-hop dance. MiRi is a recipient of the UCR Christena Lindborg Schlundt Lecture Series in Dance Studies and the CSU Faculty Innovation and Leadership Award. Her writing will appear in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Hip Hop Dance Studies*. She is a co-editor of a special issue about dance and protest for IASPM, and a producer/dramaturg/dancer for *This One Then*, a screen-dance directed by Charlotte Griffin. MA American studies, Columbia. BFA dance and BA journalism, UMass Amherst. Crews: Breakin' in Style (BIS), Tru Essencia Cru (TEC), Fox Force Five (FF5). ([seoulsonyk.com](http://seoulsonyk.com))

**Shamell Bell** ([shamellbell@gmail.com](mailto:shamellbell@gmail.com)) is a mother, community organizer, dancer/choreographer, and documentary filmmaker who received her PhD in culture and performance from UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. Dr. Bell is currently a lecturer of somatic practices and global performance at Harvard University. Bell received her MA in ethnic studies from UC San Diego and her BA with Honors in American studies and ethnicity, specializing in African American studies at USC. Her work on what she calls "street dance activism" situates street dance as grassroots political action from her perspectives as a dancer, choreographer, healer, and scholar. Bell's research examines street dance movements in South Central Los Angeles through an ethnographic and performance studies lens.