

DESTINY ARTS CENTER'S DANCE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

The Importance of Teaching the Continuum of Street Dance at Destiny Arts Center

Destiny Arts Center has always been grounded in its Oakland location and roots. Hip Hop music and Street Dance are a big part of Oakland's history and culture. The lives of the teaching artists, Destiny staff, and the youth inhabit this lineage. Hip Hop music, dance, and culture emerged in response to the social and political marginalization of low income people of color. Historically, Hip Hop and Street Dance have served as vehicles for social commentary and resistance. Destiny centers people of color, particularly African American people. LGBTQ+ people are also central to our work and are foundational contributors to Street Dance. We recognize that young people have been on the forefront of innovation in Hip Hop and Street Dance from the beginning. The new music and dances that are created to this day are a part of Hip Hop's continuum. We believe that when Hip Hop and Street Dance are taught, it is vital to pay homage to the origins and connect students to the rich traditions they are participating in.

Origins in African Diasporic Movement

Many people and cultures have contributed to the evolution of Hip Hop as an art form. As Hip Hop moves with us into this new age, it is of utmost importance to celebrate, study, and understand Hip Hop's connection to African and Afro Diasporic people, culture, traditions, and art forms. Street Dance is a direct descendant of the art forms preserved and developed before, during, and after slavery. A physical lineage can be traced from Street Dance styles back to previous American Afro diasporic movement traditions and pre-slavery African traditions. Hip Hop music and complimentary dance forms emerged primarily from disenfranchised African American communities across the United States. Since the social context was similar, comparable cultural phenomena popped up in different locations, often without knowledge of each other. This is sometimes known as the *collective unconscious*.

Our Values: Grounding Street Dance in a Community Practice

We practice Street Dance because it reflects our community. Afro Indigenous practices are innate in Hip Hop as well as the Destiny Arts Creative Youth Development (CYD) Framework. For example, we always begin and end our lessons in a circle. We also value restorative justice practices. The values of Hip Hop culture and many aspects of Hip Hop that are practiced today are easily linked to the values of Destiny's Warrior's Code. Providing a safe and loving space within the circle (*Opening and Closing*) are important in Hip Hop and at Destiny. In this loving and safe space, we learn the alignment between the origins of Hip Hop's values and Destiny's values. Dancers of all ages, young people who will take care of the world, and peaceful warriors are nurtured. At Destiny Arts Center, we honor and preserve the history and culture of Street Dance. We respect the individual's voice and embodied expression within the agreed upon values of the community. Lastly, it is integral to our work to foster a space where young people have the opportunity to be fully self-expressed through these practices.