

layna lewis

artist statement

I collaborate with youth, artists, activists using social practice strategies to create modern myth and archetypes through narrative, performance and ritual. Deploying film, theater, mural and sculpture to activate community. Making art collectively provides opportunities to make meaningful connections as a means to heal ourselves from the oppression we face historically, structurally and systemically. I develop and direct collaborative projects that provide access to arts to individuals and communities facing barriers imposed by oppressive systems. Becoming the person I desperately needed as a child and young adult is my core practice. I manifest the world I imagine through critical excavation of dominance and oppressive systems to decolonize and transform external and internalized systems using the process of creative expression to heal trauma, with the goal of liberation. Viva la Free!

layna lewis

Thesis Proposal

presentation video:

<https://youtu.be/LijEAkzl-s8>

Our voices, our choices, our actions, make history Now!

Black History Remix is an AfroSurrealistFuturist modern myth that reimagines history; past, present and future.

This epic tale of liberation activates the power inherent in each of us.

I am writing and illustrating a Graphic Novel, Black History Remix. My thesis project refines themes that I have been exploring throughout my scholarship at PNCA and beyond.

I am adapting the script from two productions I created; wrote, produced and directed, Black History Remix is an original, theatrical III Act play, and EarthDance moves through human history using dance, sound, and immersive tech. From the first human heartbeat in Africa through the middle passage to the Americas and the evolution of Black/African American Art forms.

The productions activate revolutionary theory through creative entanglement in Modern Myth, contextual historic education, and science fiction; igniting movement beyond the performance, beyond the participation of cast, crew and audiences into actively transforming policy, practices, curriculum and culture in the movement for Black Lives. Archetypes, and symbols figure prominently in the Afrofuturist myth weaving science, quantum physics, biology and history into the arc of awakening, liberation and human (r)evolution.

In the early 21st century on Planet Earth, the empire then known as the United States is crumbling. Many are in denial of what is happening and are going about their lives as if the greatest shift in modern history is just another inconvenient trend. The children are awake but believe they have no power. The 'Futures', young humans from the distant future, travel back in time using the technology that naturally exists within each of us.

Their destination; a public school on the West coast of Turtle Island where we join the youth at ground zero.

Storytelling is one of the earliest human forms of creative expression. Myth and archetypes are maps that offer ways to navigate our human experience. Art is critical in the movement to liberate ourselves from oppressive systems by opening, shifting our perceptions. There are some stories that are inherently transformational; ideas that literally revolutionize our ways of thinking about what it is to be human.

The epic tale ignites imaginations and inspires us to explore the immense power of the human potential. Technology and nature are embodied in humans, neither separate or external, but

internal. The 'Futures' access the latent potential creatively through the senses and systems of our bodies and minds, in active symbiosis with our environment.

The story cleverly delivers accurate, contextual history through the fresh eyes of the 'Futures' and begins to demystify the staggering social ills plaguing humans. As we reimagine history; past, present, and future, a portal of power opens within us. We begin to make the connections, see the patterns, and recognize the formula of conquest intentionally operating historically and currently; we imagine innovative ways we can creatively transform and liberate ourselves in the legend and in real time.

Black History Remix and EarthDance are performance and multidisciplinary projects that I wrote, produced, and directed. The graphic novel will comprise content from both projects. Black History Remix is an original three act play that was devised collaboratively with Portland Public School elementary students in six weeks of workshops prior to production. I then wrote the script, cast the characters, rehearsed, produced, and directed the theatrical play culminating in a performance. Black History Remix ran two consecutive seasons; 2017 & 2018. In 2019, the third season, I abandoned the script for a non verbal deconstructed production. I created EarthDance, an all Black/African incubator of dancers & choreographers. Together we explored through movement, sound and immersive tech subtexts, and overarching concepts of the modern myth and beyond. These serve as the springboard for my thesis, which will essentially be a teaser of the epic in graphic form.

I am inspired by the forms of Visionary Fiction, AfroSurrealism, ~~Futurism~~, devised theater, improv and performance art that I have experienced as audience, participant and creator. My practices/praxis most closely resemble Radical Black Queer Feminist Theory and organizing for Black Liberation and community care. All of the project's structure and content both explore and interrogate relative intersectional locations of oppression, privilege, and power. I employ art activism to interrupt the indoctrination and internalization of White Supremacy, antiBlackness, and other derivative forms of domination and oppression in Portland Public School curriculum and culture. I fund, facilitate and provide access to expressive arts to process trauma, educate and connect. I flipped the educational model on its head by utilizing non hierarchical student centric curriculum and production models informed by Transgressive Pedagogy and Popular Education.

Many technologies, practices and fields of study coalesce in the process of creation, including but not limited to: political theory, transgression, pedagogy, economics, geometry, biology, fractals, physics, quantum mechanics, sound, dance, epigenetics, neurogenesis, literature, drawing, painting, Black/African American history and Art .

My primary tools will be drawing and painting implements to create the graphic novel vignette. My process begins by deciding which scenes and dialogue will be featured. Next I intend to create an outline and work on adapting the script to the literary form, employing literary and visual devices as transitions. To capture action and point of view I will render a storyboard. I plan to create character studies in color. I utilize large scale paintings and murals to nonverbally

explore the epic scale of the archetypes. Throughout my process I continue to research historic and current characters, their mannerisms, expressions, clothing, environment, as well as narrative forms. Next I create frames and drawings, explore style and palette as I edit the text and drafts. I plan to research printers, paper and binding. Finally I photograph and submit my camera ready art to be produced and bound. I intend to install drawings and prints that demonstrate my process. The printed graphic novel will operate as a portal to liberation, the centerpiece. The mediatheque or an outside venue COVID and weather permitting is to be determined.

I intentionally structured the project to allow for adaptation and spontaneity. This enables me to remain open to emergent modes, modalities, technologies, direction, and ideas. A process-focused structure creates and maintains generative space and capacity to explore what I cannot possibly anticipate.

The graphic novel will function as a teaser of the saga. I will adapt scenes from Black History Remix, and incorporate themes from EarthDance to shape the emerging myth. The printed illustrations and text will capture the narrative story arc. Myth is a map; an imprint, a formula. Storytelling uses metaphor to clarify an idea. Epic and archetype communicate a vision in concert with the audience. The reader is a co-conspirator, projecting themselves into the adventure; actively co creating the imaginary experience. The story activates the imagination of the audience and inspires action through the vicarious experience of activating the portal within us to radically transform ourselves, liberate our world and bring our visions to life.

annotated bibliography

"Magnetic Field Measurements of the Human Heart at Room Temperature." ScienceDaily, ScienceDaily, 26 Dec. 2009, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/12/091211131520.htm.
<www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/12/091211131520.htm>.

The electromagnetic field of the human heart is measured using new technology. The implications of which is quantum in nature; quantum entanglement, energy transfer, etc. The electromagnetic field emanating from mammals, trees, plants, etc. is the shape of a torus.

Robert Hayden, "Frederick Douglass" from *Collected Poems of Robert Hayden*, edited by Frederick Glaysher. Copyright © 1966 by Robert Hayden. Reprinted with the permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.
Black Imagination as generative, powerful force

Williams, John. "In 'Afropessimism,' a Black Intellectual Mixes Memoir and Theory." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 5 Apr. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/04/05/books/afropessimism-frank-wilderson-interview.html.

"My wife taught writing and is a poet, and we have these conversations all the time. What does it mean to be a slave and the subject of narrative? One of her mantras is: "Make the problem your subject." So rather than try to fix what could not be reconciled, I allowed that sore to fester on the page — as beautifully as I could."
Chris Hani said,, "We need "revolutionary theory" a book like Frantz Fanon wrote for Algeria, "The Wretched of the Earth." We needed that book for South Africa. Chris knew the value of intellectual writing as well as action. His generosity of spirit, and the way he saw the need to do critical theory while you're fighting a revolution, really sparked my imagination".

Writing hybridity; Memoir and Theory

Delistraty, Cody C. "The Psychological Comforts of Storytelling." The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 3 Nov. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/11/the-psychological-comforts-of-storytelling/381964/.

Presents the seven story forms that all narratives fall within. Research data finding human memory responding to facts vs information delivered within a story.

Bey, Marquis "The Transness of Blackness." TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly * Volume 4, Number 2 * May 2017 275 DOI 10.1215/23289252-3815069 a 2017 Duke University Press

the an/originality of that poetic, creative, fugitive force known as blackness. It bears a slight textured kinship with Michel Foucault's understanding of literature, that "third point" that is external to language and literary works and 278 TSQ Transgender Studies Quarterly Published by Duke University Press that describes an "essential blankness" (notably, I kept misreading this as "essential blackness") in which the question of "What is . . . ?" is "originally dismembered and fractured" (Foucault et al. 2015: 47). Blackness here, in another sense, riffing on Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's concept, is an undercommons, a subtending and subverting sub- where fugitives dwell, reveling in chaos

Parsons, Lucy E. "The Principles of Anarchism." The Anarchist Library, Ahrens, Gale, 2004, theanarchistlibrary.org/library/lucy-e-parsons-the-principles-of-anarchism.

"Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals". A primary goal in my social practice is to create the conditions for critical analysis and means of interrogation, response and expression.

world science festival. "Quantum Biology: The Hidden Nature of Nature." YouTube, YouTube, 17 Sept. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADiql3FG5is.

Quantum mechanics active in biological science; migration and navigation amongst certain species of birds and flying insects.

layna lewis
T H E S I S
p a c i f i c n w
c o l l e g e o f a r t
i n t e r m e d i a

Thesis:

The discovery and process of embodying afro-surrealism

Embodying a narrative is an intentional practice,
a process of integrating the elements and principles of surrealism into being.

This is world building, experimental community collaborations in an ongoing project.
These works in progress are emerging rituals in what we define as an arts ecosystem, a
living creative force at the intersection of art, culture, and activism.

Interviews

in order of appearance

Teressa Raiford Community Organizer, Activist
Rashad Pridgen Performing Artist, Choreographer, Designer, *earthdance* company
Kayla Banks Performing Artist, Choreographer, *earthdance* company
Alexander Gedeon *Sanctuaries* Jazz Opera Director, Artist, Performer
Mr Bobby Foucher Artist, Scholar, Elder *earthdance 2019*, Albina Arts Salon
Darrell Grant Composer, Pianist, PSU Professor of Music, *Sanctuaries* Jazz
Opera Soul Restoration Project, Albina Arts Salon

earthdance company

in order of appearance

Olaoye Onipede
Amie Sowe
Amaya Kay
Layna Lewis
Kayla Banks
Rashad Pridgen
Malik Delgado
Ashley Morton

layna lewis
Oral Thesis Fall 2021
Intermedia

Embodying AfroSurrealism

Welcome to my thesis. I'm Layna. Thank you for being here and supporting me in the culmination of my arts practice, process and scholarship at PNCA.

My thesis is nontraditional; it is an evolving work in progress that has been intentionally developed over the last 5+ years.

The process is my project. My presentation is also non-traditional -yes i will articulate and name the components of my thesis, directly from my mouth to your ears as is standard --and also. through video from interviews with artists and collaborators This presentation includes documentation and media from works in progress, film shoots, residencies, home studio and performances.

(play *earthdance live* video)

embodying AfroSurrealism....

My thesis is the discovery and process of embodying AfroSurrealism-

Embodying a narrative is simply An intentional practice a process of integrating the elements and principles of surrealism into being.

Embodying AfroSurrealism. What does that mean? And *how*?

Afro = African, Afro descendent, Black

Surrealism; ok, surrealism requires some unpacking, we will get to that ...

Please note AfroFuturism is a relatively new descriptor of AfroSurrealism- you will hear both in my presentation-more on this later too

I want to be clear that what I am attempting to do, in collaboration with our, community is world building; making something out of nothing.

Black people in Portland, Oregon, renegotiating space, time, reconfiguring energy, matter through vibration through, intentional use of ritual, of the creative force to activate evolution. Surrealism afro surrealism embodied is alive

literally essentially living, moving

a collective and individual dance, a movement.

Full disclosure `My thesis was to be a graphic novel

My thesis shifted significantly.

A few weeks into my final semester last year, life showed up. And I made the very difficult and necessary decision to take an extension. I finished my other two courses and graduated with my class virtually.

When I returned to finish my thesis much had shifted since I originally proposed my

Thesis in 2020. As we began to emerge from the lockdown, and long term isolation, I was surprised by the need to connect, directly, as directly as possible.

I decided to take a risk to attempt to embody the narrative. This was the next thing like Linda Kliewer always says “Your thesis isn't the big thing. It's the next thing”. The next thing for me was fraught with risk, exposure, vulnerability, way beyond my comfort zone, and personally outside of my current practices, that I enjoy a level of comfort, proficiency and success in.

How did I get from creating a graphic novel about afro surrealism sic afro futurism to this- embodying practice?-literally embodying the afro surrealist narrative? Embodying themes, practice, and aesthetics I have been exploring throughout my time at PNCA. I will cover that briefly; as it is a critical component of my process of discovery, research and lived embodiment.

My thesis takes place within an emerging arts ecosystem, intentionally working to shift the atmosphere by creating microclimates, harnessing forces to transform our environment to build a biosphere of fertile ground, is a process of planting seeds, tending and harvesting through the seasons creating the conditions in which they may thrive. This is World building, being captive in a world in a city we did not design or have agency or autonomy in creating; and so we are using creative force to project momentum to activate the imagination potential.

My time @ PNCA has been enmeshed with my activity in collaborative projects outside of and ,adjacent to the institution, art activism, social practice & responsive works. I am already positioned as an active maker of arts and culture in Pacific NW. Out of necessity, and my experience with the power of art to work and move beyond traditional methods, I was simply compelled to *do something*.

‘*Something*’ took many forms. My larger practice has been a process of taking on mediums as a vehicle. Whatever creative form most effectively worked to best explore and express the injustice or ill. My use of art forms To move in and through is important to note as an essential component to my practice Using, deploying and discarding them as needed.

Its necessary to back up and provide some context of what precisely I have attempted to embody.

And the importance and deeply personal value inherent in the inception of *Black History Remix*.

In 2005, my youngest daughter was five months old and I went back to school, to art school for the first time. and then that first, Class. We're asked What our vision was for ourselves. What did we want o dol said, I wanted to, I was going to create a modern myth. and of course, I got lots of looks and I got a comment that I get occasionally I left handed. Compliment. Wow, that's ambitious. Meaning, I don't think you can do that. You are not in a position. To do that. I doubt your intelligence. I doubt your ability. I doubt

your capacity, okay, well, it took 10 years.

And it took a little longer for me to realize it. I wrote an original play and produced it, for two years. Many of you were part of those productions. PNCA was part of that. And It wasn't until after it was performed that it hit me. Oh my God. I did it. I created a Modern Myth. An Epic. On a relatively epic scale. And the impact was indeed epic. Not just to me, but for kids, who don't get to create stories or see themselves. as epic, powerful, as heroes. And not just onstage but beyond the stage; making real change in the world. Being a kid; small, invisible, powerless, the ultimate underdog. Having the opportunity. To do something. And Together. Living our vision into being. Making something out of nothing.

And so, after that first year once I realized, I had done it. I thought, wow! What else can I do?

(Play *Black History Remix* intro)

Black History Remix is a modern tale using afro futurism to reimagine history; past, present, and future. And most critically to locate power and heroes amongst us and within us now.

One of the real life present day characters in *Black History Remix* was played by Sanaa, a 7 year old. Sanaa played Teresa Raiford. I spoke with Teresa about Portland, and Arts as a vehicle for liberation.

(play Teresa Raiford Interview excerpt)

(Play *Black History Remix* outro)

Embodying the narrative is a practice of intentional thought & action testing the hypothesis Living our vision into being. Exercising creative force for us, by us. In *Black History Remix*, The essential function of AfroFuturism is to locate positions of power, then activate and wield it to reimagine, and to create the world as we vision it.

After 2 seasons of *Black History Remix* at Irvington Elementary we were 'uninvited' for being too radical.

The third season found its home here at PNCA . I abandoned the script for an entirely non-verbal exploration of subtexts and themes using movement, sound, and immersive tech in an all Black African, Afro=descendant incubator earthdance collective company collaboratory.

(Play Rashad Pridgen Interview excerpt)

earthdance 2021 began in an incubator at New Expressive Works residency, March through May 2021, which happened to coincide with a Performance course at PNCA,

taught by Erin Doughton.

I tried something new- I got high on my own supply; I took my own advice and followed the prescribed invitation to use the time in the studio to simply move, to dance. To practice being wholly present, in the process, without planning for a performance; to show and prove my worth to justify the resources extended to me.

Taking the shape of. A seed and embryo. A sort of prostration. A humbling. A gesture in a Devotional practice to myself, to the earth, to this ecosystem. To empty the vessel, literally putting my head to the ground. Creating the conditions. For something. To move through. Creating this microclimate. Intentionally. Within myself.

(Journal excerpt)

Movement shakes loose long stuck stagnant masses

what lies beneath

emerges and the body my body refuses to let it go

Im rendered motionless

The body begs acknowledgement Demands reckoning.

Not all release is relief

slow slough dragging

digging across surfaces thick my body

will not

can not respond to rhythm. Ive lost the beat

old wounds turning deep below where i thought i ended

Its unclear what or when

but the dread is familiar and the ache of despair rings like a fresh bell

Peeling back every shred of protection Ive carefully constructed

The process of attempting to embody archetypes, enact ritual and modern myth is a practice of facing myself, of moving in and around the weeds, uprooting unexamined beliefs that impact and impair my thoughts, perceptions and actions. It's a process.

(Journal excerpt)

Im too old

Im moving for myself no one else

When the choice is to dance and look like a fool or not dance

I will dance

Gertrude Stein said that

I forget

there are places (2,6,infinite x) in every production / process

where i ask myself what ever made me think I could do this?

Eventually

I remember to remember

these are the problems I've wished, prayed, sweat & bled for

(Play home studio video)

The downside of me partaking in the discovery process, that I had prescribed for our collective; "Getting high on my own supply", is the hangover, the low lows. It's a whole trip.

(Play *earthdance* at Bonsai Mirai excerpt)

The formula I had developed to facilitate the process of a deeper understanding was working on me. Of course it's easier to observe it happening for someone else. Sometimes the obvious eludes me

.One of the powerful functions of Afrofuturism is how it emancipates people from paradigms and constructs assumed to be inherent truths, accepted without question. African cosmology and traditional practices figure prominently in Afrofuturism. Time is non linear and even when it is, its context is Black. A particular African American narrative common to Afrofuturism is that the Apocalypse has already happened; the worst has already happened is happening slavery, genocide settler colonialism and racial capitalism. We are currently living the apocalypse. I reconsidered the term 'Afrofuturism' I used ad nauseum in our productions. This interrogation eventually led me to a greater understanding through research, of the form and the origin of the term credited to, created by Mark Bery, a white man, a self identified Surrealist. But more importantly, what I discovered as I travelled backwards through modernist art movements; the direct influence. appropriation, theft of Black, African culture, arts, language, ritual and cosmologies.

Robin DG Kelley found African tradition arts & Culture “buried in the rich, black soil of Afrodiasporic culture. -- a most miraculous weapon with no birth date, no expiration date, no trademark. Contrary to popular belief, surrealism is not an aesthetic doctrine but an international revolutionary movement concerned with the emancipation of thought”. Kelleys expansive thesis acknowledged the lived and living culture, making room for how we live and move, how we struggle and grapple, using everything available, especially creative expression. After all what is Blackness in the context of America but a surrealist performance of emancipation, a spiritual, radical act of living the vision of freedom into being.

Through my scholarship I ‘discovered’ the ‘Notorious RDG’, Robin DG Kelley, and their contemporaries, Saadiyah Hartman, Fred Moten, Marquis Bey, of course standing on the shoulders of Black radical revolutionaries, scholars & visionaries.

But isn't Surrealism a 20th century invention of European men? No? Well yes, there is that one brown indigenous Mexican woman. But Frida is not part of the origin story either. There are clues here that point to the historic global context: symbols, iconography, biomorphic, and the overt tropes: taboo, primitive, uninhibited sexuality.

sur·re·al·ism

/səˈrēəˌlɪzəm/

Noun a 20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature which sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind, for example by the irrational juxtaposition of images.

Features of Surrealistic Art

- Dream-like scenes and symbolic images
- Unexpected, illogical juxtapositions
- Bizarre assemblages of ordinary objects
- Automatism and a spirit of spontaneity
- Games and techniques to create random effects
- Personal iconography
- Visual puns
- Distorted figures and biomorphic shapes
- Uninhibited sexuality and taboo subjects
- Primitive or child-like designs

Historic Timeline of Colonization and Modernist Art Movements:

1884-1885	Scramble for Africa
1888	Berlin Conference
1900's	Looted African Art pours into Europe

Modernist Art Movements

1890 Post Impressionism
1908 Cubism
1909 Futurism
1910 Conceptual Art
1916 Dadaism
1916 De Stijl
1925 Surrealism

Of course, we know this didn't happen in a vacuum. The inception and inventions of staggering genius That European men cranked; out one miraculous movement after another, follows the formula of conquest and the extraction of labor, wealth, and resources by European colonizers.

Pillaged African forms are inextricably bound & found in Modernist movements, from Surrealism, backwards through Dada, Futurism & Cubism.

Picasso was introduced to traditional African art in Paris, it was during a visit to the first Anthropological museum in Paris Musee d' Ethnographie du Trocadero. Matisse had just been enjoying raves over his newest paintings, and he shared his newfound inspiration with Picasso.

Picasso and other European masters 'created' Cubism, and other modernist movements.

"It's not where you take things from — it's where you take them to"
Jean-Luc Godard

DaDa emerged in Hugo Ball's Zurich nightclub Cabaret Voltaire in 1915, many of their acts were staged renditions of African rituals.

(Play "WWI & Cafe Voltaire" documentary excerpt)

Dada movement saw non-European cultures as the "other" and didn't refrain from exoticising their "difference". This opportunism has remained almost unquestioned in art ever since: Jean-Luc Godard's quote, "It's not where you take things from — it's where you take them to" which perpetuated the hypocrisy of the west simply by disregarding the horrors of European colonisation.

I've made my case it is clear that the impetus and influence of modernist art movements were African, straight across reproductions of african sculpture in painting, enactments of african ritual language, and the pillaging of forms arts and culture the brutality was only matched by arrogance

In the same way that Black History is American History, AfroSurrealism is Surrealism.

Calling/ naming Surrealist arts and culture enacted by Black african people 'AfroFuturism' instead of Surrealism is a grift, a bait and switch; don't look here- look there, the old 'Kansas City Shuffle'.

And yes, these Modernist art movements were revolutionary, despite their nefarious origins of extraction and erasure that generated immense wealth, power, and prestige, does not entirely negate their value.

(Play Kayla Banks' interview)

Embodying archetypes through epic gestures of power and idealized forms positions us to activate the ecosystem. Taking the shape of essential elements and forces positions us as world builders.

(Play Sanctuaries backstage video)

Four *earthdance* company members, including myself, were cast as supernumeraries in non speaking roles, in the AfroSurrealist Jazz Opera *Sanctuaries* Composed by Darrell Grant, Directed by Alexander Gedeon, Libretto by Anis Mojani.

(Play Alexander Gedeon Interview)

Alexander on creating *Sanctuaries* as a ritual, a spectacle, an encounter.

So here we have ritual and symbols iconography Key elements of surrealism

And we are talking about Black people in Portland. And what strikes me is this collective drive we share- this need to create a way for us to exist, to renegotiate how we are in relationship to the world, in Portland specifically -through art- through Surrealism. This goes right back to Robin DG Kelley, "surrealism is not an aesthetic doctrine but an international revolutionary movement concerned with the emancipation of thought". So these visions, encounters, these representations we build are inherently transformative.

After *Sanctuaries*, after being ignited and validated and performing with other Black dancers and artists in *T:BA* and the *Soul Restoration Project*, I was on fire. And I got this wild idea...

about Darrell Grant composing for *earthdance*; scoring our next season. So I was trying to figure out the best way to do it, to ask him, to raise the money, and all the things. And then the phone rang. He called me, and proposed a collaboration *earthdance* co working with the musicians at his residency at Albina Arts Salon.

(Play Darrell Grant Interview excerpt)

Black People in Portland. So here we are, dealing with 'place', site specific work Darrell Grant's *Soul Restoration Project* is now in residence at the site of the former center of Black communities, Black culture, Albina Arts. Here, at a planning meeting for *earthdance* live with Darrell Grants band and other culture bearers, Mr Bobby Fouter schooling us on Portland Apartheid.

(play Mr Bobby Fouter video)

(Play Darrell Grant Interview excerpts)

(Play *earthdance live* performance)

These performances, even *earthdance live* are all seeds, experimental community collaborations in this ongoing world building project. These works in progress with dance and live music are emerging potential works. We are just beginning to test to pilot and through the process we are building community and culture in what we define as an arts ecosystem, a living creative force at the intersection of art, culture, and activism. We create the conditions to facilitate healing, and connection by centering the needs and desires of the artists and our communities. Through artistic expression and creative collaboration, we empower ourselves, our communities, together pulling our visions of the future into the present.

Darrell Grant
Alexander Gedeon
Yuki Izumihara
Tiffany Austin
Darien Patrick
Marcus Shelby
Mr Bobby Foucher
Anastasia Belay
Shamay Thomas
Tom Griff-Valade
Oro Santiago
Belinda Washington
Subashini Ganesan
Intisar Abioto
Seth Neil
Andre Middleton
Bonsai Mirai
Sledge Family

Thank you

Lola Lewis
Nina Lewis
Kai'Bella Lotus Joy
Leaha Lewis
Wilma Lewis *Mom*
Don Lewis *Dad*
Hillary Buffalo
Rashad Pridgen
Kayla Banks
Olauye Onipede
Kemba Shannon
Serrelle Shannon
Amie Sowe
Amaya
Teresa Raiford
Jenny B

Jasmin Johnson
V Maldonado
David Eckhard
Erin Doughton
Linda Kleiwer
Melanie Stevens
Gillian Nance
Kamelah Adams
Black History Remix Cast
Marin Vesely
Monica McGrane
Hilary Tsai
Rose Bond
Maxwell Brown
Ben Glas-Hof
Dean Ford
Justin Phillip
Chisao Hata

earthdance live performance. Images 1-4. *earthdance* co members: Olaoye Onipede, Amie Sowe, Amaya, layna lewis, Piano; Darrell Grant, Vocals; Tiffany Austin, Bass; Marcus Shelby, Drums; Darian Patrick Photographer; Intisar Abioto









Sanctuaries Jazz Opera
(pictured / to r) layna lewis, Alexander Gedeon, Marilyn Keller, Darrell Grant



Oral Defense presentation: (l to r) *superposition*, 4' x8', acrylic on wood panel, projected slide presentation, dance shoes, *earthdance* sketchbook/journal, *Black*

History Remix programs, poster, T:BA Artist Pass, pink whistle, pink tube socks, T:BA 2021 program

<https://youtu.be/ZL1wvotX0Nc>

earthdance at Bonsai Mirai

Bey, Marquis. "The Trans*-Ness of Blackness." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* * Volume 4, Number 2 *, Duke University Press, May 2017, transreads.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2019-03-20_5c92869edae81_The_Trans_-ness_of_Blackness_the_Blackne.pdf.

The eternal dissolving edge "where fugitives dwell, reveling in chaos". in perpetual motion, flight.

Forbes, Melissa. "The Jazz Singer's Mind Shows Us How to Improvise through Life Itself: Psyche Ideas." *Psyche*, Psyche Magazine, 12 May 2021, psyche.co/ideas/the-jazz-singers-mind-shows-us-how-to-improvise-through-life-itself.

The practice of embodied improvisation in music vocalization informing the creative process to access deeper psychological, spiritual energies and connect to self and the world vibrationally.

Moten, Fred, et al. "Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, and Michael Sawyer: 'On Fugitive Aesthetics.'" *YouTube*, Colorado College, 15 Mar. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBJh-9caNf4.

Exploring performance, non performance, practice of practice within the carceral aesthetic and fugitivity, in music, art, literature, basketball and beyond.

St Clair, Bourne, director. *Alice Coltrane 16mm Doc. 1970 (Black Journal) Rare. Alice Coltrane*, NET National Education Television Black Journal, 15 June 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA_Ae-rc6Ws.

Alice Coltrane reflects on she and her husband John Coltrane. They were attempting to create a universal sound and were guided by a universality in all traditions, religions, and practices that informed their daily life, artistry, family, raising their children. A deeply spiritual commitment that permeated every aspect of their lives. She speaks about the Egyptian origin of the harp.

West, Cornel. "Cornel West on John Coltrane, American Transcendentalism, Jazz, Radical Politics (2000)." *YouTube*, The Film Archives, 26 Jan. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFcKjok4ZZ4.

Cornel West contextualizes the impact of blues and jazz in American music and politics; literally and comprehensively the 'Blue Note' alters the form and ecology of arts and culture.

Wilmer, Val. *As Serious as Your Life Black Music and the Free Jazz Revolution, 1957-1977*. Serpent's Tail, 2018.

Val Wilmer excavates the lives, practice, innovative methods, and spiritual depths of the radical musicians of the free jazz (r)evolution.

<https://offshootjournal.org/what-will-be-the-cure-a-conversation-with-sylvia-wynter/>

Total transformation of society by way of language and arts; narrative, story. Shifting the way we think and live education to an initiation. Africa must be reimagined grappled with as the beginning, not as the affliction. moving out of duality and binaries such as affliction and cure.

<https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=237667&xtid=50626>

Sun Ra's *Cry of Jazz* asserts the humanity of Black Americans and their unique location as the creators of Jazz. The forms; repeating chords & harmony/changes of Jazz mirroring the restraint and repetition Black Americans are captive in; Present without a future.

and the Improvisation of Jazz that demonstrates the triumph, joy and freedom over the oppressive, deadly conditions.

Jack on Jazz: How A Genre of Music Helped Create a Genre of Literature

Posted on JUNE 17, 2014 Categories Hi

spontaneity in Art How Jazz liberated Kerouac

<https://psyche.co/ideas/the-jazz-singers-mind-shows-us-how-to-improvise-through-life-itself>

embodied improvisation in music vocalization

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA_Ae-rc6Ws

Alice Coltrane reflects on her husband John Coltrane were attempting to create a universal sound and were guided by a universality in all traditions practices, that informed their daily practice, life, artistry, family, raising their children. A deeply spiritual commitment that permeated every aspect of their lives.

Craven, Jackie. "These Artists Thrived on Dreams - Discover Their Surreal World." *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 19 Aug. 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-surrealism-183312>.

Surrealism movement and art, and aesthetic origin, artists, philosophers and key devices and elements of the art form.

"Dada Africa: The Show Which Speaks about Tribal Art, the Dada Movement and the Birth of Performance." *Judith Benhamou-Huet Reports*, 16 Dec. 2019, <https://judithbenhamouhuet.com/the-dada-movement-inspired-by-tribal-art-paved-the-way-for-the-most-daring-forms-of-contemporary-art-like-performance-or-embroidery-art/>.

Dada, Futurism and Surrealism, and other forms in the historical context of World War I, and the global influences and origins of modernist aesthetics, arts, and movements.

Caplan, Byron. "WWI, Cabaret Voltaire & The Beginnings of Dada." *YouTube*, YouTube, 11 Aug. 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEBnxWQct24>.

Origin of Dada movement being essentially an enactment of African ritual, culture, arts and cosmology at Cafe Voltaire in Zurich, Switzerland

Artist of Interest; Dana Lynn Louis

1.

Louis, Dana. "MAKE:SHELTER." *GATHER*, Wordpress, 2017, gathermakeshelter.org/.

2.

Zinn, Sebastian. "Artful Solutions to Foster Community." *Oregon ArtsWatch*, Oregon ArtsWatch, 17 May 2020, www.orartswatch.org/artful-solutions-to-foster-community/.

3.

Louis, Dana. "Artist Website." *Dana Lynn Louis*, WordPress, 2015, danalynnlouis.com/.

Line of Inquiry: Can art making foster human connection and build relationships with people ; affected by poverty, houselessness, and artists?

I concluded that Dana's work is essentially creating opportunities to encourage human interaction, through art making workshops and projects. The images and narrative text on the websites, articles detail Dayna's community based social practice and their goal to foster authentic connections, friendship, and spontaneous intimacy with people impacted by poverty, houselessness and artists.

embodying Afro-surrealism



layna lewis
THESIS
pacific nw
college of art
intermedia

Indigenous Peoples Acknowledgement



Portland, OR / traditional lands of Clackamas, Wasco, Molalla, bands of the who made their Willamette Rivers. bands have become Tribes of Grand Tribes of Siletz Cowlitz Nation in Washington State.



- Acknowledges the ancestors that were here before us and counters the “doctrine of discovery;”
- Gives visibility to indigenous people who are part of our community;
- Recognizes tribal people as their own sovereign nations;
- Spreads awareness about the historical context that has led to this moment and supports truth telling;
- Provides space to reflect on the ways non-Natives currently inhabit the land, dominate resource consumption, and exist within a still-active process of colonization;
- Creates space to build relationships with indigenous people and communities and with the Chinook Nation and land;
- Inspires ongoing action and relationship.

layna lewis
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intermedia

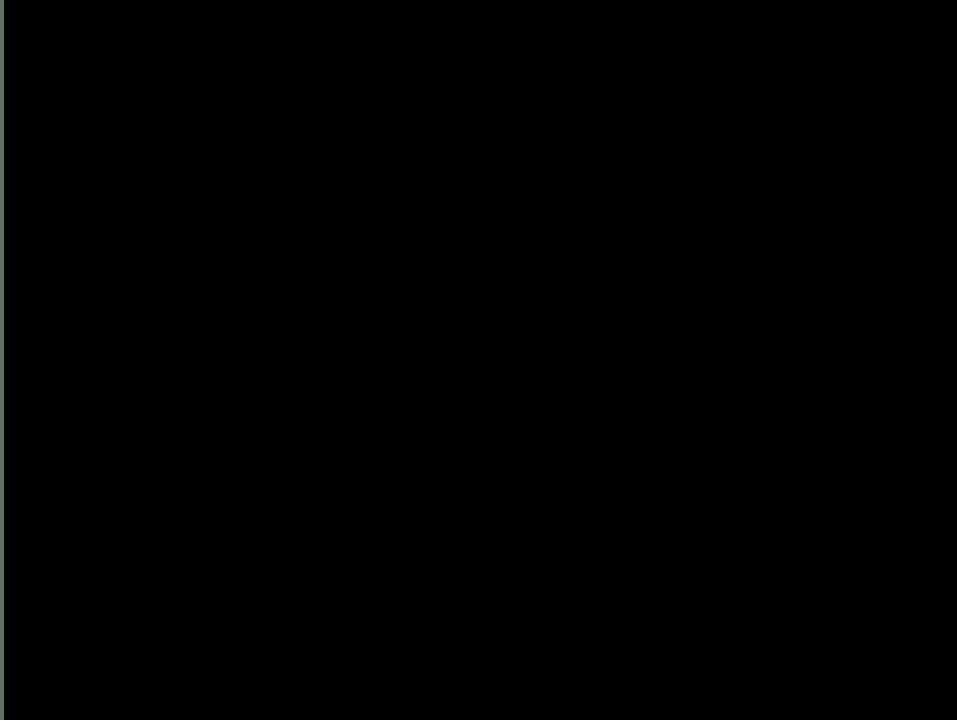
earthdance live 10/16/2021

Darrell Grant
Piano

Darien Patrick
Percussion Drums

Marcus Shelby
Bass

Tiffany Austin
Vocals



earthdance co

In order of appearance

Olaoye Onipede

Amie Sowe

Amaya Kay

Layna Lewis

AFRO-SURREALIST NARRATIVE EMBODIED

AN INTENTIONAL PRACTICE

A PROCESS OF INTEGRATION

embodying Afro-surrealism



BLACK HISTORY FEMEX

graphic novel



extension

Life showed up



moving from passive creator
storyteller
to embody the narrative
directly
actively

- this is the next thing (Linda Kliewer, Director of Thesis BFA)
- the riskiest thing



slow burn

art activism

collaborative projects

social practice

responsive works


Do something!





BLACK HISTORY REMIX
graphic novel



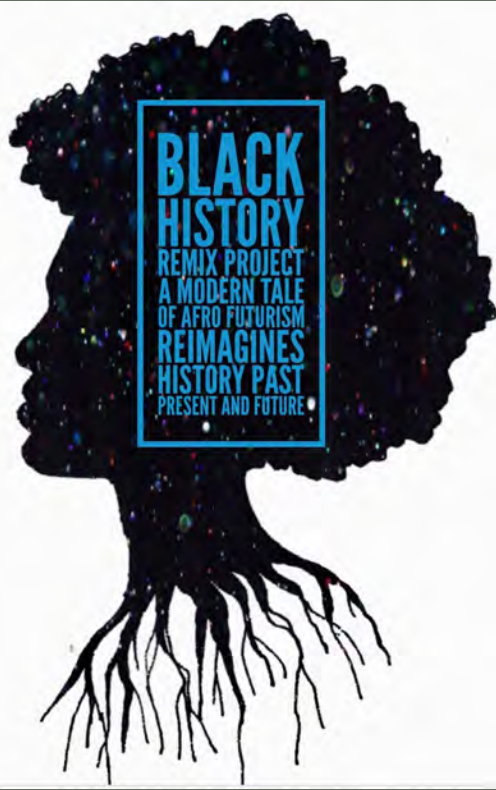
A person with short, dark, curly hair and glasses is sitting on a dark-colored couch. Their hands are clasped together in front of them. The person is wearing a dark top over a light-colored collared shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The lighting is somewhat dim, and there is a slight shadow on the wall behind them to the left.

Layna Lewis

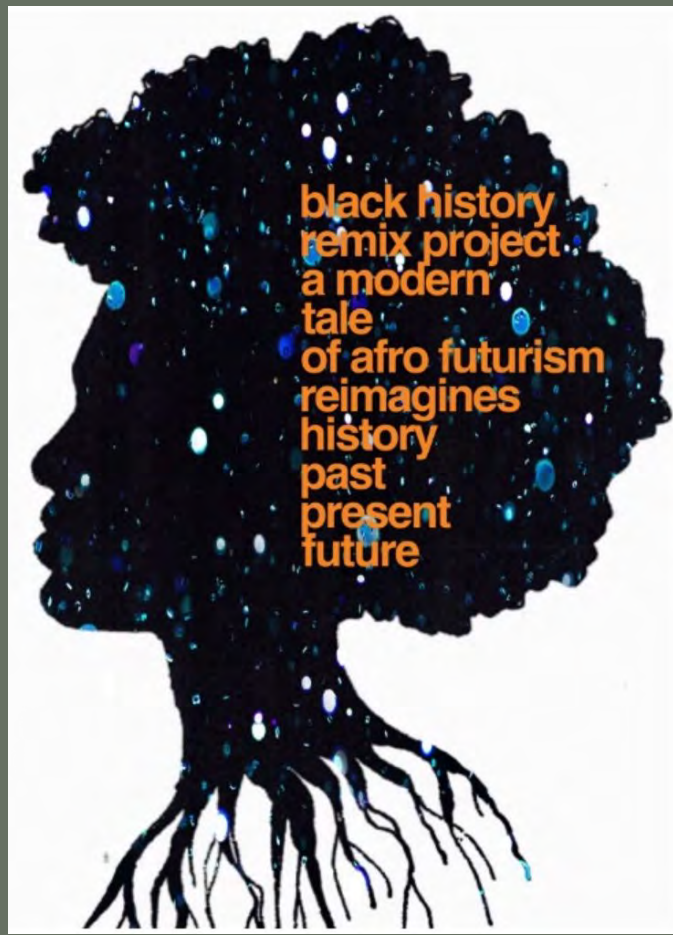




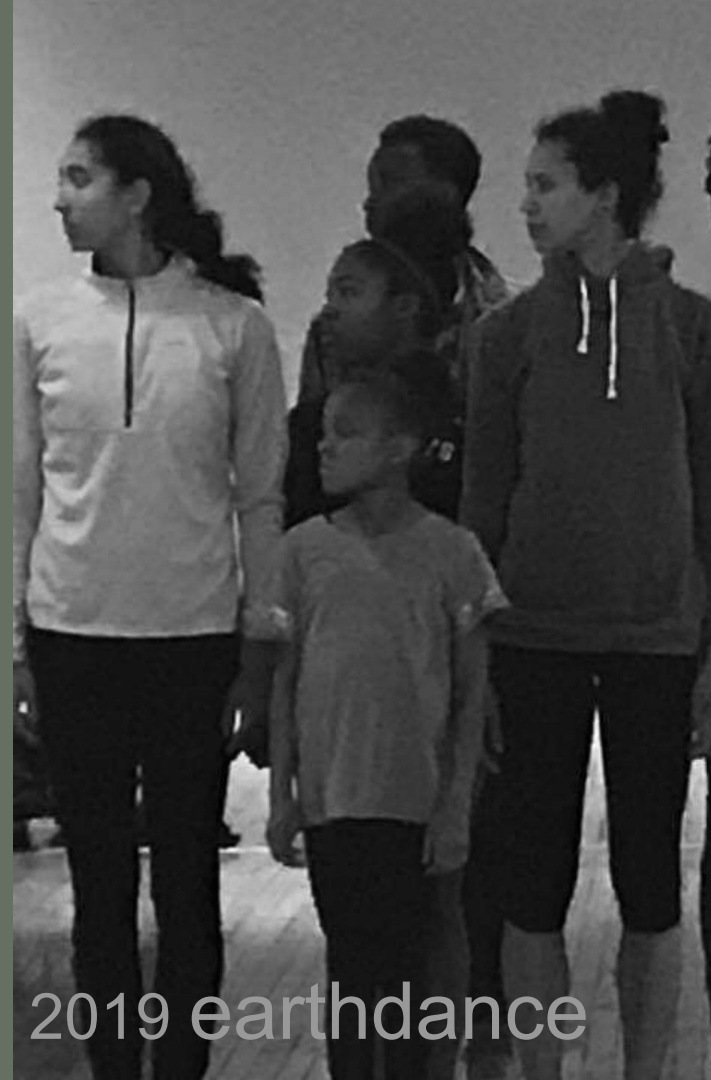
Layna Lewis



2017



2018



2019 earthdance







rashadxoulhubian



EARTHDANCE 2021

SKETCHBOOK

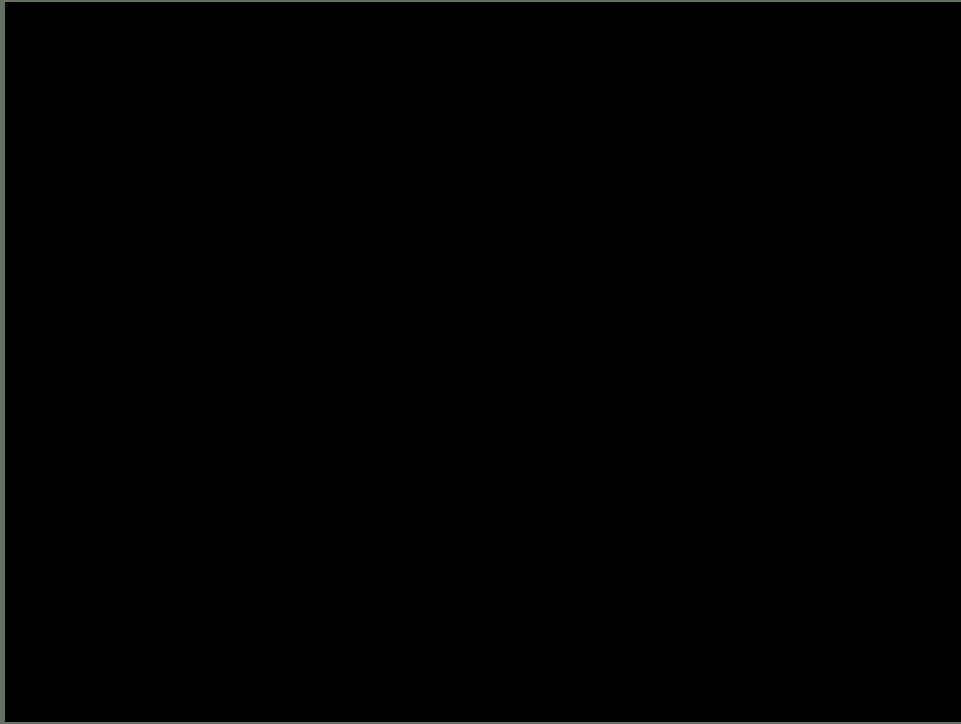
EMPTY THE VESSEL



so Movement shakes loose long stuck stagnant masses
what lies beneath
emerges and the body my body refuses to l e t i t go
Im rendered motionless
The body begs acknowledgement Demands reckoning.

Not all release is relief
slow slough dragging
digging across surfaces thick my body
will not
can not respond to rhythm. Ive lost the beat
old wounds turning deep below where i thought i ended

Its unclear what or when
but the dread is familiar and the ache of despair rings like a fresh bell
Peeling back every shred of protection I've carefully constructed



Living the dream

Im too old
Im moving for myself no one else
When the choice is to dance and
look like a fool or not dance
I will dance
Gertrude Stein said that

I forget
there are places (2,6,infinite x) in
every production / process
where i ask myself what ever made
me think I could do this?

Eventually
I remember to remember
these are the problems I've wished,
prayed, sweat & bled for



Keepin it Surreal

“Buried in the rich, black soil of Afrodiasporic culture... I found a most miraculous weapon with no birth date, no expiration date, no trademark. Contrary to popular belief, Surrealism is not an aesthetic doctrine but an international revolutionary movement concerned with the emancipation of thought”.

Robin DG Kelley

Freedom Dreams: Black Radical Imagination

sur·re·al·ism

/səˈrēəˌlɪzəm/

Noun a 20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature which sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind, for example by the irrational juxtaposition of images.

Features of Surrealistic Art

- Dream-like scenes and symbolic images
- Unexpected, illogical juxtapositions
- Bizarre assemblages of ordinary objects
- Automatism and a spirit of spontaneity
- Games and techniques to create random effects
- Personal iconography
- Visual puns
- Distorted figures and biomorphic shapes
- Uninhibited sexuality and taboo subjects
- Primitive or child-like designs

1884-1885 Scramble for Africa

1888 Berlin Conference

1900's Looted African Art pours into Europe

Modernist Art Movements

- 1890 Post Impressionism
- 1908 Cubism
- 1909 Futurism
- 1910 Conceptual Art
- 1916 Dadaism
- 1916 De Stijl
- 1925 Surrealism



Stolen African Art flooded Europe in the early 1900's



Picasso was introduced to traditional African art in Paris, it was during a visit to the first Anthropological museum in Paris Musee d' Ethnographie du Trocadero. Matisse had just been enjoying raves over his newest paintings, and he shared his newfound inspiration with Picasso.





"IT'S NOT WHERE YOU TAKE THINGS FROM — IT'S
WHERE YOU TAKE THEM TO"

JEAN-LUC GODARD

DaDa emerged in Hugo Ball's Zurich
nightclub Cabaret Voltaire in 1915, many
of their acts were staged renditions of
African rituals.



WWI & Cabaret Voltaire





Layna Lewis



Layna Lewis





BONSAI MIRAI
EARTHDANCE

VIVA LA FREE. SPRING 2021





Alexander Gedeon



Alexander Gedeon

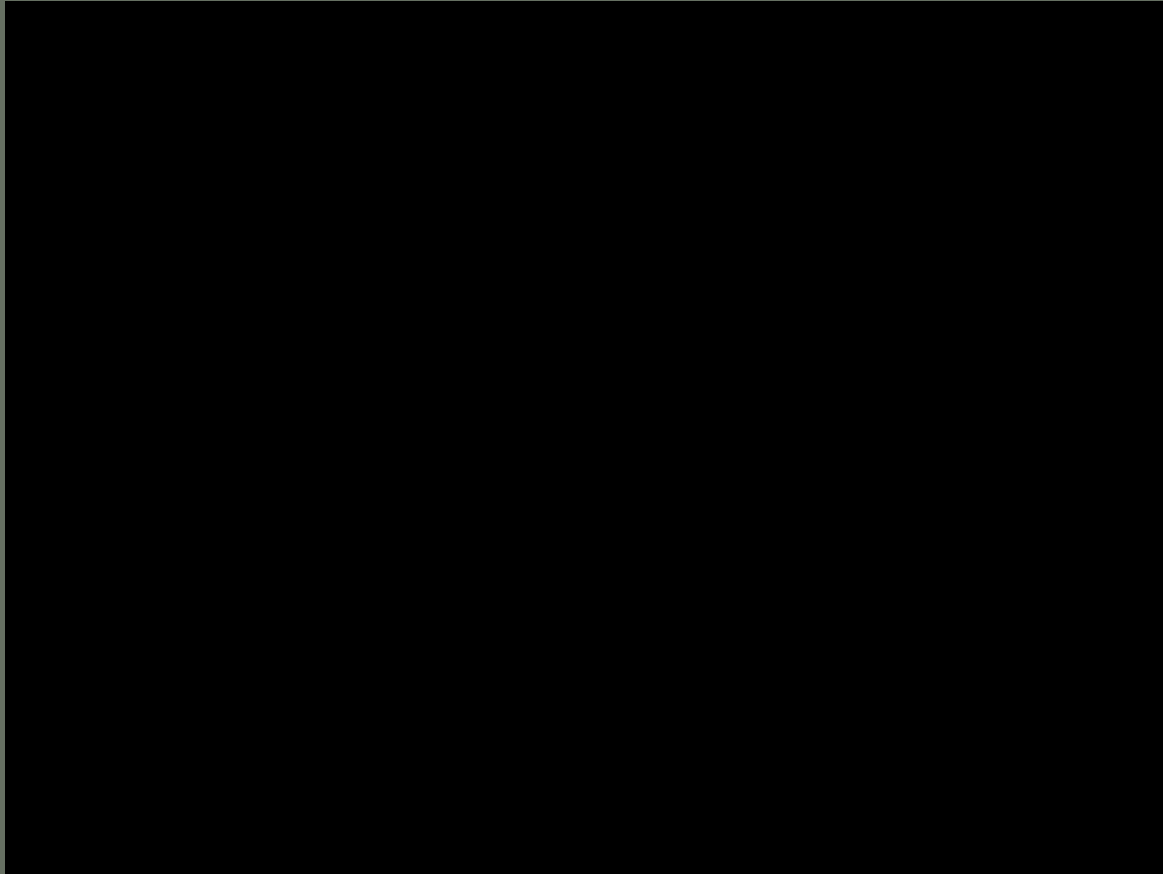


Alexander Gedeon

Darrell Grant



MR BOBBY FOUTHER ALBINA ARTS HISTORY OF PORTLAND APARTHEID







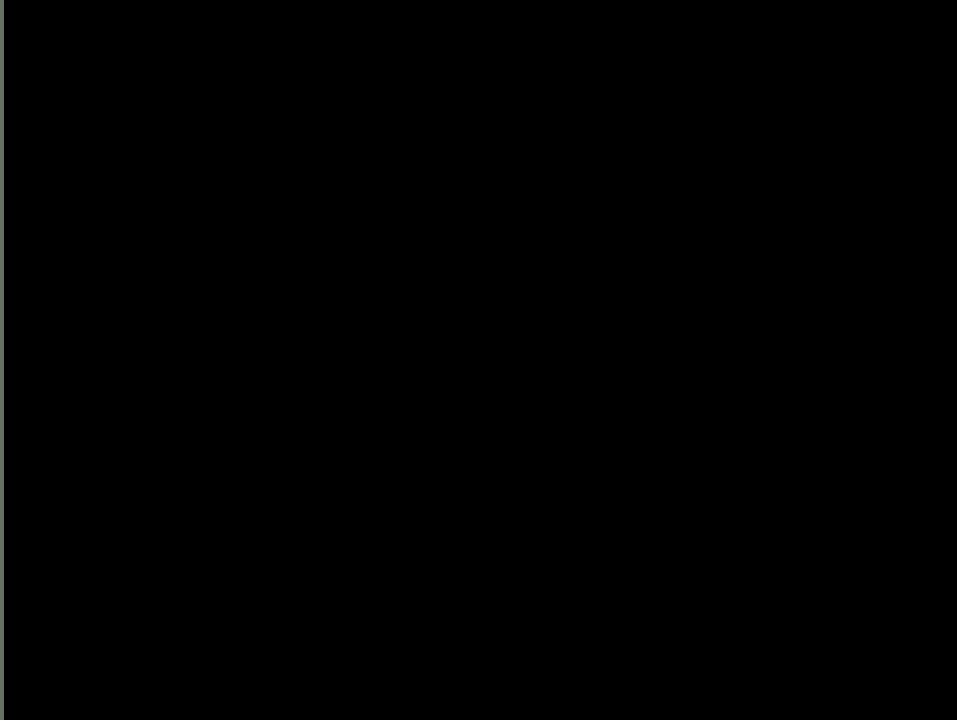
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Alexander Gedeon
Yuki Izumihara
Tiffany Austin
Darien Patrick
Marcus Shelby
Mr Bobby Foucher
Anastasia Belay
Shamay Thomas
Tom Griff-Valade
Oro Santiago
Belinda Washington
Subashini Ganesan
Intisar Abioto
Seth Neil
Andre Middleton
Bonsai Mirai
Sledge Family

Thank you

Lola Lewis
Nina Lewis
Kai'Bella Lotus Joy
Leaha Lewis
Wilma Lewis *Mom*
Don Lewis *Dad*
Hillary Buffalo
Rashad Pridgen
Kayla Banks
Olauye Onipede
Kemba Shannon
Serrelle Shannon
Amie Sowe
Amaya
Teresa Raiford
Jenny B

Jasmin Johnson
V Maldonado
David Eckhard
Erin Doughton
Linda Kleiwer
Melanie Stevens
Gillian Nance
Kamelah Adams
Black History Remix Cast
Marin Vesely
Monica McGrane
Hilary Tsai
Rose Bond
Maxwell Brown
Ben Glas-Hof
Dean Ford
Justin Phillip
Chisao Hata