

One Body : One Spirit
Reclaiming our Wisdom and Divinity Within through Dance
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"The most basic, fundamental tool of magic is the body...The body is the vessel that houses all the energies and forces to do anything we might imagine." (Noble, 1991 p. 40)

This study is about reclaiming ourselves as vehicles for the Divine. Because dance was forbidden by Christianity as religious expression (Drinker, 1948), we, as a culture, became disembodied and disempowered in relation to Spirit. Each time I dance is an opportunity to unite more deeply with the Divine, just as each breath we take is an invitation to deepen into ourselves. Combining my extensive Reiki and dance training, I plan to create a movement technique for healing and re-connection. This technique will be heavily based in Chakra Integration within Congolese, Afro-Cuban, Middle Eastern and Hip Hop Dance styles. I will teach this technique to a small group of co-researchers and examine it's effectiveness through our physical, spiritual, mental and emotional experiences.

Reiki is a Japanese form of healing which channels "universal life energy" through the body, particularly to the Chakras, or energy centers within the body (Horan, 1997). The seven Chakras each have corresponding emotional, physical and psychological qualities. Additionally, the "Chakras are associated with seven basic levels of consciousness. As we experience the opening of a Chakra, we also experience a deeper understanding of the state of consciousness associated with that level." (Judith, 1993 p. 22). What I would like to examine in this study is the effectiveness of opening the Chakras through this movement technique, and what type of transpersonal, mental and emotional changes result from this opening. We will consciously engage our Chakras, attuning ourselves to our corresponding mental and emotional energies, as we explore how this movement allows us a deeper awareness of our embodied connection with

the Divine.

Dance is the oldest expression of the Divine throughout the world, and *women's moon dance* is the oldest religion (Gottner-Abendroth, 1991). I will develop the technique as a tool for Divine connection for both men and women, yet Middle Eastern dance will be incorporated specifically for women, because of its deep origins in Sacred Dance Rites, particularly as a Birth Dance (Al-Rawi, 2003). The movement of the hips, pelvis and belly which house the first three Chakras, are the foundation for Belly Dance as an imitative birthing dance (Buonaventura, 1983), connecting women to a deep well of sacred kinesthetic information. Through the incorporation of Belly Dance in its true historical context, hip movements will melt away puritanical rigidity or over-sexualization - dispelling monotheistic, patriarchal training - and returning women to their Divine power. Male Divinity will be explored through specific movements for Afro-Cuban Male Deities, celebrating the following archetypes: the trickster, the hunter, the warrior and the king.

I met the Goddess of Love, the Warrior Goddess and the Mother Goddess within my own body as I studied Afro-Cuban dances. Embodying all archetypes of the Divine Feminine and Masculine, Afro-Cuban dance allowed me to understand the deep connection with my body and the Divine, in addition to the relationship between worship and movement in African and Diaspora cultures. Ancient cultures have always used dance to connect with Spirit (Daniel, 2005). I am intentionally combining the deep roots of Congolese Dance, which moves through all of the Chakras, with Afro-Cuban dance, which is heart centered; and then bringing it into an urban context with Hip Hop. Hip Hop has been a bridge for new generations to reconnect with their roots, and to explore self-expression and empowerment (Chang, 2005), which is why the third chakra (the power center) is pivotal in Hip Hop movement.

I will use heuristic methodology to develop the technique, with an intricate warm-up focused on each Chakra, and codified movement phrases and combinations based on integrating the Chakras and the movement styles. Throughout the creation process, I will utilize my skills, intuition and experience and prayer, along with the wisdom of nature. I will spend some of the preparation time in sacred nature sights, to intentionally keep the technique connected to natural cycles. I will teach the classes once weekly for six weeks to 5 co-researchers who are interested in the project and agree to share their experiences honestly at the end of the six week session, at which point, Organic Inquiry will be used to complete the study.

The technique, if successful, will serve a cross-cultural and diverse audience, and will benefit the following fields of study: Women's Studies, Transpersonal Psychology, Women's Spirituality, Education, Dance and Healing. Further, this project will only be the seed for lasting evolution and reclamation of the body as a vehicle for Spirit.

Dance is a perfect and Divine reflection of the self. Dance communicates from our innermost soul,

and allows for expression and connection of mind, body and spirit (Stewart, 2000). It places us in

a Divine state of vulnerability. When we release our mental confines, and allow our bodies freedom, deep and lasting growth and opening occurs! We connect to our true selves, unearthing our beauty and Divinity as we dance sacredly.

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