

# DBIPOCUNFRAGMENTED

Kayla Hamilton.

Black woman.

Fat, Disabled.

Wide-framed glasses.

Small black afro.



A collage of black and white photographs, featuring (from left to right): Alice Sheppard, black shirt, medium length curly hair, smiling and facing towards the camera; Pelenakeke Brown wearing a black thin strapped shirt, long black hair, facing the camera; Leroy Moore Jr. Black shirt, left hand underneath chin and head resting in his hand, short black hair, facing towards the camera; Jerron Hermon light grey medium strap shirt, short black hair, arms tossed behind him, head facing to the left of the camera. Above Jerron is Yo-Yo Lin, black pants, grey halter, arms to the side, hair in a bun, facing to the right of the camera. The background of the image is shades of orange. Photo courtesy of beverlie lord, Laura Hetzel, a friend of Leroy's, Dan Kim, and Jesse Sperling.

*During the Covid-19 pandemic, Kayla sits at her spherical-shaped brown table in her basement apartment in the North Bronx sipping her heavy creamed coffee from a large-mouth, almond-colored coffee mug that reads “Queen of the Kid-dom.” Around her are the humming of the refrigerator, the dripping from the faucet leak in the sink, and Bad Bunny blasting from the cars in the distance. Taking a sip of coffee, she asks questions out loud to herself. “Who does she make art for? Why does she make art? And how can she expand her practice?” During the Covid-19 shelter-in-place order in New York, there was an attempt by all of us to continue in whatever form of normalcy we had experienced before.*

I didn't feel like I was in a place where I could make traditional art in the same way.

I was being asked to *s t r e t c h* myself, but not given the means, support, or guidance to do so. I didn't want to make traditional dance films where I recorded myself dancing in my kitchen and upload it to social media. Just hitting record didn't feel right to me. Instead, I want to create work—especially when it is nestled in technology—that stretches and expands my process and the field. I want to challenge what is possible by finding creative ways to engage in an ever-expanding technology.

I began to ask what prompted me to explore and expand and how I could do this with the tools and means that I had *right now*.

I started to think about other ways that my artistic practice could live outside of a traditional theater space, how it could manifest and take space, and *what I would need to do right now to make it happen?*

That was the seed of self-reflection and self-questioning from which *DBIPOCUnfragmented* grew.

**[DBIPOCUnfragmented is a living virtual game of telephone using a single description to make movement phrases or choreography from multiple disciplines.]**

*Kayla creates a phrase.*

*Kayla creates a movement description.*

*Kayla shares the movement description with a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person Of Color) Disabled artist. Artist makes a movement phrase using Kayla's description as a guide.*

*BIPOC Disabled artist then sends their creation back to Kayla and offers three other BIPOC and Disabled artists' names.*

*Kayla sends her original movement description to three new people and the process continues in a never-ending loop-chain in the hopes of connecting BIPOC Disabled artists to each other—and to the world.*

*The game of telephone begins with Kayla.*

*Kayla tosses*

[Arms cycle. Chest rises. Upper body yields to the earth.]

*to Alice Sheppard.*

*Alice tosses*

[Arms and legs sweep out and gather into a spiral.]

*to Jerron Herman.*

*Jerron tosses*

[The quick back, front, and wheeling accelerate.]

*to Yo-Yo Lin.*

I don't want my, our stories and bodies to be erased, unheard, or untold. I want people to know. I want history books to show that BIPOC Disabled bodies exist. We are here. I want to document it, share it, and embed these histories in new technologies. I want future generations to have an easier time finding others who look, move, and live like them.

The project, *DBIPOCUnfragmented*, was the result of a movement already dancing and living within me. However, Covid-19 provided me with the space to incubate the idea of *DBIPOCUnfragmented* without having to be on someone else's time.

Before I began, I conducted extensive research on seasoned Disabled BIPOC artists like Leroy F. Moore Jr., Vilissa Thompson, and Alice Sheppard who pioneered the field. As my research grew, I had conversations and Zoom calls with them. I found Leroy Moore Jr. and his organization Krip Hop Nation early in my research. I was inspired by Leroy's hip-hop lyrics and writing and reached out to him on Facebook. We scheduled a video call where he shared his extensive knowledge of Black Disabled history with me. Leroy's openness and generosity in our conversations gave me the confidence to move forward with *DBIPOCUnfragmented*. His guidance helped clarify who I wanted to include in this project—artists of all disciplines, not just movement-based. These kinds of conversations helped shape *DBIPOCUnfragmented*. They also provided feedback about access, practices, representation of our community, and overall support—not just of the work, but for my own pedagogical and creative practice.

This exchange with artists whose legacies and roots run deep was the soil to ground the work that I needed.

*DBIPOCUnfragmented* stems from my desire to be connected to a community that I identify with but haven't been a part of.

I've designed the game to keep growing—with or without me. While I am the initiator, I do not want to be the face of it. I do not want to center or

call attention to myself as the creator of *DBIPOCUnfragmented*. Instead, my goal for it is to become so expansive that no one knows who started it. I want the work to be shared by artists of all modalities. I want the project to reach multiple levels of artists—those who have been doing it forever and those who may not have thought of themselves as artists.

*DBIPOCUnfragmented* is not about “professionalism” or status quo in the field. It’s about the people, representation, and the experience of doing.

It is a living piece of art that is for ALL the people, BY the people who are the most underrepresented in the arts.

*Yo-Yo tosses*

[Sitting into one hip and pulls a cord.]

*to Pelenakeke Brown.*

[*DBIPOCUnfragmented* makes the work of Disabled BIPOC artists accessible to all using descriptors, captions, etc. The work then gets tagged with #DBIPOCartists and shared on multiple social media platforms as well as the project website.]

*Alice Sheppard, Jerron Herman, Yo-Yo Lin, and Pelenakeke Brown toss their creations back to Kayla.*

*Kayla catches the fragments of their explorations. Their fragments expand and push the game forward as they invite more contributors. As more DBIPOC artists share, our fragments become unfragmented through a singular description and creative container that fosters our collective growth and visibility.*

*After an hour of sitting at the table, Kayla peeks inside her coffee mug. She notices she is out of coffee and instantly gets up. Kayla stands in the center of the kitchen between the humming refrigerator and leaking faucet. She closes her eyes and begins to move...*

[Arms cycle. Her chest rises. Her upper body yields to the earth. Arms and legs sweep out and gather into a spiral. The quick back, front, and wheeling accelerate. Sitting into one hip and pulls a cord.]

*Kayla continues the movement phrase, adding on and on to the point of exhaustion.*

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Kayla Hamilton is a Bessie-Award winning artist originally from Texarkana, TX, who now resides in The Bronx, New York. When Kayla is not dancing, she enjoys sipping on peppermint tea and watching *Law and Order* on Hulu.