



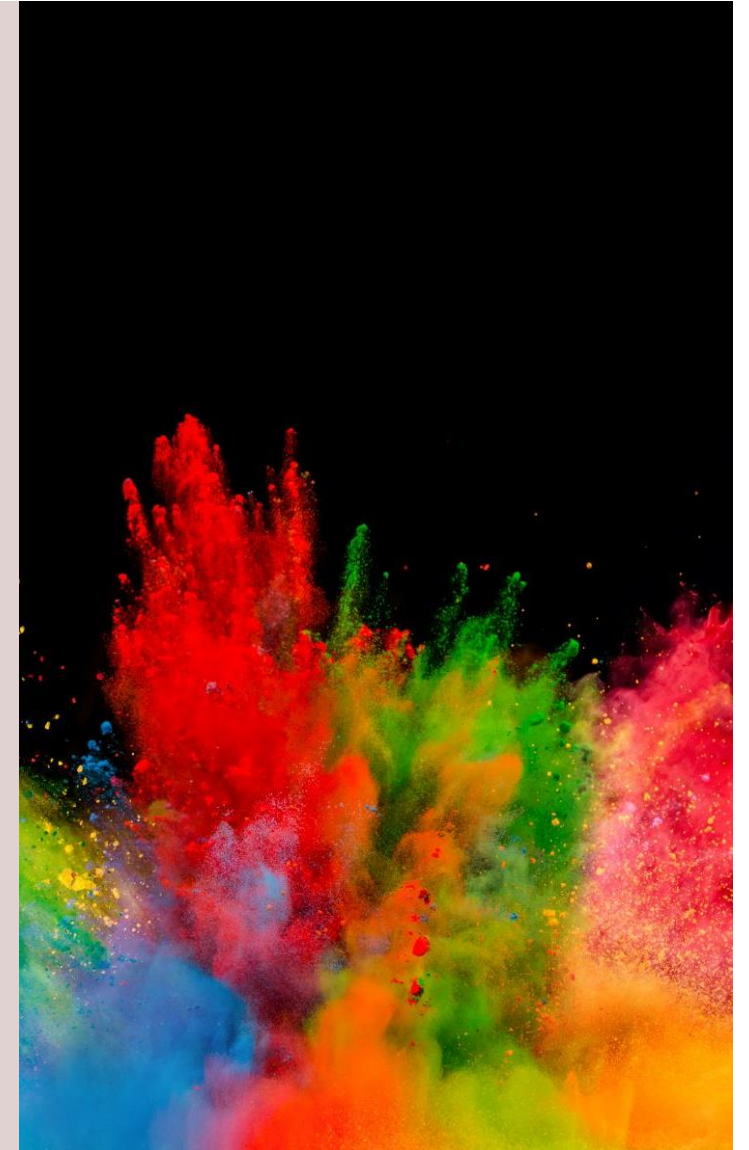
The House of Escada's iconic Boston Chapter on HBO Max's LEGENDARY

BOSTON'S BALLROOM/VOGUEING COMMUNITY: BY KARA DANAS

COMMUNITY AND ART: BETTER TOGETHER

- “Like eternal lovers, American communities and the arts and culture of the individuals that create them have been and will be forever intertwined, unable to quit each other, and yet often not quite sure what to do with each other either.”
- “Communities are a place where the arts and culture can play a unique role. Culture is a unique tool for, making the ‘other’ human. By bringing people together and building new understanding across differences, art can provide the pathway for increased empathy in an imaginative and effective way.”

americansforthearts.org





THE BASIS FOR WHY THE BALLROOM/VOGUEING SCENE GIVES AN IMPORTANT VOICE

“Recent and long-standing mistreatment and discrimination against non-dominant groups including African-American populations, women, and the LGBTQ community will continue to have damaging, dehumanizing impacts on how the members of those communities see themselves. The arts will allow for an increased control of the narrative and a corresponding re-humanization of those community members who have felt dehumanized.”

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HOW DO THE ARTS HELP TO CREATE A HEALTHY, EQUITABLE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY WITHIN THE BOSTON BALLROOM/VOGUEING SCENE?

- This is answered by looking at a snapshot of my research featuring:
 - Online articles about this community
 - Three Compelling Interviews from those directly involved in the Boston Ballroom/Vogueing Scene (you will be seeing/listening to Yyoyo's today).
- My own personal, first hand experience into this community.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BALLROOM AND VOGUING CULTURE

- Ballroom culture was rooted in necessity.
- The 1970s saw an expansion of ball participation as balls increased their numbers and types of categories to allow inclusivity and involvement of everyone (*Paris is Burning 1990*). Balls became a safe space for queer youth of color, mainly Blacks and Latinos/Latinas, to express themselves freely.
- This world was forged by queer and trans people of colour, those in need of love and safety, all banding together for strength and acceptance. This is a **COMMUNITY OF OUTREACH** in championing sexual health, wellness, and safety, as well as all aspects of mental and physical health. This core practice was started during the AIDS Pandemic and is continued still today.
- As these networks grew, people gathered with their chosen families at large events to compete and showcase their skills, fiercest outfits and ability to tap into parts of their gender and sexuality that were only celebrated in the bustling underground.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BALLROOM AND VOGUING CULTURE CONT.

- *These families are called “houses” and the event that brings this glamorous spectacle to light is what we know today as “the ball.”*
- *With this new realm of ball culture came the development of competition. The competitions consist of an entire language of concepts, categories, dances, and slang that are unique to the subculture. Participants “walk” or “compete” on a stage or runway for prizes, displaying their outfit along with their persona for different categories. The performances consist of strutting, dancing, and spoken word. Performances are judged by one’s fashion, appearance, and dancing.*
- *Voguing actually originated from ball culture in the 1980s. Voguing categories quickly became popular in the ball community. The dance utilizes stylized arm movements, sharp poses, and fast, low to the ground foot movements.*
- *The balls create a welcoming, non-critical space for the queer community to construct their sense of self in their own hidden world free of the constraints that mainstream society puts on gender and sexual expression.*



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BALLROOM AND VOGUING CULTURE CONT.

- *In essence, this is one of the simplest ways to describe the foundations of ballroom culture, a movement that's risen from the underground and helped inform over 20 years of pop culture and identity.*
- *In pop culture today, drag pioneers like RuPaul draw influence from the culture through the hit series RuPaul's Drag Race. Hit shows, like HBO Max's LEGENDARY, and FX's POSE, continue to showcase Ballroom and Voguing culture in 2020.*
- *BALL CULTURE AND DRAG INCLUDES THEMES OF: Gender and Sexuality Performance, Resistance and Conformity, and Race and the Civil Rights Movement*



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BALLROOM AND VOGUING CULTURE CONT.

How the “house” is built

- Within the ballroom community, the “houses” enter and throw balls, and are meant to serve as a system of support. A traditional house is headed by a mother and father, which are genderless roles.

Understanding the “KiKi scene”

- The “KiKi” scene originated from social gatherings at health outreach organizations. A KiKi, by definition a low-key function, sometimes includes dancing and friendly competition – always fun, never serious. The KiKi scene is focused heavily on community, and events are often run by up-and-comers.
- Members of the ballroom community use these KiKi events to practice for the mainstream balls, but also form smaller houses and balls within the group. The KiKi scene has allowed younger performers to harness their craft in a smaller setting. These houses are forming everywhere now and it’s given lots of opportunities for younger queers to compete and showcase their skills.
- The Kiki’s are usually hosted in community spaces by health and wellness clinics. Sexual health items such as condoms and pamphlets of information are given out to all attendees for FREE to promote safe sexual health, mental health, and overall physical health and wellness.

THE BOSTON BALLROOM AND VOGUING COMMUNITY EXPLAINED

*I am struck by the PASSION, COLOR, LOVE, and ENERGY
that this beautiful and VIBRANT community has!*

I have known of and loved this community for so long now

*My perception has changed to a deeper understanding of this
community's culture and people the more I have researched it.*

WHO IS THE HOUSE OF ESCADA BOSTON CHAPTER?

House of Escada, or Iconic House of Escada, is a ballroom house originally known as the House of Evangelista, and was founded by the founding father Tony Escada. He named the house after 1990s supermodel Linda Evangelista. Tony changed the name of the house to "House of Escada" in 1995 after visiting Chicago and discovering a building named the "Escada Plaza". In 1996, the house debuted its current name at the first House of Escada "Winter Solstices" ball. However, another House of Escada was created by Shawn Odom in Detroit, but the two houses merged in 2005. Currently, the overall mother is Lila Escada and the overall father is Teo Escada.¹

House of Escada appears in the first season of the HBO Max original reality-competition series "Legendary". The house is full of confident members, and presents themselves a tight-knit family. In order to be in the House of Escada, the members explain you must be able to bear the weight of a crown. The members consider their house as regal and apart of ballroom royalty. They also express that every member in the House of Escada must be able to hold their own."

[HBO.com](https://www.hbo.com)





04:00

Preserving The Queer Exuberance Of Voguing In A Roxbury Basement

September 04, 2018

By Quincy Walters



Dancers at Boston GLASS's Vogue Hour. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

This article is more than 1 year old.

On a recent Tuesday night, in a basement in Roxbury, people of varying ages danced around each other in what looked like one part fashion-show-runway struts and another part extemporaneous dance combat. For all the unchoreographed movements, the scene also looked elegantly synchronized — like a mashup of ballet and break dancing.

The dancers are preserving the vintage underground art form of voguing, which was pioneered by queer black and Latino youth in 1980s New York.

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Audio player controls: Play, Stop, Previous, Next, Volume

like a mashup of ballet and break dancing.

The dancers are preserving the vintage underground art form of voguing, which was pioneered by queer black and Latino youth in 1980s New York.

Every Monday and Tuesday, Boston GLASS, a program of the Justice Resource Institute, hosts Vogue Hour.

One of the dancers, Erin Ebony, started off slow and then became more animated. Donning a tinsel wig and a leather jacket with silver buckles, she stuck her tongue out as she moved her limbs.



Erin Ebony dances at Vogue Hour at Boston GLASS, in Roxbury. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

"I just really like to embody this alter ego, similar to Sasha Fierce with Beyoncé," Ebony said. "Just take yourself to that place and that's what takes your vogue to the next level."

Ebony said that inherent license to be feminine was particularly important to



"I just really like to embody this alter ego, similar to Sasha Fierce with Beyoncé," Ebony said. "Just take yourself to that place and that's what takes your vogue to the next level."

Ebony said that inherent license to be feminine was particularly important to her eight years ago when she came out as trans. Voguing helped her affirm her identity. She said it's almost like a telepathic energy that connects the queer community.

"We don't have many spaces where we can go and authentically be ourselves. It creates a space for us," Ebony said. "We can do it in the street, we can do it in our homes, we can do it in the privacy of our rooms and still feel connected to one another. Just as long as we have each other and we understand, that's all that really matters when it comes to vogue."

Ebony is part of a younger generation keeping voguing alive. But the ability to free oneself through the art form connects newcomers and veterans.



Erin Ebony is among the first on the dance floor at Boston GLASS's Vogue Hour. (Robin



Dancers at Boston GLASS's Vogue Hour. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

By day, Spriggs is an HIV prevention services coordinator. He said during the AIDS crisis in the '80s, voguing was used as a form of preservation. Attendees of vogue events would often have to bring condoms to participate and condoms would be distributed.

"We weren't getting the messages back in the day about HIV," Spriggs said. "We [didn't know] how people were becoming infected and how to protect ourselves."

That's what was so powerful about voguing — it made people feel invincible, in control and desired in a time of uncertainty. And that holds true today.



Treik Spriggs dancing at Vogue Hour at Boston GLASS in Roxbury. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

EAGLE, House of Mulan Giving Emerson Campus Kiki Ballroom

London Mulan, father of the Boston House of Mulan, leads a Vogue workshop in a Paramount Center studio ahead of Friday, April 26's Vogue Kiki Ball. Photo/Claire Richards '22

By Erin Clossey

Come on. Vogue.

Emerson's Advancement Group for Love and Expression (EAGLE) and London Mulan, father of the Boston chapter of House of Mulan, are hosting the College's first ever Vogue Kiki Ball, a celebration of culture and creativity, on Friday, April 26, in the Bobbi Brown & Steven Plofker Gym (which you won't recognize).

According to Christopher Henderson-West '20, EAGLE president and mother of Haus of Emerson, Friday's event, with the theme, "End of an Era," will be the first ever ball of its kind - with experienced competitors and \$3,000 in prize money - put on by a college.

"Emerson is giving their students an open door to experience more than just the everyday college life," said Lamont Mulan of House of Mulan, co-sponsor of the Ball. "They're basically saying, 'It's O.K. to be yourself, it's O.K. to experience new things in life. Go for it.'"

[Event Details](#)

Typically, balls are sponsored by health clinics or just put on by people in the scene, said London Mulan.

"Emerson's the only one to actually take it and let it become part of their own teaching. There has never been that type of link between colleges and the



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Event Details

Typically, balls are sponsored by health clinics or just put on by people in the scene, said London Mulan.

“Emerson’s the only one to actually take it and let it become part of their own teaching. There has never been that type of link between colleges and the culture,” he said.

Kiki Balls spring from the queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) community, and offer opportunities for young (18-24) performers to get experience before entering mainstream balls. As with mainstream balls, contestants “walk” against each other in a number of categories (Emerson’s will have 12 major categories), which include Performance, Runway, Face, Realness, and Glitz & Glamour.

An important part of the Kiki scene is its sense of community. Kiki balls are often sponsored by health centers and are held in community centers. Proceeds of Emerson’s ball will be split between the Office of Student Success’ Student Assistance Fund and [Boston GLASS](#), a nonprofit serving LGBTQ+ youth of color.



VOGUE. PHOTO/CLAIRE RICHARDS '22

The theme, “End of an Era,” has multiple meanings. For London Mulan, it refers to the Boston Ballroom scene, which is consistently overlooked and having a resurgence. This weekend there will be people coming to Boston from across the country and across the Atlantic to watch and compete in more mainstream events in the city, London said, and some are expected to turn up at Emerson.

For Henderson-West, it reflects the changes EAGLE has undergone in the past year: overhauling their constitution; broadening the meaning behind their acronym (from Emerson Alliance of Gays, Lesbians and Everyone to Emerson’s Advancement Group for Love and Expression); starting Haus of Emerson, the College’s first ballroom house system.

[Read: EAGLE’s Haus of Emerson Immerses Students in Drag Culture, History](#)

“EAGLE has been rebranding and shifting our focuses, so that we are also kind of ending our own era,” he



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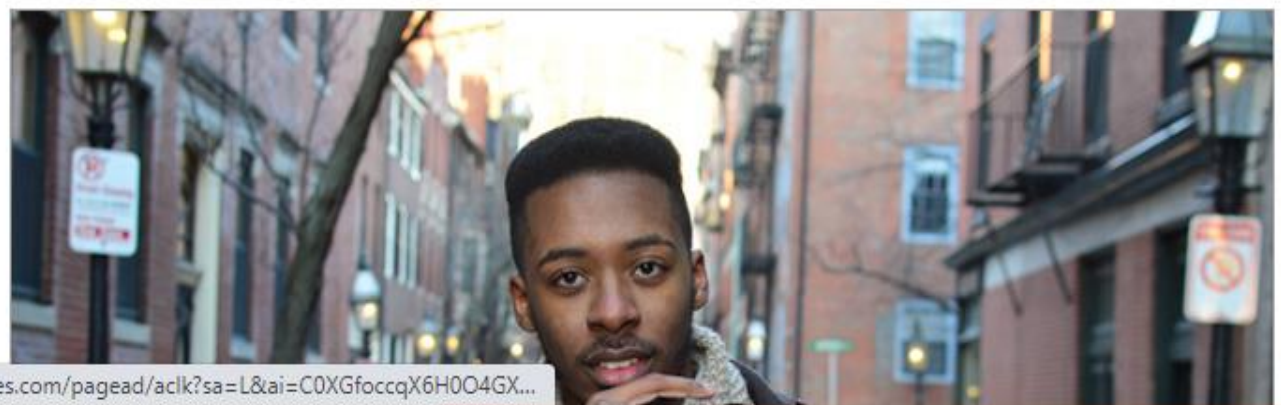
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Emerson College in Boston is making history, and we are living for it. The 139-year-old private, well-heeled (and predominantly white) institution is now home to the first official collegiate vogue ballroom house in the U.S. The Haus of Emerson was established last fall by Christopher Henderson-West, "a poor, Black, bisexual, gender-fluid male from the Midwest" who struggled to find his community on campus.

In 2018, Henderson-West took over as president of the school's student-run LGBTQ organization, EAGLE (Emerson's Advancement Group for Love and Expression), established in 1991 with a goal of promoting the visibility and acceptance of queer culture throughout the Emerson campus and greater Boston area. And he quickly "narrowed the organization's focus to the visibility of QTPOC [queer and trans people of color] at the predominantly white and wealthy institution." In order to "help empower the voices I felt were lacking on our campus," says Henderson-West, he reworked the organization's annual student drag show into the first Haus of Emerson event this past October. Emerson is the first campus in the United States to develop and host a competing vogue ballroom house.



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Chat with us. How can we help you?

As with any job, a youth must be qualified and give something in return. Legendary New England Mother, De'Zyre Revlon, says that many houses expect something from you. Some houses want you to participate in a ball or win a certain number of pageants. Above all, the house has to want you and want the best for you.

"I was a young knucklehead who was making a lot of mistakes and someone was willing to give me the opportunity," Revlon said. "They said, 'I don't like what you're doing. I want you to come and meet these people.' So I was adopted into a family that way and the ballroom aspects were introduced at a later time."

Evidently, it can go beyond the competition, but also if the house is no longer doing something for a youth, then that youth can leave and find another.

"It wasn't always handouts," Revlon said. "They made sure you work for what you had. They made sure they helped you as long as you're working for something. It was 'you should get a job,' 'you should do this,' 'you should finish school and if you're not going to finish school, get a job.'"

Beyond being employed, the houses are in place to make sure you aren't getting into trouble whether it be legal or the kind of trouble that came with the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Today, many adults in the scene are a part of LGBTQ community organizations and provide guidance to the whole ball scene rather than their own house. Khan herself is involved with **Connected Boston**, a health navigator for GBTQ men of color and BAGLY, Revlon with **TransCEND**, a group that helps disadvantaged transgender women.

"Families are created to keep you in the limelight but to also make sure you're taking care of yourself," Khan said. "A big thing that's going on is [HIV/AIDS] testing and prevention and that's what I can say for New England. Our main focus is on prevention within [the] ballroom to make sure people are taking care of themselves."

Many balls will offer reduced ticket prices if an entrant gets tested, but Revlon threw a ball that provided *free* admission to anyone who got tested. Testing can prevent the spread, but general sex education can help the individual; there are health care navigators available to provide advice on safe sex practices and risk levels.

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Chat with us. How can we help you?

“There’s always condoms around whenever BAGLY throws a ball,” Courtney Ebony, 22, a youth from the scene, said. “I always have condoms on me now and I’m always able to provide my girlfriends with condoms.”

“Before I joined this scene I did not know where to go to find free condoms and lube,” Mickey 007, 22, another ball scene youth, said. Mickey will be referred to as his ball scene moniker for the purposes of this article.

“When I had joined the scene I was not having sex like that, so I had not gotten tested either, but I did feel like it [was] available to me once I did want to get tested.”

Not only have they been educated, they’ve also gotten involved with those same community organizations. Ebony has been involved with BAGLY for six years and Mickey 007 has been working with Connected Boston and won an award for his community work this past year.

“For nearly a decade, BAGLY has been honored to collaborate with, and help support, Boston’s vibrant and resilient Ball and House communities. BAGLY’s mission and commitment to leadership development, health promotion, and racial and economic justice are well aligned with the work of Boston’s Ball and House communities, and so we are proud to celebrate our partnership and shared success,” said Grace Sterling Stowell, executive director for BAGLY.

These are the kinds of things that are possible with every ball scene. Every house can bring you up and help you to get to a new place, but in New England, everyone is helping everyone.

“When I go out there, I get love and stuff, but I choose my gay family not from my house, but who I connect with,” Ebony said. “I have a gay mother who helped me become the woman I am today.”

The family aspect is important. Revlon and Khan were originally in the same house but are no longer. They’re still sisters, though. Revlon stressed that the house you’re in is more of a brand that you represent, “365 days a year, seven days a week, 24 hours a day,” but your chosen family is pivotal to maintaining your identity.

“The most important thing to know about the New England Ball Scene,” Revlon said, “is that outside of the ball, we’re all a family.”



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FOLLOW ALONG WITH THIS VOGUING
BASICS TUTORIAL!!



MY RESEARCH QUESTION: MULTIPLE PARTS FOR INTERVIEWS

Looking into the Boston Ballroom/Voguing community, what are some of the major characteristics of this community as a whole; what creates this community? Dance?

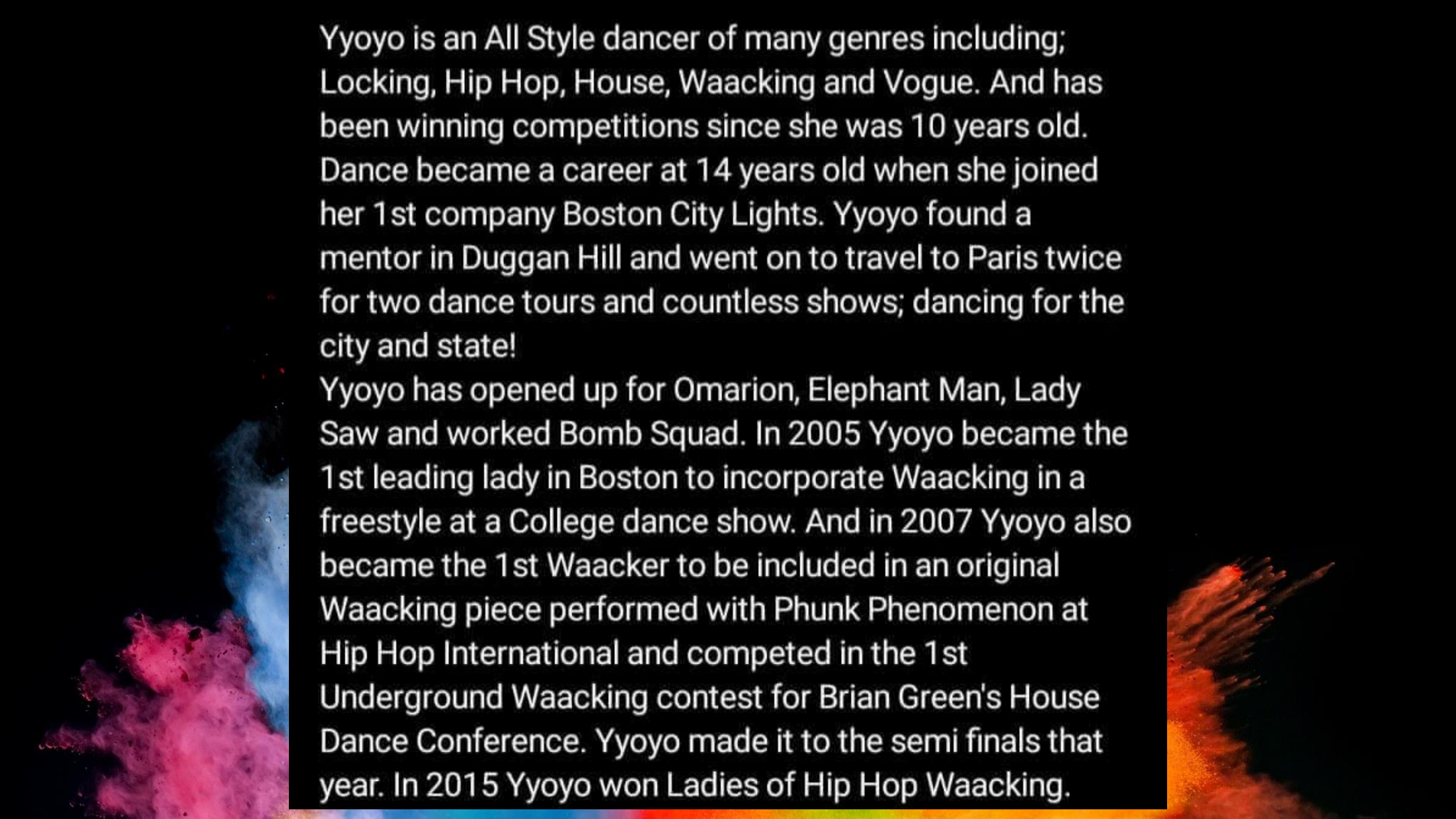
- What is your roll within this community? What is one of your favorite parts of this community?
 - What art forms are prominent within this community and which sub-communities or subcultures are present?
 - How do the arts influence both the main and sub communities of the Boston Ballroom/Voguing scene?
- What other factors, in addition to art forms (which ones), were these sub communities created around and did art influence their creation? If art was not the main reason for their creation, what is/was?
- What is most important for those outside of this community to understand about it? What IS this community and what IS IT NOT? What misconceptions about this community are there and what should people take away from this community?

COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

*Who I interviewed and why they are important people
in this community? I will introduce them to you!*

A woman with dark skin and hair is shown in profile, looking upwards and to the left. She is wearing a black, feathered costume that covers her head and shoulders. Her lips are painted a dark, glossy blue. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue. The text "YYOYO ESCADA" is centered over the image in a white, serif font.

YYOYO ESCADA

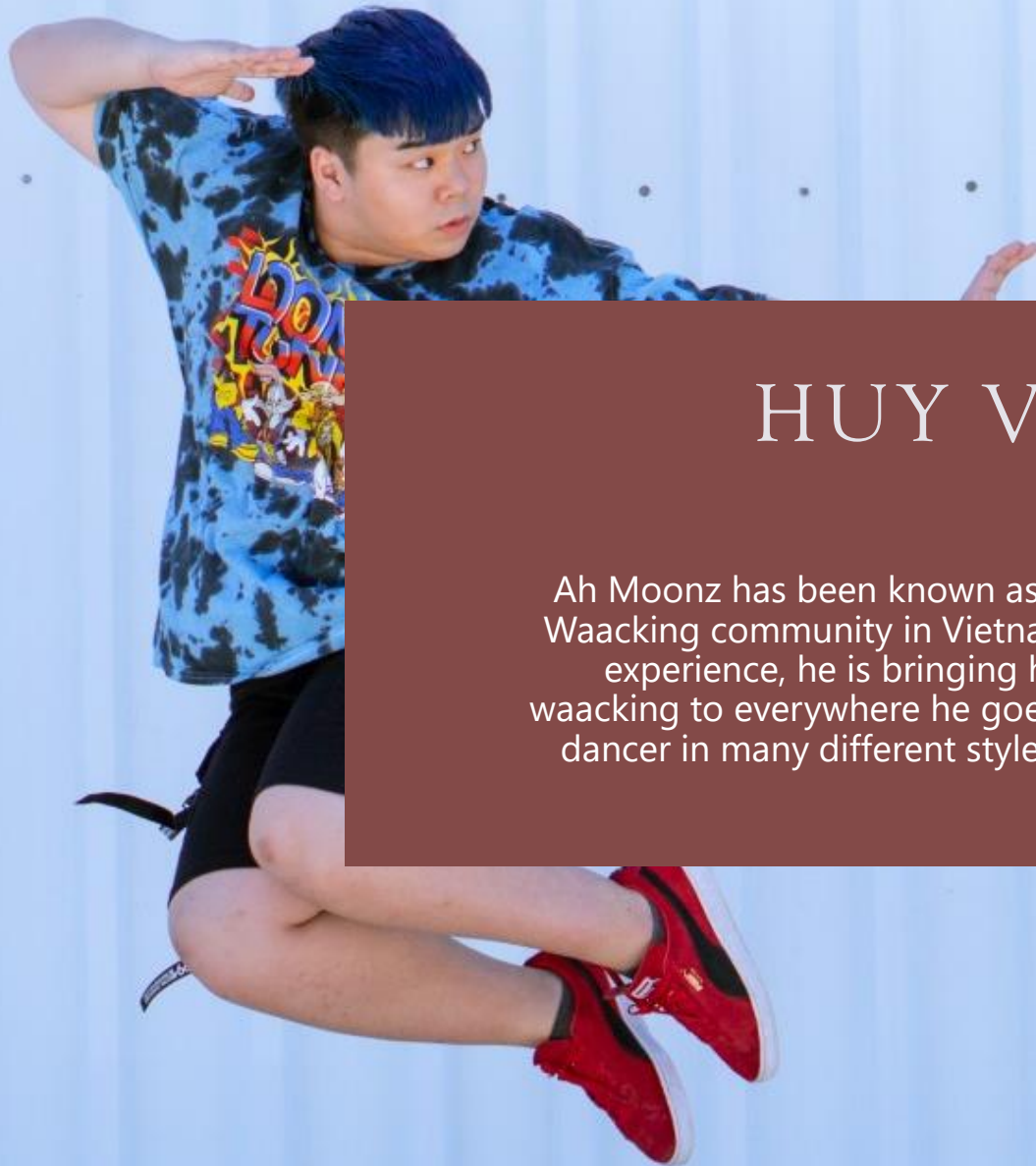


Yyoyo is an All Style dancer of many genres including; Locking, Hip Hop, House, Waacking and Vogue. And has been winning competitions since she was 10 years old. Dance became a career at 14 years old when she joined her 1st company Boston City Lights. Yyoyo found a mentor in Duggan Hill and went on to travel to Paris twice for two dance tours and countless shows; dancing for the city and state!

Yyoyo has opened up for Omarion, Elephant Man, Lady Saw and worked Bomb Squad. In 2005 Yyoyo became the 1st leading lady in Boston to incorporate Waacking in a freestyle at a College dance show. And in 2007 Yyoyo also became the 1st Waacker to be included in an original Waacking piece performed with Phunk Phenomenon at Hip Hop International and competed in the 1st Underground Waacking contest for Brian Green's House Dance Conference. Yyoyo made it to the semi finals that year. In 2015 Yyoyo won Ladies of Hip Hop Waacking.

In 2011 Yyoyo and a group of veteran dancers were hand picked by Reia of Phunk P, to compete in Germany in an AllStyle World battle; Yyoyo was the only female. And in 2013 Yyoyo along with New Skool Assasins won they're into books with a fierce 5 man battle that sent them to the Biggest dance competition to compete as guest from Boston. Yyoyo is now a leading Mother of a Waacking chapter in Boston and belongs to 2 Ballroom Houses and numerous affiliations.

Yyoyo is not only a dancer but also Mother of 2 children and a Healer in her community. She is a Hair stylist, Jewelry maker, Spiritual reader, Artist and Herbalist. Yyoyo continues to build her career through performing, teaching and fun battles. Yyoyo's impact in Boston and surrounding areas will be remembered hopefully through her powerful demand on the dance floor.



HUY VUONG

Ah Moonz has been known as the one of the pioneers of the Waacking community in Vietnam. With more than 10 years of experience, he is bringing his unique style and love for waacking to everywhere he goes. Moreover, he's also a versatile dancer in many different styles : Hiphop, House, Voguing,.....



DAMIAN CARTER

“Hi, I'm Damian Escada! Former NE England Father. I have been in the ballroom scene on and off 8 -9 years. I started in the House of St. Clair where I remained for about 2 years and learned all the basic knowledge of what ballroom is and how it works. During that time I grew close to the voguing category inspired by people like Legendary Tarik St. Clair, Legendary Leiomy Amazon, as well as my gay father at the time Stone Clark. Due to my masculinity the category I walked was realness with a twist and school boy realness. As time progressed I ended up parting ways with the house of St. Clair and joining the House of Escada where i still am currently going on about 7 years now. The house of Escada taught me the means of FAMILY! I've had some of the best times of my life amongst many people in this house but the one who has pushed me consistently is Overall Father Teo Escada. He molded me in many ways and is probably one of the biggest inspiration to me in and out of ballroom. He has cultivated me on how to run a house, always putting family first while at the same time when stepping on the floor looking your very best. He's a very critically honest person but it's needed in order to succeed especially with the knowledge he holds. During my time in the house I have walked again realness with a twist, best dressed but my current and most known category is Executive Realness. I've traveled and walked in many states from the east to the west, and north to the south. I debuted as the NE father April of 2019 but I had been overseer prior recruiting lots of talent and sharing my knowledge to many others that were curious or I saw potential in. Although I stepped down from that position for reasons beyond my control I still continue to spread ballroom knowledge across Boston. Ballroom is one of a kind but a reflection our black gay community and ultimately very inspirational to creativity. Once again the biggest thing that really captured me is not just the talent but FAMILY!!!”





**BALLROOM/VOGUE
MISCONCEPTIONS DEBUNKED**



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Stop disrespecting Ballroom Culture

REMINDERS

For those who are unaware :

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twilightescada Madonna did not create vogue !

Its called a dip not a death drop !

Without ballroom you would not have your lingo !

Do your history !!



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MADONNA DID NOT CREATE VOGUE

**VOGUING AS WE KNOW IT TODAY
WAS BUILT ON THE BACKS OF
BLACK QUEER PEOPLE
(SPECIFICALLY JOSE AND LUIS
EXTRAVAGANZA)**



**BALLROOM WAS AN UNDERGROUND
SCENE AND EXCLUSIVE TO QUEER
PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH MADONNA'S 1990
HIT "VOGUE" DID PUT BALLROOM ON THE
MAINSTREAM MAP, MADONNA REAPED
THE BENEFITS OF VOGUE'S ORIGINATORS
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**PLEASE STOP USING THE
WORD “DEATH DROP” WHEN
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**A DIP IS A MOVEMENT THAT IS
EXCLUSIVE TO THE ELEMENTS OF
VOGUE .NO MATTER WHICH WAY YOU
DO IT IT’S STILL A DIP SIS .**

**A DEATH DROP IS A TERM THAT
WAS MOST LIKELY MADE UP BY
SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT
UNDERSTAND THE ESSENCE OF
VOGUE**

**BY CALLING IT A
“DEATH DROP” YOU
ARE ERASING
BALLROOM CULTURE**

#QUEEREDMILLENNIAL



Liked by lovemmalou and 785 others

twilightescada Madonna did not create vogue !
Its called a dip not a death drop ! ... more



KEY FINDINGS: THE ARTS IN
BOSTON BALLROOM/VOGUE
CULTURE: THEY ARE
EVERYWHERE!

*Fashion. Makeup. Clothes. Runway. Dance. Vogue.
Chanting MC on the mic. Music. Actors. Models.
So many diff things that come out from the community that
have birthed so many different looks and images and videos.
Birthed a legacy of its own in the real world.*

THE BOSTON BALLROOM AND VOGUING SCENE: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

- *STRONG, Tight knit, BOLD, creative, loving, dedicated!!*
- *Smaller, not as well known, does not have as many connections as other scenes do.*
- *Opportunities for GROWTH, making national connections with other Houses. Gives opportunities to SO MANY humans of all ages and walks of life to joint their community and GROW together!*









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