WALKING, DANCING, AND THE BRACE:

On Black Performance in Seattle Emerging from the Pandemics

Jasmine Mahmoud

I was not braced for the joy, but I ended up saturated by it. Here are some things I remember from that night.

Inside a black-walled space, long sheets of fabric hung from the ceiling on which projections landed. As the audience, we stood, sat, and moved throughout this space, noticing each other, and sensing motion. The official performers were all Black dancers, dressed in colorful combinations of shorts and underwear, netted tights and crop tops, and face masks. They often moved as clusters through the audience—gently backing up into and making space among us—to music orchestrated by a live DJ, ranging from a drumline whistle to the bassline and hi-top of 90s R&B.

At one moment, two of the dancers positioned themselves, one in front of the other. The dancer in front had latte-colored skin and curly hair that hung past her shoulders. A sparkling silver mask covered her nose and mouth. She wore a white t-shirt, glossy yellow briefs, loose fishnet tights, a protective knee brace on her right leg, and white tennis shoes. Standing a yard behind her was the second dancer, with darker skin and short braids that graced his ears as he moved. His outfit included a black facemask, pink neck choker, long-sleeve black mesh crop-top, bright pink and layered tutu skirt, and black boots.

I was part of a crowd that surrounded them, while the music surrounded all of us. To a pulsing repetitive beat with high tins and inaudible words (something like "wake up wake up wake up" or "break out break out break out"), I moved and smiled behind my own mask as the duo danced a synchronized choreography, a slow-motion grind of sorts. Standing in a shallow squat, they raised their arms upwards and downwards, while moving their hips forwards and backwards. Then, things returned to real time again. To the rapid pulse, they moved with elbows square at shoulder height and then raised their hands above their heads in a diamond shape and pulsed their arms backwards before closing with hands on hip.

These movements/moments come back to me from *Let 'im Move You: This Is Formation*, a performance by jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham. poe and Beacham began collaborating in 2009 and the performance, which is "informed by Black queer and Black femme innovations, centered around the artists' explorations with the J-Sette form," is also part of a their decade-long artistic relationship.[1] It allowed audiences to "share space with dancers (including seven local performers) whose call-and-response movement forges and affirms community around Black queer resistance and delight."[2] That official curatorial language resonates with my experience, immersed as I remember being among performers and audiences under dreamy pink and golden lights—often not fully grasping who was who. A radical anonymity was created by these dancers, who, in addition to poe and Beachem, included Juan "Co-eL" Rodriguez, LaKendrick Davis, Maria Bauman, Marýa Wethers, Nikolai McKenzie Ben Rema, Sanchel Brown, William Robinson, and Zen Jefferson / dø√Σ Ç@KΣ.

Singing, swaying, moving with friends and strangers, I remember the joy of the night. But I also remember that dancer's brace, which propped, joisted, and pillared her knee—such a flexible, strong, and vulnerable body part.[3] I have so many questions about this performer and her brace: What is her dance history and when did she begin to wear this brace? What kind of movements does the brace support? How does the brace mark the body as hurt or recovering or in need of support? How does the knee brace function as an appendage, that bolsters and facilitates practice, participation, and immersion? How does the brace echo—aesthetically, functionally, and psychically—the face masks we all wore that night?

So I keep thinking about her brace, the brace, and to brace. Brace, as a noun, means "a device fitted to something, in particular a weak or injured part of the body, to give support."[4] Similarly, as a verb "to brace" is to "make (a structure) stronger or firmer with wood, iron, or other forms of support" or "prepare (oneself) for something difficult or unpleasant." The brace gives support and fortifies the dancer's knee and, at the same time, it prepares her body for something difficult, whether risk-taking or repetition or both. Yet the brace itself presents a duality, for not only does it facilitate the body's interaction with its external environs, but the brace also exteriorizes the body's internal mechanics.[5] In that, there's a suggestion of how structures interplay with bodies and how our bodies—including those of the Black dancers—each differently respond to similar spaces, floors, velocities, gravity, and movements, while differently needing various forms of supports. While the brace might suggest healing and restoration, I am more interested in the way the visibility of the brace might, as Joshua Chambers-Letson writes about minoritarian queer performance, "sustain new ways of being in the world together."[6] In particular, the brace's multiplicitous ways of sustaining performance acts as a metonym for visible and occluded movements during this time of intrapandemic[7] and "twin-pandemics,"[8] wherein the safety of live engagements demands both physical masks and layers of mediation and distance in the ongoing negotiation with racial capitalism. During this time, how do we move each other and what braces our movements?

This essay focuses on two instances of Black (dance) performance in Seattle, Washington that took place in September and October, 2021: the Black queer dance experience *Let 'im Move You: This Is Formation* at On the Boards, a contemporary performance venue in Seattle,[9] and *Walk the Block*, an outdoor "art festival and fundraiser" held for Wa Na Wari, the Black art house in Seattle's Central District neighborhood. Tethering these performances are Blackness, movement (dancing and walking), location (Seattle, which is often framed as a "white city" and seldom written about in academic prose about performance let alone Black performance), and the temporality of the (post)pandemic of Fall 2021—as well as the concept of the brace. How do conceits of the brace frame these performances and their (post)pandemic context? How are these two Black (dance) performances bracing and what are they bracing for? Through ethnographic and sensorial readings of both performances, I suggest that they collectively functioned as performative braces, making some internal Black communitarian supports exterior, preparing audiences for past and future

1 Project description for *Let 'im Move You: This is Formation*, https://www.ontheboards.org/performances/let-im-move-you-jumatatu-m-poe-jermone-donte-beacham

2 Ibid.

3 Thank you to the following for their amazing feedback and reminder of the detail of the brace: Rob Rhee, Adair Roundwaite, Amanda Doxtater, Daniela Rosner, Scott Magelssen, Anne Searcey, and Ellwood Wiggins. Also thank you to Amna Farooqi who shared brilliant thoughts about the performance with me.

4 "Brace." New Oxford American Dictionary. Version 2.3, 2020.

5 Thankful to Scott Magelssen for this framing.

6 Joshua Chambers-Letson, *After the Party: A Manifesto for Queer of Color Life* (New York: NYU Press, 2018), 5. There is something in the brace that is less about restoration, though I am indebted to Soyica Diggs Colbert, Douglas A. Jones Jr., and Shane Vogel's suggestion of "a different understanding of performance, informed by another meaning of restore: 'to give back or recompense,'; 'to make amends for…'; to repair … performance not only as restored behavior but also as behaved restoration" quoted from the introduction to their edited volume, *Race and Performance After Repetition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

7 Citing this term by Adair Roundwaite.

8 Defined by many as Covid-19 and the ongoing pandemic of racism. See Alison Cook-Sather, "Responding to Twin Pandemics: Reconceptualizing Assessment Practices for Equity and Justice," *Research & Practice in Assessment* (Winter 2021), vol. 16, no. 2: 5-16.

9 I am on the Board of this organization. This work feels too important to not write about, but I want to mark this for ethical reasons.

Image from *Let 'im Move You: This Is Formation*, (Seattle: On the Boards, September 24–25, 2021). Photo by Jasmine Mahmoud.

difficulties, and performing ways in which arts organizations might repair and care for Black artists over the long term. The brace, in its manifestations, is a performative appendage that facilitates and bolsters engagements, exteriorizes interiorities, and nevertheless also gestures towards the binding structures of racialization and racial capitalism that these performers endure. After a closer ethnographic reading of both performances attentive to the temporal, geographic, and theoretical framing of this work, as well as to labor and authorship, the essay closes with attention to the brace (and the mask) as appendages that anticipate the presence of Black pandemic performance and its affects.

LET 'IM MOVE YOU

The dancers stand in the corner with backs to the audience. Each is partially clothed, including, of course, face masks. But they are each also partially undressed so that their backsides are bare. We view their exposed butts bumping the air as the crowd cheers—crassly, celebratorily, collaboratively, and in defiance of any reading of the action as exploitative. This is jubilant.

Through this movement, I think of poe and Beachem as queer of color nightlife thinkers, in dialogue with José Esteban Muñoz, as well as Kemi Adeyemi, Kareem Khubchandani, and Ramon Rivera-Servera. The latter three write about "seek[ing] the feeling of being swept up in spaces and communities that make us believe in our bodies and affirm our desires."[10] Applause as affirmation, I think, as seeking a feeling. But it is also a seeking that, as Adeyemi et. al. write, does not to "reproduce the false narrative that queer nightlife or queer subject positions are inherently or necessarily utopian formations"—a seeking that "pay[s] rich attention to the ways that bodies are crafted in conversation with one another, within nightlife sites, and against broader landscapes that contextualize them."[11] I am struck by the use of "formation" within poe, Beachem, and Adeyemi, et. al. Framed through the brace (as all the things), pleasure (often interiorized) is exteriorized by the formed dancers and exuberant, applauding audiences, all of us in formation. This staging and its joy, pulse, process, and execution refuses to prohibit such pleasure out of fear of racial exploitation and other political economic structures that surround us.

A day earlier, while on my phone, I clicked on an Instagram live feed to watch these dancers walk and move through streets in Rainier Valley, a South Seattle collection of neighborhoods which has long been largely non-white. Recently, in the last ten years, the area has been rapidly gentrifying due to its proximity to the light rail which opened in 2009. Staring at my phone, I remember hearing the mostly-still sound of the street scape with a quiet rush "shh" of cars driving by. I remember watching movement sets as brief, ten second segments of call and response, begun by one dancer and repeated by another, followed by walking. I remember the live video feed, on my tiny smart phone screen, as two to four simultaneous streams captured the front, middle, and back of these formations.

This was *Let 'im Move You: Intervention*, where dancers imbue city streets with the J-Sette form in front of an audience of passersby—in person and online. This work was also durational as it first "premiered in three Philadelphia neighborhoods in June 2016,"[12] and has continued to take place across other cities where poe and Beachem perform, activating mostly Black and minoritarian city streets. An archived Instagram video of the 2021 Seattle iteration

10 Kemi Adeyemi, Kareem Khubchandani, and Ramon Rivera-Servera, eds. *Queer Nightlife* (University of Michigan Press, 2021), 1.

11 Ibid, 2.

12 Project description for *Let 'im Move You: Intervention*, https://www.ontheboards.org/performances/let-im-move-you-jumatatu-m-poe-jermone-donte-beacham-intervention

Image from *Let 'im Move You: This Is Formation*, (Seattle: On the Boards, September 24–25, 2021). Photo by Jasmine Mahmoud.

captures a moment in which a dancer stands facing forward, firmly on his right foot with left knee bent. His outfit includes a red visor that wraps around his head, where his shaved sides accentuate his black hair gathered in a top bun. He also wears a black facemask, white cropped t-shirt, black shorts, and white sneakers with black socks. He stands alone, in front of a group of six dancers about twenty feet behind him. He is graceful and precise: with his left arm out leftwards and right arm bent behind head, he enacts a short sequence that closes in a pile, a bending of his knees, before he turns backwards at the group behind him. Arranged in a diamond formation, they are dressed similarly (though some have crop t-shirts with dangling shards of fabric, or red headbands instead of visors). They repeat his movement. At the front of the group is the dancer with the knee brace, but here it is more hidden as she wears black full-length tights. In the call and response, the dancers iterate and echo the movement sequence.

Their stage: the street, in particular Rainier Ave S. in Rainier Valley. They stand in front of Northwest Tap Connection, a Black-founded-and-led dance center, adjacent to auto detailing, tire, and paint shops. In addition to passersby, some of the audience is there with the distinct intent to protect these dancers. On the Instagram post archiving this footage, gratitude: "shoutout to @seattlebike-brigade for trailing the crowd along the route to make sure we stay safe." The brace offers protection, holding together the way exterior (the street) is interiorized (the stage).

I connect this work to Maya Stovall's *Liquor Store Theatre (LST)*. Beginning in 2014, Stovall (an anthropologist, dancer, and native Black Detroiter) has engaged her McDougall-Hunt neighborhood by staging contemporary dance in front of liquor stores (the neighborhood has eight) and interviewing interested passersby. She records these encounters and has produced over thirty one episodes, videos of four to eight minutes that weave dancing with resident testimony. As she asks in her monograph of the same name:

> [h]ow, in Detroit, do people struggle for access to key resources, like quality education and employment opportunities, affordable housing, clean air, clean water, fresh produce and adequate nutrition, reliable public transit, and leisure, recreation, and green space amid the concrete grids and inequities of city life? How do people view, experience, shape, and reshape urban process? How do people shape their day-to-day, and through this, the city as a whole?[13]

Similarly, poe and Beachems' *Intervention* frames performance in the streets as questions. How does the street as stage connect dance to the everyday, to histories of J-Sette, and to other ways of being together?

Stovall, poe, and Beachem all use mediated forms (social-media friendly video) as a genealogical and archival method. Stovall cites 20th century dancer-anthropologist Katherine Dunham as well as Zora Neale Hurston who, in the early 20th century, archived through embodiment and recording the songs and movements of her community-members in the Black township Eatonville, Florida. Similarly, poe and Beachem work as archivists of the J-Sette form, made popular in late 20th century Black collegiate spaces and repurposed by Black queer men who, "prohibited from trying out as majorettes, would create competitive teams to practice the form in gay clubs and pride parades." Their J-Sette calls and responds to their community. Their J-Sette is queer, iterative, shared, and open to viewership for all. Viewed through the brace, poe and Beachem's *Intervention* facilities the practice and archive of this form and its meaningfulness to Black queer communities.[14]

13 Maya Stovall, *Liquor Store Theater* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 27.

14 Project description for *Let 'im Move You: This is Formation*.

Image of bib installation at *Walk the Block: Art Festival and Fundraiser* (Seattle: Wa Na Wari, October 16, 2021). Photo by Jasmine Mahmoud.

Given this genealogy, this work also asks: how does Anthropology as Discipline brace often-dismissed Social Media Visibility? During the inside *Let 'im Move You* production at On the Boards, the DJ gave audience members permission to—at only select times—photograph and record video, and then post and tag on Instagram. In fact, much of my performance renderings earlier in this article were re-remembered after reviewing my photographs and recordings. In giving the audience boundaries in when and how to digitally amplify, I am reminded of how Aymar Jean Christian et. al.[15] describe "intersectional counter platforms" and Andrea Medrado, Renata Souza, and Monique Paulla[16] term "link visibility" to frame the dual vulnerability and power experienced by Black women—and those who are particularly hyperinvisible[17]—using social media. In these ways, *Let 'im Move You*'s use of social media does not just allow external, digital viewership. Rather, as carefully choreographed and permitted, social media also acts as brace: remembering, visibilizing, and protecting these Black dancers.

15 Aymar Jean Christian, Faithe Day, Mark Díaz, and Chelsea Peterson-Salahuddin, "Platforming Intersectionality: Networked Solidarity and the Limits of Corporate Social Media," *Social Media + Society* (2020), vol. 6, no. 3: 1-12.

16 Andrea Medrado, Renata Souza and Monique Paulla, "Black Women in Parliament and on Social Media: Link Visibility as an Intersectional and Solidarity-Building Tool," *Global Perspectives* (2021), vol. 2, no. 1, https://doi.org/10.1525/gp.2021.24503.

17 From the excellent chapter by Amber Johnson, Chapter 1: "Trans Identity as Embodied Afrofuturism" in *African American Arts: Activism, Aesthetics, and Futurity*, ed. Sharrell Luckett (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2019).

WALK THE BLOCK

In her monograph, Maya Stovall also writes, "[w]ith this walk, I launch a corrective against the poverty of thinking concerning African American lives in U.S. cities. In the case of *LST*, we're in Detroit—and I explore here how lives and existence connect with U.S. founding myth. Please walk with me."[18] I think of that plea when remembering *Walk the Block* at Wa Na Wari, held on a Saturday afternoon in October, a few weeks after *Let 'im Move You*'s iterations moved through Seattle. On that afternoon, I had so much awe.

I meet up with friends on 24th Avenue between Spring and Marion Street in Seattle's Central District neighborhood. This used to be a Black neighborhood, I've been told many times. I've also been told that people in Seattle (which people I ask?) used to call it the "Colored District." When I teach about redlining, I show students a Seattle redlining map from the late 1930s and this neighborhood is entirely in red. It was dispossessed and disinvested from by the government. Today, this neighborhood is trendy and expensive. Single family homes often sell for over one million dollars, often to white homeowners, as the neighborhood has gone from eighty percent Black in the 1970s to less than fifteen percent today.

We are walking outside on a residential street of two-story homes, at a time of year when red and yellow leaves blanket the ground, and cool crisp air touches your face in a way that feels refreshing rather than just miserably cold. There are hundreds of people here. Some are organizers who sit at booths directing us where to go, handing out maps and drink tickets. Most are participants who follow the directors. "Go select your bib," we are told.

18 Stovall, 2.

Image of work by Barbara Earl Thomas in front of Wa Na Wari. Part of *Walk the Block: Art Festival and Fundraiser* (Seattle: Wa Na Wari, October 16, 2021). Photo by Jasmine Mahmoud.

We walk over to the bib station, a triangular pillar that stands maybe ten feet tall and has bibs attached in somewhat alphabetical order on each of the three sides. These are racing bibs (for 5k, 10k, marathon races etc), but instead of just numbers, they include words: "Leaving," "Evolution," "Extinction," "Erotic," "Cyanobacteria," "Commute," "Doubt," "Dialect." We are invited to choose our own and self-attach. I select "Dusk" because I love that time of day. The bib is a brace of sorts, poetically making visible my attachment to the word I've selected by also facilitating my awe-struck engagement with others who also don their whimsical labels this afternoon differentiating us as part of this neighborhood event.

Wa Na Wari opened in 2019 as a fifth-generation Black-owned residential home turned Black art space. On their website, they describe themselves as,

> an immersive community art project that reclaims Black cultural space and makes a statement about the importance of Black land ownership in gentrified communities. Our mission is to create space for Black ownership, possibility, and belonging through art, historic preservation, and connection. Referred to as a 'container for Black joy,' Wa Na Wari incubates and amplifies Black art and belonging while providing a safe space for organizing and movement building.[19]

In 2019, I brought a class to meet the co-founder Elisheba Johnson and engage with Chantal Gibson's redaction poetry. In 2020, during the pandemic, I attended virtual events (including receiving a postcolonial karaoke album from Sharita Towne and attending a virtual artist talk by Lisa Jarrett). I also visited the venue in person—with mask and distance—to view Jarrett's *How Do You Draw the Light from Sapphires* (2020), an artwork made largely of Black hair and a video installation featuring a slideshow with old family photos and questions: "How do you keep a safe distance?" "How durable is that mask?" "How do you reframe value?" "What edge of precarity do you track?" "Can aesthetics make you legible?" "Are these origin stories too?"

Back again in 2021, I am outside of Wa Na Wari for their fundraiser, an art and food scavenger hunt of sorts. We walk a mile-long loop to nearby locations to view art, reclaim our drink tickets (for hot cider), and celebrate this community. At 2320 E. Columbia Street I discover Martine Syms's video *Notes on Gesture* (2014), installed on a television screen set up in a private home's front yard. *Notes* centers looping video clips of a Black woman gesturing against a purple background. Her gestures include shaking her hand and wagging her finger; at times overlaid with text such as "When It Ain't About The Money." The accompanying didactic explains,

> [i]nspired by a riff on a popular joke "Everybody wanna be a black woman but nobody wanna be a black woman," *Notes On Gesture* is a video comparing authentic and dramatic gestures. The piece uses the 17th Century text *Chirologia: Or the Natural Language of the Hand* as a guide to create an inventory of gestures for performance.

"Why do black folks always have to save everybody?" I think, "Who is supporting us?" (Where is our brace?)

A block down and over: Marita Dingus's installation at the courtyard at Coyote Central, a youth arts nonprofit. Here, Dingus, a Seattle-based artist, present sculptural portraits of Black children made from scrap materials like wire metal, plastic, and fabric. In one sculpture, a length of mesh-fence is shaped into a column to form a body from which metal slinky-like coils cascade as legs. Heading this figure is the representation of a Black child. There's a colorful, junkyard, urban garden aesthetic to this work. There's also

19 For more information visit https://www.wanawari.org/about.html

Image of installation of Martine Syms's video *Notes on Gesture* (2014) at 2320 E. Columbia Street as part of *Walk the Block: Art Festival and Fundraiser* (Seattle: Wa Na Wari, October 16, 2021). Photo by Jasmine Mahmoud.

a vulnerability with cloth materials exhibited outside in a city know from rain and dampness. The displayed artist statement is written from first person: "I've also come to the viewpoint that people of African descent were 'used' during the institution of slavery and then callously discarded. So I make art out of discarded materials to express an empowering missive. The goal of my art remains to show not only how people survive but prosper under dire circumstances." Dingus's statement bolsters her colorful method of reclamation of otherwise discarded materials. In method and statement, she exteriorizes and facilitates an understanding of how Black people were discarded and the ways they made and lived anyway.

Later, at 1108 25th Ave (another private home), we stand among many listening to the Gary Hammon Band. Hammon, a Black jazz saxophonist, sets a mellow, hopeful reflective mood as he performs on the porch with his band. There are dozens (maybe nearing a hundred?) people outside listening to Hammon and his band. And yet, within the mellow mood, I think of how Kevin Quashie writes about Black quiet and interiority as modes of strength and fullness for Black people. Across the street is Lisa Myers Bulmash's lush *nanoforest*. We complete the loop and arrive back at Wa Na Wari, where I noticed the visual artist Barbara Earl Thomas's portrait of Elisheba Johnson sitting on the lawn (this work is part of a series that, at the time, was on view at the Seattle Art Museum, the city's flagship art institution). There is something calming and accessible but also precarious about this masterpiece casually resting on a lawn.

Walk the Black was an art fundraiser that actually centered Black art and Black community, rather than normalized acts of fundraising (banquet halls, high priced admittance tickets, auctions). It did so through walking the neighborhood in a way that amplified art and people. In her essay "Cityspaced: Ethnospheres," dancer, scholar and ethnographer Anna B. Scott writes about engaging public space including walking on sidewalks. "But so many bodies experience the public as punishment," she writes "as a disciplining force. In a neighborhood, transitioning from one social class to the next—gentrifying—the dust from generations of soles attached to bodies that look like me, a geography of meandering, holds no sway against the 'real use value' of the sidewalk. Step aside, or buy your own right of way." I think of current speculative and capitalist practices in the Central District neighborhood that have dispossessed Black residents. Scott also writes "Walking sets us apart and brings us together, even though we are always already each other, fluid system to fluid system." I think of how Erika Chong Shuch—in working creatively and collaboratively with elders in their *For You* project—and Chloe Johnston theorize "creative mutual aid." In walking with each other in support of Black art, we give to each other so much.

THE MASK AND THE BRACE

Let 'im Move You and *Walk the Block* weave together collaboration, joy, and exploration, Black feminist and queer and communitarian strategies, and do so carefully during the pandemic. Lisa Jarrett's questions from her video installation at Wa Na Wari are amplify this connection.

How do you keep a safe distance?
How durable is that mask?

At *Let 'im Move You* there was a collective glee in our ability to move and dance with one another. The protocol helped; we showed vaccination cards and had to be masked. But we weren't safely distanced from the dancers, who kept bumping into us, nor from the audience. I went with several friends who I couldn't help

Image of installation by Marita Dingus at the courtyard to Coyote Central as part of *Walk the Block: Art Festival and Fundraiser* (Seattle: Wa Na Wari, October 16, 2021). Photo by Jasmine Mahmoud.

but hug and sway with when "our jam" came on. (As someone who grew up almost exclusively listening to soul and R&B, I ran up to two other friends when Dru Hill's "5 Steps" came on. Released when I was in high school, the song's chorus swells with crescendo and enciantion. Dru Hill's Sisqo sings the chorus with his tinny-voice: "We were FIVE STEPS from e-ter-ni-ty. We were FOUR STEPS!...") We were singing together, dancing, and smiling under our masks.

How do you reframe value?
What edge of precarity do you track?

Walk the Block was essentially a fundraiser. Tickets ranged from $25 (which included map and racing bib) to $350 for a two-person tickets with food, drink, and artist-designed umbrella. At the event, local Black theater artists drove around in a car encouraging us to text a number to donate even more money. And yet it didn't feel like any arts fundraiser I've ever attended. All were welcome; other than for food and drink tickets, no one verified ticket purchases and anyone passing by could engage art. The calls to money were filled with glee and humor and fun.

On jumatatu m. poe's website is a link to a "Creation Budget." It links to a Google Doc Excel spreadsheet with a budget that tracks labor, expenses, and actual funds paid starting in 2012. Categories include "Rehearsal Personnel Expenses," "Travel/ Housing/Per Diem/Club Outings Research," "Costumes and Props," and "Administrative Fees." There are also narratives. At times poe and Beacham were paid but at other times the narrative reveals how they were paid less than they budgeted or "no cash actually received." The spreadsheet numbers and narratives make external the labor and value, and how compensation often fails to truly pay for their labor and work.

Can aesthetics make you legible?
Are these origin stories too?

Following both events, I raved to friends. To friends I had invited who were unable to go (you missed out, it was amazing!!) To friends that I want to know about these organizations. To friends who claim there are no Black people or art in Seattle.[20] I think part of my raving is about the intrinsic power of art to do things make joy and temporary spaces of belonging.

I think about form and how conceits of form often break down on Black art, artists, and people. Often it's blatantly racist (Lil Nas X isn't country because he's Black, the avant-garde doesn't include the Black Arts Movement.) But sometimes, nevertheless, that breakdown can bring joy. It's amazing to me that *Let 'im Move You* is performance art, and also a queer Black dance party that graced movement, play, nudity, fun, repertoire making, and archival work, and queried stages for communities, especially Black queer communities. It's amazing to me that asking Seattle residents to walk (or move how they are able) around a block that used to be Black and now mostly isn't can still center Black histories and aesthetics—and raise money for Black people and homes and art. It's amazing to me that the brace—which supports the body due to perceived weakness—actually facilitates strength, preparation, duration, and repair, and allows a window into the interior at a time when we are all so covered and so unsure.

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20 In her *Black Embodiments* Studio, Kemi Adeyemi is actively confronting the idea that there are no Black people or Black art in Seattle.