

Nikka Maynard

Nikka Maynard, born and raised in the diverse Berkeley/Oakland East Bay and has always been intrigued and inspired by culture. Her parents were born and raised in Trinidad & Tobago and made sure that their heritage was in the forefront of Nikka's upbringing. At a very young age Nikka, started a Hip-Hop youth group with other neighborhood friends called "Red & Black Licorice." Through this group Nikka developed a passion for performing and choreographing. This included performing at local talent shows, venues, and community events.

1996 is when Nikka's love for African Dance began. She was recruited to enroll in the Berkeley High School (BHS) African Dance program under the direction of Naomi Washington-Diouf. This program was her first experience performing African dance both on stage and in a professional atmosphere. After graduating from BHS, Nikka joined Mrs. Washington-Diouf's performing company, Diamano Coura. Nikka also became an understudy and instructional assistant to Black Studies African Dance Program at BHS which was an essential tool that helped to develop her natural ability to instruct. While performing with Diamano Coura Nikka took on numerous teaching positions all over the Bay Area. This includes organizations such as the Stanford GEMS, CitiCentre Dance, Dimensions Dance, Destiny Arts, Kids N' Dance, and the Fred Finch Academy to name a few. Nikka remained with Diamano Coura for 8 years as one of the most inspirational and creative dancers in the group. She appreciates the knowledge of this dance form of which this company has given to her.

Nikka continues to expand her knowledge of the art form by traveling throughout the United States to take instruction from renowned African dance artiste. These artiste include: N'deye Gueye, the late Malonga Casquelourd, Marie Basse-Wiles, Assane Konte, Babacar N'diaye, Mareme Faye, Aziz Faye, and Riche Faye to name a few. Over the years she has choreographed and performed in various states such as New York, Ohio, Washington D.C., Maryland, and multiple places throughout California. Nikka's most exciting achievement thus far was performing overseas at the 2005 Maio Li International Mask Festival in Taipei, Taiwan.

Nikka will be conducting a West African Dance class at the New Style Motherload Dance Studio's in Berkeley this Summer. Also, She is the co-director of Khaley Adouna Productions. An ethnic performing group which in the Senegalese language of Wolof means "Young Life!" She can be reached by calling 510-764-0547 or by emailing dance.drum@gmail.com.