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## UMFUNDALAI

Pronounced: ma-foon-dah-lah

Meaning: “Essential” or “essence” (in Kiswahili roots)

Progenitor/Codifier: Dr. Kariamu Welsh (Asante)

*\*affectionately known as Mama Kariamu*



### What is Umfundalai?

Umfundalai is a Contemporary African Dance technique that gathers movement ideas from dances across the African Diaspora. It teaches us to move with grounded energy, clear shapes, rhythm, and community focus.

### Who is it For ?

Students of all levels who want to learn about African and Diasporic cultures through movement.  
 Movers who want to explore and enjoy storytelling, rhythm, and teamwork.



### Why is it important?

- **Education & Expression:** Builds solid technique rooted in African principles and lets students craft personal/ancestral stories through movement, learning history, language, and ritual as they train.
- **Explore & Connect:** Invites identity exploration and collective storytelling, fostering inclusive, respectful communities.
- **Hold Tradition, Make New Traditions:** Preserves African Diasporic aesthetics while evolving them for today's stages and classrooms.



### What To Wear & Why

- Fitted, comfortable dancewear so alignment is visible.
- Bare feet for grounded, full-foot articulation.
- Hip wrap (lapa/sarong) or loose harem pants (shokatoes) over dancewear.
  - Why: honors cultural practices and the many functional uses of a wrap, supports self-covering, visually frames pelvis/hip work, and aligns with the Umfundalai aesthetic.
- Bring an open mind to explore and ask questions.

