

Aysha Upchurch, the Dancing Diplomat, is an artist and educator who creates, facilitates, and designs for radical change. She is an embodied storyteller, leaning on African diasporic movement to create works of joy, connection, and liberation. Named one of the nine women who shaped Hip Hop education by Upscale magazine, Aysha creates spaces to champion Hip Hop as an essential force in transformative education. She has been a John F. Kennedy Center commissioned artist, a Schonberg Dance Fellow at The Yard, and a 2025 United States Artist Fellow. Aysha has been on faculty at George Mason University, Salem University, Harvard University, and UT Austin, where she is currently pursuing a PhD in Performance Studies to continue expanding the boundaries of scholarship to embrace the power of the cypher, Hip Hop culture, and rituals of Black girl embodied play.