

# HISTORY

## FOR BREAKING WEEK CURRICULUM

### HISTORY

- Breaking, also called b-boying/b-girling, originated in the Bronx, New York City in the early 1970s as an innovative street dance style.
- Breaking is the story of African American and Latin American youth who lacked opportunities due to socioeconomic challenges and fought for recognition and acceptance.
- It allowed individuals to express their creativity, thoughts, emotions, and experiences through movement.
- It started in informal settings like house parties, block parties, and street corners.
- Breaking became a competitive art form, with dancers engaging in battles (competitions) to showcase their skill and creativity.
- Battles were held in public spaces and judged by fellow breakers based on factors like musicality, originality, and athleticism.

### CONFLICTS

- The Breaking community is riddled with conflicts regarding history, pioneer recognition, factual accuracy, and terminology, all of which will always be debated among Breakers.
- Breaking is considered one of four main elements under the umbrella of Hip Hop (others are music, DJing, graffiti art, and rapping)
- Early legends of breaking are referred to as "OGs" (Original Gangsters), where OG names often coincided with their affiliation with crews (teams).
- The community does agree that breaking is influenced by tap dance, African tribal dances, salsa, mambo, kung fu, capoeira, gymnastics, acrobatics, and athletics, as well as musical genres of rock, jazz, funk, soul, and techno.

### THE MUSIC

- DJ Kool Herc is credited with inventing the breakbeat, a musical technique central to hip-hop and provided the foundation of breaking battles.
- Breakbeats involve isolating and repeating a section of a song's rhythm or percussion break to elongate the break in the song.

### THE MOVES

- Breaking embraces four main types of moves: toprock, downrock, power moves, and freezes (downrock is sometimes referred to as footwork or floorwork).
- The moves primarily originated from the East Coast pioneers' acrobatic and athletic movements, including spins, flips, and freezes.

# HISTORY

## FOR BREAKING WEEK CURRICULUM

### MAINSTREAM & GLOBAL GROWTH

- Breaking gained mainstream recognition in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with media dubbing it "breakdancing."
- The 1981 Lincoln Center Battle was a pivotal event that attracted major media attention.
- Prominent breaking crews performed in:
  - Movies (*Fame*, *Flashdance*, *Wild Style*, *That's Incredible*, *Breakin'*, *Breakin' 2*, *Beat Street*)
  - TV shows (*Soul Train*, *American Bandstand*) and national voting ads for 1984 presidential election
  - The 1983 Kennedy Center Honors reception in front of seated U.S. President Ronald Reagan and even at the 1984 Summer Olympics.
- Breaking expanded its reach into other forms of popular culture such as fashion and advertising.
- Breaking spread across the U.S., West Coast, and internationally, influencing countries like Japan, South Korea, and the Soviet Union. Today, China has a strong underground culture because of country restrictions.

### THE CULTURE

- Breaking faced challenges and criticism in the mid-1980s due to safety concerns and association with violence.
- The media subsequently declared breaking as dead, which led some breakers to succumb to gang activity while other breakers took breaking underground.
- The dance style began to evolve in new and innovative directions.

### FEMALE PARTICIPATION

- Though historically male-dominated, female participation has been present since the early days of breaking.
- The b-boy community couldn't figure out where the b-girl community fit.
- Barriers to participation such as gender-based discrimination, limited opportunities for mentorship and training, and lack of representation in media and competitions existed.
- In recent years, efforts to address gender inequality include b-girls organizing events, competitions, and teaching and mentoring younger b-girls.

### THE LIFESTYLE

- Breaking experienced a resurgence in the 1990s and 2000s, with a new generation of breakers pushing its self-expression, boundaries and creativity to new heights.
- It requires athleticism, strength, and flexibility, serving as physical exercise and a way to stay healthy.
- Breaking became recognized as a legitimate and respected art form with its own distinct subculture and community, incorporating elements of other dance styles and music genres.

## **HISTORY**

### **FOR BREAKING WEEK CURRICULUM**

#### **PROFESSIONALIZATION & GLOBAL EXPANSION**

- Breaking battles and events became organized and professionalized, supported by sponsors, cash prizes, and international competitions.
- Some original breakers have concerns about its professionalization and commercialization, while others embrace its global expansion.
- Breaking had a successful debut at the 2018 Summer Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires.
- Breaking will make its debut as one of the four additional ‘temporary’ sports at the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.