

Naima Adedapo grew up in a world of full of song and dance, from hand clapping games in the streets of her hometown Chicago to the rhythm of traditional African drums. "Every third Sunday of the month, the Yoruba community would get together for food and singing," Naima says. "I've been dancing my whole life."

Naima moved to Milwaukee in 1994 and attended Lincoln Middle School of the Arts, where she says her desire to pursue dance first started. By the time she graduated from Tippecanoe High School, she was already dancing with Ko-Thi in the children's company.

Naima says the curriculum of the dance program was intimidating at first. Coming from a strong background in African dance, the foreign techniques (and words) in Ballet I made her question a dancer's life. "The audition was intimidating. But I fought it - I didn't wanna be torn down. I wanted to prove myself I had it in me to pursue it." **Naima cites Luc Vanier as truly making her comfortable with ballet. "He made it more human for me and gave me more confidence."**

Naima recalls the daily schedule of being a dance student. "Sometimes we'd be on campus until 11pm if we had a show. It's not just dancing - we were learning history, anatomy, doing papers - plus you had to stay physical enough to take on the challenges. People don't realize how hard we work. Being a dance major is one of the most challenging things."

Naima's favorite pieces she danced while in the department were ones that had a message or that challenged her mentally and physically. Pieces that had an "African vibe" or incorporated Modern or Hip Hop technique felt the most natural to Naima. "I took a few classes in African Dance under Ferne to observe her teaching styles. **It was a modern based program, and I wanted everything. Pilates, ballet - I value it a lot now.** I wasn't the most graceful, but I tried really, really hard!" During her senior year, she played Anita in the Musical Theatre Department's production of West Side Story.

After she graduated, Naimia says she was coming into her own as a teacher, doing residencies in African dance, and being a mother. She also continued to dance with Ko-Thi and perform with her reggae band. After playing Anita in the Musical Theatre Department's production of West Side Story her senior year (2007), she traveled to North Carolina to act in Theatre Professor Rebecca Holderness' production of Crowns (2008 + 2010). It was then that Naima auditioned for American Idol.

"It's my lottery ticket," she says. "It was a hardcore experience - We never had a day off! AND you're shot to the top! But once that American Idol bubble pops and you drop into the real world, you gotta keep working hard. It's a stepping stone, but I had to step on it and jump to the next one, or else I'd be back at Summerfest cleaning toilets. I was already striving for it. I understood the reality of the business." Her favorite thing about American Idol? "The energy of the people - the vibe. The television aspect was different, but on the tour shows you could talk to the people and not worry about camera angles."

Since her experience on American Idol, Naima's been "rippin' and runnin'." She's performed with musicians like Beyonce and Stevie Wonder, and has signed record deals with Peak and My Block. Her single, Free your Mind, is also due to come out **[get a date]**.

"I'm excited about making original music and sharing it with the world. And I always have to get back and give thanks to my ancestors, my teachers, my friends and family. I always give thanks to those who pushed me."

Naima's Bio for further reference:

Naima Adedapo, a native of Chicago, has been trained in African Dance through her home, Ndongo (Lucky) Diop, Jam Ak Jam African Dance Theatre, she spent four years performing with Ko-Thi African Dance Company as a senior company member. She graduated with honors from the UWM Peck School of the Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance and has been trained in Modern, Ballet, Jazz, Stepping and HipHop. Naima has performed in works choreographed by Ferne Caulker-Bronson, Roxanne Kess, Melissa Beverly, Youseff Kumbassa, Darci Wutz, Clare Byrne, Elizebeth Torres, Cedrick Gardener, Louis Hurd, Andre Tyson, Ed Burgess, Laurie Ann Gibson, Ronald K. Brown, Laura Dean, Napoleon and Tabitha D'umo, Robin Antin and Jaquel Knight. Naima was one of the 38 nationwide finalists MTV's/P. Diddy's reality T.V. show "Making the Band". Also experienced in Theater, Naima has performed in For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enough (Lady in Red, 2003), West Side Story (Anita, 2007), Crowns (Yolanda, 2008 and 2010), Unclothed (Caregiver, 2009) and more. One of her choreographed works Behind Closed Doors: Everything is African was chosen for UWM's New Dancemaker's concert, The ACDFA Gala Concert (out of 75 dance pieces nationwide), UWM's High School Outreach program, and to be performed at the Peck School of the Arts Graduation Convocation Ceremony. Since the age of 13-years-old she has taught Stepping, African Dance, and Hip Hop to youth for several different community outreach centers and schools all over Milwaukee as an intern and performing artist with Milwaukee Public Theatre. Also a vocalist, she sang with two African Pop groups "Sindoolaa" and "Kassumai" and now lead sings in her own reggae band "R.A.S. Movement". Recently, Naima Adedapo was one of the Top 11 finalists from American Idol Season 10 (2011) and signed a record deal with Peak Records/eOne Music and is set to release her single "Free Your Mind" in March of 2012. Carrying on the traditions of her ancestors and passing them on to the youth, Naima gives thanks for the many talents that have been bestowed upon her (including being a mother and a wife) and plans to follow in the footsteps of those great Africans who came before her. Updates about Naima Adedapo's performances can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/NAdedapoAI10> or you can follow her on Twitter at @Naima_Adedapo.