

Learning  
Kizomba

/

Thinking  
Through  
Dancing

2013 - Ongoing

From the Fieldnotes of Sora Park

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Date: April 3, 2013

Location: <https://youtu.be/IelPNwvLQcs>

The effervescent scene that commences as soon as the YouTube video starts playing is a sure indication of a successful and enjoyable dance class that has just ended. A Caucasian female with bleached blonde hair, and a racially ambiguous male with baggy jeans and a tank top are surrounded by a crowd who are holding onto the remnants of a gratifying class by shouting out positive interjections and clapping in unison to a song. Perhaps this song was intentionally selected for the demo to match the exuberance of the crowd, as it certainly is more upbeat than the only Kizomba song I have ever heard previously - “Magico” by Mika Mendes – but, I am just guessing. Maybe this is another kind of a Kizomba song.

The female, wearing a skin tight purple spaghetti strap tank top, skinny jeans and a pair of light brown Salsa shoes with about two and a half inch flared heels, has a desirable body by a Western standard: she is fit, has a small waist and, round and full buttocks.

Her body could not have been more perfect for attracting attention: it exudes confident sexual energy by showing that she is aware of how to operate and move every single muscle in her body in a visually pleasing way. The way she walks, steps, turns and does a waving movement while accentuating her buttocks is mesmerizing. The millions of views that this video already accumulated indicates that I am not the only one who is coerced into being interested in this dance called Kizomba.

The two dancers are joined together in a close embrace, with her right hand being held up by his left hand, and his right arm wrapping around her mid-back on an area that my Bachata instructor once called “her bra line”. They dance together, but not like Salsa, not like Bachata, not like Tango. I am not sure what Kizomba is yet, but its indomitably positive portrayal in this video sure got me interested. The male dancer also deserves some praise since he knows how to lead. He must be a good leader, if he can lead her into dancing like that. He must be really good.

I want to learn how to dance Kizomba. I want to dance like her and I want to dance with someone like him.

The dancers in this video are Albir and Sara, based in Madrid, Spain.



This video was the beginning of Albir and Sara, their rise as a consecrated entity and Kizomba's uncontrollably explosive popularity in Latin dancing scenes around the world that ensued afterwards. The Kizomba, danced by them, became an epithet for sensualized and sexualized social interaction between man and woman on a dance floor, and an overt display of female sexuality.

What began as a harmless derision of Albir “not dancing properly” turned into Angolans making invidious remarks at him and constantly criticizing him for “ruining Kizomba.”

Albir and Sara became the most hated Kizomba dancing couple.

After the popularity of their first Kizomba video, the months and years following saw Albir and Sara traveling all around the world constantly giving dance lessons, doing demos and performances.

Then suddenly, I started seeing many Kizomba videos of dancers based in France, especially Paris, being uploaded on YouTube. The female dancers in the videos all had that familiar hip movement that I saw in Sara. The male dancers all seem to know how to lead the female dancers into moving the hips in that way.

The Angolan Style

The French Style

Date: June 6, 2013  
Location: On The Rocks  
Edmonton, Canada  
Event: Latin Thursdays

With my arms crossed, I was standing on the periphery of the dance floor, where lied the invisible boundary that separated the space for dancing from the space for other activities.

It was only my second time coming to the Latin Thursdays at On The Rocks, as I only visit Edmonton during summer. I did find this bar/club turned into a dancing venue for one night a bit of an uncomfortable setting, as I noticed a lot of non-dancers, all male, holding onto their beer, just staring into the dance floor, as if they were waiting on an opportunity – an opportunity that did not seem all innocent. I could feel their eyes judging female bodies based on the attractiveness and how they dressed. This scene was definitely different from what I was used to from dancing in Vancouver, where venues were strictly for dancers only. No prying eyes. No overt “dressing up” to attract others.

But Latin Thursdays at On The Rocks was the only Latin dancing night that was being held in Edmonton. So here I was, standing alone, with my guard up, waiting for this Salsa song to be over.

The next song came up and I instantly recognized the familiar 1,2,3,4, beat right away. “Ohhh! It’s Bachata!” Whenever I hear a Bachata song, my body automatically pulls itself onto the dance floor. I looked around to see if anyone was free to dance with me. Suddenly, somebody tapped on my shoulder and asked me to dance with him, which I gladly accepted. On a Latin dance night such as this, where Salsa is played predominantly, I never let a chance to dance Bachata go to waste - Oh, how I miss “Bachata only” dancing nights of Vancouver!

I had a very pleasant time dancing with him for the first song, and as the second Bachata song – “Shorty Shorty” by Xtreme – came on, we did not break an embrace and continued dancing. After the song ended, he asked me if I would be interested in teaching Kizomba with him. I told him that I had no idea how to dance Kizomba, but he assured me that



my Bachata dancing level was high enough to learn Kizomba in a short period of time.

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His name was Miguel and he moved to Canada from Angola about ten years ago. As a trained contemporary dancer, he had participated in various dance projects in Calgary, the very first Canadian city he settled in. He told me that he had recently been asked by a dance company owner Alejandro Rota to teach Kizomba, because he was Angolan. I accepted his offer to be his dance partner without hesitation, as I had been eagerly wanting to learn how to dance Kizomba and thought that it would be indispensable to learn Kizomba from someone who came from the country where the dance itself was originated from.

Date: June 7 - August 24, 2013

Location: Edmonton, Canada

As soon as I got home, I searched “Kizomba” on YouTube, and watched as many videos as possible. I had almost no knowledge of Kizomba dance at this point – except that famous Kizomba video<sup>1</sup> that kept popping up on my Facebook timeline from my Bachata friends.

I particularly enjoyed the way Kwenda Lima danced, and felt the joy transmitted through his smile and appreciated the respect he showed toward his female dance partners<sup>2,3,4</sup>. But Miguel did not like him.

I sent him videos of other prominent instructors that I saw on YouTube: Tony Pirata, Isabelle and Felicien, Morenasso and Anais<sup>5</sup>. Miguel just shook his head with every video he laid his eyes on.

According to Miguel, the concept of teaching Kizomba in a dance class setting was abhorrent to him. After he casually mentioned that the Kizomba means “backyard party” in one of the regional languages of Angola, he went on an exasperated rant about how the sole component of Kizomba as a dance was adversely extracted from Angola’s

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1 Kizomba- Não Me Toca by Anselmo Ralph. YouTube. Liveonmotion, 15 Jan. 2012. Web. 3 Apr. 2013. <<https://youtu.be/IelPNwvLQcs>>.

2 Kwenda Lima Con Anuki, III Afrolatin Dance Congress - Pamplona 16-03-13. YouTube. DJ KIKE - Enrique Alonso Sola, 19 Mar. 2013. Web. 7 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/bhHU2l0oz24>>.

3 Kwenda Lima Demo in Sheffield. YouTube. MrWeebs, 11 July 2010. Web. 7 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/psVtamnvQTU>>.

4 KWENDA LIMA Kizomba W/ Veronika in San Francisco, CA 07/29/12. YouTube. Eva Chavira, 3 Aug. 2012. Web. 7 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/vuY2pDvYYVQ>>.

5 Morenasso & Anais Millon - Kizomba.mp4. YouTube. Helder95, 30 Aug. 2012. Web. 7 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/KJZ6sx3dZ-A>>.

I sent him videos of other prominent instructors that I saw on YouTube: Tony Pirata<sup>1</sup>, Isabelle and Felicien<sup>2</sup>, Morenasso and Anais. Miguel just shook his head with every video he laid his eyes on.

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1 TONY PIRATA & CHERAZAD, Africanaçar 2011: Music: Rei Helder Ft Yuri Da Cunha Essa Quer Me Matar. YouTube. Beatriz Soto, 12 Apr. 2011. Web. 7 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/-1clJbhtPJ4>>.

2 Kizomba Isabelle and Felicien, Studio MRG \*Falem Mais - DJ Znobias\*. YouTube. Isabelle Felicien Kizomba, 4 Aug. 2011. Web. 7 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/fsRYdqjFaik>>.

culture of Kizomba that encompasses and represents more than just a dance. He felt that Kizomba now existed only to satisfy people's desire to be the participants of the new fad in Latin dancing.

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The owner of the dance company, Alejandro, phoned Miguel after our first practice and suggested that he should change a dance partner. His reasoning was that I did not look like a "Kizomba girl."

But Miguel vehemently disagreed with Alejandro and told him off by saying that Kizomba is not about how a female dancer looks like, what she dresses like and how sexual she is while being in man's arms. He mentioned that he learned how to dance Kizomba from the female members of his family - mother, sisters, aunts, grandmothers and cousins - while growing up, and the Kizomba he would teach to the class would represent the dance and the culture embedded within him.

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Miguel decided to teach our beginner's classes in a style of a YouTube video<sup>6</sup> posted from a dance school in Angola. In the video, the dancers in the video lined up linearly on each side of the room, separated by gender, and one by one came into the centre of the floor to proudly showcase their dancing skills and declared "This is Angola" in Portuguese at the end of each dance.

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6 Semba Angolana -- Isto é Angola (this Is Angola) - Pura Karga. YouTube. Frans & Sarah Kizombalove, 2 Nov. 2012. Web. 21 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/RPhNlJR4GjE>>.

The "Kizomba girls" of famous Youtube videos<sup>34</sup> not only had voluptuous bodies - which someone would never describe my body type as such - but most of the times the videos were shot from an angle that accentuated the female bundas<sup>5</sup>. Their skin tight tank tops and pants - the multi-coloured leggings, skinny jeans and short shorts - equipped with high heels all played a notable role in emphasizing the bodies of the "Kizomba girls"

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3 Kizomba Démo Tony Pirata Et Cherazad - Festival United Kiz Toulouse 2012. YouTube. Hype Médias, 18 June 2012. Web. 11 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/tiAMRGpNAzs>>.

4 Tony Pirata & Aurélie - Kizomba @ Tabarka Salsa Festival 2012. YouTube. StarMamboVideo, 16 July 2012. Web. 16 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/rmI1e7M1aus>>.

5 NEW Kizomba | EXCLUSIVE Albir and Sara Interview | A Conversation with Albir and Sara. YouTube. KIZMEPRODUCTIONSTV, 17 Mar. 2013. Web. 14 June 2014. <[https://youtu.be/\\_BXnL02l4Yo](https://youtu.be/_BXnL02l4Yo)>.

But the students in our class were unfamiliar with Miguel's unconventional class structure, especially since he announced after the first class that the students now knew everything that was to know about dancing Kizomba with just walking back and forth, side to side, and turning 90 degrees.

I mentioned the difficulties that students were experiencing to Miguel and insinuated that we should try to incorporate how Kizomba is being taught currently around the world into the classes, but he refused. He showed me that he could execute all the ostentatious and sexualized moves done by famous teachers perfectly but he told me firmly that Kizomba is not and should not be danced that way.

The students, who had obviously been watching YouTube videos of Kizomba workshops<sup>67</sup> expected to hear the same method and language in teaching to be used, same steps to be broken down into smaller elements and be repeated over and over again.

As an assistant who had also been watching many YouTube videos of famous instructors, I tried to translate Miguel's instructions into more familiar forms of Kizomba to students on one-on-one lessons and they seemed to catch on the concept easier that way.

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6 ALBIR ROJAS and SARA LOPEZ: Tarraxinha Workshop Movements. YouTube. Beatriz Soto, 8 Feb. 2013. Web. 14 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/pyZBvjWO8Xo>>.

7 CRIOLA BEACH FESTIVAL 2012 Alicante. I Tony Pirata Workshop. YouTube. Beatriz Soto, 7 June 2012. Web. 14 June 2013. <<https://youtu.be/ZY1J23rCx10>>.

Date: August 31, 2014 - June 2, 2014

Location: Vancouver, Canada

I went back to Vancouver and continued dancing Bachata and Kizomba regularly. My dancing routine included three or four nights of dancing per week and three hours of Salsa lessons per week, even though I despised dancing and listening to Salsa and my skills in Salsa dancing were at a total impasse for months. My instinctual hatred toward Salsa further proved that my body accepted Bachata and Kizomba with an ease. Even though some dancers within the Latin dancing community - the Salsa dancers, to be exact - disparaged Kizomba as not technical and professional and just “easy”, I genuinely enjoyed dancing Kizomba, and I did not feel the need to justify my preference in dancing to others, as long as I was having a good time.

Date: August 19, 2014  
Location: Det Akademiske Kvarter  
Bergen, Norway  
Event: TuesdayKiz

No Angolans.

Despite the event being advertised as a Kizomba event, the DJ played 1/3 Kizomba, 1/3 Bachata and 1/3 Salsa songs, which indicated the lack of enough Kizomba dancers who could occupy the dance floor continuously and that many dancers were still very much Salsa-based.

As expected, the male dancers pulled me into a close embrace as soon as a Kizomba song started playing. However, their steps were indecisive and lacked confidence. Their hand placement and pressure they were putting on my body were inconsistent with their intended moves.

I was surprised and disappointed at the very low level of Kizomba dancing in Bergen.

Date: September 20, 2014  
Location: Paul Pellicoro's DanceSport  
New York City, USA  
Event: French Connection Weekender

No Angolans.

I had been looking forward to attend “French Connection Weekender” event as one of its invited guests was Enah from Paris. His friendship with Curtis and frequent appearances in Curtis’s videos<sup>1</sup> had him gain some recognition amongst Kizomba dancers. Suddenly, after a few months later, Enah was being marketed as the new face of French Kizomba, which others coined the term “Urban Kizz” for Enah’s way of dancing.

Enah was a no-show at the party, which surprised and disappointed me greatly at the same time: I had never been to a party where the invited artists did not show up. In addition, other artist Moun, whom I had never heard of until this event, was sitting on the couch, simply observing the very small group of dancers in a Kizomba party room, located in a hallway away from the main Salsa and Bachata party floor.

I was definitely expecting more from New York City, but I had never seen a more dull Kizomba party before.

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<sup>1</sup> Semba Enah Et Curtis (La Réunion). YouTube. Wapëou DiaS, 3 July 2013. Web. 27 Aug. 2013. <<https://youtu.be/ZeEw3tjF0F0>>.

Date: October 20, 2014

Location: Nix Nox

Paris, France

Event: Les Lundis Kizomba

I was asked to dance by a skinny man dressed in jeans, white shirt and a black dressy jacket. As soon as we embraced and took first five steps, I could tell that he was not dancing the French style and being embraced with him had similar feeling as dancing with Miguel.

It had been a while since I felt this erect and rigid upper body position that barely shifted as he took his steps. This surprising encounter with an Angolan leader enthralled me. His footsteps were so distinctly Angolan as well: grounded, yet moved swiftly and quickly as if he was only dancing on his toes with heels elevated, and the slight vibration of the heels in between the steps were felt throughout the whole dance.

Once I entered the boat that was being used as a dancing venue, the coat check was directly in front of me. Moun, who was one of the artists invited for the “French Connection Weekender” event in New York City last month was sitting there, casually chatting with a girl at a coat check and checking his cell phone. After paying €13, - €10 for entrance, €2 for a purse and €1 for a coat, - I went down the stairs toward where the music was being loudly projected. I had a passing thought that I would surely and quickly go penniless if I lived in Paris and went dancing like how I did in Vancouver. In Vancouver, I only paid \$5 - 10 CAD, approximately €3 - 7, for every dance event and coat checks were always complimentary.

As I looked around a rather empty space with dimmed light, I saw a male DJ tucked under the spiral stairs, about seven couples dancing on the dark wooden floor, and a brightly lit bar on the other side of the dance floor. Most of the people congregating around the bar all had same t-shirt on. “They must belong to a same dance group,” I presumed.

On the dance floor, there was no doubt what style of Kizomba was being danced. Everyone was in a tight, closed embrace and engaged in sensual Tarraxinha for every single song being played.



Dancing with this male leader brought me right back to that summer when I spent the whole day, for months dancing with Miguel.

His name was Clavio, and not surprisingly, from Angola, but had been living in Lyon, France for a while. He was in Paris to do his apprenticeship.

We danced a lot, both complained about how this DJ did not play any Semba songs, and tried to communicate with each other, but our common language being English, which he did not speak fluently, restricted the depth of our conversation.

C: (talks in French)

Me: Je ne parle pas français.

C: Okay. Do you want to dance?

C: Where are you from?

Me: Canada.

C: Where in Canada? I have a cousin that lives in Canada. I think he lives in Toronto.

Me: No, I am from the other side of Canada.

C: People dance Kizomba in Canada?

Me: It is very popular. You would be so surprised at how many people are into Kizomba right now.

Me: I learned how to dance Kizomba from an Angolan man!

C: Are you tired?

Me: What?

C: You tired or want to keep dancing?

Me: Keep dancing.

Me: They should play Semba.

C: Oh, you know how to dance Semba?

Me: I LOVE Semba.

C: They are only playing Kizomba right now. If they play Semba, we dance together.

Me: Okay. Come find me later.

C: I don't know what kind of dance they do. This French dancing is not the real dance. I don't know how they dance like that. It's not Kizomba.

C: You know who the worst dancer is? That Albir guy. He ruined Kizomba. He is just so horrible. The way he dances is just so ugly!

Me: I've been wanting to learn Kuduro for the longest time.

C: Oh, I can teach you Kuduro. I can make you dance Kuduro like a real Angolan in a day!

The way Clavio lamented the current state of Kizomba being danced outside of Angola also brought me right back to that summer when I spent the whole day, for months dancing with Miguel.

The dance venue emptied out after midnight, and Clavio and I decided to walk home together since his place was close to where I was staying.

Date: October 21, 2014  
Location: Concorde Atlantique  
Paris, France  
Event: AGUA!

It was Kizomba night hosted by Morenasso and Anais.

Since I had been watching innumerable videos of Morenasso on YouTube, I particularly was looking forward to seeing Morenasso in person on this research trip. His frequent appearances to Kizomba workshops accoutered with a shirt with an Angolan flag<sup>1</sup> and Angolan national soccer jersey<sup>2</sup> elicited my desire to dance with him, especially he paraded his nationality so proudly and publicly while being based in Paris.

But he was not there.

This made me wonder, “Then how short is Morenasso?”

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1 Morenasso & Anais Millon - Diamonds - Kizomba. YouTube. Bjørn Arne, 11 May 2013. Web. 20 Nov. 2013. <<https://youtu.be/t-SRGetFA4>>.

2 LBKF @ Riga 2013. Facebook. Ramūnas Tanguris, 12 May 2013. Web. 27 July 2014. <<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4925725703263&set=t.100004133521947&type=3&theater>>.

It was Kizomba night hosted by Morenasso and Anais.

Only Anais was present but she was not dancing either. She had sneakers on, rather than the pointy heel dancing shoes that she wore in every single YouTube videos of hers. I especially liked the white ones with red straps she frequently wore<sup>1</sup> and if I were an acquaintance of hers, I would have asked her where she got that pair of shoes from.

I was surprised at how short she was. She looked like she was only about 5 feet 3 inches tall (5'3"), but on YouTube videos, she looks about 5'6".

Instead of dancing, Anais was busy managing all the taxi dancers, talking to the coat check girls, bartenders, and her friends.

There were about 6 male taxi dancers, and 4 female, all wearing same baby blue shirt. After midnight, they all took off their identical shirts with “Taxi” written on the back, and came back to the dance floor as regular dancers.

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1 Morenasso & Anais KIZOMBA | Suave Dance Festival 2014. YouTube. Liza Owl, 6 Feb. 2014. Web. 20 Feb. 2014. <<https://youtu.be/vypvZ5FqJd8>>.

Date: October 22, 2014  
Location: Le Bateau Alize  
Paris, France  
Event: Secret Love Boat

No Angolans.

The arrogance on the Kizomba floor was unmistakably present. There was an air of pretentiousness, that I could only perceive as being on the brink of poisonous. My upper body, only covered by a spaghetti strap tank top, was for sure standing out in this dark room, but I had never felt so invisible before. Is this the same subculture that I had once loved and was so ardently involved with?

As I felt like sinking more and more into the chair I was sitting in, embarrassed by the lack of invitations coming toward my way, I stood up and went down to the the Bachata floor.

On the Bachata floor, I did not hesitate to ask a male dancer out to the floor, since when it came to Bachata, I knew I would never disappoint my dance partner. Bachata is my favourite dance and what I am most comfortable dancing. Unlike the Kizomba floor upstairs, I felt right at home.

Also, it puzzled me that Bachata crowd and Kizomba crowd did not mix in this dance venue.

Why was the Kizomba floor so exclusive, dare I say, with an acceptance to enter granted based on skin colour? - the adequate skin colour for entrance visibly contrasting my light skin colour.

“No, I am just being overly sensitive right now”, I thought.

I dismissed my puerile thought and concluded that the lack of invitations were due to me being new. If I was a regular to this dance venue, I would have been asked to dance constantly by male dancers.

I really wished that it was the case.

Date: October 23, 2014

Location: Khao Suey

Paris, France

Event: Latino Afterwork

I had planned to attend a Bachata and Kizomba night at this venue, but I was just too exhausted from dancing three nights straight.

No dancing tonight.

Date: December 3, 2014

Location: <https://youtu.be/hGrubTc829w>

I stumbled upon this YouTube video shot in Luanda, Angola and felt an absence of glee and excitement that dancing used to bring into my life.

I miss dancing very much.

Date: January 9 – 12, 23 – 25, 2015

Location: Tango Abrazo

Bergen, Norway

Event: Nybegynnerkurs (NYB1)

I decided to sign up for beginners' Tango classes since I had been greatly dissatisfied by Bachata and Kizomba scenes in Bergen. My body, which had been dancing consistently with other bodies, for the past four years definitely realized the void in my life since moving to Bergen, and I decided to actively fill that void by taking lessons in another partner social dance. According to Tango Abrazo website, the milongas were being held regularly: three nights per week, which indicated a rather active dancing community.

However, the Tango classes here required the participants to have a partner before signing up and this concept was novel to me. All the dance classes that I had participated and seen advertised always promoted "No partner required" to attract as many people as possible.

I sent an email to Tango Abrazo that I did not know anyone who could be my partner, and they replied back to me by saying that they just received an email from an Italian exchange student who was also looking for a partner. The Italian exchange student, Filippo, and I met on the first day of Tango classes and remained as each other's partner for the rest of the course. This concept, also felt peculiar, as in my previous dancing experiences, the instructors encouraged frequent partner changes within classes to expose the students to different ways of dancing with others.

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Right before the third class on January 12th, there was a practice session held by more advanced dancers. There were about four people – one male and three female – dancing freely. I thought, "Maybe they are dancing Tango Nuevo." I had heard about this new genre of dancing where the rules of Tango dancing were not imposed as strictly as in traditional Tango dancing.

I noticed two females embracing each other and dancing together with their socks on. I was intrigued by the fact that they were not wearing heels.

As soon as they finished their practice session, I went up to them and asked what kind of Tango they were dancing. One of them said: "We practice Queer Tango every once in awhile."

Date: February 27, 2015  
Location: Adlershof con.vent. Center  
Berlin, Germany  
Event: Berlin Bachata Congress

There was one male dancer, whom I found out was Angolan, after reading about him on the Berlin Bachata Congress website. He was noticeably older, compared to other prominent male dancers in their 20s and 30s such as Enah, Curtis, Tony Pirata, Nima, etc; who usually participated in organized dance events.

During the instructor's performances, he did not do any ostentatious acrobatic moves, such as lifts and dips that are usually used so prevalently with young French dancers; nor the overtly sexualized moves of accentuating the female dancer's hips or freely touching her midriff.

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There was a dancing couple of two female dancers during the instructor's performances. The girl in a loose white blouse, black pants, and flat shoes was a leader and a girl with tight jeans and a tank top was a follower.

I danced with him for one song and his nationality as Angolan was verified by his upper body posture and footworks. I happily smiled during the whole song dancing with him.

In the Kizomba room, I spotted that female leader and asked her to dance with me. She responded, "Do you want to lead or follow?"

I said "I will follow" as I did not know how to lead.

Her left hand and my right hand, gently being held by her hand, became more of a solidified unit as the music went on, and the back of her hand provided a place for my right cheek to rest softly.

I felt like we were dissolving into each other's bodies as she guided me, without demanding anything from me other than trust, enjoyment and dedication to each other and to the song we were dancing to.

It was the best dance I've had in years.



Date: June 18, 2015  
Location: On The Rocks  
Edmonton, Canada  
Event: Latin Thursdays

I went back to dancing in Edmonton for the first time in almost two years. There were some who recognized me from the classes that I taught with Miguel two years ago, especially DJ Clavecito, whom I communicated often when Miguel and I did Kizomba and Semba performances at On The Rocks.

DJ Clavecito told me that Kizomba had been growing rapidly in Edmonton, and a Cuban Salsa instructor, Usukuma, had taken a charge of giving Kizomba classes in Edmonton now.

Nobody was dancing like Angolans.  
No Angolan footworks were seen.

After hearing that Kizomba had gotten bigger in the city, I was eager to experience the improved Kizomba community in Edmonton, expecting it to be at the same level as Vancouver when I lived there two years ago.

The Kizomba songs that DJ Clavecito played - of artists such as Mika Mendez<sup>1</sup>, Kaysha<sup>2</sup> and Nelson Freitas<sup>3</sup> who often provided songs used for demos by French instructors - were homogeneous, lacking diversity in speed, mood, language and rhythm. When Kizomba songs played, the dance floor was not as full as when Salsa was being played, but I noticed about six couples dancing, which definitely was more than how it was before.

My former student, Cam, recognized me and asked me to dance. As he was leading me to the dance floor, he told me that he had been taking more lessons here in Edmonton

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1 Curtis & Justina - SaBaKi Fusion 2014 Torun, Poland - Kizomba. YouTube. SaBaKi Fusion, 28 Dec. 2014. Web. 9 Feb. 2015. <[https://youtu.be/xGztEwG\\_RrQ](https://youtu.be/xGztEwG_RrQ)>.

2 Cours De Kizomba île De La Réunion "kaysha - Diamonds" YouTube. Ainamarca, 26 Mar. 2013. Web. 11 Jan. 2015. <[https://youtu.be/z\\_W1hXfbs-Q](https://youtu.be/z_W1hXfbs-Q)>.

3 Kizomba :: Nelson Freitas 'Rebound Chick' - Foire De Paris [06/05]. YouTube. Chriestelle972, 9 June 2014. Web. 21 Dec. 2014. <[https://youtu.be/3jj\\_OQW8\\_NU](https://youtu.be/3jj_OQW8_NU)>.

This felt so different from all the Kizomba videos I had seen coming out of Angola<sup>1234</sup> and what a difference there was now between how it is danced in Angola and by instructors from France and their students.

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1 Matias Damasio Kwanza Burro - Kizomba - Semba Na Rua Luanda Angola. YouTube. Sébastien Gouiran, 14 Jan. 2013. Web. 3 Feb. 2015. <<https://youtu.be/FZ5MsBTIka8>>.

2 Kizomba De Angola. YouTube. Litle, 21 Sept. 2010. Web. 17 Apr. 2015. <<https://youtu.be/htwsUrSs4Rc>>.

3 Kizomba---Dançarinos Angolanos. YouTube. Manulevicente, 12 Dec. 2010. Web. 27 May 2015. <<https://youtu.be/W5dlqRTsDnE>>.

4 N-py Da Baila KIZOMBA Na Rua. YouTube. Jose Nunes, 2 Mar. 2014. Web. 27 May 2015. <<https://youtu.be/toBygFhxukw>>.

and also at different cities such as Vancouver, Toronto and Seattle.

On the dance floor, he held me so tight, I felt like my body would leave an indentation on his body. I felt suffocated. His right hand, placed just above my buttocks, was forcefully pushing my body side to side, asking my buttocks to sway. However, I did not want to respond to his aggressive requests. His lecherous way of communicating with me through physical signals did not depict who he was outside of the dance floor - a jolly yet erudite doctor -, nor even who he was while dancing Salsa. It was as if Kizomba music activated him to act out of character and anomalously.

More throughout the night, I unfortunately had more of similar Kizomba dances: Aggressive, demanding, dominant, and sexualized. The male leaders were trying to dance like the French male instructors they saw on YouTube and wanted me to look like the female instructors, yet their blatant and sexualized aggressiveness deterred me from staying longer at this venue.

On my drive home with fresh summer air circulating in my car, I felt disgusted by the dance that I once besotted so much. Ever since moving to Bergen and being away from my usual circle of dancer friends, I had been trying to justify my love for this dance to non-dancers, especially since I was aware of how it was being portrayed and perceived: female dressed provocatively and male dragging her here and there, while making her move sexually.

This felt so different from all the Kizomba videos I had seen coming out of Angola and what a difference there was now between how it is danced in Angola and by instructors from France and their students.

As I commiserated with myself on the deplorable experiences I had tonight, I suddenly felt the heightened awareness of my body being that of a female body, and what was expected of me as a female follower to participate in a Kizomba community now.

Date: October 2, 2015  
Location: She-Va Pub  
Istanbul, Turkey  
Event: Forever Kizomba

No Angolans.

The uncomfortable tight grips on my right hand and my upper body from a male leader indicated that he was not an advanced dancer, but his “I am the leader in charge” rhetoric was surely noted by me. This silent, yet pernicious message innervating throughout my body was tantamount to having a nightmare of bugs crawling all over my naked body.

Even with simple steps such as walking side to side or waking forward, he inserted sexual energy into them and demanded sexual responses from my body. This sexual energy he was communicating with me never felt genuine; it was learned, copied and forced.

Date: October 15, 2015

Location: D5

Vancouver, Canada

Event: Kizomba Thursdays with DJ PeLu

I haven't missed a single Kizomba night at D5 ever since DJ PeLu has been in charge of playing music regularly; her effortlessly balanced sets of slow and sensual French Kizomba songs and a sudden jolt of gleeful traditional Kizomba songs from Angola have been a source of my satisfied smile and an euphoric state at the end of the dancing nights. She has been getting many praises amongst dancers lately; must be a good feeling as a DJ when your assiduous planning is recognized and appreciated. A DJ and the music she presents to the venue and the dancers really do make a difference.

Tonight, she is wearing a sleeveless black shirt with a dark green bow tie that she got as a gift from her brother living in Australia. I know this because Petra and I have recently become close acquaintances - mostly fueled by her extroverted personality and her belief in the importance of networking - who share random and banal anecdotes sporadically via Facebook messages. As an introvert, I even find interacting on a social media site a dreadful thing, but every time I get a message such as "I am playing Wegue Wegue for you tonight!" from Petra, I cannot help but smile. Ever since I have been seen being friendly with her, I am feeling more included in this community: I get to go to private house/dinner parties where I join in the veteran dancers to eat, talk, laugh and dance all night together.

She spots me as I enter the dancing venue and throws her right hand up in the air to wave at me. Maybe it is this excessive yet modest friendliness of hers that is a key to her recent surge in popularity and success in building a community around her. I predict that she will be around in this scene for awhile, unlike some other DJs who once had a spark of visible appearances previously in this city but fizzled away:

DJ Mars only comes to dance once in a while and spends most of her time engaging in conversations with her old friends. To be honest, her sets were too boring as she was never adventurous in her music selection: when you hear Nina Mendes' "Magico" every night it really does get boring, no matter how popular this song once was. Somebody

told me that she has been seen a lot at a Salsa scene lately, as it is her first love. It is no surprise: Salsa and Kizomba just do not mix.

DJ \$\$HANGZ stopped playing after many complained that the quality of her music is bad: it is because she gets her songs converted as MP3 files from YouTube videos. Somebody wrote on her Facebook event page for “Kizomba Tuesday @ TripleSecret with DJ \$\$HANGZ”, “Hey, it sounds like your songs are low quality recordings (128kbps). Ideally, mp3s should be at least 192 kbps or better when using them in a bar/club. I don’t know if anyone has told you yet, but the louder the system the more noticeable the quality or lack there of!”

DJ KingKy, who once was called the King of Kizomba music, left the city suddenly and her mysterious disappearance has been a gossip amongst the dancers lately.

Nevertheless, many dancers think of these DJs with reverence for their contributions to the rapid growth of Kizomba community.

As I pay \$7 for the entrance fee to a pretty boy with a shy smile working the reception – he is a nephew of D5 manager Jennifer – I notice the front of the venue where the dancers wait to be asked to dance, teeming with guys looking into the dancing space in the centre.

I smile and think: “Ah, always so many followers here. Perfect!”

I walk through this congregated section of followers waiting to dance, and spot a familiar face. “Sebastian!”

He gets up from the bench and greets me. “Look at my new shoes I got from the San Francisco Congress! I am trying to break them in tonight. So, if I stumble, it is because of the new shoes!”

The shoes are red high-heels with gold beads over the front of his feet.

As he continues showing off his new shoes by twisting his ankles from left to right, expecting me to respond back to him with “ohhh and ahhh,” a new song starts playing. It’s “Amor da Minha Vida” by Ary.

“Let’s go! I love her.” I grab Sebastian’s hand and lead him to the dance floor. Usually Ary’s songs are too fast to be danced as a first song of the night for me – I prefer a song like Jennifer Dias’ “I Need You So” to warm up my body - but I desperately wanted not to listen to Sebastian’s vehement rants on his new heels.

Men talk about heels as if they are indispensable things – surely, they make men’s butts perky and I like looking at their long toned legs equipped with heels and tight shorts - , but I am not the one to ruminate on their latest fashionable heels. As long as men are visually pleasing to look at and they follow me well on the dance floor, I do not care what kind of heels they wear.

I put my right arm on his waist and his left arm automatically goes around my neck and lands softly just right under my left shoulder. I wrap my left hand around his right hand and hold it toward my chest. In between embracing our bodies, we exchange a quick jubilant glance as if we both know that this dance will be danced delightfully as if we were in Angola during a sunset, surrounded by many dancers. This is why I like dancing with advanced dancers who immediately recognize a type of song and how it should be danced as soon as the song starts playing.

After this upbeat song ended, a slow song comes on right away and I don’t let go of Sebastian: I want to dance one more song with him. We remain embraced together and I put slight pressure onto him back and he brings his body about an inch closer to me. I quickly clasp his right hand with my left hand and land them on my chest as if I am holding onto something precious. Well, at least that is the message I want to send to the men I dance with: I am the admirer and protector of the precious souls that reside in them. I respect their tenderness, sensuality and sexuality that they possess. Sebastian knows exactly what I want. He knows that I want to pretend that we are a romantic couple who cannot help but to display our affection on this dance floor for the next four minutes. I want to reach inside of him and tenderly caress his heart and guide him into ethereal ecstasy. His beating heart is unsure whether to quickly calm down from the jubilant dance we just had or to stay beating fast as we dance romantically. His timid first few steps excite me – what a turn on - and I hope that his hand on my chest can feel my heart beating as well.

When the song ends, we slowly break our embrace and smile at each other: No words needed, just a smile is enough to appreciate what just happened.

I take Sebastian back to a bench so he can rest his feet a bit. I notice some followers staring at us as we walk out of the dance floor. I know what they witnessed of Sebastian

and I dancing and as much as I enjoy purely dancing with Sebastian, I would be lying if I said that I did not use him to get my confidence up and to flaunt myself in front of others. When I dance, I can feel the eyes directed at my moves and how I lead my follower to move with me.

Next song comes up: it is “Leva Me” by Mamma Killas. I look around me and there are no followers that I recognize within my immediate vicinity. Then, I suddenly feel somebody tapping my back gently, which prompts me to turn around. As his nervous gaze is fixated on my eyes, he asks me “Wanna dance?” I scan his body to see what kind of dancer he is: his baggy shirt that looks more like a gym shirt, his old fashioned jeans with hideous fades on, and his running shoes. I thought, how is he going to slide, turn and move swiftly on the dance floor with shoes with rubber soles. You can easily spot a beginner by just looking at their shoes. There is a reason why followers invest hundreds of dollars on buying a new pair of shoes specifically made for dancing.

I tell him as politely as possible “Sorry, I need a break” then I walk away with an apologetic smile. Only ten steps away, I spot Felix. I lead him to the dance floor and we have a very satisfying dance together.

The beginner with running shoes might have regarded my rejection toward him as a repugnant act, but I cannot help but to think that these beginner dancers asking us leaders to dance with them as a desperate act. They stare at me like a dog begging for a treat when I walk by them at the beginning of a song, but I do not want to waste a good song on dancing with a follower who does not know how to dance. I have developed a way of avoiding such forlorn followers: I would strike a conversation with another leader next to me or I tell them that I need some fresh air and walk away. But usually a simple avoidance of eye contact does a trick, like avoiding cabeceo in Tango.

The followers who have the temerity to ask leaders to dance, instead of the dance progressing the other way, are definitely acting on their desperation to be seen on the dance floor, especially with an advanced leader, so they can learn something and be invited to dance again later.

However, as a leader, I need to choose carefully whom I dance with, since being seen with a bad follower will do more harm than good to my reputation. In this case, I think

my pretentiousness is justified and many leaders will agree with me.

Sometimes, I do feel sorry for those followers who come to the dance night, get maybe one or two dances in three hours and spend most of the time staring blankly into the dance floor. Sometimes, they become a prey for novice or perverted leaders and I truly feel sorry for the followers who will have to put up with them.

A follower, whom I barely knew, once wrote a scathing attack on the advanced leaders on Facebook via his post.

His lengthy, enraged, and rambling Facebook post<sup>1</sup> with many capital letters – “I FELT SOOOO VIOLATED!” and “THIS HAS TO CHANGE!” - about how a dancing scene is an unhealthy space where men, as followers, have to put up with unpleasant physical, verbal and emotional cues forced upon them. The post was too long for anyone to pay close attention to or to generate a productive discussion, and his nonsensical act of bravery was met with a few comments from fellow followers, but mostly got dismissed quickly. He was never seen at a dance floor afterwards.

DJ PeLu ends the night with “Baby Não Vai” by Aida Cudz. I wait with the usual Kizomba after-party gang while Petra packs her gears up and we all go to Michelle’s penthouse bachelorette pad with five boxes of pizza. It is another of my favourite Kizomba night out.

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1. James Heatley wrote on his Facebook on September 21, 2015

*“I just came back from a Kizomba night and I need to vent right now. I know that I am not the only follower who is constantly being excluded and having bad nights at dances. We, the followers, need to speak up more and not let this toxic environment of pretentious dancers judging us, shoving us around and get us down!*

*Tonight, I was at NaRua Club for three hours but only got asked to dance four times – all by leaders I met during the beginner lessons – and as I stand there hoping to be asked to dance, I had an epiphany: Why can’t us followers ask the leaders to dance? Why can’t I ask a fellow follower to dance with me? Why can’t we be more active when it comes to initiating the dance? Why do we, especially the beginners, have to be passively standing and smile at every single leader passing by, hoping that she would lead you to the dance floor? THIS HAS TO CHANGE! We live in 2015, come on, guys!*



*Some leaders complain about how they don't have enough followers to dance with, but rather than complaining, they should focus on developing the community as a whole and dance with beginner followers as much as possible. They have forgotten that they were beginners once. They are aware that the only way to learn how to social dance is to be actually thrown into the dance floor. Leaders! I ask you to not dismiss the new boy standing next to you. He might have lots of potential as a follower, he could be the next performer in three years, he could be the next instructor in five years, who knows! He might have so much potential, but because of your elitist mindset, you are actually the one who is losing out!*

*Also, can I mention that it is NOT OKAY to shove your hands down my pants or pat my butt or even throwing sexual innuendo as I walk by? Last week, I had a leader who slid her hands down my pants and when I tried to position my body differently to take her hand out of my pants, she pushed it down even harder. I FELT SO VIOLATED! SO EXTREMELY VIOLATED! Of course, I didn't want to cause a scene on the dance floor, but I can assure you that I am not the only follower who has experienced this unspeakably low act that infringes on personal space!*

*Why is it that the dance floor encourages and operates strictly within heteronormative power relations between women and men and why is it the norm that women are automatically put in a leader position, while men are put in a follower position? These traditional gender roles are practiced with so much emphasis on the dance floor, it is creating a toxic environment for many men. THIS HAS TO CHANGE. THIS HAS TO CHANGE!*

*Leaders, I hope that by you reading this post, you at least get a sense of what I have to endure at dance nights.*

*Followers, we have to be more active! We need to speak out when we have negative experiences!*

*Please comment if you have something to say! I only want this Kizomba community, which I hope to be a part of for a very long time, to grow into a very healthy one. THAT'S ALL!"*

Date: November 20 – 23, 2015  
Location: Hilton Hotel Charles de Gaulle  
Paris, France  
Event: Paris Kizomba Congress

The Paris Kizomba Congress, the biggest gathering of Kizomba dancers in the world, had always been on my must-visit list. I booked a hotel conveniently located at Charles de Gaulle airport for three days and found a French girl to share the accommodation with.

Her name was Belema, and according to her Facebook, she was very much involved in the Kizomba scene in Paris. Even though she lived in Paris, she decided to stay in a hotel to party, sleep, wake up, go to Kizomba classes from the morning to late afternoon and repeat this for the next three days.

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After standing a good hour waiting in a coat-check line - with a girl holding a Rema 1000 bag in front of me, two Canadians from Toronto standing behind me, and French, English, German and Polish being spoken by people passing by - I rushed down to the party floor flashing my bright and sparkley red wristband, indicating that I had only purchased a Party Pass.

One of the things I had been anticipating to see was how the organizers of this event would satisfy both French style dancers and Angolan style dancers, as according to their website, instructors representing both styles were invited to the event. Would they play maybe one Angolan style Kizomba song for three French style Kizomba songs? Would they play half and half? How would the crowded dance floor clear out fast enough for a turn over from French to Angolan? Would people complain about certain style of songs not being played frequently enough?

I was surprised to see that there were two separate rooms for two Kizombas. One for French style Kizomba and the other one for “Old-school” Kizomba.

I was surprised to see that there were two separate rooms for Kizombas. One for French style Kizomba and the other one for “Old-school” Kizomba. I was anticipating that the division and the acrimonious dispute between the two Kizombas would be felt during my research trip to Paris Kizomba Congress, but I did not expect Kizomba to be physically separated into two different rooms.

The “Angolan Room” was visibly empty as I could see the far end of the wall of the big room even before going through the entrance. The air inside of the room was cool and the emptiness of this room made DJ Tecas, bumping his head enthusiastically side to side, look as if he was a lone soldier in a battlefield. But there were two or three couples who were dancing impeccably right in front of the DJ booth. Even though throughout the night, more people showed up, the Angolan room never reached the state of being crowded.

The “French Room” was visibly crowded as there were people congregating at the entrance trying to find a way to weave through the dancers. As soon as I got closer to the entrance, I was instantly hit with humid and warm air, and it felt like I danced two songs already in the arms of a sweaty man.

When I finally entered the room, the scene that I encountered was what I had been seeing on various YouTube videos<sup>12</sup> from organized Kizomba gatherings: DJs playing mellifluous music that did not clearly indicate the beginning and the ending, male and female couples holding each other close and moving only a few steps at a time in a crowded room and bumping into other couples. In addition to this big crowd of people enjoying the dance, there were many female dancers standing against the wall all across the room, awkwardly looking into the dance floor. The passive female dancers.

I stood amongst them waiting for a leader to lead me to the dance floor. Though I did not get as many dances as I would have liked to, I ended up staying till 3 in the morning dancing and fastidiously observing the behaviours on the dance floor.

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The next morning, Belema asked me how my very first Kizomba Congress experience was. I told her how amazed I was at the huge number of people, and subtly mentioned about not getting enough dances. To that she said, “You can never be a passive female in Kizomba. I feel empowered as a female initiating the dance, rather than passively waiting for a guy to take me to the dance floor. You need to be in charge.”

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1 The Best Kizomba Video - How We Party in Afro Fever Festival (2015). YouTube. Afro Fever in Love 2015, 27 May 2015. Web. 28 June 2015. <<https://youtu.be/7VAVXYLa9O0>>

2 Atmosphere KIZOMBA OPEN SPAIN 2012 Social Party in COLONIAL NORTE Disco. YouTube. Beatriz Soto, 21 Sept. 2012. Web. 28 Sept. 2015. <<https://youtu.be/mEYTHICh0C4>>.

She is about two inches taller than me with light brown hair coming down past her collar bones. Her neutral facial expression while standing against the wall indicates that she might not be having the best time, but her clothes tell me that she is familiar with the Kizomba scene: a beige tank top, tight multi-coloured leggings and light brown Salsa shoes are common attire of a Kizomba girl. She might not be dressed as seductively as some other girls, but her attire modestly asks for people to notice her curves.

But that does not matter. I just want to dance with her, especially to this ever so sublimely sung “Mil Pasos” by Soha.

I make an eye contact with her as I hold out my right hand, and ask her to dance. She gives me an aporetic “oui?” as she peels her body away from the wall, but follows me to the dance floor.

*Un paso,  
Dos pasos,  
Tres pasos,  
Cuatro pasos,  
Cinco pasos,  
Mil pasos*

I am the best leader she has ever danced with.

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It was one of the best chances I had taken on that day; saying “yes” to a skinny boy in a white wife-beater.

Even though the way we were dancing looked sexual in appearance, I had the most asexual experience dancing.

He was making my hips move, there were waves, and we were embraced tightly as if we were a couple saying goodbye to each other at an airport. It was full of passion and emotion as I could feel his heartbeating fast and the sudden rush of warm blood circulating throughout my body, but it was completely asexual.

He was definitely an advanced dancer. If we had missteps, he could fix it himself. His steps did not judge me if I did not follow him correctly. Instead of demanding me to adjust myself, he adjusted himself according to my body position, which was something I had not experienced in a while. He was magisterial while leading, as a good leader should be, yet careful and considerate.

While in his arms, I had an epiphany that the male leaders I had unpleasant time dancing with previously, were not dancing the French style Kizomba; they were dancing Kizomba through the lens of sexualized perception of the French style that was instilled to the core as a way for the French instructors to battle the “Angolan vs. French” war in claiming the ownership of Kizomba.

He initiated certain moves that I had seen before on YouTube videos<sup>34</sup> of Enah and Carolina, where Enah held Carolina’s torso and lifted her up above his head. This French guy’s respectful initiation at this move made me giggle inside and think “How adorable, but this is such a cliché French Kizomba move.”

I was in a “French Room” at the Paris Kizomba Congress, dancing with a French boy, doing the move that sometimes made me cringe when I saw Enah perform on YouTube

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3 Enah & Carolina at Kizomba Valencia Festival 2015. YouTube. Enahpest, 27 Apr. 2015. Web. 27 May 2015. <<https://youtu.be/Wh3S23VfxAM>>.

4 Enah & Carolina Kizomba Bachaturo Demo. YouTube. Dana U, 24 Aug. 2015. Web. 1 Sept. 2015. <<https://youtu.be/oN6OszxCqlA>>.

videos because it was simply too prententious.

But when he did this move on me, it felt natural and I wanted to execute it, for him and fo us. I wanted to respect his lead and as a follower, I wanted to follow as perfectly as possible. I wanted to follow wherever he took me. We were sharing something beyond a sexual connection that French Kizomba vehemently marketed, and this kept us together for ten songs without breaking an embrace. It was empyreal.

I wish I could dance with him again. Someday.

Date: December, 2015 - April 1, 2016

Location: Bergen, Norway

I stopped dancing completely in Bergen.

Many of my dancer friends in Vancouver would surely be bewildered and concerned by this upheaval in my daily routine, but this was something even I had not anticipated.

As a female follower in Bergen, I was bored by a homogeneous Kizomba dancing style, and lack of advanced dancers and diversity in music selection. Knowing that infinitesimal Kizomba scene in Bergen had not developed notably in past two years only implied that having unpleasant and unsatisfied experiences were expected, if I were to continue dancing.

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My only hope now is that the last vestige of my dancing ability and passion would carry me through my future research endeavours.

# Appendix

(as of April 1, 2016)



## Notes from a Researcher

My research project initially began as an investigation on how the emotion and the body - two distinct, yet crucially pertinent factors of the human social interplay - were essential modes of non-verbal communication in partner social dances. My impassioned and devoted participation in Latin dancing subcultures provided me with an ample amount of resources to base my research on.

However, the main focus of my project took on a different direction when I moved to Bergen, Norway. Being physically based in Bergen, where the Latin dancing scene was significantly smaller than that of Canadian cities, had what at first felt like a negative effect on my research. Not only I was not able to reach the ecstatic state that kept me being involved in the Latin dancing subculture, but the small scene in Bergen provided almost no ethnographic knowledge and material for me to further my original research project. Half in desperation to seek the joyous emotions vicariously through other dancers and half maintaining my position as an ethnographer, I chose an online space as my main fieldwork site.

Kizomba particularly appealed to me as an impetus for my project, due to its explosive popularity and rapid growth that were obviously visible through YouTube videos constantly being uploaded, but also the fact that Kizomba, as a new dance that just arrived in the Latin dancing scene, had not been analyzed from anthropological and sociological perspectives yet. Even though there were numerous studies done on other Latin partner dances such as Salsa and Tango, Kizomba encompassed a unique characteristic that demanded a scholarly interpretation distinct from Salsa and Tango studies.

The very first starting point in my research was on the tension arising within the Kizomba subculture due to the emergence and existence of two evidently different styles of dancing: the Angolan and the French style. The retrieved materials from online fieldwork sites - Facebook, YouTube, blogs and dance production websites - were archived and sorted in accordance to the Kizomba style that they belonged to. Both quantitative data - the number and names of Kizomba dance partners, areas occupied by each dancer within the video frame and time it took to execute a single step, - and qualitative data - opinions from dancers, specific language used, - were given equal significance to achieve a more thorough and diversified study on Kizomba.

Regarding the two different styles of Kizomba, the camera angle and focus of YouTube video footages shot by third-party participants provided a rather clear representation of which aspect of Kizomba that each style wanted to emphasize. In the videos of the French style, it was common to see the female body to be shown as the focus of the video. In contrast, in the videos of the Angolan style, there was an emphasis of Kizomba not containing sexual connotations by showing people of all ages - from children to seniors - dancing, and young people making a nationalistic remark after each dance.

As an ethnographer, even though I was using the online space primarily as a main fieldwork site, it was important to continue participating physically. I took research trips to various cities in North America and Europe to observe how people around the world interpreted the existence of the two styles of Kizomba that was creating animosity amongst the dancers.

Due to the nature of Kizomba, as a form of dance that is based heavily on emotions, especially passion and obsession through physical interaction, my fieldnotes were written in response to the physical and emotional receptions that my body had experienced.

Like many ethnographers who were in constant struggle on dealing with what they planned on finding and what they actually found, and unexpected shifts happening throughout their research processes, the direction of my own research also shifted as my body engaged itself in various gatherings of the Kizomba subculture around the world.

While observing the power struggle between two Kizomba styles and their claim for the ownership of a cultural product, the type of power struggle that I was not expecting to experience, or was not comprehending fully before, became one of the most pressing issues. It was the power struggle based on gender.

Through the popularization of the French style, where the appearance of the dance had become hyper-sexualized, my body, that of a female follower, experienced a gamut of unfortunate and unpleasant instances: I was dragged around on the dance floor, I was forced onto a male dancer's body, I got touched inappropriately too many times. This led me to fully recognize the operation of sexist idioculture accompanying the attractive and passionate leisurely activity of social dancing. My fieldwork thus heavily became shaped by my heightened awareness in evidently present tolerance for, if not outright acceptance of, traditional gender role assignment based on biological sex in social dancing practices that extended beyond Kizomba.

At the same time, I was accidentally introduced to a very small yet passionate group of Queer Tango dancers in Bergen, who practiced gender-fluid partner dancing and encouraged the dismissal of traditional gender-based behaviours on the dance floor. Observing this group of people helped me to further realize how my body - as a female follower in a subculture that encouraged and operated strictly within the heteronormative structure - was subjected to accept cisgender-ing and traditional gender role assignment on the dance floor as a norm for years. Since I was addicted and obsessed with the subculture of social dancing that brought so much joy and happiness into my life, I was not able to notice the underlying and troubling power relations between male and female.

As of now, this ongoing research project stands at peeling my psyche and body out of the traditional gender role assignment and behaviour on the dance floor. Currently, as a non-dancing body lacking a frequent embrace of another

body, the attempt at switching a gender role rely mostly on my memory of dancing and interacting with male leaders and how they behaved while embracing my body, and also by observing the kinetics of male dancers on YouTube. Such attempt sure calls for more forced mental contemplation on my part, but I am captivated by tracing my own thought process as I experiment with my body executing a leader role and struggling through it.

The research will continue until I become comfortable dancing as a leader and asking any follower onto the dance floor at a social dancing event.

## Glossary

<b>Bachata</b>	A partner social dance from Dominican Republic
<b>Bunda</b>	A Brazilian Portugese slang for buttocks
<b>Cabeceo</b>	A method of invitation to dance by an eye contact in Tango
<b>Connection</b>	A mode of communication between a leader and a follower in partner social dances through various subtle signals
<b>Embrace</b>	A dance position in partner social dances where a leader and a follower are physically connected to each other, often while facing each other
<b>Open</b>	an embrace with a space in between a leader and a follower, maintained by connection of arms
<b>Close</b>	an embrace maintained by chest-to-chest body contact
<b>Follower</b>	A person receiving signals from a leader in a partner dance
<b>Footwork</b>	A movement of the foot when it is in contact with the floor
<b>Frame</b>	An upper body position in a partner dance that is created by a physical contact of arms by a leader and a follower
<b>Kizomba</b>	A type of music and a partner social dance from Angola. The term “Kizomba” comes from the linguistic expression Kimbundo, which means “backyard party”
<b>Kuduro</b>	A type of music and style of street dance from Angola that is danced to an upbeat music
<b>Leader</b>	A person in charge of initiating the moves and determining the course of the dance by sending various signals to a follower
<b>Milonga</b>	A Tango dance event
<b>Musicality</b>	Consideration of musical elements - timing, mood, melody, rhythm - of a song being played while dancing
<b>Salsa</b>	A partner social dance with influences from various countries in Latin America. Currently, Cuban, On1 (LA) and On2 (NY) styles are danced most prominently within Latin dancing communities throughout the world

<b>Semba</b>	A type of music and a partner dance from Angola that is danced faster than Kizomba
<b>Tango</b>	A partner social dance from Río de la Plata area, which lies in between Argentina and Uruguay
<b>Tango Nuevo</b>	a type of music and a partner social dance that evolved from the traditional Tango form in modern days
<b>Queer Tango</b>	a partner social dance that refrains from heteronormative customs of traditional Tango dancing practices
<b>Tarraxinha</b>	A partner dance resembling Kizomba but is danced slower and more sensually
<b>Taxi dancer</b>	A dancer who is paid to dance with other dancers, usually the beginners, at a dance event

## Dance Partners

### A

Aaron Espinar & Pilar Ramirez  
Adi & Eden  
Ailin & Ernesto  
Aime Beurt & Dominika  
Aladje & Elena  
Alan Eufor & Anna Laguer  
Albir & Carola  
Albir & Kizomba Chick™  
Albir & Ksenia  
Albir & Nina  
Albir & Sara Panero  
Alex Vunda & Celine  
Andre & Arina  
Andre & Susana  
Andrey & Nastya  
Ange & Fanja  
Annika & Dwé  
An'So & Nima  
Antonio & Manuela  
Arley & Hamed  
Arthur & Ida  
Arun Srinivasan & Katia Verreault  
Aurelia & François  
Azael & Nadezda  
Azlan & Mabel

### B

Ben Pedrosa & Ana Guerreiro  
Ben Pedrosa & Marta  
Benie & Goddess Juvier  
Beto & Lupita

Billie & Emi  
Billy Myles & Monica Kay  
Boni & Arancha  
Bonifácio & Anita  
Bonifácio & Conceição  
Bonifácio & Karina  
Bonifácio & Lety  
Bonifácio & Lorena  
Bonifácio & Lucia Nogueira  
Bonifácio & Mário Jordão  
Bonifácio & Saskia

### C

Ceijay & Bruna  
Cesar & Tracie  
Charles Ogar & Kizomba Chick™  
Charles Ogar & Lily Vasquez  
Charles Ogar & Monica Kay  
Charles Ogar & Nipa  
Charles Ogar & Vivian  
Chris PY & Elodie  
Christian Jean-Francois & Sharna Wilds  
Cláudio & Cris  
Cotiso & Dada  
Curtis & Carola  
Curtis & Cherazad  
Curtis & Gigi  
Curtis & Joanelly  
Curtis & Justina  
Curtis & Karole  
Curtis & Lisa De Campos  
Curtis & Lucy  
Curtis & Macarena

Curtis & Monica Kay  
Curtis & Monika  
Curtis & Sandra  
Cymeone & Jade  
Cymeone & Lydia  
Cymeone & Monica Kay  
Cymeone & Tabara

### D

Daniel & Coco  
Daniel & Liliana  
Dasmara & Elias  
Dasmara & Lolanda  
Dasmara & Lucia Nogueira  
Dasmara & Sonja KikiZomba  
David Campos & Guida  
David Pacavira & Bárbara Barros  
David Venturi & Laura  
Dennis Richards & Oriel Siu  
Diego & Hari  
Dilson & Bernadeth  
Dim Dim & Lika  
Donald & Josipa

### E

Eddy & Yaya  
Eddy Vents & Adda Dociu  
Eddy Vents & Aziza  
Eddy Vents & Chalianna  
Eddy Vents & Frances  
Eddy Vents & Josy Semkiz  
Eddy Vents & Kianda T.

Eddy Vents & Kristina Shatalova  
Eddy Vents & Laury  
Eddy Vents & Lucia Nogueira  
Eddy Vents & Melina  
Eddy Vents & Nidia Aitatus  
Eddy Vents & Norma Facey  
Eddy Vents & Riquita Alta  
Eddy Vents & Shannon Urza  
Eddy Vents & Tanya Fiske  
Eddy Vents & Tina  
Eden kim's & Lilia Mada  
Edo & Alessandra  
Edo & Denise  
Elson & Charlys  
Enah & An'So  
Enah & Carolina  
Enah & Isabelle  
Enah & Jessica  
Enah & Teresa  
Ennuel & Fabricio  
Ennuel & Hakima  
Ennuel & Lucia Rodriguez  
Ewa & George

### F

Fabricio & Alina  
Fabricio & Amandine  
Fabricio & Jhanelle  
Fabricio & Josy Semkiz  
Fabricio & Laura  
Fabricio & Sabrina  
Fabricio & Sisi  
Fara & Marion

Felipe & Katerina  
Felix Faria & Manu Afrojoy  
Florian & Ela  
Frans & Sarah  
Fred & Catia  
Fred Maestro & Adi Baran  
Fred Maestro & Andrea  
Fred Maestro & Elsy Azzam  
Fred Maestro & Kriste  
Fred Maestro & Ksenia  
Fred Maestro & Margaux  
Fred Maestro & Roberta Toffano  
Fred Maestro & Sabrina  
Fred Maestro & Yesica

## G

Garciana & Bon Bon  
Gds & Isabelle  
Georges & Laura  
Greg Martin & Anais Barthe  
Greg Martin & Emma  
Greg Martin & Tania

## H

Hakan & Adela  
Helio Santos & Ana  
Helio Santos & Axel Stel  
Helio Santos & Eli Pinto  
Helio Santos & Joana Carvalho  
Helio Santos & Sonja KikiZomba  
Henrik & Aleksandra  
Hugues & Aiina  
Hugues & Sheina

## I

Inaki & Beige  
Inaki & Elina  
Inaki & Ksenia  
Iris De Brito & Kwanda Lima  
Iris De Brito & Manuel Dos Santos  
Iris De Brito & Miguel Monteiro  
Iris De Brito & Nuno Campos  
Isabelle & Felicien  
Isabelle & Joy

## J

Jamba & Liliana  
Jay & Frances  
Jazzy Cubango & An'So  
Jazzy Cubango & Kizomba Chick  
Jazzy Cubango & Lucile  
Jeffrey & Carla  
Jeffrey & Fanja  
Jeffrey & Leila  
Jeffrey & Monica Kay  
Jeremy & Stephanie  
Jes & Karina  
Joao & Giedre  
Joao & Mafalda  
Jojo & Jess  
Jojo & Laetitia  
Jojo & Sifu  
Jonathan & Mickaela  
Jose & Yoli  
Jovany & Justine

## K

Kaem & Marine

Ken & Dinara  
Kenny-Davis & Arley  
Kenny-Davis & Kylie  
Kenny-Davis & Sindali  
Kike & Pepa  
Kinggali & Deborah  
Kristofer Mencák & Anusha Dyachenko  
Kristofer Mencák & Daniella Sebastian  
Kristofer Mencák & Gigi  
Kristofer Mencák & Isaura De Norre  
Kristofer Mencák & Jhanelle  
Kristofer Mencák & Jô Chagas  
Kristofer Mencák & Lusine  
Kristofer Mencák & Maggali Zerrouki  
Kristofer Mencák & Mariah Tolmacheva  
Kristofer Mencák & Marisa Pita Alvarez  
Kristofer Mencák & Namrata Wittke  
Kristofer Mencák & Pepa Cabrera  
Kristofer Mencák & Rita Szabó  
Kristofer Mencák & Teresa Jimenez  
Kristofer Mencák & Upa Dançarina  
Kristofer Mencák & Yulia Volkova  
Kristofer Mencák & Yurena Abreu  
Ksenia & Anton Praga  
Ksenia & Loic  
Ksenia & Vladimir  
Ksenia & Yuriy Pikhun  
Kwenda Lima & Amelia H  
Kwenda Lima & Anuki  
Kwenda Lima & Letitia  
Kwenda Lima & Nadia  
Kwenda Lima & Veronika

## L

Laurent & Adeline

Liliana de Lima & José Luis  
Liliana de Lima & Leslie  
Lilix Mc & Moorea  
Lisa Dunke & Mandela  
Lisa Dunke & Oussema  
Lloyd & Elsy  
Lourenço & Sabrina  
Luis & Carolina Fajardo  
Luiz & Ignacia  
Lydia & Comes

## M

Mafalda & Alphonse  
Mafalda & Bruno  
Mafalda & Ennuel  
Mafalda & Jeffrey  
Manu Afrojoy & Paulinho  
Manuel dos Santos & Flavie  
Marc Brewer & Anna  
Marc Brewer & Inna  
Marc Brewer & Jacki Rozzo  
Marc Brewer & Jhanelle  
Marc Brewer & Ka-Yanne Cuong  
Marc Brewer & Kiri Chapman  
Marc Brewer & Lucero Huitron  
Marc Brewer & Macarena  
Marc Brewer & Nika  
Marcel & Fleur  
Marcio & Gabriela  
Mário Jordão & Laury  
Maya & Yves  
Merete & DJ Snakes  
Miguel & Sora  
Miguel & Susana  
Miguel Jones & Nyna

Mike Even's & Emelie  
Mike Even's & Ksenia  
Mike Even's & Laurhina Meloni  
Mike Even's & Marie  
Mike Even's & Marta Oteiza  
Mike Even's & Maymouna  
Mike Even's & Pepa Cabrera  
Mike Even's & Sophie  
Mike Even's & Stefania  
Mirabella & Álvaro  
Mister Tecas & Miss Jo  
Morenasso & Anais  
Morenasso & Kim  
Morenasso & Mafalda  
Morenasso & Vicky  
Moun & Annie  
Moun & Julie  
Moun & Karole  
Moun & Marta

## N

N-Py & Lily  
Narcisse & Anna  
Narcisse & Maylie  
Namenja & Laura  
Neelam & Harry  
Nuno & Nagyla  
Nuno & Sarai

## O

Ouzin & Ariella  
Ozy Shyne & Jogaile  
Ozy Shyne & Justyna  
Ozy Shyne & Monica Kay

Ozy Shyne & Sabine Kolle

## P

Patrick & Efy  
Pauline & Joao  
Paulo Cruz & Lanna  
Pedro & Christina  
Pedro & Lara  
Petchu & Karolina  
Petchu & Vanessa  
Petchu & Veronika  
Phil & Annie

## Q

## R

Ricardo & Paula  
Rico Suave & Adda  
Rico Suave & Josy Semkiz  
Ronald & Arley  
Ronie & Emma  
Rubens & Vanessa  
Ryu & Amalia

## S

Sara Lopez & Albir  
Sara Lopez & Curtis  
Sara Lopez & Dante  
Sara Lopez & Dudley Angela  
Sara Lopez & Inaki  
Sara Lopez & Kadu Pires  
Sara Lopez & Kristofer Mencák  
Sara Lopez & Marc Brewer  
Sara Lopez & Marta M

Sara Lopez & Reda  
Sara Lopez & Wojtek  
Sami Love & Maria  
Samuel & Dile  
Selwin & Suleika  
Shani & Ivo  
Shiran & Helena  
Sonja KikiZomba & Antonio Bandeira  
Sonja KikiZomba & Bruno Alfonso  
Sonja KikiZomba & Elisa  
Sonja KikiZomba & Gaetan  
Sonja KikiZomba & Inês Duarte  
Sonja KikiZomba & Jacinto Teca  
Sonja KikiZomba & Jamba Mulimbwe  
Sonja KikiZomba & Kevin  
Sonja KikiZomba & Kika Neves  
Sonja KikiZomba & Lydia  
Sonja KikiZomba & Mário  
Sonja KikiZomba & Miguel Monteiro  
Sophie & Mario Bonifacio  
Sophie & Nacimao  
Sónia & Ricardo

## T

Theo & Anne-Guro Zahl  
Theo & Stine Larsen  
Tony Pirata & Aurélie  
Tony Pirata & Cherazad  
Tony Pirata & Fanja  
Tony Pirata & Lisa Dunke  
Tony Pirata & Sophie Fox  
Tony Pirata & Veronika

## U

Usukuma & Kristiann

## V

Vasco & Emmeli  
Vasco & Manu Afrojoy  
Vitor Mendes & Rita Szabó

## W

Willy & Camille  
Wimmy & Bari

## X

## Y

Yami & Sabiha  
Yami & St'Effy  
Yami & Veronika

## Z

Zio & Jess



## Resources

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