



Akilah Newton is an activist, entrepreneur, author, and arts advocate whose passion for community engagement began at John Abbott College. A graduate of the Creative Arts program, she transformed her love of the arts and media into a career dedicated to empowering young people, amplifying diverse voices, and creating meaningful social change.

Following her studies at John Abbott and the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts in England, Akilah built a career spanning arts education, media production, entrepreneurship, and community leadership.

In 2009, she and her twin brother, Omari, founded Overture with the Arts (OWTA), a non-profit organization dedicated to making the arts accessible to youth from all backgrounds. Through its programs, workshops, and events, OWTA has reached more than 95,000 young people, helping them discover their creativity and potential.

Akilah's commitment to education and social change is perhaps best reflected in OWTA's Black History Month Tour, which has travelled across Canada for more than a decade, educating students about Canadian Black history through music and spoken word. The tour has also returned to John Abbott College, maintaining a meaningful connection to where her journey began.

Her work extends beyond the performing arts. Through media projects such as CBC Life's *Beyond February* and educational initiatives through her company, Big Dreamers, Akilah has amplified underrepresented voices while creating resources that celebrate diversity, inclusion, and Canadian Black history.

Through her leadership, creativity, and advocacy, Akilah has inspired thousands of young people and expanded access to arts education across Canada. Her accomplishments reflect the values of John Abbott College and demonstrate the transformative power of education, creativity, and community engagement.

RECOGNITION

- 2014 Montreal Community Cares Award, Community Organization
 - 2019 Parliament of Canada Community Service Award
 - 2021 CBC Canadian Black Changemaker
 - 2023 African Canadian Philanthropic Moms of Magnificence
 - 2023 King Charles III Coronation Medal
 - Spirit of Harriet Tubman Visionary Impact Award, presented by the Afro-Canadian Alliance
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