

SCHOOLS

Luna Dance announces scholarship for dance educator

SOURCE: JOHN-MARIO SEVILLA

In a news release dated last week, Luna Dance Institute announced Berkeley High alumna Yeni Lucero Rivera as the first recipient of the bell hooks Dance Education Scholarship.

The scholarship supports Rivera’s enrollment in California State University’s East Bay (CSUEB) Dance Teaching Credential Program, which provides a pathway for a dancer with an undergraduate degree to acquire the coursework and training to teach dance full-time in a California public school. The credential results from the 2016 legislation known as SB 916, the Theatre and Dance Act (TADA!), that addressed the lack in arts education by establishing the single-subject teaching credential for dance and for theatre.

“When I started there wasn’t a lot of faith in dance. Ten years back, we had to go through PE [Physical Education]. There was no dance credential at the time, so I feel the respect level was very low. I always had to prove myself. So, when I heard that there was a dance credential, I had to do it,” Rivera reflected about her studies.

Currently, she is the dance educator at Learning Without Limits Elementary, an Education for Change public school in Oakland. She previously founded the dance programs at Oakland’s Elmhurst Community Prep School and Cox Academy Center. Rivera has a bachelor’s degree in Dance from San Francisco State University. Self-described as an “Afro-Latina from El Salvador” and raised in Sweden, where she and her family were political refugees, Rivera attended Berkeley High School, where she met her long-time mentors Mama Naomi Diouf and the late Papa Zak Diouf.

“I learned about the power of traditional dance,” Rivera said about her time under the Diouf’s guidance before adding, “I was being planted and empowered, a voice that had been stolen from me...this felt like shackles broken.”

Now her mission as a dance educator is to “minimize systematic oppression and offer the medium of dance to underserved communities; an outlet to build equity and mold



Yeni Lucero Rivera (BHS ‘XX) – was recently announced as the recipient of Luna Dance Institute’s first bell hooks Dance Education Scholarship.

identity while culturally rooting the learner.”

The bell hooks Dance Education Scholarship is offered by Luna Dance Institute to inspire and support dance educators working in communities that have been marginalized and under resourced. Named after the writer, teacher, and philosopher, whose life-long activism with issues of race, class, and gender and whose pedagogical theories are aligned with the educational and social justice values of Luna, the scholarship includes partial tuition funds, six hours of coaching with Luna faculty, and a copy of “Body, Mind, Spirit in Action, ed. 2” by Luna co-executive director, Patricia Reedy. The scholarship is intended for dancers who seek to teach in an urban public school in the San Francisco Bay Area upon graduation. QBIPOC and teachers from marginalized communities are encouraged to apply.

To learn more about this new program and scholarship, go to csueastbay.edu [theatre and dance credential program] or contact Chris Chamberlain, CSUEB interim Associate Dean at chris.chamberlain@csueastbay.edu.

Parenting: Suicide Prevention

BY MARILEE STARK

Pay attention

“What’s with Aaron?” Marie had been sitting on the couch in the living room knitting a baby blanket for her niece.

“What do you mean?” Stephen sat down next to Marie and opened his laptop.

“I mean he’s in his room all the time...never comes out.”

“You worry too much,” Stephen said. “He’s a teenage boy.”

“He just doesn’t seem like himself lately... hardly eats, not interested in the things he used to love...doesn’t even want to play the drums anymore.”

“I remember being like that in high school,” Stephen mused. “Liking something one day and not liking it another.”

“Yeah, but Aaron isn’t you, and I’m not overreacting. The other day I heard him talking to someone on his phone about not wanting to do anything but sleep...I don’t know what to do.”

Stephen looked up from his laptop. “Maybe try talking to him?”

Marie shook her head. “He’s more apt to talk to you.”

“I wouldn’t even know where to begin,” Stephen confessed. “But I still don’t think anything’s wrong with him.”

“He’s not with his friends much lately and mopes around here aimlessly. I’ve been depressed. I know what it feels like. You don’t have the energy to do anything even things you like to do.”

“Look, he just needs to get back in the groove of school.” Stephen could feel his own worry seeping in now. “He’ll be okay once his classes are underway. He’s a senior...a lot going on.”

“What if he’s feeling suicidal?” Marie persisted. “How would we even know?”

“Honey, now you’re really going off the deep end. He’s just a teenage kid having a few bad days....don’t we all?”

Marie put down her knitting. “Did you know he carries his friend’s photo in his wallet...the one who overdosed a year ago? Aaron was crushed. That kid’s mom told me she had no idea her son was so depressed. I think our own son is depressed, and we have to do

something. I’d rather err on doing too much than too little.”

They stopped talking as they heard the front door open and then slam shut. Aaron walked in the house and right past them on his way to his room.

“Hey, you gonna say hello?” Stephen called after him.

“Later, Dad.” Aaron slammed his door.

“See, this is what I mean,” Marie said. “I’m worried because he’s never thought much of himself even when he was feeling good. Remember his 5th grade teacher talking to us about his low self-esteem?”

Stephen nodded. “Yeah, figured he’d grow out of it.”

“Well, he didn’t, and we should have gotten him help then, but it’s not too late to get him help now.”

“Okay, I’ll talk to him,” Stephen said. “Maybe we can play some golf together. He used to like that.”

“Promise me you’ll talk to him and not just play golf.” Marie could feel her heart racing. “He’s in trouble. I just know it. I’m going to ask around for a good therapist.”

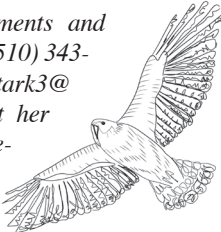
“I’ll handle it....not sure we need a therapist,” Stephen said. “Plus, I don’t think he’d go anyway.”

“We have to try, Stephen while we still have some leverage. We have to have the courage to act...”

Resources

Crisis Support Services Alameda County, 24-hour Crisis line: 1(800) 309-2131
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 or text MHA to 741741

Marilee Stark, PhD is a psychologist who specializes in family issues. She’s also a parent, teacher and writer. Please forward your comments and questions to her at (510) 343-9216 or marileestark3@gmail.com. Or visit her website at marilee-stark.com



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