



Media contact: John-Mario Arcilla Sevilla, Director of Operations & Development
jmsevilla@lunadancecreativity.org (510) 883.1118, ext. 12

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**Luna Dance & Creativity announces
Afia Thompson and Jennifer Andrea Porras (yAyA)
as the first recipients of
Dance & Justice Explorers, an artist residency project**

Berkeley, CA – Luna Dance & Creativity announces **Jennifer Andrea Amezcua-Porras (aka yAyA)** and **Afia Thompson** as the first recipients of **Dance & Justice Explorers**, an artist residency project that seeks to share Luna’s new community dance space with artists who are visionary educators and agents of change. Dance & Justice Explorers is designed to provide under-represented dance activists and under-resourced social justice advocates with work space and resources for inquiry, research, creative practice, and community building.

This unique project is defined mainly by its selected Explorers, who define and design their scope of work and expectations, which may include artistic investigation, convening of stakeholders and peers, technical support, and professional development. As part of the residency, Porras and Thompson will receive access to Luna’s studios, library, community spaces, and programs; a monthly stipend; and technical and administrative support for their research and creative projects. **Dance & Justice Explorers** is supported by a grant from the San Francisco Foundation.

Jennifer Andrea Amezcua-Porras is an IndigiQueer, Two-Spirit, Coahuiltecan descendant/ChicanIndia, madre, curator, producer, and transdisciplinary movement artist with over 25 years of experience in performance, arts programming, fundraising, and education. They develop work upon sacred indigenous lands through commissions, invitations, collaborations, research, creating site-specific installations, ritual performance, and teatro y flor y canto movimiento. Porras has studied, taught, performed, and facilitated inter-tribal ceremonies as a dancer in the Afro-Cuban, Danza Mexika, and Black contemporary concert dance traditions in Northern California, the Southwest, Cuba, Mexico, Africa, and New York. Also, Porras has produced fellow artists in Indigiqueer film, performance art, and through arts curation. Porras earned their B.A. in Theater Dance with a minor in Cultural Anthropology from California State University, Sacramento, where they concentrated on Black, Indigenous, and

Chicano theater, dance, and leadership. Porras's projects for their Explorers residency include research studies of transdisciplinary installations and community engagement prompts for large open spaces.



Jennifer Andrea Amezcua-Porras



Alfia Thompson, Co-founder of Bahiya Movement, has performed nationally and internationally. Trained in West African, hip-hop, Afro-House and modern dance, she continues to perform, teach, coach, mentor, and direct dancers and artists of all ages, genders, and body sizes. Alfia and her daughter, Nafi Thompson, Artistic Director of Bahiya Movement, created Believe-In-Self (BIS) in 2018, now called QUEERspace-BIS emerging artists mentorship program, a six-week residency for dancers to deepen their ongoing artistic practice, create connectivity within our urban communities, and develop skills to succeed as professional artists. For Explorers, Thompson will be seeking to build a coalition of Black female business, address issues of Queerness and plus-size bodies in the arts, and provide healing movement classes.



AfiaThompson (photo by Chani Bockwinkel)



Afia Thompson photo by F. Asha Passalacqua

About Luna

Luna is a nationally recognized arts leader and institution that supports families, artists, teachers, leaders, schools, and community & arts organizations through programs that promote creativity and self-determination through the transformative power of dance. Founded in 1992, Luna has become the most comprehensive dance education organization on the West Coast. Luna's mission to bring creativity, equity, and community to every child's life through the art of dance is fulfilled via education services to the youth and families who are the least likely to receive the benefits of an arts education, including children and mothers in the dependency system and living in poverty; children living in neighborhoods and attending schools with little to no access to arts programs; and children diagnosed with autism, special learning needs, and other disabilities. Luna serves children, families, and dance practitioners through partnerships with schools and school districts, social service agencies, and arts and culture organizations. Last year, 419 teachers—who taught 29,021 students, 3,282 with disabilities—received Luna's services and resources. Discover more at lunadancecreativity.org.