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CLARA & A.I.M ANNOUNCE RECIPIENTS OF FIRST ARTIST RESIDENCIES

*Local choreographers Ayo Walker and Inertia DeWitt to receive rehearsal time, space
in exchange for providing SCUSD students with access to dance*

Today the E. Claire Raley Studios for the Performing Arts (CLARA) announces the recipients of its first artist-in-residence program, produced in conjunction with Artists In Motion Lab (A.I.M. Lab). CLARA will provide two choreographers, **Inertia DeWitt** and **Ayo Walker**, with 16 hours each of access to free rehearsal space, during which each artist will create and workshop an original dance piece.

Furthering CLARA's mission of providing support to performing artists in exchange for arts education in Sacramento City Unified School District schools, both artists will also provide 10 hours of dance instruction to students at **Will C. Wood Middle School** this spring.

"The concept of CLARA comes from the idea that if we can provide artists with space to work, and youth with early education in performing arts, the arts economy grows stronger at every level," **explains Megan Wygant**, executive director of CLARA. "In this project, we are lucky to have found two immensely talented young artists who are passionate about their craft and about sharing it with the next generation. We cannot wait to see what these women accomplish with this residency."

A showcase which includes first looks at both artists' pieces is scheduled for March 31, 2018 and will be produced by **Diego Campos**. More details & tickets can be found at claramidtown.org/events.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Dr. Ayo (Joy) Walker is a lecturer in the African American and African Studies department at UC Davis, and a performance studies practitioner specializing in the Black dance aesthetic. Her research focuses on the racial and cultural biases that impact how we perceive different dance genres, and particularly engages with the cultural racism that results in our society valuing different genres at different levels. Dr. Walker's choreography grows from hip-hop, postmodern, Afro-modern and jazz dance; at CLARA she will work with dancer **Brianna James** on a piece called "**Do Hashtags Make Black Lives Matter?**" This work challenges the cultural desensitization towards racialized police brutality and addresses the following inquiries:

- 1) What do hashtags do in front of the names of dead black bodies? #JLAustin
- 2) What is the performative utterance of hashtagging in this instance? #speechacts
- 3) How are the hashtags #blacklivesmatter, #ifidieinpolicecustody, #icantbreathe, #handsupdontshoot changing the social reality they describe?



Inertia DeWitt is a performance-artist, dance and yoga instructor, and Marriage & Family Therapist Trainee. She holds an MFA in Dance from Arizona State University and MA in Counseling Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her artwork explores issues of identity, spirituality, and the intersections of American pop-culture and politics. Her current artistic endeavor, *American Wonder*, is a multidisciplinary performance-art protest that calls upon various mediums including dance, voice, spoken word, satire, and video, to express her views as a 21st century, *American Wonder Woman*. This work is meant to engage audiences into political discourse and inspire an embodied revolution. During her residency at CLARA, she will be working on a new piece titled “**Courage to Be Seen**,” which is an exploration of the interplay between confidence and vulnerability. The making of this piece includes the development of a somatic-based, improvisation pedagogy that supports practitioners of embodied protest.

About CLARA

CLARA provides studios for both professional and community-based arts groups and a place for creative collisions and collaborations – including an innovative partnership with Sacramento City Unified School District which provides underserved students with access to arts summer camps, internships, tickets and in-school programs fostering interaction with professional artists in a studio environment. Housed at the historic Fremont School in Midtown Sacramento, CLARA was funded by grants from the City of Sacramento and private donations, including the Raley-Teel family. For more information, visit claramidtown.org.