

Media contact: John-Mario Arcilla Sevilla, Director at Large  
[jmsevilla@lunadanceinstitute.org](mailto:jmsevilla@lunadanceinstitute.org) (510) 883.1118

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 28, 2023

## **Luna Dance Institute announces Yeni Lucero Rivera as the recipient of bell hooks Dance Education Scholarship**

Berkeley, CA – Luna Dance Institute announces **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 clear 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.

As Rivera reflected, “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 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 BA in Dance from San Francisco State University. Self-described as an “Afro-Latina from El Salvador” raised in Sweden, where she and her family were political refugees, Rivera is an alumnus of Berkeley High School, where she met her long-time mentors Mama Naomi Diouf and the late Papa Zak Diouf.

Under the Dioufs’ guidance, reflects Rivera, “I learned about the power of traditional dance; I was being planted and empowered, a voice that had been stolen from me...this felt like shackles broken.” 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 identity while culturally rooting the learner.”

According to Brad Vartan, CSUEB Development & Campaign Director and member of the selection committee, “We are overjoyed that Yeni was selected, and she is clearly deserving of the award. We look forward to supporting her on her journey to graduation and know she will do great things after graduation and beyond. Thank you to Luna Dance Institute for their partnership and support of the dance students at Cal State East Bay.”

The bell hooks Dance Education Scholarship is offered by Luna 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, 6 hours of coaching with Luna faculty, and a copy of the *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, visit <https://www.csueastbay.edu/theatre/theatre-and-dance-credential-program.html> and contact Chris Chamberlain, Interim Associate Dean, College of Education and Allied Studies at [chris.chamberlain@csueastbay.edu](mailto:chris.chamberlain@csueastbay.edu).

Prospective students must apply both to CSUEB and to the Department of Teacher Education/Credential Program. Application forms for CSUEB and the Credential Program may be found here: <https://ce.csueastbay.edu/ce/programs/single-subject-teaching-credential/>.

## **About Luna**

Founded in 1992, Luna has become the most comprehensive dance education organization on the West Coast. Luna is a recognized arts leader and nationally acclaimed institution that supports families, artists, teachers, leaders, schools, community and cultural arts organizations through programs that promote creativity and self-determination through the transformative power of dance. Locally, Luna serves children and families through partnerships with schools, social service agencies, and arts and culture organizations. Luna re-opens its new fully ADA-accessible dance studios in 2023 for in-person dance learning. Discover more at [lunadanceinstitute.org](http://lunadanceinstitute.org).