

We are: Gabriel Christian, a fiscally-sponsored artist and Audio Describer with Gravity, a *Beyond Gravity* featured artist, and recently elected Board President of Gravity; Europa Grace, a fiscally-sponsored artist with and Audio Describer with Gravity and a *Beyond Gravity* featured artist; and Jose E. Abad, a fiscally-sponsored artist with Gravity, a *Beyond Gravity* featured artist, and one of six community members engaging in the ongoing accountability process between Folawole Winfunke and Jess Curtis.

The original date of production for *Beyond Gravity 2021* was February 19th - 20th, 2021. On February 1st, all of the Black artists commissioned for *Beyond Gravity* were contacted by Folawole Winfunke, who brought to our attention his experience of the racist, abusive, and discriminatory actions of white administrators, Bay Area artists, faculty, and students at the University of California, Davis MFA and PhD Performance Studies programs - including an exchange he had with Jess Curtis while Jess was there as a PhD student.

Folawole asked us all to divest from Jess Curtis and the *Beyond Gravity* production due to the harm that he experienced—in the hopes that he might get his demands for repair met. In the following weeks, many of the artists and staff gathered for multiple group meetings in order to establish an accountability and repair process, some with the support of a facilitator. During that time, we decided to postpone the February show to honor the process and consider our next steps collectively. *Beyond Gravity* artists were given the space to leave the show or move forward with a new date. Everyone was paid regardless of their decision. Since that time, these are the [demands](#) from Folawole and the artists that were met. There are additional requests and demands that Folawole has shared

After assessing the situation, eight artists chose to remain in this showcase and in relationship to JCG. As the three Black artists sharing work in the festival, we required that, in order to move forward with the show, certain elements of this conflict must be made transparent, and that we have this time to share why/how we hope to engage in a process of repair.

Our agreement to participate is tied to our interest in processes "that change the conditions and structures of society to diminish our reproduction of harm" (Nina Monei). Part of the way we see this happening is by leaning into our relationships, sticking through the trouble, and showing up in community as fellow choreographers and dancers in the Bay Area. This requires making space for redemption and change while engaging in open and honest communication regarding the ways we uphold systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, ableism, and capitalism. Rather than separating ourselves from JCG, we're choosing to stay close to ensure we can catch each other when we slip off track in our efforts to create a more equitable arts ecosystem.

We acknowledge that this letter does not heal the harm Folawole has experienced. But, as Black freelance artists with limited capacity, this is our imperfect attempt at reconciling grievances of the past while tending to pressing issues that continue to emerge in the present.

Preceding these reports of the harm done to Folawole while attending UC Davis, Jess and Gravity's Board had started the process of initiating and installing a five-year strategic plan with the help of organizational consultants Marc Vogl and Kelly Varian. Gabriel joined the Gravity Board of Directors in the finalization stage of this plan and was asked to review materials, offer edits, etc. The timing coincided with the calls to action and uprisings of June 2020 - and it was clear that Gabriel could not continue with Gravity if resources were not named and funneled directly to Black-identified artists; this led to immediate implementation in those curated for a series of Pop-Up Performances in late 2020/early 2021. *Beyond Gravity*, similarly, was curated with a majority of Black artists (five out of nine) with this initiative in mind.

As Board President, Gabriel is present organizationally to hold Jess accountable to the visions outlined in the strategic plan—particularly around centering and horizontalizing leadership with QTBIPOC, femme, and disabled-identified artists and decentering Jess. Especially as the organizational vision expands in both Germany and the USA, these efforts also include future programming that strongly considers the events and factors of this conflict.

Parallel to Gabriel's role infrastructurally, Jose is involved in an ongoing accountability council with Jess and Folawole and all of us still serve as members of the local arts community, which is to say there is no turning the other cheek. This event will sit like a stone in the shoe to assess and address how to move with, account for, support, and figure out how healing after harm is possible.

Signed,

Gabriel Christian

jose e. abad

and

Europa Grace