



**CLIMBING POETREE**

**PRESS KIT 2017**

# WHO IS CLIMBING POETREE?

Alix Garcia & Naima Penniman

Climbing PoeTree is the combined force of two boundary-breaking soul sisters who have sharpened their art as a tool for popular education, community organizing, and personal transformation. Alixa and Naima interweave spoken word, hip hop, and award-winning multimedia theater to expose injustice, channel hope into vision, and make a better future visible, immediate, and irresistible. With flawless cadence and impeccable lyricism, Alixa and Naima weave together their voices to tell powerful stories of love and liberation, state and personal violence, social, environmental, racial, and sexual justice, woman's empowerment, and human transcendence.

In 30 self-organized tours over the past 14 years, Climbing PoeTree has blazed stages in more than 80 cities across the U.S., and abroad from the UK to South Africa, Mexico to Cuba. At concert halls and conferences, classrooms and festivals, prisons and universities, Alixa and Naima's words inspire thousands of people to activate the transformation they wish to cultivate within themselves and their communities.

Their soul-stirring performances have been featured alongside legendary thinkers such as Cornel West, Angela Davis, Vandana Shiva, Danny Glover, Naomi Klein, Van Jones, Janet Mock, and Gloria Steinem, and visionary artists such as Alicia Keys, Janelle Monáe, Erykah Badu, Sonia Sanchez, Amiri Baraka, Maxwell, Little Dragon, Talib Kweli, Madonna, Goapele, Rising Appalachia, Angelique Kidjou, T.I. and Dead Prez.

Amid their busy touring schedules, Alixa and Naima are committed organizers and educators. They lead workshops in state institutions from Rikers Island Prison to Clark County Juvenile Detention Center, and prestigious academies such as Harvard and Columbia Universities. One Common Unity recognized Climbing PoeTree with an award in 2010 for creating peace and lasting sustainable change in their communities; and in 2016 Climbing PoeTree received the Bioneers Award for their work connecting communities, building bridges, and using arts at the service of their vision for a better world.

One of Climbing PoeTree's ongoing projects is called S.T.I.T.C.H.E.D.—a collaborative truth-gathering endeavor wherein Alixa and Naima invite their audiences and workshop participants to write their Stories, Testimonies, Intentions, Truths, Confessions, Healing,

Expressions, and Dreams on squares of fabric that they sew together into colorful prayer flags. Begun in 2005, S.T.I.T.C.H.E.D. is now over 7,000 submissions and hundreds of feet long. It has been featured at the Smithsonian Museum in DC, The African American Museum in Philadelphia, The Brooklyn Museum, The Museum of Contemporary African Diasporic Art and Museo Del Barrio in New York, and countless public spaces nationwide. Alixa and Naima use S.T.I.T.C.H.E.D to catalyze collective-healing, anti-oppression, and media justice workshops in communities across the country.

Climbing PoeTree's award-winning production *Hurricane Season: The Hidden Messages in Water* interweaves spoken word poetry, shadow art, dance, film and animation to examine the "unnatural disasters" of state violence, environmental injustice, and displacement. Alixa and Naima travelled to 50 cities with an all-women crew, traveling 11,000 miles on a bus converted to run on recycled vegetable oil, on an ecojustice tour that obliterated the boundaries between performance and activism. *Hurricane Season* featured 200 grassroots organizations at the shows in "Solution Ciphers" to garner support for their initiatives and give audience members access into local movements.

Inspired by the success of the "Solution Cipher" model, Climbing PoeTree created an online resource called "Solution Spotlight" to shine light on transformative, grassroots, solution-oriented actions people are taking around the world to galvanize positive transformation in their communities and environments. The goal of this site is to cross-pollinate creative approaches for challenging injustice, and offer tangible opportunities for readers to be agents of change.

Since the *Hurricane Season* tour, Climbing PoeTree has also translated the work into a year-long multimedia social justice curriculum. The "Hurricane Season Curriculum" has been piloted on both the high school and university level in 5 states, and will soon be an invaluable teaching tool in learning environments nationwide. Through the curriculum, Alixa and Naima are committed to harnessing the power of art to build critical consciousness and build new leadership essential for fundamental social change.

Currently, Climbing PoeTree is preparing to release a new album called INTRINSIC in March 2017. Alixa and Naima brought together a team of 33 world-class musicians, vocalists, and producers led by the legendary Toshi Reagon to translate their brazen lyricism into 17 rebel-rousing anthems, bilingual ballads, and unconventional love songs. INTRINSIC explores the inescapable network of mutuality that binds our existence through the ricochet of oppression and the reciprocity of liberation, reminding us that we all belong to each other.

# PRAISE FOR CLIMBING POETREE

## reviews from distinguished allies

*"Each time I have the pleasure of attending a performance by Climbing PoeTree, I feel enriched, renewed, and inspired. Alixa and Naima insist that poetry can change the world—and it is true that the urgency, power and beauty of their words impel us to keep striving for the radical futures toward which they gesture."*

~ **Angela Y. Davis**, political activist, scholar,  
Distinguished Professor Emerita, UCSC

*"Climbing PoeTree is a soulful expression. Alixa Garcia and Naima Penniman are deep thinkers and gifted poets. I am moved profoundly by the power of their words!"*

~ **Cornel West**, philosopher, academic, activist, author

*"These stunning poems prove that there is something sacred, unyielding and deeply human in walking the path of rebellion. Climbing PoeTree offers us a language, a soundtrack, a heartbeat-rhythm for how to speak with courage."*

~ **Carlos Andrés Gómez**, poet, actor, author

*"With vision and rhythm, Naima and Alixa's poems stretch from souls-deep toward the radiant pulsing horizon. Look and listen—Climbing PoeTree might take you exactly where you need to go."*

~ **Jeff Chang**, hip hop journalist and critic  
author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop*

*"Hurricane Season pounds with intensity and fierceness and love. Naima and Alixa are truly forces of nature, delivering a performance that will move you to tears and to action."*

~ **Tia Lessin & Carl Deal**, Producers of "Fahrenheit 911"  
Directors of Academy Award nominated "Trouble The Water"

*"Alixa and Naima create a wave of such intelligent soul-moving proportions that we will surely see its effects in catalyzing a radical shift in how our generation cares for the earth and all cultures of our human family."*

~ **Michael Flynn**, founder, Common Vision

# TESTIMONIES

from audience members

“I am so deeply moved, inspired, healed and transformed by the love you make visible. Your work embodies the genius that Alice Walker describes as artists and as witnesses for the future...Trust that you are shifting universal consciousness.”

~ **L’Erin Asanteewa**, Atlanta, GA

“Your performance moved me, touched me, and inspired me to create change, to start action that I have been contemplating for years.”

~ **Chris Wiesner**, Toronto, ON

"This was truly the most inspiring presentation I have ever been to. I felt as if I truly had been given the strength and motivation that I needed to not only stand for issues that I care about, but to live life freely and fully; to never let people or fears inhibit my actions; to recognize beauty in life itself; to embrace each day with wonder, curiosity, and most of all, empathy. Thank you for changing my life!"

~ **Bonnie Ricord**, Burlington, VT

“I had the pleasure of hearing you at the Black Repertory Theater and may I say that I have never been so moved in all of my life... The message you are sending is positive, fulfilling, heart-wrenching and motivational.”

~ **I’Loner L. Weaver**, Providence, RI

“I don't remember meeting more sincerely dedicated individuals than yourselves. Your spirit shines through your art form and glows like a beacon on a cloudless night.”

~ **Ty Gray-EI**, Washington D.C.

“Two wise and beautiful souls spouting the truth in such a way that makes one cry and laugh and rage and hope all in a matter of hours... You two create, something so raw, and so inspiring. I hope your message will be heard by all.”

~ **Michelle Pizzuli**, Cleveland, OH

# CLIMBING POETREE CV

## Roster of Featured Performances

### Local & International Festivals:

- 2017 Women's March on Washington, DC
- 2016 Many Rivers to Cross Festival, Atlanta, GA  
Rock Against the TPP, Seattle, WA & Portland, OR  
Work\*Rock\*Sword Festival: A Musical Celebration of Women's Lives, NY, NY
- 2015 42nd LEAF Festival, Asheville, NC  
One Billion Rising, New York, NY  
Unifier Festival, CT  
Gallatin Arts Festival, NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study, NY, NY  
Work\*Rock\*Sword Festival: A Musical Celebration of Women's Lives, NY, NY
- 2014 Mystic Island Festival, Maui, HI  
Lightning In a Bottle, Bradley, CA  
International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, Sedona, AZ  
Unifier Festival, Lebanon, CT  
Detroit Pride, Detroit, MI  
41<sup>st</sup> LEAF festival, Asheville, NC
- 2013 Symbiosis Festival, Oakdale, CA  
New Seed Festival, Tampa, FL  
Life is Living Festival, Oakland, CA  
Hip Hop Beyond Gender Festival, Berkeley, CA  
ReFrame International Film Festival, Peterborough, Canada  
Casa De Arte En Movimiento, Chiapas, Mexico
- 2012 Work\*Rock\*Sword Festival: A Musical Celebration of Women's Lives, NY, NY  
Clear Creek Festival, Rockcastle County, KY  
Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Oceana County, MI  
Mujeres De Maiz 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival, Los Angeles, CA  
UCC National Youth Event, West Lafayette, IN  
Half The Sky Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY  
3 Rivers Art Festival, Groton, MA  
10<sup>th</sup> Annual Terry P. Maine Poetry Festival, Augusta, ME
- 2011 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Oceana County, MI  
Esalen International Arts Festival, Big Sur, CA  
Blaktino Performance Festival," Bronx, NY  
18th Annual Red Hook Waterfront Arts Festival," Brooklyn, NY
- 2010 Injuco Convention, Goa, India,  
Third Eye Open 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Hip Hop Festival, New Bedford, MA,  
Esalen International Arts Festival, Big Sur, CA

- 2009 Afro-Latin Soul, Montreal, QC
- Mayworks Festival, Toronto, ON
- Aloha Music Fest, Honolulu, HI
- Green Fest, San Francisco
- Kona Pride Festival, Kona, HI
- Sheep Dog Festival, Maui, HI
- 2007 Guelph Festival of Art and Human Rights, Guelph, ON
- Blaktino Performance Festival, Bronx, NY
- Prisoners Justice Film Festival, Toronto, ON
- Lilikoi Fair, Honolulu, Big Island & Kauai, HI,
- LadyFest Toronto, Toronto, CA
- One love South Africa, New York, NY
- 2006 Sound Session Music Festival, Providence, RI
- National Pride for Women who Love Women, Atlanta, GA,
- Ladyfest South, San Antonio, TX
- 2005 Ground Breakers, Durban & Johannesburg SA
- 2004 International African Arts Festival Brooklyn, NY
- Women Center Stage," New York, NY
- Cultural Exchange International Art and Music Festival Portland, ME
- One World Fair, Cummington, MA
- Female Flavor: Women in Hip Hop, Bronx, NY
- 2003 National Blacks Arts Festival, Atlanta, GA

### Performance Venues:

- 2016 Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH
- ShowBox SoDo, Seattle, WA
- The Fairmount, San Francisco, CA
- Poetic Theater, New York, NY
- Sun Gate, Portland, OR
- Joe's Pub, New York, NY
- The Public Theater, New York, NY
- BRIC, Brooklyn, NY
- The Marin Center, San Rafael, CA
- Just Buffalo, Buffalo, NY
- Urban Roots, Miluakee, WI
- 2015 United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY
- Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
- Hammerstein Ballroom, New York, NY
- Manhattan Center, New York, NY
- World Café Live, Philadelphia, PA
- Pearl Street, Northampton, MA
- Community Works, New York, NY

Dance Mission Theater, San Francisco, CA  
 Le Poisson Rouge, New York, NY  
 Arts for Art, New York, NY  
 Cooperative Development Institute, New York, NY  
 Cyclorama, Boston, MA  
 2014 Tenney Theater, Oahu, HI  
 Children of the Land, Maui, HI  
 Hawaii Sanctuary, Big Island, HI  
 Turtle Bay Resort, Oahu, HI  
 Orange Peel, Asheville, NC  
 The Fox Theater, Atlanta, GA  
 The Hub, Oakland, CA  
 The Scottish Rite Center, Oakland, CA  
 Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY  
 Pinche, Fresno, CA  
 Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, WI  
 Zenu, Seattle, WA  
 2013 National Black Theater, Harlem, NY  
 The Shabazz Center, New York, NY  
 La Peña, Berkeley, CA  
 88 Days of Fortune, Toronto, ON  
 Edelo, Chiapas, Mexico  
 Culture Strike, Tuscon, AZ  
 2012 Smithsonian, African American Museum, DC  
 National Museum of the American Indian, Rasmussen Theater, DC  
 Washington Hall, Seattle, WA  
 Center for the Arts, Jackson Hole, WY  
 Portlan Stage, Portland, ME  
 Mujerez De Maiz 15<sup>th</sup> Annual, Los Angeles, CA  
 La Peña, Oakland, CA  
 Madrone Studios, San Francisco, CA  
 2011 Brooklyn Academy Of Music, Brooklyn, NY  
 Center On Halsted, Chicago, IL  
 BlackTina Performance Series, BAAD, Bronx, NY  
 Esalen Institute, Big Sur, CA  
 Museo Del Barrio, Harlem, NY  
 Historic Capitol Theater, Olympia, WA  
 The African American Museum, Philadelphia, PA  
 2010 Brooklyn Art Museum, Brooklyn, NY  
 Esalen Institute, Big Sur, CA  
 La Peña, Oakland, CA  
 Temple, San Francisco, CA  
 US Social Forum, Detroit, MI  
 92 Y Tribeca, New York, NY  
 Passage Theater  
 2009 The National Black Theatre, Harlem, NY (Month-long run)



- Newark Symphony Hall, Newark, NJ
- Riverside Theater, NY, NY
- The Hawaii Theater, Oahu, HI
- Passage Theatre, Trenton, NJ
- Women's Building, San Francisco, CA
- Montreal Afro Latin Soul, Montreal, ON
- Les Contes a Rendre, Montreal, ON
- 2008 The Nuyorican Poets' Café, NY, NY
- The Martin Luther King Unification Center, Washington D.C.
- anitAFRIKA! Dub Theater, Toronto, ON
- The Black Repertory Theatre, Providence, RI
- Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, Seattle, WA
- Big Sur Spirit Garden, Big Sur, CA
- National Black Theater, Harlem, NY
- 12-Mile West Theater, Bloomfield, NJ
- 2007 Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn NY
- Veye-Yo, Miami, FL
- Da Poetry Lounge, Los Angeles, CA
- Women's Building, San Francisco CA
- Ong King Arts Center, Honolulu, HI
- The House of Storms, Oakland CA
- Cell Space, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 Bronx Academy of Art and Dance, Bronx, NY
- The Knitting Factory, NY, NY
- The Regency Ballroom, San Francisco
- Spoken Soul Sessions, New Orleans, LA
- 2005 Casa de Hermanos Raiz, Santiago de Cuba
- Mega Music, Johannesburg, South Africa
- The Black Repertory, Providence College, RI
- La Peña, Oakland, CA

### Colleges & Universities:

- 2016 Oregon State, Corvallis, OR
- University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
- Colorado College, Boulder, CO
- Rutgers University, Jersey City, NJ
- Mills College, Oakland, CA
- Swarthmore College, PA
- Highline College, Olympia, WA
- Goucher College, Baltimore, MD
- UC Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA
- Reedley College, Fresno, CA
- Portland State University, Portland, OR
- 2015 University of North Carolina, Asheville, NC

California Institute for Integrated Studies, San Francisco, CA  
University of Illinois, Champaign- Urbana, IL  
Earlham College, Richmond, IN  
Cornel University, Ithaca, NY  
City College of New York, NY, NY  
Rhode Island University, Bristol, RI  
Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
Antioch College, Yellow Springs, OH  
Manchester College, Manchester, CT  
Northwestern Michigan College, Traverse City  
NYU- Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York, NY  
Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA  
Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI  
Kingsborough Community College, Brooklyn, NY  
2014 Harvard University, Boston, MA  
University of Hawaii, Big Island, HI  
University of California, Santa Barbara, CA  
University of California, Santa Cruz, CA  
Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME  
Fresno State, Fresno, CA  
Fresno City College, CA  
San Francisco State University, CA  
City College SF, San Francisco, CA  
California State, Northbridge, CA  
Susquehanna University, CA  
Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR  
University of Delaware, Newark, DE  
University of New York, Harlem, NY  
Naropa University, Boulder, CO  
Colorado University, Boulder CO  
Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY  
Highline Community College, Des Moines, WA  
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR  
Stetson University, DeLand, FL  
2013 Yale University, New Haven, CT  
Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA  
Florida International University, Miami, FL  
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR  
University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa  
Providence College, Providence, RI  
Mills College, Oakland, CA  
University of Texas, Austin TX  
Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI  
California State University, Santa Barbara, CA  
University of Iowa, Iowa, WI

University of Oregon, Portland, OR  
2012 Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA  
Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA  
Oregon State University, Corvales, OR  
University of North Carolina, Asheville, NC  
Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY  
Roger Williams University, Bristol, RI  
Mass College of Art, Boston, MA  
Smith College, Northampton, Ma  
Emmanuel College, Boston, MA  
Providence College, Providence, RI  
Augusta College, Augusta, ME  
Macalaster College, Saint Paul, MN  
UC Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA  
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR  
Marymount College New York, NY  
SUNY Purchase College, Purchase, NY  
2011 Depaul University, Chicago, IL  
Loyola University, Chicago, IL  
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT  
SUNY Plattsburg, Plattsburg, NY  
Mass Art College, Boston, MA  
Smith College, Northampton, MA  
College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME  
Boston College, Boston, Ma  
Wellesley College, Wellesley, Ma  
Pace University, Pleasantville, NY  
UW Madison, Madison, WI  
Oberlin College, Bowling Green, OH  
Scripts College, Claremont College  
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
University of Wisconsin, Duluth, WI  
2010 Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles CA  
Sacramento State University, Sacramento, CA  
Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA  
Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI  
Smith College, Northampton, MA  
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
Western Washington University, Bellingham WA  
Brown University, Providence, RI  
Providence College, Providence RI  
RISD College, Providence College, RI  
Columbia University, New York, NY  
Loyola University, Chicago, IL  
2009 Hampshire College, Amherst MA

Keene State College, Keene, NH  
 Boston College, Boston, Ma  
 College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME  
 Unity College, Unity, ME  
 UC Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA  
 NYU, New York, NY  
 Cornell University, New York, NY  
 2008 Western Washington, Bellingham, WA  
 University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI  
 Humboldt State College, Arcata, CA  
 2007 Mills College, Oakland, CA  
 Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA  
 Humboldt State University, CA  
 Amherst College, Amherst, MA  
 Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY  
 Boston College, Boston, MA  
 SUNY Ulster College, Stone Ridge NY  
 Concordia College, Moorhead, MI  
 Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA  
 University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI  
 Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL  
 University Of Wisconsin, Madison, WI  
 Mills College, Oakland CA  
 2006 Milikin University, Decatur, IL  
 University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH  
 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 UHD, Houston, TX  
 Florida International University, Miami, FL  
 George Brown College, Toronto, CA  
 Mills College, Oakland CA  
 Hobart William and Smith College, Geneva NY  
 Wesleyan College, Middleton, CT  
 New Paltz College, New Paltz, NY  
 Medger Ever College, New York, NY  
 2005 Bard College, Hudson NY  
 Boston College, Boston, MA  
 UMASS Amherst, Amherst, MA  
 Hampshire College, Amherst College, MA  
 University of Rhode Island, Providence, RI  
 Brown University, Providence College, RI  
 FAM University or Maryland, Baltimore, MD  
 2004 University of Pennsylvania, State College, PA  
 University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
 Depaul University, Chicago, IL



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## CONTACT

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