

## HAVE NO FEAR

### Logline:

To teach her children how to avoid becoming another police brutality victim, activist and choreographer Adia Whitaker leads her ensemble in the creation of a new stirring performance.

### Synopsis:

Choreographer and activist Adia Whitaker is a mother of two. Too many sons and daughters from her community have been harmed by police brutality. Frustrated by the fleeting media coverage and public attention, Adia creates a performance piece designed to engage people, using her lyrics to teach children how to stay safe during encounters with the police. Rehearsals slowly become a call to action, a form of resistance, and a way to connect with the community.

### One Page Synopsis:

Under the leadership of founder and choreographer Adia Tamar Whitaker, Brooklyn-based performance ensemble, Ase Dance Theatre Collective, prepares a piece to elevate the conversation around police brutality.

Since its inception, the dance group has been a space for artists of color to address issues related to identity and race on stage. Now that Adia has two young children to protect, her work has taken on a new sense of urgency. Too many sons and daughters from her community have been brutalized by police. What is left after the #ICantBreathe and #HandsUpDontShoot hashtags fade from public consciousness? Adia seeks to find new ways to engage people with raw directness and open up a dialogue about police brutality that lives in her audience's consciousness even when a case is not in the news. Adia looks to her dance company as a form of resistance, using song and movement to honor past victims, empower her community and pass lessons of strength to younger generations. As she explains, her life and the lives of her children are not a trend. Injustice from the very people sworn to protect them is a reality that she and her family will have to deal with their whole lives.

Together they discuss the meaning of the movements and gestures they reference, which combine traditional dance with contemporary issues. The film opens with a glimpse inside rehearsal as Adia and her dancers work through a sequence that portrays a violent encounter with the police during an arrest. The company's music and movements are shot in different environments as the piece evolves. However, as Adia makes clear, rehearsals are not simply about preparing for the stage. Instead, they are a call to action, an opportunity to connect with the community. We follow Adia and her company as they spread their message throughout their neighborhood in Brooklyn, expressing the need for unity with strangers they meet on the street. Intimate moments between Adia and her children are captured, connecting the artist's life with her creative process. Her piece is like a manual for children. Adia conveys practical "know your rights" training by explaining ways to stay safe during encounters with police in the lyrics of her songs. The same songs she creates for Ase performances are used as nursery rhymes and lullabies at home.

The piece is only one element of a larger "four-part movement prayer." Adia says the work is structured in the tradition of an African folklore "revolution piece," a format the film loosely follows. Echoing these revolution pieces, Adia's performance begins with a public call to join a cause. It continues with community unification and mobilization, building to a revolt. The last

shot is the entire company addressing the audience, forcing them to grapple with the issue despite discomfort or difficulty.

This is a film about an artist and black mother trying to turn her fears into direct action, as Adia teaches her children and her company how to stay strong, express themselves, and interface with a world that is not always safe or just.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Have No Fear was made in collaboration with Adia Whitaker, founder and choreographer of Ase Dance Theatre Collective. From the moment we met Adia, we knew we were in the presence of an extraordinary person, with a lot to express and a captivating way of doing it. We went to her home during our first meeting together and recorded some lyrics from a piece she was working on with her ensemble. The lyrics included some African and Haitian folklore elements, but mostly sounded like specific instructions for young people on how to behave when interacting with the police. There were references to police brutality cases to further drive the point home.

She explained to us the meaning behind the words and how she imagined she was singing to educate young children of color; she referred to her song as a 'manual' she wanted to leave behind for them. As we started recording again, she began singing not only into the microphone but also to her little boy, whom she was breastfeeding. It was her lullaby. This powerful image, and the sense of urgency in her eyes when she discussed her piece, made us realize that we had a responsibility to honor Adia and share her important work.

Our different backgrounds didn't give us pause because we never gave consideration to individual authorship. The goal was to get Adia's message to come through and, while some artistic intervention on our part was inevitable, we ultimately felt like a conduit to something much bigger than us. This is a film about a black mother and artist trying to turn her fears into direct action, as Adia teaches her children and her company how to be strong, express themselves, and interface with a world that is not always safe or just. We hope the film serves as a reminder of the all-consuming fear caused by police brutality that parents and communities of color experience every day, especially in the absence of news coverage, when the issue is largely forgotten.

## Full Cast and Crew:

Co-Directors: Beata Calinska & Sarah Jacobson in collaboration with Adia Tamar Whitaker

Director of Photography: Tracie Williams

Second Camera: James Nguyen

Sound & Editing: Beata Calinska & Sarah Jacobson

Additional Camera: Beata Calinska & Sarah Jacobson

Sound Engineer: Joe Morgan

Sound Mix: Christopher Allen & Emile Klein

Executive Artistic Director: Christopher Allen

Executive Producing Director: Lucila Mocetuzuma

Productions Coordinator: Sarah Lerner

Project Mentor: Lynne Sachs

Choreographer, Founder & Artistic Director of Ase Dance Theatre Collective: Adia Tamar Whitaker

Co-Choreographer & Executive Director of Ase Dance Theater Collective: A. Nia Austin-Edwards

Ase Dancers/Vocalists: Brittany Grier, Erin Holmes, Aleijuan King, Wi-Moto Nyoka, Brian Polite, Kendra J. Ross, Rachel Russell, Efeya Sampson & Rashad Wilson  
Vocal Soloists: Kendall Johnson Smith, Tendayi Kuumba & Timothy Prolific Veit Jones  
Dance Soloists: Sade Adona, Kevin McEwen & Tyrone Bevans  
OG Ase Dancers/Vocalists: Coco Killingsworth, Joy Bell & Jovan Clay  
Musicians: Orion Gordon, Kojo Odu Roney, Goussy Celestin, Baba Duru Dimitrius & Talu Green  
Costumes: Uncle Sene & Adia Tamar Whitaker  
Special Thanks To: Vincent Burwell, Stephanie Battle, Baba Antoine Roney, Mama Nia Love, Baba Ben Rojas, Beans & Booty & Melana Lloyd, Michael Gitlin, Toby Lee, Kara Oehler, Lu Olkowski, Lynne Sachs, Pacho Velez, Jody Wood, Caveh Zahedi, Kevin T. Allen, Alan Berliner, Bill Brown, Jem Cohen, Andrés Duque, Betzabé García, Jill Godmilow, Jennifer Heuson, Penny Lane, Marie Losier, Yael Melamede, Joe Richman, J.P. Sniadecki, Kazuhiro Soda, Stefanos Tsviopoulos, Lana Wilson, Jason Fox, Toby Lee, Scott MacDonald, Caspar Stracke, Chi-hui Yang, 2016 & UnionDocs Colab Fellows

Contact Info:

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Beata Calinska Co-Director, Co-Producer, Co-Editor

Beata Calinska has been awarded the European Union grant to set up her own non-profit to produce media and research projects. Her documentary short debut “The Conductor” was awarded first prize at the Goethe-Institut’s international competition. She was selected as a resident fellow for the 2015-16 edition of UnionDocs’ Collaborative Program in New York where she co-directed short ‘Have no Fear’. Her documentary films were presented at the international film festivals and reviews in Germany, Austria, Greece, Slovakia, Switzerland, Cyprus, Argentina, India, China and USA.

Beata completed her studies with an M.A. in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Lodz, in addition to the Film and TV Production program at the Lodz Film School, and the Scholarship in Visual Anthropology at the University of Cyprus. She is currently based in Los Angeles.

Sarah Jacobson Co-Director, Co-Producer, Co-Editor

Sarah Jacobson is a researcher and filmmaker based in New York City. She has worked on a number of projects in non-fiction media, ranging from Vimeo Staff Pick shorts to the Emmy Award-winning feature documentary, We Could Be King. She was a 2016 fellow at the UnionDocs Collaborative Studio in Brooklyn, NY, where she directed and edited two short films. Sarah received her B.A. in Psychology from Boston University before spending several years teaching in rural Spain.

Tracie Williams- Director of Photography

Tracie Williams is photographer, visual artist, filmmaker, and creative producer. Hailing from the deserts of New Mexico and transient by nature, her spirit has brought her from the bays of Australia to the banks of the Mekong River in Laos. She now rests her weary head in the heart of the beast that is NYC. Although her roots are social documentary and street photography, her most recent quest - to experiment and discover innovative approaches to the traditional narrative - led her to pursue an MFA degree at ICP-Bard. Tracie is currently a 2016 Fellow of the UnionDocs Collaborative Studio based in Brooklyn, New York.

James Nguyen- 2nd Camera Operator

James Nguyen is a Sydney-based artist working with documentaries, installation and performance. He completed a Masters of Fine Arts at Sydney College of Arts (the University of Sydney) and is a recipient of the Clitheroe Foundation Scholarship and the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship. James has exhibited throughout Australia and in China. He is also co-founder of curatorial projects; ACuratorVisists.com and AstuteArtInvestments.com creating collaborative platforms to engage artists and communities in China, Australia and the greater Asia-Pacific Region.

Emile Klein- Sound Postproduction

Emile Klein works in sound and image. He's produced non/fiction pieces for a variety of podcasts and radio outlets, including WNYC, NPR, the BBC, Panoply, BuzzFeed, and WFMU. Klein's multimedia, storytelling, non-profit, You're U.S., has exhibited with museums, universities, and cultural centers across the US, and been featured by the New York Times, Vice, PBS, and USA Today. The quasi-millennial is the recipient of the 2015 Gold Tape award, was a 2016 UnionDocs CoLab alumnus, and, just recently, has become enamored with documentary film mixing. He's currently exploring Los Angeles.

**Àşę Dance Theatre Collective** is a professional, neo-folkloric performance ensemble that specializes in Dance Theater from the African Diaspora. The company is currently made up of seven female dancer/vocalists, two male freestyle dancer/spoken word artists, two musicians and one vocalist.

Under the artistic direction of its founder, **Adia Tamar Whitaker**, a dancer/choreographer and vocalist from San Francisco's Bay Area, this Brooklyn based dance theater collective is dedicated to preserving the past, present and future of the African presence in the "New World". Since 2000, ASE has presented work that links contemporary dance, original vernacular movement and traditional dance theater from the African Diaspora to conceptual ideas in the human experience. The current repertoire features a variety of multi-media dance theater and music works composed by Adia Tamar Whitaker. ASE also performs as a folkloric music ensemble and provides interactive educational performances for children K-12.

Under the musical direction of Sekou Alaje, ASE presents the African Diaspora's diverse dance <http://asedance.com/the-company/adia-tamar-whitaker/>