

# Statement from 2017

## Building Inclusivity through Challenging Assumptions

### in Contact Improvisation

#### wcciJAM 2017

*In this house, we believe:*

*Black Lives Matter.*

*Women's Rights are Human Rights.*

*No Human is Illegal.*

*Science is Real.*

*Love is Love.*

*Kindness is Everything.*

*— Kristen Joiner*

The wcciJAM team offers this festival as an immersive time to train and gain perspective on the many ways Contact Improvisation is practiced. We also recognize that our dance practice by itself will not lead to a more just and equitable society. Part of our work has to be that of recognizing the visible and invisible barriers around this dance, which is so often depicted as being equal and inclusive. Working towards inclusivity means more than just

opening the door. The theme for the 2017 Jam is “Challenging Assumptions;” as we work with assumptions about how to share weight or how to enter and exit dances, we also recognize that the body is a political site. We invite you, over the course of the festival, to join us in reflecting on this dance and the culture around it, to deepen our CI practice, and to move toward co-creation of more equitable spaces for practicing CI.

A first step in this work is not assuming that everyone enjoys the same freedoms on and off the dance floor: not assuming that everyone is free from the threat of violence, or feels full freedom of expression, for instance. These freedoms tend to go hand-in-hand with privilege in our society, and are often associated with straightness, maleness, whiteness, physical ability, and class status, among others. Acknowledging that we don’t know each other’s experience, and actively practicing challenging our own assumptions about each other’s intention, gender, sexual orientation, class, or ethnicity is one way to begin to navigate the complicated sociopolitical power structures that we inhabit, no matter where we find ourselves on in these spectrums.

A thread about assumptions in CI practice may be found on the wcciJAM Facebook group page. Note that Carol Swann’s class on Friday will specifically address the socially conscious body, and that Jun Akiyama and Ronja Ver will be hosting a conversation about political awareness in CI on Sunday. Challenging our assumptions requires a willingness to get uncomfortable, to not know, make mistakes, and be open to conflict and communication. This document is a work in progress, intended to create conversation. We invite you into dialogue with us.

*~ the wcciJAM organizing team*

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