

THE
SAN
FRANCISCO
FOUNDATION

2017 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARDS



OUR 2017 WINNERS

Dr. Ayodele Nzinga

Pogo Park

Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology

Tamisha Torres-Walker



Dr. Ayodele Nzinga from Oakland is the winner of the Helen Crocker Russell Art Award. In 1999, Dr. Ayodele Nzinga founded Oakland's oldest Black theater troupe, The Lower Bottom Playaz. Originating in West Oakland, the troupe was the company in residence for 13 seasons at an outdoor theater built for Dr. Nzinga. Now in residence at The Flight Deck in Oakland, Nzinga and her troupe, the only theater company to stage the August Wilson Century Cycle in chronological order, are a gateway to employment in the performing arts for actors of color. Her groundbreaking work has been performed in underserved communities across Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco

Counties. Dr. Nzinga also founded a Summer Theater Day Camp in 2007 which provides free enrichment programs for youth ages 5-18. As a writer, theoretician, and practitioner of the arts, she creates, directs, and produces performances that facilitate complex conversations across race and class by bringing together mainstream theater goers and marginalized communities of color.





Pogo Park, based in Richmond, is the recipient of this year's Impact Award. Founded in 2007, Pogo Park is an entrepreneurial, community-based, 501(c)3 nonprofit that creates vibrant parks in Richmond's tough Iron Triangle neighborhood where children can play, grow, and thrive. Ten years ago, Pogo Park reclaimed Elm Playlot, a broken, dispirited, and little-used city

park – and transformed it into a beautiful, safe, green oasis that serves the needs of 13,000 low-income residents. To transform Elm Playlot, Pogo Park hired, trained, and empowered community residents to plan, design, build (and now manage) this park themselves. Today Elm Playlot is a symbol of change in a neighborhood where virtually every other public works project has failed. The park has energized the neighborhood – and a wave of positive impact is rippling out, transforming the people and the place. Pogo Park's process is being hailed as a national model for what deep, authentic community engagement looks like.





Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology (BAYCAT) of San Francisco is the recipient of the

John R. May Innovation Award. BAYCAT is a unique nonprofit social enterprise which educates, empowers, and employs youth and young adults to produce digital media that tells their unique stories and engages them to positively transform themselves, their communities, and the world. They provide a tangible pathway from education to employment in media, tech, and the creative industries for low-income youth and young adults from historically underserved Bay Area communities of color. Since their founding in 2004, they have educated close to 4,000 students in media production, trained and employed over 200 interns in their studio, and placed 80% of their graduates in media-related careers with partners like Pixar, Lucasfilm, HBO, and Netflix. 100% of BAYCAT's last internship cohort were young people of color and 67% were women.





Tamisha Torres-Walker of Richmond is the recipient of the Robert C. Kirkwood Leadership Award. She is the Director and Founder of The Safe Return Project. Tamisha, who is formerly incarcerated, shares a powerful personal story about the journey to healing and successful re-entry with her two sons Yomani and Irra. Walker has been a Richmond/Contra Costa based community organizer and known advocate on issues related to mass incarceration and racial disparity in the criminal justice system since her release from incarceration in 2009. She has six years of community organizing experience in cities impacted by trauma and economic inequality, including her own personal experience with trauma

and poverty growing up in Richmond California. Her experience includes professional training in research and advocacy for the formerly incarcerated and their families, violence prevention strategies and conflict mediation to reduce urban gun violence. Tamisha's work on investing in people and not prisons has impacted the lives of thousands returning home from incarceration to Contra Costa County.

