



NIA CENTRE HOSTS LITERARY ARTS LUNCH N LEARN

Dalton Higgins and Timea Wharton-Suri Share Expertise at 'The Real Jerk'

Seated at a round table in a popular Toronto Caribbean eatery, an intimate gathering of artists had the opportunity to enjoy the best of The Real Jerk's flavours, while engaging in an informative discussion with two of Toronto's top black literary experts on Saturday, May 13, 2017.

Selected via online application, the group was treated to an educational lunch session hosted by Nia Centre for the Arts' *Creative Connect* Program Coordinator, Shelton Mpala, and featuring mentors writer Dalton Higgins and literary administrator Timea Wharton-Suri.

The *Creative Connect* program is a professional development project for early career artists seeking career-building opportunities. The Lunch n Learn series is an informal talk-back session with topics that include: building one's creative skill set, politics of creating one's art, intersections of identity in art, and creative career paths. The Literary Arts theme on Saturday also contained discussion about the granting process, the publishing process, and participant-specific inquiries.

Mentor Dalton Higgins, a Toronto-based public relations strategist, author, music and arts festival presenter, spoke to the group about his experiences navigating the publishing industry, and provided tips based on his career in Toronto's arts sector. Mentor Timea Wharton-Suri, an accomplished dancer and business administrator, has been instrumental in developing Toronto Arts Council programming as their Literary Arts Officer.

Dalton gave the participants a raw overview of what they can expect, and what they should be prepared for as they plot their career paths; Timea outlined the granting process, and provided advice for artists seeking support for their projects. Key takeaways: finding one's niche, the importance of marketing, and building a community with like-minded peers. "It takes a village..." was a cultural-specific lesson that was emphasized along with seeking advice from elders and reaching out to industry experts.

For more information about Nia's *Creative Connect* program, visit the Programs & Partnerships section of Nia Centre's website, www.niacentre.org.

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