

## A Right to Move

By: Larry Ossei-mensah | December 9, 2014



### *A Right To Move*

*Ailey's Odetta celebrates the legacy of a noted humanitarian.*

BY LARRY OSSEI-MENSAH

This year's season at the legendary Alvin Ailey Dance Theater is anchored by the world premiere of *Odetta*, a seminal piece created by rehearsal director Matthew Rushing, that pays homage to singer, civil rights activist and humanitarian Odetta Holmes, a Harlem resident until her death in 2008. Holmes' career spanned over six decades in influencing iconic musicians from Bob Dylan to Janis Joplin and Holmes—who used her voice to vividly articulate the pain, anger and optimism of the Civil Rights movement—is widely considered one of the most influential voices of the 20th century.

"I want to continue the momentum of Odetta's legacy," says Rushing, who looked to create a piece that organically fuses her music with soul-stirring dance movements. "[We want] more people around the world to learn about who she is and what she stood for."

The graceful gestures and hypnotic motions exhibited by the dancers in *Odetta*, to what Holmes described as her "liberation songs", are filled with purpose and passion. Rushing allowed his instincts and the spirit of Holmes to act as guide. "Once I started my research, I realized what an enormous contribution she had not just on African American culture, but the world." [Alvinailey.org](http://Alvinailey.org)