

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Ravyn Ariaiah Wngz. I am an Afro-Indigenous, 2Spirit, Queer and Transcendent multidisciplinary art maker, curator and empowerment storyteller living and working in T'karonto.

I am a member of the Board of Directors for Black Lives Matter Canada and Wildseed Center, a Black community dedicated to nurture radical Black experimentation and creation. My work is rooted in abolition and expressed through movement, political education, cultural research, DEIA consultancy, and many forms of disability justice. Some career highlights include: Canadian Best Selling Author (Until We Are Free), Stratford Festival mid-career artist award 2021, named Top 25 Women of Influence in Canada recipient of 2021, Nobel Peace Prize nominee 2021 (with Black Lives Matter). I have lectured widely on topics such as abolition, art & activism, accessibility, LGBT inclusion, leadership, policy, and land-based informed policies at Deloitte Canada, University of Virginia Dept of Anthropology, UCLA School of Architecture and Urban design, McMaster University, University of Toronto School of Law Faculty, Faculty at the Toronto District School Board & Toronto Catholic School Board, and Canada's National Ballet School.

I write to confirm my enthusiastic involvement with Shaunga Tagore's Village Artist Grant Ecosystem project, as co-producer, dramaturg and trusted advisor. I met Shaunga in 2009 while sharing a stage at a Colour Me Dragg showcase, a beloved series that prioritized the well-being of people of colour in an often racist queer and trans performance scene. I became her mentor in 2011 during the first phase of development for her one-person-show, "The Erasable Woman." In 2015 She invited me to direct her play, "Letters to the Universe," and we have been colleagues and collaborators ever since.

Shaunga is a bold, ambitious and uninhibited creator. In 2012, I witnessed her grow the seed of a vision to take up space with "Unapologetic Burlesque," a performance showcase and education series dedicated to reclaim the ancestral and political roots of burlesque. Her work held audiences, performers and crew accountable to holistic accessibility, care, consent, and Land Acknowledgement commitments that very few performance spaces in T'karonto were thinking of at the time. I saw the way her work spread and changed the cabaret, dance and theatre landscape in this city that many do not realize can be attributed back to her labour. As a leader, Shaunga is guided by ancestral veneration and respect of people, place, land and the cosmos. Her commitment to accessible affirming gender expansive spaces makes working with her a generative, accountable and joy-loving experience. She prioritizes care, rest, mutual respect and reciprocity. She curates spaces from a place of ritual, ceremony, and the invitation to a life well-lived, and well resourced.

Like that of a Birch Tree, Shaunga is a Weaver who lives her teachings through all her relations. Her ability to translate and share her knowledge of Ancestor wisdom has been the ignition for so many QTBIPOC to grow their relationship to spirit and ancestral listening here in T'karonto. I myself have been the beneficiary of her wisdom and mentorship, which has transformed how I show up for myself and the communities I live alongside. My success can't be separated from her genius and generosity.

Shaunga's investment in crafting and curating ecosystems of care, abundance and community are what so many have been asking for. Supporting this project means that her medicine will continue to transform and 'evolutionize' this city and beyond, in ways we deeply need now, and for the future. This is justice, this is love.

Ravyn Wngz