

MEDIA KIT



SHONDA BUCHANAN

WRITER • EDUCATOR • SPEAKER • CONSULTANT • TRAVELER

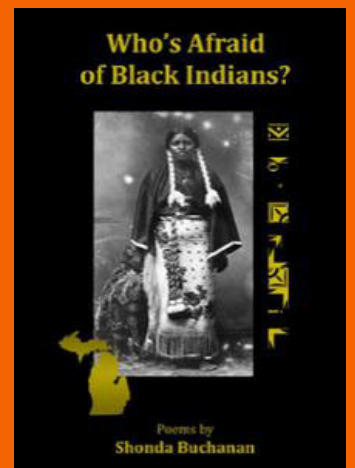
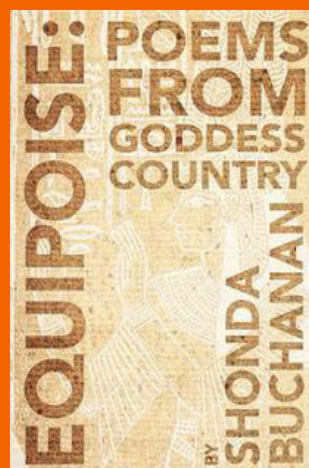
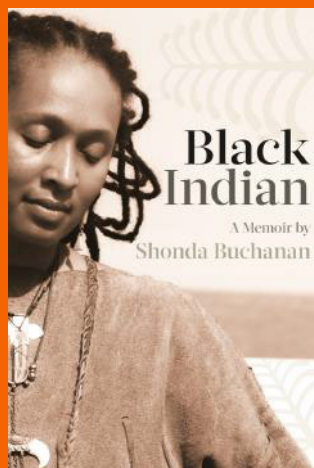



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SHORT BIO



Kalamazoo, Michigan native [Shonda Buchanan](#) is a twice Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee, Oxfam Ambassador and a PEN Emerging Voices Fellow and PEN America Mentor. A professor in the Department of English at Western Michigan University and Alma College's MFA Program in Creative Writing, Shonda is the author of three collections of poetry, *Who's Afraid of Black Indians?*, *Equipoise: Poems from Goddess Country* and the forthcoming, *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone*, as well as the award-winning memoir, *Black Indian*, chosen by PBS NewsHour as a "Top 20 books to read to learn about institutional racism." Former Board President for Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center and Board member of the Kalamazoo Poetry Festival and the Kalamazoo Arts Council, Shonda has published in *The Mississippi Review*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *the LA Weekly*, *LA Times Magazine*, *AWP's The Writer's Chronicle*, *Indian Country Today*, *Red Ink Journal*, *LA Parents Magazine* and freelanced for the *International Review of African American Art*, *Westways*, *the Los Angeles Review of Books*, *the Daily Press* and *Sisters of AARP*. Shonda's forthcoming essay collection, *Children of the Mixed Blood Trail*, explores mixed-race migration in North America. An English Language Specialist with the Department of State, Shonda is currently shopping a Black Lives Matter book of poetry, *America's Bloodflowers: Poems*, as well as *Artificial Earth: Poems and Essays*, about the first founding mixed race "settlers" of Los Angeles and California Indians. Descendant of the African Mende nation of Sierra Leone, and in North America, the Coharie, Choctaw and Eastern Band Cherokee, and Europeans, Shonda writes on Chumash/Tongva lands in Los Angeles and in the Midwest on Ojibwe/Anishinaabe, Ottawa and Potawatomi lands. Shonda has taught creative writing, research and BIPOC/American literature for the past 24 years.

Links & Social:

www.shondabuchanan.com

Facebook: [@shonda.buchanan](#)

Twitter: [@shondabuchanan](#)


Instagram: [@shondabuchanan](#)

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/shondabuchanan/

YouTube: www.youtube.com/@ShondaTheWriter



LONG BIO



Author of six books, including the award-winning memoir, *Black Indian*, Kalamazoo, Michigan native **Shonda Buchanan** is an award-winning poet, memoirist and educator with a mission to inspire, educate and heal. Focusing on the intersections of race, identity, migration, landscape and language, Shonda's work creates space and capacity to explore difficult social, cultural and racial issues from a place of empowerment, motivation and grace.

Shonda's memoir, *Black Indian*, won the 2020 Indie New Generation Book Award and was chosen by PBS NewsHour as a "Top 20 books to read" to learn about institutional racism. *Black Indian* begins the saga of her family's migration stories of Free People of Color communities exploring identity, ethnicity, landscape and loss.

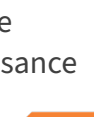
Finalist for the 2021 Mississippi Review poetry contest, her first collection of poetry, *Who's Afraid of Black Indians?* was nominated for the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and the Library of Virginia Book Awards.

Twice Pushcart Prize nominee, a Best of the Net nominee, California Arts Council Established Artist Fellow and Oxfam Ambassador, Shonda is also a USC Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities Fellow and City of Los Angeles (COLA) Department of Cultural Affairs Master Artist Fellow. President of the Board of Trustees for Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, Shonda is the recipient of the Brody Arts Fellowship from the California Community Foundation, a Big Read grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, several Virginia Foundation for the Humanities grants, the Denise L. Scott and Frank Sullivan Awards, and an Eloise Klein-Healy Scholarship.

Consulting PEN America Emerging Voices Mentor, Association of Writers & Writing Programs Proposal Judge, Poetry Curator for the Broad Museum and Grand Performances, Shonda is also a Sundance Institute Writing Arts fellow, a PEN Center Emerging Voices fellow and a Jentel Artist Residency fellow.

For the last 25 years, Shonda has conducted writing workshops, readings and lectures for public, university and community college libraries, the Salvation Army and Goodwill for K-12 and college students, working adults, veterans, the unsheltered and corporations. An educator and journalist for over 25 years, DEIA workshop leader and trainer, founding Literary Editor of Harriet Tubman Press, Shonda is an expert in African American and American Indian literature and culture. 2023 Best of the Net Nominee from Tab Journal, Shonda has freelanced for the *Los Angeles Times*, *the LA Weekly*, *AWP's The Writer's Chronicle*, *Indian Country Today*, *Capital & Main*, *LA Progressive*, *Westways Magazine*, *Sisters of AARP*, *The International Review of African American Art*, *the Daily Press*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. She commentated for Marketplace Radio and was featured on WHRO's HearSay, and National Public Radio's Tell Me More.

Shonda is also published in Tab Journal, Inlandia Institute's *The Black Experience Anthology*, the Mississippi Review, Urban Voices: 51 Poems from 51 American Poets, Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noire, Art Meets Literature: An Undying Love Affair, Phati'tude Literary Magazine, Red Ink ...



LONG BIO

... Arise! Magazine, Def Jam Poetry's Bum Rush the Page, Geography of Rage: Remembering the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 and Rivendell.

As an Education Specialist (Regional English Language Program) for the U.S. Department of State's Embassies, Shonda has taught and lectured in Malaysia, Brazil, England, Greece and Amsterdam. Shonda has been a consultant, grant reader and manuscript reviewer and/or judge for the Poetry Foundation, the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the Library of Virginia's Poetry Book Awards, the North Carolina Arts Council Poetry Fellowship, the George Floyd Youth Justice Poetry Contest, the Amanda Gorman Youth Poetry Contest, the Virginia Commission for the Arts Fiction Contest, the Metrorail Public Art Project Poetry Contest, CavanKerry Press, NAACP's ACT-SO Youth Poetry Contest, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the Creative Writing Youth Contest for the College Language Association.

As a culture and literary arts ambassador and lecturer, Shonda has conducted workshops and presentations for the U.S. Government Accountability Organization, the U.S. Embassy of Brazil and Kuala Lumpur/U.S. Department of State, the Athens Institute for Education and Research in Athens, Greece, the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, Michigan Department of Education, California Poets in the Schools, the Hampton Roads Writers Conference (former Board member), the Poetry Society of Virginia (former Board member) and numerous others.

Former Interim Chair of the Department of English & Foreign Languages at Hampton University where she was an assistant professor for 13 years, Shonda Buchanan was the Fall 2017 Writer-in-Residence in the Department of English at William & Mary College. A national and international lecturer and workshop leader, Shonda received an MFA from Antioch University, and an MA and BA in English from Loyola Marymount University where she currently teaches as a Writing Instructor in the First Year Seminar Program and a Senior Lecturer in the African American Studies Department. In addition to her work as a literary activist, a teaching artist, diversity expert and a writing mentor, she is a faculty member in Alma College's MFA Program in Creative Writing and has taught at Cal State Northridge, Whittier College and Mt. San Antonio College. Shonda is also a founding board member of the African American Alumni Association at Loyola Marymount University.

Shonda's forthcoming books are, *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone* (poetry, RIZE Press, 2025) and *Children of the Mixed Blood Trail* (essays, Wayne State University Press, 2026). She is currently shopping a Black Lives Matter essay collection and a BLM poetry book, *America's Bloodflowers: Poems*, as well as *Artificial Earth: Poems and Essays* about the first founding mixed race "settlers" of Los Angeles and California Indians, as well as a second memoir about love, travel, spirituality and finding joy.

Descendant of the Mende African nation of Sierra Leone and the West African region, and the Coharie, Choctaw and Eastern Band Cherokee North American nations, and Europeans, Shonda lives and writes in Los Angeles on Tongva and Chumash lands and in the Midwest on Ojibwa, (Anishinaabe), Ottawa and Potawatomi lands, yet she considers herself a citizen of the world.

THE LOST SONGS OF NINA SIMONE

by Shonda Buchanan

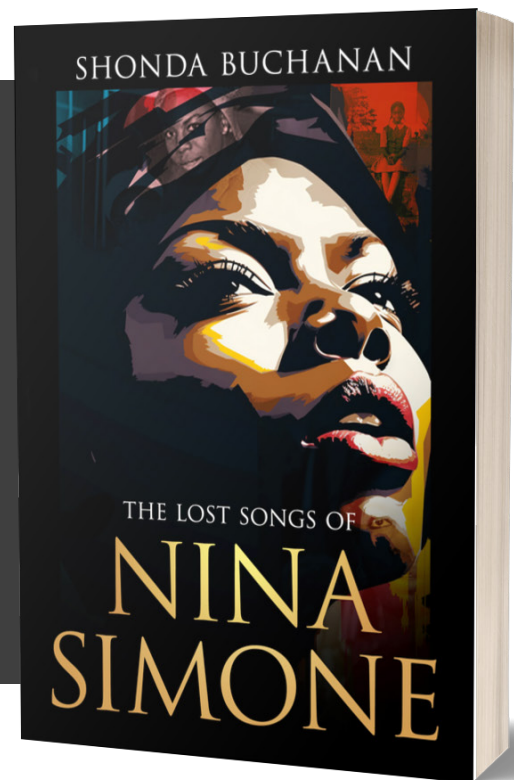
PUBLISHER:
RIZE Press

PUBLICATION DATE:
May 26, 2025

ISBN-13:
978-1960018984

FORMAT:
Paperback (119 pages), Ebook

PRICE:
\$21.99 (Paperback), \$9.99 (Ebook)



Praise

“Shonda Buchanan crystalizes [Nina Simone] as a rare amalgam: piano prodigy, sudden soul singer, freedom fighter, half-loved-lover, complex mother and still more.”

— Remica Bingham-Risher, author of *Soul Culture*

Simone’s childhood is portrayed against the backdrop of a nature-centric, magical realist narrative. The book culminates in a realistic and politically charged conclusion, all intertwined in histories of Africa, Ireland, and North America.”

— Carolina Rivera Escamilla, author of *In a Corner of Your Country*

Shonda Buchanan weaves a prism of language, sound and light about , and light about the life of concert pianist, singer, the life of concert pianist, singer and Civil Rights activist, the incomprehensible Nina Simone. With this book, Buchanan is declaring this The Century of the Black Woman, providing a glimpse into not only Simone's life, but the lives of Black women in America, and their choices in a myopic, unforgiving country. A grandchild of enslaved Africans, American Indians, and Irish migrants, born into poverty in a traditionally large family, Simone lived a life few Black American women lived during the Jim Crow era in the South, yet rose to ultimately impact the world with her creative genius and determined spirit.

A Q&A ABOUT THE LOST SONGS OF NINA SIMONE

Q: Why did you write your book?

A: The poems kept coming to me. I discovered a cassette tape in my early 20s and from the first moment I pressed play on my cassette player (I know, I'm dating myself!) I fell in love with her sultry, smokey voice – a cross between backwoods tinted words bent into a jigsaw European accent. Listening to her haunting songs and haughty interviews, I always thought, where is she from with that accent? Where did she come from with those fingers that fly across the piano keys? This difficult, sable-skinned Black woman who loved us more than we loved ourselves. She loved Black people so much that she sacrificed her career. I had to know. I had to find her. Her story. It was a quiet obsession that I nursed for years.

Q: What parts of history are you examining with this book?

A: Of course I'm exploring her life as a Black woman in America. Yet I'm also exploring her origin story, and the origin story of her ancestors in South and North Carolina, two states that were among the first British colonies in the Southeast of our country. This book re-imagines her childhood, her young adulthood and as a married woman to an abusive man. Because I love the genealogy trail, I'm also looking at how her African and Indigenous roots formed.

Q: You can do all this in a poetry book?

A: For some, it might be odd to think of a book of poetry, or poems, as historical markers and containers because in our slim understanding from school, poems are about love and flowers and nature. But Nina, her impoverished upbringing, her rich ancestry, her incendiary music and her groundbreaking life, deserved to be treated with the same kind of thoughtful care and research that we give any pivotal moment in history. Nina was a visionary and a leader, and the impact of her music, and her choices, is truly underrated and undervalued. This book of poetry is the first time we see her life from beginning to end, looking at these particular crossroads. My book, *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone*, is my love letter to her. For her. For her art in my life.

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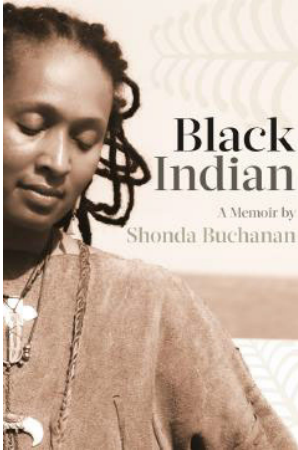
Q: How did Nina's downfall start?

A: First, let me talk about her power. Since her childhood, as little Eunice Waymon, trained as a classical pianist and a kind of “favorite daughter” of her community, her charisma flooded with every room she entered thereafter, from New York music studios to the Newport Jazz Festival to the Playboy Mansion when she performed her hit, “I Loves You Porgy,” to Carnegie Hall and table tops of Liberia, to Italy, Spain, Paris, in every room, she commanded attention. How many Black women could do that at this time, in Jim Crow America? She was spectacular. A Gorgon, a soothsayer. A Goddess. But then in 1964, after writing and singing the enraged “Mississippi Goddamn,” a response song to the death of Medgar Evers and the four Black girls who died in the Alabama church bombing, she threw in with Civil Rights activists who knew her visibility could help move the needle against white discrimination and prejudice. It did, but she also became a pariah and slowly, with the gutting assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X and others, not only was her sanity tested, but her career was suffering.

Q: How is Nina Simone still relevant today?

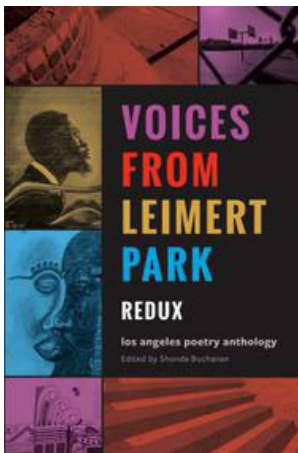
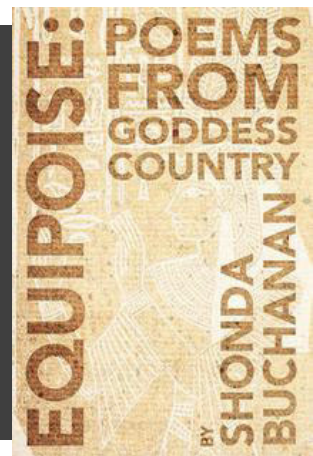
A: I think the real question is ‘Will Nina Simone ever not be relevant?’ Her work tangentially and directly informs the work of so many other artists – Common, Erica Badu, Lauryn Hill, Bob Dylan, James Baldwin, Jasmine Sullivan – people trying to reach a new level of consciousness and artistic engagement in an attempt to change racist paradigms and name names of who is reeking injustice. Another question to ask is ‘Why are we still in the same place in our country as when Nina was first singing her fire songs and waking us up?’ We’re still a land of blatant inequality with two tiers of justice, one for white people and one for everyone else. “They” tried to silence Nina, which is one of the reasons why she fled to Europe and Africa, to escape. But like a chameleon, her music, her presence and her persona, reappear and become something different for new generations in America, for Black, white, and Asian folks; for Africans and Europeans, those who also see that thing Nina could feel in her bones – justice. Nina said: “An artist’s duty, as far as I’m concerned, is to reflect the times.” I wrote this book, *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone*, to share a new perspective, explore her motherhood, her failures and triumphs, but also to extend the cloak of activism to the rest of us. If you are an artist, then this is your job, it is your “responsibility” to try to make a change. Is that why we write? 6

PUBLISHED WORKS



AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Black Indian, A Memoir
PUBLISHER: Wayne State University Press
PUBLICATION DATE: August 26, 2019
ISBN-13: 978-0814345801
PAGES: 352

AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Equipoise: Poems from Goddess Country
PUBLISHER: San Francisco Press
PUBLICATION DATE: May 19, 2017
ISBN-13: 978-0996835053
PAGES: 128



AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Voices from Leimert Park REDUX: A Poetry Anthology
PUBLISHER: Tsehai Publishers
PUBLICATION DATE: October 14, 2017
ISBN-13: 978-1599071848
PAGES: 171

AUTHOR NAME: Shonda Buchanan
BOOK TITLE: Who's Afraid of Black Indians?
PUBLISHER: Poetica Publishing
PUBLICATION DATE: 2012
ISBN-13: 978-0983641087
PAGES: 48



CONTACT



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To request Shonda as a Keynote Speaker, Workshop Leader, Presenter, Lecturer, or as a Consultant, Curriculum Development Coordinator/Consultant, Grant Writer or Program Coordinator/Manager

Note: In your email, please include the occasion/theme, date, time, location, number of participants or estimated audience and honorarium/speaker fee/or anticipated consulting budget.

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