



PRESS RELEASE

25 August 2009

SHANGWE HAIR & SKIN ANTHOLOGY SECURES ARTS COUNCIL FUNDING

*Shangwe Community Arts Consultancy has been awarded a £5,000 *Grants for the Arts* Award from Arts Council England, London, to produce an anthology of writing by Black and Mixed-Race women of African and African-Caribbean descent.

Shangwe's third anthology, which is being designed to reflect the themes of hair and skin will be edited and independently published by Shangwe's founder and director, Nicole Moore. Two volunteer artists, Patsy Antoine and Sheree Mack will be involved in the project to ensure dialogue and mutual artistic development takes place and that the project achieves high-quality work throughout.

Contributions have already been received from a number of women, but now the editor will advertise the anthology widely and seek further submissions. Forty participants will have the opportunity to write, and express their hair and skin stories using the genre of poetry and personal essay. The published anthology will be promoted with a well marketed launch and a series of twelve readings and four spoken word events, where contributors will perform their contributions to a wider audience.

This national project builds on the successful Shangwe Hair Stories Blog, www.hairjournal.blogspot.com, which was a Black History Month project launched in October 2008 to collect and edit Black women's Africentric natural hair stories. The aim was to provide an interactive dialogue of visual and written expressions to share journeys to natural hair styles. After evaluating the project, Nicole Moore decided to add the theme of skin so as to widen the scope for a potential anthology.

Sheree Mack, Artist & Diverse Arts Project Coordinator said:

'This is a tremendous project that I'm honoured to be involved with. I welcome the opportunity of creating those spaces where black and mixed-race British women can share and discuss their diverse experiences and issues, which still surround how we ourselves and society at large perceive and represent the themes of hair and skin. Receiving the funding to fulfil this endeavour is a sign that these issues are being taken seriously and that our voices will be heard. This is an exciting and rewarding time.'

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Patsy Antoine, Writer & Literary Consultant said:

'How fantastic that Shangwe has the support of The Arts Council in its exploration of themes so pertinent to black and mixed race women today. An anthology that gives voice to these experiences can only be a good thing.'

Jackee Holder, Author & Director of Life Work In Progress said:

Telling our hair stories is an important and vital part of keeping our herstories alive. It is a fundamental journey in marking and sharing the diverse, creative, spiritual and political identities of Black women in the UK. Like books our hair stories must be both told and read. I am delighted that Shangwe is putting together this anthology as documentation of our journeys with our hair.'

Nicole Moore, Founder of Shangwe said:

'I am absolutely thrilled and grateful for this Arts Council backing. The hair and skin themes are important to me for a number of reasons. For example, society, particularly the beauty and fashion industries still maintain a closed shop when it comes to the selection and promotion of models. In women's magazines, on catwalks, even shop dummies, dark skin is rarely seen. In this context, light skin and straight hair affirm superior human status.'

Anyone wanting information about the anthology should contact Nicole Moore on 07846 542321 or email: nicole@shangwe.com

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NOTE TO EDITORS

Shangwe Hair & Skin Anthology is supported by a *Grants for the Arts* Award through Arts Council England, London. To find out more about the Arts Council visit www.artscouncil.org.uk

Shangwe Community Arts Consultancy provides a range of community arts services, for example, freelance article writing, designing and delivering creative writing workshops, book readings and spoken word events and has developed considerably since its launch in 2004. Shangwe's website www.shangwe.com was created and launched in January 2005 with the main purpose of contributing to the development of new Black British literature by promoting writing by and for UK Black and Mixed-Race women. In this context, Shangwe aims to inform, inspire and empower these women writers, build their confidence and encourage their participation in the arts.

Nicole Moore is of Guyanese and English parentage. She is a published poet and arts commentator and has been a freelance writer for fourteen years, with experience of producing work for magazines and poetry anthologies. She is the editor of *Brown Eyes* (2005) and *Sexual Attraction Revealed* (2007) both Shangwe produced anthologies of creative expressions by black & mixed-race women. She is a member of The Society of Authors and has also taught creative writing as a writer in residence in primary and secondary schools, as a tutor in colleges and as an associate lecturer for Open University.

Nicole Moore is available for interviews.