

Black Leaders, Visionaries, and Advocates from Our Pasts and Presents

Text-Only, Large Text Version

Created by the staff of The Youth Project

Shea Diamond

Shea Diamond is an incredible singer, musician, and trans rights activist currently living in the U.S. Shea cites "the late great Whitney Houston, Tina Turner and Nina Simone" as integral influences to her powerful sound that centres themes of liberation, self-determinism, and revolutionary dreaming.

While experiencing the violence of incarceration at a very young age, she wrote her now popular song "I Am Her" which she describes as [quote] "a statement to a world that said I shouldn't exist". Currently, Shea uses her platform to speak about the critical need for abolition and the immense discrimination, isolation, and harm she faced as a trans woman in a mens prison.

It's Shea's goal to build more space for trans artists and creatives, she says [quote] "my music speaks about oppression...it speaks about how times should change." In 2019 Shea Diamond was nominated for the GLAAD Media Award and was included on Billboard's list of the

best LGBTQ songs of 2020, we know that this creative momentum, recognition, and celebration will continue!

Evelyn White

Evelyn White's creative practice lives at the intersections of memoir, essay, and journalism. Apparent in her body of work, she has dedicated her practice to platforming the legacies of Black women that have inspired her, such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Viola Desmond, Esther Phillips, Gwendolyn Brooks, Aretha Franklin, and Audre Lorde. Using her abundance of knowledge, experience, and talent, Evelyn also writes for the legacies of Black women that are yet to come. Evelyn carves space to disrupt realities of anti-Blackness in Nova Scotia through her brilliant journalistic contributions to the Coast, Examiner, and NS Advocate. As a weaver of past and future, an archiver of Black excellence, and a story-teller for those without a voice, White is leaving a legacy of her own.

About the high standards she sets for herself, Evelyn has said [quote]: "I am a direct descendant of enslaved Africans who were forbidden, on the penalty of death, to learn how to read or write. As such, I approach my work as a journalist with uncompromising truth and integrity. I must be fit for myself to know."

Stormé DeLarverie

Stormé DeLarverie, born December 24th, 1920, was a lifelong 2SLGBTQIA+ rights activist, advocate, and creative. Storme was an extremely talented drag performer and one of New York's Premier Drag Kings. From 1955 to 1969 Storme traveled with the legendary Jewel Box Revue as their MC and only Drag King, inspiring many with her trend-setting style. Many say that she is a primary influencer of the gender-nonconforming fashion we know today.

Stormé loved her community and took on a community safety role called [quote] "Guardian of the Village", where she served as a security guard in the neighbourhood's gay bars and as a general watch-keeper. On June 28th, 1969 at the Stonewall Inn, Stormé was violently arrested for dressing in drag, she fought back at the police violence encouraging her community to do the same. Stormé's revolutionary passion contributed to what we know as the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion.

In 2008, she disclosed to Curve Magazine that she was the long-unidentified [quote] "Stonewall lesbian" who helped incite the uprising, she became known as the [quote] "Rosa Parks of Stonewall." Storme was inducted into the National LGBTQ Wall of Honour in 2019 coinciding with Stonewall's 50th Anniversary.

Joshua Obawole Allen

Joshua Obawole Allen is an imaginative poet, creative, and 2SLGBTQIA+ activist and advocate. They are deeply invested in building community spaces that are rooted in principles of abolition and uplift Black, Two Spirit, trans, and gender-nonconforming people.

Impacted and influenced by their lived experience, Joshua has cultivated critically needed resources in Lenapehoking (also known as Brooklyn, New York) such as The Black Excellence Collective. Joshua has served as a member of Resist, and the Sadie Nash Leadership Project and is currently working on their debut collection of poetry and prose titled *All the Things I Never Said*.

They strongly believe in the transformative power of arts as activism and the revolutionary importance of representative education. You can watch Joshua discuss gender non-conforming liberation on the recent debut of *Getting Curious*, a Netflix special.

Aaron Rose Philip

Aaron Rose Philip is a trailblazing high-fashion runway model, activist, and 2SLGBTQIA+ community advocate. She is the first Black, disabled, trans model to be represented by a major agency stating [quote] "It's

important that it's not just a singular moment... but the start of a more inclusive reality in fashion”.

In her New York Fashion Week debut, the Antiguan American supermodel made history at the Moschino’s Spring 2022 show as the first disabled model to grace the runway using a wheelchair. Philips said, [quote] "The advice I give young disabled women who dream of walking the runway is to simply have faith in yourself," — "be assertive and persistent about your goals and aspirations”.

Through her new powerful platform and social media following, Aaron is carving crucial spaces in the creative sector that disrupt anti-Blackness, ableism, transphobia and affirm and elevate Black, disabled, trans youth.

Portia White

Portia White (1911 to 1968) was the first Black Canadian singer to gain international recognition. Born in We'kwampekik (Truro) and raised in Kjiptuk (Halifax), Portia began public singing at church when she was six years old. She studied at Dalhousie to become a teacher and eventually taught in Lucasville and Africville, while attending vocal lessons and competitions after classes. She went on to perform in nearly 100 recitals across North and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe.

She was known for singing in a variety of languages and styles (including Black spiritual music and classical European). Portia retired from public singing in 1952, but continued to teach music in Toronto (Toronto).

Today, many young musicians' dreams are supported in her honour. Although Portia is not known to be queer, her art and activism work helped pave the way for Black 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadian musicians to share their voices worldwide.

Tourmaline

Tourmaline is a creative visionary, filmmaker, writer, activist, and was named one of [quote] "Time Magazine's Top 100 Most Influential People of 2020." Tourmaline's brilliant work is archival, telling stories of 2SLGBTQIA+ leaders, dreamers, and community builders in imaginative ways. She has released works celebrating 2SQTBIPOC revolutionaries such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera through the film *Happy Birthday Marsha* and Miss Major through the short animation *The Personal Things*. Tourmaline first started her career in 2013 with her Tumblr visual project, *The Spirit Was...* which detailed the work of 2SQTBIPOC activists who have been left out of the popular whitewashed narrative of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Tourmaline's most recent project, *Salacia*, is a short film that focuses on Mary Jones. Mary was a Black, trans, sex worker that lived in Seneca Village, which was the largest community of free Black people in New York city before it was torn down in the 1850s in order to build Central Park. We highly recommend engaging with Tourmaline's work to learn about these systemically erased legacies.

Ms. Myles

Ms. Myles is a vibrant and outgoing Jamaican-Canadian trans woman who creates beautiful art and engaging, educational content on her Instagram and TikTok.

Her goal is to create digital spaces that centre and affirm Black 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences and prioritize their confidence and care. Ms. Myles' hope is to demonstrate the transformational power of community and chosen family – she knows how crucial it is to feel loved and supported in journeys of self-actualization.

She is a shining example of the representation our communities need. Ms Myles is making an active change in the lives of many through her leadership, creativity and hope.

Eddie Ndopu

Eddie Ndopu is a writer, storyteller, and humanitarian, and describes themselves as a [quote] “unrepentant bougie crip” – “unapologetically brilliant, Black, queer and disabled”. In his writing work (TIME Magazine, Forbes, The Guardian) Eddie centres his lived experiences of Blackness, queerness, and disability, and is currently writing his forthcoming memoir, *Sipping Dom Perignon Through A Straw*.

Eddie has an academic background in public policy, and is currently an United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocate. In their humanitarian work, Eddie’s focus is in offering advisory in scientific and medical fields around accessibility, universal design, and disability-based innovation.

[Quote] “there’s no contradiction between being disabled and being utterly, mind-numbingly fabulous”, among other written celebrations of disability, can be found in his short-form written work on social media (@eddiendopu), and through his practice of disability justice. He invites his disabled community to [quote] “hold space for our agency, our sass, our messiness, our desires, our dreams, all of it”.

For Further Learning

All titles below are hyperlinks.

Texts

- [Racism Persists Amidst Nova Scotia School Systems](#)
by Evelyn White for The Coast

Music

- [I Am Her](#) by Shea Diamond
- [Think on Me](#) by Portia White

Video

- [Getting Curious Episode 3: “Can We Say Bye Bye to the Binary?”](#) (Netflix)
- [“Ladies Who Lunch” Moschino Spring 2022 \(Aaron Rose Philip at 3:20\)](#) (Youtube)
- [Happy Birthday Marsha!](#) by Tourmaline, Sasha Wortzel (Prime Video)
- [The Personal Things](#) directed by Tourmaline (Youtube)

Socials

- [@iamsheadiamond](#)
- [@joshuaobawole](#)
- [@blackxcollective](#)
- [@aaron__philip](#)
- [@tourmaliine](#)
- [@ms.mylesmua](#)

- [@eddiendopu](#)

Image Descriptions

From the illustrated version of “Black Leaders, Visionaries, and Advocates from Our Pasts and Presents”.

Shea Diamond

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black trans woman on a gold background. She is wearing a blouse and a stack of necklaces, large hoop earrings, rings, long pointed nails, and a crown around her afro. She is wearing makeup and long eyelashes, and gazing upward with a neutral expression with her hand up to her crown. Her name is written above her hair, surrounded by doodled sparkles.

Evelyn White

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black cis woman on a gold background. She is wearing a pullover sweater that reads “Africville: A Spirit that Lives On”, a pair of round thick-rimmed glasses, and has short curls styled in a quiff. She’s smiling widely, and looking at the viewer. Her name is written above her shoulders, with doodled expression lines around her smile.

Stormé DeLarverie

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black butch on a gold background. She is wearing a suit with a bow tie and rings on her fingers, her hair is short and cropped, and she is posing with her chin resting on her hands. She is gazing at the viewer with a slight smile. Her first name is above her left shoulder and her last name is at the bottom of the portrait, and a box is drawn askew behind her head.

Joshua Obawole Allen

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black non-binary person on a gold background. They are wearing a tank top, and a mask and pair of sunglasses that have been pushed off of their face. They are facing the viewer, smouldering, and they have long locs that extend past the barriers of the portrait. Their name is above their head, and their face is framed by doodled squiggles.

Aaron Rose Philip

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black disabled trans woman on a gold background. She is wearing a stoned bustier and feathers in her hair, and is looking at the viewer with a joyful open-mouthed smile. Her name

surrounds her whole portrait, with expression lines doodled around her.

Portia White

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black cis woman on a gold background. She is wearing fur and looking downward, and her hair is parted and pushed back. Her name is above her head, and lines of music notation flow from her ears past her shoulders with notes from her song "Think On Me".

Tourmaline

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black trans woman on a gold background. She is wearing a strapless top, a handkerchief in her chin-length curly hair, small hoop earrings, a chain necklace, and has visible tattoos, including one of Marsha P. Johnson on her chest. Her name is above her head, and behind her head is a doodled heart shape.

Ms. Myles

A head and shoulders line portrait of a Black trans woman on a gold background. She is wearing a blouse, large hoop earrings, a septum ring, abstract eye makeup., and she has long braids that extend past the barriers of the portrait. She is smouldering, and looking

directly at the viewer. Her name is above her head, and there is a starburst shape doodled behind her.

Eddie Ndopu

A seated line portrait of a Black disabled queer person on a gold background. He is wearing a light jacket with pins on it and a collared shirt, and his short locs are styled into an updo. They're wearing makeup and they have some facial hair, and they're sitting with their chin up and their head resting against the headrest of their wheelchair. His name is on his left side, accentuated by doodled expression lines.