

UBUNTU! FEST ONLINE PROGRAM

9:30AM-2:30PM DAILY (PUERTO VIEJO COSTA RICA/CST)

11:30AM-4:30PM DAILY (TORONTO CANADA/EDT)

4:30PM-9:30PM DAILY (LONDON UK/BST)

free online attendance



D'BI.YOUNG
ANITAFRIKA



ANITA STEWART



DR. NATALIE WALL



LYNN ADHIAMBO
OBATH

**UBUNTU! FEST
AN ONLINE SYMPOSIUM
AUG 25-27, 2022**



MIRANDA EDWARDS

**PRAXIS
PERFORMANCE &
PEDAGOGY**



BEHBEIT



ESIE MENSAH

by Black
Womxn

RSVP

decolonialartscentre.com



RAVYN WNGZ



SASHOYA SIMPSON

**2022 SEASON LAUNCH
UBUNTU! DECOLONIAL ARTS CENTRE**

WELCOME TO

UBUNTU! DECOLONIAL ARTS CENTRE

Dear Global Village

My name is d'bi.young anitafrika and I am the founding Artistic Director of UBUNTU! Decolonial Arts Centre, located in the jungle hills of Puerto Viejo Costa Rica. Welcome to our inaugural season launch event: *Ubuntu! Fest Online Symposium*, featuring nine incredible Black womxn practitioners from around the world.

UBUNTU! Decolonial Arts Centre is a holistic gathering place, aiming to embody the African philosophy from which it takes its name—*Ubuntu*—a Zulu/Xhosa word meaning *I am because you/we are*. UBUNTU! centres the relationship between arts practice, humxn and planetary ecologies, water, land and food cultivation, and embodied decolonial praxis by Black and other Global Majority arts practitioners from around the world.

Founded on the principle of Sankofa—an Indigenous African philosophy (Twi) which means *to return and get the knowledge*—we are attempting to cultivate our Black and indigenous roots, that tether us to the earth, to unlearn and relearn through the decolonial framework of the Anitafrika Method. The Centre:

- a) hosts year-round individual and cohort artist residencies
- b) convenes international workshops, courses, and in-person/online gatherings
- c) hosts the annual Ubuntu! Fest & Online Symposium

Ubuntu! Fest is our first offering to you Global Village. It is an annual free 3-day international arts festival featuring decolonial arts practitioners from around the world, who are working to rupture colonial matrixes of power within themselves and society. Ubuntu! Fest highlights reflexive theatre and performance practice, as well as other creative, intellectual, socio-political and cultural interventions that aim to decolonise personhood, practice, and pedagogy. This year's theme—*Praxis, Performance & Pedagogy by Black Womxn*—forms part of my ongoing doctoral research into Black womxn's personhood, practice and pedagogy.

"Black womxn face invisibilisation and systemic violence throughout the world, due in large part to compounding colonial-historical-systemic oppression. This phenomenon is "best understood through explorations of intersectionality...interactions of race/ethnicity, gender/sex, socioeconomic status, sexuality, nationality, age, spirituality, and/or abilities..." (Boylorn R.M and Orbe M.P 2014, 16). As an insider autoethnographer with hyphenated identities—Black-queer-feminist-working-class immigrant-mother, dub poet-playwright-performer-dramaturge-director, and decolonial researcher—I am attempting to connect the dots between (1) Black womxn's experiences of oppression, (2) the decolonial performance frameworks that we cultivate in response to those oppressions, and (3) how we use decolonial frameworks to devise theatre and performance." (anitafrika, 2022, 22)

Ubuntu! Fest centres Black womxn in conversation about ourselves and the ways we navigate, negotiate, and narrativise our lives and practice. I asked each practitioner to provide a praxis statement as an entry point into our

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conversation. I invite you to reflect upon your world views, values, and beliefs from a decolonial perspective as an entry point into our community gathering space. Join us for keynote talks, poetry, play readings, and interviews with Pioneer Dub Poet/Playwright/ Educator **Anita Stewart**, Scholar/Writer/Antiracist **Dr. Natalie Wall** (PhD), Artist/Writer/Teacher **ona adhiambo margaret**, Actor/Playwright **Miranda Edwards**, Maker/Herbs Womxn/Facilitator **behbeit**, Dancer/Choreographer/Educator **Esie Mensah**, Abolitionist/Thought Leader/Storyteller **Ravyn Wngz**, and Storyteller/Writer/Performer **Sashoya Simpson**.

UBUNTU! Decolonial Arts Centre and annual festival are both dreams come true for me, made possible because of your ongoing support Global Village. Thank you for your solidarity throughout the years. Our doors are now open, and we would love to host you here.

In kindness,

d'bi.young anitafrika
Founding Artistic Director of Ubuntu! Decolonial Arts Centre

anitafrika, d.y. 2022. "Ubuntu! Decolonial Performance Methods by Black Womxn in Theatre: a Black-Queer-Feminist Critical (Auto) Ethnography" Unpublished PhD diss. London South Bank University.
Boylorn, R.M & Orbe M.P. (eds) (2014) Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life. New York & Oxon: Routledge.

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SYMPOSIUM DAY 1

THURSDAY AUGUST 25

9:30am-2:30pm daily (Puerto Viejo Costa Rica/CST)

11:30am-4:30pm daily (Toronto Canada/EDT)

4:30pm-9:30pm daily (London UK/BST)

UBUNTU! WELCOME

CST 9:30AM/EDT 11:30AM/BST 4:30PM

d'bi.young (30mins)

KEYNOTE TALK

CST 10:00AM/EDT 12:00PM/BST 5:00PM

Dr. Natalie Wall (30mins)

IN CONVERSATION + Q & A

CST 10:30AM/EDT 12:30AM/BST 5:30PM

Dr. Natalie Wall & d'bi.young (30mins)

BREAK

CST 11:00AM/EDT 1:00PM/BST 6:00PM

30 Minutes

PLAY READING-BROWN GIRL IN THE RING

CST 11:30AM/EDT 1:30PM/BST 6:30PM

Miranda Edwards (Pre-Recorded)
(30mins)

IN CONVERSATION (PRE-RECORDED)

CST 12:00AM/EDT 2:00PM/BST 7:00PM

Miranda Edwards & d'bi.young
(30mins)

BREAK

CST 12:30AM/EDT 2:30PM/BST 7:30PM

30 Minutes

IN CONVERSATION + Q & A

CST 1:00PM/EDT 3:30PM/BST 8:00PM

Esie Mensah & d'bi.young (1hr)

UBUNTU! SYMPOSIUM WRAP-UP

CST 2:00PM/EDT 4:00PM/BST 9:00PM

d'bi.young (30mins)

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SYMPOSIUM DAY 2

FRIDAY AUGUST 26

9:30am-2:30pm daily (Puerto Viejo Costa Rica/CST)

11:30am-4:30pm daily (Toronto Canada/EDT)

4:30pm-9:30pm daily (London UK/BST)

UBUNTU! WELCOME

CST 9:30AM/EDT 11:30AM/BST 4:30PM

d'bi.young (30mins)

KEYNOTE READING—FROM DUB POETRY TO DUBBIN THEATRE

CST 10:00AM/EDT 12:00PM/BST 5:00PM

Anita Stewart (30mins)

IN CONVERSATION + Q & A

CST 10:30AM/EDT 12:30AM/BST 5:30PM

Anita Stewart & d'bi.young (30mins)

BREAK

CST 11:00AM/EDT 1:00PM/BST 6:00PM

30 Minutes

PLAY READING—LULU'S LULLABY

CST 11:30AM/EDT 1:30PM/BST 6:30PM

Sashoya Simpson
(30mins)

IN CONVERSATION + Q & A

CST 12:00AM/EDT 2:00PM/BST 7:00PM

Sashoya Simpson & d'bi.young
(30mins)

BREAK

CST 12:30AM/EDT 2:30PM/BST 7:30PM

30 Minutes

IN CONVERSATION + Q & A

CST 1:00PM/EDT 3:30PM/BST 8:00PM

Ravyn Wngz & d'bi.young
(1hr)

UBUNTU! SYMPOSIUM WRAP-UP

CST 2:00PM/EDT 4:00PM/BST 9:00PM

d'bi.young (30mins)

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SYMPOSIUM DAY 3

SATURDAY AUGUST 27

9:30am-2:30pm daily (Puerto Viejo Costa Rica/CST)

11:30am-4:30pm daily (Toronto Canada/EDT)

4:30pm-9:30pm daily (London UK/BST)

UBUNTU! WELCOME

CST 9:30AM/EDT 11:30AM/BST 4:30PM

d'bi.young (30mins)

IN CONVERSATION—BLACK WOMXN PRAXIS + Q & A

CST 10:00AM/EDT 12:00PM/BST 5:00PM

d'bi.young & ona adhiambo margaret
(1hr)

BREAK

CST 11:00AM/EDT 1:00PM/BST 6:00PM

30 Minutes

IN CONVERSATION—IF BLACK CRACKED + Q & A

CST 11:30AM/EDT 1:30PM/BST 6:30PM

behbeit & d'bi.young
(1hr)

BREAK

CST 12:30PM/EDT 2:30PM/BST 7:30PM

1 Hour

COSTA RICA CARNIVAL LIVE

CST 1:30PM/EDT 3:30PM/BST 8:30PM

ona adhiambo margaret & d'bi.young
(30mins)

UBUNTU! SYMPOSIUM WRAP-UP

CST 2:00PM/EDT 4:00PM/BST 9:00PM

d'bi.young (30mins)

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PRACTITIONER

BIOGRAPHY & PRAXIS

Anita Stewart | Dub Poet/Playwright/Educator

Anita Stewart is a Jamaican-Canadian poet, actor, social worker, elementary school teacher, mother to Johari Stewart Crawford and d'bi.young anitafrika and grandmother to Moon and Phoenix Anitafrika. She is the fourth daughter of Theresa Daley and is a sister to Beverley, Kathleen, Inez and Vashti. From Dub Poetry to Dubbin Theatre represents over forty years (1979 to 2022) of Anita Stewart's writing including her poetry, dub theory and dub play. She studied Theatre-in-Education and Acting at the Edna Manley School for the Visual and Performing Arts in Jamaica from 1982-1985. Stewart worked as a teacher to neuro-diverse and differently-abled young people at Carberry Court Special School in Kingston, from the mid-eighties to the early nineties, using Popular Theatre to engage, educate and transform the lives of her students and the wider community.

Stewart has travelled extensively, performing and facilitating workshops in South Africa, Europe, North America and the Caribbean. Her published and recorded work include selected pieces in the anthology *Dub Poets—Nineteen Poets from Jamaica and England*, published in Germany by Christian Haberkost; *Woman Talk: Caribbean Dub Poetry*, the all-female album produced by Mutabaruka in Jamaica; the premiere dub poetry album *when the love is not enough* by d'bi.young anitafrika; *The Great Black North: Contemporary Canadian Poetry* edited by Valerie Mason-John and Anthony Cameron; and *Utterances and Incantations: Woman, Poetry and Dub* an anthology edited by Afua Cooper.

Anita Stewart is a pioneer of dub poetry in Jamaica and was at one time the only womxn member of the premiere dub poetry group Poets in Unity. Upon moving to Canada in the early 1990s, she was one of the organisers of *Toronto's International Dub Poetry Festival*. She was also a key organiser in the Fresh Arts multidisciplinary program in Toronto, developing decolonial arts curricula and facilitating programs within drama-in-education and creative writing alongside Amah Harris and Ivor Pecou of Theatre in the Rough.

Stewart's dub thesis written in 1985, forms the theoretical foundation of the Anitafrika Method—a decolonial Black-queer-feminist praxis, created by her offspring d'bi.young anitafrika and taught globally to thousands of arts practitioners. During her time at Drama School, Stewart theorised dub poetry's intrinsic embodiment of theatre. She brought her research practice to full realisation when she wrote her first dub play entitled *Fatima's Mood*, which is also included in this collection (see Part IV). A recipient of the Manifesto Life-Time Achievement Award, Anita Stewart continues to impact performance art practitioners globally, through her ongoing dub poetry legacy—a tree of life that continues to bear fruit and feed the people.

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PRACTITIONER

BIOGRAPHY & PRAXIS

Dr. Natalie Wall | Scholar/Writer/Antiracist

Originally from Toronto, Dr Natalie Wall has been based in the UK since 2015. She is an interdisciplinary researcher whose work focuses on Black women's performance, activism and antiracist praxis, with a particular emphasis on Canada and the Caribbean diaspora, and more recently the UK. Natalie recently chaired a panel on "Mediating Carnival Digitalscapes" at the Society for Caribbean Studies conference, which she is evolving into a special journal issue with her collaborators. She has also recently published a paper on the work of dub performer d'bi.young anitafrika, titled "Catching Bullets with Her Ass: Matrilineality and the Canadian Dub Poetry Tradition in the Work of d'bi.young anitafrika" in the Journal of West Indian Literature. Natalie is currently writing a book titled *White Generosity* (forthcoming with Emerald in 2023 and based on her similarly titled 2021 article). *White Generosity* examines contemporary and historical discourses of black freedom in the context of an exchange economy in which the dominant white culture continues to construct itself as a benevolent benefactor to those it has enslaved and exploited. Natalie is Research Impact Lead at King's College London.

Keynote Talk—Praxis, Performance, Pedagogy:

WAP and Black Womxn's Matrilineal Inheritances

In summer 2020, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion released the sex-positive smash hit *Wet Ass Pussy*, whose expression of Black femininity and open embrace of vulgarity made it an immediate hot topic, not only for right-wing culture warriors but anyone and everyone that felt they were best placed to tell Black women how to talk about their own bodies. The furore around WAP demonstrates the lingering impact of colonial-era coercive control over Black womxn's bodies and reproduction – of Black womxn legally denied access to marriage, to raising their own children, to choosing their own partners. This is a colonial history that we live with every day, and it produces a fundamental tension in Black mxtherhood – Carolyn M. West's discussion of the figures of the Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel show that we, as Black womxn, are still suffering from narratives and opinions originating during slavery and upheld by the colonial structures surrounding us. Our bodies have never been our own. But Black womxn's bodies resist their colonial containment. The Black womxn's body performs – "a deliberate performance of visibility that begs us to consider the constructed nature of visibility" (Fleetwood 20). Hypervisibility and excess are the language of resistance and the inheritance Black womxn's bodies carry come from larger than life womxn with cultural, historical and political resonance, including Sojourner Truth, Nanny Maroon, Louise Bennett, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Claire Harris, Azeezat Johnson, Anita Stewart, d'bi.young anitafrika, our mxthers and dxxghters.

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PRACTITIONER

BIOGRAPHY & PRAXIS

d'bi.young anitafrika | Founding Artistic Director of UBUNTU! Decolonial Arts Centre

d'bi.young anitafrika (they/them) is an african-jamaican-tkarontonian artist-pedagogue; creator of the anitafrika method and founding artistic director of the watah theatre and ubuntu! international decolonial arts centre.

Praxis

The Anitafrika Method is a Black-queer-feminist decolonial framework originated by d'bi.young anitafrika. Integrative, critically reflexive, and trauma-informed, the method supports the growth and development of artists, educators, innovators and leaders. It is a practitioner-centred arts-based intervention that nurtures self-transformation, creative expression & community embodiment. Emerging from the Dub theory of d'bi.young's mother—pioneer Dub poet Anita Stewart—the Anitafrika Method is grounded in nine fundamental principles: Self-Knowledge, Power, Orality, Language, Rhythm, Urgency, Sacredness, Integrity and Experience, explored through the Energy, Spiritual, Mental, Community, Emotional, Exchange, Creative, Physical and Earth Bodies.

behbeit | Maker/Herbs Womxn/Facilitator

behbeit is a multi | inter-disciplinary artist from Toronto. Her work is built on over 20 years of experience in creative and technical disciplines, which include but are not limited to: fashion/textiles design, fine metals + jewelry, digital media, video production, photography, midwifery, and space curation. All of her work is a critical reminder to the world and those that come after, that she exists. Her existence is not only essential but pertinent to the existence of humanity. The space she holds will take on a whole new shape that must remember what it held before. The art she has created is that reminder. Until her last breath, she is a part of the whole.

Praxis

I realized that I was a completely whole composite of all that does and doesn't exist, and my only purpose while here, is to be me, a perfect reflection of you. That is all we owe humanity, that is all we owe each other. but most of all, it is all we owe ourselves. It is in this spirit that I incorporate the broader aspects of the Anitafrika Method in not only my art, but the actual performance of behbeit, by looking at myself as being the intersection of my art and community of neighbours/makers/creators/ healers + the universe.

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PRACTITIONER

BIOGRAPHY & PRAXIS

Miranda Edwards | Actor/Playwright

Born in Saskatchewan to Grenadian parents, Miranda grew up in Toronto where her love for theatre was born. Decades later her career includes a growing list of credits in Film, TV and Theatre. Some of these include *Mean Girls*, *Orphan Black*, *Arrow*, *Supernatural*, *Snowpiercer*, *A Million Little Things* and *Family Law*. Theatre credits include *'da KinK in my Hair*, *Toronto the Good*, *who knew grannie: a dub aria*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Madonna Painter*. Miranda is excited to take part in the Ubuntu! Fest with her new play; returning to her theatre roots. She now calls BC home, where she resides with her two phenomenal kids.

Praxis—*Brown Girl in the Ring*

In the play *Brown Girl in the Ring* by Miranda Edwards, Young Shassi is invited by an unknown entity in the midst of a most challenging time. As she grows older, struggling with her sense of worth and self love, Shassi navigates these choppy waters with a reluctant witness by her side.

Esie Mensah | Dancer/Choreographer/Educator

Esie Mensah is an artist whose creative footprint extends into many genres, disciplines and regions. Whether as a dancer, choreographer, director, educator, and TedX speaker, Esie's mastery of storytelling is as diverse as her experience. From working with megastars like Rihanna, Drake, Janelle Monae and Arcade Fire to historic brands like Holt Renfrew, Coca-Cola, TIFF, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto Raptors, and more. For her own work, Esie has committed to using Afrofusion to explore more personal narratives of her blackness, belonging and Ghanaian heritage. Years have been spent developing her own style of dance, which fuses traditional and contemporary African styles with Urban, Latin, Caribbean and Modern styles of dance. Her company Esie Mensah Creations has created 3 original works; *Akoma*, *ZAYO* and the Dora-nominated *Shades*. Esie has a unique ability to transform movement into a physical language and has been doing so as a movement director for the past few years. Recent involvement includes the Shaw Festivals' *Russian Play* and *Victory*, Souleppper's *MaRainey's Black Bottom* to Dora-nominated Musical Stage Company's production *Caroline, or Change*.

Praxis

As a multidisciplinary artist that creates through the medium of dance I am interested in how our stories can be a catalyst for healing ourselves and our communities. Art and life are an intersectional network that continue to feed each other in my practice. Deep Ancestral listening has been integral through my voyage of self-discovery. Unpacking complex topics helps me recognize the importance of creating work that needs to be shared to push the foundation of our communities forward. Utilizing dance as a form of storytelling which can be an instrument for connection between artist and audience cultivating a somatic tethering between both parties. The body's connection reminds us to come back into ourselves so we can remember who we are and the impact we have with those around us.

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PRACTITIONER

BIOGRAPHIES

ona adhiambo margaret | Artist/Writer/Pedagogue

ona adhiambo margaret is a multilingual Kenyan-American interdisciplinary artist, writer and storyteller. ona Adhiambo creative practice is inspired by the oral traditions of her Luo ancestry and uses a variety of techniques to delve into themes around shared memory, embodied knowledge, and belonging. ona adhiambo's approach to practice and research is centred on orality, which she defines as a restorative act aimed at preserving individual, collective and cultural memory. Influenced by the Anitafrika Method principles ona Adhiambo's practice is an ongoing, iterative journey towards Ubuntu through the stages of personal transformation, artistic expression & community embodiment. Through her work, ona adhiambo seeks to give an account and hold on to Luo cultural traditions for those, who like her, will come looking for their roots.

Praxis

Stories interconnect us, allowing us to keep our separate senses of self while creating an entirely new body where between the “me” and the “you”, a we might emerge. This is the art of storytelling. As a storyteller it is my great joy and responsibility to tell stories in a way that captures the human experience as one of me and you and us. As a Luo woman, one of the most beautiful things about my mother tongue Dholuo, are the many meanings that can be pulled from a single word or simple statement in our story telling. Within Luo culture storytelling is traditionally facilitated by elders. Elders hold the responsibility of developing and maintaining the community's social fabric—which as a result retains cultural memory and passes on knowledge. Elders are members of the community with life experience and cultural knowledge, who through storytelling strategies engage these faculties when making decisions around economic, moral or political issues. In Luo storytelling culture these strategies are used to point to the connected nature of the personal, communal and universal experience—in the process developing our capacity for navigating uncertainty and change. My praxis aims to cultivate those creative behaviours needed to preserve my Luo storytelling traditions, inspire new knowledges grounded in African philosophical forms of enquiry and grow into the traditions of my elders. Despite the narrative of valuelessness inflicted on the African continent and her people by colonial occupation, our traditions are alive and well. My praxis, or theory with practice, allows me to document and develop work in a way that illustrates the intrinsic value of those knowledges that live in the body as memory, tradition and story.

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PRACTITIONER

BIOGRAPHY & PRAXIS

Sashoya Simpson | Storyteller/Writer/Performer

Sashoya Simpson is a writer and theatre practitioner, of Jamaican lineage, based in Toronto, Canada. She has appeared in *Known to Police* by Nomanzland (Young People's Theatre, 2012), *Zero Visibility* by the Artist Mentoring Youth Project (AMY) (Summerworks Festival, 2013), *To The Kid That I Was* by Expect Theatre (Nuit Blanche, 2015), *Bleeders* by d'bi.young anitafrika (Summerworks Festival, 2016) and *Lukumi* (Tarragon Theatre, 2017). Her work has been published in *Black Solo: Watah Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Monodrama Volumes 1, 2 & 3* as a playwright and in *From The Root Zine* as a storyteller/poet. She's also the award recipient of the ArtReach Pitch Contest in 2016. As a recent grad of the George Brown College Screenwriting & Narrative Design program, she has completed her first animation screenplay which she's now drafting as a stage play. Her work is now primarily geared towards young audiences.

Praxis—Lulu's Lullaby

My play *Lulu's Lullaby* is set in present-day Toronto, the play follows Lulu Kromanti (10), who is a fun-loving headstrong girl of Jamaican descent and the only granddaughter of Grandma Clarice. When her grandma falls ill, Lulu learns from Anansi, a shape-shifting spider, that the only way to save her is for grandma to eat fruit from the Birth Tree. After contemplating, Lulu embarks on a grand adventure with Anansi into the mystical Folk Realm in search of the tree. Along the way, Lulu meets an array of characters and learns the true secrets of the Folk Realm as she navigates the strange yet familiar surroundings. But as the time counts down and the Folk Realm is on the edge of destruction, will she make it back in time?

Ravyn Wngz | Abolitionist/Thought Leader/Storyteller

Ravyn Wngz "The Black Widow of Burlesque" is a Tanzanian, Bermudian, Mohawk, 2Spirit, Queer and Transcendent empowerment storyteller. Ravyn is an abolitionist and co-founder of ILL NANA/DiverseCity Dance Company. She is a co-founder of Black Lives Matter Canada, a co-founder of the Wildseed Centre for Arts & Activism, a Canadian Bestselling Author, Top 25 Women of Influence in Canada recipient of 2021. Ravyn is committed to eradicating all forms of anti-Black racism, settler colonialism systems of oppression while nurturing Black and Indigenous healing in communities.

Praxis

The Black Widow of Burlesque is a tagline that I chose to create specific intention in my storytelling. I am a memory keeper and part of my life's work is to be a reminder of forgotten neglected and invisibilized Black Trans Women. I utilize my body and weaponize my glamour as a symbol for love, change and Liberation.

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UBUNTU! DECOLONIAL ARTS CENTRE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT. PLEASE CONTRIBUTE

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PUERTO VIEJO COSTA RICA

**d'bi.young anitafrika is fundraising
to establish an international decolonial
arts centre in Costa Rica.**



Ubuntu! Decolonial Arts Centre is a holistic gathering place highlighting reflexive performance and land/food cultivation practices, as well as other creative, intellectual, and socio-political/cultural interventions that aim to decolonize personhood, practice, and pedagogy. Through establishing the centre, we are attempting to cultivate our Black and Indigenous roots - that tether us to the earth - to unlearn and relearn through a decolonial framework.



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