

The Burden

A Rainy Day Bliss production



Cast: Rajiv Shah, Vachensky Vieux (Pose, Station 19) Rashawn Nadine Scott (South Side), Samuel Ademola (Freaky Tales), Tish Arana, DaJuan Johnson (Bosch), Lavelle Roby, Fay Kato, Christopher Benitez, Puppett, Louise Houghton, Aisha Lomax, and Ashley C. Ford (NYT Bestseller Somebody's Daughter)

Directed and written by: Tish Arana

Produced by: Brandi Nicole

Cinematography by: Kalilah Robinson

Edited by: Puppett

Logline: When culture vultures apply for citizenship on a new planet colonized by Black people, three judges must decide how to deal with folks who want everything but the burden.

Synopsis: In 2044, immediately following the election of another racist president, a group of wealthy Black people pooled their money together

to take all willing Black people of Earth to a new colony in the Andromeda Galaxy they've built called New World

Sankofa. In order for non-Black people to gain citizenship they must go through a series of citizenship steps, concluding with a formal hearing in front of a tribunal. We open on one tribunal hearing featuring an Asian American man named Shawn Lee.

He's proven he's well versed in Black culture until they learn he's a perpetual N-word user. The tribunal judges attempt to reason with Shawn to no avail, realizing he's more appropriator than appreciator. He's a classic culture vulture; wanting everything but the burden. The judges have technology up their robe sleeves, though.

FAQs:

How were you able to fund the project?

2/3rds of the initial funds came from my commercial acting residuals and the remaining from my fundraising campaign on Support Our Story. We were fortunate enough to raise the total amount we needed for both production and post.

What was your inspiration for the film?

The Burden is an Afro-Futuristic film inspired by actual events. I overheard one of my husband's Filipino friends yell the N-word in an Instagram story and felt compelled to explore a radically empathic approach to this ongoing conversation. Hearing the same people using the word compounded with the powerlessness I felt in that moment was

the impetus for *The Burden*. For the first time, I understood a writer's power; and the desire to drag those people in the same way I felt dragged, thus a revenge fantasy was born. Taking note from the great sketch comedies I grew up with, I designed *The Burden* to elicit laughs that will hopefully blossom into substantive dialogue about racism and anti-Blackness.

Could you speak more about your casting?

I felt compelled to address how racism plays out among people of color. I believe a Black Utopian society would most certainly have solved not only racism and colorism, but also homophobia and transphobia; therefore, casting a Black, dark-skinned Trans woman as a Tribunal Judge was pivotal to my utopian vision. I believe when our most marginalized members of society represent the highest positions of power, we all win.

How long did the project take to shoot?

Shooting took place over three days at BLT Studios & Soundstages.

What is your goal for the film?

My goal is to find a home on a streaming platform for an agreed upon amount of time and then create college curriculum around the film. I found Afrofuturism in college and would love to pay it forward.

What was your favorite part of production?

My favorite part of production was our last day on set right before we tore down the tunnel leading to the tribunal room. I decided everyone (cast & crew) would do a soul train line to Heavy D's "Now That We Found Love". I got even our favorite curmudgeon gaffer to smile and let loose. So many people including the Studio manager told me it was the best time they'd ever had on set. That is my goal each and every time. I want my teams to love their time on set.

How diverse was your crew?

My production heads consisted of all women and nonbinary people. The Director, writer, Producer, Cinematographer, and AD are all Black women. Our crew consisted of mostly women of color and queer folks which was intentional. I wanted my cast and crew to reflect the utopian world in my film.