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SFTC Selected to Host Arts of Citizenship Graduate Student Summer Fellowship

After just a few incendiary years in operation, Shop Floor Theatre Company [SFTC] is proud to have been selected by the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor [U of M] Rackham Graduate School to join the select group of Southeast Michigan non-profits participating in the School's summer fellowship intern program. "This type of philanthropic partnership, is a key to our ongoing work", the SFTC director stated.

Graduate students in the arts, design and humanities will gain the field experience and networks to drive current and future non-profits; continuing the torch forward as the need for these social works increases. SFTC, coupled with several other not-for-profit organizations, provide these tools [to grad students] through research projects of several kinds. "We are excited to be able to share in a program that encourages students to think critically about what it means to be a public scholar and how they can apply their strengths to a range of pressing social issues", the SFTC Director explains: "This is just another fine example of how the Arts of Citizenship program at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor is reaching far beyond their community to make a positive difference."

Working with the graduate student directly, Kendrick Jones [SFTC Executive Director] intends to fill the "plate" and get to work as the summer quickly approaches. SFTC is in the primary stages of a documentary which will proffer the intern a lead role in the development, planning and marketing of this multicultural and communal work of art.

The project, *"Immigrant U: An Original Play and Documentary about the Experiences of International Students in American Universities"*, looks closely at the standpoint of foreign students who come to Flint University communities for their college experience. —
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Shop Floor Theatre Company will work with students in a broad range of place-based art forms including: theatre, dance and spoken word. The culmination of everyone's efforts will occur June 4th in a performance event at a location to yet be determined. "I truly hope this will evolve into a sustainable program for these students. My goal is to generate an outlet that, at this time, isn't provided to these kids in their districts. Life happens and schools are doing all that they can. We are doing all we can to support our community" the SFTC's Executive Director stated during a recent interview.



SOMETHING NEW FOR STUDENTS IN GENESEE COUNTY: PILOT SUMMER ARTS PROGRAM

There isn't a single public school district in this country who isn't suffering from some form of financial remediation. Sadly, the first group of deliberations in budgets happen in art departments. Shop Floor Theatre Company is tackling this problem head on in conjunction with Genesee Intermediate School Districts (GISD) Health, Safety and Nutrition Department. The SFTC Director is confident that this program will not only provide the students with a multitude of outlets but enrich the community as a whole through meaningful art programs.

This pilot program is planned to run from April 14th to June 17th and will tender to students from the Ninth to Twelfth grades. This program is all inclusive and reaches to multiple districts in Genesee County. The Director of SFTC is excited to afford the opportunity to students and have a positive effect on the community as a whole.





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SFTC Fellowship Continued

Students from different backgrounds and majors within the UM-Flint student-body have been handpicked as actors, assistants and contributors in every aspect of this project. The intern from U of M will experience firsthand the trials and tribulations; joys and complications of living half a world away from home to receive a college education.

In a recent press release, SFTC detailed, “In keeping with the organization’s values and commitment to inclusion, this project constitutes a much-needed effort to engage diverse communities that may not have the resources to participate in arts and cultural activities offered by other local institutions”. To have such an opportunity to include the local community, a representative of U of M and a group of UM-Flint students will engage all parties in a growth and development process that will assuredly change views.

For the intern, the occasion opens research for the project via interviews and exploration into cultures abroad working to adapt to an ever-changing American society. This also provides consultation to the director of the play and documentary to create the authenticity of the experience for audiences.

Lastly, several organizations across Southeastern Michigan have been selected for this fellowship; together all parties will provide a positive and highly motivating experience for interns and team members alike. Below is a list of the selected organizations; to learn more about them please click the links: ●

[Arab American National Museum](#)

[ACCESS Growth Center](#)

[Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History](#)

[CriticCar](#)

[Detroit Institute of Arts](#)

[East Michigan Environmental Action Council](#)

[FoodLab Detroit](#)

[Hamtramck Historical Museum](#)

[Institute for Research on Labor Employment, and the Economy](#)

[University of Michigan Detroit Center](#)



“This is a student-centered concept”



SFTC Proudly Introduces: Natasha LaGrone

Natasha LaGrone brings to the SFTC the perfect storm of education, experience and passion for community engagement. Natasha, 24, returns to her home town of Flint after completing her degree in Communications from MSU, her final years

working in Washington D.C. and studying at the George Washington University, Natasha worked as a production assistant with the Black Entertainment Television; then served the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) Communications Internship Program as a writer on the press and media relations staffs of Senator Michael Bennet, (D-Colorado) and Representative Steve Cohen (D-Tennessee). After completing the White House Internship Program, she received a Presidential Appointment to the Department of Commerce in the Office of Public Affairs. Natasha says her goal is to have her own television production company, always keeping her hand in advocacy and outreach. The 2006 graduate of Flint Central High School credits her parents with teaching her to stay positive. Growing up in Flint prepared her for the work she’s doing today with SFTC: sharing her knowledge and passion with other students in a place where they can create, produce and experience live theatre. ●

SFTC DIRECTOR BRINGS EMBODIED LEARNING INTO HIS CLASSROOM

Education in this country is receiving a dynamic [and much needed] facelift. With so many school systems globally adopting new techniques to impart knowledge to the students, here in Flint, MI change is gradual. SFTC Director [Kendrick Jones] has recognized the requirement for a fresh presence in the classroom and decided to act.

“This is a student-centered concept”, the Director mentioned during an interview. “We all remember the old lecture halls in which the Professor stands and barks the information to be regurgitated back by the students on some high stress exam”. This type of education is as ancient as dinosaurs with mixed results for sure. Embodied learning involves use of the mind, text and body in the learning process. This allows the text to be taken from the page and brought to life.

What is embodied learning? According to SMALLab Learning (smallablearning.com); “embodied learning is an emerging field that blends the learning sciences and human computer interaction. Cognitive scientists have discovered compelling evidence that nearly all of our experiences are in some way grounded in the body”. The SFTC Director has taken this to heart. He has seen the future and has decided to begin the arduous process of blending this into his own education program. By utilizing media, movement and group learning activities and the best in modern technology at UM-Flint; the impact of his efforts are not unnoticed.

Students are truly excited about this new interaction. As a student in one of his classes myself, the opportunity to grow and interrelate with fellow classmates is refreshing to say the least. “It opens up the spectrum of possibilities while allowing students to have fun in the classroom” ●





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On a Personal Note:

During this past three years, we have experienced extraordinary growth here at Shop Floor Theatre Company, thanks largely to our continued commitment to teamwork, community-centered programming strategies and to our policy of placing the people we serve above all else. We have successfully reached key milestones, added multifaceted place-based arts and education programming, increased research and community engagement, achieved significant advancements in diversity and inclusion and strengthened our position as a community partner.

Even in the face of challenging economic conditions, we're finding new ways to take advantage of our creative capital and collaborative partnerships. The upcoming year will be exciting as we continue to broaden our company efforts and move from pledge to programming. We have set increasingly ambitious goals for ourselves, but we have the intense vision and wherewithal to achieve them. One of our partners has described our success story as; "beneficial beyond measure...a gem to the district."

We take pride in this portrayal and embrace it as we strive to enhance the lives of those we touch. Our future progress will be measured in terms of our ability to build strategic partnerships. These partnerships will provide Shop Floor Theatre Company with a broader perspective and unique avenues through which to launch place-based arts and education for a broad spectrum of community centered applications.

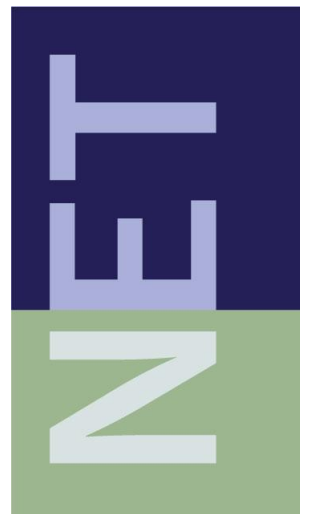
I honor each of our staff members for making these past years such a thrilling success, even in turbulent times. I would also like to extend my thanks to our funders and our partners for their unfailing sense of devotion, responsibility, guidance and support; without whom this vital work would not be possible.

Sincerely,

Kendrick Jones
Executive Director
Shop Floor Theatre Company

A Very Special Thanks To:

Click on any of the logos to learn more about these organizations.



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY |

Center for Community
and Economic Development

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