

# Career

In 1975, Shange moved back to New York City, after earning her Master's in American Studies in 1973 from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California. She is acknowledged as having been a founding poet of the Nuyorican Poets Café. In that year her first and most well-known play was produced—for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf. First produced Off-Broadway, the play soon moved on to Broadway at the Booth Theater and won several awards, including the Obie Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, and the AUDELCO Award. This play, her most famous work, was a 20-part choreopoem—a term Shange coined to describe her groundbreaking dramatic form, combining of poetry, dance, music, and song—that chronicled the lives of women of color in the United States. The poem was eventually made into the stage play, was then published in book form in 1977. In 2010, the choreopoem was adapted into a film (For Colored Girls, directed by Tyler Perry). Shange subsequently wrote other successful plays, including Spell No. 7, a 1979 choreopoem that explores the Black experience, and an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children (1980), which won an Obie Award.

In 1978, Shange became an associate of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press (WIFP). WIFP is an American nonprofit publishing organization. The organization works to increase communication between women and connect the public with forms of women-based media. In 2003, Shange wrote and oversaw the production of Lavender Lizards and Lilac Landmines: Layla's Dream while serving as a visiting artist at the University of Florida, Gainesville.

Shange's individual poems, essays, and short stories have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including The Black Scholar, Yardbird, Ms., Essence Magazine, The Chicago Tribune, VIBE, Daughters of Africa, and Third-World Women.

image

image