Last

Every now and then my friends ask me

why I always cook with the fire on high.

My fried potatoes and onions firm, sunflower sweet.

My broccoli, burdened still with its original green

and the taste of tilled earth. My water boils,

furiously, delirious with heat.

I look at him.

How could he not know.

The fire is a kind of breath too.

And I am a Black Indian woman who lives close to it.

To flame and ash. To smoldering embers.

It is all my history now.

To caking steam that kisses air and rises.

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Shonda Buchanan

Pushcart Prize nominee, Oxfam Ambassador, USC Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities Fellow and City of Los Angeles (COLA) Department of Cultural Affairs Master Artist Fellow, Shonda Buchanan is the author of five books, including the award-winning memoir, ***Black Indian***, which was chosen by PBS NewsHour as a "top 20 books to read" to learn about institutional racism. Shonda is also the newest fiction faculty member in Alma College's MFA Program. Writing on Tongva/Chumash land, Shonda is compiling a poetry collection that explores the lives of Los Angeles' Mixed race settlers (Africans, Indios, Mexicans, Spaniards) and the Indigenous nations already there. Shonda is also currently shopping her book of poetry about Nina Simone, *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone*.