



# NIYAH and the MULTIVERSE



## CREATOR BIOS

### AFROFUTURIST ARTISTS AND ANIMATORS



#### Nygilia McClain

Nygilia stands as a proficient multidisciplinary artist, deftly crafting mixed-media artworks that draw inspiration from the realms of fantasy, gaming and the rich tapestry of multicultural influences. Originating from New York, her creative evolution was nurtured by a childhood immersed in basketball and video games, including iconic titles like Final Fantasy and Legend of Zelda. This exposure kindled a profound affinity for the narrative power, cultural depth, and visual expression found within these realms.



#### Kwame-Michael Brako

Kwame-Michael Brako (artist alias 'DarkMythst') is a Ghanaian-born California-based AfroCosmic/Futurism artist, who creates artistic visuals using both traditional and digital methods in the medium of 3D digital and physical. He has been credited in visual effects/stereoscopic work in films such as The Avengers, Iron Man, GI Joe, and many more. As an afro-cosmic/futurist artist, he fuses the art of interstellar story-telling, African mythology, and entertainment through effects and animation. His work has been exhibited globally, and he continues to make a worldly impact with his artistic vision.



#### Jeryce Dianingana

Jeryce Dianingana was born in Paris, France, to Congolese parents. He works as a 3D Game Artist at Cliffhanger Studios in Vancouver, Canada. In between his time working on AAA games projects, Jeryce has built up a powerful body of afro-centric 3D art inspired by his African heritage. He aspires to be a voice for the rich diversity of African culture and to help increase the visibility of African-inspired design in the video game and movie industries.



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## WRITERS

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### Ytasha Womack

Ytasha L. Womack is an author, filmmaker, dancer and champion of humanity. Her book *Afrofuturism: the World of Black Sci Fi & Fantasy Culture* is the leading primer on the subject. She speaks around the world on the subject of Afrofuturism and the Imagination. She's featured in the National Museum of African American History & Culture's Afrofuturism exhibit and the documentary *Afrofuturism: An Origin Story*. Her works include the books *Rayla 2212*, *Spaceship in Bronzeville*, *Black Panther: A Cultural Exploration*, and the upcoming graphic novel *Blak Kube*.



### Taylor Witten

21st century griot - Taylor Witten is a storyteller, filmmaker and award-winning writer-producer. Her works explore Otherness, Afrofuturism, identity, and representation within contemporary audio-visual culture. Taylor is the founder of Blessed Press Productions, a purpose-driven production company. She also serves as Head of Production at The Nova Collective, a DEI consulting firm in Chicago, IL. With a passion for advocacy, community, and creative equity, Taylor aspires to develop pathways and spaces for the next generation of visionaries, world builders, and Afrofuturists.



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## ACTORS

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### Kim Mercer (Young Niyah)

Kim Mercer has used her voice throughout her 15-year advertising career as an Associate VP of Branded Content, helping guide marketers on how to best connect their brands with people. Holding production roles at various advertising agencies, she's played a key role in the integration of content strategy and activation into culturally-connected communication plans. Her work has been industry recognized, including a Silver Telly and Silver Clio for top Branded Entertainment and Content categories. Outside of work, Kim has completed Second City improv courses, and serves as Media Director at her church where she has produced, edited, and provided voiceover for multiple radio programs airing across Chicagoland AM & FM stations. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, watching reruns of Law & Order, and growing her experience in voiceover work.



### Lisa Beasley (Adult Niyah)

Originally from Gary, IN, Lisa Beasley attended Emerson School for the Visual & Performing Arts before being accepted into an Historically Black College in Memphis, TN. After graduating with a B.A. in Classical Jazz Studies, Lisa attended acting school in Los Angeles, CA. She pursued a ten-year theater career in Chicago, IL. Now as a leader in the community, Lisa's entrepreneurial skills provide a level of inclusion, autonomy, and creative freedom not found in most traditional workplace environments. As an entertainer, comedian and actor, Lisa is known for her performances on KevOnStage's Black People Do Improv, HBOMax's South Side, NBC's Chicago MED (Netflix), The Blackening (Comedy Central), and more. She has been featured in Black Enterprise, Essence, PopSugar, Pink News U.K., BuzzFeed, Syfy, Chicago Reader, The Red Eye, and more.





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### SCIENTISTS

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#### **Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein**

Dr. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein is an associate professor of physics and astronomy and core faculty in women's and gender studies at the University of New Hampshire. Her research in theoretical physics focuses on cosmology, neutron stars, and dark matter. She is also a researcher of Black feminist science, technology, and society studies. She was a co-convenor of Dark Matter: Cosmic Probes in the 2021 Snowmass particle physics community planning process, and she is a member of the National Academies Elementary Particles: Progress and Promise decadal committee. She is the creator of the Cite Black Women+ in Physics and Astronomy Bibliography in addition to being an award-winning author.



#### **Dr. Geza Gyuk**

Since joining the Adler in 2000, Dr. Geza Gyuk's research has spanned a range of topics, including Cosmology, high energy astrophysics, ultra-cool white dwarves, the characterization of active and outer-belt asteroids and the extent and effects of light pollution. He has focused his educational efforts on bringing authentic science to the public, including through founding the Adler's Far Horizons program and co-originating the vision of the Zooniverse at the Adler and the University of Oxford. Geza earned his B.S. from Brown University and his Ph.D. in Physics at the University of Chicago. He is currently the Adler's senior director of astronomy.