

# 2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

## School of Visual Arts Honorable Mention



### ALEXIA TOWNSEND

Film  
Freshman  
New York University

I had a red nose, white face, black hands and a blue blazer with vibrant, loud, multi-colored patches. The blazer tightly hugged my triceps and was kept from dragging on the ground by robust shoulder pads. Nobody looked like me for Halloween; I was truly a unique kindergartner. As a child, my mother could never afford the luxury of buying me a costume. She said I could be whatever I wanted to be as long as I could create it: that is when I got the idea to be a hobo clown. I rummaged around my room for pieces for my costume, finding a squeaky red nose from a previous Halloween and my mother's face powder to give me that clown complexion. My giant Jamaican nanny, Lorene, collaborated with me and together we found that blue blazer that had been lurking in my closet. It looked plain, dull and dusty, but after Larine applied a myriad of patches, it became like Joseph's Technicolor dream coat. Each patch was truly unique. Every stitch was made with love. That coat is me.



In retrospect, I realize I was never normal. Born half Black and half Puerto Rican while being taught in a predominantly Anglo elementary school, it was a cyclical challenge to find where I belonged. I was a child of the world, yet not one culture



Worldstudio  
FOUNDATION



the professional association for design

## ALEXIA TOWNSEND

Film

claimed me as theirs. Instead of caving to this hardship, I overcame it and made myself universal. I spoke to everyone in their own style in their own way. Instead of having my own culture, I embraced everyone equally. My initial difficulties with my cultural identity actually served as a blessing in my career dream of being a filmmaker for it allowed me the gift to write, cast and film based on talent and not color.

I am the patches. I do not come from a "traditional" family. My father has never been a big part; instead, my family consists of actors, dancer, singers, writers and painters. I have been predominantly raised by a pack of rowdy, boisterous, lively female stand-up comics, who taught me how to laugh and tell a good joke. From them I learned that femininity does not equal weakness. They inspired me to write stories where women are not trapped doing "chick flicks," but are allowed to be strong, motivating leading ladies, someone that the next generation can look up to.

I am the thread. I have always tried to make people feel better by getting them to laugh. It was actually the laugh of a friend that inspired me to become a filmmaker. When I was 9, my friend was hospitalized with leukemia. I felt powerless in her pain but thinking quickly, I started to tell an outrageous story, which made her burst into uncontrollable laughter. In that split second her pain lifted as she enjoyed the world that I had created. I want to be a professional filmmaker, to transport people to happier places. I uncover very difficult issues not by pointing the finger in my films but by using the method of satire. I find more people are likely to listen to jokes, then listen to stern reprimands. Humor especially has the ability to bond people from different stages of life. In the future, I see myself contributing to my community by creating strong media awareness about such issues relating to sex, health, drugs and racism, but also by inventing strong models for society.

That coat is me. I am proud of my past patches and ready for my next patch...hope you know how to sew.

