



Dr. Rhonda Quash Coats was born in a small farming community in Dawn, Virginia. She earned a B.S. degree from Norfolk State University in Health and Physical Education, a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from The Pennsylvania State University and a doctorate in Education with an emphasis in Community College Leadership from Oregon State University.

Rhonda started her career in higher education as an admissions officer at Bucknell University. She taught basic skills and GED preparation classes to soldiers at Fort Lewis, but found her love and passion for the work of community colleges. She has campus-based experience in admissions, recruitment, and financial aid with additional experience working at the state-level specializing in policy development on issues related to academic advising, athletics, childcare, counseling, disability support services, student employment, student government, students of color, financial aid and veteran affairs. Rhonda currently serves as the Vice President, Student Affairs at Davidson County Community College in Lexington, North Carolina.

Dr. Coats is known for her advocacy work and giving voice to issues related to diversity, inclusion, equity, social and economic justice. She has received numerous awards recognizing her dedication to supporting faculty, staff and students of color in higher education, including the first Dr. Rhonda Quash Coats Award from MSSDC. She is one of the founders of the Washington State Faculty & Staff of Color in Higher Education Conference and is an active, Golden Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Rhonda lives in Greensboro, NC with her husband Ray and they have four children Jalen Victoria, Miles, Valerie, and Wesley.



Nikki Silvestri, CEO of Soil and Shadow, a consulting firm for social and environmental entrepreneurs, guiding thousands of leaders and organizations into a conversation at the intersection of ecology, economy, and social equity.

An internationally recognized thought leader and speaker, recipient of The Root's 100 Most Influential African Americans, ELLE Magazine's "Gold" Award, and OxFam America's "Act Local, Think Global" Award.

Nikki serves in Environmental Protection Agency negotiations, Board Member- Greenpeace USA, Board Co-Chair- Common Future, formally BALLE, and a Faculty Member- Food Business School. She currently lives in Oakland with her husband and son.



Be Steadwell is a singer songwriter from Washington DC. A blend of soul, acapella and folk-Be calls her music QUEER POP. In her live performances, she utilizes looping, vocal layering and beat boxing to compose her songs on stage. Be's original music features earnest lyricism, and Affirming LGBTQ content.

As she pursued her career in music, she began a career in film. Shooting and editing her own music videos, Be combined her love of music with narrative film. Her film Vow of Silence received awards at film festivals around the world, including Black Star, QWOCCMAP, and Fringe Fest UK. This year, Issa Rae Featured vow of Silence in her Short Film Sundays Series. After receiving a BA at Oberlin College, Be completed her MFA in film at Howard University in 2014.

Be has shared stages with fellow artist Activists Big Freedia, Nona Hendryx, Nikky Finney and Gina Yashere. In 2017 Be sang at The Women's March on the National Mall behind Maxwell and Janelle Monae in Toshi Reagon's Big Lovely Band. In may 2018 Be released her studio album "Queer Love Songs". This year, Be composed the music for The alvin Ailey dance company's production of "[the gone](#)". In her latest work - A Letter to My Ex, the musical, Be tells stories of love, loss and intimacy through a collage of music, movement and film -- narrating one character's journey through the year following a breakup.