

Speaker Spotlight



VERSHAWN SANDERS WARD

CEO

Red Clay Dance Company

Vershawn Sanders-Ward holds an MFA in Dance from New York University and is the first recipient of BFA in Dance from Columbia College Chicago (Gates Millennium Scholar.) She is the Founding Artistic Director and CEO of Red Clay Dance Company and is currently a candidate for Dunham Technique Certification. Sanders-Ward is a 2022 Dance/USA Artist Fellow, 2019 Chicago Dancemakers Forum Awardee, a 2019 Harvard Business School Club of Chicago Scholar, a 2017 Dance/USA Leadership Fellow, a 2013 3Arts awardee, and a 2009 Choreography Award from Harlem Stage NYC. In 2015, 2018 and 2020, NewCity Magazine selected Ward as one of the “Players 50, People Who Really Perform for Chicago”.

Her choreography has been presented in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, The Yard at Martha’s Vineyard, and internationally in Toronto, Dakar and Kampala. Vershawn is currently on faculty at Loyola University Chicago in the Fine and Performing Arts Department and has received choreographic commissions from Columbia College Chicago, Northwestern University, Knox College, AS220, and the National Theatre in Uganda. Her upcoming site-inspired choreographic project, Rest.Rise.Move.Nourish.Heal which is set to premiere June 2023 was selected for a 2021 National Dance Project Award from NEFA with additional support from the NEA.

As an arts advocate, she serves on the Board of Trustees for Dance/USA as well as the Board of Directors for the African American Arts Alliance of Chicago. Vershawn was selected to attend the inaugural Obama Foundation Summit for Emerging Global Leaders and has had the pleasure of gracing the cover of the Chicago Reader and DEMO, Columbia College Chicago’s Alumni Magazine.