

## THINGS I SHOULD HAVE SAID

Tasha Smith

[Rhythmic drumming]

I am Anishinaabekwe.

Do not tell me how I should look, or act, or live, or be. You will not name me or claim me, categorize me or put me in your box. For I am free.

I am Anishinaabekwe.

Do not ask me your ignorant questions. As occupier of this land YOU have a responsibility to learn the history of the land in which you stand and the first people who are on it. No. And do not tell me it is all in the past, when the pain is still being felt by wounds that are fresh, and bruises that have yet to fade.

I am in Anishinaabekwe.

Do not tell me I am too sensitive, when every residential school survivor story is a tear my grandmother could not shed. No. Do not put on cheap knockoffs of my culture's sacred items, items which were not that long ago outlawed in this country and are now found on the appropriator's body, as plastic feathers and moccasins made in China.

I am Anishinaabekwe.

My struggles for success will light my darkness. I am humbly proud. Do not mistake it for weakness! My strength is sometimes silent, but now I shout it!

I am in Anishinaabekwe.

I know who I am. I am not me for you. I am me for me. I will never be who you think I should, or look like you think I should, or act as you think I should. Do not try

# Re·Vision

The Centre for Art and Social Justice

to authenticate me with your fabrications of what you think I should be. Bits and pieces you took from Westerns and television, product advertisements and Edward Curtis in your back pocket. It don't mean shit to me.

I am Anishinaabekwe.