

PEN Spotlight: Shaundale Rénā

Shaundale Rénā is an award-winning and Amazon bestselling American author and entrepreneur who has been editing professionally for the past nine years. Shaundale holds a bachelor's degree in computer information systems from Grambling State University and a certification in technical writing from the University of Texas at Arlington. She is the author of two books, one nonfiction, and the other fiction (published under the pseudonym Stony Rhodes), that debuted as best newcomer on [Wattpad.com](https://www.wattpad.com).

What led you to editing as a career choice?

Because I have always enjoyed reading and writing, editing was a natural progression for me. I just wish I'd figured it out decades ago. After publishing my first book, many people asked me for help on their own literary journey. I ended up assisting people with everything from questions about publishing to editing their work. As the years passed, my hobby had become a part-time job. When I decided to get my certification in technical writing, it was official. My business was started with friends and family, who referred their own friends and family. Now I edit for indie

authors and both vanity press and traditional publishers.

What is your editorial specialty?

My editorial specialty is developmental editing. I enjoy connecting the dots and seeing the potential in each story unfold. It is quite rewarding to see the transformation take place and to watch authors embrace the changes and continue to grow.

What has surprised you most about editing?

The number of projects that consistently show up has been surprising. I didn't realize how in-demand editing was until I leaped into freelancing full time. It has also been surprising to discover that there are not many editors of color out there.

Which PEN events and aspects have been especially helpful?

The aspects of PEN I've found most helpful are the email digests. I love information!

What is the best career advice you were given?

The best career advice I was given came from a client a few years ago. She simply

said, “Raise your prices.” Colleagues had told me the same thing, but I didn’t actually do it until I heard it from my client after getting her final file back. A number of individuals had said I’d given them more than they’d paid for. I always took it as a compliment. I didn’t realize my prices might actually be too low until the moment it came from the other side of the table.

Which project are you most proud of?

To date, I am most proud of my work for Queen Afua, world-renowned holistic wellness expert, on her book, *Impeccable Listening*.

What are your go-to resources for professional development?

My go-to resources for professional development are [Author Accelerator](#), a book coaching certification program, and any books on editing and/or leadership. My favorite read of 2021 was *We Should All Be Millionaires* by Rachel Rodgers.

What editing tip do you have for other members?

The editing tip I’d recommend for other members is to give yourself time. We need time to read, time to process, time to review, and time to unwind. That last part is pivotal. Because I failed to prioritize self-

care in 2019, I started 2020 unable to move. My neck decided it didn’t want to be a neck anymore in early January 2020. I lay in bed in a panic—crying and screaming. My husband and I had to lock arms for him to help me sit up. I thought I was paralyzed. After months of intense physical therapy and deep tissue-resistance massages, I am keenly aware of my body’s need to take a break from the computer. It is necessary. No matter how much I enjoy editing, the memory of my neck “quitting on me” keeps me balanced. I log off and pick up a paperback to read instead. That’s how I unwind—with a good book that’s been sitting in my library!

What has changed the most since you started editing?

Since I started editing full time, I feel like a better version of myself. I feel free, like I am becoming who I was intended to be. It’s like waking up and getting to do the only thing you really want to do all day. It’s like having a superpower and the world actually knowing who you are.

What do you do when you aren't working?

When is that? Seriously, I work every day—because I want to. I just get off early to spare my neck. However, when my family wants me to go to Six Flags or to watch a

movie (and I don't complain because I'd rather be working), I'll join them. Aside from that, I enjoy eating at a good restaurant and traveling (mostly alone). I enjoy friends and family; it's just more of a when-I-want-to-be-around-people kind of thing because I'd always opt to be alone with a book.

What is the most surprising thing about you?

The most surprising thing about me is that I'm fulfilled. I've spent decades searching for the perfect "thing," not knowing the gift I've always had was intended to be used to help others live their dreams. I've literally been reading and writing my entire life, since I was three. Had I known this was the life awaiting me, there's so much I would have done differently—starting with majoring in IT.

Networking News welcomes Shaundale to the PEN newsletter team as the new "In the Spotlight" coordinator. If you are interested in sharing about yourself as part of our regular "In the Spotlight" column, please contact Shaundale at shaundale@shaundalerena.com.