

Journey Writers, Inc.

Annual Report

2023

Our Mission: To provide a safe, open, and supportive environment for writers to share their work and receive constructive feedback and encouragement.

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Original writings by our members are included throughout the report.

A Note from the President



Ten years ago, Journey Writers, Inc. was just a dream. We didn't even have a name, yet. We were a small group of writers who wanted a place to share our work and improve our skills. Four of us, Liston Filyaw, Therelza Ellington, Frances McAlpine Sharp and I came together and invited others to join us to create this new organization for writers and those who wanted to become writers. In the beginning, we met in the Hartford Public Library and later we moved to meet in members' homes. We wanted to encourage and support Hartford area writers and we wanted to provide opportunities for them to share their work and receive honest, supportive feedback. From the beginning, we knew we wanted our organization to be a safe space. Everyone would be welcome to join our workshops.

Now, we provide an opportunity for writers and would-be writers to join our twice-monthly workshops. Moreover, we've provided the opportunity twice each month for the past ten years. First, meeting in person, then during the pandemic, meeting electronically on Zoom. Now, as of May, we've begun hybrid meetings. That's a good thing because now, our members come not only from Connecticut, but because of technology, members can join workshops from any place in the country. Our members are active contributors to the community. You will find them on the radio, in publications, in plays and working with organizations throughout the area.

Over the years, Journey Writers has established annual programs like "Journey Writers Tell the Whole Story: Queer Black History," and we've also presented timely, topical programs like "Global Perspective." We've addressed critical social issues like child sexual abuse and at other times, we've turned our skills to creating haikus and six-word stories. We are poets and playwrights, short story and novel authors. We've written autobiographies and songs. We've worked in partnership with other organizations like Hartford Pride, the Hartford Urban League, and New England Donor Services. (A program we did with New England Donor Services won two national awards!) We've developed a website to showcase our work, and we're pleased to premier the updated website later this summer. This year, we are proud to publish "*Journeys*," our first literary anthology. It features the works of twelve Journey Writers members. We hope you'll purchase a copy for your personal library, and perhaps you'll join us for one of our book signing events later this fall.

We've come a long way since our days in the Hartford Public Library meeting room, and we're still growing and changing and moving forward. Check out our website, see our work, and join us for a Workshop. All writers and want-to-be writers are welcome. We are a dynamic and friendly group. We hope you'll want to come back to join us again and again.

Carla Dean

President, Journey Writers, Inc.

Board of Directors



Carla Dean
President



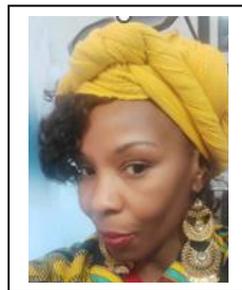
Liston Filyaw
Vice President



Beth Gibbs
Secretary



Larry Roeming
Treasurer



Leslie Bivans
Artistic Director



Regina Dyton
Grant Writer



Denise Best
Director



Andre Keitt
Director



Earl W. Gardner
Director

Programs and Activities

Hybrid Workshops



Ten years ago, if you wanted to attend a Journey Writers workshop, you had to join in person. That all changed with the start of the COVID 19 pandemic. In 2020, we began to hold our meetings on Zoom. Now, we offer both options.

Members can attend workshops in person or they can choose to join on Zoom. The pandemic forced us to become more technologically savvy and the result is more options for our members and for others who would like to attend a workshop. All meetings are now hybrid.

A calendar of all our workshops and other programs and activities can be found on our website, www.journeywriters.org. Please join us in person or virtually, either way, you'll be welcome!

Journey Writers Tell the Whole Story: Queer Black History

Each year, in honor of Black History Month, members of Journey Writers, Inc. present a program that features Black members of the LGBTQ+ community. Typically, the individuals we have written about lived in the United States in the last 100 years or so. This year we took a different direction both in time and geography.

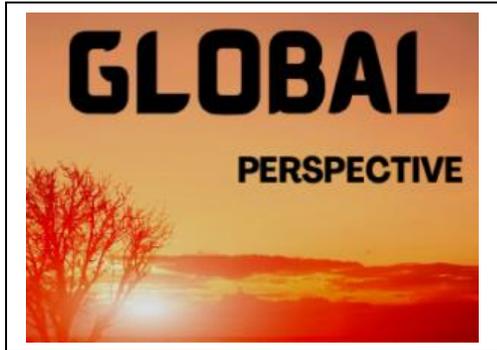
We invited viewers to travel across space and time for “5,000 Years of Queer Black History,” to learn more about historical figures who never thought of their experience as being part of LGBTQ+. It was just their way of life.



The 2023, QBH program featured Egyptian Pharaoh, Hatshepsut; flamboyant, big-hearted hustler Odessa Madre; Queen Nzinga, monarch of the Mbundu people; William Dorsey Swann, the first person in the U.S. to lead a queer resistance group; and Oshun, one of the most powerful of the Orisha gods.

This year's program, and programs from previous years are available for viewing on our website, www.journeywriters.org, as well as on the Journey Writers YouTube page.

Global Perspective



The Global Perspective program gave Journey Writers members an opportunity to examine the effects of climate change from a variety of viewpoints.

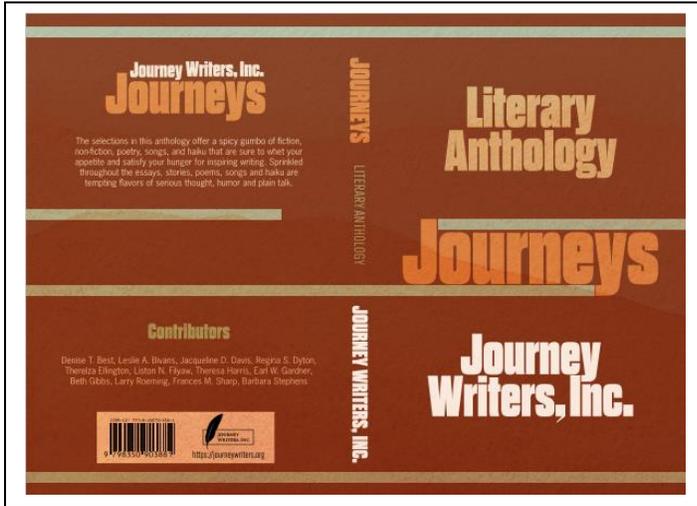
The seven pieces in this program included poetry,

essays and a short play, all looking at the ways we view ourselves, nature, society, and the world. This and other Journey Writer programs can be accessed on the Journey Writers website,

www.journeywriters.org.



Journey Writers Anthology



Over the years, our members have often suggested that we publish an anthology of our writing. This year, we've done just that. Journey Writers is proud to announce the publication of "Journeys," our first literary anthology.

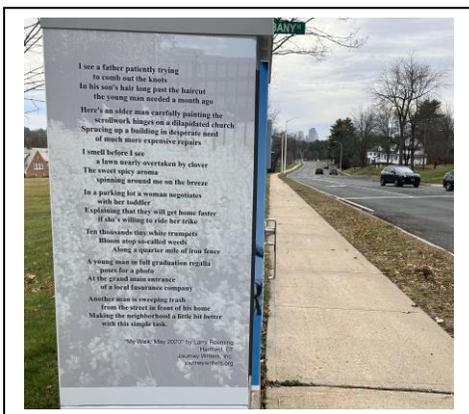
The book includes the poetry, songs, short stories, plays, essays and commentary on a wide range of topics, written by twelve Journey Writers members.

Beginning this summer, you can purchase your copy of *Journeys* on Amazon, Barnes & Noble.com, www.store.bookbaby.com, and through book distribution programs like Baker & Taylor, Ingram and Powells, and 50+ other worldwide sites.

This fall, Journey Writers will hold a series of readings and book signings. Dates and locations will be posted on our website, www.journeywriters.org.

hARTford Love Project

Last year, the City of Hartford invited local artists to apply for an opportunity to have their artwork displayed on bus shelters and utility boxes along Albany Avenue to highlight and express pride in the Albany Avenue and Clay Arsenal neighborhoods. Journey Writers submitted three original poems written by our members. This year, the artwork is up. Journey Writers' work can be



seen on a utility box and a bus shelter



near the intersection of Albany and Bloomfield Avenues.

It's our hope that seeing these works will inspire other writers and want-to-be writers in our community. The poems include, "My Walk," written by Larry Roeming, "The Urban Battle of Notes", written by Denise Best and "Life in the City," written by Earl Gardner. If you have an opportunity, please stop by to see these inspirational works!

And at night sometimes, when I hear another face like mine has been lost, I'm sobbing, "Why am I merely a lowercase i?"

I just whisper-yell-beg, "Sandra, have you seen Emmett?"

"Did you tell him, 'Emmett, you can look now. They yelling our names. I didn't let you live alone just to be hanged alone.'

"Sandra, have you seen Amadou Diallo? Did he give Trayvon the gun they said he had?"

"Sandra, did you greet Breonna? Did you hold her hand while she walked to light? Did you take her to meet Harriet? Did she say, 'Sisters, you ain't gotta wear a white dress, cuz white ain't never meant purity here. And why play harps when you can have drums?'"

I'm so broken I don't come to church for the Heaven-ing no more— I just come here for the hats.

Leslie A. Bivins

Excerpt from "Sandra Bland"

Where did I put my purse?

Did I leave it in the car?

Did I leave it in the shopping cart at the store?

I've looked in the car, and it wasn't there.

Let me call the store and see if anyone found my purse and turned it in.

"Hello, this is Mable Jenkins. I was shopping at your store today, and I am calling to see if anyone found a brown and tan purse and turned it in."

It wasn't at the store.

I declare, I can't keep up with anything these days.

My age is catching up with me.

This week, it's my purse. Last week, I locked my keys in the car. Before that, I misplaced my teeth.

So far, each week, I've misplaced something.

I better leave that weed alone; next week, I might misplace myself. Let me fix a sandwich. This weed sho' nuf' makes me hungry.

What is that in the back of the refrigerator?

Lordy, there's my purse!

Mable Jenkins, you dummy. You better leave that weed alone.

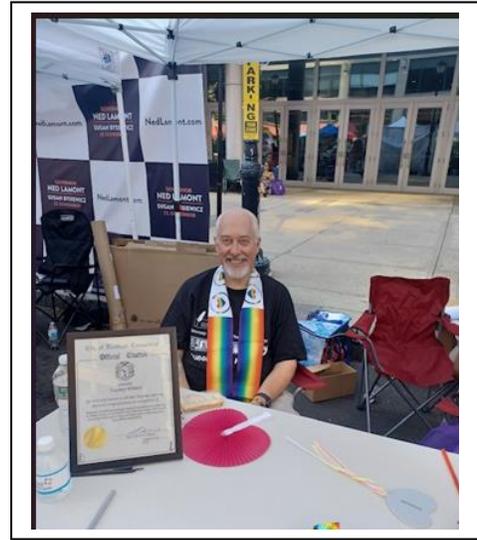
Barbara Stephens

"The Purse"

Hartford PRIDE Festival

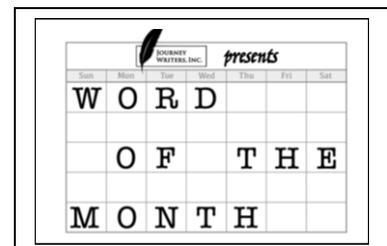
Journey Writers supports the Hartford PRIDE Festival each year. In addition to answering questions about our organization and encouraging attendees to attend a workshop or join our mailing list, we also offer the opportunity to write and post a “six-word story” on our whiteboard. These six-word pieces tell an entire story with just six words.

It’s a challenge to be sure, but one many participants enjoyed trying.



Word of the Month

In December we finished a year of exploring how the meanings of some words can change over time. Each month, members wrote poems, short stories, essays, and commentary on how the meanings of words like “zoom,” “shade,” “ghost,” “woke” and others are used differently today than they have been used in the past. Each month, a compilation of these original works was recorded and presented on WQTQ-FM radio on Saturday afternoons.



It took only five seconds for him to realize they were out of time and needed to go—now! He put the truck into drive and floored it down the lane, away from his home, and to safety.

When the warning sirens began, he ran to the dining room window and saw the tornado was closer than he expected. He yelled to his wife, daughter, and son and explained as calmly as he could that they needed to leave now.

“Don’t pack anything, and when I tell you to, just run for the truck,” he said. “Listen,” he repeated, “on the count of five, we run, run as fast as you can, don’t look back, get in the truck, and we will head for the high school.” The whole time he was talking his son stood there shaking his head.

“No, no, no...I can’t, I can’t,” he kept saying over and over.

*“Son, you have to. We gotta go now!”
“I can’t—I’m scared.”*

The boy’s dad stepped in close to his son and took his face in his hands.

“CJ, we’re all scared, but we are out of time here,” the dad pleaded with his son. “Come on. You can do this; you are the fastest runner around.” The boy’s dad pleaded with his boy. “You were the High School State Sprinting Champion. Just think of this run to the truck as a race.”

The dad spotted the entire family in front of him—waiting for his cue. “Okay, everybody, here we go!” Their dad took a deep breath and then exhaled. “One, two, three, four, five!”

They shot out of the door and ran to the truck. Each family member climbed in, and their dad floored it. The truck shot down the lane away from their home. His wife turned to look at her family in the back seat.

“No!” she screamed.

“What is it?” her husband asked. “What’s the matter?”

He’d never heard this panic in his wife’s voice before—like an injured animal howling for her life.

“CJ is still at the house. He didn’t leave when we left.” The man’s wife jumped out of the truck and started for the house. “You have to go back, turn around. We have to go get him,” she hollered back to her husband.

The man took one look in the rearview mirror and knew there was no time to go back. When his wife realized he was not going back, she jumped in the truck, screaming and hitting him on his arm. Their daughter, only eleven, sat in the back seat, silent, with a vacant look, the look one gets when they are in shock. His wife’s screaming subsided. She sobbed and cried to Jesus to watch over her baby boy.

*Earl Gardner
Excerpt from “Tornado”*

Urban League of Hartford

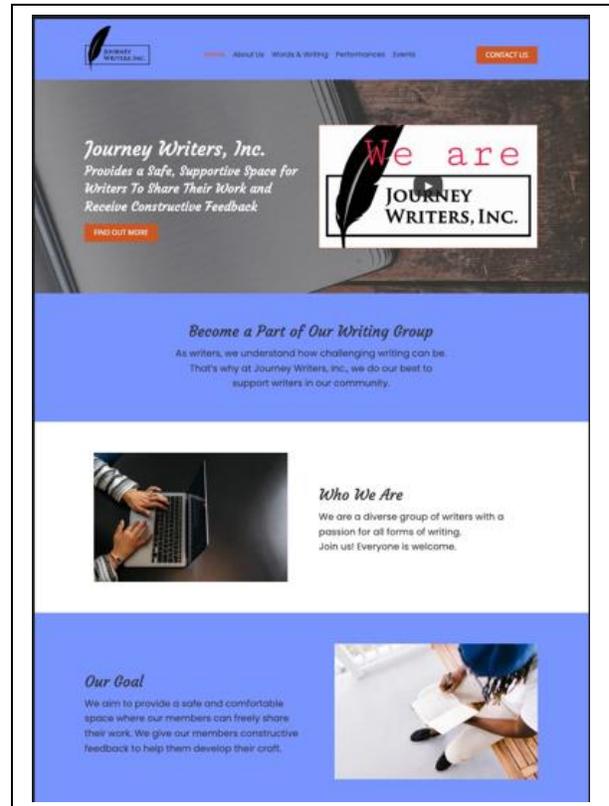
Once again, Journey Writers supported the Urban League of Greater Hartford as a “Legacy Exhibitor” at the Urban League’s annual signature Black History Month Celebration. This year’s theme was “A Legacy Revealed – A Glimpse of Hope.” Our participation is just one of the ways Journey Writers supports local organizations and helps empower members of our community.

Journey Writers Website

Journey Writers has been working toward updating our website since late 2021. Thanks to a grant from CT Humanities, we were able to launch the project in 2022. We suffered a slight setback at the beginning of 2023 as our webmaster had to withdraw from the project.

In early March, we contracted with our longtime web hosting service, GoDaddy, to design a new website for us using the industry-standard Wordpress software. The contract provides all design services as well as updates to the site on demand for the first year. We are considering hiring a local webmaster to provide day-to-day maintenance of the website when the contract ends.

The new Journey Writers website will feature more images representing the diversity of our membership (including photos of our current members), new tpestyles, more color, simpler navigation and more. We plan to debut the new website later this summer. Be sure to check it out: www.journeywriters.org



*The cousin of death
Harbors our clandestine dreams,
Fears and fantasies.*

*With Forging hot moons
Chill solar silence
This is how we love*

*Over the night's sky,
For her, the dear sweet baby
God sprinkled the stars*

*Stay away earth's worms
I'll be with the birds, my friends
Buried in the sky*

*For it I do scream,
The one thing that makes me cry,
The bellows of hearts.*

*Liam Marshall-Butler
A Collection of Haikus*

I'm trying to be happy. Sometimes it seems to be just within reach.

*I see something that once was good and fun and positive.
But when I try to reach it, I can't.
Or, I grab hold and it just dissolves . . .
it isn't what I thought it was. Or it just isn't as satisfying
as when he was here. Or it's simply an illusion.*

*Or, worst of all, when I get there, it makes me sad . . . rather than happy.
It's something that he would have enjoyed as much as me
and I hate that I can't share it with him.*

*Sometimes I think to myself,
"Yes, I can be happy,
I just won't be AS happy."*

*The question is:
"Can I be happy enough?"*

*Larry Roeming
"Grief and Happiness"*

OFFICER NELSON *unlocks the door and places FEDORA SNOOPS & CARMEN SNIFFS in jail. It is dark inside the cell.*

SNOOPS: Officer, why are you locking us up. We did nothing wrong!

OFFICER NELSON: Breaking into someone's house is against the law. Your entrance into the Willard's home was unlawful.

SNOOPS: We entered to save the lady trapped in the upstairs room.

OFFICER NELSON: There was no lady in the room; remember, I was there.

SNIFFS: There was a lady in the room, I saw her with my own two eyes.

OFFICER NELSON: Listen ladies, I've had a long and tiring day. I worked two shifts chasing after criminals all day, so I'm not in the mood to discuss this with you.

SNIFFS: But officer you don't understand....

OFFICER NELSON: I don't need to understand it and I don't want to! Tell it to the judge.

SNOOPS: I demand to speak to the judge right now!

OFFICER NELSON: You can demand to speak to the judge all you want, but it don't work like that here. Besides, the courts are closed now and the judges have all gone home for the day.

SNOOPS: What are we supposed to do?

OFFICER NELSON: You'll have to wait until tomorrow when the court opens.

SNIFFS: Tomorrow?! I can't spend the night in this place. I'm claustrophobic.

OFFICER NELSON: That's not my problem. You should have thought about that when you broke into the Willard's house.

SNOOPS: We told you we didn't break in; we were only trying to save the lady upstairs.

OFFICER NELSON: Whatever! Listen, I'm not going to stand here and go back and forth with the two of you. I suggest you get used to your surroundings.

(OFFICER NELSON exits)

PANDORA: Instead of you arguing, why don't you help me get home?

SNIFFS: Who said that?_Oh my God, is that you Pandora?_How did you get here; and how did you get out of the Willard house?

PANDORA: I don't know. I closed my eyes and when I opened them, I was here.

SNOOPS: Why did you disappear when Officer Nelson was looking for you, and where did you go?

PANDORA: I don't know. I don't trust the officer so I hid.

SNOOPS: There was no way for you to get out of that room without us seeing you.

SNIPPS: Officer Nelson looked you up on the internet and said you died a year ago.

PANDORA: And you believed him? Do I look like I'm dead. All I remember is Weena Willard gave me some tea and I went to sleep. When I woke up I felt like I was in a trance. Now I can't remember where I live. I need some answers; I need to find Weena Willard.

*Liston N. Filyaw
Excerpt from "Inside the Room"*

*Jumped out of my sleep this mornin'
I'm all out of sorts
Can't get out my own way
I'm sorry to report
it was fun while it lasted
and it brings me to tears
But I warned you it might happen
you'd have to get up outta here
That I would care 'til the day that I don't
I know you thought, I wouldn't
I know you thought, "she won't"
A mule couldn't be more stubborn
So you didn't change your ways
Well, I woke up this morning
and Baby, you cannot stay*

*Denise Best
"Suddenly Woke!"*

I no more decided than you decided to be heterosexual, cisgender, no more than you decided your race or your genealogy.

Just when did you decide to be heterosexual? Were there any signs that you had such inclinations? What do you think caused it?

And speaking of cause, one of the most illogical things I hear is that women become lesbians because men have hurt, scared and/or abused them. If that were the case, many more women would be lesbian! One in four, and likely more, women are sexually violated before they turn 18.

The great majority of the perpetrators are men. Violation can make a victim avoid or fear something but it does not create an attraction to anything.

Liking cookies does not indicate a dislike for cake, and vice versa.

Another foolish theory is that women decide to become lesbian because they hate men for doing them so wrong. The majority of women dogged by men are looking for another man who will do right. They get lucky or die trying. Yes, plenty of people decide to “try it”. We can decide what we will do but cannot decide who and what we essentially are.

In prison and group homes, we call it “gay for the stay”, an adaptation. And I admit that I’ve heard women say that they are so disgusted with men that they are going to turn lesbian. It doesn’t work. They end up back with men.

Doing it doesn’t make you queer anymore than putting on a bikini makes me thin. Ponder this one – it drives some minds to the edge. If a lesbian remained a virgin throughout her life, she would still be a lesbian. She decided not to have sex. She didn’t decide her orientation.

Regina S. Dyton

“NOT a Decision (But It Wouldn’t Be a Bad One If It Was)”

*Grass-stained knees on my good pants
Dunking for apples, a birthday party favorite
Confessions, “Yes, Mom, I broke it.”
Going for Sunday afternoon rides with my family
Hide-and-peek,
Using clothes pins to hold baseball cards in the spokes of my bicycle summer camp.
Learning to write cursive
Riding the merry-go-round, the seesaw, climbing the jungle gym, going down the metal sliding board on the asphalt-topped school playground.*

*Lying on my back on a hill on a warm spring day.
Looking up and laughing at the puffy, white cloud animals as they float by
Playing cowboys and Indians.
Plunging my arm into the frigid water of the soda cooler to get a Nehi Grape
Learning to swim at the Black YMCA.
Sunday School
Trying to kiss my elbow because I wanted to be white
Yes, yes, yes.
I’d do it all over again.*

*Earl Gardner
“All Over Again”*

Financial Report

January-December 2022

		TOTAL
Revenue		
Contributed Income		
Corporate & Foundation Grants	17,125.00	
Donations Directed by Individuals	586.06	
Government Grants & Contracts	500.00	
Total Contributed Income	<u>\$18,211.06</u>	
Directors' Contributions	1,207.10	
Membership Dues	884.02	
Total Revenue	<u>\$20,302.18</u>	
Total Income (<i>calendar year end 2022</i>)		\$20,302.18
Expenditures		
Advertising & Marketing	3,794.21	
Contract & Professional Fees	2,730.65	
Accounting Fees	600.00	
Filing Fees	229.99	
Legal Fees	340.00	
Total Contract & Professional Fees	<u>\$ 3,900.64</u>	
Equipment Computer	1,649.93	
Equipment A/V	6,155.56	
Gifts	206.91	
Office Expenses	37.70	
Internet & TV Services	51.27	
Software & Apps	255.68	
Total Office Expenses	<u>\$ 344.65</u>	
Supplies	330.77	
Supplies & materials	32.20	
Total Supplies	<u>\$ 362.97</u>	
2022 Expenditures	<u>\$16,414.87</u>	
Total Expenditures (<i>calendar year end 2022</i>)		\$16,414.87
Balance (<i>calendar year end 2022</i>)		\$ 3,887.31

Zelda shivered as the rain dripped down her thinning white hair and landed on her neck. The shiver was involuntary and didn't register as discomfort. For Zelda, discomfort was her natural state, interrupted by rare periods of comfort. For many people, especially people who live in homes, pain, anxiety, hunger and extreme heat or cold were the exceptions. For Zelda these conditions were her life. She was relieved when she saw that the spot outside of the luncheonette was free. If no one bigger and stronger than her claimed it she might be able to spend the whole night there until the restaurant opened for breakfast.

She slowly dragged a trash bag filled with what was left of her possessions into the alcove at the restaurant's entrance. There, she would be somewhat sheltered from the rain, if not the cold. She moved slowly, as she always did these days. She made her trash bag a couch that she sat on. She had become good at making places home. She had also become good at abandoning them on a moment's notice.

The street was busy for this time of day. Were people getting ready for one of their holidays so soon? Could it be Christmas again? Wait, no it was that other holiday. What did they call it? Thanksgiving, that was it. She stopped celebrating holidays long ago, around the time she lost her job and her family kicked her out. Holidays never did make any sense to her. Why would everyone in the whole country sit down and eat a bird at an unusual time of day with people that they usually didn't like? They made less sense now. She had no seat at any Thanksgiving table. Not even a seat reserved for relatives that no one liked.

Her doctor, back when she saw doctors, blamed the Voices. He told her to ignore the voices. He gave her medicine to make her stop hearing the voices. But she liked the voices. Sometimes they were comforting, but even when they were critical and cruel, they kept her company. With the voices he built her own special world. It was a sacred space where she had intimate relationships. No matter how bad things got or how little people respected her, she knew that she had a secret, a good secret that they would never be let in on. She might appear lonely but she had a close knit circle of people unknown to outsiders.

Sometimes even now that she didn't take medicine, the voices went away, leaving a void that quickly filled with despair. She prayed desperately to a god in whom she no longer believed to bring the voices back. They made her feel human.

She crouched against the restaurant on her makeshift trash bag couch door guarding her spot and waiting for the crowd on the sidewalk to thin so she could sleep. No one made eye contact with her. Why would they? She was on the ground, and she embodied all their worst fears. She was who they might become, a crazy toothless old lady with no place to go in the rain. Mostly she stared at the ground hoping to hear the voices.

*Melissa Marshall
Excerpt from "Zelda"*

As time passed, we learned that my brother was coming home. I was beside myself. I missed him so much I could not contain my excitement. My mother, father, and all the family were excited, not only about his return, but two of my other cousins were also coming home.

I could not sleep, just imagining the great reunion between my brother and me. I imagined that he would walk into the room, hug my mom and dad and then laughing, he would try to swoop me up in his arms and say, "My, you have grown. I can't even pick you up anymore." He would give me a big ole hug and tell me how much he missed me.

The day arrived, and the room was filled with family and friends. Someone yelled, "He's here!" I pushed in front of everyone so I would be the first one he saw when he entered the room. I had on my Sunday best: pink dress, pink tights, and black patent leather loafers.

My brother walked through the door with his hat in his hand. He looked so handsome in his green uniform, his hair cut really close, and he wore his black shoes.

He walked right past me and hugged my mom and dad, an awkward embrace, almost tentative, and then he loosely shook a few hands.

I ran over and stood right in front of him and asked, "Don't you remember me? I missed you!!"

When our eyes met, his eyes looked empty to me.

"Oh, hi," he said. And that was it.

My best friend, my brother, left for the war a funny, loving, happy-go-lucky teenager and returned emotionally detached from the things he once knew and loved.

He tried to live a regular life. He married, had a son, bought a house. But he was never the same, and he always seemed to be in pain, which he would soothe with some gin and a glass of Kool-Aid.

*Theresa Harris
Excerpt from "The Hardest Thing"*

Journey Writers in the Community

Theresa Harris celebrated 14 years as host of “Diversity in the Community” on Windsor Public TV.



Theresa also starred in a segment of a documentary/training film helping to show the sensitivity needed by healthcare workers when dealing with older adults and how depressing it can be for them to lose their independence.



Liston Filyaw, Jacque Davis, Frances McAlpine Sharp and Leslie Bivans performed in: “*Day of Absence*,” with the Hole in the Wall Theater and
“*Day of Tears*,” with the Day of Tears Touring Company

Liston Filyaw performed in “*Illumination, Our Stories, Our Voices*”, presented by Unity of Greater Hartford.

Jacque Davis performed in “*Barbeque*” with the Hole in the Wall Theater.

Andre Keitt, Theresa Harris, Leslie Bivans, and Liston Filyaw continued to support the Amistad Freedom Tour with the Farmington Historical Society.



Andre Keitt ran the Changemakers Storytelling Series and Workshop at the Hartford Public Library.



Like Mrs. Edmonds's expectations for her children, I had expectations for my marriage. And like Mrs. Edmonds, I pushed, prodded and even criticized to convince Marceline to be what I wanted her to be, instead of accepting her for who she was. Marceline never shared my expectations of her or for us.

I pushed that memory aside and returned my attention to the woman in front of me. Although Mrs. Edmonds appeared strong and resilient, she was also vulnerable. For many reasons, she had waited a long time to wrap herself in a life of her own making, I think largely because most of her earlier wrappings were made for her. She, like me, was born in the South. She'd had to deal with all that meant for Black folks trying to get by and "make a way out of no way," as the saying goes.

Her father left shortly after her birth. Her mother died when she was three, and she was sent north to be raised in the authoritarian household of an aunt and uncle at a time when society did not care what a woman might want outside of husband, home and children. Except for Black women, of course, who were expected to do it all—bring home the bacon, fry it up in the pan, manage the household, and pamper the man.

Mrs. Edmonds learned the lesson well and sang that song for the next fifty years. She'd graduated secretarial school at the top of her class, but unable to find a job in that field, instead ended up working as a salesclerk in a drugstore, all while keeping house, being a wife and a mother to three children, and handling the legal and financial responsibilities of the household.

Underneath those outer wrappings, Martha Rae Edmonds hid her vulnerability along with her demons. And she did have demons, though until now she'd been reluctant to face them, trace them or erase them.

However, she was, as I learned over our time together, an expert in sniffing them out. She'd let them raise their eyes from her subconscious mind and open their mouths to speak. Then she would smash the lid of defiance, dismissal and denial on top of their heads.

Did that work for her in the long term? Sadly, no, because despite Mrs. Edmonds's glowing community and social success, her wrappings had started to come apart at the seams and experienced more than a few rips and frayed edges. The demons boldly peeked out over the brave toss of her head, the flick of her hand, and the smile on her lips that never quite reached her eyes.

Beth Gibbs
Excerpt from "The Well-Wrapped Life"
Soul Food, Life-Affirming Stories Served with Side Dishes and Just Desserts

*If you have any connection to the natural world
The warm months are a time of anticipation and release*

We wait for the first crocus, the daffodils, the tulips, perhaps rhubarb

*Later, our attention turns to lilacs, peonies and strawberries . . .
. . . ah, strawberries*

Every week throughout the summer, brings some new treat for the eye, the nose or the tastebud

And on into the fall, bringing apples, pumpkins, and hardy mums

*In each case, we know they won't last
They are ours to enjoy for a finite time
And when they are gone, we are disappointed
But we recognize it's the way of the world*

*Creeping phlox in November?
Winter blueberries?
Roses in January?*

That would just be weird

*Perhaps we need to treat the other things in our lives more like this
— be it a job, a home, a friend or a lover*

*Recognize the beauty and wonder while it's there
Be delighted and astonished every day that we are allowed to have it
Revel in the joy and the blessing it brings into our lives
We realize, deep down, even the people we bring into our lives will not be there forever*

*"Til death do us part" is real
Our own death or that of someone close*

But love, given and received, is forever

*Larry Roeming
"To Every Thing There is a Season"*

Journey Writers in Print

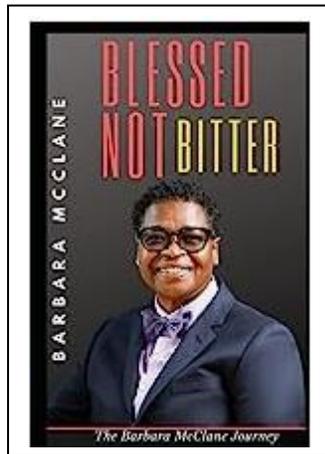
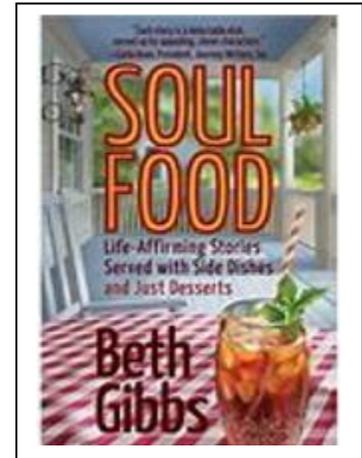
June 2022 – May 2023

Books

Beth Gibbs

Soul Food: Life-Affirming Stories Served with Side Dishes and Just Desserts.

Emerald Lake Books, Sherman, CT, January 2023.



Barbara McClane

Blessed Not Bitter, The Barbara McClane Journey. October 2022

Short Stories, Essays & Poems

Regina S. Dyton

“Dear Ella.” In *Sinister Wisdom, a Multicultural Lesbian and Art Journal.* June 2022.

Articles, Commentary, and Op-Eds

Regina S. Dyton

“The Color of Capitalism.” *Aislin Magazine*, June 2022.

Beth Gibbs

“Flightsong” *These Black Bodies Are...a Blacklandia Anthology*

Denise Best

“I Guess I Am Invisible, And That Matters” *These Black Bodies Are...a Blacklandia Anthology*

Awards

Beth Gibbs

Enlighten Up! Finding Clarity, Contentment and Resilience in a Complicated World

- June 2022
San Francisco Book Festival: First Place Winner. Category, Spiritual
http://www.sanfranciscobookfestival.com/winners_2022.htm
- June 2022
International Book Awards: Award Winning Finalist. Category, Self-Help-Motivational
<http://www.internationalbookawards.com/2022awardannouncement.html>

About Journey Writers

Since its inception in 2013, Journey Writers, Inc. has provided a safe, open, and supportive environment for writers to share their work and receive constructive feedback and encouragement. We provide information and skill development opportunities to assist writers. We celebrate each person's unique contributions and assist individuals as they develop their skills and reach their full potential. The organization comprises over twenty-five writers from diverse backgrounds, including playwrights, poets, storytellers, songwriters, actors, directors and producers. Periodically, we offer performances and showcases designed to highlight the creative writing of our members. Many of the programs address social issues and encourage positive changes. Each performance is entertaining and thought-provoking. As a result, audience members have commented on the genuine impact Journey Writers programs have had on them.

As we begin our second decade, Journey Writers gives special thanks to the individuals and organizations that have supported our growth and development over the past ten years. We are committed to continuing our journey as we support writers and our community.

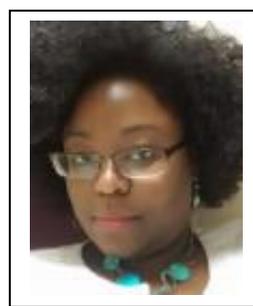
The Founders



Carla Dean



Liston Filyaw



Therelza Ellington



Frances McAlpine Sharp

Ten years ago, Journey Writers began as an idea shared by four individuals. Now, a full decade later, the organization has grown and developed in amazing ways and all four founders are still actively involved in our programs and activities.

Acknowledgements

Journey Writers is grateful to the many individuals and organizations that have offered their generous support for our programs and activities. Their contributions of time, skill, guidance, as well as financial contributions have helped to sustain and guide our programs, enabled us to serve the community and helped support the development of our writers. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

ProBono Partnership for supporting our legal needs

William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund for supporting the publication of *Journeys*, our literary anthology

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for technical equipment

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Donald W. and Dorothy D. Johnson Fund for supporting the publication of *Journeys*, our literary anthology

CT Humanities, the statewide, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities for a generous grant to support our online presence, marketing and accessibility efforts

City of Hartford for supporting our work with hARTford Love Project and our general operating expenses

Center for Leadership and Justice for allowing Journey Writers, Inc. to use their facilities as our home

Free Center of Hartford for allowing Journey Writers, Inc. to use their facilities for our programs

Friends, Families and Community members for continuing to attend programs and provide ongoing support

We Welcome Your Support

Journey Writers, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. We provide a safe, open and supportive environment for writers to share their work, receive constructive feedback and encouragement. Workshops are held twice each month. New writers are always invited to attend. We welcome your inquiries and your support. Please contact us if you would like to volunteer, become a member, attend a workshop, join our mailing list or make a contribution.

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