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2>Thank You, From One Poet To Another

The Capital Times :: EDITORIAL :: A9

Saturday, January 26, 2008
FABU

I am Madison's third poet laureate, and I follow two very remarkable artists.

John Tuschen was the first poet laureate, and I only knew him through his poetry and having heard him read. I was new to the Madison literary scene when Tuschen was a prominent poet, and I remember thinking that he was the epitome of the eclectic poet. His look, his conversation, his poems were all undeniably distinct. From a distance, I felt that Tuschen was a poet adamant about his craft and his beliefs.

Andrea Musher, the second Madison poet laureate, I know better. I can't remember where we first met. I think it was at a Tap-It production called the Poetry Cafe when I submitted my narrative poem "The Mary Turner Lynching in Valdosta, Georgia." Andrea not only accepted the poem for inclusion, she also asked me to read it. That was our poetic beginning, and this article is a thank you to Andrea for her tenure.

Andrea Musher, poet, activist and associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, teaches creative writing, women's studies and literature classes. She believes that "poetry is the voice of a culture." Two of her initiatives were Poetry Buzz, featuring 52 poets, and Poets for Peace. She also facilitates a "Works-in-Progress Cafe" at UW-Whitewater.

As poet laureate, Andrea has served as a liaison between poets in academia and poets in the community. I believe that she has been successful in her office because she has contributed her own strident voice, while connecting poets from all over Madison. She listens keenly for original and unusual voices in poetry. She values the perspectives of poets from all ethnicities while maintaining her own unique style.

I am one of those original and unusual voices in poetry. Born a Southerner, I have a world view shaped by faith, living in several racist Southern states, living overseas in France and Kenya, and now I have lived more years in Madison than in any of those places. Madison is home because my parents are deceased.

As a poet, I particularly like speaking for those who often go unheard in our society, which means I have poems about lynchings as well as poems about children.

My duties as Madison poet laureate are still being discussed and formulated with the able assistance of Karin Wolf, arts program administrator with the Madison Arts Commission, and others connected to literary arts in Madison. As the third poet laureate beginning my service to Madison on behalf of poetry, in a new year, it is exciting to dream of new initiatives in partnerships with poets, artists, ethnic communities and organizations. For poets, it is our words that we want shared and to speak for us.

To introduce my work to those readers who do not know it, here are two of my poems: Southern Love I want love to be like a good pot of greens pick the tenderest parts separate from the hard stem wash gently and thoroughly removing every bit of dirt and grime rinsing over and over and over with the clear clean water of forgiveness season with savory meat, herbs and spices and then simmer, simmer, simmer.

My Mother Is Sun. My Father Is Moon.

My mother is sun yellow heated passion 'ssippi hot burning illumination.

My father is moon bright in still darkness glimmering cool contrary by day or moonlit night.

And I am moving water reflecting sun and moon points of light while my parents rest before rising.

\ Fabu is a poet, writer and educator who lives in Madison, and she writes a monthly column for The Capital Times. She was installed Jan. 20 as Madison's new poet laureate and will join the Festival of Poets for a reading of her work at 2 p.m. Sunday at Avol's Bookstore, 315 W. Gorham St. Fabu@Poetfabu.com

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