

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Cassandra Darden Bell:** Cassandra worked a number of years in news broadcasting as a reporter, anchor and editor. She left her career four years ago to become a stay at home mom. In May 2002, she self-published her first book, *The Color of Love* and started on her second manuscript, *Mississippi Blues*. With that manuscript, her agent, landed a two book deal with BET/Kensington Publishing. Cassandra is represented by Crichton and Associates Literary Agency, and is a member of Black Writers United. Her first book, *The Color of Love*, is included in the AA Literature reading list at East Carolina University.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**BELL:** *Mississippi Blues* deals with many things, from family relationships, and marital infidelity, to teenage drinking and driving. At the helm of these issues is the powerful force we call communication. *Mississippi Blues* shows how embracing it can lead to understanding and growth, while denying it can lead to misunderstandings and tragedy.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**BELL:** I feel a responsibility to the reader to not just spend 200 pages talking about the problems, but to also offer sound guidance and workable solutions. I would like for readers to walk away from *Mississippi Blues* with an understanding of how crucial it is to confront and work through the tough issues in life.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**BELL:** I have three children ages 4, 3, and 18 months. The best thing I do for them is lead by example. Of course I read to them and let them pretend to read to me. And even when they are running about doing other things, they see me reading, and they get the impression that reading is important. They catch things even when I'm not trying to teach them.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**BELL:** With a busy writing schedule and three very young children, this stage of my life does not allow me time to physically spend time with my local literacy organization. However, that is not an excuse to do nothing, so I financially support grassroots adult literacy programs in my community. I also have

opportunities each school year to speak to elementary and middle school students as part of their school reading programs.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**BELL:** My favorite books as a child and teenager were anything by Judy Blume. Her characters and stories always helped me understand things about growing up.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**BELL:** My advice is simply, write. There are a million books on the market that deal with the craft and the business of writing. But none of it will help, if you don't spend considerable time actually writing.

**SORMAG:** What is something reader's would be surprised you do?

**BELL:** I walk through my house, from room to room. It's as if the physical movement starts the movement of my story. After a few laps, I sit down and write until it's all gone and then I walk again.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**BELL:** I have to stay active. When I sit down to write and nothing comes, I shut down the computer and get caught up in life. Before long, the living gives me material and I can't get back to my computer fast enough.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**BELL:** Readers can contact me through my website via email. My address is also on the site for those who like to use snail mail.

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**BELL:** My next book is called *After the Storm*. Set in Jacksonville Florida, the story plays off an actual storm, as well as a metaphorical storm in the lives of three women. The story takes us into the stormy devastation of life taking turns you hadn't anticipated, the aftermath of despair, and the rebuilding process.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Parry Ebony Satin Brown:** A happily divorced grandmother of five that has been writing since 1996. I have five published book of which three have been optioned for films.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**BROWN:** Love is Blind is an anthology that takes the reader on a romantic journey through the lives of three couples as they deal with blind dating. Just a Click Away (my story) explores dating via the Internet.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**BROWN:** It's just a fun book that will open up the options of blind dating, especially via the Internet. I met the love of my life on the net and we've been together for four years.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**BROWN:** My grandkids call me on the phone and read to me once a week.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**BROWN:** I attend conferences and serve on panels to make people aware of the very serious problem.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**BROWN:** All of the Hardy Boys mysteries and Cinderella

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**BROWN:** Surround yourself with authors who

are where you want to be. Watch and learn. Writing the book is the easy part. It's all about the marketing.

**SORMAG:** What is something reader's would be surprised you do?

**BROWN:** I'm and accountant and programmer

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**BROWN:** I people watch. It's amazing what you can learn and think of just by being quiet and watching what's going on around you. Most of my character development has come from just seeing people interact.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**BROWN:** pbrown@parryabrown.com or calling 310-213-2515

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**BROWN:** Fannin' the Flames is a full length novel that deals with the issues of black firefighters both on and off the job. Another family drama that depict good strong African American men!

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**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer

**Shonda Cheekes:** Born and raised in Miami, Florida, I'm a mother of two, wife of one, and sister to four. It wasn't until I started reading books by African American authors in my 20's that the thought of being a writer even entered my mind. I basically used writing as a stress relieving tool.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book

**CHEEKES:** Another Man's Wife is a story about Yani Miller, who is dealing with the fact that her husband disappears and five years later she decides to move on with her life. She then meets the man of her dreams, Alex Chance, an extremely successful businessman that's looking for a woman who isn't out to use him for his status or his money. Then there's Yani's sister Aisa who ends up rekindling her relationship with her ex-fiancé while in Miami. After a whirlwind courtship, Yani and Alex marry, but before they can get to happily ever after, the first husband reappears.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**CHEEKES:** Other than pure enjoyment, they should realize that sometimes we have to let the past be the past.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together

**CHEEKES:** My daughter is 12 and my son is 10 and we go to the local library religiously. Right now we're doing twenty to thirty minutes of reading every night before bedtime.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**CHEEKES:** I'm visiting the local high and middle schools talking to students about being a writer and avid reader. I'd like to start a book club with them. I started out as a publicist, so I guess you can call

me a professional book pusher.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**CHEEKES:** I loved Dr. Suess stories. So take your pick on that one. As a teenager I remember two books - *The Catcher in the Rye*, (J.D. Salinger) and *My Name Is Asher Lev*. (Chiam Potok).

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**CHEEKES:** You have to work at honing your craft so write and learn the basics. When I met Lolita Files she said, never think of yourself as aspiring - if you wrote your name on a piece of paper that makes you a writer.

**SORMAG:** What is something readers would be surprised you do?

**CHEEKES:** My husband and I own Thoroughbred race horses. We follow the sport like people follow football and basketball.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**CHEEKES:** When a reader tells me how much they enjoyed my story or book is enough motivation.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**CHEEKES:** My email is – PubliSista@aol.com

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**CHEEKES:** Right now I'm working on three books, so I'm not sure which one will be the next.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you, the person and the writer?

**Michele Claybrook-Lucas:** I am a native Philadelphian. I currently live just outside of Philly with my husband and daughter. After working for 20 years in corporate America, I decided to pursue other options that allow me use some stagnated creativity.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** “Quilting a Life” is a quick, easy to read guide that addresses life situations that affect our livelihood, lifestyle and life dreams. Similar to a quilt, life has many pieces. Unlike a quilt, we don’t have a pattern that tells us what our life’s design will resemble. This book is for anyone who ever felt stuck and needed some ideas to “kick start” the process for changing jobs, building confidence, saving money, exiting a bad relationship or pursuing a dream.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** “Quilting a Life”(QAL) is a reminder to all who read this book that “You are capable of many things. Think positively, be creative, love yourself, get rid of personal baggage and keep pushing.”

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literary. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** My eight year old daughter, Ciara, loves to read. When she was an infant, I read to her and listened to books on tape when traveling by car. As Ciara learned to walk, we visited the library weekly. One of the most exciting events for Ciara occurred when she turned six and acquired a library card. She was beaming! This was affirmation that I planted the seed of literacy in my child.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** I use gift-giving opportunities to share my love of reading and to encourage folks to read. Book certificates or copies of books make great holiday and special occasion gifts.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** As a small child I loved to hear my mother read “Artey the Smarty” by Faith McNulty. It was about a little fish that thought he knew every thing. My favorite book as a teenager was “A Teacup Full of Roses” by Sharon Bell Mathis. This is a great book about a teenage boy surviving inner city turmoil, family struggles and community issues. The book is an example of how personal fortitude and focus can help people overcome their circumstances.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** Write everyday. Write what is in your heart. Stay focused. Of course, keep a dictionary close at hand!

**SORMAG:** What is something readers would be surprised that you do?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** I’m a practical joker. I like to play pranks and tell jokes. My sense of humor is evident in my writing.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** I have a note card posted on my computer that states “You are a writer.” I look at that card everyday to reinforce my purpose.

**SORMAG:** How can writers get in contact with you?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** My web page is [www.geocities.com/michele\\_claybrook/QAL.html](http://www.geocities.com/michele_claybrook/QAL.html). My email address is [michele\\_claybrook@yahoo.com](mailto:michele_claybrook@yahoo.com). I’d love to hear some feedback regarding your thoughts about “Quilting a Life.”

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peak at your next book?

**CLAYBROOK-LUCAS:** I’m currently working on a humorous, fiction project entitled, “*Hello my name is Enthusiasm.*” It’s about a young woman who loses her job but finds herself through the process of reflection, restoration and renovation in her life. (I love alliteration!) Through it all, she has some whacky experiences that will resonate with many contemporary black women. I’m having a lot of fun writing it.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Shirley Hailstock:** I'm the author 16 novels and novellas, many of which have garnered awards and accolades. I write both contemporary and historical fiction and have been on the board of Romance Writers of America for seven years. I've just completed my term as the only African American president in their history.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**HAILSTOCK:** LOVE ON CALL is the second book in the series of The Clayton Family. (A FATHER'S FORTUNE was the first.) Brad Clayton is one of six adopted children. His biological mother abandoned him and his brother Owen when Brad was nine years old. Brad has never given up on finding her and confronting her for the answers only she can give. Consequently, he has issues with women, until a life-threatening incident in the emergency room brings Dr. Mallory Russell to his attention.

Mallory has her own problems which beg for a solitary life, but the attraction to the moody Dr. Clayton won't allow her to keep her secrets. As she becomes deeply involved in his quest, her growing attraction for Brad alters her course of life and love.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**HAILSTOCK:** A sense that all is not as it appears to be and we should look for the deeper meaning in what we see and hear. We are so quick to look only at the surface of a problem when the underlining cause can hold a greater understanding for the truth.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**HAILSTOCK:** My children are college age now and their reading is restricted to textbooks and what's on a computer screen. Luckily I have a twenty month old grandchild. I read the Golden Books, Disney Books, and lots of picture books to her. She'll probably be a reader because she stopped tearing the books apart and eating the pages at 10 months.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**HAILSTOCK:** I participate in a lot of organizations, donating my time by speaking, that support literacy programs or donate to literacy. Romance Writers of America makes a major contribution to literacy every year. My local chapter also donates to them and I have been a speaker at many fund raising programs which support literacy in America.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**HAILSTOCK:** I wish I could remember a children's book that was a favorite, but I can't. My first mystery was a book called THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD RED BARN. In grade school (4th grade, I believe) my teacher read us DR. DOOLITTLE and I was captivated by it. As a teenager my favorite books were a series of young adult books by Rosamund du Jardin. They were about teenagers slightly older than myself and I thought the characters had wonderful lives.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**HAILSTOCK:** READ, READ, READ. Read everything you can. Read books you like and books you don't like, especially books you don't like. Analyze them and find out why you like or don't like them. When you write take the good parts and use them. Take the bad parts and make sure you don't do them. And you have to write.

**SORMAG:** What is something reader's would be surprised you do?

**HAILSTOCK:** I do several creative things other than write. I decorate cakes, play the piano (only for myself) and sew. I have precious little time for any of those endeavors with my current schedule, but I used to sew all my clothes. When my kids were smaller I made cakes and decorated them as trains, cars, champagne bottles, bassinets, and a five-tiered wedding cake.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**HAILSTOCK:** Motivation isn't a problem for me. I have so many stories in my head that I want to write and I love the process of writing. For me it's relaxation after a busy day. I look forward to getting to my computer. It is the fun time for me. When I enter that world I know everything that happens is safe and controllable.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**HAILSTOCK:** I have a webpage at <http://www.geocities.com/shailstock> and I can be reached through e-mail at [Shirley.Hailstock@diag.bracco.com](mailto:Shirley.Hailstock@diag.bracco.com)

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**HAILSTOCK:** My next book is not titled at the moment, but it is the next brother's story in the Clayton series. Owen Clayton is Brad's (from LOVE ON CALL) biological brother. Owen is an architect in Dallas, Texas. He discovers a family secret and has to deal with the consequences to the family and himself personally.

**Shades Of Romance Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**DeVonnia Livous:** I'm a single mother of 3, grandmother of 3, currently residing in Chicago with my youngest son, with dreams of becoming a best-selling author so that I can retire from UPS, where I've been employed for the past 7 years. Reading and writing have been life-long loves for me. It's my love for reading and these crazy talk shows that inspire me and my vivid imagination.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**LIVOUS:** MY FRIEND, MY LOVER, MY STALKER (Black Print Publishing), revolves around Tara St. Pierre, a successful author, and her childhood friend, Stan Bishop. Stan's young years were not happy ones. His mother was an alcoholic who deserted him and his father when Stan was just 5 years old. Stan and Tara met when Stan's father then met and married Tara's aunt. Stan was further scarred when he caught his new step mom in a compromising position with another man, which resulted in a divorce, his father turning to alcohol and Stan being sent to live with relatives. After years of not seeing one another, Stan and Tara are reunited, resuming their friendship, and eventually start dating. What seems like a wonderful, blossoming relationship takes a bad turn when it becomes clear to Tara that Stan is possessive, jealous and controlling. Fed up, she ends the relationship. Stan isn't having it. He's determined to get her back, or make her life, and her loved ones lives a living hell.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**LIVOUS:** No one should have to live their lives in fear or turmoil because they choose to not be with someone. If someone is in a situation like this, then like Tara, they should do whatever is necessary to insure their safety.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**LIVOUS:** My son is 14, but when he was younger, I would read him bedtime stories and encourage him to develop a love for reading like his mom.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**LIVOUS:** My oldest granddaughter is an avid reader and she realizes the importance of reading both for fun and knowledge. My youngest grandkids are infants, but I stress to their parents the importance of reading to them regardless of their age.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a

teenager?

**LIVOUS:** As a child, I loved *The Cat In The Hat*; *Curious George*; and *Nancy Drew*. As a teen, I was hooked on *Stephen King*.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**LIVOUS:** First, get unbiased opinions about your writing. This should help you determine if writing is for you or if you should keep your day job and find another hobby. I had people read some of my writings, but I'd tell them someone else wrote it. That way I could get an honest opinion without them being afraid of hurting my feelings. But if writing is truly for you, stay focused, be consistent with your writing, always keep a note pad or voice recorder nearby, because a thought or idea may come at any time and you want to write it down before you forget it. And mostly, make your story interesting and develop your characters, something I'm still learning to do.

**SORMAG:** What is something readers would be surprised you do?

**LIVOUS:** I gave this question a lot of thought; and I thought about sky-diving, rock climbing, snorkeling, amateur boxing, and a lot of other things that readers would be surprised I do. Well, I don't do any of these things. I'm just an ordinary, hardworking woman who enjoys the simple pleasures, a few dollars in my pocket, a new pair of shoes, and the company of an intelligent, sexy man.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**LIVOUS:** Getting feedback from readers motivates and inspires me to continue writing. And just keeping an open and clear mind, allowing my imagination to flourish.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**LIVOUS:** I'm in the process of having my website developed, but in the meantime, I can be emailed at: [anovelidea@ameritech.net](mailto:anovelidea@ameritech.net).

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**LIVOUS:** My next novel is about a close knit family of 4 brothers and their loving father, who teaches his sons everything he knows. Cons, scams, swindling, pandering; his boys are following in their father's footsteps and making him proud.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Eddra Marchand:** I have always enjoyed writing since my young adulthood in New Orleans, Louisiana. It served as a reprieve from life's ups and downs and allowed me to utilize my creative energies. As the youngest of four children, by several years, I often entertained myself and writing and performing was how I accomplished that goal. However, when I entered college my writing came to a halt as I pursued my degree in biology with hopes of getting into medical school. That dream became a reality when I moved to Atlanta, Georgia and began medical school at Emory University in 1990. Needless to say, my primary focus then became sleeping and conserving energy to complete my journey through the structured world of medicine. It was not until I was working as a full time internist and on maternity leave with my daughter, Mallory, that this hidden passion of writing revealed itself again. I then found myself writing in between nursing, burping, and changing diapers. Sleep was no longer a priority as my mind yearned to unleash it's creative beast that had lay dormant for much too long. It was then that the skeleton of "Balancing Acts" was produced and subsequently when I had my son, Zachary, in December 2001 the manuscript was completed.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**MARCHAND:** "Balancing Acts" is a novel which involves a metamorphosis. It chronicles the life of an African American woman, Cassandra Nicholas, in her mid thirties who has found success in many aspects of her life, but who has not been particularly successful in her personal endeavors. Through the novel, she endures a series of "life moments" which help her evolve and to question a lot of the choices she has made. She ultimately embarks upon a journey of self-discovery to establish the true essence of her being and uncovers some hidden realities in the process.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**MARCHAND:** I would like readers to recognize that we live in a real world with real choices and real consequences. We have to seek peace and harmony within ourselves and not through others. We have to recognize that life is a journey not a destination in which we should always strive for harmony.... spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together?

**MARCHAND:** I have two toddlers, four and two. They each choose a book every night to read and on Saturdays there is a Toddler time at the local Barnes and Noble that we go to for them to have stories read to them and various fun activities including singing and crafts to keep their imaginations alive and balanced.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**MARCHAND:** I believe illiteracy is a huge obstacle that we face, particularly in the African American community which we can only overcome through programs which promote reading and writing and not let people forego this education because of shame or embarrassment. I am giving a portion of proceeds from "Balancing Acts" to local youth literacy programs to help our youth recognize

that education and knowledge is a priority.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**MARCHAND:** As a child my favorite book actually was the "Highlight" magazine, which had stories, games, and activities, all in the name of learning. One of my favorite stories as a teenager was a Judy Bloom book called, "Are you there God? It's me Margaret."

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**MARCHAND:** Advice for an aspiring writer is to stay focused and to get involved in learning as much about your craft as possible. Know the statistics, so that you can keep it "real" through the process. Create a business plan to include manuscript production, editing, typesetting, marketing. Understand that the process has essentially just begun after the manuscript is produced. Bottom line is anything is possible if you are positive and have a positive support team around you. Utilize your resources!

**SORMAG:** What is something readers would be surprised you do?

**MARCHAND:** Most readers I guess are surprised that I am a full time mother, wife, and physician. I also promote health and fitness so I place a priority on that as well in my household. I play racquetball and run. I have to practice what I preach, because I tell my patients the same thing.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**MARCHAND:** Staying motivated is very easy. I stay positive. I see all types of afflictions every day that impact people's lives and I recognize how blessed I am to be healthy and be able to have a positive impact on others. In the office I help people deal with medical conditions and promote a healthy physical and mental condition. In the novel I give people a diversion from their typical existence to the life of a character who helps you laugh, cry, smile and keep it real.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**MARCHAND:** Readers can contact me via my website at <http://www.mzvpublishing.com> and I welcome comments and questions because it is the readers who motivate me to keep putting my best foot forward creatively.

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**MARCHAND:** The sequel will be very captivating as it delves into the lives of a few characters in the first novel. I can say that one of the characters in the first novel will reach their demise in book two.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Sean Miller:** I am a natural poet that discovered a love for writing early on. I believe in the essence of love and more importantly how it relates to men and women in relationships. I am forever gathering information o women trying to understand them in hopes of finding Mrs. Sean Miller.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**MILLER:** A Gambit for Love relates the 3 stages of chess, the opening, middle and the end and parallels those stages with love using Steve Milton, Lisa Thomas and Monica Jones as the central characters. It promises to take you on the same emotional roller coaster ride as them leading to an intriguing ending.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**MILLER:** I hope that readers will see a true love story and cherish the love they are with or perhaps reflect on the true love they let get away.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**MILLER:** When my daughter was younger I would challenge her all the time by changing different ways she learned, I believe this helped her become a more focused student.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**MILLER:** To tell you the truth I don't do nearly enough, but I do often encourage young people whenever in their presence to study hard.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**MILLER:** I vividly remember being a member of

the Dr. Suess Book Club when I was a kid and Green Eggs and Ham was my favorite book.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**MILLER:** Do your homework because this publishing game is noooo joke.

**SORMAG:** What is something reader's would be surprised you do?

**MILLER:** Well if you saw me in person you would NEVER believe that I have a daughter going off to college next year. That's how young I look.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**MILLER:** I try to stay focused on what's on the "other side". The other side being where the accomplishment of my goals and dreams are.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**MILLER:** Seanmiller@bww.com. I'd love to hear from you.

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**MILLER:** It will pick up where A Gambit for Love left off at only several years later. I'd like to see what happens with Steve Milton myself. He is a true romantic.

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**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Pat Simmons:** I'm a news writer/assignment editor for a CBS station. Married, two teenagers, avid reader, seamstress, and amateur genealogist.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**SIMMONS:** Anthology Love Is Blind is a joint effort with best selling author Parry "EbonySatin" Brown and new writer, Lisa Watson. Three novellas about falling in love with someone you don't know physically.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**SIMMONS:** A feel good feeling, an achy stomach from laughing so hard, and a desire to wait for our next anthology.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**SIMMONS:** My children were reading as toddlers. I always purchased fiction books as well as African-American history non-fiction for them. I always read to them or had toys that taught them how to read. I loved purchasing toys, video, and other stuff that educated them.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**SIMMONS:** I give my books I buy away, especially to someone who may not be able to buy them. I plan to sign and send some of my new books to the troops in Baghdad. After the war, I'll probably always send my books to troops where ever they are.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**SIMMONS:** Favorite...impossible to name just

one. As a child and teenager, I enrolled in the read 100 books during the summer program, I always read more. As a former radio host, I read a hardback in a weekend. Today, I can easily read a novel a day.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**SIMMONS:** PRAY, PRAY, AND PRAY  
Be encouraged and network. I'm blessed today because Parry gracefully agreed to help sponsor me as a new writer. I can't think of too many authors who would have had blind faith in an unpublished writer. God had a plan for me and it included Parry "EbonySatin" Brown.

**SORMAG:** What is something reader's would be surprised you do?

**SIMMONS:** A lot of things. Basically, I have my shy moments. Lisa, pick yourself off the floor. Smile.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**SIMMONS:** Sunday school, Sunday worship, Wednesday Bible class, Monday prayer. I want to hear the voice of God and have him minister to me so I can touch my readers. AND I attend local events, monthly luncheons with my girlfriends and any activity where I can be nosy (Basically to learn something I don't know...which is a lot of things).

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**SIMMONS:** patlsimmons@yahoo.com

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**SIMMONS:** I'm glad you asked. Guilty of Love is a full length novel that will make the reader cry, laugh out loud, and cheer.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Lashelle L. Turner:** I am a graduate of Alabama State University with a Bachelor of Science in Business. I currently reside in Atlanta, Georgia with my family. I work full-time as an Investment Professional for a major bank.

I began writing at the age of eight, poetry and short stories. My high school English teacher encouraged me to enter poetry contests. Since then, I've entered countless poetry and short story competitions. My first attempt at a novel came at the age of fifteen. My current novel, "On the Short End of the Love Stick" is my third attempt and my first completed novel.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**TURNER:** "On the Short End of the Love Stick" is a contemporary romance novel about how African American women of Generation X deal with dating and finding love. It is romance drama about three women under thirty finding love in the big city. The novel is about how the dating game has changed now that we live in a hip hop generation. Today sisters are bolder and more up front about what they want from men. Ultimately, the book questions women what they are willing to put up with to keep what they consider a 'good man.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**TURNER:** I would like readers to take good look at what is happening with modern day relationships. Do we like what is happening to the intimacy between black men and women? If not, how can we change it to make it better for our daughters?

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together?

**TURNER:** I have two daughters, five and ten. We make monthly trips to the public library and local bookstores where we load up on books. I am an avid reader and encourage my daughters to be the same. It has worked. My daughter is in the fifth

grade and reads at the eighth grade level. She is now reading classic novels.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**TURNER:** I always pass along a good book and donate my old books to my public library.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**TURNER:** My favorite book as a child was "Charlotte's Web". As a teenager, "I Know why Caged Birds Sing" by Maya Angelou.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**TURNER:** Read, Read, Read. Every author must learn the art of storytelling. It is an art form. Just don't read contemporary fiction, go back and read the classics. They endure through time for a reason.

**SORMAG:** What is something readers would be surprised you do?

**TURNER:** I watch TV and read at the same time. I'm a busy woman. I have to do two things at once sometimes.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**TURNER:** My love of telling a good story and providing entertainment as a form of escape for this hectic world.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**TURNER:** LTurnerS@aol.com

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

My next book is tentatively titled, "Love on a Full Court". It is about a love triangle entangled in fame, success, and money. The book is about a celebrity marriage in which one partner refuses to let go fearing they will lose all the fame and fortune the marriage has brought them. The book is about how keeping secrets and telling lies can destroy relationships. And learning when to let go.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Lisa Y. Watson:** I was born and raised in Washington, D.C.. I attended, School Without Walls, a non-traditional magnet high school. It was there I first discovered and explored my passion for writing. After graduation, I went straight into Corporate America. I worked at a management consulting and software development firm in Northern Virginia. The purchasing, telecommunications and web development positions I held there allowed me to write on a daily basis. I took college courses, a correspondence course at The Long Ridge Writer's Group and online courses at Writer's Village University to strengthen my natural abilities. I'd write poems and short stories, but rarely showed them to anyone. I was a closet writer until taking these courses and having to post my assignments for constructive comments (they didn't like to use the word critique) by my peers.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**WATSON:** Love Is Blind is a novella with three unique stories on blind dating. Our characters explore the intricacies of love and relationships by internet, letters and in person. My story, The Switch, is about two people that fall in love after meeting on a blind date. My character goes to break a date for his best friend and ends up assuming his identity and finding the woman of his dreams.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**WATSON:** That ordinary events transpire in a person's life that could change them forever. Love can be found in the most unusual places and under unusual circumstances. Never close yourself off to the possibilities. And most importantly, just because you don't go looking for love, doesn't mean it won't eventually find you!

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**WATSON:** I have two children, a six-year old son, Brandon and my daughter Alyssa, who's almost four. We read books daily and we visit our local library often. They find and check out books they'd like to read for story time at home. My daughter doesn't read yet but she has no problem sitting down and doing her version of reading aloud. My mother and sisters tell me I was just like that at Alyssa's age. I listen to her sometimes; she's very animated and really has a avid imagination, which I think is amazing.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**WATSON:** I volunteered with other parents to establish a Publishing Center at Brandon's elementary school. It's an incredible opportunity for me. The publishing center will allow the children to write an original story and bring it to the center for publication. We interview the children and have them relay their vision for their story. The story is typed by parent volunteers, sent back to the kids so they can illustrate their stories and returned to the publishing center. We then bound and laminate them. As a writer, I was interested in being a part of this process; from seeing a story go from an idea to a finished, published product. It's exciting!

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**WATSON:** I've always been a voracious reader; my appetite for books was sparked as a young girl beginning with Dr. Seuss and moving to Judy Blume and Nancy Drew type mysteries during my teenage years.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**WATSON:** My advice would be to not close yourself off to the possibilities. Go to writer's conferences, join book clubs and peer groups. Commune with the literary world. It's scary, and you may find yourself uncomfortable sharing your views and your most prized possession, your writing, but it is necessary in order to grow as a person and a writer. Know your writing style; acknowledge your own writing process. What works for others might not work for you. Don't be afraid of constructive critiques of your writing. Other writer's have the same hopes and fears you do. Avail yourself of other writer's experiences and knowledge. Support is essential in your journey to becoming a published author. You never know when a chance meeting will change your life and your writing career.

**SORMAG:** What is something reader's would be surprised you do?

**WATSON:** I write fan fiction for a popular 80's television show, Remington Steele. It's my whimsical indulgence. It allowed me to reach other authors and readers that share this interest. I can't begin to describe how amazing it is to receive e-mail from people all over the world that actually read my stories and look forward to them. Some people have actually sent me e-mail to ask me to hurry up and post the next part of a story so that they can print it out and take on vacation with them. I'm in awe. I've also encouraged other readers to try writing their own stories and have guest authors on my site that have accomplished this goal.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**WATSON:** I have a phenomenal group of friend and family that support me in my writing endeavors. Some of them I've known all my adult life, others I've met through networking with other writer's at conferences and peer groups. These are the incredible people that keep me going when I'm doubting my abilities and need a boost or when I'm being indecisive. They keep me grounded.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**WATSON:** By dropping me an e-mail at [lisa@cyberwatson.com](mailto:lisa@cyberwatson.com) or [lywatson007@hotmail.com](mailto:lywatson007@hotmail.com)

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

**WATSON:** My next story is entitled "All Worked Up" for the Love At Work novella with Parry "Ebony Satin" Brown and Pat Simmons. The main character is Adrian Anderson, a rich, handsome, real estate broker that readers will remember from The Switch. Adrian's love them and leave them attitude worked just fine for him. He's dodged his mother's match making arrow. Then Milan Dixon walked into his office and all bets were off. But Milan isn't after Adrian's money or his body. She succinctly puts him in his place, something a woman's never done. This intrigues Adrian and he finds that he won't rest until Milan is working her magic in his office and in his life.

**Shades Of Reading Magazine:** Please give the readers a brief bio on you the person and the writer?

**Kevin E. Young:** I grew up in Camden, N.J. I received my Bachelors Degree from Rutgers University then completed my MBA studies at Temple University. Artistically, I've been published in a couple poetry anthologies as well as had articles published as a freelance journalist. I've always attempted to be entertaining while disseminating information to those who need it without being preachy.

**SORMAG:** Tell us about your current book?

**YOUNG:** GHETT OH LUV is a coming of age story about two sisters from Newark, N.J., a confused Black male who befriends the sisters, and an abused young lady from Cleveland, OH. The setting is split 50/50 between Newark, NJ and Cleveland, OH, at the fictional Ghatt Ohio University.

GHETT OH LUV is an urban love story in its rawest form. It features the honest dialogue regarding relationships that both genders have when the opposite sex isn't around. And it paints a vivid picture of how much deceitfulness some women accept to maintain unhealthy relationships with undeserving men.

**SORMAG:** What would you like readers to take away from this book?

**YOUNG:** First and foremost, I'd like readers to join me and benefit from the therapeutic effects of saying what you want to say. My characters are very honest and writing them has enabled me to be blunt with people when I need to be.

Socially, I'd like readers to skim between the lines to see that although the in-your-face attitudes of the characters may be entertaining, they do face repercussions for their actions. Hopefully, GHETT OH LUV will motivate readers to think carefully before making life choices.

**SORMAG:** Our theme for this issue is Family Literacy. If you have children, what type of reading activities do you do together.

**YOUNG:** My daughter, who lives in Dallas, speaks with me about books that she's reading and I always encourage her to keep it up. Literacy is so important- that's why I've driven home the fact that being articulate isn't a corny thing, or a nerd thing, it's a success thing. I have absolute faith that she's listened to her mother and me in that respect.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to promote literacy?

**YOUNG:** I volunteer my time when I can to literacy programs for both children and adults at local schools and community centers.

**SORMAG:** What was your favorite book as a child, and as a teenager?

**YOUNG:** As a child my favorite book was actually the Bible. I did very well in Sunday school and enjoyed the positive feedback from adults when I memorized the Scriptures. As a teenager, Invisible Man and Native Son were inspiring. Yet, I navigated toward poetry and tried to read every poem Langston Hughes ever wrote.

**SORMAG:** What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?

**YOUNG:** Don't disregard your dreams and believe in yourself wholeheartedly. Self-confidence is so important when it comes to writing, so don't let people discourage you. With that said, make sure that you learn your craft and strive to get better with each stroke of your pen.

**SORMAG:** What is something readers would be surprised you do?

**YOUNG:** I cook. Actually, I cook a lot. And, every year I have huge cookouts for my family and close friends. My specialties are seafood lasagna, chicken and shrimp alfredo, collard greens, sweet potato pies I better stop. I'm getting hungry.

**SORMAG:** What do you do to keep motivated?

**YOUNG:** Pray. And I think about how much easier my daughter's life will be than mine if I stay focused. I have so many dreams for her that I don't want shortages of money to stifle.

**SORMAG:** How can readers get in contact with you?

**YOUNG:** Log onto [www.GhettOHLuv.com](http://www.GhettOHLuv.com). That's "GHETTOH" with an "H." You can also visit my publicist's website, [www.echosoul.com](http://www.echosoul.com), for information and updates.

**SORMAG:** Can you give us a sneak peek at your next book?

SEEPING THROUGH THE MAZE by Kevin Young

Mac Johnson:

God bless the little children who live their lives in divided space  
and with young eyes glimpse love's cruel face

God bless the little children-  
God bless the little children.

My wife Damien just dropped a serious bomb on me- and she didn't even have the good sense to wait to tell me face to face. I'm conducting business in California and my day has been hectic enough. So, why did she have to tell me, now, that she's pregnant?

Truthfully, my right-hand man, Tony Christian, could have handled this business trip on his own. And, I was really just using the time away as a means to clear my head and decide on the fate of my marriage - which, by the way, I decided that I was going to end as soon as I got back home to the Philadelphia suburbs. But, with this new information, I'm not sure what I'm going to do.

The call from Damien confirms for me what I've always thought: she was named perfectly since she's a damned devil in the flesh. Why, you ask? Because, she just is.