



REMICA BINGHAM-RISHER

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Poetry Spotlight

Black History Month 2022

1. In what ways do you work with your communities?

Often, my community ends up being my students. Right now, I'm teaching a class at Old Dominion University that is listed in the Women's Studies and English departments called Women Writing Black Lives Matter, where I get to talk to students weekly about poets who are doing work about the intersectionality and complexity of the Black woman's interior, so that's a course that I'm loving. In particular, those students become my sounding board, a very integral part of my community.

2. What is your most recent publication/project/performance?

I have a book that's being released in August of this year; it's my first book of pros after publishing three books of poems. The book is called [SOUL CULTURE: BLACK POETS, BOOKS AND QUESTIONS THAT GREW ME UP](#). It's essays about Black poets that I had the privilege of interviewing over the course of a decade and what they taught me about entering into the writing life. It is a memoir of my own walk into the literary world and how we continue to build community within it.

3. Please name 1-3 books or works by Black poets/writers that you consider essential reading especially during these times that we are experiencing.

Lucille Clifton – [The Book of Light](#)

Everyone should read Clifton. Period. This is one of my favorite collections. I happen to be teaching it this semester because I believe Clifton reminds us how to be mindful, how to use economy of language and tenderness to still rail against the things that bind us.

Patricia Smith – [Incendiary Art](#)

Smith isn't afraid to look trauma squarely in the eye and dismantle it. She helps me work through my rage, my fear and helps me remember those others might want me to forget.

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers – [The Age of Phillis](#)

Jeffers is a huge novelist now with the release of her first novel this year but her last book of poems was also a tour de force. There's so much we can learn from Phillis Wheatley Peters' story and so much work we can do tracing back from the past to find ourselves squarely in the present.