

Meditations

By Dr. Brenda M. Greene

Greetings Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to Meditations, a newsletter reflecting my thoughts on writers and books. Meditations will provide a preview of my book project which will contextualize the interviews that I have conducted with Black writers throughout the African diaspora on the radio show and podcast Writers on Writing. In this issue, I feature Haki R. Madhubuti, founder of Third World Press and provide a synopsis of three books published by Third World Press. The books focus on the impact of the Israel/Gaza war on our children, an analysis of the erosion of democracy that began when the American public elected #45 in 2016, and the role of the poet in advocating for social justice. I encourage you to review and dive into the issues raised in these books.

writers on writing

Writers on Writers is a radio show that I created and produced at Medgar Evers College in 2003. The show airs every Sunday over the airwaves of WNYE, 91.5 FM. As the host of the show, I interview writers about their lives, their craft, and their work. During COVID, I expanded the format of the show and began to host podcasts and post the interviews of the writers on the Center for Black Literature YouTube page. (122) Center for Black Literature Medgar Evers College - YouTube

My interview with Haki Madhubuti provided a context for examining his poetry and prose.

It is often the poets who bring clarity, who warn us, forcing us to think beyond the possibility of one's own life or death."

The only way we can grow and develop as a people is that we have to tell the truth, and I think that for my short time on this earth "what I've tried to dedicate my life to, is to move toward that which is correct and just and true.

Excerpts from Writers on Writing Interview with Brenda Greene and Haki R. Madhubuti

Haki R. Madhubuti

Although I had listened to and read the poetry of Don L. Lee later known as Haki R. Madhubuti in the late 60s and had followed his journey as a "revolutionary writer committed to the principles of cultural nationalism," I did not have the opportunity to meet him in person until the 1980s when he was a featured speaker at the National Conference for Teachers of English. Upon meeting him, I thought to myself, was this tall, demure man with a humble spirit and presence, the same Don L. Lee who I had listened to at readings and who had written *Think Black* (1966), *Black Pride* (1968), *Don't Cry, Scream* (1969), and *We Walk the Way of the New World* (1970)?" I had expected to meet a poet with a thunderous forceful voice who embodied the essence of radical and revolutionary politics and activism; instead I met a peaceful warrior, a quiet, determined, visionary, and passionate poet and activist who was committed to truth-telling and social justice.

Madhubuti, under the umbrella of Third World Press, has published *For Gaza's Children: Black, Brown, and Jewish Writers and Poets Speak Out* (2025), *Not Our President: New Directions from the Pushed Out, the Others, and the Clear Majority in Trump's Stolen America* (2017), and *Liberation Narratives: New and Collected Poems 1966-2009* (2009). Each of these books represents Madhubuti's refusal to be silenced about injustices in our nation and his belief in creating a book culture that provides a platform for political, social, and moral analysis of the issues facing us in our nation.

For Gaza's Children, Not Our President, and liberation narratives

Books Published by Third World Press

The back cover of *For Gaza's Children: Progressive Black, Brown, and Jewish Writers and Poets Speak Out*, an anthology edited by Marc Lamont Hill, Haki R. Madhubuti, and Keith Gilyard reads: "We firmly believe that our children are the stewards of our liberation. When we prioritize our children, we are also prioritizing a world shaped by peace, safety, love, and justice." This anthology deepens the public's awareness of the devastating impact of the Israel/Gaza War on the children of Gaza and offers a blueprint for racial solidarity as Palestinians relentlessly struggle for justice. Writers and poets include Zahra Ali, Herb Boyd, Lara Friedman, Brian Gilmore, Talib Kweli Greene, Maulana Karenga, Robin D. G. Kelley, Julianne Malveaux, Tony Medina, Michael Simanga, Alice Walker, and Rabbi Alissa Wise among others. For information regarding the dramatic escalation of the suffering of children in Gaza, see the article published by UNICEF.

'Unimaginable horrors': more than 50,000 children reportedly killed or injured in the Gaza Strip

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Haki R. Madhubuti and Lasana D. Kazembe published *Not Our President: New Directions from the Pushed Out, the Others, and the Clear Majority in Trump's Stolen America* when #45, was elected President in 2016. The anthology represents a "Call to Action" from scholar-activists, historians, journalists, educators, and poets who analyze the landscape that enabled #45 to be elected in 2016. Who knew that the "Call to Action" from the contributors to this anthology would be even more critical today?

Forty-three scholars, activists, and poets responded to the "Call to Action." They include Jared A. Ball, Carl Dix, Talib Kweli Greene, Gerald Horne, Maulana Karenga, Lasana Kazembe, Julianne Malveaux, Jessica Care Moore, Ishmael Reed, Michael Simanga, and Elizabeth Warren among others. The anthology is divided into four sections: "The American Moment," "The Optics of White Nationalism," "Examining America's Body Politic," and "Onward: Activating Critical Resistance."

Writers, many of them journalists or staff with whom #45 worked, comment on his serial lying, his need for absolute loyalty, his attempt to discredit the legitimacy of President Obama, his use of anti-Semitic and derogatory language towards Black and Brown people, and his dysfunctional management of the White House.

Haki Madhubuti's lines from his poem *Liberation Narratives V.* underscore the role of the poet and poetry.

if poetry is to have meaning it must mean something more than metaphor and simile more than tree-talk and looking for gigs more than competition in unrhymed free verse serious to the bone of incomprehension surely to land the poet a guggenheim or macarthur genius grant.

Liberation Narratives is symbolic of the totality and complexity of the man I met in 1980, the passionate poet, activist, educator, who on his journey through the cycles of life, remains committed to truth telling and social justice. In "Life Poems," the speaker underscores the responsibility that people have to save the earth and ensure the future for their children.

it is true that nature in time will

solve the world's problems and

resolve the world's disputes

however, nature and time are unpredictable

and may not act in our lifetime.

our understanding of life

demands that we respect nature & time

but our children's future

demands that we help nature solve our problems

today with the little time that we have on earth.

Haki Madhubuti, University Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Chicago State University, has edited and published dozens of books and his poetry and essays have been included in more than one hundred anthologies. He is a cultural worker and regarded as one of the architects of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). As the founder and publisher of Chicago's Third World Press and co-founder of both the Institute for Positive Education and the Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools, he has developed an African-centered institution which operates three schools in Chicago. For more information about the Third World Foundation visit [Third World Press Foundation](#) and for information about Haki Madhubuti visit [Haki R. Madhubuti | The Poetry Foundation](#)

I would love to hear from you. Please visit my website at www.drbrendamgreene.com.

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