

A long time ago a little girl sat in the window of the bedroom she shared with her older sister and read by finger flash light. She looked at the stars when the battery gave way and when she got older she snuggled under her grandmother's quilts to listen all night to jazz on the radio; or at least until she fell asleep. She first fell in love with words, then they somehow seemed to fall in love with her. She got to learn history, meet people, travel everywhere; and since this is a good fairy tale, she lives happily ever after. There may be other things along the way but the words and the stars and the music are all that matter.

I am 79 years old. I highly recommend old age; it's fun. I have been awarded an unprecedented 7 NAACP Image Awards which makes me very very proud. I have been nominated for a Grammy; been a finalist for the National Book Award. I am very proud to have authored 3 New York Times and Los Angeles Times Best Sellers, highly unusual for a poet. I am a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech. The year my good friend Toni Morrison was awarded The Nobel Prize for Literature I had a Chilean bat named after me. I don't have a lot of friends but I have good ones. I have a son and a granddaughter. My father, mother, sister and aunts are all deceased literally making me go from being the baby in the family to being an elder. I like to cook, travel and dream. I'm a writer. I'm happy.