

## An Interview with Paula Robinson

**Q.** How did you learn to write?

**A.** I've attended a number of writers' courses, seminars and workshops over the past 20 years. I can recall being either the only person of color or one of a few in most of them. At Harvard, I took a screenwriting course that was the best where each person was required to produce a script. The teacher, a practicing screenwriter, held high expectations – it was a good experience, teaching me practical skills through applied methods with rigid outcome standards. After each period of teaching, there would be a period of practice - most simple practices such as each of us were required to watch and evaluate a number of diverse films. While at MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning Fellows Program, an accomplished writer, speaker and futurist gave a seminar on proposal writing. The info was very good, the modeling and insights were excellent, but other than to show up, ask questions and listen - no outcomes were expected from the participants. As part of my undergrad work at Mass College of Art, I took a creative writing course - it was OK. The professor had limited teaching experience and the college didn't value the course as it was only given 1 credit. But at Emerson, I took an Advertising course: that was very deep and comprehensive with lots of showcasing and some expectations, but the class was too big for the professor to really give the attention to students, so he only attended the emergencies - those who didn't get it. Along the way, I've also taken one-week intensives on writing for Public Relations, Writing for Journalism and in separate situations that were in workshop\lecture format and very much like the MIT experience all study and no practice. I've also given a few workshops on writing: proposals, newsletters and PR.

**Q.** What kind of writing do you teach?

**A.** I regularly get invited to do workshops for adult students who complete writing projects they believe in at Springfield College, Boston Campus. I help them prepare their research and writing for presentation in a variety of mediums for varying audiences. I've been invited to work with after college and after school programs with both adults and teens that were required to write for a course they were taking. Regardless of where I lecture, my focus is on owning ones experiences and information to capitalize as experts and the importance (and methods) of developing the world-class skills to do so. Most of what I do is non-fiction self-development, but I do have one poem published in an anthology. My ideas for teaching writing include anthology style publishing; magazine writing and teaching online.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** It is important for me to be around people whose actions mirror who they say they are. I believe the experience of all African peoples is under documented in global storytelling - and as such, is a missing voice in the solutions needed by mankind. Much of the under-documentation comes out of the insecurity of Blacks as writers as much as lack of information about writing and publishing. I believe our ideals and expectations are so high and our value of self so low that we put the teachings of academia and the church before and above, but not inclusive of the teachings of our experiences. I've spent the past 20 years of my life getting us, "Black Folks" to write and produce quality media so that we can learn from each other's experiences. Much of my work has been encapsulated online at EWORKSTYLE.com.

**Q.** Has writing shaped your life?

**A.** Writing is what I intend to do for the rest of my life. I've studied a variety of favorite writers who are successful at it - habits and such. Quincy Jones for instance - had a standard, he wouldn't take on anyone with less than 100 songs and some strong ideas about continuing to write. Many writers cross-write, e.g. music, scripts, books; proposals; advertising, etc. people like this are often grind workers with continuous unending deadlines and syndication writers – journals, magazines, news, internet - who are required to have their first series of 30 plus pieces with a strong idea of what's to follow. My experiences in writing include public relations, journalism, fundraising and advertising, so I'm a grinder who has earned a living in print, radio, cable & broadcast TV, the internet and advertising.

**Q.** What kind of writing to you really prefer?

**A.** As you know, most writing comes within fiction and non fiction whereby each type breaks out into categories. I believe both are necessary, one has to earn a living and one must have their art. I'm currently doing non-fiction self-help, but have a few fiction pieces that have been on the back burner for a while, which I love every time I revisit – but haven't had time to complete, including children's stories and some music. I'm also involved in this whole new creative process called web publishing as a writer and publisher of electronic information. As you may know, I'm passionate about my online magazine at EWORKSTYLE.com because it's a way to be inclusive of a variety of types of writers and there is so much to learn from other people's experiences. I believe in good news and its ability to empower and inform as much as "hard news." Human beings need to know about the positive things that are going on in every corner of this world to keep balance. I'm also in love with giving opportunity to young, old, new and prolific writers who haven't had the resources or time to write beyond what's required of them at school or work. I see EWORKSTYLE.com as another way that people can connect with others all over the world and really get to know each other through their areas of interest.