

## An Interview with Author Stacy-Deanne By: Michelle Cuttino

Black Literature Magazine sits down with Stacy-Deanne to discuss her journey as an author up to now and why she decided to write outside of the typical African-American fiction boundaries.

**Michelle:** Your debut novel, *Everlasting*, and its successor, *Melody*, were both published under the Simon & Schuster imprint. How did you land a book deal with this powerhouse?

**Stacy-Deanne:** I believe back in 2005, a friend of mine who was published with Strebtor told me Zane was looking for Latino-themed books. I had just written *Everlasting* and my friend told me to submit. At first I wasn't going to because I figured they wouldn't be interested but after months of waiting I got an acceptance letter in my email. That led to a two-book deal.

**Michelle:** You are now publishing under the Peace in the Storm Publishing imprint. What made you switch from Simon & Schuster or do you publish through both of them?

**Stacy-Deanne:** I am strictly with Peace in the Storm now and very happy with the company. Being with a big house was cool to open the door for me, and I am grateful for it, but there are a lot of things that go on in big house publishing that I didn't like and that didn't fit the kind of author I am. I am an author who likes to be seen as an individual and you get that attention with small publishers. You get the closeness with a small press that you don't get with a big publisher. You also have time for your work to grow and sell. You can do things at your own pace and build an audience and not have to worry about everything depending on sales figures or numbers.

I love the closeness I have with my publisher, Elissa Gabrielle. She is fantastic and this is the happiest I've ever been in my career. I plan to stick with the company for as long as I can. I have been blessed with so much since being with PITS. I have gotten accolades, and accomplished things I never got before. I've been nominated for big awards, and the *Season of Sin* was reviewed in USA Today. So all the wonderful things I've received on this journey with PITS tells me this was meant to be. I am happy and that's all I think we want to be.

**Michelle:** Your books have been nominated in myriad categories by different organizations. Which award would have been the most significant to you and why?

**Stacy-Deanne:** I am grateful for any award I am nominated for, but being nominated for two African-American Literary awards for two years in a row was the big thing for me. This award is the uptime of awards for black authors. It is a very, very huge deal so to be recognized and nominated out of millions of black authors is an incredible honor. Being nominated put me on the map as one of the notable black authors of mystery.

**Michelle:** Multicultural novels seem to be your forte, regardless of genre. Why do you think it's so important to show such diversity in your novels?

**Stacy-Deanne:** My books are diverse simply because this is how I am naturally. I write what I am comfortable with. I think books should be diverse and universal because they should mirror the world, and in the world there are many types of people. I write interracial books because I am a huge supporter of interracial couples and always have been.

**Michelle:** Your latest title, *The Season Of Sin*, continues to follow the characters Detectives Brianna "Bree" Morris, Stephen Kemp and Jayce Matthews. Please tell us what the book is about.

**Stacy-Deanne:** This installment focuses on the murder of Bree's psychiatrist Nadia Hollister who is killed while Bree is in Nadia's home. Bree is knocked unconscious by the killer so she didn't see who it was. She only has the killer's scent to go on and from there Bree, Steven, and Jayce begin tackling theories and tracking potential suspects. However, their investigation opens up a huge secret concerning Nadia and her adopted daughter.

**Michelle:** Where did you get the idea for this type of book series, with a run-on storyline involving your main characters?

**Stacy-Deanne:** Bree and Steven originated from my novel *Melody*. The book focused on a mystery involving Melody, the central character as well as a subplot about a serial rapist terrifying black women in Albany, New York. Bree and Steven are the cops on the case and the subplot ties into Melody's storyline. I fell in love with Bree and Steven as well as got great feedback from those who enjoyed them so I wanted to continue the series. I really love putting these characters in different situations, and everyone loves the chemistry between Bree and Steven.

**Michelle:** You will soon be releasing a new book entitled *The Wild Life*. Give us some background on it and let us know what we can expect different in this novel.

**Stacy-Deanne:** *The Wild Life* was intended to be the first book in the series. I originally wrote it in 2009. This installment gives readers more insight into Bree's background and childhood. I introduce the audience to Brianna's father, George, who is a career criminal

and has gotten himself in hot water with the Southern Cuban Mafia in Miami. Bree is torn between helping her father because of their strained relationship, but she heads to Miami to find out what he's gotten into. I think this installment will help readers understand why Bree is the way she is and makes the decisions she does, because they will get a glimpse of what she comes from.

**Michelle:** What's your opinion on there being so many self-publishers in the game today? Do you think it is overkill or do you feel that it's a necessity?

**Stacy-Deanne:** It really doesn't matter to me. I am not into self-publishing but I understand it works for some. I think the overkill comes from there being tons of badly written and unedited self-published books. A lot of people do not take the process seriously and think that writing a first draft is all it takes to publication. If you're gonna self-publish you must remember you are not just an author but a business entity too and you should put out quality products. So while I won't say the current state of self-publishing is overkill, I do think that there is an abundance of horrible books because some people don't know what they are doing and do not understand the writing and publishing process. As for being necessary, I don't believe self-publishing is any less or any more important than a trade publisher is. Both are adequate ways to get the work out and it depends on what works for an individual book.

**Michelle:** In your opinion, what makes for a great mystery? Is it plot, character development, sex, all of the above or something entirely different?

**Stacy-Deanne:** I feel sex is not necessary in a mystery unless there is a strong romantic subplot. Character development is important for any genre. To me, the most important parts of a mystery are suspense and tension. Some people do not realize that suspense and mystery is not the same thing. Mystery is the plot, the puzzle. Suspense is the element incorporated in it. It's the thrill and the excitement. Suspense to a mystery is like fear is to a horror. If you don't have that element of suspense, your mystery will fall flat. Suspense *drives* the mystery. It's what keeps readers interested, turning pages and wanting to find out what happened in the first place. You have to have captivating suspense to make a mystery novel work and it's not easy to convey suspense.

**Michelle:** What advice would you give to others looking to step outside of the norm and write in what some deem to be unconventional markets for African American authors?

**Stacy-Deanne:** I say that you have to be true to yourself or you have no business writing books. You can't let others dictate what you write. Black authors also have to stop looking at ourselves as a color but as authors, period. We get enough of people outside of the black community not accepting us as authors without adding our race into it. We don't need to do the same. So I say no matter what color or gender someone

is they need to write the stories they want to because there's no point in sharing your words with an audience if *you* don't believe in them.

### **About The Author**

Stacy-Deanne (Dee-Anne) is a published novelist of crime fiction, mystery/suspense, and romantic suspense with interracial subplots. She started writing professionally in 1997 when she was nineteen years old. Stacy grew up loving the suspense genre. Her idols are Edgar Allan Poe and Alfred Hitchcock. Her love for Psycho and many of his movies fueled her fire for suspense.

Stacy's books include Everlasting (Simon and Schuster, 2007), Melody (Simon and Schuster, 2008), Giving up the Ghost (Peace in the Storm Publishing, 2011) and The Season of Sin (Peace in the Storm Publishing, 2012). Stacy's books have been nominated for numerous awards.

Stacy is profiled in the NAACP-nominated 2006 book, Literary Divas: The Top 100+ African-American Women in Writing by Heather Convington. She has written for numerous sites and blogs pertain to writing. She contributes to the blog Become a Successful Author and she is currently the African-American Lit editor at BellaOnline.

Stacy supports all authors and loves writers who venture outside the box. She especially encourages minority writers to be different, follow their hearts and to not let their race pigeonhole them when it comes to their creativity or the books they write.

She was born, raised and currently resides in Houston, Texas.

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