

SISTAH CIRCLE – DALLAS (November 2005)

Monica F. Anderson author of WHEN A SISTAH'S FED UP

General Questions:

Where are you from? **I was born in Houston, but I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas**

Tell us your latest news? **I recently released my third book, which is my first novel, WHEN A SISTAH'S FED UP.**

When and why did you begin writing? **Honestly, I don't remember when I began breathing or writing. I've always loved to write stories, poems, and songs. My mother has stories I wrote in first grade. They're horrible, by the way.**

When did you first consider yourself a writer? **I considered myself a writer when a publication paid me. In 1989, I was asked to write a weekly column for the "Viking Update," a sports magazine. They paid me \$25.00 a week. I was ecstatic. That won't fill up my gas tank now, but it was a great opportunity to be published and learn more by working with professional editors. Before that I did a lot of writing for free but getting a check made it real for me.**

What inspired you to pen your first novel? **I'm an avid reader of novels and, like many readers, I always wanted to write one. I wrote a weekly column for a major daily newspaper for eight years. My subjects included my divorce, my experience with depression, and the challenges of motherhood. I received so many emails and voicemails from readers who related to these topics. That was the seed of the novel. This book is my way of warning sistahs about the consequences of "spiritual anorexia" and not making your needs a priority without sounding like a doctor. LOL**

Who or what has influenced your writing, and in what way? **My parents are both retired educators. They helped me understand the importance and impact of effective communication. As far as authors, everyone I read impacts my writing from the humor of Bill Cosby to the to the honesty of Senator Barack Obama in his autobiography.**

How has your environment/upbringing colored your writing? **I grew up in the South; middle-class, shy, and skinny. I'm still in the South, but I ain't shy and I dang sho' ain't skinny. Consequently, I'm more comfortable with suburban settings and middle-class issues. I'm learning to broaden my scope with research, but there's some validity to writing what you know.**

Do you have a specific writing style? **I've written technical pieces for dental journals, features for women's magazines, humor for a newspaper... I believe I have my own voice, but I'd like to think I'm flexible in terms of style.**

What genre are you most comfortable writing? **Humor and romantic fiction.**

How did you come up with the title for your book(s)? **When A Sistah's FED UP? You're kidding, right? Let's just say it's not from R. Kelly's song.**

Is there a message in your novel that you want readers to grasp? **Yes. You cannot be everything for everyone. The soul is the immortal part of a person. It will live on after the body is gone. However, the spirit, the joy of living, can literally starve to death though your body appears perfectly healthy.**

How much of the novel is realistic? **The novel is 100% realistic and honest. Part of the reason I self-published is so many of the guidelines I received from major publishers required perfect women, flawed men, boring sex, and neat, predictable endings. Puhleeze! No one is totally perfect or completely flawed in this novel. My characters encounter conflict, make choices, and deal with the consequences, which usually involve more drama. That's real life.**

Are experiences based on someone you know, or events in your life? **Hhhmmm. There is fiction in all truth and truth in all fiction. This is NOT my story. It's a compilation of life as I know it. But yes, some of my experiences are included.**

What books have most influenced your life? **The BIBLE, INVISIBLE MAN by**

Ralph Ellison, I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS by Dr. Maya Angelou, THE GREATEST SALESMAN IN THE WORLD by Og Mandino, and THEY CAME BEFORE COLUMBUS by Professor Ivan Van Sertima.

If you had to choose, which writer would you consider a mentor? **Laura Parker Castoro, a prolific and best-selling author, is my primary literary mentor.**

What are you reading now? **I'm re-reading THE KNOWN WORLD by Edward P. Jones. I love his characterization. Under my mattress is another smutty book I don't want my kids to see. It has good dialogue. LOL**

What new author has grasped your interest? **Karen V. Siplin**

What are your current projects? **I'm working on a novel about a 33-year-old celibate ophthalmologist who can't let go of his past despite the voluptuous temptations of the present.**

Do you feel that the boom in African American writers is a fad or another renaissance? **African-American writers have been producing voluminous work since the Harlem Renaissance. Getting the work published and distributed has been the challenge. With more publishers catering to African-American readers and more writers self-publishing, I don't see this "boom" busting.**

Do you feel more African Americans are reading? **Yes. As the education levels and discretionary income of African-Americans continue to rise, more of us have the time and resources to indulge in leisure reading.**

Name one entity that you feel supported you outside of family members. **My friends and other authors have been extremely supportive. I don't do haters or leaches. If you wanna roll with me, you've got to be positive.**

How do your family and/or friends feel about your book or writing venture in general? **My mother keeps asking about the sex scenes! Everyone else loves the book, but they think it's my life story.**

Do you see writing as a long- or short-term career? **Long-term. It's my first love. I'll never stop writing whether I'm published or not.**

If you had to do it all over again, would you change anything? **Yes, I wouldn't have gotten into so much debt buying stuff I don't need, and I could write full-time.**

Is there anything additional you would like to share with your readers? **Nah.**

Self-Publishing Questions:

How do you feel overall about self-publishing? **It's hard. It's exhilarating. Did I say it's hard? If you want to see your work in print and you're willing to make a lot of sacrifices, it's a good way to start.**

What are the strengths and weaknesses of promotion for self-published authors? **Marketing and promotion on a large scale is very expensive. There are so many advertising programs, but they're not all effective. The strength is we have passion and commitment for the project. The weakness is time and funds. Many self-published authors won't hire a professional to help them, but I've found it's worth the investment.**

What do you feel is one major benefit to self-publishing your book? **Control. I made the final decisions on the cover, title, and editorial content. Good or bad. It's mine.**

Would you encourage or mentor someone to become self-publish? **I have and I would. Authors must take time to learn the industry by reading and studying intensively, and they should be self-motivated/organized.**