

Michele Andrea Bowen is a native of St. Louis, MO. She was raised on the city's north side or the traditional African American Community by everyday, hardworking black folk. And she was a member of Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, where both her mother and father's family have been members for over half a century.

She began writing stories as a child, and her experiences growing up gave her insight concerning all of the possibilities for telling great stories about regular folk who go to church and love the Lord.

Michele was educated in the St. Louis Public School system in segregated schools. She then went on to earn her Bachelor and two Master's degrees from Washington University in St. Louis. And she also furthered her education by earning graduate degrees in United States History and Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has worked as a social worker in mental health and child abuse, a program coordinator in health care, and instructor at the undergraduate level. She also worked at Barnes and Noble Books, a job that offered considerable experience with the retail side of the book world.

Michele currently lives in Durham, North Carolina with her daughters. They are members of St. Joseph's AME Church, where she is an active member in the bible study program, a soloist in the Inspirational Singers Choir, and works on the campaign committee to help her pastor, Rev. Phillip R. Cousin, Jr. get elected bishop at the AME Church's 2008 General Conference in St. Louis, MO.

She writes black Christian Fiction because that is what the Lord called her to write. And each novel is a venture into black church life and culture that she hopes will entertain, make you laugh out loud, inform, inspire, and hopefully encourage each reader to seriously think about what a wondrous thing it is to serve the Lord.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT ME

MICHELE ANDREA BOWEN

Website Address: www.micheleandreabowen.com

I am a native of St. Louis, Missouri. I grew up on the city's north side in an all-black working class community. I was educated in the St. Louis Public School System in segregated schools. My family didn't have a lot of money but we were blessed. We were healthy, had all of our basic needs met, had lots of love, friends and family, and a wonderful church home, Washington Metropolitan AME Zion Church, a historic institution that was established in the city during the late nineteenth century.

I was always active in my church and started singing in the choir when I was three years old. As I grew, I became quite active with choral activities and at the age of eleven was selected to sing in a city-wide children's choir that did guest performances with the renowned St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, which was then under the direction of the esteemed conductor, Maestro Leonard Slatkin. I also sang throughout high school, college, and continue to perform as a soloist with my current church home's Inspirational Singers Contemporary Gospel Choir, at St. Joseph's AME Church in Durham, North Carolina.

I started telling stories when I was a little bitty thing. I started writing stories on that huge, lined elementary school paper in pencil when I was eight years old at the suggestion of my mother, who told me it would be easier to read all that I was making up and trying to tell her at any given time. My first stories were generally about little black girls who lived in St. Louis. These tales were taking to another level when I reached high school and started writing about black urban teen life during the 1970s. My first

audience consisted of my cousins (I'm an only child) and good friends, who read the handwritten stories and passed them down, page-by-page, mid-west assembly line style, reader-to-reader while we sat on the porch or at the lunch table at school.

After graduating from Beaumont High School, I won a full scholarship to Washington University in St. Louis and earned an undergraduate degree with honors in Psychology. I also earned an M.S.W. in Social Work, along with an M. Ed. in Counseling Education from Washington University. Later I moved to North Carolina and completed my academic training by earning graduate degrees in Public Health as well as United States History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

I was on my way to becoming a history professor when the writing bug really hit me and I started writing what was the rough draft of my first novel, Church Folk. I originally titled this book "The Missionary Ladies" but quickly came up with Church Folk after my good friend, Dr. Valerie Kaalund, a professor at UNC-Chapel Hill, took one look at that title, frowned and said, "NO. NO!"

I became a writer and subsequently an "author," when Church Folk became the third book in an African American Christian Fiction line of books under a new Warner Books Imprint called Walk Worthy Press in June 2001. I was blessed beyond belief with the response to this outrageously funny book about black "peepes" who went to "chutch." And since that time, I have published two other books with Warner, Second Sunday (June 2003) and Holy Ghost Corner (September 2006).

I am currently writing a fourth book that has not been titled but continues with my tales of African American religious life and culture. Writing is a ministry for me. I love the Lord and I love writing about God and church life. It has been a tremendous blessing

to reach so many people with my stories. I praise God for this. I can't imagine writing in any other way.

God has been good to me. I have my health and strength, three beautiful children, a great church home, and friends and family. I also have loyal readers and fans who have blessed me with their support and praise for these books. God bless you all.

“I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.” Psalm 34: 1-3, NIV

Favorite Books and Websites

Books

I have very eclectic tastes in books. But here is a short-list of literature that has influenced me from childhood until now.

The Bible by God (favorite versions include, New King James, New International Version, and the Amplified Bible). Favorite books in the bible, Ruth, Esther, and Revelation (I have to confess that there are some very scary sections in the Book of Revelation. But the description of heaven is, as my kids would say, “crunked.”)

Little Women (Louisa May Alcott), Souls of Black Folk (W.E.B. DuBois), Why We Can't Wait and Letters From A Birmingham Jail (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), The Prophet (Kahlil Gibran), Family and The Matter is Life (J. California Cooper), Jonah's Gourd Vine and Their Eyes Were Watching God (Zora Neale Hurston), Waiting To Exhale (Terry McMillan), Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class (Robin D.G. Kelley), the entire Easy Rawlins Series by Walter Mosley, The Purpose Driven Life (Rick Warren), Shanna (Kathleen Woodiwiss), From God to Gangsta Rap (Michael Eric Dyson), and the Vicar's Daughters Series by Marian Chesney.

I also enjoy books written by Jacquelin Thomas, Victoria Christopher Murray, Kimberla Lawson Roby, Omar Tyree, and Eric Jerome Dickey.

One of my prized literary possessions is a copy of an unpublished manuscript, Bethesda A. M. E.: A Romance of Negro Religion by W. E. B. DuBois (circa 1928-29), that is currently in the archives at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

Websites

My list of favorite websites includes author sites because they have a lot of information. I think author, Michael Baisden's website is fun because I can listen to his radio shows via his website.

www.biblegateway.com This site is a wonderful resource for finding bible quotes and comparing different versions of the bible.

Holy Ghost Corner

Michele Andrea Bowen

My newest novel, Holy Ghost Corner, is set in modern-day Durham, North Carolina, a vibrant, mid-sized city in the Southeast. One of the main characters, Theresa Elaine Hopson, is a successful, forty-something black business woman who does everything right—or so she thinks. Theresa is saved, smart, good-looking, kind, and makes plenty of money. She prides herself on doing everything by the book, which is part of the problem. For you see, pride is not one of the fruits of the spirit, and Theresa discovers that “doing things by the book” doesn’t always work, especially if the rule book you’re working from is not the Word of God. And it takes a few humbling experiences, like witnessing Miss Baby Doll Henderson, a woman who lived on the fringes of black Durham before turning her life around and seeking the Lord, receive the blessing of a loving and devoted husband—a blessing Theresa prays for on a regular basis.

But Theresa, despite her obvious short-comings, has known the Lord all of her life. So, figuring out that she is handling this all wrong is one of the first lessons learned, and the beginning of a wonderful turn-around in her life. The only problem, though, is that the best man for her is immersed in his own struggles. Lamont Green, a sensual, smooth, sharp, no-nonsense brother has known Theresa practically all of his life. They grew up in the same neighborhood—one that represented the best of black working class neighborhoods until post-segregation community development and growth inadvertently contributed to the demise of what had been a great place to live.

Lamont, a successful urban developer, has an opportunity to re-build their old neighborhood, Cashmere Estates, if he can only convince the powers that be in Durham County that he is the best man for this job. While he can envision a wonderful place for working folk to live, his dream is in danger of being destroyed by another powerful developer and his cronies. Unlike Lamont and his team, this group is motivated by all of that money they stand to make, if they can get a foothold in this community and begin to build new homes that are guaranteed to displace the hard-working people who live there.

While Lamont’s plan is noble and stands to help a lot of folks, he is missing one vital ingredient—Jesus. Because things don’t fall in place for him until he decides that no effort is worthwhile without being first centered in the Lord. And while this “happily single” man is struggling to let go and let God, he also has to come to terms with his growing love for his childhood neighbor, Theresa Hopson.

Holy Ghost Corner is a funny, heartwarming, and thought-provoking romp through the lives of church folk in a community faced with the challenges that come from growing past its old-south, small town personality into the post Civil Rights Movement, mid-sized urban center in the new south it is struggling to become.

INFORMATION SHEET
Michele Andrea Bowen

Published Novels

Church Folk, Warner Books/Walk Worthy Press, June 2001

Second Sunday, Warner Books/Walk Worthy Press, June 2003

Holy Ghost Corner, Warner Books/Walk Worthy Press, September 2006

Up At The College, Warner Books/Walk Worthy Press, Summer 2008

Book Facts

Church Folk was number one on Essence Magazine's Bestseller's List for four consecutive months

Second Sunday was also number one on Essence Magazine's Bestseller's List (sales are somewhere around 100,000)

Holy Ghost Corner made top five of Essence Magazine's Bestseller's List

I am categorized as writing in the genre of Black Christian Fiction, which is relatively new, making it's mark in November 2000 when Victoria Christopher Murray's book, Temptation was released, and increasing in popularity upon the release of Jacquelin Thomas's book, Singsation (April 2001), and then Church Folk in June of that year. I am also classified as the number one ranking author in this division of black contemporary fiction.

Agent

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Education

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, MA in US History (1994), MPH in Public Health (1985)

Washington University, St. Louis, MO, BA, Psychology (1979), M.Ed. (Counseling Education) and MSW (Social Work), 1981.

Other Information

Have three daughters, 19, 11, and 9.

Member of St. Joseph's AME Church, Durham, North Carolina
Soloist in the Inspirational Singers Gospel Choir, active member of bible study,
Campaign Committee Member for Rev. Philip R. Cousin, Jr.'s [my pastor] bid for an
Episcopal seat in 2008, and member of Women's Ministry.

Pledged Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. at Washington University in St. Louis, Omega
Epsilon Chapter, August 1976.