

Shirley Bradley LeFlore

Poet-Professor-Activist



Shirley Bradley LeFlore is a poet, oral performing artist and playwright. She is a former adjunct professor of women and ethnic literature at the University of Missouri, St. Louis and recently retired as an adjunct professor at Lindenwood University, teaching in the creative writing cluster.

At the beginning of her career, LeFlore was one of the first artist/writers in the Missouri school district to work with teachers and students (K-12 grades), conducting writing labs and creative writing workshops that eventually catapulted her to take the program in various schools around the country. LeFlore was an artist-in-residence at various colleges and universities throughout the country, teaching at such institutions as Harris-Stowe State University and Montclair State University. She has received grants from the Missouri Arts Council and CDCA for state touring to write projects that were artistically driven, but that also centered on key social issues, such as the stage production, "Behavior As Theater" for adolescents; and "Deliverance," a play that was among one of the first regional productions centered around AIDS and HIV.

LeFlore's poetry and writings have appeared in many anthologies and magazines, including *Spirit & Flame*, *Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry* (1997), *ALoud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café* (1995), *Black American Literature Forum: Henry Dumas, Vol. 22, No. 2* (1988), *Turn in the River: Celebrate Issue for Gwendolyn Brooks* (1988), and *SHEBA REVIEW: Anthology of Missouri Women Writers* (1987). LeFlore has served on the editorial board of *RIVER STYX: Literary & Arts Magazine* (1975-1988), and served as a producer of *phatLiterature*, a multicultural arts literary series for The IAAS, where she presented the works of literary poetry legends Gwendolyn Brooks and Margaret Walker. She was also featured prominently in the critically acclaimed novel, *Wildflowers*, written by her daughter, National Bestselling author Lyah Beth LeFlore.

As one of the original members of the Black Artist Group (BAG) in St. Louis during the late 1960s and early 1970s, over the years LeFlore has collaborated with musicians, dancers, and visual artists. As an oral performer, LeFlore has blended the vocal texture of her poetry with the music giants of jazz, blues, gospel/spirituals and classical music. She has performed and recorded with "The World Jazz Saxophone Quartet"; worked closely with woodwind virtuoso J.D. Parran, whom she created the duo "Word and Wind," and with Parran's NYC-based music group "Spirit Stage"; and performed and recorded with Hammiet Bluiet's BBQ Band. LeFlore has also written performance pieces, notably "Songs of River Magic" at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; and her critically acclaimed original spoken word composition that she performed at the historical Weil Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York.

LeFlore collaborated with producer Lyah Beth LeFlore on her play, "Rivers of Women," in 2013, marking her daughter's directorial debut. The play premiered at the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis with multiple runs with plans to tour across the country and eventually to Broadway. LeFlore recently published *Rivers of Woman, The Play*, featuring photographs by award-winning Chicago-based photographer, Michael J. Bracey, and her first collection of poetry, *Brassbones & Rainbows*, both published by 2Leaf Press in 2013.

The New Jersey Journal has referred to LeFlore as "Poet Natural." LeFlore holds a B.A. in Language Arts and Behavioral Science from Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, an M.A. in Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and was a National Institute in Minority Mental Health Fellow (NIMH).

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