

S. Pearl Sharp

Cultural art for eye, ear and heart

Artist Bio

Creating cultural art for eye, ear and heart is my calling, manifesting as writer, filmmaker, actor, broadcast producer/host, ritualist and creativity coach. I work at the intersection of art and history, of wellness and language. What excites me most during the creative process is finding the perfect marriage of artistic genres.

My astrological key word is “I see” and around 1980 I began shifting from acting to the other side of the camera. It was like landing on earth. Documentary film allowed me to merge art and history visually, to experiment with poetry on film (*Back Inside Herself, Life Is A Saxophone*), frame-by-frame animation (*Picking Tribes*), to enlighten women about health issues (*It's OK To Peek*) and to capture the voices of Los Angeles' art treasures in videos for the City of Los Angeles' CH 35, (*Central Avenue Live!, Spirits of the Ancestors* and more). Then this ancestor-driven film, *The Healing Passage/ Voices From The Water*, took over my life for 10 years. By the time it was completed “digital” had become the new word for god, but it's a needy, impermanent deity. Back to pencil, paper, radio, theatre.

View my Creative Chronology

Writing has been my grounding through the joys and stresses of a free-lance career. Even though I swore I was not going to write it Glenn Thompson, publisher of the For Beginners series of documentary comic books, convinced me to do *Black Women For Beginners* and it's been in print for more than twenty-five years. Thompson also published my 4th collection of poetry, *Typing In The Dark*. I skipped the book and recorded 5 of my short stories on the CD *Uncertain Rituals*. More are in progress. A special collaboration happened with esteemed actress/writer Beah Richards on her essay collection, *There's A Brown Girl In The Ring*, which I adapted to the stage. Now I'm excited to be writing music and plays again. *Give Me Liberty!*, a political one-act, had its 1st birth in 2019.

My radio career began on the college station at Bowling Green State University, Ohio, and I interned at Cleveland's WABQ-AM. From 2003-07 I recorded commentaries and essays on NPR [Nat'l Public Radio.] These, plus broadcasts on the Pacifica Radio Network, are collected in *The Evening News – Essays And Commentaries From NPR And Other Clouds*. Merging poetry with jazz produced 2 CDs with some of L.A.s top musicians: *On The Sharp Side* and *Higher Ground*.

During the 1960's and early 70's New York City's vibrant Black Arts Movement was my soil. I studied acting in Harlem through the government's “Poverty Program” and with the Al Fann Theatrical Ensemble. In esteemed novelist John Oliver Killens' writing workshop I created my first play, *The Sistuhs*, published my second collection of poems and birthed the performance group Poets & Performers. Color barriers were falling and I was part of some significant “the first Negro” moments, like *Sounds of the City*, a nationally broadcast and sponsored Black radio soap opera, becoming a leading radio & TV commercial spokesperson, performing in the chorus of Broadway's all-Black company of *Hello, Dolly!* and winning a small role in Gordon Parks' much honored, ground-breaking film *The Learning Tree*. One result of the Civil Rights Movement was more roles for Black actors on screen.

Moving to Hollywood I had recurring roles on *Wonder Woman*, *St. Elsewhere* and starred in the TV movies *Hollow Image* (ABC) and *Minstrel Man* (CBS).

Many of my family members were involved in the arts. We were also card carrying members of the NAACP and I learned early that art is political. In 1975 I formed **Poets Pay Rent, Too** to support my work and the work of other writers. Alex Haley and other industry leaders and friends helped me publish the first-of-its-kind *1980 Directory of Black Film/TV Technicians, West Coast*, to highlight the employability of Black talent working behind the camera. In the 1980s I joined other artists forming the Black Anti-Defamation Coalition which directly challenged the entertainment industry on its depiction of the Black image.

Each sentence here has a story to go with it. My best life now is to keep telling them in the most engrossing ways, to inspire and instigate through art.



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