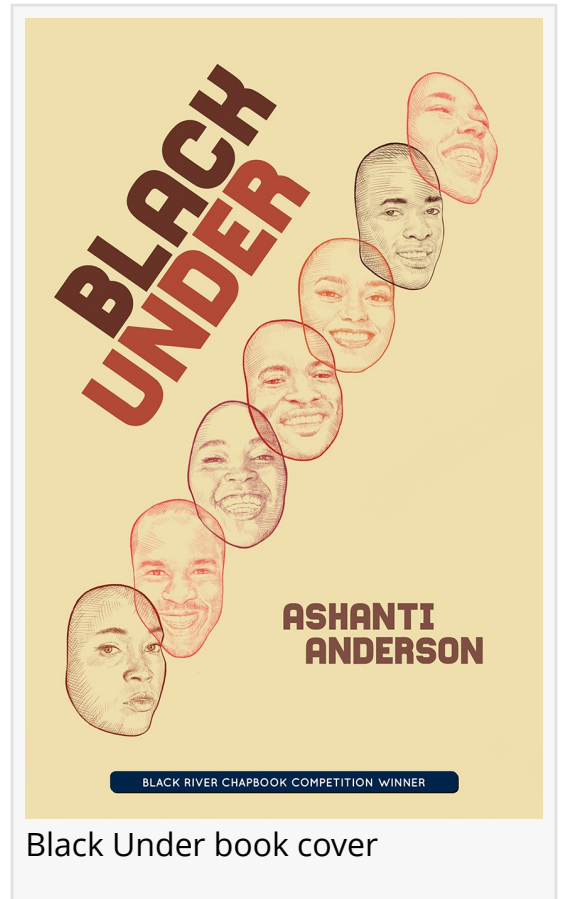


Ashanti Anderson's "Black Under" is a Haunting and Hopeful Reclamation of Black Past, Present, and Future

She moves between marginalization and hypervisibility, between trauma and joy, between declaration and reflection with dynamic strength.

LOS ANGELES, CA, USA, September 30, 2021

/EINPresswire.com/ -- "You are dark as religion," poet [Ashanti Anderson](#) writes in "Ode to Black Skin," the poem that opens her debut collection "[Black Under](#)". "Black not as sin, but a cave's jaw / clamped shut by for-giveness." Published today on September 28, 2021, by [Black Lawrence Press](#), "Black Under" is at once a celebration of Black survival, an interrogation of racialized violence, and a challenge to the dehumanizing narratives of the white gaze. The winner of the Spring 2020 Black River Chapbook Competition, "Black Under" reflects the African-American experience across a multitude of eras. Its poems are both haunting and hopeful in their exploration of Black performance, history, and identity. "I bow to your darkness like I kneel / beside a child's bed," the collection's "Ode to Blackness" continues— "confessing as gospel There's no monster here."



Black Under book cover

Each of "Black Under's" speakers is aware of their position in the webs and hierarchies of systemic power. In one series of poems ("Self-Portrait as Overseer," "Self Portrait in Blackface")

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For me, Black culture means being the creative and artistic zeitgeist of America.”

Ashanti Anderson

Anderson embodies a set of characters from American history, reclaiming control of their narratives from a white audience. These narratives grow into layered mixtures of tone and timeline. In "Slave Ship Haibun," a Carnival cruise-goer can't help but imagine her ancestors as her own vessel crosses the ocean. In "If," the arrest of Sandra Bland is juxtaposed with the tale of lady Godiva. "It is rare to see

such work as Ashanti Anderson's "Black Under" dive so deeply, head-first and unflinching, into

history," says Luther Hughes, founder of Shade Literary Arts. For the poet, these historically resonant questions of Black power and pain can be explored through the subjects' consciousness of a constant gaze. "Black culture means being the creative and artistic zeitgeist of America, and often-times, popular culture around the world," Anderson says. "We are trend-setters and our dialect, apparel, mannerisms, behaviors, and attitudes are routinely adopted by others. In my sole opinion, a big part of the Black experience is 'putting on,' i.e. carrying yourself in a way that makes you look and feel immortal... being constantly aware of your impending death encourages you to find freedom in expression."



Poet Ashanti Anderson

A core tenet of Anderson's poetry, prose, and playwriting is her advocacy for health equity, reproductive justice, disability rights, and criminal justice reform. She has also collaborated with universities, at-risk youth groups, nonprofits, and healthcare professionals to develop programs and activities that promote diversity, inclusion, and minority health. As a Black disabled queer woman, the relationships between Anderson's identities and their intersections can be complex to put to paper, but her razor-sharp poetic sensibility retains nuance and contradiction in lyricism. She moves between marginalization and hypervisibility, between trauma and joy, between declaration and reflection with dynamic strength. Perhaps this fluid quality of her debut collection accounts for its resounding power of expression. "'Black Under' defies strict categorization," writes poet Marcus Wicker, "save for the fact that it is altogether excellent."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Ashanti Anderson (she/her) is a Black Queer Disabled poet, screenwriter, and playwright. Her debut short poetry collection, "Black Under", is the winner of the Spring 2020 Black River Chapbook Competition at Black Lawrence Press. Her poems have appeared in "World Literature Today", "POETRY magazine", and elsewhere in print and on the web. Learn more about Ashanti's previous and latest shenanigans at ashanticreates.com.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

"Black Under" will be published on September 28, 2021, by Black Lawrence Press. It can be purchased in paperback at \$9.95 or ebook at \$4.95 from Black Lawrence Press, Amazon.com, or Small Press Distribution.

REVIEW COPIES AND MEDIA INTERVIEWS:

To request a review copy of "Black Under" or to schedule an interview/event with Ashanti Anderson, contact publicist Nanda Dyssou of Coriolis Company at nanda@corioliscompany.com or 424-226-6148.

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