



Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet: Selections from the People Pieces (Richard Jackson Book)

By Jo Carson

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“Haunting and funny, full of folk wisdom and unflinching honesty.” – *Publishers Weekly*

Playwright and poet Jo Carson has long been mining the rich field of everyday life in her native Appalachia region and East Tennessee. Collecting found stories as part of her ongoing “People Pieces” series, she has created a remarkable distillation of the rhythms and nuances of a specific landscape that proves common to us all. These fifty-four monologues and dialogues are statements of life from the region of the heart.

“The pieces all come from people. I never sat my desk and made them up. I heard the heart of each of them somewhere. A grocery store line. A beauty shop. The emergency room. A neighbor across her clothesline to another neighbor. I am an eavesdropper and I practiced being invisible to get them.” – Jo Carson, from the Preface.

JO CARSON is an author of poems, plays, short stories and essays who lives and works in Johnson City, Tennessee. She has toured internationally with *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet* and her play, *Daytrips*, has been widely produced. Ms. Carson has been a regular commentator on National Public Radio's “All Things Considered.”

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In one of the most powerful poems in this 96-page collection, a mother asks her grown child to come home while she is still alive: "I could fill you up with stories, stories I ain't told nobody yet. . . . When I am dead, it will not matter / how hard you press your ear to the ground." Like the voices in the oral histories collected by Studs Terkel, these monologues and dialogues from east Tennessee and the Appalachian region "all come from people," and while the poems "remain true to the speaker's thoughts and rhythms of speech," they are Carson's "distillations." Haunting and funny, full of folk wisdom and unflinching honesty, the characters seem spotlighted on a stage. Many poems presume an adult perspective and understanding, but all reflect Carson's sensitive and unsentimental awareness of her characters' lives and language. A Richard Jackson Book. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up-- As Carson points out, the 49 poems in this collection are "distillations," reconstructions of monologues and dialogues from east Tennessee and the Appalachian region. The pieces, written in colloquial English, are short and untitled and appear in broad groupings. The designation "juvenile poetry" seems a misnomer since most of the pieces deal with adults and their concerns: a woman describes being beaten by her husband; a dyer worries about toxins in the factory; a newly married man throws his mother-in-law out of the house. Not only is the subject matter adult; so is the language, which is strong yet appropriate in context. Nonetheless, some young adult readers would respond to their wry humor and authentic "down home" tone. A speaker describes a neighbor as "tryin' to slip Jesus Christ a couple of dollar bills/ for the free gift of salvation." A terminated worker notes that some "will not look at me/ because somehow fired and failed/ are too close together." And the denizen of a small town observes that everyone there "made their decision/ once or twice/ about whether you was right/ or wrong." A few poems sound preachy. About a third of the selections appeared previously in literary magazines. --Ellen D. Warwick, Robbins Junior Library, Arlington, Mass.

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About the Author

Jo Carson has published award-winning plays, short stories, books for children, essays, poems and other work. Her play "Whispering to Horses" and solo show "If God Came Down..." premiered at Seven Stages in Atlanta. She currently performs "Liars, Thieves, and Other Sinners on the Bench", made up of selected stories from the 30 oral history plays she has written.

Users Review

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