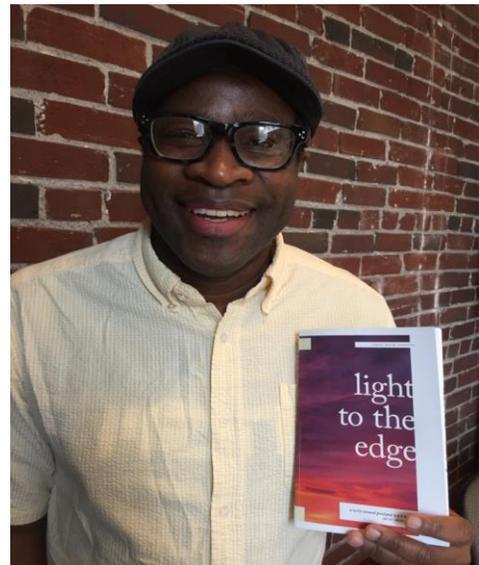


Featured Writer Interview with Carlos Dory

Carlos Dory, 51, who goes by the pen name selRahC yRoD, may have missed his bus by split seconds but he decides to see the upside—“I needed the exercise anyway,” he grins, shaking the rain off his jacket before our interview. The power of perspective is an important theme in Carlos’s attitude toward life, which may have something to do with his impressive travels. Born in Fort Worth, Texas with bouts of Portland living, he has spent long stretches in Mexico City, Vancouver BC, Barcelona, Ukraine, and many other places in Eastern Europe.

This past fall Carlos participated in our creative writing workshop at Home Forward, Pearl Court Apartments for adults living in low-income housing.



Thinking Outside the Box (excerpt)

by selRahC yRoD

My character is generally outside the lines of what is standard or typical as social norms.

By accident at first, but crafted by me over time. Outside the Lines.

To be unique and stand out from the pack requires courage, self-confidence, love for an idea, a fresh point of view, the curiosity of discovery, etcetera. That breaks down the walls, beliefs, and boundaries of what is normal in any situation. In a goal to evolve, grow, and be enlightened to the truth. Of what is beyond the knowledge of everything. To venture out of what is conformable and experience what is here and now. Outside the Lines.

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Interview with Featured Writer Carlos Dory

Interviewed by Leah Middleton, Write Around Portland intern.

How did you hear about the Write Around Portland workshop?

When I came back to Portland from the Ukraine, some people were like “Hey, you can talk! Have you ever challenged yourself to write?” and I was like “I don't know about that one.” But it was words of encouragement by other people that empowered me more to challenge myself. And that was the best part. [The workshop] was offered in our lobby [at Pearl Court Apartments]; Jake was our facilitator. I was already writing based on the Humanity in Perspective [a free college humanities course I was taking through Reed College at the time]. I thought, you know, I'm going to start doing something.

So you went for it. Tell me a little bit about the workshop with Write Around Portland.

The workshop was people from our building. And I am social but I kind of keep a distance because of personalities. I got to see sides of people. One guy, he was so detailed, you could close your eyes and then hear and connect to his story. Then you had one [participant] who wrote simple, but when she expressed her story in words, it was just like, people could relate. And one who would write usually stories of her childhood, and you could relate to it, and there was humor with it. People had different niches of what they were really good at.

You read at the anthology release party—was that a good experience for you?

It was good! What I have to say is—this is my second time reading—but when I wrote that [piece] I didn't know that the political landscape was happening. So I wrote it before all that happened. You never know how things pan out when you write something. It may not be relevant at that moment but later on you look back and everything plays into itself.

Did you write as part of your traveling experience?

When I was doing the Ukraine thing, once a week, my partner Vitaliy would go get me tapes at this place called the black market—for us it's the outlet store, but it's called the black market over there. He'd find the micro-cassettes because they had a dictaphone, and then a friend bought me a new recorder. So I would [record my thoughts] and it was a way for me to process. And sadly Vitaliy passed away. But I was like, oh all that information I wonder where that went, but you know it was out there.

I did continue it, I really enjoy it, even in my darkest moments and my most frustrated moments, those moments when I felt like I was fearful but it was also the experience of the encouragement: the light is going to come. So even in your darkest hour, the light is there. And then being able to process those thoughts just to move on. I smile and say I can't believe I did that.

So you started out writing as more of a way to process. Yet your writing style is really playful, you play with your punctuation and capitalization. When writing start to become more of a creative process for you?

Yeah, it's not always as I had [written before]. I kind of go with just what is inside. I just let the inner part of me express itself. And that's it. I really don't even think about it.

You've talked about watching people come into their voice and peeking into the uniqueness of each participant. Was that your favorite part of the workshop?

I think first it was just seeing—pulling—people out of their shells and seeing who is able to express their story in a way that people can understand. The great part is when you can close your eyes and really try to connect with everything that he or she is saying. And then that is the story, because I'm using my imagination on top of what he or she is expressing. And that's really good. And then there is seeing when people's penmanship is amazing! [laughs] Mine is like chicken scratch! Seeing everyone's unique ways of doing things and taking that in and then being like, okay, maybe I can be a better person.

Your piece speaks to the idea of not listening to the negative voices, or giving into fear. What role do you think fear plays in the act of writing, alone or with others?

I want to say it doesn't eliminate fear completely, but it does have me open up to the possibilities, seeing other options. [Writing] challenges each person to process other options because sometimes you get stuck in one place. And the only way you can get out of that place is you have to do it; no one can do it for you—you have to do it. And there is a point to which you have to face your fears. You have to face those things. One: you have to be able to overcome that or it will hold you back for the rest of your life, and two: you can become a role model and inspiration for others. Because you stepped out into the light and shined a light on something that was pretty dark.

What drew you to sign-up?

Up into my junior year in high school I was the nerdy quiet person. It was my classmate in French class who asked me to the prom. I was in my own bubble. And then my senior year I began to be exposed to things and people were challenging me to grow. And the challenges I wasn't ready for but you can never be prepared for things, you just have to experience things and that's how you grow. Whether good or bad. You grow based on experience.