

Last Sunday I got my backside out the door and went to see **Doris K. Reed: A Woman and Her Poetry** at Kitchen 86 in Palm Desert.

Apparently, quite a few other people had the same idea. The place was packed, the food was delicious, the drinks were cold, and then Doris began to read.

She brings a smooth, almost musical cadence to her poetry. Her words can be powerful, funny, sexual and deeply tender, sometimes all within a few minutes of one another. There is something magnetic about watching someone who has lived with words for a very long time and knows exactly when to let one linger in the air.

Doris Reed has been writing for more than 40 years. She is a poet, writer, artist, recording artist and motivational speaker whose work has appeared in newspapers, magazines and anthologies. She has published two books of poetry, a children's book and a spoken-word CD, and her poetry has been performed on stages around the country.

One of the poems that stayed with me was **"On the Shoulders of Time,"** her tribute to her ancestors. Doris looks backward toward people torn from Africa, enslaved, separated from those they loved and forced to endure unimaginable hardship, but she does not leave them imprisoned in suffering. She stands on their shoulders. Their endurance becomes the ground beneath her feet, their sacrifices part of what makes her own life and dreams possible. It is a poem about memory, but also inheritance: what survives when people refuse to surrender hope.

And then there is Doris writing about women loving women.

There was no coyness in it, no apology, no stepping delicately around desire. A woman loving another woman was allowed to be sensual, physical, joyful and completely ordinary. I loved that. Especially from a woman who has lived long enough to remember when our love was something people expected us to hide. There is power in simply standing before a room and saying, in poetry, **this love exists, this desire exists, and it belongs to us.**

Doris believes that everyone has a voice and that using it can make a difference. After spending an hour listening to hers, I believe her.

Definitely someone to see if you get the opportunity.

Kim Kieler