

SPECIAL GUEST

MARTIN GLYNN



My SPECIAL GUEST this month, Martin Glynn took time out to reason with me about him and his works. Here is his story...

NSS: First of all Martin, thanks for taking time out to talk with *PANTHER NEWSLETTER*. Please tell the readers a little about yourself and where you are from?

MG: I am 53 years of age. Born in Nottingham (UK). Mother Jill (Wales) and father Astley (Jamaica). Both of them are dead now. I have 3 children (Melanie, Sherene, and Adika) and 4 grandchildren (Jahmal Jeniece, Samuel, and Kayla)

NSS: What type of work do you do?

MG: I am writer and criminologist with over 25 years experience of working in prisons and schools. I have a Cert. Ed, a Masters degree in criminal justice policy and practice, and am currently doing my PhD at Birmingham City University where I am also a visiting lecturer. As a writer/director, I have gained a National and International reputation for my commissioned work in theatre, radio drama, live performance, and poetry. In October 2010 I was also awarded a prestigious local heroes award by 'The Association of Jamaica Nationals' (Birmingham) attended by the High Commissioner of Jamaica.

[Birmingham criminologist is local hero](#)



Martin receiving his local hero award from Marcia Fletcher

NSS: When did you first realise you wanted to pursue your career? – What prompted you?

MG: Always loved language, writing, and performance as a young person. I was surrounded by books and had difficult home life. Books provided me with an escape. Performance provided me with an outlet.

NSS: Who has inspired you in particular? (Authors/poets/people)?

MG: Nuff people, from Shakespeare to Charles Dickens, Richard Wright to Ralph Ellison, Gil-Scott Heron to Michael Smith, Bertice Berry to Sonia Sanchez. Dub Poets, Jazz Poets, Hip-Hop and Grime artists. Those I've met in prisons who use writing to understand who they are as well as commenting on the world.

NSS: What do you most enjoy about your work?

MG: Creating my own schedule. Meeting people. Having the freedom to think and write about my own concerns without getting swallowed up by a system that wants me to conform to its own way of being. I like being in control of my own life and destiny. Writing costs me in terms of time, but if the time I spend is rewarded, then it's worth it.

NSS: Does your work enable you to visit many countries? – If so which countries have you visited?

MG: Several trips to Jamaica. Nuff places in the US and across Europe. I'm yet to go to Africa and across Asia, but they are high on my future agenda.

NSS: You recently visited the United States, what was the purpose of that visit?

MG: In 2010 I was awarded a Winston Churchill International Travel Fellowship where I spent several weeks in the city of Baltimore and Johns Hopkins University (USA) looking at issues of fatherlessness, father hunger, and father deficit amongst young black men.

NSS: About you being a criminologist; what is the story behind that, how did that come about?

MG: 3 decades of working in prisons with black men using creativity to explore issues relating to masculinity, self-concept, fatherhood, and numerous other stuff, forced me to address the issue of how academia saw this work. So rather than let White men define black male social reality around issues of offending and criminality in general, I decided to take my concerns right into the heart of the academy.

NSS: What kind of research is involved with this line of work?

MG: I'm currently doing my PhD on '*British Black Men and Desistance -Towards a Critical Race Theory of Desistance*'. It involves:

1. Developing a critical race theory of desistance using black men's narratives to understand how they have ceased to engage in activity considered 'criminal'.
2. Investigating how black men construct their own understanding of desistance in relationship to being both black and male.
3. Exploring how racism in criminal justice processes impedes the termination point of investment in criminal activity for black men.

NSS: Do you impose a discipline on yourself regarding schedules, goals etc?

MS: The expectations coming from publishers, university, and other sources ensure that I never fall short on meeting a deadline. Also, my own internal discipline won't permit me to get behind on deadlines, as I have so much writing to do.

NSS: Do you write full-time?

MG: Yes. Both academically and creatively. I also keep a journal.

NSS: How do you promote yourself? Do you have a website?

MG: I'm fortunate I have a lot of exposure from the press and the marketing department at my university. I do have a website. www.sankofaassociates.co.uk

NSS: What does it take for a person to be successful in your chosen vocation; a freelance writer/academic writer?

MG: With the diversification of TV, the film industry becoming more and more driven by digital animation, and the impact of technology, the landscape has changed. There are more mediums, which in cultural terms means more choice for consumers. However, the market-driven environment we find ourselves in doesn't create many routes for development, failure, risk or innovation. So newer writers will get squeezed out. For writers from culturally diverse backgrounds, there are many other binds and setbacks. Issues of representation, control over production of ideas, and generally feeding a marketplace that is still mainly White means that consumers of popular culture are short-changed as the creative industries still operate from a colour-blind approach, combined with a continuing invisible presence for diverse communities at all levels of the process. There are smatterings of representation, but in terms of high-profile TV drama, film, novels and theatre, it's minimal. That, in my view, is not equitable or representative of the potential that is out there and deserves to be given a chance.

NSS: **Will you ever go back to writing poems and performing them on stage?**

MG: I had become tired of the constant run-around and denial of access; the writing industry had little or no access for writers from diverse backgrounds. I was fortunate inasmuch as I have published a lot, have had stuff produced in a range of mediums, and generally had a good career. However, as many writers find, my commissioned work was too sporadic. So I needed a fresh challenge and new journey. I had always loved reading academic texts and had written numerous articles and papers. Back in 2005 I took a master's degree, and then in 2010 I began a PhD, and where I acquired a different writing voice. Internally I felt I had to reach a new audience, as a way of pushing my motivation beyond the 'writer's fatigue' I had suffered previously.

As a lecturer I had been teaching crime and the media, and representation of crime in film and TV – with a special emphasis on David Simon's *The Wire* – and nursed a deep ambition to write drama depicting real inner-city life in the UK, set against the backdrop of the wider society. As I delved into the world of academic writing, I discovered the research methodology of ethnography, a social science research technique which is narrative-based. It was then that I realised that this discovery could lead me back to my creativity.

NSS: **Are you working on a current project(s)?**

MG: Translating my PhD into a book, a fatherhood writing project, and a new film project.

NSS: **Outside of work, what other interests and hobbies do you have?**

MG: Music, meditation, travelling, relaxing.

NSS: Do you have any advice and encouragement you would like to share with the *PANTHER NEWSLETTER* readers especially the youth?

MG: Black writers have to diversify their remit and address their concerns through writing, activism, advocacy, organisation and, most of all, by forming partnerships and affiliations with potential new sponsors, producers and audiences. Our stories are important and demand to be listened to, seen and heard. Most importantly those same writers have to write, write, write, and ensure that support network can assist in transcending the pain of denied access. Ultimately it is about getting the work out there and into the market place. For me, when a door shuts I'm going to open a new one. So the other consideration is the role of the writer to find new audiences that see the work produced as relevant and important, and that it speaks to those who want to hear those silent voices.

Martin thanks for taking time out to be interviewed in this issue of *PANTHER NEWSLETTER*. It has been a pleasure connecting with you. Guidance and protection in all your future ventures; bless.

LOG ON NEXT MONTH AND MEET ANOTHER SPECIAL GUEST/ARTIST OF THE MONTH