

CAROLINE BELL FOSTER

[Caroline Bell Foster](#) is a British Jamaican author, dubbed...***THE CARIBBEAN'S LEADING LADY OF LOVE***, she writes contemporary fiction with a distinctly Caribbean flavour. She has been featured in a number of magazines across the globe. A child of the 70's Caroline was born in Derby England of Jamaican parents. A six week holiday visiting her grandmother in Manchester, Jamaica turned into a 20 year adventure...



NSS: First of all Caroline, thank you for taking time out to be interviewed in this issue of ***PANTHER NEWSLETTER***.

CBF: Thank you. Panther Newsletter is one of the online newsletters I follow, so it's my pleasure to be invited.

NSS: Please tell the readers a little about yourself; where are you from?

CBF: I'm a novelist of three contemporary novels, which, by themselves reflect who I am and what shaped me. I was born in Derby England, but went on holiday to Jamaica in my early teens for what should have been a short holiday. We ended up staying. All of my higher education and path to adulthood took place in the tropics. I now live in Nottingham with my husband, two children, cat and rabbit.

NSS: When did you first realise you wanted to be a writer? – What prompted you?

CBF: Writing is a natural talent but I've always believed the writing chose me. I used to write a little poetry and short stories for the Jamaican newspapers as a teenager, more to flex my creativity than anything else. I was blissfully enjoying a career in Travel and Tourism, when my idyllic life was halted by personal tragedy. In my grief, I started to write and several months later, I had a huge 140,000 word manuscript and a pretty good story. Always one to 'challenge life' I sent it to a publisher in a very unprofessional state. Single-spaced and bound! Luckily, it landed on the right desk, the editor loved it, but asked me to tighten it up and knock off several thousand words. I attended the University of the West Indies to hone my skills, surrounded myself with other writers and was fortunate enough to be mentored by Trinidadian author and journalist Wayne Brown.

NSS: What people such as authors/family have inspired you?

CBF: It sounds cliché' but I'm inspired by everything around me. I don't really have a favourite author as I read everything.

NSS: You spent some time living and being schooled in Jamaica; how much did the island and your travels influence your writing experience?

CBF: I fell in love with Jamaica as soon as I looked out of the plane window as a child. The colours, the smells and most importantly the people. Jamaica seems to simply pulse with life and you can't help but be caught up in it. I went to The Queen's School for girls. It was strict yet fun and completely different to what I was used to in England. I thrived on the discipline and hard work and rose to their expectation of me. The very best thing to happen as a child of the seventies was our move to Jamaica.

I've also lived in Nairobi, Kenya as an exchange student for a year. I was part of 20 students from across the world and represented Jamaica as a junior ambassador. To ensure I captured every experience in minute detail I had three diary's going at once and actually wrote my very first short story whilst there. I have lived in Toronto, Canada, and travelled extensively though out the world always practising what I now call looking at things with a 'writers eye'.

NSS: What do you enjoy most about writing?

CBF: Ahh [smile] the entire creative process. I was one of those annoying people at school who used to love doing full-length projects. I would go to the library to do a detailed research on whatever topic and then write pages and pages, include diagrams, charts, table of contents and a bibliography! But there is nothing more satisfying than the finished novel, knowing the characters I set out to create are jumping off the pages and I can evoke different roller coaster emotions for my readers. Bliss.

NSS: Do you write full-time?

CBF: I like to think that I do, but really, I don't push my creative flow. I can write furiously for months and months, usually on more than one novel. When my characters aren't jumping off the page, I'll go to the other manuscript and vice-versa. It keeps things fresh for me. I'm very busy with home life, but I also work part time, to get 'out there' to observe people and eavesdrop!

NSS: Do you have or set a schedule when you are writing?

CBF: I tend to be more creative in the wee hours of the morning and can write fluently and consistently for 4 to 5 hours a day. I need complete silence and like to be surrounded in darkness, so I can 'see' my story.

NSS: What is your creative process like; what happens when you first sit down to write?

CBF: I'm running on anticipation all day until I can unleash my creativity. When I'm involved in a project, I think about it and jot down notes all day. I've been known to use the back of a till receipt to capture dialogue I've been working on! When I finally sit down to write, I usually read the last 200 words or so to get ready and then I let my fingers fly! On the odd occasion I don't really feel that motivated, I write a letter to myself, waxing lyrical about how brilliant I am. Self-adoration and confirmation works every time.



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

CBF: I've always been ahead of myself when it comes to my work and as I have more than one project going at a time and at different stages I can keep my publishers relatively happy. My idea of bliss would be to have three or four laptops to keep my projects completely separate, but I'm having to make do with the one. I'll write consistently for months, put it down - to distance myself - do something else for a month and then start the most important part, the re-write. I will repeat the process for several months until my editor and myself are happy. So on average a book takes me about 10 months to complete.

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

CBF: Yes. I have a novel scheduled for a 2012 release. But that's all I can say about it.

NSS: What projects have you worked on and have been published in previously?

CBF: I have published three novels so far. Ladies Jamaican (2004), Caribbean Whisper's (2009) and Saffron's Choice (2010). The first two set exclusively in Jamaica and a bit of Nottingham in my last. I have a huge North American and Caribbean fan base and since returning to England, interest in my work is growing. I've been featured in magazines and newspapers across the globe

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

CBF: My publishers are overseas so I do a lot of my European promotion myself. Life as an author doesn't stop when the book is finished. I liaison very closely with the European distributor and let them know every time I'm scheduled to be featured on the radio and other media so they can ensure my books are visible on the High Street. I do readings and signings in libraries and bookshops within the East Midlands, but I am getting requests to go further a field nowadays. I have a website www.carolinebellfoster.com and a fan page on Facebook. Fans have asked me to Tweet, but I'm not sure I can restrict myself to the 140 characters.

NSS: What other outside interests and hobbies do you have?

CBF: Of course I read a lot, as most writers are prolific readers. However, when time allows I'm learning the art of belly dancing. Trying to isolate one part of my body, whilst the other part is shimmying to the Arabic music is an art in itself! We moved house last year and have a large garden that was left unattended for three years! I had no choice but to take up gardening, but I'm enjoying this new creativity of planning and planting and seeing the results.

NSS: Finally, do you have any advice and encouragement you would like to share with the youth and any potential budding writers?

CBF: Those who want to write should know this already. Write everyday, even if it's just a 20 minute diary entry. Read absolutely everything, especially those books in your chosen genre. But ultimately, I follow the advice author Jodi Picoult once told me several years ago. Never, ever, stop writing!

Caroline 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.

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