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Red Hen Press

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Trouble Funk

POETRY BY

Douglas Manuel

Soundtracked with soul, disco, and funk hits from the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, the speaker of *Testify* returns in *Trouble Funk* to tell the story of how his parents met and fell in and out of love.

The speaker of *Testify* returns to divulge his parents' love story. Set in Anderson, Indiana in the 1960s, 70s, and '80s, *Trouble Funk* exposes ways Black Love is thwarted but never destroyed by racism, classism, and sexism. Eschewing the "lyrical I" in favor of a third person omniscient point of view, this text exhibits how the latter half of the twentieth century rhymes with our current moment when it comes to political division, the hardships that Black folks face, and the rise of toxic right-wing policies. In many ways, *Trouble Funk* serves as a prequel to *Testify* in which Douglas Manuel seeks to better understand and love himself, his family, and his country.

ADVANCE PRAISE

In these stunning poems of love and longing, Douglas Manuel offer us richly textured lyrics inspired by three decades of Black music, refreshing nostalgic beats. This book is a playlist for Black joy and perseverance, each line smooth as *Soul Train* and studded with sonic delights. I will carry these playful, resonant poems with me – "lift and flit, lift and flit" — catching their sweet signal, like late-night radio in the wee hours.

– Kiki Petrosino, author of *White Blood: a Lyric of Virginia*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Douglas Manuel was born in Anderson, Indiana and now resides in Long Beach, California. He received a BA in Creative Writing from Arizona State University, an MFA in poetry from Butler University, and a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Southern California. His first collection of poems, *Testify*, won an IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award for poetry, and his poems and essays can be found in numerous literary journals, magazines, and websites, most recently *Zyzzyva*, *Pleiades*, and the *New Orleans Review*. He has traveled to Egypt and Eritrea with [The University of Iowa's International Writing Program](#) to teach poetry. A recipient of the Dana Gioia Poetry Award and a fellowship from the [Borchard Foundation Center on Literary Arts](#), he is a Bayard Rustin Fellow at Whittier College and teaches at Spading University's low-res MFA program.



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FROM TROUBLE FUNK

Excerpt from "Let's Get Small"

Another job gone, the song of another
woman all over his lips. Caught, she could taste it.

She screams. He screams. They scream.
They scream. He screams. She screams.
She screams. He screams. Their scream

the same scream they began with, the same
scream they'll end with. But, really,
it's older than that, deeper than that, and oh so Black.

The same scream since middle passage,
since slavery,
since Reconstruction,
since Jim Crow,
since Great Migration,
since redlining,
since Civil Rights.

Excerpt from "Mothership Connection"

Before DJ-scratch, the breakdown was all drum-fill,
handclap, bass-slap, guitar-wail. Talk over the track, not yet
rap yet rap always.

Is funk. Is blues. Is jazz. Is Black.

Same scream since—.



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