1. Q: What inspired you to become a writer?

A: I wanted to read romance novels that reflected characters who looked like me.

1. Q: What three pieces of advice would you give an aspiring writer?

A: Learn your craft by reading Writer’s Digest books on, plotting, characters, setting, dialogue, etc.

1. Q: Where do you get your ideas?
2. A: From my imagination.
3. Q: What led you to first write an African American Historical Romance novel?

A: I read an article in Newsweek about Emperor Heile Selassie of Ethiopia, referring to him as The Lion of Judah. I did some research and was shocked when I found that he can trace his ancestry back to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. What a romantic story, I thought. That’s when I wrote “The Lion of Judah.” My second book on Ethiopian history was about Makeda, The Queen of Sheba. I named that book Moon Goddess, because she worshipped the moon and her people worshipped her as a goodess.

1. Q: What are the top three hobbies you enjoy and why?

A: I enjoy gardening, because I like to see things grow. My grandmother used to grow okra, so one year I planted some okra seeds, just to see how they look when they grow. I enjoy traveling to visit my family, and writing.

1. Q: What are the titles in your body of work and when were they published?
2. **TITLE:** JUSTIN’S BODY OF WORK

**DATE:** May 2015

**TITLE:** KENTON’S VINTAGE AFFAIR

**DATE:** October 2014

**TITLE:** THE LION OF JUDAH

**DATE:** August 1997

**TITLE:** MOON GODDESS

**DATE:** April 1999

1. Q: How do you manage the work/life balance?

A: Discipline. Monday-Friday, I start work in the morning, and stop every day in the afternoon, unless I’m on deadline. Then I will burn the midnight oil.

1. Q: What are the top three steps you employ in researching a story?
2. A: 1) Internet. 2) Visiting the setting if possible. 3) Reading books.
3. Q: What draws you to the Napa Valley Wine Country as a home base for your first series and why?

A: 1) The area is beautiful, and 2) I found out there were black wineries in Napa. I’d visited the wine country for years, participating in wine tastings with friends and taking visiting relatives there for tastings and dining. I never knew there were any African American wineries there until I heard about Bates Winery, now Black Coyote. I had a chance to interview Dr. Bates and two other African American vintners from the wine country.

1. Q: What three traits do you attribute most to your writing success?

A: The love of reading, learning, writing and a good imagination.

1. Q: Of all the characters you’ve written, which one is your favorite and why?

A: Makeda, The Queen of Sheba, because she was an historical figure. I loved her character because I’d never read a romance novel about her before.

1. Will there be an Underwood’s of Napa Valley tour, if so, what are the details?

A: There will be a blog tour on Black Pearls online magazine.

1. Q: In what formats are your books published?

A: E-books and print.

1. Q: Do you mentor new writers through workshops, coaching or critiques, for example?

A: I haven’t mentored any yet because I’m so busy with my writing. Maybe I will in the future.

1. Q: Where can we purchase your books?

A: My books are available on Amazon.com

1. Q: Do you write non-fiction as well as fiction books?

A: No. I do not write non-fiction books.

1. Q: Are there any plans to make the Underwood’s of Napa Valley series into movies?

A: No, but I’m ready in case someone offers to make the series into movies.

1. Q: Do you have a blog or newsletter? If so, how may we sign up?

A: I have a blog on my website. Readers can sign up for my newsletter on my website.

1. What five things do you know now that you wish you’d known at the beginning of your career?

A: 1) Get your work professionally edited. 2) How to structure a book. 3) All of the different categories in the romance genre. 4) Know your target market. 5) Don’t stop writing, no matter what obstacles you face.

1. Q: Do you create music playlists for your books? If so, what are some of the songs on the playlist for KENTON’S VINTAGE AFFAIR?

A: John Legend’s “Best You Ever Had,” was my heroine’s favorite song in Kenton’s Vintage Affair. Pharell Williams’ “Happy” is my heroine’s favorite song in Justin’s Body of Work. Redpearl, a group from Oakland, CA that my brother Larry Dennie plays with, creates original music for my book trailers on Youtube.

1. Q: How does your family contribute to and support your writing career?

A: My entire family has been very supportive of my writing career. Especially my husband, Gregory Reed, who helps me with whatever I need. He patiently listens to my story lines and characters.

1. Q: What are your writing credentials?

Q: No professional credentials. I am self-taught. I’ve always been an “A” student in English. I almost became an English teacher, but decided to go into technology instead.

1. Do you participate in book club readings? If so, how may a book club schedule you for an event?

A: I have participated in readings at bookstores in the past. I am open to them. I can do readings for book clubs in the Northern California area, between Sacramento and San Francisco. I can be contacted on skype for other events.

1. Q: What made you self-publish rather than seek a contract with the “Big 5” publishing companies?

A: In 1994 before the African American romance novels came out, an editor told me that Black people didn’t read romance novels. I explained to her that Black people did read romance novels, especially my aunt who had stacks of them hidden in a corner with the covers torn off. When I visited my aunt at the age of 21, I read my first romance novel, The Wolf and the Dove, by Katheleen E. Woodiwiss. I’ve been hooked since then.

1. Q: Tell us a little about your self—what’s your favorite movie? Your favorite song? Your favorite or sport? Your favorite romantic date?

A: My favorite movie is Star Wars. I think George Lucas is a master storyteller. My favorite songs are anything by Motown. My favorite sport is basketball. My favorite romantic date is dinner and dancing with my husband anywhere.

1. Q: What is your writing process—from idea to finished product?

A: Think of an idea. Write a synopsis. Break synopsis up into a plot outline. Write the first draft. Update the manuscript until it is in final form.

1. Q: How much of your stories are autobiographical?

A: None.