



Book Title: *Miss Virginia and the Sweet Sisters*

Logline: For a mixed-race girl in 1967, acceptance amid life and death is hard-won.

Synopsis: Growing up with different-colored skin shouldn't be difficult. So why is it that Lindsey always feels "other than?"

These are the sentiments of mixed-race thirteen-year-old Lindsey Hollis, growing up in 1967 in small-town Kentucky where intraracial racism proliferates and where a long-ago murder still haunts the town. Lindsey longs for acceptance, but because she looks white, she is plagued by bigotry from her small circle of black friends. Not long after Lindsey befriends two mysterious elderly ladies and their teacher friend, she learns that a

psychopathic killer has returned to town. Now Lindsey and her friends are being stalked. With the specter of sinister premonitions and secrets that need to be kept, Lindsey must find a way to bridge the social and racial divides that separate them before the killer strikes again.... And time is running out.

In *Miss Virginia and the Sweet Sisters*, we are immersed in the world of Kentucky bluegrass horse country, coming-of-age wonders, and the mysteries of life experienced by a young girl on the cusp of young adulthood. The backdrop of murder and the seedy side of small-town life heightens the suspense interwoven with the racial tension of late 1960s civil-rights era Kentucky.

Genre: Women's Fiction/Historical Fiction/Suspense/Coming of Age.

Audience: The novel will appeal to readers who enjoy female friendships, the resiliency of female strength, and insightful reflections on racial relationships.

Trigger Warnings: Racial slurs are used per the vernacular of the period depicted (the late 1960s South) and give authenticity to the story. They are not meant to be offensive to today's reader(s). Intraracial racism & bullying. Adult situations. Explicit language & violence.

Reviews: (to read more of what readers are saying, see Reviews Page on the author's website).

What a story! Absolutely superb! ~**Natli VanDerWerken**, MSCIS, International Award-winning Author.

Short Author BIO:

Donna Lawrence writes in the genre of women's fiction set in historical periods, even touching on coming-of-age in small-town America. *Miss Virginia and the Sweet Sisters* is her debut novel. A collection of short stories and poetry is scheduled for release soon. Her poetry is published in a compilation and featured in newspapers. As of 2020 and 2021, two of her poems are featured on the 9/11 Memorial Website. Donna was born and raised in Kentucky. She currently resides in Colorado. She is currently working on her second novel and posts monthly on her personal blog.

Long Author BIO:

Donna Lawrence writes in the genre of women's fiction set in historical periods, even touching on coming-of-age in small-town America. *Miss Virginia and the Sweet Sisters* is her debut novel. A collection of short stories and poetry is scheduled for release soon. Her poetry is published in a compilation and featured in newspapers. As of 2020 and 2021, two of her poems are featured on the 9/11 Memorial Website.

Donna started her writing career at the age of eleven when she received her first diary. Her love of all things literary and her creative pursuits grew from this early age to the present day. As an artist, she enjoys expressing herself on paper using pen and ink as a medium. Writing music lyrics is another favorite pastime. She likes a story well told and enjoys a variety of movie genres, especially if the story is depicted from an intelligent perspective.

Known affectionately as DaMarie, she was born and raised in Kentucky but is a longtime resident of Colorado. Both states hold special meaning and the many experiences she's had are ones she draws on in her writing. She is currently working on her second novel and posts monthly on her personal blog.

Very Short BIO:

Donna Lawrence is a women's historical fiction, short stories, and poetry writer. *Miss Virginia and the Sweet Sisters* is her debut novel. She was born and raised in Kentucky but is a longtime resident of Colorado. Both states hold special meaning and the many experiences she's had are ones she draws on in her writing. She posts monthly on her personal blog.

Contact Information:

Website Email: donna@donnamarielawrence.com

Business Email: damarielawrence2@gmail.com

Author Website: <https://donnamarielawrence.com>

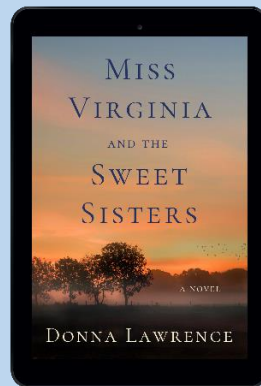
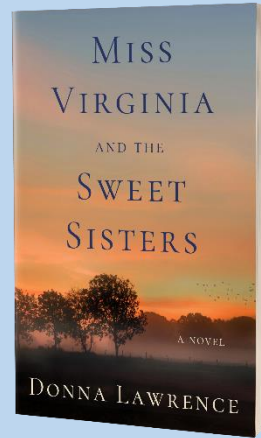
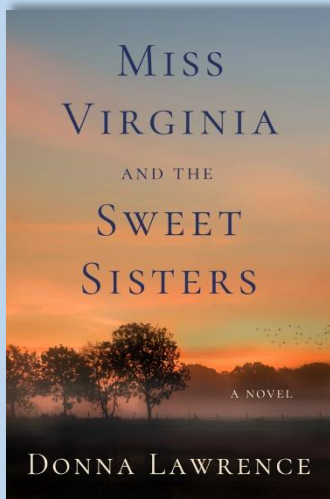
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/donnamarielawrencebooks>

Personal blog: <https://weeklydamarie.blogspot.com>

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Interview Questions and Answers

What makes this novel different than others written about race?

I thought it would be interesting to explore intraracial and race relations through the eyes of a young mixed-race girl as she comes of age in the late 1960s civil right era in Kentucky. The aspect of intraracial racism is not spoken of very much in the African American community. Colorism is a “thing,” but for me, how it shapes the nature and maturity of a young girl of mixed race during that period was intriguing to examine. It didn’t hurt to raise the stakes by adding a touch of the sinister for interest. Exploring how the tensions of events are resolved gave me an avenue to bring a message that speaks to our times.

What compelled you to write this story?

So little has been written about how we treat each other regarding skin color and ethnicity within our racial communities. I don’t think we see how that mirrors the way we treat others who are different from ourselves. Bullying is a vehicle from which discrimination can hide behind, and so is disinterest. It starts from within. With the social issues we struggle with today, I hope the story resonates and gives us pause to question just how much this issue of race *is or is not* the biggest obstacle to overcome. I hope it tells us that what we “overcome” is how we see ourselves reflected in how we treat others. It’s an age-old cliché, but I think it needs to be revisited. I wanted to tackle this issue by telling a story from another perspective. I hope it reminds us how persevering in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds is the most prescient issue of all, regardless of the obstacles that get in our way.

Why did you choose an actual small town for the location of your story instead of a fictitious one?

At first, it was a struggle to determine the setting for the events in this story. I knew the location should be in the South. Kentucky is one of those states considered to straddle the North and South. Because of that perspective, I thought it would best illustrate the dichotomy of both sides of the coin as far as race is concerned. Kentucky has a rich history, and I love Paris. In that small town, there weren’t the proverbial railroad tracks that separated the races; there was a hill. On top of that hill is where similarities could be found. I wanted to use that as a metaphor, and for me, Paris, Kentucky, was the perfect town to set this story.

You speak of dichotomies. How important is this theme in your story?

I believe there is something to be said about life’s yin-yang philosophy. Love versus hate, yes versus no, up versus down, black versus white, etcetera. Opposite elements are part of life. It keeps us in check and balances our choice of consequences, in this case, good versus evil. The evil aspect is an element I wanted to interject into this story to highlight the internal struggle, despite so much good. I wanted to show the ugly of man in all its hideousness and the ability to find redemption if there is one. The supernatural or spiritual component in the story is not the main focus, of course, but it serves as a backdrop to life’s mysteries and gives a slightly hidden glimpse of what lies within us. I believe it’s inherent in man to struggle with that constant search to do good when evil calls us to do bad things.

Is this why you used a Prologue in your book?

Yes. I understand it's a literary device we don't see used in fiction as much anymore. I chose it as a vehicle to introduce the evil thread that runs through the story. Apart from the central characters, bad and good can be seen as additional characters. There are two protagonists, one being the main character, and two antagonists. The dichotomy reference is relevant there as well.

What is the moral of this story or lessons you hope readers learn?

In this raw, gritty, authentic, and heartwarming tale lies a timely message that I believe needs to be told and a message I hope resonates with today's reader. I hope

the reader understands how one tiny spark, event, or circumstance can change much of what we deal with daily. I think we can apply much of what occurs in this book to our lives, past and present. Unfortunately, man's inhumanity to man is a constant. I believe it's how we rise above that frailty and the beneficial consequences it brings that matter most. God's grace is always with us. I want to think that what we have struggled through as a people and as a nation and the resulting relationships we have with each other are not as bad as we think. We have come so far together. It wasn't perfect back then; nothing ever is. But I think if we can reclaim some of what we had and apply it to how we live with each other today, we'd be on our way to healing the rift that has torn our country, if not the world, apart.

I hope it isn't too late.