

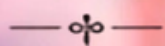
THE LOTT LIST

FIRST
ISSUE

BOOKS WORTH READING. AUTHORS WORTH KNOWING.

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1

INSIDE THE WORLD OF THE CONJURE SERIES



*Folklore.
History.
Conjure.
Horror.*

A POWERFUL
COMBINATION.

A VOICE YOU
WON'T FORGET.



TRACY CROSS

**BLACK
HORROR
HAS A NEW
VOICE.**

“

*I done told y'all I'm dangerous.
I'm gonna be the best damned
conjure woman ever.*

”

— Pee Wee Conway

“

*I do love
writing horror
from a Black
perspective.*

”

— Tracy Cross



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
WRITING CRAFT

HONEST REVIEW
BOOK NEWS

FEATURED POET TRE WHARTON
BOOKS ON OUR RADAR



thelottlist.substack.com





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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

FIRST
ISSUE

Welcome to the very first issue of The Lott List.

I only meant for The Lott List to be me doing book reviews, not a full-on publication with reviews, interviews, writing tips, tricks, book news, and everything else. Still, my higher power said, “Girl, you know you want to do this... do it!”

I felt like a lot of great authors were being overlooked, especially in the BIPOC community. I made the decision on a Friday, and one week later, I had my first interviewee and a poet who is so deep, I’m not entirely convinced any of us are worthy enough to fully grasp his brilliance. So, pull up a chair. Pour that tea or wine. Coffee is welcome too.

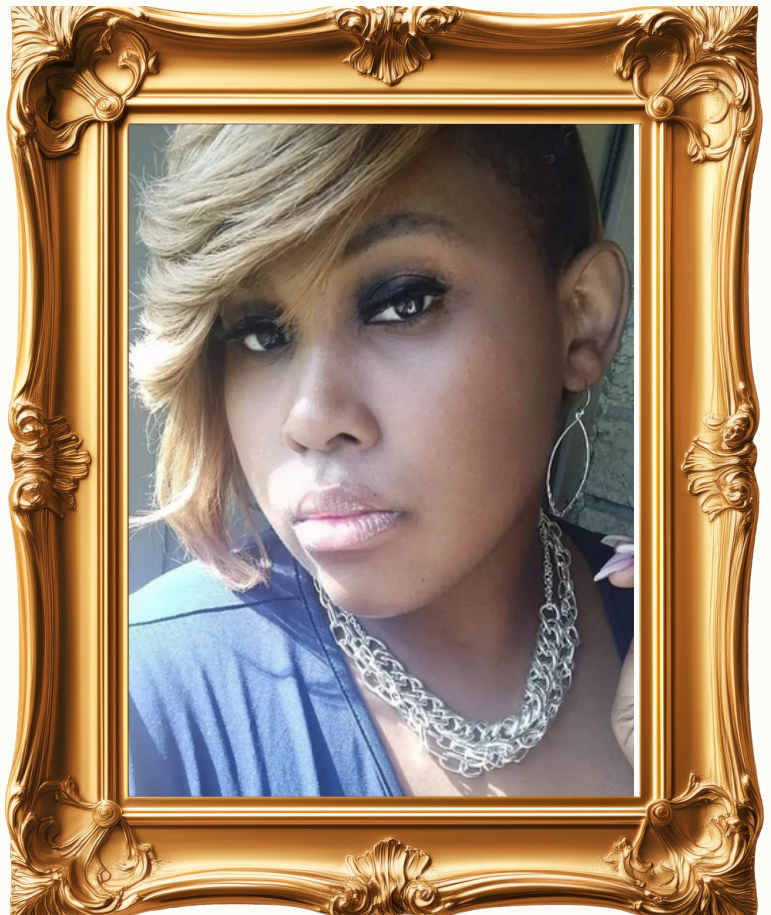
We are about to make history, and you are a vital part of it.

V. Joyce Lott

Founder, Editor & Publisher

The Lott List

www.lottheritagegroup.com



WHY TRACY CROSS BECAME OUR FIRST FEATURED AUTHOR.

Some authors create monsters because horror is trendy. When you have Blumhouse, Jordan Peele, etc., making millions off of gory storylines and the unexplained, who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

People love a good scare.

Then there is Tracy Cross, who doesn't write horror just to frighten you. She writes Black horror rooted in folklore, history, and culture. And if you know me, you know I love all of those things individually for good reason.

Usually, before I decide which book to feature or promote in The Lott List, I read the sample on Amazon. I have read a lot of samples. Some were good; some were really good as well. None of the authors were bad writers, and the stories were interesting enough that I could see why someone would enjoy them. However, they weren't my cup of wine. I said what I said.

I asked authors on Threads to pitch their books to me and drop the link. I proceeded to read samples and continued... and then someone commented on one of my posts.

"Do you feature historical horror?"

I told them to send me the link. It was worth a try; nothing had struck me yet. It took a little while. Then I went to her page and saw,

"A Gathering of Weapons: The Conjure Series."

The first thing I noticed was the cover.

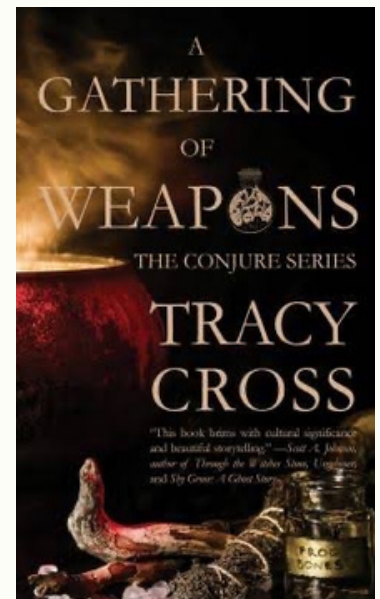
It wasn't flashy or doing too much. No glitter text or bells and whistles. It was simple.

Now, I'm from Louisiana.

We know a little somein'-somein' about conjure, hoodoo, rootwork, and the stories that have been passed down for decades. So naturally, my curiosity was already piqued. I opened the sample chapter.

www.lottheritagegroup.com

That was it.



This wasn't just another horror novel. This was historical horror. The story takes place after slavery, following a young girl named PeeWee, who never experienced slavery herself but still lives in a world shaped by its aftermath. That perspective immediately drew me in.

The atmosphere reminded me of the kinds of stories I grew up hearing and loving. There were moments that made me think about Toni Morrison's ability to ground readers in community and history, while the speculative elements reminded me why Octavia Butler remains one of my favorite writers. Don't misquote me or get it misconstrued. Tracy brings her own uniqueness and voice to this space by centering African American folklore rather than treating it as background decoration.

I also love that she added another layer. One of the characters is Native American and brings his own traditions, healing practices, and folk knowledge to the story. That element, along with the African American conjure, felt natural. Magical, to say the least. I also appreciated that the novel doesn't romanticize history.

The book wasn't just waving wands and casting spells. It explores difficult realities, including prostitution after the Civil War and the ways conjure women became part of everyday survival. Their gifts weren't just mysterious powers. In the South, people depended on their services for healing, protection, justice, and sometimes for helping women earn a living in a world that gave them very few choices.

And then there's the horror...

Honey...

One night, I was sitting in my recliner reading a particularly creepy scene. The house was quiet. It was dark outside. One of my kids walked up behind me without making a sound. I almost knocked that baby into next week. That's when I knew Tracy Cross had done her job. She doesn't just write horror; she writes the kind of horror that pulls you in so tight that you forget where you are. You are standing in that little cabin with the crazy spirit of a witch antagonizing you.

That's exactly the kind of book I wanted to introduce to readers. Not just another urban romance or werewolves getting busy with fairies and gnomes.

So when it came time to choose the very first featured author for The Lott List, the decision wasn't difficult.

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 1.

Meet Tracy Cross.

MEET TRACY CROSS



Tracy at a Glance

Photo: Mig Dooley

Tracy Cross writes historical horror rooted in Black folklore, family history, and the supernatural. Her Conjure Series follows Hattie Mae "Pee Wee" Conway, a young conjure woman growing into her power in the years after slavery.

Tracy has loved horror since childhood and draws inspiration from writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, and Rod Serling. She is especially passionate about telling horror stories from a Black perspective and treating folklore as something living, powerful, and worthy of serious attention.

In *A Gathering of Weapons*, the second book in the series, Pee Wee is older, bolder, and more dangerous. Tracy joined The Lott List to talk about Pee Wee's evolution, the stories that shaped her, and why Black horror deserves more space on readers' shelves.

Tracy Cross isn't slowing down anytime soon.

She's currently working on a collection of African American folk-horror stories featuring monsters, magic, and demonic entities. The collection begins with the arrival of the first slave ships and spans generations, exploring folklore, fear, survival, and the stories that continue to shape Black communities today.

Readers can also look forward to the third and final installment of The Conjure Series, *The Legend of Pee Wee Conway*, where Pee Wee's journey as a conjure woman will continue.

Find Tracy

Official Author Page

[Dark Matter Magazine Author Page](#)

Amazon Author Page

[Shop Tracy Cross on Amazon](#)

Goodreads

[Follow Tracy Cross on Goodreads](#)

Website

[tracycrossonline.com](#)

Threads

[@tracycrosswrites](#)

Instagram

[@tracycrosswrites](#)

Review: A Gathering of Weapons

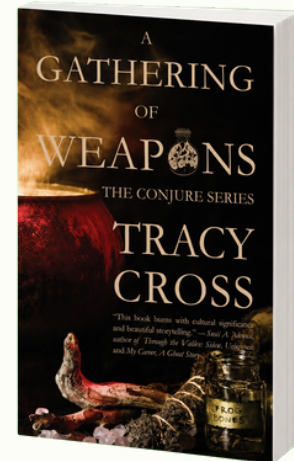
By: V. Joyce Lott

What Worked

What really worked for me was the simplicity of Tracy's language and the way the scenery unfolded. You could tell she researched this time period and intentionally wove details from that era into her prose.

As a Louisiana native, I was transported back home. The old houses from the early twentieth century through the 1980s are still standing in many places. They're worn down now, but they're still full of stories.

The way Tracy described the architecture, I was there. I knew exactly what Viola's cabin looked like. I knew that dirt road. I could see the sweet grass, the exposed tree roots, and the rocks pressed into the earth. Her atmospheric storytelling is top-notch.



Favorite Character

Pee Wee. Hands down.

Not only is she cocky enough to tell everybody she's dangerous and determined to become "the best damned conjure woman ever," she's powerful, and she knows it.

I love confident female characters, especially when that confidence has to survive the world they're living in.

The Folklore

Growing up in Louisiana, we eventually moved from the city to northeast Louisiana—deeeeeeeep in the woods.

Stories about hoodoo, ghosts, haints, and things people couldn't explain were just part of life. I was fascinated by all of it.

I actually have a Hoodoo certification, so when it comes to throwing bones, rootwork, and even a little spell here and there, I might know a thing or two.

Now, before somebody jumps in the comments, Wicca, Hoodoo, and Vodou are not the same thing.

If you know, you know.

That's one of the reasons this book resonated with me. It treats these traditions as living cultural practices rather than cheap horror props.

Read the Conjure Series

1. Rootwork
2. A Gathering of Weapons
3. The Legend of Pee Wee Conway — forthcoming

***Support the author by purchasing the book, adding it to your Goodreads shelf, and leaving an honest review after reading.

Final Thoughts

If they ever turn this into a movie or television series, I'll be right there at the premiere with my pralines and a "Best Damned Conjure Woman" T-shirt on.

My only disappointment?

I didn't realize I had started with Book Two.

Looks like I've got some catching up to do.

Who Should Read?

Literally, any and everyone. However, if we are being technical I will say, Those that enjoy African American folklore, historical horror, richly atmospheric settings, and stories that pull you in so completely you jump out your britches, this book belongs on your reading list.

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The Lott List

QUICK FIRE — WITH — TRACY CROSS



The Lott List: Morning or night writer?

Tracy Cross: Night.

The Lott List: Music or silence?

Tracy Cross: Music. Musical scores. I like most music.

The Lott List: Coffee, tea, or something else?

Tracy Cross: Coffee. Peppermint mocha decaf.

The Lott List: What are you currently reading?

Tracy Cross: *Model Home* by Rivers Solomon.

The Lott List: What book changed the way you write?

Tracy Cross: *The Best of Richard Matheson* and *Every Tongue Got to Confess* by Zora Neale Hurston.

The Lott List: Who is your favorite fictional villain?

Tracy Cross: Dr. Impossible from *Soon I Will Be Invincible*.

Favorite line: some days you just do not feel especially evil.

The Lott List: Describe your dream writing retreat.

Tracy Cross: Somewhere warm with a hot tub and sauna. A bookstore and coffee are a must.



POETRY FEATURE: TRE WHARTON



I told y'all in the welcome letter that I had found a poet so deep, I wasn't entirely convinced any of us were worthy enough to fully grasp his brilliance.

I meant that.

Tre Wharton's "At Miss Annie's House" is not the kind of poem you skim and keep moving. It places readers inside the memory of a child trying to navigate adolescence after domestic violence has already changed everything.

Set inside a women's shelter in the United States, the poem explores the realities families may face while seeking safety. Shame, illness, conflict with other residents, and the discomfort of shelter life are all present. However, none of those things compare to the destruction of what was once a happy home.

Wharton uses details from his own past to create an experience that feels immediate, uncomfortable, and deeply human.

"At Miss Annie's House" is also only one part of a much larger story. The poem appears in *Grown Folk Business: Tenth Anniversary Edition*, a collection that explores the effects of domestic violence through Wharton's poetry.

The collection is scheduled for release in October 2026.



Photo: Miguel Von

Tre Wharton on

At Miss Annie's House

The humor in *At Miss Annie's House* makes the poem feel almost innocent at first. Bunk beds. Chinese Checkers. Cool pencils. Cornbread.

Then the truth underneath those memories begins to show. The rooftop mothers staring over the ledge. The donated clothes delivered in trash bags. A child hiding beneath a jacket hood so nobody from school recognizes her.

Tre Wharton spoke with *The Lott List* about the experiences behind the poem and the larger body of work in which it appears.

The Lott List:

Give me some background information on how this poem came about. What do you want your readers to know about you?

Tre Wharton:

"*At Miss Annie's House* is a first-hand account of what it's like for children to navigate adolescence after domestic violence. This poem is set in a women's shelter in the United States and depicts some of the challenges families may face while seeking refuge in these safe-housing programs.

Yet shame, conflicts with other families, and even infectious diseases are but secondary issues when compared to the undoing of a once-happy home."

In Summary:

The author uses keen details from his past to create a near-immersive experience for the reader. However, *At Miss Annie's House* is merely a shard in the mosaic of Wharton's poetry that explores the effects of domestic violence. The poem appears in a larger work entitled "*Grown Folk Business: Tenth Anniversary Edition*," which is scheduled to be released in **October 2026**."



Tre Wharton on: *At Miss Annie's House*

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Find Tre On Socials

Instagram
Threads



The poem appears in a larger work entitled
"Grown Folk Business: Tenth Anniversary Edition,"
which is scheduled to be released in
October 2026.

At Miss Annie's House

By Tre Wharton

At Miss Annie's House
We got to sleep in bunk beds
And play Chinese Checkers
But the kid with the ringworm
Always won.

At Miss Annie's House
They gave away cool pencils
In the tutoring center
(I didn't write a whole lot
Back then, but they were perfect
For pencil break!)

At Miss Annie's House
One kid's mom had two split earlobes
That opened and closed
Whenever she talked.
(I can't lie, it was sorta creepy!)

At Miss Annie's House
I missed Mama's cooking
But that was before she got hired
As the cook for all the families
(Mama's famous cornbread, again! Woohoo!)

At Miss Annie's House
The playground was on the rooftop
And all the moms smoked their cigarettes
While staring blankly over the ledge

At Miss Annie's House
Our school was right across the street
So Carole wore her jacket hood
Every time we went outside.

At Miss Annie's House
We tried to make our own cigarettes
With rolled-up notebook paper
But somehow my sock caught on fire
So I kicked that habit soon after.

At Miss Annie's House
My eyes burned from the ammonia
That Mama sanitized everything with
(I was surprised when she
got ringworm, too—Mama has always
Been a neat-freak).

At Miss Annie's House
We were brought clothes in huge trash bags
And could pick as many outfits
As we wanted.
I chose the dark green sweater
With a golden crest on the left
I thought it made me look nice
But the other kids called me "Fairbanks"
And laughed. But

At Miss Annie's House
I only had three friends anyway:
Carole, Mama, and Jesus
And I don't think we'd ever
Been that close before.

— *Tre Wharton*

WRITING TIPS

Stop Waiting for the Perfect Time

There will always be laundry, children, work, bills, phone calls, errands, and somebody asking what's for dinner. The perfect writing schedule may never show up. Write for twenty minutes. Write in the car while you wait. Write before everybody wakes up. Write a paragraph in your Notes app. A book is built one page at a time, not during one magical weekend when nobody bothers you.

Start Where the Story Gets Interesting

You do not have to begin with the character waking up, looking in the mirror, getting dressed, and making coffee. Start with the argument. Start with the body. Start with the secret being exposed. Start with the moment the character's ordinary life stops being ordinary. You can explain how everybody got there later.

Give Every Scene a Purpose

A scene should change something. By the end of it, the character should know more, lose something, gain something, make a decision, create a problem, or move closer to what they want. If the scene changes nothing, ask why it is there. Beautiful writing cannot always save a scene that has no job.

Let Your Characters Be Wrong

Perfect characters are boring. Let them misunderstand people. Let them make decisions based on fear, pride, jealousy, desperation, or incomplete information. Sometimes the strongest part of a story is watching a character confidently walk toward the consequences of a bad decision. Readers do not need characters who always behave correctly. They need characters whose behavior makes sense.

08 Finish the Draft Before You Judge It

A first draft is not supposed to be beautiful.

It is supposed to exist.

You cannot revise a blank page, and you cannot publish a book you keep restarting every time Chapter One stops feeling perfect.

**Finish it.
Then fix it.**

ON WRITING



“Your story does not
need perfect conditions.
It needs you to keep
returning to the page.”

— *V. Joyce Lott*

◆ WEBSITES ◆ RESOURCES

Reedsy Learning — Courses on writing, editing, publishing, and book marketing; several are free.

<https://reedsy.com/learning/courses>

Jane Friedman — Reliable guidance on publishing paths, agents, queries, author platforms, and the business of writing.

<https://janefriedman.com/>

Purdue OWL — Free grammar, punctuation, style, and general writing references.

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/>

Poets & Writers — Writing prompts plus directories for literary magazines, grants, contests, agents, retreats, and small presses.

<https://www.pw.org/>

QueryTracker — Search for literary agents and organize query submissions; basic membership is free.

<https://querytracker.net/>

Manuscript Wish List — Search what individual agents and editors are actively interested in representing.

<https://manuscriptwishlist.com/>

Optional editing tool:

Hemingway Editor — Highlights readability and clarity problems. Writers should treat its suggestions as signals, not automatic corrections, because aggressively following them can flatten an individual voice.

<https://hemingwayapp.com/>

The VIPS Framework

Four Pieces. One Public Presence.

A signature framework by V. Joyce Lott designed to help authors market their work, strengthen their brand, and reach the right readers.

Authors are constantly told to post more, promote harder, and build a brand. That sounds simple until you are the writer, the marketer, the content creator, and the person trying to finish the book at the same time.

That is why I created the VIPS Framework.

VIPS is the approach I use to help authors build a public presence with more clarity and less confusion. It focuses on four connected areas that shape how readers find you, understand you, and remember you.

This framework is not about turning writers into influencers. It is about helping authors market with intention, communicate clearly, and create a presence that supports their books.

When these four parts work together, authors are better positioned to reach their audiences without feeling like they have to do everything at once.

“Writing the book is only one part of the work. Readers still have to know it exists.”

In future issues, *The Lott List* will break down each part of the VIPS Framework and show authors how to apply it in practical ways.

What VIPS Stands For

V

V — Visibility

Show up where your audience can recognize you, not just scroll past you.

I

I — Identity

Make your message, visuals, and voice feel like one clear brand.

P

P — Positioning

Clarify why your work matters and why the right audience should trust it.

S

S — System

Build repeatable assets that support launches, sales, and long-term audience growth.



The Lott List

BE PART OF THE NEXT ISSUE

The Lott List exists because great authors get overlooked, especially indie and BIPOC voices telling stories that deserve to be read. If that's you, or if you just finished a book you can't stop thinking about, we want to hear about it.

FOR READERS

Read something worth knowing about? Tell us. Some of the best features start with a reader who refused to let a good book go unnoticed.

FOR AUTHORS

Are you an indie author with a story to tell? Apply to be considered for an interview, review, or spotlight in an upcoming issue. Every submission is read with care, and every author gets a fair look. Real stories, real impact.

HOW TO REACH US



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Or email editor@lottheritagegroup.com

Books worth reading. Authors worth knowing.