



## Border Arts Network Artist Spotlight

Telling the stories of the Border.

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**City:** Oakland



## Bio

Dee Allen. African-Italian performance poet based in Oakland, California. Active on creative writing & Spoken Word since the early 1990s. Author of 7 books--"Boneyard", "Unwritten Law", "Stormwater", "Skeletal Black" [ all from POOR Press ], "Elohi Units" [ Conviction 2 Change Publishing ], "Rusty Gallows: Passages Against Hate" [ Vagabond Books ] and "Plans" [ Nomadic Press ]--and 68 anthology appearances under his figurative belt so far.

## Interview

1) *How does your home state influence your art?*

The California/Baja California border has always been the scene of multiple border crossings. Border crossings by train, however, occur more frequently in Texas' Rio Grande region. Hence, my poem "La Bestia".

2) *What inspires you to create?*

Real life. Events current and past. Far as past events go, usually historical events that are less told and long suppressed.

3) *What is your art? Literary? Music? Drawing, painting, sketching? Photography? Film? Or other?*

Literature. Mostly poetry, song-lyrics, essays and to a lesser extent, fiction.

4) *Which creators influence you?*

Langston Hughes, Amiri Baraka, Gil Scot Heron, Haki R. Madhubuti, Lucille Clifton, Diane DiPrima, Janice Mirikitani, Mumia Abu-Jamal--to name several.

5) *How is your art (or art in general) important to society in the border states??*

Art tells the stories of the border states themselves--their formation, peoples' lifeways, where those states are now, where they're looking to go. Government border enforcement plays a role in those places. So does art--for resistance against it.

6) *Is there a specific purpose for your art?*

Yes. Social justice. Without apology.

7) *Are there other artists that you collaborate with, network, or recommend?*

I recommend folks to check out "Things", the debut book by Florida-based La Raza poet Jennifer Nuesi. If you like your poetry with visuals and emotional, heart-wrenching text together, you'll love "Things".

8) *Do you have a "real" job or is your creative work your fulltime gig?*

My survival work is--groundskeeper, at a mostly concrete park located in Noe Valley, a economically-affluent, mostly White neighbourhood in San Francisco.

9) *Do you collaborate with other artists/creators?*

Currenty, no. I would like to collaborate with someone who actually understands what I'm attempting to say with my work.

10) *Tell us about an upcoming project you are working on currently?*

I'm splitting my time between finishing 3 future book projects. Meanwhile, I'm playing "The Waiting Game" with 2 publishers [ in the U.S.A. and England ] who had expressed interest in publishing my manuscript for a potential 8th book.

**Additional info:**

Two of my newest works can be found via Written Tales Magazine:

<https://writtentales.substack.com/p/what-better-gift>

AND

<https://writtentales.substack.com/p/overcome>

After reading each one, feel free to leave a comment. At Written Tales.