



## ***A Gathering of Voices: The Longwood Writers Workshop***

### **Extended Biography**

#### **DENISE BILLINGS**

*"We too often have been expected to be all things to all people and to speak everyone else's position but our very own.*

*"Our experiences and stories are way too often told through interpreters. And history, systems, and laws have told us we need a man's voice or power to name our existence, to validate our experiences. That we need a son to carry on a legacy, to etch our impact in time. But we get to define ourselves, not through how others imagine us, but through how we see ourselves. Even if our truth makes you uncomfortable."*

*- Audre Lourde*

A writer of memoir, short stories and essays that explore the interior lives of Black women, St. Louis native Denise watched her father read books, magazines and newspapers by the hour. That experience inspired the admirable but impossible childhood goal of reading every book in her local library. Operating a bookstore out of her home in the 1990s, she delivered books long before Amazon. She packed her car full of books for Black men and peddled them to the guys on their way to Washington D.C. for the Million Man March in 1995. She sold every last book.

She earned a B.A. in Psychology at Lincoln University, Missouri, where she was on the dean's list and was included in Who's Who among College Students. After college she moved to Los Angeles and began working for the Pacific Bell Telephone Company, where she was also a union representative. She later returned to St. Louis for five years, where she raised funds for the St. Louis Science Center, Dance St. Louis and the St. Louis Black Repertory Company. Along the way she raised a son as a single mother.

For three years she studied writing with renowned author and actress Denise Nicholas and the Longwood Writers Workshop. Previously, she contributed articles to several publications and the anthology *BEFORE, DURING & AFTER THE 'C' WORD*. Her recently published book *ROAD TRIP: A MEMOIR* was a finalist in the 2024 Black Authors Matters TV Awards. She is co-author of anthology *A GATHERING OF VOICES: STORIES FROM THE LONGWOOD WRITERS WORKSHOP*, released February 14, 2025. Her next project is a memoir in essays.

In addition to her son, she has a bonus daughter and son-in-law and lives in Los Angeles with her fourth and final husband, noted actor Earl Billings. Contact Denise at: [denisebillings.com](https://denisebillings.com), <https://www.facebook.com/DeniseBillingsAuthor>, Instagram @neciebug, [neciebug@threads.net](mailto:neciebug@threads.net), @denisebillings.bsky.social