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## Chicago Poet's Concentrated Pen Leaves a Deep Impression

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### **MY SOUL'S JOURNEY** collected poems by **W.C. Aldridge**

ISBN 978-0-938513-71-1, trade paper, 120 pp. \$16.95

W.C. Aldridge uses snapshots of her childhood and a keen sense of faith to weave her experiences and memories through her poetry. Originally from Central Massachusetts, Aldridge moved to Chicago and eventually settled on Chicago's west side, "*the best side.*" Her new collection, *My Soul's Journey*, marks a timely addition to Amador Publishers' Worldwind Books Poetry Series, as Aldridge's flair for honest reflection takes readers into her world with unapologetic transparency.

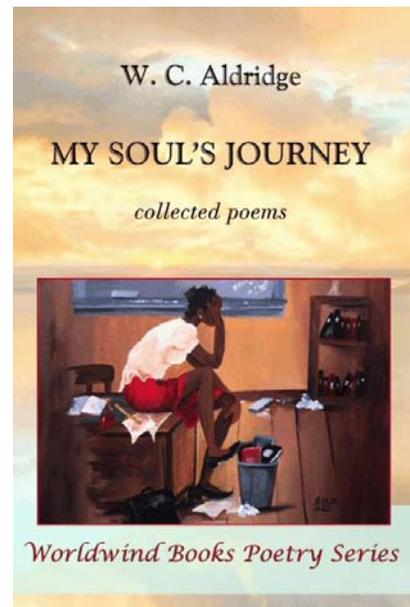
Aldridge describes her poetry as cathartic. In free verse and narrative prose poems she allows herself release through celebration of her Christian faith. With her soul lighting the way, she embarks on a journey both unique and universal, reflecting on family, culture, hurt and healing. Her willingness to broach truths more often left unsaid, from deep cultural anguish to ecstatic spiritual grace, establish her as a significant voice in the story of Black life in America.



**W.C. Aldridge**

Aldridge holds a BA in English and an MAED in Curriculum Technology. She worked as a high school teacher and tutor before beginning her freelance writing career, initially in education. She has written for magazines, created materials for book publishers, and contributed to life stories through ghostwriting. Aldridge placed 2nd in the 2003 Nubian Poets' Black History Month Contest, was chosen as a finalist for the 2017 Palm Beach Poetry Festival / African American Fellowship, and is a 2018 ACT ONE Hollywood Writing Program graduate. She currently writes her own column, *Purposeful Gospel Profiles*, which features profiles of gospel artists with a focus on the inspiration behind their music.

*more...*



*Cover image by Annie Lee  
courtesy Annie Lee Art Foundation*

Aldridge says she came late to writing as a profession, yet her relationship with the written word began early. She started writing poetry when she was 13, and won her first poetry contest when she was a Senior in high school with a poem about Martin Luther King Jr.

She describes delivering newspapers as a girl in her poem "Black Ink on My Fingers": *I let fly the wordy objects from my hands, / And watch them sail on the porch with precision, / While many more follow—Slap! Tap! Slap! Swish!*

In "To Be and To Do," Aldridge unravels the Black experience in America with deliberate simplicity: *Black people just want to be left alone... / To be and to do...*

"A Time to Release" paints a clear picture of the weight our troubles can carry. Until we choose to show ourselves mercy, it debilitates our minds and souls: *The stench of her soul has filled her senses, / To taste, to touch, and to see, / Has caused her very heart to flee...*

Aldridge's teaching experience is reflected in her choice of art for her collection. A detail of Annie Lee's painting "5<sup>th</sup> Grade Substitute" appears on the cover. The image captures an exhausted teacher with her head resting in her hands. The room and her clothing are disheveled, yet the atmosphere is meditative. For Aldridge, Lee's painting is "a form of encouragement... I would look at it, sigh with relief and understanding... it would subconsciously lift me up, encourage me to keep going." The complete image appears within the collection, paired with the poem "Ever Present": *Life seems to throw me jabs, / Air rushes from my lungs through stabs, / And shortness of breath is common perhaps... / Yet, I'm breathing.*

Aldridge's support of African American arts permeates all of her work. Just as her columns in *Purposeful Gospel Profiles* pair musical and written narratives, her poetry collection is complimented by the inclusion of several images by African American photographer Michele Lee, also of Chicago (no relation to Annie Lee). Aldridge chose Lee because she "captures the essence of certain items, particular scenes." Lee herself states, "My father was a journalist, my mother a social worker, and together they fostered a love of art and poetry in their children." This blending of elements in *My Soul's Journey* provides for a contemplative experience of the poems, a hallmark of the Worldwind Books Poetry Series. The visual balance and simplicity of the printed page invites readers to savor the author's words; judiciously placed illustrations offer quiet space for reflection.

Aldridge's artful organization of *My Soul's Journey* into chapters with evocative titles such as "Forgiveness is Not a Byword," "My Relationship with God," and "Everything is About Color," further enhances the collection with added layers of meaning. In expressing the ubiquitous bond her soul has on her life experiences, the author revels in a journey that ultimately transcends time, and thus painful history, to arrive at a *Now* each one of us has the power to imbue with promise.

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