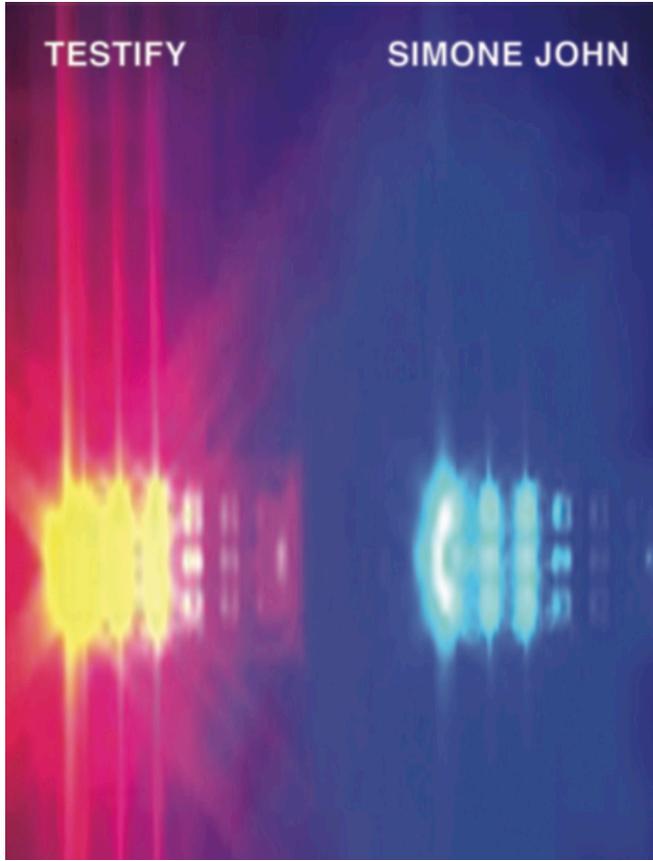


“In John’s work, the people left behind, survivors and witnesses alike, preserve the memories of lost loved ones and serve as their living eulogies.”— Publisher’s Weekly



TESTIFY POEMS BY SIMONE JOHN

Simone John's first full-length book of poems experiments with documentary poetics to uplift stories of black people impacted by state-sanctioned violence. The book's first section weaves Rachel Jeantel's testimony in the Trayvon Martin trial with Kendrick Lamar lyrics, fixed form and found poems, and personal artifacts. The second section centers on the audio of the dashboard recording that captured Sandra Bland's fatal police encounter. Excerpts from this exchange are punctuated with elegies for other dead black women, creating a larger commentary about race and gender-based violence. TESTIFY is ultimately a book of witness. Combined, both chapters serve as an unflinching critique of race and gender supremacy in the United States.

ADVANCE PRAISE

“Simone John, like Claudia Rankine and Charles Reznikoff before her, has a gift for locating her historical moment’s most troubling details and presenting them plainly, using line breaks with astonishing deftness.”

— Mary Austin Speaker, author of *The Bridge*

Trayvon Martin and Sandra Bland are at the heart of this elegiac collection, which includes poems comprised of courtroom testimony and phone transcripts. Drawing upon personal experience with racism, the speaker of John’s poems describes powerfully how a community must endure such injustice, such brutality, such loss. If *Testify* sometimes seems light on nuance, perhaps the matter-of-factness is out of urgent necessity. “The next black girl they’ll kill,” John declares, “is writing this poem.”

— Ben Purkert for *Guernica Magazine*

By braiding official court testimonials from the Trayvon Martin trial and audio recordings from Sandra Bland’s police stop with her own poetic musings on race, language, witnessing, and remembrance, Simone John brings attention to staggering racism and gender discrimination in her debut documentary poetry collection, *Testify*.

— E. CE Miller for *Bustle*

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Title: *Testify*

Author: Simone John

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brent@spdbooks.org | 510-524-1668 x308

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simone John is a poet, educator, and facilitator based in Boston, MA. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College with an emphasis on documentary poetics. Her poetry has appeared or been reviewed in Wildness, The Boston Globe, Public Pool, PBS Newshour, Bustle, and elsewhere. Simone is the Associate Director of Organizational Equity Practice at Trinity Boston Foundation. She is also the Chief Creative Officer of Hive Soul Yoga, a community wellness business. Find her online at simonejohn.com and on twitter @simoneivory.

FROM TESTIFY

Elegy for Dead Black Women # 1

The first death comes by
bullet. The second, when they've
forgotten your name.

A Brief History of Murder (Excerpt)

The last black girl they killed wore beads in
her hair on picture day. Her name is
swallowed instead of spoken. Her hash
tag—trending until they kill the next black
boy.

The next black girl they'll kill is writing this
poem.

The first black boy they killed was neither
black nor boy. Seen as some rare breed of
African wildlife to be captured. To be carried
across the Atlantic. To be sacrificed to the
sea when his body broke in the belly of the
ship. The first black boy they killed had a
mother.

The last black boy they killed had a mother,
too. She is crying into the camera. Sitting on
stage with a sorority of sonless women. They
welcome her to the club she didn't ask to
join. Daily, my mother prays not to join. I
don't believe in her god but my poems pray
too, in the way poems do.