



Enzo
SILON SURIN
Educating. Empowering. Advancing.

Poet, Author, Educator, Speaker, Publisher, Social Advocate



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Enzo Silon Surin is a Haitian-born award-winning poet, author, educator, speaker, publisher, and social advocate. He has taught, performed, and lectured at schools, universities, festivals, and various other venues and has served as a keynote speaker on topics such as social justice, the immigrant experience, racial disparities in America, mental health, and education reform. He has been recognized for his artistry and literary citizenship and has dedicated his life and career to affecting social change through creative and critical writing.

Surin is the author of four collections of poetry, including *American Scapegoat* (Black Lawrence Press, May 2023) and *When My Body Was A Clinched Fist* (2020), winner of the 21st Annual Massachusetts Book Awards for Poetry. He is co-editor of *Where We Stand: Poems of Black Resilience* (Cherry Castle Publishing, 2022) and their work has been featured in numerous publications including the anthologies *Black Immigrants in the United States: Essays on the Politics of Race, Language and Voice* (Peter Lang Publishing), and *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop* (Haymarket Books). Their work has also been published in *Bear Review*, *sx salon*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Transition*, and by the Poetry Foundation and in *Poem-a-Day* by the Academy of American Poets. Surin's librettos have been commissioned by the Boston Opera Collaborative and were adapted as part of a musical reimagining of Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe* song cycle, featuring new works by 21st-century composers and poets. Their short opera, "Last Train," based on their 10-minute play by the same title, premiered in January 2023 as part of a series of *Opera Bites*, eight 10-minute operas written by contemporary composers and librettists.

As an educator, Surin has over ten years of experience and has won the Framingham State Alumni Association Achievement Award for Inclusive Excellence and the Sally K. Lenhardt Professional Leadership Award from Lesley University, given to alumni who demonstrate a commitment to the arts, community service and education. He has experience leading lively, diverse and socially responsive classrooms, focusing on literature, composition, pedagogy, and creative writing. With a specialization in poetry, drama and multicultural literature, he believes writing is a form of activism and a tool for liberation and his pedagogy is often infused with extensive research and inclusion of disciplines such as Postcolonial Poetics, African-American, Caribbean, and the Immigrant Experience. Surin also conducts generative craft seminars and writing workshops that focus on discovering the power of one's voice, celebrating identities, and has led workshops with the youth, the incarcerated, and other marginalized groups, as well as with undergraduate and graduate students.

Being a product of two countries, Surin gives voice to experiences that take place in what he calls "broken spaces". Their social advocacy efforts are focused primarily on creating a more socially just society guided by the vision of human rights that may include awareness of socio-economic inequities, protection of social rights as well as racial identity, socio-political stability, experiences of oppression, and spirituality. He has featured at a number of institutions and festivals including the Hiphop Archive & Research Institute and the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University, Institute of Contemporary Arts as an artist-in-residence, American Poetry Museum, African American Civil War Museum, Boston Book Festival and Massachusetts Poetry Festival. Surin has also been a featured speaker, guest lecturer and has curated and moderated panel discussions on topics such as "Intersectionality of Race and Mental Health", "A Stranger in My Own Home: Black Experiences Within the American Literary Canon", "Black Lives and Black Poetics Matter", and "Quitting History: Poets Penning Liberation," and their work has been taught in public schools and colleges and universities.

In *American Scapegoat*, Surin's newest collection of poems, he explores the intersectionality of race, culture and class through the lens of blackness. These poems take a hard look at history, America, and mortality in a world where oppression and violence continue to thrive. This collection is as much about healing from the trauma of systemic racism in America, as it is about empowering us as a country to take an honest and reformative approach towards human rights. Surin affirms how important it is for us to understand that there are significant differences in how we experience and define what we mean by American culture and each poem goes deeply into the heart of a nation still at war with itself and its humanity.

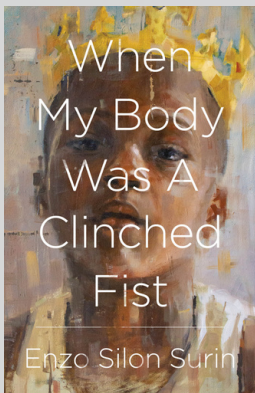


American Scapegoat is a book of painstakingly honest and chilling poems about America's neglectful relationship with its own history. At the core of this reluctance to frame the past in its proper context is the fraudulent and fraught mythology that Black people are what America needs to be protected from. This extremely damaging narrative has been prominently embedded within the socio-political framework of American culture and continues to play an inescapably significant role in the Black experience in America. This timely collection looks both to the past and the future, and fosters a deeply essential conversation about what it means to be Black and American in a democracy at war with itself and its humanity.

"In America, choice is always an illusion. And it always comes back to having to answer questions for which my body is never prepared.

Through his own distinctive path, Enzo Silon Surin bears witness to the complexities of the Black experience in America. These poems examine the hard edges and paradoxes as a way of illuminating them as he grapples with violence, injustice, masculinity, intimacy, and fatherhood. How does one locate themselves in this American landscape? American Scapegoat is a remarkable testament to the power of language, marked with intensity, radiance, and hope."

—January Gill O'Neil



Winner of the Massachusetts Book Award

WHEN MY BODY WAS A CLINCHED FIST is a book that addresses the effects of social violence on a young boy's mind and the consequent physical toll it takes on his body. At the heart of the collection is the metamorphosis of trauma from different acts of violence, some witnessed firsthand, and the struggle to make sense of the world in its aftermath. Set in the borough of Queens, New York, each poem is unrelenting in its depiction of the body as a fist and a young boy's decade-long clinch for survival.

"When My Body Was A Clinched Fist emerges as a significant marker in the reimagining of African American culture. Enzo Silon Surin's poetry brings an honest lyricism to the body of work by people of African descent that began in the eighteenth century in a country that struggles to realize its ideals. His delicate unveiling of hurt and courage are the American story in miniature. A young boy from Haiti leaves the dangers of home to confront the unknown dangers of a new home. Surin is the poet as warrior priest, his work the prophet's homily redefining what it means to become and be an American."

—Afaa Michael Weaver, author of Spirit Boxing & A Fire in the Hills

"Enzo Silon Surin has crafted a poetic composition that laments both the historic and contemporary 'matterless' nature of black lives in America. It is a masterpiece. Much like James Baldwin before him, Surin's gripping work is equal parts a catalog of black suffering and a bold declaration of independence from the tyranny of racism. In a time in the United States when injustice is a bully with a Goliath-like roar, Surin answers back with poetic stones of resistance."

—TRUTH THOMAS, author of *Speak Water*, winner of the NAACP Award

"Enzo Silon Surin is a traditionalist in the best sense. He sees the value of preserving what has sustained the black community...and recognizes how difficult it is to preserve anything in the blighted racist ghetto world that tries to 'beat out every last spiritual' in a man."

—J.D. SCRIMGEOUR, author of *Banana Bread: Mandarin Pandemic Diary*

"The poems in *American Scapegoat* are not for the faint of heart. Wrapped masterfully in poetry's artful tongue, they do not seek absolution nor do they apologize as the collection indicts American racism and its bloated, systemic injustices. Heightening the reader's experience with a surgically precise interrogation of form...Enzo Silon Surin writes against our fears and shines bright the hope we dare have for our sons."

—Frank X WALKER, author of *Masked Man, Black: Pandemic & Protest Poems* and *Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers*

"Enzo Silon Surin writes, 'I guess I'll keep on writing until my lines can stop a bullet' and we're grateful for his commitment, for his willingness in a world where 'each step taken toward higher ground feels cold.'"

—DORIANNE LAUX, author of *Only As The Day Is Long*

Enzo Silon Surin weaves his words, like he weaves through trauma, with vulnerability, grace, and radical resilience. His writing is clearly an intrapsychic reckoning, with wounds and scars deeper than anyone ever wants to ever fathom, and too, a love song to finding home again within one's mind, body, and brain. The reader is gifted with this journey, which is a redemptive one at its core."

—JENNIFER R. WOLKIN, PhD, Licensed Psychologist & Clinical Neuropsychologist and author of *Quick Calm*

"Surin writes about the confused and disconnected, trigger happy wannabes...outdated notions of masculinity, the cracked head...addicted, broke, lost and tossed...black bodies caught in America's clinched fists. Surin yields his pen like a microscopic scalpel whereby an autopsy of possibility is performed to un-clinch the remarkable bone gristle poetry in these unflinching heart-wrenching pages."

—TONY MEDINA, author of *Death with Occasional Smiling*, and *I Am Alfonso Jones*

"Surin's eloquence deserves recognition: these poems are exquisitely crafted. Moreover, *When My Body Was A Clinched Fist* is a deeply important contribution to our national conversation about gun violence."

—CATE MARVIN, author of *Event Horizon*

Enzo Silon Surin traverses the turns of coming of age...and interrogates how masculinity is so often flexed like the knuckles of an ever-ready fist, even when vulnerability pulses underneath."

—TARA BETTS, PhD, author of *Break the Habit*