

## Fine Lines: Kimberly Dark

Local professor and poet lovingly explores race and womanhood in ‘Love and Errors’

by [Seth Combs](#); March 28, 2018

In this post-Presidential election age of wokeness and intersectionality, Kimberly Dark is the perfect poet at the perfect time. An accomplished local writer, professor and journalist (with contributions in publications as diverse as the *Union-Tribune* to *Ms. Magazine*), it’s a bit of a shock to learn that *Love and Errors* (Puna Press) is her debut collection of poetry. No matter. The fact that she’s saved it all for now only means there’s plenty to take in.

Written primarily in a nuanced, free verse style, Dark tackles a number of subjects that can sometimes be uncomfortable, even shocking. Still, even in her stark candidness, she finds a way to reach her fingers through our chests and massage the heart. “Resignation to Fashion” is the first such example of this. With a letter addressed to Karl Lagerfeld, Dark begins the poem by dragging the fashion designer for his antiquated ideas of beauty. However, just as we’re getting used to Dark’s, eh, dark wit, she brilliantly transitions into a heartfelt treatise on body positivity, letting the designer and the reader know just how treacherous her own journey has been.

*I was raised to count my blessings, hide my flaws,  
to worship the artful concealment of human  
diversity  
in favor of careful image and restraint.  
So this is a renunciation of faith as well.*

Dark goes on to tackle sexuality, rape, womanhood, culture and identity with a keen sense of fluidity and character development. Her role in poems like “After Five,” “Hawaiian Language Class” and “Fat Stripper” is often one of an observer, both casual and intimate. What is remarkable—nay, exceptional—is how even when some of her poems are difficult to read because of their graphic, uncensored details, Dark builds a character that is visceral and sympathetic. She draws from these characters in order to relay her own experiences. Her smooth and exquisite turns of verse render even the darkest edges of the human experience into something the reader will find relatable even if they’ve never experienced it themselves. Dark is a fantastic poet (I’d also highly recommend seeing her read in person), but she’s an even better storyteller.