

## Interviewers' FAQ: Author Bea Giovanni

### **Q: What is your writing style?**

**A:** It really all depends on what genre. For example, my writing background is primarily in the academic setting. As a scholar and lecturer, I have performed extensive research in a variety of areas. So, my writing style in academia would be a scholarly one and tone. However, because I recently started writing outside the academic setting, my writing style is evolving and I like it. In the academic setting, you have so many writing conventions and limitations that it is almost monotonous and plain, since everyone uses similar styles. But, in non-academic writing settings, I am able to explore other styles and go beyond the traditional writing conventions and push the limit in my writing. So, I guess you can say I try not to pin myself into one category or style.

### **Q: When did you first start writing? Also, what was the first thing you wrote?**

**A:** It depends on what you consider writing. I remember in elementary school, I first started writing raps or rhymes. I had a clear yellow folder with sheets of raps. I never used my raps. I thought they were not good enough. It was just something I did when I had free time. I use to hide the raps under my dresser because I did not want anyone to know I wrote raps or to tease me about them.

Years later in college and while my sister, who was in high school, was rearranging things around the house, she found my book of rhymes (or raps) under the dresser, hidden away. Her and her friends thought the raps were good, so they used them to call into a radio show to win prizes. The best rap would get tickets to a concert, money, t-shirts, trips, and whatever the radio station gave away. She did not tell me until I noticed the yellow, clear folder on the shelf.

Another instance of my early writing was when I was 14 years old. My junior high English teacher encouraged me to enter a poem into a poetry journal contest. So, I wrote a poem on the environment. I was hesitant and somewhat critical of myself since I thought it was not good enough. But, apparently, someone saw otherwise because it was published in an international poetry journal.

Then, about a year later, another one of my English teachers encouraged the class to write an editorial piece and then try to get it published in the local newspaper. It was extra credit, even if you did not get it published. I am not sure who else submitted an article. But, I took the challenge since I figured no one would publish my article anyway, but I thought at least I could get extra credit by showing I wrote the article and submitted it to the editor of the local newspaper.

Well, to my surprise, my article was the only one accepted from our class into the editorial piece. I believed I wrote it on wasteful government spending, which I thought no one wanted to hear, better yet read. But apparently, it was a good topic to write about at the time. My teacher, my school and my family were very proud of me. Not many people, especially children, got their opinions published in the local newspaper (at least not at that time).

### **Q: Can fans expect another fictional novel?**

**A:** Definitely. Writing is an art and I love the arts. Even though this is currently a hobby, I love writing. I do not know what the next novel will be, since I wait until inspiration hits me. I never like forcing a situation. Art is too delicate and carries a bigger, overarching message for everyone.

For myself, writing has served as a vehicle to express myself and to also explore other art forms. Most recently, I had an opportunity to be an assistant producer of a reality TV series. I would love to explore writing screenplays, television and movie scripts, and even venturing into the entertainment and media industry.

I am a big fan of the entertainment industry and I love virtually every one of Shonda Rhimes' television series. She is definitely a trailblazer. Knowing that women are underrepresented in many industries, especially the entertainment and media industry, in key and meaningful decision-making roles, fuels my desire to also help break those barriers.

**Q: What is your dream job?**

**A:** I love this question because I never have the same answer. I am not a person who likes to be 'boxed' into a certain career or path. Recently, someone called me a polymath. I never heard of this term before they called me that. When I asked what was that, they said look it up. So, I did. And, it's you! I have been searching for the words since a child to describe my different interests and this word perfectly describes me.

I have taken several psychological assessments and tests and one of them suggested that I was an INFJ personality type. This actually explained why I disliked being in just one category or being boxed into one career path. I think I may have been in several career fields similar to an INFJ personality type, and this was long before I knew I was an INFJ personality type or even a polymath.

Most people want you to be in one career and that's it. However, the world is changing and people need to be dynamic and versatile since companies need innovators and thinkers and not just people who stay in their lanes. The future belongs to those who can think big picture and bring those ideas to life. You cannot do that by staying in one career your entire life.

In an ideal world, my dream job would be fun where I would make lots of money. I love money! Let's get real, not all jobs that are fun pay well. I got to eat. I have bills and I have to provide for myself.

I would love to leave a great legacy and wealth for my family, so things are a bit easier for them later in life. But, of course, they need to earn it and work hard, like I have.

But, with all seriousness, I would like to be a media personality or commentator covering maybe political news but definitely social news or even a television show host, traveling the world and documenting weird and unique things and showing how different cultures, traditions and people all around the world connect yet are so different but similar.

Actually, I do not think I have only one dream job. I get inspired and interested in a ton of stuff. So, my dream job or jobs may be a lengthy list.

Getting back to the point, I have lots of inventive ideas and I keep a log of all of my invention ideas. Some of them, of course, may not be winners. But, there are some ideas that no one has created yet. If I had the money and support to innovate, I believe these would really help society as a whole and how we do things in our daily lives (and of course, make great money, I love money).

I have done the R & D in my head (so to speak), then compared them to real projects and many of my ideas are doable. My mind is usually looking at both the short-term and long-term analysis and crunching numbers. Lots of people who I meet like how I think, and some say I could possibly make some people lots of money.

I am usually that person who thinks of things that most people don't and others gain a new and different perspective. My friends and family often joke that I am like a walking and talking computer (when I want to be). Over the years, some people have called me the female Tesla. But, with all seriousness, when people want some solid, sound advice, I am one of those people who they usually come to.

**Q: Could you describe your childhood?**

**A:** Actually, I loved my childhood. Like any childhood, there are things a person did not like and other things the person liked. I would not change it for the world. I think my childhood helped in shaping my desire to do good in the world and succeed.

It was not a bad childhood experience. Mostly, it actually was fun. I have so many memories, some good, some bad, but mostly good.

I was born and raised in Louisiana and I love my home state. It is like a country within itself; from the food, people, culture and dialect, it is so unique from north Louisiana to south Louisiana.

I lived in south Louisiana pretty much all of my life, so you could call me a bayou country girl. Many areas in south Louisiana consist of bayou and swampy areas. Living in south Louisiana, you become familiar and comfortable with the various dialects and languages and may speak many different versions of the same language. But, most people know what you mean.

Also, coming from a small, tight knit bayou and fishing community, I lived in an area where most people tended to help one another and watch out for you and your family. They took pride in their culture, family and hard work and success. Gumbo, jambalaya, fishing, crayfish and Mardi Gras are so commonplace that if you do not like any of those things, something is wrong.

Growing up, I guess you can say my life was a little like Forrest Gump, but not really (for those of you who get my humor). I grew up very humble and I am still very humble. I was and am kind and nice, to the point of my own detriment. That's who I am. But I am still learning to set those boundaries.

My mother, who passed in 2011, was a social worker and my stepfather was a fisherman. I did not know my biological father very well and he did not really claim me as his child. So, my stepfather was really the father figure in my life, along with my uncles.

I was the oldest of my mother's three children; I have one sister and one brother. And we had lots of family, near and far. Just because you did not see some family near did not mean they were non-existent. Some we did not know but knew of us and others we knew very well. It was never a dull moment.

[I actually come from a very diverse family background, which most people do not know because my family identifies as African American and never really talks about our family history. But, I am sure you can tell by looking at me. Well, to begin, my mother's father is of mixed heritage, i.e. one of his parents was Caucasian while the other parent was African American. I also believe there may have been Jewish in my grandfather's family background too. But that was not talked about very much either.

Then, my mother's mother (my grandmother) also has a diverse family background, as my grandmother's mother (my great grandmother) was part Native American, part African American and part Caucasian. Then, my great grandmother's father was actually Caucasian and African American, but mostly resembled Caucasian as he passed as Caucasian. He was the son of a tobacco plantation owner. But, census records show he was not treated like a slave but treated like the owner or his son and granted all the freedoms of such. This was very interesting to say the least, during a time like that.

In 1999, while I was in my Master's in History program, I applied what I was learning and I was able to trace our family history back to that tobacco plantation. The internet was not what it was back then. However, through diligent research efforts and using certain depositories of information available to the public, I actually located the descendants of the family who owned that plantation and contacted a few of them. They were Caucasian and ironically welcomed the written correspondence and eventually phone conversations.

One family member shared stories and history of the family. He said it was an unfortunate part of their family history but he said we are definitely family. It was almost like he was ready to welcome the conversation and truth about his family history. He did not shy away from welcoming me and embracing any uncomfortable truths.

He confirmed my great grandmother's father was the son of I believe his grandfather (or maybe great grandfather). But I do not specifically recall. Getting to know more about them, there was a pretty fascinating family history. I digress.]

Anyway, being from a relatively small area in Louisiana, which is not that small anymore, everyone pretty much knew everyone. And everyone knew my mother. My mother was a helpful person to a lot of people. When they saw me, my brother and my sister, they knew we were my mother's children, so people tended to watch out for us.

This also meant if I got into any trouble or did anything (or someone was messing with me), people knew about it and it traveled very quickly back to my mother and my family. I was actually a very kind and nice child, maybe too kind and nice since I got bullied a lot. Most people, if not all, knew that I was a good child, though not perfect, and that I was not a child to cause trouble and I did not mess with anyone.

If I did, which was very rare, the first question they would ask is what the other person did to me to make me do anything against my own interests because I did not bother anyone but was a very nice person, probably too nice. So, everyone knew that if someone was messing with me or made me go against my own interests, they knew that the other person (or people) had the problem and not me and that the other person (or people) were not good people.

I come from a fairly large family. I had 5 uncles (all of my mother's brothers) and lots of cousins and lots of distant relatives, spread all over the U.S. So, as a child, I could not go anywhere by myself. If I wanted to go to the movies with friends and their family, I always had one of my uncles, my stepdad, or a trusted family friend with me. By the time my little sister and my little brother were older, they had less "supervision" (so to speak).

As a child, I considered myself a prankster. I would say I was not the perfect child. Who is? I may have given my mother a few gray hairs but not too many. Later in my adult life, my mother said that I, my sister and my brother were good children and never really gave her any trouble. Again, this is not to say we were perfect. But, for the most part, we became responsible adults.

My mother was strict (but not too strict) and had certain expectations. But, it was nothing unrealistic of any caring parent but very realistic for a parent wanting the best for his or her children as well as wanting their children to be protected and safe. Who doesn't want this as a caring parent? Today, I think most of those values are not even seen today in some parents. Her strictness and expectations is what I think has put the fire 'under my butt' to succeed.

**Q: What are little known facts unknown to your readers and fans?**

**A:** Well, if I give away too many little known facts, it would not be surprising. Or better yet, it would not give my readers and fans anything to research. So, I will give two little known facts about myself.

The first little known fact is that Bea Giovanni is not my real name but a pen name. My first name (Bea) is a nickname by my friends and the second name is my given middle name (Giovanni). For the sleuth readers, you would know how to find out my real name by doing the research. The reason for the pen name is to separate my professional life from my creative and artistic life (writing and other creative projects). I have written scholarly articles and I did not want to confuse my readers with that of my creative and artistic works.

And here is the second and last little known fact, since I would like to maintain some mystery behind the novel, *Bernice Rathe*, and other books or creative projects to come. Well, this little known second and last fact is that, under my real name, I was an extra in the movie, *A Lesson Before Dying*. This movie had famous actors and actresses in the movie. How I became an extra is due to timing and pure luck as the movie was being filmed in my hometown in Louisiana as one of its locations.

It was 1998 and I had just come home for the holiday break from graduate school. Word got around in my bayou area that a movie was filming in our area and there was a casting call at a community center (I believe). Anyway, I went to the casting call, where they took our pictures and contact information. The same day they notified me that I would be an extra in the movie.

Though it was an uncredited role and I spent one day on the set, it was fun and exciting. This was my first taste of “Hollywood” and I loved it. Everyone behind the scenes were working towards one goal, which was making a great movie.

My role was a very brief one (and if you blinked you probably would miss my role in the movie). I played a young woman working from the store in the first 5 minutes of the movie. I was the one walking from the store as the vehicle with the three men passed. I was very slender during that time (as I was for most of my life). You barely saw my face, if any shot of my face was seen in the movie, since it was a very short and quick scene.

I wore this old white (possibly old crème color dress) and a dark wig for the extra role. This was required as a part of the wardrobe, which they provided to me and others. I believe it took approximately 5 to 8 takes for this particular scene, which I am sure was quick and easy, compared to other scenes.

**Q: What inspired you to write? Where did you get the idea to write *Bernice Rathe*?**

**A:** This is a very good question. My life’s journey inspired me to write and provided the context for the novel as well as the *Bernice Rathe* comic book series. In 2017, shortly after writing this novel, I did a TEDx talk where I talked about this inspiration in brief detail. I think you should take a look at the TEDx for more context. See it here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuyz\\_rZgQqU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuyz_rZgQqU)

I have had an amazing life journey so far, hitting many milestones and breaking barriers, from my early beginnings, being successful, to teaching K-12 at an early age to being a former government lawyer, later becoming a United Nations Delegate for a NGO, an associate professor-lecturer, a TEDx speaker, as well as an assistant producer of a reality TV series.

And the journey continues to date. Life experiences and also my wild imagination pushed me to write. It is like a healing process. So, when I started to write, I thought writing freely should not be this easy and revealing.

But, I was actually correct in thinking that it was a healing process. During my initial writing, my therapist and my friends told me that writing can be a form of healing, called narrative healing.

So, I wrote and wrote, but decided that I did not want to publish it and wanted to use it as my healing tool and nothing else. After some time went by, I had friends and family who were waiting for my book. I actually thought everyone would forget about the book I was writing. But, they didn’t.

Like my family and close and trusted friends, they gave me some feedback. All of them were supportive and encouraged me to continue writing and to publish it. So, I did.

**Q: What can your readers and fans do to support your work or you (the author)?**

**A:** Readers and fans can support my work and myself as an author by purchasing *Bernice Rathe* (paperback, eBook, or both) and spreading the word about the awesomeness of the novel. Buying *Bernice Rathe* is a big part of an author’s success and ability to provide more creative works.

*Bernice Rathe* can be purchased through major book retailers. Some indie bookstores may sell it; if not, request it and buy it. You can also purchase the book on [bernicerathethebook.com](http://bernicerathethebook.com).

**Q: Was it difficult writing in a different genre, other than academically?**

**A:** Not really. I enjoy writing in a different genre, than the academic one. In academic writing, you are constrained in how you write, whereas in fictional writing, you are not. This is because you are establishing yourself as an expert in academia, while in the fictional writing world, you are writing for fun (or to entertain others). This is no matter the errors or mistakes you make in writing, it is purely for fun and entertainment. Despite what people may think, I never take myself too seriously. So, fictional writing was a perfect fit.

However, I also love the research and writing process in academic writing. You are able to learn and apply what you learned, while educating others and corroborating with other experts. I absolutely love these aspects about the process. These skills and experiences I have acquired over the years helped me to create this fictional novel, since it was already researched.

With that said, my academic writing and background is not placed on the shelf and forgotten about. That knowledge and background has become useful in many of my career experiences. It has definitely added value and expertise. I have written on some complex topics, such as intellectual property, international and domestic law, anti-terrorism, business, innovation and even religion. Those are some pretty challenging topics, and my research and corroboration has helped many researchers and experts on these complex topics.

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