



# The Venus Hottentot: Poems

*Elizabeth Alexander*

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**The Venus Hottentot: Poems** Elizabeth Alexander

**Elizabeth Alexander's highly praised first collection is available once again**


*I didn't want to write a poem that said "blackness  
is," because we know better than anyone  
that we are not one or ten or ten thousand things  
Not one poem  
-from "Today's News"*

Originally published in 1990 to widespread acclaim, *The Venus Hottentot* introduces Elizabeth Alexander's vital poetic voice, distinguished even in this remarkable first book by its examination of history, gender, and race with an uncommon clarity and music. These poems range from personal memory to cultural history to human personae: John Coltrane, Frida Kahlo, Nelson Mandela, and "The Venus Hottentot," a nineteenth-century African woman who was made into a carnival sideshow exhibit.

In language as vibrant within traditional forms as it is within improvisational lyrics, the poems in *The Venus Hottentot* demonstrate why Alexander is among our most dazzling and important contemporary poets and cultural critics.

"Alexander creates intellectual magic in poem after poem."  
--*The New York Times Book Review*

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