

PORTFOLIO

Catherine Rios, MFA

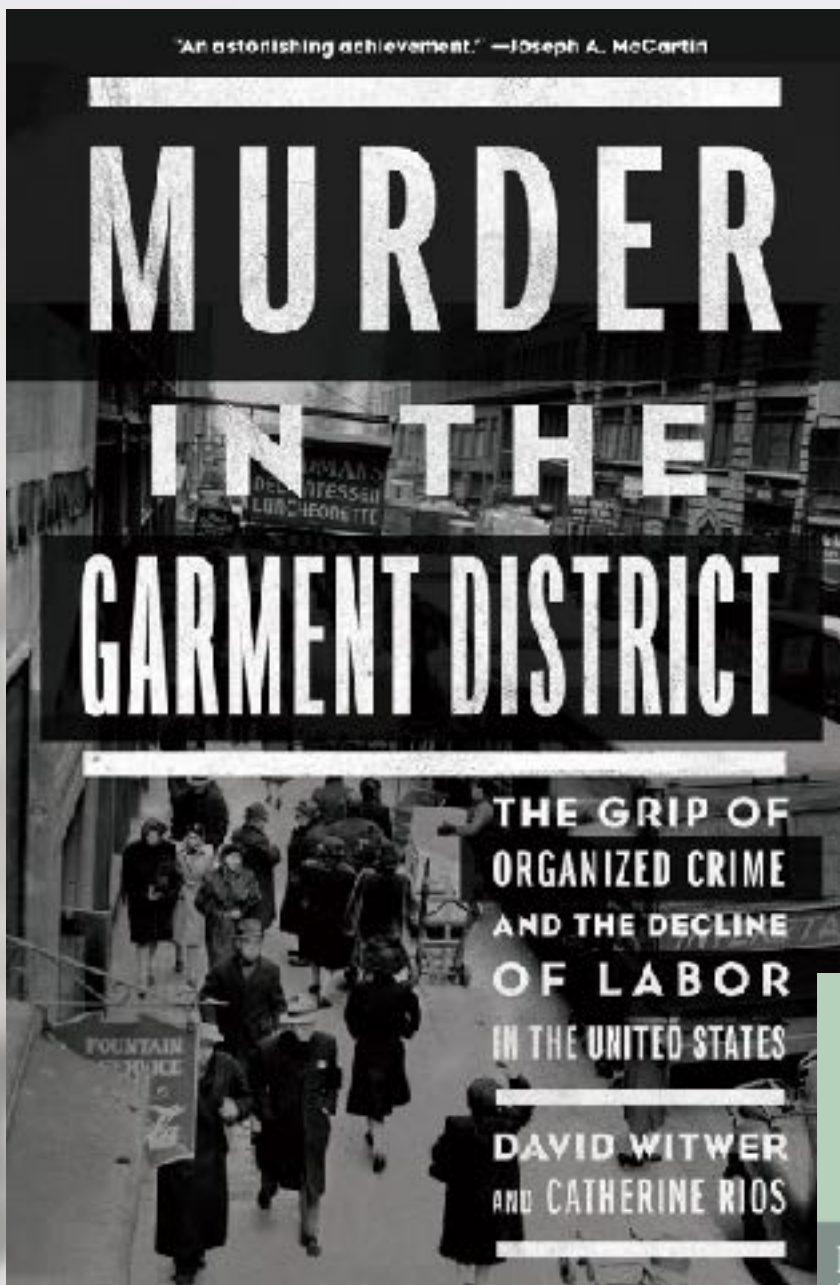


BIO

Author, artist, and professor emeritus of writing and media studies, Catherine Rios' work explores the tension between political power and personal meaning. With an unconventional path from the arts in glassblowing and filmmaking, to screenwriting and historical research, she writes across genres to tell the story of human connection as one of the last shields against misinformation and propaganda, among other things.

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Murder in the Garment District

The Grip of Organized Crime and the Decline of Labor in the United States

The New Press, 2020

[Link to website](#)

"A powerful page-turner that completely reshapes how we think about the connections between unions, corruption, and organized crime..."

Erik Loomis

"...a fierce yet all but forgotten battle for the soul of the union movement – a battle whose ambiguous outcome haunts us still."

Joseph A. McCartin



[Link to review](#)

About Murder in the Garment District

Developed from over ten years of research, with a narrative that is unique in its depth and its inclusion of the roles of working people and their unions, *Murder in the Garment District* traces the political battles over organized labor's role in this country. Deeply researched, *Murder in the Garment District* draws on a broad range of primary source material, much of which has only recently been made available. Research also includes FBI case files, and the private papers of the investigative journalists whose exposés helped trigger these events. The result is a unique behind-the-scenes perspective on the investigations of the time. Grounded in the street-level events that put people's lives and livelihoods at stake, *Murder in the Garment District* shows the systemic corruption that shaped the public perception of a once potent labor movement.



Related Work

The Irishman, Hollywood, and America's Hostility to Unions 2020

Hollywood's fixation on corruption and criminal personalities in depictions of labor distorts the historical truth of unions and their power, and undermines our understanding of the goals and struggles of America's working people.

[Link to page](#)

Depictions of workers and power: Russell Bufalino's fight with the garment workers and their union 2020

The real-world efforts of The Irishman's Russell Bufalino to exploit and control women garment workers in Pennsylvania's coal country met with fierce opposition by the members of the Ladies' Garment Workers Union and Min Matheson, the woman who led them.

[Link to page](#)

The True Story of Min Matheson **Smithsonian Magazine** October 22, 2020

The Labor Leader Who Fought the Mob at the Polls

The activist rallied garment workers and combated organized crime interests in northeast Pennsylvania in the mid-20th century.

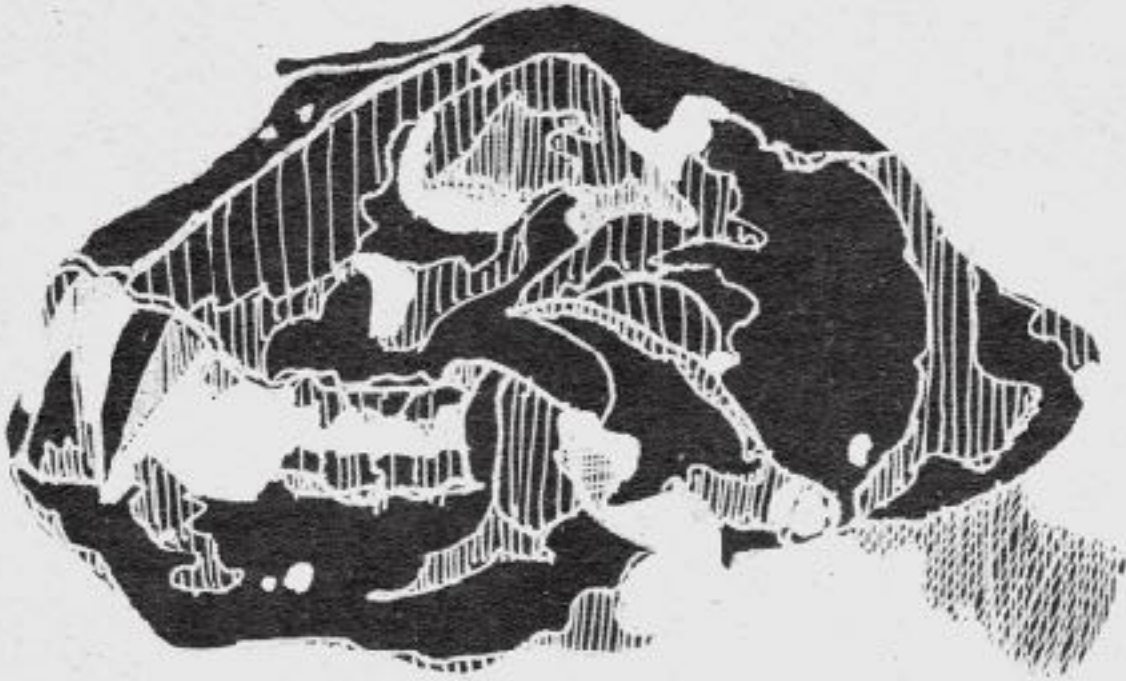
[Link to website](#)

Pay Dirt A dramatic limited series screenplay 2020

A fictional telling of the events of Murder in the Garment District. The murder of a corrupt low-level union organizer escalates the battle for control of the politically tangled 1950s garment industry of New York.

[Link to full script](#)

OPEN SEASON



catherine rios

Short Fiction

First Prize in Fiction, Orchid Literary Review 2004

Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship – Literature, 2005

Writing Aloud Short Story Series, InterAct Theatre, Philadelphia, June 12, 2006

Excerpt

This was a piece of meat the size of China, it hung over the rim of her plate, dripping thick bear juice that spread into the grain of the plank table. At first she thought she might carve it into China, actually, that on this piece of meat she might find great foreign rivers, and mountains, villages of tiny people, a whole world. She had never had food that spread over the boundaries of her plate, and she herself was just a girl, little.

[Link to full story here](#)

~5,000 words



Fathers Or, I Was Half Mexican

2007
Excerpt
~900 words
[Link to full essay](#)

Now I'm half Portuguese. All of this came about when my twin sister and I received DNA tests in the mail one Christmas. We had finally agreed to take this test, had finally achieved some vague indifference to the outcome. After all, the thinking went, we were grown women, almost 40. The whole father thing had done its work on us already. And our mother seemed to need whatever would come from knowing. We sent in our swabs and waited to discover what even our mother couldn't tell us.

It was a matter of genetics, our mother had persuaded. Of medical histories. And, since we never knew our father, were never raised by him, we felt there was little to lose. Many people grow up without fathers, and survive quite well. We did. But as we waited for the results of the test, I began to think about which parts of me were shaped by my sense of this man, my so-called father.

Watching Artists Watch Chickens

2025 Arteles, Finland
Excerpt
~1200 words
[Link to full essay](#)

Recently I spent a month with a group of artists at a retreat in rural Finland. We gave up our phones and access to the internet, and dropped into communal living in an unfamiliar countryside to reset and focus on our work, undistracted.

One day, a few of us visited a chicken cafe. And by chicken cafe, I mean a small family-owned cafe on a country road, known for its collection of chickens. And by artists, I mean an international group that included visual artists, a photographer, a computer programmer – and one writer – ranging in age from twenty-six to sixty-two.

Several hours and a couple hundred photographs later, I had the question that had been simmering all month: what is going on when artists work?