

Daughters of Domestics: Poets and Academics Respond to *The Help*

This engaging panel of intellectuals and artists will take on the contradictions, complexities and sites of contention engaged in a movie and book that has become an American cinematic favorite! The poets will perform creative literary works while the academics will engage in a provocative discussion with the audience and each other.

Monday, October 17, 2011

6:30 p.m.

Xavier University College of Pharmacy

Qatar Pavilion Auditorium and Atrium

Refreshments will be served

THE MODERATOR



Dr. Kimberly J. Chandler is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana. As well, she is a faculty contributor to the Women's Studies program at Xavier. Her research interests are in Gender and Communication, specifically focusing on African American masculinities as well as Black women and identity negotiation. Dr. Chandler uses her academic platform to engage in advocacy work. Her life mission, as an activist-scholar, focuses on improving the quality of life for marginalized communities. To this end, she works with local organizations such as the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies and the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys-New Orleans as well as maintains an active blog as an extension of her work in gender and communication entitled, "Confessions of an Ex-Superwoman" (www.exsuperwoman.wordpress.com). Dr. Chandler's latest publications are "Searching for the 'NewBlackWoman': One Single, African American Professor's Experience with the Strong Black Woman Myth" in *Experiences of Single African-American Women Professors: With This Ph.D., I thee Wed* (Lexington Books) and "How to Become A 'BlackMan': Exploring African American Masculinities and the Performance of Gender" in *Masculinity in the Black Imagination* (Peter Lang Publishing). She is currently working on a book length autocritography based on her life experiences as a survivor of abuse.

THE POETS



Kelly Harris-DeBerry earned her MFA in poetry from Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass. She has been awarded fellowships by Cave Canem and the Fine Arts Work Center. Her poems have appeared in *Say It Loud: Poems for James Brown*, Yale University's *Caduceus*, *The Southern Women's Review* and on metro buses in her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. In Cleveland, Harris-DeBerry served as a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame arts- in- education facilitator, helped develop a poetry and art distance learning program for the Cleveland Museum of Art, and started an empowerment program for African-American girls called *GAP: Girls. Achieving. Possibilities.* She also performed in an Arts- in- the Prison project for two years. Her literary activism continues in New Orleans. She is the creator of *Poems & Pink Ribbons*, a poetry workshop for breast cancer patients, survivors and their loved ones, and has been a guest poetry instructor at NOCCA and Lusher. She is a proud member of Melanated Writers NOLA, a workshop for writers of color. She serves on the board of STAIR, a local reading program for 2nd graders, and is the chair of community outreach for the New Orleans chapter of the Women's National Book Association. Most recently she has launched The Literary Lab, a small business that focuses on literary events that encourage public discourse and promotes local writers, especially those of color, through public relation strategies and new technology.



Kysha Brown Robinson is a publisher, poet and performer, and author of the collection “Spherical Woman.” She is co-founder and president of Runagate Multimedia, an independent, New Orleans-based press that specializes in books on New Orleans culture and African heritage cultures worldwide. Runagate has published and Brown has co-edited (with Kalamu ya Salaam) the anthology **Fertile Ground: Memories & Visions** (1996), which includes noted writers from the Caribbean, Africa, England and important African-American writers such as Amiri Baraka, Kathleen Neal Cleaver, the late Stephen Henderson, Haki Madhubuti, and Sonia Sanchez. Runagate's second publication is the critically acclaimed

anthology **From A Bend In The River: 100 New Orleans Poets** (1998). Runagate collaborated with BlackWords Press to produce **360° A Revolution of Black Poets** which features 40 established and emerging Black writers. Brown is a broadly published poet whose work appears in literary magazines and national anthologies (e.g., **Role Call**, **Drum Voices**, **Dark Eros**, and **Beyond the Frontier**). Her hallmarks are meticulous craft, a fine ear for alliteration and a sensitive use of metaphor.



Asali DeVan Ecclesiastes is a mother, daughter, wife, educator, event producer, spoken word artist, and community servant. Asali has performed her brand of "activist poetry" and conducted workshops for universities, conferences, and slam venues across the country. She is highly sought as a speaker and writer on community development issues. In addition to authoring the Essence Empowerment Seminars for the past three years, she coordinates the Congo Square African Marketplace at New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, teaches spoken word, social justice, and service learning at Tulane University and is co-founder and Executive Producer of the Akoben Words-In-Action Festival. Her examination of how the flood of 2005 transformed the lives of women in the Gulf Coast is included in *Swimming Upstream*. The play she co-authored with a distinguished group of New Orleans women writers, is currently touring the country to sold out audiences. No matter her endeavor, Asali continually seeks opportunities to forward her mission of creating a platform for societal change through art and her vision of social justice for all humanity.

THE ACADEMICS



Professor Theresa M. Davis is an Associate Professor with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Communications from Gannon University and a Master of Fine Arts in Performance from Virginia Commonwealth University. Tenured at three different institutions, she has taught theatre at Kalamazoo College and West Virginia University. In 2007

Professor Davis joined the UVA faculty as an Associate Professor of Cross Cultural Performance. Theresa is a former member of the Board of Directors for the University and Resident Theatre Association (U/RTA). As a Director she has enjoyed guest residencies at Macalester College and Purdue University. Her directing credits include *The Colored Museum*, *The Miser*, *A Piece of My Heart*, *Flyin' West*, *Twelfth Night*, *Mo Pas Connin, for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*, *Seven Guitars*, *The African Company Presents Richard III* and *Day of Absence*. She is also the founding Artistic Director of the Cultural Awareness Troupe (The CAT). As a performer Theresa has had the privilege of christening a new black box space at the ETA-Hoffman Theater, Bamberg, Germany in a performance of *This is the Life*. Her current research includes African American Theatre: Influences of the Black Arts Movement and Poetry in Performance. In the spring of 2011 Professor Davis with a company of "Poetic Liberators" presented the piece *Give Me Liberation and Give Me Soul: A Poetic Exploration of Oppression versus Freedom*.



Dr. Brenda Edgerton-Webster joined the Xavier University of Louisiana Communications faculty as an assistant professor of Mass Communication in 2009. Formerly a radio/television reporter and anchor for over a decade, she teaches courses in writing for radio and television, radio and television announcing, and media history and law. Most recently, Dr. Edgerton-Webster received a 2011 UNCF Henry McBay Research Fellowship and was named the 2011 1st Place Winner of the Scholastic Journalism Innovative Outreach Award from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). She received the award for her research on the scholarship of teaching and redesign of her *Introduction to Mass Communication* course that addresses the University QEP (*Read to Lead*) Initiative, Service Learning to a New Orleans Recovery High School, and a current event drill session. Dr. Edgerton-Webster was also selected as a 2011 Summer Fellow to the Scripps-Howard Leadership Academy at Louisiana State University (LSU). Her research includes journalism history, civil rights history, women's studies, oral history, and cultural criticism. A 2008 NEH Summer Fellow at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute at Harvard University, she is currently working on an article, "Passing for Black, Passing for Freedom: The Oral History of Mississippi Freedom Summer Women Communication Workers and Identity Switching," about white women who passed for black during the Modern Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, she is working on an extensive research project funded by UNCF and titled, "Strangest Fruit: Newspaper Coverage of Mississippi African American Women at the End of Jim Crow's Noose."



Dr. Denese O. Shervington M.D., M.P.H has an outstanding career in academic psychiatry and public mental health. She is the President and CEO of The Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (IWES), a community-based public health institute, and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Tulane University. Dr. Shervington directs the community-based post-disaster mental health recovery program and directs a federally-funded Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Program at IWES. Dr. Shervington is a graduate of New York University School of Medicine; she completed her residency in Psychiatry at the University of California San Francisco. Dr. Shervington is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Dr. Shervington also received a Masters of Public Health in Population Studies and Family Planning from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. In 2006, she was awarded the Isaac Slaughter Leadership award by the Black Psychiatrists of America.