

THE CHRONICLE



*A Newsletter for the Department of English
At Texas Southern University/Spring 2008*

*There will always be men struggling to change,
and there will always be those who are controlled by the past.*
Ernest J. Gaines

Afro-Latino and Afro-Caribbean Diaspora Literature and Culture: Gender, Race, and Class

The Department of English and Women's Studies at Texas Southern University will host the annual Fall Symposium on November 13-14, 2008. The general topic of the presentations will be "Afro-Latino and Afro-Caribbean Diaspora Literature and Culture: Gender, Race, and Class." Specific areas of interest include literature and culture, women's studies, music, drama, art, song, painting, poverty and wealth, historical viewpoints, political economics, politics, and family. Abstracts of 300 words or less are requested by September 10. A response will follow in one week. For more information or to submit an abstract, contact the Department Chair Rhonda Saldivar at 713-313-7916 or Saldivar_rx@tsu.edu. We encourage that abstracts be submitted electronically. The first Fall Symposium held in 2007—"Women of the Harlem Renaissance and Its Radiance"—far surpassed the committee's expectations and goals. We look forward to another high achievement in the fall.

Lambda Iota Tau Inducts New Members



LIT Official Flower: The Pansy

I'm an English greek!



The Delta Chapter of Lambda Iota Tau Honor Society inducted four new members on February 27, 2008. Those honored this year include Jaquenetta E. Armstead, Johnniea W. Armstead, Quianna J. Glapion, and Toni D. Walker (Ms. Walker will graduate with a B.A. in English in May 2008). As part of the induction ceremony, each candidate presented a reviewed paper. Ms. J. E. Armstead's writing probed the topic "How Can One Save Something That Was Not Lost." J. W. Armstead explored "Satan: A Total Manifestation of Envy." Q. Glapion analyzed a French drama in "Existentialism in Jean-Paul Sartre's dramatic work *No Exit*." And T. Walker looked at "My Misunderstanding: An Attempt at Analyzing Waris Dirie's *Desert*."



Ms. J. E. Armstead congratulated by Dr. Ronald Samples



Ms. J. W. Armstead honored by Dr. Ron Samples



Ms. Q. Glapion welcomed into the Society by Dr. Rhonda Saldivar



Ms. T. D. Walker receives her certificate from Dr. Ronald Samples

Lambda Iota Tau Honor Society is a coeducational literary society. It was founded at Michigan State University on December 3, 1953, and was admitted to the Association of College Honor Societies in 1965. Delta Alpha Chapter of Texas Southern University was chartered July 16, 1971. Negotiations with the national office which led to this achievement were conducted by Dr. J. Marie McCleary, head of the Department of English, and Prof. Yvonne P. McCree, who had been initiated into Gamma Alpha Chapter. The first moderators (sponsors) of Delta Alpha Chapter were Prof. Yvonne P. McCree and Prof. Barbara Elliott, who was initiated with the charter group in the fall of 1971.

Officers serving in 2007-2008 include Neshon P. Jackson as President and Natalie Baker as Vice President. Dr. Rhonda Saldivar continues in her position as the Chapter's Moderator. LIT photos above provided by Arbolina Jennings.

New Radio Active Department Celebrity



Photo by Arbolina Jennings

T. S. Eliot's "cruellest month" proved otherwise at TSU this year. The month of April brought a benevolent shower of generating growth to the Department's NuRoots and other creative writing programs. Professor Donna Kilgore took to the air waves by appearing on several radio programs on KPFT, 90.1 FM, to promote the English Department's Creative Writers' Conference and to discuss her planned appearances at the International Festival on the Literary Stage, Julia Ideson Library, April 19 and 26, as the literary scholar discussing Negritude Poets and Major African American writers, works, and movements. The radio programs included Connect the Dots hosted by Robert Muhammad, Pan African Journal hosted by Akua Holt, Open Journal hosted by Jew Don Boney, and The Peace Hour hosted by P. K. McCary.

Keeping the Dream Alive for Student Success

The English Department has committed to the Achieve the Dream effort to help students succeed in college and to improve retention and graduation at Texas Southern University. The grant proposal, written by Dr. R. Saldivar, Dr. M. Sollars, and Prof. A. L. Jennings in September 2007, cites the extremely low passing rate in ENG 131 Freshman English, and the need for a comprehensive approach to lecture and lab, well-aligned academic support services, and a welcoming, nurturing environment for the student. The proposal emphasizes instructor collaboration, student-centered learning, and student models both in the classroom and in the writing laboratory.

The English Department proposal was approved, and Supplemental Instructors (model students) were matched with instructors of ENG131 under the direction of Shannon Thomas, Coordinator of Retention and Recruitment. Those directly overseeing the program within the Department, instructors, and students attended numerous workshops, trainings, and collaborative sessions during the pilot semester of Spring

2008. The instructors participating in Spring 2008 were each matched with a student: Kimberly Barron-Brown--Janae Seymore; Iris Lancaster-- Toni Walker; Lana Reese – Ezinne Onyearugha; Linda Burgess-- Osato Imade; William Miller--Jared Terry; Negussie Zelelie – Krystal Cousins; and Melba Johnson – Tiffany Urbano.

Participation in Achieve the Dream this pilot semester has benefitted the Department, the Freshman English 131 instructors, and the student SI participants in direct and indirect ways. The instructors are enthusiastically preparing Innovative Teaching Strategy Proposals; the SI's are seeing growth and potential in themselves, if not yet in their students; and the general faculty in the English Department is collaborating on a Freshman English Orientation for all students in Fall 2008.

Our ENG 131 instructors are actively working on their Faculty Action Research Grants. The Department is hosting a lunch-workshop for those instructors to discuss the progress of their proposals.

Getting Creative With Writing

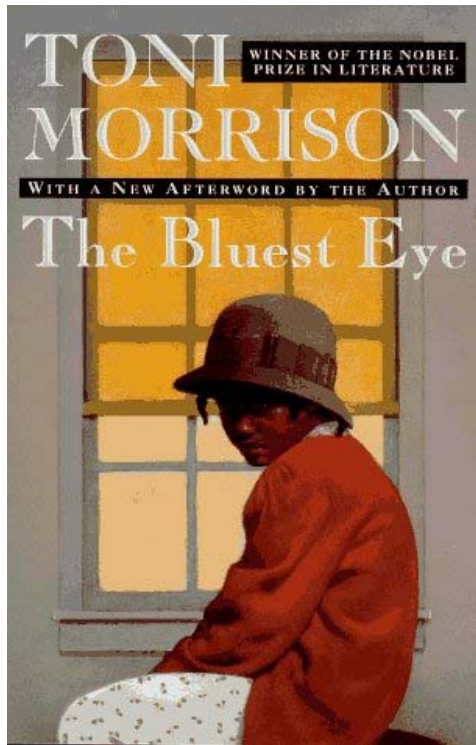
The Department of English's A Creative Writers' Conference, held April 18-19, 2008, was spearheaded by Professor Donna Kilgore. The opening day was performance day, with NuRoots Creative Writers students from English 320, Introduction to Creative Writing, and members of the community sharing their works. Also participating in the performance portion of the conference included Dr. Ron Samples, Dr. Obidike Kamau, Dr. Haiqing Sun, Mr. Ronald Keys, and host of the on-campus organization Poets for Peace, Nefatari. The special guest performer on Friday was Kangsen Feka Wakai, recipient of a Poets & Writers grant secured by the English Department on his behalf.

The second day's session centered on the craft of creative writing, with a workshop designed to mentor writers in the creative process. Professor Donna Harmon presented a lesson on analysis of literature and how to transfer that to the writing process. Afterward, Mr. Ronald Keys of the Robert J. Terry Library reference area spoke on the use of research in crafting fiction and poetry and about existentialism. Dr. Alexis Brooks de Vita conducted a session on "journaling." Professor Donna Kilgore led a session on meter and scansion. And Dr. Rita Saylor included a session on writing creative non-fiction. Special recognition goes to Professor Melba Johnson of Howard Johnson Caterers who provided lunch. Additional sponsorship was provided by Poets & Writers, Inc.

Tiger Day Roars With Success

TSU's Tiger Day held this year on April 18 was a success. The annual program allows departments to showcase their programs to prospective students. Putting the Department of English's best face forward included Iris Lancaster, Kimberly Barron Brown, Latoya Douglas, and Hakeem Harris. Much credit goes to Mrs. Conerly for her efforts in preparing the materials used during the promotional day. Department Chair Rhonda Saldivar also greeted prospective English majors at the event.

Book Club Looks At *The Bluest Eye*



The TSU Book Club met on April 16 under the sponsorship of the Department of English and *Lambda Iota Tau*. Led by Dr. Michael Zeitler and Professor Donna Kilgore from the Department of English, fifteen faculty members and students spent a stimulating hour discussing Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives. The Book Club is now gearing up for its fall 2008 roundtable and invites University-wide participation at all levels. Tentative topic: An Interdisciplinary Retrospective on the Relevancy of Carter G. Woodson's classic *The Mis-education of the Negro* on the book's 75th anniversary.

COLABS, McCleary Scholarships

The Dean's COLABS scholarship for the next school year will be awarded to an exemplary undergraduate student in English, as well as to top students in the other departments. The amount is \$1,000 for each student. In addition, the J. M. McCleary Scholarship awards a limited number of scholarships to qualifying students. Students interested in applying for an award should contact Mrs. Joyce Conerly in MLK 106 for more details.

English SACs Update And Assessment

The English Department submitted a Plan for General Education Assessment during the fall 2007 and a report of the results in March 2008 to the SACS General Education Committee. The General Education component of SACS refers to the core curriculum courses, which are stipulated by the Texas Coordinating Board.

Every Texas institution must have a required set of core courses which is overseen by the institutional core curriculum committee—at TSU the General Education Council—and must periodically report all additions and deletions to the core, including assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the core curriculum, exemplary educational outcomes embedded in each individual course, and plans for use of the assessment results for improvement.

The SACS reaffirmation process stipulates two full reporting cycles of core courses, which in the English Department means ENG 131, ENG 132, and ENG 2xx (to designate any sophomore level literature course). These courses support college competencies in communications (reading, writing, and critical thinking) and in the humanities, specifically literature. The learning outcomes to be measured in these course are the ability to write and analyze rhetorical works and identify purpose, audience, point of view, thesis, organization and development. The method of assessment is a common final examination, which is developed, evaluated, and cross-graded by English instructors, and the results are used for general improvement in subsequent semesters.

In the English Department, 15 faculty members participated in evaluating instruments and developing rubrics; 10 instructors participated in calibrating scores and cross-grading final examination essays. The English Department General Education Report for fall 2007 was submitted in March 2008; and its content was summarized in the preliminary SACS report due April 1, 2008. Updates for spring 2008 are due in June 2008.

In addition to General Education Assessment, the English Department is undergoing required SACS Program Assessment of field of study curricula of the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees and of the achievement of the graduates in each program. Dr. Rhonda Saldivar and Professor Arbolina Jennings are directing the compiling of data for the SACS ASSESSMENT in the English Department. Any questions should be directed to those individuals.

New Brochures



New brochures to promote the Department's undergraduate and graduate programs have been produced by Dr. Sollars. Copies of these are available from Mrs. Conerly.

McCleary Program Honors Three Sons of the South

The tenth annual J. Marie McCleary Symposium on "Literature by Sons of the South—Ernest J. Gaines, Richard Wright, and William Faulkner" was held April 3-4 at the University Museum. Presentations were made by many members of the Department: Professor William Miller, "The Censorship of Richard Wright's *Native Son*"; Dr. Michael Zeitler, *Pulp Fiction: Wright, Dickens, and the Political Gothic*"; Dr. Alexis Brooks de Vita, *Shades of Manhood in Ernest J. Gaines's 'The Sky is Gray' and Richard Wright's 'The Man Who Was Almost a Man'*"; and Dr. Shirley Moore, "Good for Whut's Ailin' You."

Graduate Students Reach Milestone

The Department is proud to recognize four graduate students who successfully completed their oral defenses of their theses in April. These students will go on to graduate in May with a M.A. in English. The entire Department deserves credit for helping to shape these fine students during their scholarly achievements at TSU. Lafonda Johnson's thesis work is entitled "Beauty in Black: The Search for True Heart." Jorge Santos discussed his work on "Societal *Tabula Rasa*: Destruction as a Form of Creation in Selected Works by Kurt Vonnegut." Gustiallia Renee Piper presented her work on "A Historical and Social Study of the Common Themes and Dysfunctional Dynamics Found Within Passing Literature." And Cathy Clay presented her research into the "Supernatural: The Juxtaposition of Sensuality and the Macabre in Edgar Allan Poe's 'Lygieia.'"

SCAASI

The Department was well represented at the 2008 Southeastern Conference for Africa American Studies, Inc. On hand at the Atlanta conference were Rhonda Saldivar, Betty Taylor Thomas, Ron Samples and William Miller. Dr. Saldivar served as a discussant on “Challenges and Prospects for Arts and Letters in the Diaspora.” Dr. Taylor-Thompson delivered a paper on “Gender Tension and Disease: Cause and Effect in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.”

Of particular note at the SCAASI conference were two poets represented by the Department. Dr. Samples was named the winner of the Slade Poetry Prize and Dr. Saldivar’s poem “Ode to the King” was published in the official *Griot* conference program.

Dr. Samples was further honored at SCAASI with a request to compose a memorial tribute (under his pen name “the grandson”) to the recently deceased Professor Thessalonia Ford. The product of that request is “The Wafer and the Wine – A Preface and a Poem Become a Prayer, for Thessalonia Ford,” which is scheduled to be published in the Spring issue of *The Griot* so that those not attending the conference can share in the memorial tribute.

Dr. Samples has also submitted several additional poems for publication consideration to *The Griot*, among them “Agamemnon Plays Teddy Pendergras at Howard University,” which was first read publicly at the Department’s fall semester poetry reading. Dr. Samples’s works in progress include “Grandmother,” “Smoked Turkey,” and “For My People, Many Years Hence – A Poem for Margaret Walker,” an epic-length poem.

Other Conferences And Activities

Dr. Alexis Brooks de Vita presented her most recent research, “The River Runs to the Road and Returns: The Circle and the Cross in Prophetic African Literature,” at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in March in Orlando, Florida, where she was also invited to chair and act as discussant for a panel called “Transcendent Sublime.” Following the conference, Dr. Brooks de Vita presented a summary of the Circle and Cross presentation during Research Week at Texas Southern in both the general and Liberal Arts/Humanities presentation divisions. Dr. Brooks de Vita is excited to report that she has been invited to submit the essay for publication consideration in two refereed journals of comparative literature and fantastic arts.

Dr. Rhonda Saldivar presented a paper at the Texas College Teachers of English in February in San Antonio on the Southwestern theme “Under Texas Skies,” a quest theme in the works of Americo Paredes.

Dr. Brooks de Vita has been invited to present a comparative study of sacrificial children in film and literature titled “From the Pit of the Redeemer: The Sacrificial Child Descends to Silent Hill, El laberinto

del fauno, and Io non ho paura" at the Conference on Children's Literature in Normal, Illinois, in June 2008.

In April 2008, Dr. Brooks de Vita was invited to attend an international conference on philosophy and religion at Bethany College, West Virginia, where a student whose research she supported was invited to make a presentation. The essay, which deals with African religious and philosophical influences on self-assertion expressed in tango, was not only well received at the conference in West Virginia, but the conference's organizers requested that the student, Alfonso Israel Arteaga of Houston Community College, present his research again at the society's upcoming conference in India in December 2008.

Dr. Michael Zeitler has had papers accepted to be presented at two upcoming conferences. He will present his work on "Wessex Past and Present: Primitive Myth and Modern Man in *The Return of the Native*" at the 2008 SCMLA, San Antonio, November 2008. He will also talk about "Realism in Retrospect: Representation, Disraeli's *Sybil*, and the Two Nations" at the Victorian Interdisciplinary Society of the Western United States, Seattle, October 2008.

Dr. Brooks de Vita in February spoke at the Houston Baha'i Center about the literacy/community uplift work done by Elizabeth Kharono in Mbale, Uganda since 2001, through her Unity Nursery and Unity Project outreach efforts. Ms. Kharono returned from her university studies in the capital city of Kampala to a region of Uganda challenged by decades of revolution and upheaval, bordering the area where child soldiers were being abducted, to teach preschoolers the fundamentals of reading and healthcare. Ms. Kharono is currently the director of Living Earth Uganda.

Publications

Dr. Michael Zeitler is under contract to write five articles (Du Bois, Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, *The Crisis*, and the Harlem Renaissance) for *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest: 1500 to the Present*, Blackwell Publishing (2009). He is also writing a series of thematic essays on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as part of a multi-volume *General Themes in Literature* to be published by Facts on File (2009).

Celebrating Black History Heritage

The theme Black History Heritage highlighted the Department's 2008 celebration of Black History Month. The program included poetry, oration, and a special salute to Dr. Thomas Freeman, longtime TSU debate coach. During the special event, Dr. Rhonda Saldivar presented her original work "Ode to the King" (the full text of the poem appears below). The welcome was delivered by Dr. Michael Sollars. Neshon P. Jackson, president of Lambda Iota Tau Delta Alpha Chapter and Natalie Baker, vice president of the honor society, offered salutes to special guests. Others present to celebrate Black History Month included Dean Merline Pitre and Reverend Terry Mackey, minister to young adults at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. Lana Reese offered the closing remarks. A special luncheon honoring Dr. Freeman was graciously provided by Professor Melba Johnson.

An Ode to the King

Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ill-fated, brave warrior, dauntless leader of the human race,
The world reveres your memory.
Like a shadow of a giant meteor, you flashed across
The horizon of humanity and left your imprint
Stamped on the conscience of mankind.
You joined the illustrious throng of martyrs who
Made their mark and died young.

Life was hard, but you were the abrasive that
Cut across the grain of prejudice and goaded
A sluggish humanity to take action.
You set your face doggedly to committed goals and
Trudged on to keep your rendezvous with history.
The world misses you and must
Always feel the void you left.

We are reminded of your greatness in every
Village, hamlet, and city, as streets,
Schools and boulevards shriek out your name.
Dumb voices that came too late.
The eternal flame burns daily,
A silent reminder that
Invincible spirits cannot die.

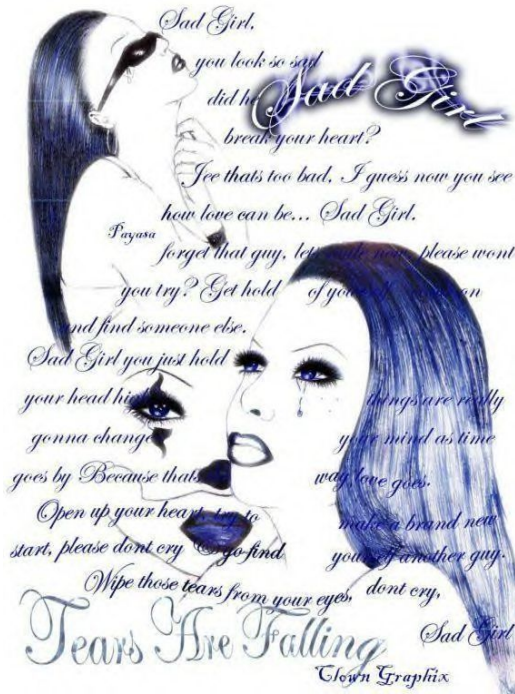
As long as there are injustices to correct,
Prejudices to combat, and promises to keep,
Your visage will materialize as
A spectral reminder to a recalcitrant world that
Principles remain, dreams endure,
Even though the dreamer must die.

Prophet, educator, preacher of the gospel
Civil rights activist, martyr,
Your life was a quiver in the bow of justice.
Your fate was sealed.
Politics was a volatile quality
Added to your vial of life,
But you did not shrink from the brew.

It was your fatal catalyst, yet you plodded on
And kept your rendezvous with fate.
You never reached the promised land,
But you did reach the mountain top and
God flashed your message
To a misguided and blinded world.
This dream can never be obliterated.

Rhonda Saldivar

Student Winners Of Spring Poetry Contest



The Spring Poetry Day program was held on February 14 in the MLK auditorium. Many faculty members from the Department were involved to make the celebration of the verse of romance and love a special highlight for students. Judges of the poetry contest included Alexis Brooks de Vita, Arbolina Jennings, Iva Woods, Rhonda Saldivar, Michael Sollars, and Donna Kilgore. Co-chairs of the program were Professors Kilgore and Sollars.

Congratulations to the student winners of the 2008 Poetry Contest.

- 1st Place Robert Clary, "My Mother's Child"
- 2nd Place Christopher Lacy, "Echoes of Us and Billy Holiday"
- 3rd Place Valarie Jackson-Balo, "SHE"
- 4th Place Tie: Joeneaka Hyder, "Unconditional Love"; and Muriel Thyms, "Blooming Love"



To sleep, perchance to dream-*Hamlet*

2008 Research Week

COLABS authors, editors, and grant recipients participated in Breakout Sessions held during Research Week, April 2, 2008. Sessions were organized and co-chaired by Daniel Adams and Karen Kossie-Chernyshev, who serve as representatives for the COLABS on the University Research Council. Several members of the Department of English offered presentations and were on hand to engage in the exchange of ideas expressed during the valuable program. The program presentations are detailed below.

Fine Arts and Other Research Areas: Similarities and Differences That Make a Difference:

Panelists engaged in a candid discussion about the shared and distinct features of Fine Arts and other areas in COLABS. The discussion fostered a greater appreciation for Fine Arts and generated enthusiasm for envisioning interdisciplinary projects and programs between Fine Arts and other disciplines. **Panelists: Daniel Adams (Music), Maya Imani Watson (Art), and Thomas Meloncon (Theater).**

Emerging Research in the COLABS: Alexis Brooks de Vita presented her work-in-progress "The River Runs to the Road and Returns: The Circle and the Cross in Prophetic African Literature," which she shared here at Texas Southern University after an earlier reading at the International Conference on the "Fantastic in the Arts" in Orlando, Florida.

Great Proposals and Winning Budgets for COLABS Projects: Panelists hosted a lively discussion about the art of conceptualizing effective grant proposals and writing budgets that adequately address the breadth and scope of projects envisioned. **Panelists: Earl Wright, II (Sociology), and Karen Kossie-Chernyshev (History).**

Recently Published COLABS Authors and Editors: COLABS editors and authors discussed the questions or problems that generated their respective studies, highlighted the phases of scholarly production leading to the publication of their findings, and discussed how they decided which publisher (vanity, trade, scholarly, or university press) best fit the aims of their projects. **Panelists: Michael**

Sollars (English), Arbolina Jennings (English), Cary Wintz (History), Merline Pitre (History), Karen Kossie-Chernyshev (History), and Michael Zeitler (English).

COLABS authors and editors showcased the following publications:

Karen Kossie-Chernyshev, ed., *The Diary of Lillian B. Horace*, Pearson Custom Publishing, 2007,

_____, ed., *Angie Brown*, Copley Custom Publishing, 2008.

Merline Pitre and Bruce Glasrud, *Black Women in Texas History*, Texas A & M University Press, 2008.

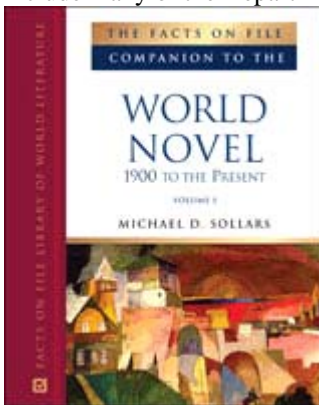
Michael D. Sollars and Arbolina L. Jennings, eds., *Compendium of World Novel and Novelists: Working with Scholars Around the Globe*, 2008.

Cary Wintz and Paul Finkelman, eds., et al, *Projects in African American History Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*, Oxford University Press, 2006-2008.

Michael Zeitler, *Representations of Culture: Thomas Hardy's Wessex and Victorian Anthropology*, Peter Lang, 2007.

Novel Publication Covers World Canvas

The Facts On File Companion to the World Novel, 1900 to the Present, in two volumes, is now available. This latest title of the 13-volume reference set was edited by Michael D. Sollars and Arbolina L. Jennings. The nearly two hundred contributors, scholars from around the world, include many of the Department's colleagues and several students from Texas Southern University.



The Facts On File Companion to the World Novel, 1900 to the Present, 2-Volume Set, Part of the 13-Volume Companion to Literature Series.

Publication of the *Companion to the World Novel, 1900-Present*, an extensive 1800-page work four years in development, has been announced. This two-volume collection published by Facts on File, Inc., features novelists and novels from around the globe. The volumes are also a part of a larger 13-volume reference set. Represented in the work are more than two hundred contributors from many countries

across the world. Michael Sollars and Arbolina Jennings served as editors for this literary achievement. Special recognition goes to the many present and past scholars at TSU listed below who also contributed to the publication.

Alexis Brooks de Vita, Thorpe Butler, Cathy Clay, Marcel Crespil, Charlene T. Evans, Daniel Haworth, Neshon Jackson, Keith Jardim, Arbolina Jennings, Donna Kilgore, Iris Lancaster, Esmeralda Lopez, Rosarito Rodriguez-Gonzalez, Rhonda Saldivar, Rita Saylor, Michael Sollars, and Michael Zeitler.

Graduates to Be Honored During Cinco de Mayo Celebration

The Department will celebrate the graduation of eleven students on May 5 from 11 A.M.- 1 P.M. during a Cinco de Mayo observance held in the MLK Conference Room. We wish these students unbounded success in their professional and personal lives.



**“To accomplish great things, we must not only act,
but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.” – Anatole France**

**Natalie Baker, B.A.
Lady Brown, B.A.
Crystal Hanks, B.A.
Camilo Layne, B.A.
Alexis Mattox, B.A.
Ava Parker, B.A.
Toni Walker, B.A.**

**Cathy Clay, M.A.
Lafonda Johnson, M.A.
Renee Piper, M.A.
Jorge Santos, M.A.**

The Chronicle, a Newsletter for the Department of English, is published each semester. To submit information for a future issue of the *Chronicle*, please send your topics and copy to the publication’s editors Michael Sollars and Arbolina Jennings. The *Chronicle* results from the efforts of its contributors, writers, and editors. Special thanks are extended to contributors Rhonda Saldivar, Alexis Brooks de Vita, Donna Kilgore, Michael Zeitler, and Ron Samples.