

Acclaimed author to serve as MSU writer-in-residence

STARKVILLE, Miss. – Accomplished author and speaker Dorothy Allison will join MSU as this year's prominent guest for the College of Arts & Sciences Institute for the Humanities' third annual Writer-in-Residence February 29 – March 4.

An author of many acclaimed books of fiction, essays and poetry, Dorothy Allison is best known for her bestselling novel *Bastard out of Carolina* (1992), which was a finalist for the National Book Award. In the novel, Allison offers an honest, humorous and dispassionate portrayal of a girl from a poor family who experiences and survives sexual abuse at the hands of her stepfather.

This week-long event is a collaboration between the Department of English, the Gender Studies Program and the College of Arts & Sciences Institute for the Humanities, along with support from a grant by the Mississippi Humanities Council.

During her visit, Allison will meet with a creative writing class and participate in an informal discussion session with the Gender Studies Program. She also will hold office hours during her stay to work with students.

A public reading will be held Tuesday, March 1, at 7:30 p.m. The event will take place in the Colvard Student Union Foster Ballroom.

“Our Writer-in-Residence program has been very successful over the past few years, and we’re delighted to have Dorothy Allison at Mississippi State. It’s a great opportunity for campus and community. We welcome the public to hear Allison discuss her work at the Tuesday evening reading. Other parts of the five-day program allow students and faculty to discuss writing with an author known for her enthusiasm at taking over the creative process,” said Dr. William Anthony Hay, Institute for the Humanities director.

Born in 1949 in Greenville, South Carolina, Allison was the oldest child born to a poor, unmarried fifteen-year-old. Raised in poverty and subject to years of abuse, Allison has used her experiences and talent to become a voice for those who feel they don't have one.

Allison has won many awards, including the 2007 Robert Penn Warren Award, two Lambda Literary Awards, and the American Library Association Prize for Lesbian and Gay Writing. *Bastard Out of Carolina* was a finalist for the National Book Award and was made into a film directed by Anjelica Huston, and several of her books have become national bestsellers. In the introduction to her book *Trash*, Allison describes her work as “the condensed and reinvented experience of a cross-eyed working class lesbian, addicted to violence, language, and hope, who has made the decision to live, is determined to live, on the page and on the street, for me and for mine.” Her work has been anthologized in both *The Best American Short Stories* and *The Best New Stories from the South*. In 1998 Allison founded The Independent Spirit Award, an award designed to support writers who champion small presses and independent bookstores.

According to Becky Hagenston, an associate professor in the Department of English, Dorothy Allison “approaches the subjects of gender, violence, class, and family with compassion, directness and disarming humor. In all of her work—not just her fiction, but also her poems and essays—she’s a story teller whose powerful voice hooks you from the get-go.”

For more information about Allison’s campus visit, please contact the Institute for the Humanities Program Director, Dr. William Anthony Hay at whay@history.msstate.edu or College of Arts & Sciences Director of Communication, Karyn Brown at kbrown@deanas.msstate.edu/662.325.7952.

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