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'Diaspora' Conference Brings Together Renowned Local and International Artists and Academics

El Paso, TX, Where does a Nigerian-German poet call home? And to whom does her art belong? These and other questions of identity and migration are at the heart of Olumide Popoola's work, and the work of more than a dozen local and international scholars and artists presenting at the *Women of the African Diaspora* conference at The University of Texas at El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center April 15-16, 2010.

The conference will kick off with a keynote address from Ayo Coly, author of *Home Matters: Gender, Migration and the Claims of Postcolonial Nationhood in Francophone African Literatures* and Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Dartmouth College, at 6pm on Thursday evening. Popoola will deliver Friday's 8:30am breakfast address, and additional talks will take place until 5pm Friday evening. These will include talks from Myriam J. A. Chancy, author of *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women*, and Angie Cruz, author of *Soledad* and *Let it Rain Coffee*.

Local professors, artists, and writers will serve as co-panelists and panel chairs at the conference. Kathy Staudt, Professor of Political Science at UTEP and author of 14 books on immigration, gender, and diasporic experience, will present on a panel about women's freedoms. This panel will be chaired by Charles Ambler, Professor of History at UTEP and President of the international African Studies Association. Cynthia Bejarano, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and author of a number of texts, including *Qué Onda? Urban Youth Cultures and Border Identity*, will present alongside award-winning novelist Ana-Maurine Lara on a panel entitled "Tales of love and survival." Local author and editor for the literary review *Border Senses*, Selfa Chew, will dialogue with Angie Cruz about "The poetics of justice." Meredith Abarca, Associate Professor of English at U.T.E.P and author of *Voices in the Kitchen: Views of Food and the World from Working-Class Mexican and Mexican American Women* will chair that panel. Joyce Stahmer, renowned storyteller and U.T.E.P. staff member, will present alongside Dr. Natasha Gordon-Chipembere, political biographer and Assistant Professor of English at Medgar Evers College, The City University of New York.

According to Dr. Marion Rohrleitner, Assistant Professor of English and conference co-organizer, "Some of the most talented storytellers, artists, and academics from the African diaspora will be presenting. We invited our favorite poets, the students' favorite novelists, and scholars with important messages to engage in a two-day conversation." Dr. Maceo Dailey, Director of African American Studies at UTEP further explained, "Through the voices of women writers and as Audre Lorde would have us do, this conference speaks to the politics of vision and virtue in identifying and dismantling diasporic edifices of sexism and racism." Conference presenters will discuss a range of women's experiences, from Malawian political widowhood to Dominican adolescence in the South Bronx. The award-winning panelists will also sign their latest books throughout the conference.

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The *Women of the African Diaspora* conference is free and open to the public. According to Dr. Sarah Ryan, Assistant Professor of Communication, “we hope that the public will see this as a chance to talk with some of their favorite writers and artists about issues that matter to them.” The conference is being sponsored by the UTEP African American Studies Program, Black Student Union, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Communication, Department of Creative Writing, Department of English, Department of History, Department of Languages and Linguistics, Chicano Studies Department, Department of Political Science, Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, Humanities Texas, Institute of Oral History at UTEP, Inter-American Jewish Studies Program, Student Government Association at UTEP, and Sweet Earth Flying Press. For additional information, contact Joyce Stahmer at [jjstahmer@utep.edu](mailto:jjstahmer@utep.edu).

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