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For Immediate Release

Literary stars headline Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Month Festival at Chicago State University

CHICAGO (March 23, 2009) – From Havana to Harlem, Kingston, Jamaica to Lagos, Nigeria and the Southside of Chicago, the featured writers at the 2009 Gwendolyn Brooks National Poetry Month Festival are some of the world’s foremost voices in the genres of fiction and poetry.

Giants in the literary world, such as Achy Obejas, Major Jackson, Colin Channer, Willie Perdomo and Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu, will present works at the Brooks National Poetry Month Festival on April 18, 2009, 9 a.m. – 10 p.m. on the campus of Chicago State University (95th and Martin Luther King Drive). This one-day series of readings and panel discussions is free and open to the public. The fiction and poetry workshops will cost $70.

For nearly two decades, the Gwendolyn Brooks Center for Black Literature and Creative Writing has produced the Gwendolyn Brooks Writers’ Conference. This year’s conference, which has traditionally occurred in October, was to instead take place in April. Organizers of the conference altered those plans due to the struggling economy. Organizers felt it was important to proceed with a celebration of the literary arts, while honoring the enduring Chicago icon Gwendolyn Brooks.

The guest list is no different from past conferences, in that the best and brightest writers of color will be present. Achy Obejas, already a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and recipient of the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in poetry, is a poet and novelist whose five works have been translated into four languages. Among the respected voices in poetry, Major Jackson was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His poetry collection, Hoops, was a finalist for the NAACP Image Award in the category of Outstanding Literature – Poetry.

The Washington Post said this about Colin Channer’s seminal novella The Girl with the Golden Shoes: “The Girl with the Golden Shoes is a sparkling gift, the tale of a meager, shoeless, raggedy abandoned Cinderella whose hardships make her all the wiser.” Channer is also the author of five books.

Appearing on poetry programs on Home Box Office (HBO) and Black Entertainment Television networks, Willie Perdomo produced two critically acclaimed works and is considered one of New York City’s finest literary artists. His provocative works have appeared in publications such as the New York Times and BOMB.

CSU English and Creative Writing Professor Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu is the 2008 recipient of the vaunted Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa. She is the author of two novels.

For more information about the Gwendolyn Brooks National Poetry Month Festival and the other April events at CSU, please contact Tacuma Roeback at 773-995-4440 or at troeback@csu.edu.