

A View From the Mountain

a newsletter from the Lillian E. Smith Center



Bunkhouse update

The first of two new bunkhouses at the LES Center is almost ready for occupancy. Piedmont College is now raising funds for the second bunkhouse, which we hope to have ready for the beginning of fall semester in August. The cost of constructing each of the structures is \$57,000. Please consider an additional gift this year to help us reach this very important financial goal.



Susan Deborah King— visiting poet

The LES Center was honored to host celebrated poet Susan Deborah “Sam” King for a two-week residency earlier this year, and on Jan. 13, she gave a poetry reading to a group of students, faculty, and staff at Piedmont College’s Demorest campus.

King’s book *Tabernacle: Poems of an Island* was published in 2001 by the Island Institute of Rockland, Maine. She received a George Family Foundation grant to complete a book of poems about her experience with breast cancer, entitled *One Breasted Woman*, which was released by Holy Cow! Press in September 2007. Poems from this collection have been featured on *Garrison Keillor’s Writer’s Almanac* on National Public Radio.

Coven, a book of poems relating to women and the sacred feminine, was published by FolioBookworks in 2006 and was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Awards in poetry. Ms. King’s other titles include *Bog Orchids*, *Island Poems*, and *Dropping into the Flower*.

Her next publication is an anthology of poems by people emerging from poverty for the Poverty Initiative of Union Theological Seminary in New York City, where she was named distinguished alumna in 2008. *Out of the Depths: Poetry and Poverty – Courage and Resilience* will come out through Holy Cow! Press this year.

In addition to working on her poetry while in residence, Ms. King took some time to read Lillian Smith’s novel *Strange Fruit*. “I am now committed to being an evangelist for Piedmont College and for Lillian Smith herself,” King said. “I thoroughly enjoyed my visit at the LES Center.”



Susan Deborah King, 2015 resident poet

Writer-in-Service Award Nancy Cook

A teaching specialist and the Director of the Community Practice Clinic at the University of Minnesota, Professor Nancy Cook has been selected for an LES Center Writer-in-Service Award and a two-week residency at the Center in Clayton.

Professor Cook strives to integrate her writing, teaching, and social activism while bringing literature and creativity to her community work and addressing issues of social justice in her artistic endeavors. She has conducted numerous workshops for writers and public interest practitioners in St. Louis, Michigan State University, University of Wales College in South Wales,

City University in London, and also in Puerto Rico. She is currently working on a chapbook of poetry composed of new work emerging from the Justice Writing workshops she has been hosting for almost two years. Piedmont College will welcome Professor Cook to the LES Center in August with a residency, an honorarium, and a travel allowance. “What welcome news!” Professor Cook responded upon being notified about winning the award. “I’m honored and excited.”

For more information about the LES Center Writer-in-Service Award, visit the LES website at www.piedmont.edu/lillian-smith-center.





Barbara Brown Taylor, Imani Perry, John Blake



Robert and Nancy Fichter attended the first Lillian E. Smith Symposium and gave the event high marks. "The Symposium experience was excellent, and I continue to hear so much excitement from those who attended," Nancy said. "The whole time was so well planned and the speakers were exceptional." (Left) Barbara Brown Taylor, Imani Perry, and John Blake.

First LES Symposium a big success

What kind of extremist are you?

Piedmont College conducted a one-day conference, the "Lillian E. Smith Symposium on Arts and Social Change," March 14 at the Athens campus.

Barbara Brown Taylor, Butman Professor of Religion at Piedmont, served as moderator. Among the speakers were CNN correspondent John Blake; Princeton professor and author Dr. Imani Perry; and former U.S. Congressman C. Donald Johnson, currently director of the Dean Rusk Center for International Law and Policy.

"Lillian Smith's observations and activism from the 1940s and on into the 1960s are as relevant today as they were then," said Ashley Cleere, Chaplain at Piedmont College. "Throughout her career as a writer and humanitarian, Smith examined how the arts engage people around issues of social injustice, segregation, and isolation," Cleere said.

The symposium featured a discussion of the 1964 murder of Lt. Col. Lemuel Penn near Colbert, Ga., including stories from Tommy Brown recalling from his own memories the event that dramatized the need for civil rights reform in the U.S. Also on the panel, Johnson, whose father was the district attorney prosecuting Penn's killers, recounted his memories inside the courtroom as the dramatic testimony unfolded.

Imani Perry with the Center for African American Studies at Princeton University delivered a lecture entitled "Standing on the Rough Side of the Mountain: How to Address the Persistence of Racial Inequality and Conflict in the 21st Century." Perry is the author of two books on race in the United States and has provided social and political commentary for National Public Radio, CNN, and the *New York Times*.

John Blake, an award-winning writer and producer at CNN, discussed his book, *Children of the Movement*, in which he interviewed the grown children of 24 civil rights-era figures on both sides of the turbulent issue.

Following breakout sessions, Taylor and Blake conducted a wrap-up discussion. An Episcopal priest since 1984, Taylor is the author of 13 books, including the *New York Times* bestsellers *Learning to Walk in the Dark* and *An Altar in the World*. She was recently named to *Time* magazine's list of "100 Most Influential People in the World."



Brenda Bynum in character as Lillian Smith

Lillian Smith focus of Brenda Bynum performance, 'Jordan Is So Chilly' at Dillard Playhouse May 9

Atlanta actress and playwright Brenda Bynum will perform *Jordan is So Chilly: An Encounter with Lillian Smith*, at 4 p.m., May 9, in the Dillard Playhouse in Dillard. A wine reception will follow.

Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased online at www.piedmont.edu/brenda-bynum-tickets or ordered by mail, with checks payable to Piedmont College and sent to Craig Amason, Piedmont College, P.O. Box 429, Demorest GA 30535. For more information, contact Craig Amason at 706-894-4204.

An actor and director since 1973, Bynum served as the Acting Teacher for the nationally-known Professional Intern Program at the Alliance Theater in Atlanta. From 1983 to 2000 she was a Resident Artist and member of the faculty at Emory University in the Department of Theater Studies.

Drawn largely from autobiographical writings by Smith, the title of the play, "Jordan Is So Chilly," is from Smith's original title for *Strange Fruit*, her best-selling first novel. Bill Tribby, a member of the LES Center Advisory Board, will be reading the prologue and epilogue for the performance.

"The title calls up for me the image of the difficult times faced by anyone in crossing over to the 'promised land,'" Bynum said. "Lillian Smith faced so many trials and tribulations in her life and her work,

it seemed quite appropriate to me." In addition to unpublished writings, Bynum drew on books, letters, and a television interview Smith did in the 1960s in writing the play.

"It is an intimate conversation with the audience and is intended to be deeply personal and reveal the woman and the artist behind the icon," Bynum said. "For me, it has been a true labor of love to bring her back to life in this way, and I have been extremely gratified by the responses to her story, particularly from the many people who are hearing her story for the first time. What I want is for her name to be as familiar to any reading Georgian (and beyond) as the names of Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, Alice Walker, and even Margaret Mitchell. A Lillian Smith renaissance is far overdue."

We are grateful for the support of these generous sponsors: John and Martha Ezzard—Tiger Mountain Vineyards; Carl and Carla Fackler—Stonewall Creek Vineyards; Harry Norman Realtors Luxury Lake and Mountain—The Lake Team; Lake Rabun Association Foundation; Carol and Steve Raeber; Barbara and Hank Roper; South State Bank; and the Waterfall Country Club.

The Planning Committee includes Barbara Roper (chair), Hank Roper, Robert Pittman, Anita Pittman, Michael McGaughey, Craig Kettles, Becky Callahan, Tom Callahan, Marlee Price, Alan Price, Carol Raeber, and Steve Raeber.

Visiting poet, Alice Friman

Alice Friman, Professor Emerita of English and Creative Writing at the University of Indianapolis and currently Poet-in-Residence at Georgia College in Milledgeville, will be in residence at the LES Center this summer.

Friman will also present a reading from her work, including her latest collection of poems, *The View From Saturn* (LSU Press, 2014), at 4 p.m., Oct. 15, at Piedmont College's Demorest campus. She will be meeting earlier that day with Piedmont students in English and Creative Writing classes.

Friman's collection, *Vinculum* (LSU Press), won the 2012 Georgia Author of the Year Award in Poetry. She is a recipient of a 2012 Pushcart Prize and is included in *The Best American Poetry 2009*. Other books include *Inverted Fire* and *The Book of the Rotten Daughter*, both from BkMk Press, and *Zoo*, from University of Arkansas Press, which won the Sheila Margaret Motton Prize from The New England Poetry Club and the Ezra Pound Poetry Award from Truman State University. She has also published four chapbooks.

"I have known Alice Friman for over a decade and have had the pleasure of hearing her read her poetry on numerous occasions," said Craig Amason, Director of the LES Center. "She is such a fine writer and remarkably entertaining. Students absolutely love her."



Environmental education at the LES Center

As the steward of all the property at the LES Center, Piedmont College has an exceptional opportunity to take advantage of the rich natural resources that abound here. The flora and fauna are beautiful and diverse—from native azaleas and hemlocks to trillium and mountain laurel; from amphibians and reptiles to rodents and black bears.

A Piedmont College professor is now serving as a science coordinator to ensure that all students, faculty, and visitors to the LES Center can fully appreciate the natural surroundings. Dr. Tim Menzel, Associate Professor of Biology, is creating programs at the Center that will support science education, help manage the property and preserve its natural resources, and raise the profile of the Center and the College within the scientific community.

Dr. Menzel and LES Center Director Craig Amason are working with students and outside consultants to expand and improve interpretive nature trails that were started by members of the LES Foundation. They are also identifying tracts on the property that will be designated specifically for scientific research.

"A great part of my motivation for working at the LES Center is the setting that it provides," Menzel said. "People visiting the Center typically only see about a third of the property. The remaining two thirds is really beautiful and quite secluded. I look forward to spending a great deal of time far off the beaten path, within its ravines and on top of its ridges, studying the plants and animals that live there. I also hope to make those areas more available to others through the trail system and research plots we are establishing."



Siegel and Templeton donate folk art collection

All resident artists and most visitors to the LES Center are greeted by our gracious residency managers, John Siegel and John Templeton, who live on the property in the home originally built by one of Lillian Smith's brothers, Frank. The house was later occupied by Laurie Peeler, daughter of Annie Laurie Peeler, one of Lillian Smith's sisters. Several years ago, the LES Foundation renovated the house, which is part of the LES Center and is now owned by Piedmont College.

Those who have had the pleasure of visiting "the Johns" know that the cheerfulness of their hospitality is perfectly paired with the incredible folk art collection that decorates the interior and exterior of the house. They have been collecting paintings, sculpture, metalwork, and other creations in the folk art tradition for many years, and the interior of their house is painted in vibrant colors to compliment the art. Among the artists represented in this collection are Alan St. James Boudrot, Anne Bourassa, Ljubomir Milinkov, and Jon Whiddon.

As a result of a recent agreement, Piedmont College is now the proud owner of the Siegel-Templeton Folk Art Collection. Furthermore, Siegel and Templeton have agreed to donate to the College any future pieces they collect for the house. The Collection will stay in the house while they live there and will remain as a gallery for the LES Center into the future. We are grateful to John Siegel and John Templeton for this gift and for their ongoing assistance with the residency program. Given Lillian Smith's deep passion for art and its ability to enrich our lives, we think she would be particularly pleased with this wonderful addition to the Center.

*(Above) "Hattie Mae"
sculpture by Art Wilson*



*"Montmartre" street scene
oil on canvas by Emile
Blondel*

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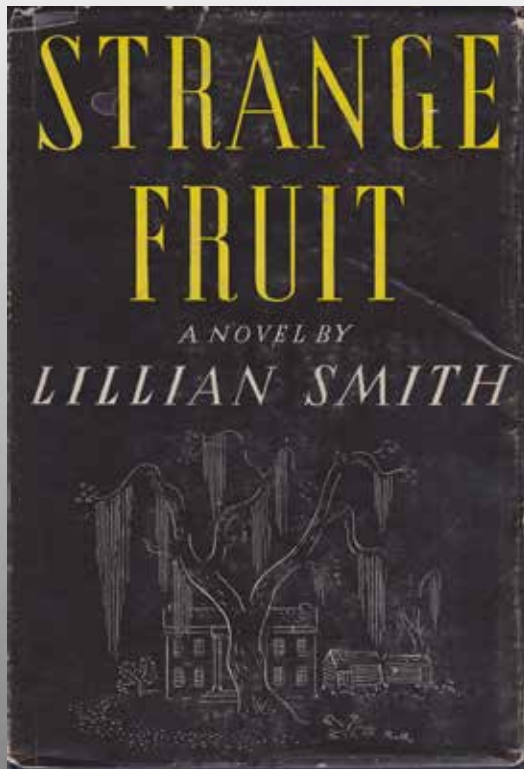
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PO Box 429
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Lillian Smith's **Strange Fruit**

is a re-adaptation of the original play from 1945, and will have its debut as the fall theatre production at Piedmont College. Thom Fogarty, New York actor/director and the author of the play, will be in residence at the College for six weeks working with students and the Theatre Department to prepare for the show.

October 1-4, 2015

Thursday – Saturday at 7:30 p.m. | Sunday matinée at 2:00 p.m.

Swanson Center Mainstage Theater
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Visit us on 

P.O. Box 10 | Demorest, GA 30535 | 706-894-4204

piedmont.edu/lillian-smith-center