



NEWS RELEASE

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Zelda Lockhart photo attached: Courtesy of Taji Shabu

NOVELIST ZELDA LOCKHART SELECTED AS 2010 PIEDMONT LAUREATE

Highly acclaimed Durham County novelist Zelda Lockhart has been selected as the region's 2010 Piedmont Laureate.

The Piedmont Laureate program is dedicated to building a literary bridge for residents to come together and celebrate the art of writing. Co-sponsored by the City of Raleigh Arts Commission, Alamance County Arts Council, Durham Arts Council, Johnston County Arts Council, Orange County Arts Commission, and United Arts Council of Raleigh & Wake County, the program's key goal is to: "promote awareness and heighten appreciation for excellence in the literary arts throughout the Piedmont region."

"The Piedmont Laureate program provides an important opportunity for residents in the Triangle area to connect with and learn about their strong literary heritage and the influence this area plays in the state's literary landscape," said Mary B. Regan, Executive Director of the North Carolina Arts Council.

Ms. Lockhart is the author of *Fifth Born*, which was a 2002 Barnes & Noble Discovery selection and won a finalist award for debut fiction from the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Legacy Foundation. She holds a Bachelor's Degree from Norfolk State University, a Master's in English from Old Dominion University, and a certificate in writing, directing and editing film from the New York Film Academy. In 2007, Lockhart's second novel, *Cold Running Creek*, was published, winning a 2008 Honor Fiction Award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. In June 2010, Ms. Lockhart's third novel, *Fifth Born II: The Hundredth Turtle*, will be published. Her other works of fiction, poetry and essays can be found in anthologies, journals and magazines.

"I am honored and excited to sharing my passion for literature...with the Piedmont community," Ms. Lockhart stated. "During my tenure as Laureate, I plan to

design and participate in programs that will help individuals self-define through the experience of literature.... I look forward to the many new people I am bound to meet and share precious time with over the next year,” she added.

In her letter of support for Ms. Lockhart’s laureate application, well-known writer Dorothy Allison wrote: “Zelda has a strong commitment to beautiful and unique language. She gives us an unflinching view of the human spirit.... Her people read to me as real – fully rendered and difficult as any I have made myself. She is also an inspired and inspiring speaker, and I know she would serve eloquently as a laureate.”

For being named the Piedmont Laureate, Ms. Lockhart will receive an honorarium of \$7,000 and serve for one year. Her duties will include presenting public readings and workshops, participating at select public functions, and creating at least one original activity to expand appreciation of literature. A schedule of the Laureate’s 2010 activities will be posted in January on the sponsoring agencies websites and at the Piedmont Laureate website (www.piedmontlaureate.com).

Applications for the laureate position were received from a five-county area. A selection committee comprised of recognized authors John Kessel, (well-known science fiction author and faculty member at NC State University) and Susie Powell, along with sponsoring agency representatives, reviewed all the applications and made recommendations. Banu Valladares, Acting Literary Director of the North Carolina Arts Council, served as the panel observer.

“We are excited to have a program that recognizes the achievement of North Carolina writers across genres and that fosters a love of writing and reading in the state. Zelda Lockhart is talented and her work is rich and spellbinding. That, along with her commitments to her craft and to helping others find expression in writing makes her the ideal candidate for the Piedmont Laureate post,” Ms. Valladares stated.

For more information about the Piedmont Laureate program, visit www.piedmontlaureate.com or contact Martha Shannon, Orange County Arts Commission, at mshannon@co.orange.nc.us or call 919/245-2335.