Dr. Pauline Strong Becomes Humanities Institute Associate Director

Dr. Pauline Turner Strong completed her Ph.D. in Sociocultural Anthropology and began her career at the University of Chicago. In 1993 she joined the University of Texas faculty as an associate professor in Anthropology and a faculty affiliate in the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies. Her research centers on historical and contemporary representations of Native Americans and American national identity in such contexts as literature, films, museums, sports arenas, and youth organizations.

As a teacher and a citizen of both the University and the larger Austin community, Professor Strong has also made wide-ranging contributions across disciplines and constituencies. On campus, she has taken leadership roles in the launch of the Connexus Bridging Disciplines and Difficult Dialogues programs, in the development of a model for an ambitious new Museum Studies degree program, and as a member of the Faculty Council Executive Committee. In the community, she serves as President of the Board of Directors of Camp Fire USA Balcones Council and is an enthusiastic supporter of Austin arts organizations.

Over the Humanities Institute’s first five years, Professor Strong was a frequent contributor to its initiatives, as a member of the faculty seminar, a professor in the Texas Teachers as Scholars program, a Mayor’s Book Club discussion leader, and a panelist in one of the HI’s topical symposia. Her initial responsibilities as Associate Director include leadership in organizing the Sekou Sundiata “America Project” Residency of Poet, Performance Artist, Civic Educator Sekou Sundiata

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CITIZEN--of a community, of a country, of a world? If all those who called themselves Americans were in one room, what would we have in common? What does “pursuit of happiness” mean in a society so devoted to tangible outcomes? What future do we anticipate? Is it the one we would desire? Can the humanities and the arts provide a vehicle for active communal engagement with these questions?

This fall and winter, Central Texans will have the opportunity not only to attend but also to shape an extraordinary series of civic dialogs, humanities workshops, and multi-media artistic performances on the theme of post-9/11 citizenship and visions of the future, led by Sekou Sundiata—a distinguished New York poet, performance artist, and civic educator whose work originates, in Bill Moyers’ words, “at the headwaters of the soul.” With the support of the Colleges of Fine Arts and Liberal Arts and the Harry Ransom and Performing Arts Centers, the Humanities Institute will sponsor Sundiata’s residency in Austin as the first annual C. L. and Henriette Cline Visiting Professor in the Humanities.

The Cline Visiting Professorship is meant to support an annual short-term residency for...
Institute is a contributing co-sponsor: the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice’s December symposium, “The Life and Legacy of George Lister: Reconsidering Human Rights, Democracy, and U.S. Foreign Policy”; and the Phi Beta Kappa Alpha Society’s 2006-7 lecture series on “The Essence of Liberal Education,” which is set to begin on October 20. And questions of citizenship and the responsibilities and boundaries of critique are certainly at the heart of my own recently published book, *Patriotic Treason: John Brown and the Soul of America*, a narrative of the life, times, and legacy of the first white American who fully imagined—and considered himself bound to act on his belief—that the lives and deaths of blacks were morally and civically as real, human, and valuable as his own.

Questions of citizenship—the unit’s responsibility within, toward, and sometimes for the collective—are almost as relevant to modern institutions such as the university as they are to nations. These questions, though they have been articulated in somewhat different terms, very much inform the recent and continuing discussions on this campus about the needs and claims of a “core” undergraduate education in relation to those of particular colleges, departments, and degree programs. The Humanities Institute is privileged to provide a space for the exercise of critical citizenship on the UT campus and in the larger community—a space, to adapt Thoreau, in which you can “cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely.” Thanks for continuing to help us define and enlarge it.

Email: carton@humanitiesinstitute.utexas.edu

WRITING THIS COLUMN ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF SEPTEMBER 11, I find myself drawn to the sorts of questions about citizenship and democracy’s future that Sekou Sundiata, who will be in residence at the Humanities Institute later this fall and winter, asks so creatively and compellingly in both his performance art and his work as a civic educator.

What does it mean to be a citizen—of a community, of a country, of a world? When and where is our feeling of citizenship the strongest? Do our civic ideals accord with our civic practices, or have the two grown estranged? What are the prospects for love, compassion and human solidarity in a country and a world conditioned to competition and steeped in violence and fear? What future for Americans and for others do we anticipate? Is the future we anticipate the one we would desire? How can the humanities and the arts help us to create “a clearing” in which to explore these questions frankly, deeply, and publicly?

In many ways, Sundiata’s “America Project as an Arts, Humanities, and Civic Dialog”—in which I urge all the readers of this column to take active part, beginning in November and continuing through the citizenship and envisioning the future workshops and *The 51st (dream) state* performance in February—is the project to which the Humanities Institute has been committed throughout its history and in many of its programs. This is the aspiration that drives the three dynamic pilot programs (the Community Sabbatical Research Leave, the Living Newspaper high school human rights curriculum and performance initiative, and the Free Minds college humanities seminar for adults living on or near the poverty line) whose successful launches and first results we report on elsewhere in the newsletter and whose futures we are fundraising this year to ensure.

What Sundiata calls “critical citizenship” and the role of the humanities in promoting its exercise are also central concerns in two upcoming events on campus to which the Institute is a contributing co-sponsor: the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice’s December symposium, “The Life and Legacy of George Lister: Reconsidering Human Rights, Democracy, and U.S. Foreign Policy”; and the Phi Beta Kappa Alpha Society’s 2006-7 lecture series on “The Essence of Liberal Education,” which is set to begin on October 20. And questions of citizenship and the responsibilities and boundaries of critique are certainly at the heart of my own recently published book, *Patriotic Treason: John Brown and the Soul of America*, a narrative of the life, times, and legacy of the first white American who fully imagined—and considered himself bound to act on his belief—that the lives and deaths of blacks were morally and civically as real, human, and valuable as his own.

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a leading scholar, writer, or artist who will engage with both campus and community groups in a series of formal and informal workshops, forums, lectures, and performances designed to involve citizens and scholars alike in the exploration of important contemporary ideas and issues. Sundiata’s visit is scheduled for the last week in November and three weeks in February, culminating in the February 28 performance in the Hogg Auditorium of *The 51st (dream) state*—a cycle of songs, poems and monologues, still and moving images projected on multiple surfaces, and filmed dance that explores some meanings of contemporary America and American citizenship and some visions for a humane future in a post 9/11 world.

Whether he is teaching literature at New York’s New School University, performing his one-man show about his long struggle with kidney failure and ultimate transplant, recording an album of poetry set to jazz, R&B, and hip-hop, or writing a multimedia, interactive play about America and its mythologies, the Harlem-born Sundiata seeks to use art to move people, to inspire involvement, to question and to reveal. For the development and continuing evolution of *The 51st (dream) state*, Sundiata devised a creative process centered in dialogues about citizenship and the future sparked by poetry and music and undertaken in small groups. “The America Project as an Arts, Humanities, and Civic Dialogue” is his name for that communal creative process, which will be enacted in collaboration with students, citizens, and community and arts organizations in Austin during Sundiata’s residency.

Over the next six weeks, the Institute and its partners will be finalizing the formats and exact dates of America Project events in Austin. We expect these to include: “citizenship potluck” dinners; “envisioning the future” workshops with diverse constituencies (student groups, artists, civic and business leaders, social service nonprofit staffs, religious congregations); “arts and citizenship” dialogues and performances; a “Day of Arts and Ideas,” in which all the local America Project participants and members of the general public are invited to come together to present and discuss the results of their citizenship explorations and imaginings; and an audience “talkback” with Sundiata and *The 51st (dream) state* performers after the stage production.

Who are the parents of your American identity? When and where are your citizenship feelings at their strongest? How do you think love, compassion, and human solidarity may be sustained and enhanced in the face of a public imagination steeped in violence and fear? What future—for the United States and for the world—do you imagine? Join the Humanities Institute and Sekou Sundiata in creating Austin’s America Project.

Sekou Sundiata on the origins of *The America Project*:

“Living in the aftermath of 9/11, I feel an urgent and renewed engagement with what it means to be an American. But that engagement is a troubling estrangement between American civic ideals and American civic practice. When it comes to a vision of myself as an artist and as an American, I am caught in a blind spot. I don’t think I am alone. I sense there are many Americans in the same spot, probably in the millions. This project is my response to this reality. It is my way of searching for a clearing, for the necessary questions to ask. I take it as a civic responsibility to think about these things out loud, in the ritualized forum of theater and public dialogue.”

Mailing list subscribers will receive November and February notices of America Project events. Others may consult the Humanities Institute web site for updated descriptions and schedules or contact the HI at information@humanitiesinstitute.utexas.edu or at 471-9056 to inquire about participating.
Project” residency (see story on p. 1), in establishing a Humanities Institute University-Community Advisory Council, and in HI development initiatives to sustain and expand its Free Minds, Community Sabbatical, and Living Newspaper programs.

Of her decision to accept the offer of the HI Associate Director’s position, she says: “I consider the Humanities Institute one of the most innovative humanities centers in the country, and am passionately committed to its mission of building civic and intellectual community. I am excited to have the opportunity to work with Evan Carton and the HI staff to link the university’s resources to community needs and aspirations.”

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE FACULTY FELLOWS and selected graduate students representing disciplines across the university will meet weekly this year to explore the theme “Labor and Leisure.” This inquiry into the politics, arts, economics, technologies, and cultures of human work and recreation across historical periods and national boundaries and contexts will also be the focus of the HI’s 2006-7 Distinguished Visiting Lecturers series.

Five visiting scholars will offer free public lectures on issues relating to the Labor and Leisure theme, beginning in early October. (See the lecture schedule on the facing page.) Brief profiles of each of these distinguished and dynamic thinkers and teachers appear below:

**Dr. Jim Kakalios**
University of Minnesota
“Can One Learn Science by Reading Comic Books?”

Dr. Kakalios is a physicist, working to elucidate the electronic and optical properties of amorphous semiconductors, and a lifelong reader of comic books whose own book, *The Physics of Superheroes*, and whose physics classes use the modern mythologies of comic book superheroes to illustrate and explain quantum and classical physics.

**Dr. Gail Hershatter**
University of California, Santa Cruz
“The Gender of Memory: Rural Women, Labor, and Collectivization in Early Socialist China”

Dr. Hershatter is a leading historian of modern Chinese social, cultural and women’s history, and author of the prizewinning book, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in 20th-Century Shanghai*.

**Dr. Michael Zweig**
State University of New York at Stonybrook
“Class, Values, and Interests in U.S. Politics”

Dr. Zweig is a distinguished political and labor economist and director of Stonybrook’s Center for the Study of Working Class Life. He is the author of *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* and editor of *What’s Class Got to do with it?: American Society in the Twenty-First Century*.

**Dr. Victoria de Grazia**
Columbia University
“How Democratic are Consumer Societies?”

Dr. de Grazia, a specialist in the contemporary history of mass and consumer cultures in Western Europe and the U. S. is the editor of *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* and the author, most recently, of *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through 20th Century Europe*.

**Dr. Robin D. G. Kelley**
Columbia University
“Exploiting Jazz Musicians: The Case of Thelonious Monk”

Dr. Kelley, a Professor of Anthropology, has written widely on black music, visual culture, radical social movements, and labor and urban experience in the U.S., Africa, and the African Diaspora. The author of seven books, Professor Kelley has focused in his recent work on the culture and politics of art, primarily with regard to the history of jazz.

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**Distinguished Visiting Lecturers Series**

2006-7 Theme: “Labor & Leisure”

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DISTINGUISHED VISITING LECTURERS SERIES
2006 – 2007 Public Lectures

Labor & Leisure

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4
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Dr. Jim Kakalios, University of Minnesota

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25
“The Gender of Memory: Rural Women, Labor, and Collectivization in
Early Socialist China”
Dr. Gail Hershatter, University of California, Santa Cruz

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15
“Class, Values, and Interests in U.S. Politics”
Dr. Michael Zweig, State University of New York at Stonybrook

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7
“How Democratic are Consumer Societies?”
Dr. Victoria de Grazia, Columbia University

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11
“Exploiting Jazz Musicians: The Case of Thelonious Monk”
Dr. Robin D. G. Kelley, Columbia University

Free and open to the public.

Lectures held in the Art Auditorium (ART 1.102),
23rd and San Jacinto, at 7:30 p.m.

512-471-2654 or information@humanitiesinstitute.utexas.edu
for more information.
ON MONDAY, AUGUST 28TH, twenty-five students in the Humanities Institute's new Free Minds Project gathered in a large, bright classroom inside the learning center at an apartment complex on Northeast Drive in East Austin to meet one another and discuss their first reading assignment—William Carlos Williams’s “The Use of Force.” The lively conversation that followed, led by Free Minds Literature professor (and HI Director) Evan Carton, was just the first of many discussions the adult students in the Free Minds Project will engage in together as they meet twice weekly over the next two semesters.

Taught by six UT-Austin and Austin Community College professors (see sidebar), and hosted by local affordable housing agency Foundation Communities, the Free Minds Project is an introductory, college-level humanities survey seminar designed as a “jump start” for adults who have lacked the opportunity or the support structure to pursue higher education. Inspired by the work of sociologist Earl Shorris, who founded the Bard College Clemente Course in the Humanities in New York City in 1995, the Free Minds Project intends to bridge the divide between the skills-based education usually available to people living on low to moderate incomes and the formal study of the humanities, often reserved for students at elite universities and colleges. Students in the Free Minds Project pay no tuition, are invited to bring their children to child care during the class, and receive all books and program materials without charge. A UT-Austin writing center consultant attends each class and is a resource for academic support, and an ACC advisor will work closely over the year with anyone interested in transitioning to further education. Students who successfully complete both semesters of the course will receive six units of credit in the humanities at ACC.

The twenty-five students who have just begun their journey in the Free Minds Project bring with them a diverse and exciting range of personal experiences and intellectual perspectives. They have made an outstanding commitment to themselves, to the program’s faculty, and to one another for the coming year. As Ann Marie Duron, 22, reflected after the discussion about Williams’s story: “To see that all the students read the same pages and got totally different insights was amazing. Just knowing that discussions like this are coming gets me excited about reading whole books with this class.”

“...the Free Minds Project is an introductory, college-level humanities survey seminar designed as a “jump start” for adults who have lacked the opportunity or the support structure to pursue higher education.”

FREE MINDS PROJECT FACULTY

Evan Carton, English, UT Austin  
Matthew Daude Laurents, Philosophy, ACC  
Jill Dolan, Theatre and Dance, UT Austin  
Tom Palaima, Classics, UT Austin  
Jim Sidbury, History, UT Austin  
Stacy Wolf, Theatre and Dance, UT Austin

FREE MINDS PROJECT STAFF

Eileen Abrahams, Free Minds Project Writing Consultant  
Sylvia Gale, Free Minds Project Director  
De’Borah Jones, Austin Community College Recruiter/Advisor  
Erika Leos, Foundation Communities Adult Education Coordinator
Selections from the Free Minds Fall Reading List:

**Literature:**
- Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
- Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”
- John Edgar Wideman, “Signs”

**Theatre:**
- Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
- Cherrie Moraga, *Shadow of a Man*
- Suzan-Lori Parks, *In the Blood*
- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

**Philosophy:**
- Plato, *Phaedo* and *Euthyphro*
- Aristotle, *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*

**U.S. History:**
- Thomas Jefferson
- Frederick Douglass
- John Brown
- Abraham Lincoln

**Classics:**
- Herodotus
- Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*
- Homer, *Iliad*
- Euripides, *Medea*
- Thucydides

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**Student Insights**

Abbie Navarrete: “How do we define a person? What makes us unique? I was very drawn to Melissa’s comment that once Matt’s brain was destroyed he stopped ‘being.’ Brain function is not just nerve endings telling us how to walk, talk, chew, or swallow. Our personality, sense of humor, all the things that truly make us unique are housed in our brain.”

(Philosophy Class Prompt 9/7/2006)

Cheryl Hill-Burse intervened in Tom Palaima’s discussion of the Greek conceptions of hubris and happiness in order to exclaim upon her reading experience: “I was intimidated by reading this story. I felt like I was at the airport and a boat came in. The questions made me realize what you were trying to get me to see.” To which Tom replied, “Well, what Herodotus is getting us to see....”

(Classics Class 8/31/2006)

In response to a question from History Professor Jim Sidbury, Beloved Ailsworth asserted, “I think that you’re trying to get us to see that history is a tool; as Becker says, ‘Our proper function is not to repeat the past but to make use of it, to correct and rationalize for common use.’”

(History Class 9/11/2006)
Recognizing K-12 Teachers as Scholars

PART OF A NATIONWIDE INITIATIVE of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation to energize and validate K-12 teachers as intellectuals and keep them connected to cutting edge scholarship in the humanities and sciences, the HI’s Texas Teachers As Scholars program provides a unique professional development opportunity for Central Texas teachers and a critical teacher renewal and retention resource for area schools and school districts.

Seven two-day seminars are offered in 2006-7. Eligible teachers may register online. Contact TAS program coordinator Jill Anderson at humedu@humanitiesinstitute.edu or at 471-2654 for information on late registration and seminar availability. For professor bios, please visit our website.

FALL SEMINARS

Shakespeare in Performance
Alan Friedman, Department of English
Friday, September 22nd & Friday, October 20th

Seminar participants will both study the texts of plays and view videos in order to gain a sense of the range of interpretive staging possibilities the plays contain. TAS teachers will also see Hamlet performed live by a five-person troupe, Actors from the London Stage.

Race and Gender in the Classroom: Strategies for Addressing Children’s Biases
Rebecca Bigler, Department of Psychology
Monday, October 9th & Monday, October 30th

Children classify individuals according to race and gender within the first year of life, and endorse stereotypes about race and gender before kindergarten. Over the last decade, psychologists have learned a great deal about children’s thinking about race and gender, factors that promote stereotyping and prejudice, and interventions that reduce race and gender biases. This seminar will focus on such scholarship and positive ways in which teachers can address race and gender in the classroom.

Creating a Culture of Writing across the Curriculum
Joan Mullin, Division of Rhetoric and Writing
Tuesday, October 17th & Tuesday, November 7th

This seminar will offer teachers across the disciplines strategies to better prepare their students for writing in college and beyond. Participants will cover general and discipline-specific materials that will enable them to incorporate writing as a methodological tool to improve critical thinking; in the process, they will reshape or invent a teaching unit, complete with a formative and summative assessment plan.

Human Rights and Foreign Policy
Karen Engle, School of Law
Thursday, November 16th & Thursday, December 7th

This seminar will use the recently acquired archives of George Lister, a career diplomat in the State Department once called “Mr. Human Rights,” to explore the history and development of human rights in United States foreign policy. It will consider ways in which concepts of human rights have both informed and been shaped by foreign policy - particularly toward Latin America - during the Cold War. Cost for the seminar includes admission to the December 1st and 2nd conference, “The Life and Legacy of George Lister: Reconsidering Human Rights, Democracy, and U.S. Foreign Policy.” Participation in the Lister Conference will enable teachers to hear leading government officials, activists, and scholars on matters of human rights and foreign policy.

SPRING SEMINARS

Politics and Invention in the Founding of the American Constitution
Jeffrey Tulis, Department of Government
Thursday, February 8th & Thursday, March 1st

This seminar will explore the extraordinary debate over the establishment of the Constitution and the subsequent Bill of Rights. The stakes were very high, as the founders realized they were deciding not only on a new form of government, but also a way of life and a new kind of citizen. Recovering this perspective on the nation-building “experiment” will aid understanding of American politics today by bringing to light fundamental features of the American condition frequently taken for granted, and therefore often misunderstood.

La Llorona, from Folklore to Popular Culture
Domino Perez, Department of English and the Center for Mexican-American Studies
Friday, March 9th & Friday, March 30th

La Llorona (the weeping woman) is one of the most famous figures in the Greater Mexican oral tradition. La Llorona is a ghost or cultural bogy-woman said to haunt the shores of rivers or lakes searching for her “lost” children. She has wandered out of the oral stories, though, onto pages, canvases, celluloid, and even into cyberspace. Examining the history of the legend and its transformation in moving from oral folktales to popular cultural forms, this seminar will offer insight into the endurance and cultural relevance of this dynamic tale.

Media Savvy: Literacy Beyond the Textbook Model
Kathleen Tyner, Department of Radio, Television and Film
Thursday, March 22nd & Thursday, April 12th

Today’s students are “digital natives,” adept at using many digital, networked and electronic literacy tools - sometimes simultaneously. Nonetheless, the ability to think critically about and to strategically craft and distribute messages in new media requires skills that look surprisingly like traditional reading and writing. Participants will get an overview of international media education practices that can be used to bridge traditional literacy with new literacies and will learn more about media analysis and production strategies that contribute to learning and critical thinking across the curriculum.

ATTENTION TEACHER-SCHOLARS

Online Toolkit Goes Live

Visit the Humanities Institute’s “K-12 Resources” webpage to explore the lesson plans, classroom activities, audio resources, and flash demonstrations currently available to use and download in your classroom. These tools are made available for all interested teachers, whether you attended one of the featured Spring 2006 TAS seminars or not.
First Living Newspaper Project Gets Underway

“DID YOU KNOW THAT ONLY TWO NATIONS in the world have failed to ratify the UN’s Convention on the Rights of Children treaty?” asks high school theatre teacher Michelle Ludwig. “Somalia and the United States. That’s giving us a lot of motivation.”

The first teacher to introduce the Living Newspapers Across the Disciplines program into an Austin high school, Ludwig is immersed in the research phase for the documentary performance she and her students are creating about a specific human rights issue. The “us” she’s referring to includes the six St. Stephen’s students ranging in age from 14 to 17 who are working with her three afternoons a week for a month and are responsible for choosing and researching the topic, writing the script, and staging the performance.

The St. Stephen’s project marks the first implementation in the Humanities Institute’s new Living Newspaper program, a collaboration with the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice, the Performance as Public Practice program, and local high school teachers to invigorate secondary school education with topics and exercises that impact young peoples’ lives and draw on their own experiences.

An interdisciplinary educational initiative for Central Texas high school teachers and students, the Living Newspaper program aims to expand ideas about what university-community collaboration can mean and forge a meaningful relationship between UT and Austin-area secondary schools. The goals of the program are myriad and range from providing teachers with an alternative to traditional standardized test preparation to empowering young people to become critical thinkers and participants in the world around them.

Ludwig’s students have already begun to make connections between diverse issues and communities around the globe. The group collectively decided to pursue children’s rights as their Living Newspaper topic and include under this umbrella matters as diverse as child labor, child prostitution, juvenile justice, children with HIV/AIDS, and barriers to education. Ludwig remarks that the students’ “gentle but firm” resistance to narrowing the topic bespeaks their desire “to make the point that these are not isolated issues in isolated areas, but rather a systemic global problem.”

Approximately twenty teachers from eight different public and private high schools are scheduled to use a Living Newspaper unit in their English, Social Studies, Theatre Arts, Economics, or ESL classes this year. All teachers participated in a summer professional development workshop on the UT Austin campus during which they were introduced to the program and tried out selected lesson plans and exercises from the Living Newspaper Resource Guide, an almost 200-page compendium of lessons and supporting materials for implementing a Living Newspaper unit in the high school classroom. Fellow high school teachers serving as field specialists and UT graduate students and faculty led the workshop, which lasted six hours and included a screening of the Living Newspaper production created for the Rapoport Center’s “Working Borders” conference on the insourcing and outsourcing of labor.

Teachers recognized the interdisciplinary value of the program and eagerly discussed ways they could integrate part or all of a Living Newspaper project into their classrooms. Katherine McCarty, an English teacher in Round Rock with twelve years of teaching experience, embraced the idea of collaborative, interdisciplinary learning: “I feel like a new spark went off in my educational firebox, igniting a new level of research, literature, law, and performance,” she wrote on her workshop feedback form.

Back at St. Stephen’s, Ludwig’s afterschool group prepares to move from the research into the writing phase. School of Education Ph.D. student and UT Performing Arts Center staff member Ann David will be joining the class to offer her help in shaping, writing, and revising the script. How will the young people she meets choose to select and put together the countless news stories about children’s rights? What connections will they make among issues and between the material and their own lives? What will they learn from going through the process and what will they be able to teach others? These are only a few of the questions raised by only one of the projected implementations of this ambitious and groundbreaking program.
THE COMMUNITY SABBATICAL RESEARCH LEAVE PROGRAM entered its second full year this fall with sabbatical grants to staff members of three local nonprofit organizations. Julian Huerta of the affordable housing provider Foundation Communities, Lana Lesley of the Rude Mechs Theatre Company, and Gail Rice of Safeplace, an advocacy organization and service provider for victims of sexual and domestic abuse, will receive one month of paid flexible research leave, library and database access, and UT faculty consultants to help them develop new programs and capacities for their organizations and the constituencies they serve.

The Humanities Institute and its co-sponsor in the Community Sabbatical initiative, the Graduate School’s Professional Development and Community Engagement Program, received six times the number of applications from qualified 501(c)(3) organization staff members than could be supported with available funds—a measure of the enthusiasm and the need in the local nonprofit sector for this distinctive university-community research partnership. The program has also begun to draw national attention, and efforts are underway at other universities to replicate it. Profiles of the 2006-7 grantees, their research projects, and their faculty consultants follow. Synopses of the projects and achievements of last year’s grantees may be found on the HI web site.

Julian Huerta
Foundation Communities

JULIAN HUERTA IS THE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS for Foundation Communities, Austin’s largest nonprofit provider of affordable housing and supportive services. He develops and directs educational, social service and asset-building programs that serve more than 12,000 working poor families annually and that have been recognized as among the best housing-based supportive services in the country. Mr. Huerta is also co-founder of Sammy’s House, a nonprofit childcare center for young children with special medical and developmental needs in Austin. He brings more than 15 years’ experience in program development, nonprofit administration and fundraising.

During his Community Sabbatical Research Leave, Mr. Huerta will focus on developing strategies to improve and expand supportive housing opportunities for homeless and extremely low-income families with children in Austin. Developing this type of housing is challenging not only because affordability requires higher levels of funding, but also because homeless families often require extensive additional support in the form of case management to help them set and achieve goals, obtain higher wage jobs and weather the inevitable periodic challenges to their economic stability. The need for supportive housing for families has only grown since Hurricane Katrina forced thousands of gulf coast residents, many of whom were very poor, to relocate to central Texas. Mr. Huerta will explore research and best practices from around the country in the areas of housing design, funding and case management, with particular emphasis on how best to integrate supportive housing for families into Foundation Communities’ mixed-income properties in Austin.

Mr. Huerta will work with Dr. Elizabeth Mueller, Assistant Professor in the School of Architecture, and Professor Laura Lein, who has a dual appointment in the School of Social Work and the Department of Anthropology. Dr. Mueller’s research focuses on community-based efforts to revitalize low-income communities and help their residents rise out of poverty. Dr. Lein studies families in poverty and has special research interests and expertise in social welfare policies and programs, childcare policies and programs, and issues of gender, race and ethnicity.

Lana Lesley
Rude Mechs Theatre Company

CO-FOUNDER, CO-PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR and Business Manager for the ensemble theatre company, Rude Mechs, Ms. Lesley has co-created, co-produced and performed in seventeen original productions, and toured to select venues in the U.S. and Europe. She has received fifteen awards and nominations for her work as an actor, and was selected “Best Actor/Actress” in Austin by the Austin Chronicle 2002 and 2004 Readers’ Polls, and as one of “Austin’s Most Valuable Players” by Austin Chronicle critics.

Ms. Lesley will use her Community Sabbatical Research Leave to research new modes for actors to function as generative artists—initiators, along with playwrights and directors, of original theatrical productions. Out of her research and practicum sessions with UT Theatre and Dance faculty, Ms. Lesley will develop training workshops to share both with her own ensemble company and with other theater collectives around the country that frequently look to the Rude Mechs for training and consultation. Ms. Lesley will also seek to gain expertise in a traditional form of ac-
Gail Rice serves as the community advocacy director for SafePlace, a non-profit agency in Austin that provides a spectrum of services for victims and survivors of sexual and domestic abuse and violence. Ms. Rice began working as Volunteer Coordinator with the Austin Center for Battered Women in 1981. Although the greater part of her work in the intervening years has been in community education and advocacy, she has counseled victims of domestic violence individually, and in her class, “Understanding Domestic Violence.” She has an MSW from the Worden School of Social Work.

Over the past thirty years, there has been a growing willingness to acknowledge the need for innovative approaches to assisting persons who are abused and those who abuse them. During her Community Sabbatical, Ms. Rice will research the steps necessary to plan and integrate restorative justice principles into the Austin and Travis County programs for responding to domestic violence. Restorative justice aims to include all parties to domestic abuse in cooperative processes that work to repair its harm. Ms. Rice’s goals are to study existing restorative justice programs in the U.S. and Canada, to widen and advance local dialogue by educating stakeholders and addressing fears and reservations, and to develop training materials for implementing restorative justice ideas in local responses to domestic abuse.

Ms. Rice will work with two UT School of Social Work faculty members: Dr. Noel Busch, who studies violence against women and children and is the Principal Investigator for the Institute on Sexual and Domestic Violence, and Dr. Marilyn Armour, who studies clinical interventions with individuals and couples and specializes in restorative justice principles and practices.

Grantee Lana Lesley (center) with faculty consultants Charlotte Canning (left) and Franchelle Dorn (right).

EXCELLENCE WITHOUT A SOUL?: PHI BETA KAPPA PLANS INQUIRY INTO ESSENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

With support from the Humanities Institute and several other co-sponsors, the UT chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society will sponsor an eight-lecture series, beginning this month and continuing through fall 2007, on “The Essence of Liberal Education: What, if anything, is ‘the core’?” Some of the nation’s leading educators and thinkers about university education, representing diverse disciplines and points of view, will both lecture on this question and engage in informal discussions with UT faculty and students that are bound to enrich current deliberations on campus about core undergraduate education. Harry C. Lewis, Professor of Computer Science, former Dean of Harvard College and author of Excellence without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education (2006), will lead off the series on Friday, October 20 at 5:30 pm, in the Avaya Auditorium, ACES building. Information on future lectures and panel discussions may be found on the Hi website or at www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/pbk
THE MISSION OF THE HUMANITIES INSTITUTE at The University of Texas at Austin is to build civic and intellectual community—within, across, and beyond the University’s walls—by bringing people together to explore issues and ideas that matter. Our educational programs, cultural events, and public forums provide participants with stimulating occasions for discovery, dialog, and transformation. A gateway to the varied resources of the University, the Humanities Institute pursues creative partnerships with other institutions and constituencies throughout Central Texas to help citizens and scholars jointly produce better understandings of themselves, others, and the world.