

SEVENTH WARD SPEAKS

Mona Lisa Saloy

POET

FOLKLORIST

AUTHOR, *Red Beans and Ricely Yours*

WINNER, PEN/OAKLAND JOSEPHINE

MILES AWARD IN POETRY
2006 AND T.S. ELIOT PRIZE
IN POETRY 2005

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND
DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE WRITING,
DILLARD UNIVERSITY

MEDALED SWIMMER WITH

NORD POOLS, HARDIN PARK

WRITERS TEND TO LISTEN, TO BE OBSERVERS. I'M always painting in words, and I want to paint something very specific. I grew up on New Orleans Street with a Creole father and a mother whose family was from Mississippi. Everybody has a mom and a dad, but everybody's dad doesn't wake up in the morning and say, "Ahhhhhhhhh, Ya Ya. Me Di parlé mais ça, d'ici là mon ya. (This day is good. My God tell me He is with us from now on.)" That's the joy in life.

I write to capture what I think is great about us. I wanted to hear my voice—the voices of my family and community in the Seventh Ward—and contribute to the discussions of who we are as a people. There is not one monolithic black culture, but there are a lot of givens within the African worldview: we believe in a higher power, we are close to family and then community. For me, Creole is Black even though it's a French language. It is one of the ways our African selves existed through another culture.



THIS POSTER PROJECT IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
THE PORCH AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD STORY PROJECT.
INTERVIEW CONDUCTED AT MONA LISA'S HOME ON NEW ORLEANS STREET BY RACHEL
BREUNLIN AND ASHLEY NELSON IN AUGUST OF 2005. INSET PHOTOGRAPH BY ROY LEWIS.

For more information about the Porch call, 504-312-2701 or 713-504-6267.