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## Author of Reading Lolita in Tehran Opens Diversity Lecture Series; Slate Includes Heroic Hotel Manager Featured in Hotel Rwanda

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**AUTHOR OF *READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN* OPENS DIVERSITY LECTURE SERIES;  
SLATE INCLUDES HEROIC HOTEL MANAGER FEATURED IN *HOTEL RWANDA***

DAYTON, Ohio – Azar Nafisi, author of the international bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, will kick off the University of Dayton's 2006-2007 Diversity Lecture Series with a free talk at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 14 in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.

Other speakers include:

- National Public Radio correspondent Joseph Shapiro, 8 p.m., Nov. 8, Kennedy Union Ballroom. Free and open to the public.

- Educator and humanitarian Johnnetta Betsch Cole, 6:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 15, venue to be announced. Cole will keynote the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Annual Holiday Celebration and Presidential Banquet, co-sponsored by UD and the Dayton Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Cole also will headline UD's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 16, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom.

- Rwandan hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina, 7:30 p.m., Feb. 20, Kennedy Union Ballroom. Free and open to the public.

In addition, two Pulitzer Prize winners who write about race, the past president of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and an Indian-American Muslim journalist will visit campus.

Gloria Ladson-Billings, past president of the AERA who holds the Kellner Family Chair in Urban Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will address "What if we Leave All the Children Behind?" at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 2, in the Sears Recital Hall as the annual Ellis Joseph Lecture. Edward P. Jones, author of *The Known World*, a novel about slavery that won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, will speak at 8 p.m. on Oct. 23, a lecture sponsored by the Lawrence A. Ruff Honors Author Program. *Miami Herald* columnist Leonard Pitts, who won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, will speak at 8 p.m. on Feb. 7 as part of the Distinguished Speaker Series. That series will conclude with a talk by former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Asra

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Nomani, author of *Standing Alone in Mecca: An American Woman's Struggle*, at 8 p.m. on March 6. All three talks, scheduled in the Kennedy Union Ballroom, are free and open to the public.

Nafisi, visiting professor at John Hopkins University and director of The Dialogue Project: Culture and Democracy in the Muslim World and the West, will address "The Republic of the Imagination." Nafisi was expelled from the University of Tehran in 1981 for refusing to wear the mandatory Islamic veil and did not resume teaching until 1987. *Reading Lolita* "explores the transformative powers of fiction in a world of tyranny" with its account of how Nafisi gathered young women in her home every Thursday morning to read and discuss forbidden works of Western literature.

"I have often asked myself: How is it that under the worst political and social conditions, during war and revolution, in jails and in concentration camps, most victims turn toward works of imagination?" Nafisi wrote in a piece published in the *Washington Post* "Book World" in 2004.

Joseph Shapiro, who wrote the 1993 book, *NO PITY: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*, covers health, aging, disability and children and family issues for NPR. For 19 years, he wrote for *U.S. News & World Report*, where he covered social policy issues and served at various times as the magazine's Rome bureau chief, White House correspondent and congressional reporter.

Johnnetta B. Cole is the president of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C. She made history in 1987 by becoming the first African-American woman to serve as president of Spelman College. She was the first person of color to chair the board of United Way of America, a position she held from 2004-2006. She co-authored the 2003 book, *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities*.

Paul Rusesabagina turned the hotel he managed into a sanctuary and saved more than 1,000 people during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. He received the National Civil Rights Museum's 2005 Freedom Award, and his heroism inspired the movie, *Hotel Rwanda*.

Previous Diversity Lecture Series speakers included Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King, Clarence Page and Nikki Giovanni. The Diversity Lecture Series – part of a larger strategic plan to foster inclusion and diversity on campus and prepare students, faculty, staff and the Dayton community for success in a global society – is co-sponsored by the offices of the president and provost with support from corporate partners, including the *Dayton Daily News*, WHIO-TV, WDAO-1210 AM and Markey's Audio Visual.

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For media interviews about the series, contact **Lynnette Heard**, executive assistant to the president, at 937-229-4122. For ticket prices and more information about the SCLC dinner featuring Johnnetta Cole, call 937-268-0051.