



Department of English and Comparative Literature

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Spring 2008 Welcomes ZZ Packer as Lurie Professor

by Kathy Geary

The spring semester of 2008 will welcome a fresh face to the Department of English and Comparative Literature. ZZ Packer will hold the Lurie Distinguished Professor in Creative Writing position on the SJSU campus. Ms. Packer will be the seventh visiting author to hold this position at SJSU. Her book, *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*, is the SJSU Campus Reading Selection for the 2007-2008 school year.

As Lurie Professor, Ms. Packer will be speaking at a variety of events next semester, as well as teaching both an undergraduate literature course (English 177: TR 1200-1330) and a graduate workshop in writing fiction (English 241: R 1600-1845).

She comes to SJSU with stellar credentials. After graduating from Yale in 1994, Ms. Packer attended The Writing Seminar at Johns Hopkins University and The Writers' Workshop at Iowa University; she received a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University and recently was a Jones Lecturer at Stanford. In addition to these accomplishments, Ms. Packer has received multiple awards for her published works: a Rona Jaffe Writers Foundation Grant, the Ms. Giles Whiting Award,



the *Bellingham Review* Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in fiction. The title story in her short-story collection, *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*, was published in *The New Yorker* in the 2000 debut fiction issue. ZZ Packer will most certainly be a welcome addition to both the Department of English and Comparative Literature and the SJSU campus at large.

Though born in Chicago, Zuwena (Swahili for "good") was raised in Atlanta, Georgia and Louisville, Kentucky, an upbringing that imbues her writing with the essences of the American South. With race relations and conflicts woven into the fabric of her storytelling, Packer captivates her reader with events told through the eyes of African-American youth, exciting the senses with a view that focuses on the quintessential human experience, crossing both racial and cultural barriers. The stories in

