

Editor's Note

Welcome to the fall 2017 edition of the *Publication of the Afro-Latin/American Research Association (PALARA)*. As you can see, the journal has come a long way since it was first published in 1997 under the editorial leadership of Dr. Marvin A. Lewis and the late Dr. Laurence Prescott. The journal's mission was to center scholarship on the African diaspora in the Americas and creative works by Afro-descendant writers. As the official journal of the Afro-Latin/American Research Association, *PALARA* was and continues to be a pioneer in the field of Afro-Latin American and African diaspora studies. Thus, almost twenty years later, we step into the shoes of the past editors, Dr. Marvin Lewis (1996-2005), Dr. Laurence Prescott (1996-2005), and Dr. Antonio D. Tillis (2006-2016). We seek to build upon this legacy and foundation established by the previous editors by making the journal more accessible to a new generation of 21st century scholars, researchers, and students through an open access format. Not only will this issue be available in digital format, but all twenty previous issues will be digitized thanks to Digital Creation at the University of Texas at Arlington. Thus, this issue recognizes the journal's rich past and seeks to solidify *PALARA*'s status and importance in the future.

This issue is dedicated to the works of Afro-Panamanian literary scholar and writer, Dr. Carlos

"Cubena" Guillermo Wilson, who passed on June 5, 2016 after a decade long battle with brain cancer. As noted in Watson's tribute, Cubena is an "important literary figure in Panama because his writings redeem the literary image of the West Indian who was excluded from the Panamanian nation-building project." In addition to Watson's tribute which chronicles Cubena's literary trajectory, there are additional works in this edition that provide new insight and will hopefully lead to new readings of Cubena's novels and short stories. Thomas Wayne Edison's article, "Ashé-Diasporan Spirituality in Carlos Wilson's *Los nietos de Felicidad Dolores*," provides an afro-diasporic reading on the role of spirituality in Cubena's well-known novel *Los nietos de Felicidad Dolores* (1991). Finally, in "Entrevista con Carlos Guillermo Wilson," Haakayoo Nobui Zoggyie offers what would be Cubena's last published interview conducted on June 14, 2014, two years before his death. In this intimate interview, Cubena offers new insight into the meanings of his lesser known novel, *La misión secreta* (2005) which completes Wilson's trilogy [(*Chombo* (1981), *Los nietos de Felicidad Dolores* (1991))] about the black Panamanian and Afro-Diasporic experience.

In addition, we remember the impact of Dr. Laurence E. Prescott, who passed on

November 27, 2016 in Ottawa, Canada. Dr. Prescott was a pioneer in the field of Afro-Hispanic studies and taught at the University of Kentucky and Pennsylvania State University. A scholar on Afro-Colombian literary works, Dr. Prescott was one of the founders of *PALARA* and served as co-editor of the journal. Luisa Ossa's moving tribute remembers Dr. Prescott as a scholar, friend, and mentor.

This volume of *PALARA* also brings to light the lesser known works of award winning Afro-Cuban playwright, Gerardo Fullea León. Darrelstan Ferguson's interview with the Cuban playwright, "Poniéndose al día con Gerardo Fullea León," situates the author within the black Cuban literary tradition and provides insight into the author as playwright and scholar.

We continue the twenty-year tradition of the journal with the publication of book reviews. In this issue, we feature a review of *When the Devil Knocks: The Congo Tradition and the Politics of Blackness in Twentieth-Century Panama* (2015), which sheds light on new scholarship on Afro-Panamanian cultural performance and a review of *José Martí, the United States, and Race*, which discusses why the book is "relevant to scholars on Cuba, race, the African diaspora, Native Americans, and Latino studies" due to Martí's notions of race.

PALARA was established as a multi-lingual, multi-disciplinary journal devoted to the study of the African diaspora in the Americas. It was also established as a collaborative effort by the founders and their institutions. We are grateful for the generous support *PALARA* has received from the University of Texas at Arlington and it is our pleasure to continue to steward this landmark journal as we advance with new technology.

Dorothy Mosby
Mount Holyoke

Sonja Stephenson Watson
University of Texas at Arlington

Co-editors