

UDC student interviews Prof Dorothy Phaire

Transcript taken from Ms. Phaire's Interview on February 7, 2008 conducted by UDC student, Shala Goolsby

GOOLSBY: What was your inspiration for the novel, "*Murder and the Masquerade*"?

PHAIRE: I wrote this story because I was intrigued with the idea of an educated, professional woman who had achieved a level of success in her career, but who was still unfulfilled, passionless and searching for happiness. The question I first asked myself was, "Does 'having it all' bring one joy?" In other words, does obtaining that particular job, degree, spouse, children, new home, new car, or other external "possession," bring happiness? In *Murder and the Masquerade*, I explored this question through my main character, psychologist Dr. Renee Hayes. This initial question led me to one of the book's underlying issues—self-esteem. I believe that low self-esteem contributes to much of the unrecognized potential and unhappiness that people endure. Many people are constantly searching for validation from outside sources instead of finding their passion for life from within. Dr. Renee appears to have it all, but she still has deep insecurities and so does the other main character in the book—her patient, Veda Simms. The story is about these two women's search for happiness and fulfillment, their ultimate self-discovery and awakening as they learn that you cannot guarantee how your career, your children, your health, or your relationships will turn out. The only thing you have control over in life is yourself and your own choices.

GOOLSBY: How do you balance writing a novel, teaching, and all the other "hats" you wear?

PHAIRE: It's called balancing, discipline, perseverance, and time management. By balance I mean I make sure that I spend time on what's important—my spiritual growth, family, and my health, because without positive mental, spiritual and physical health you're no good to anyone. That doesn't mean you have to be able to run a marathon; just be cognizant of doing all you can do to keep yourself at your best. By discipline, I mean actually sitting down and doing the work that needs to get done. I don't allow myself to get distracted by television, phone calls, or other entertainment until I've spent time on the important task at hand. Then I reward myself with some of those fun activities. However, learning discipline didn't happen all at once. I began by stealing away 15 minutes, then 30 minutes and eventually a full hour in the early mornings or late evenings to write. Perseverance is the ability to keep going without guarantee of immediate gain. I'm not saying it's easy, but I do believe if there is something that you have a passion for, nothing should stand in your way of achieving it—not failure, not rejection, nor obstacles along the way. The trick is to discover what those gifts are and go out and use them. As Ralph Ellison, Harlem Renaissance author of *The Invisible Man*, once said, "When I know who I am then I shall be free." I know that writing and teaching are my God-given gifts because they are my passions; thus, I organize myself to find time to pursue these gifts as if it were a personal mission. Then I thank God for granting me another day to keep chipping away at it. It's not about instant success; it's about a life-long journey of living and experiencing your passion and not feeling guilty if you do need to detour every once in awhile.

GOOLSBY: Has writing always been your passion, or did you begin with another profession in mind? If so, what made you turn to writing?

PHAIRE: Okay, this is something that I haven't revealed to too many people, but my first childhood dream was to become a professional ballet dancer. I took tap and ballet classes like many little girls and envisioned myself of one day performing onstage wearing those stiff, pink "tutus" and balancing myself on point shoes with my arms raised in the air. I didn't realize that my mother had enrolled me in ballet class just to learn good posture and to become more graceful, not to become a prima ballerina! My dream as a ballet dancer didn't last long, because my

guidance counselor sat me down one day and said I could never be a professional dancer because I had flat feet! End of story. End of that dream. My vivid imagination then led me to writing poetry, short stories, and eventually longer stories. That's when I embraced the dream of becoming a writer. But as an occupation this career option didn't seem practical either. When I was growing up I didn't have any role models to show me that someone could actually make a living as a full-time writer. This is one reason why I think it's vital for young people to have role models! This time I couldn't let the dream go, because I discovered that I was really my most happiest when creating new characters and plot scenarios or writing poetry. In fact, I preferred to stay in my room reading and writing rather than going outside to play. So on the practical side, I decided to pursue a professional career in Education, but I would never give up my dream as a writer.