



## **City of Asylum Las Vegas welcomes Moniro Ravanipour of Iran**

The North American Network of Cities of Asylum (NANCA) and the Black Mountain Institute (BMI) at UNLV are pleased to announce the selection of Iranian writer Moniro Ravanipour as the third City of Asylum Las Vegas writer-in-residence, following Syl Cheney-Coker of Sierra Leone and Er Tai Gao of China.

A major figure in post-revolutionary Iranian literature, Moniro Ravanipour has published eight books in Persian, including the novels *Ahl-e Ghargh* (The Drowned), *Del-e Fulad* (Heart of Steel), and *Kowli Kenar-e Atash* (Gypsy by Fire). Her two short story collections, *Sangha-ye Sheytan* (Satan's Stones) and *Kanizu*, are available in English translation, and her story "Satan's Stones" was included in *Strange Times, My Dear*, the PEN Anthology of Iranian Literature. In 2004, the Association of American Publishers offered \$10,000 toward the English publication of her novel *The Drowned*, which is currently being translated.

"In all her work, readers discover her unceasing effort to fight injustice and to challenge the subjugation of human beings, whether by the autocratic rule of the theocratic government or the norms of outmoded male-dominated society," notes M. R. Ghanoonparvar, Professor of Persian and Comparative Literature at the University of Texas at Austin. While Ravanipour herself maintains that her fiction is not overtly political, her honest portrayals of the lives and concerns of Iranians, in particular Iranian women, led to her blacklisting by the government. In early 2007, her books were stripped from Iranian bookstore shelves in a country-wide police raid.

Ravanipour has led a campaign against the stoning of women and has spoken openly at international conferences about the reform movement in her home country. In 2000, after returning from the "Iran after the Elections" conference in Berlin, she was arrested and brought to trial, one of 17 activists accused of taking part in "anti-Iran propaganda."

"One of the ways we judge a culture or a political system is how it treats its women and children," comments Dr. Carol C. Harter, Executive Director of the Black Mountain Institute, which sponsors the City of Asylum Las Vegas program. "Moniro represents an increasing number of women in fundamentalist Islamic societies who attempt to rebel against the repressive regimes that rule their countries but cannot without fear of imprisonment or even death. Moniro is one of those courageous women who has vocally rebelled at great risk to herself and to her art."

NANCA was first alerted to Ms. Ravanipour's situation by Todd Lester, Executive Director of freeDimensional, an organization that links community arts programs with artists who create dialogue on global issues and inequalities, and by Karen Lynch of the Watson Institute at Brown University, where Ms. Ravanipour was an International Writers Project Fellow from January to July 2007.

Ravanipour will arrive in Las Vegas in July, along with her husband and 10-year-old son. "We are very excited to host her here in Las Vegas, the first City of Asylum," adds Dr. Harter. "There is enormous interest in the Middle East and its people and culture, and I believe the community will embrace Moniro and her family in every way."

Please join NANCA and BMI in welcoming Moniro Ravanipour and her family to City of Asylum Las Vegas.

**CONTACT: [www.cityofasylum.org](http://www.cityofasylum.org)**