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## Delta Authors on Tour

By Dalia Wheatt

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The Tampa event is Saturday and features authors Veronica Blakely, Alicia Warren, Yolanda Joe, Trevy McDonald, Linda Everett Moye, Wanda Muir-Oliver and Angela Ray. At noon there will be a roundtable book discussion at Jan Kaminis Platt Regional Library, 3910 South Manhattan Ave., Tampa. At 6 p.m. there will be a cool jazz session and author readings at Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Public Library, 1505 Nebraska Ave., Tampa. For more information, call (813) 272-6411 or go to [www.hcplc.org](http://www.hcplc.org).

Of the top 10 hardcover nonfiction books on the New York Times bestsellers list, three are by black authors - a former child soldier, a Somali-born member of the Dutch Parliament and political rock star Barack Obama.

Their stories are remarkable, almost unbelievable. But they are the exception. The more commonplace aspects of black American life - stories of friendship, dating woes, parenthood and faith - aren't the stuff that mainstream bestsellers lists are usually made of. The ladies of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority don't take this fact lying down.

In 2000, the predominantly black sorority kicked off Delta Authors on Tour, a national series of author readings and roundtable discussions featuring writers who are alumnae of the organization. About 50 writers from across the country are involved in this year's tour.

The women participate when and where they can, usually when they have a new book to promote or if there's an event planned in their area, said Ann Bush, chairwoman of the Commission on Arts and Letters for the sorority's Tampa alumnae chapter and a librarian in the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

This is the first time Delta Authors on Tour will pass through Tampa Bay. Of the seven authors who will appear at the event on Saturday, two are Tampa residents.

"I think the tour is important because we need to promote more of our authors," said novelist Alicia Warren, a 1986 graduate of Spelman College in Atlanta. "Being in Tampa, we don't get a lot of those big conventions that

come through and talk about the type of books that we are writing, so that will bring more focus."

Warren authored and self-published *The Chances We Take* and its sequel, *One More Chance (A Vision4Q)*. Set in Tampa and New Jersey, they chronicle the love life of a black woman in corporate America who is "very much regular people," she said.

Warren, a project manager at HSBC, has sold about 50 books to her co-workers, most of whom are white. Her protagonist's on-again, off-again relationships have become watercooler talk among both male and female colleagues.

"You cannot look at people and decide who reads what," Warren said.

For poet Veronica Blakely, the Delta tour is a chance to highlight a facet of relationships rarely discussed in public. Blakely's book, *I Want What Most White Women Got: A Black Man* (Infinity Publishing), addresses her frustration with black men who refuse to date dark-skinned women.

She said she's been criticized for tackling the issue of skin color as opposed to economics, education and other concerns within the African-American community.

"All of that is very important, (but) there are other people who are talking about those issues," said Blakely, a dark-skinned divorcee and 1978 graduate of USF. "Nobody wants to face this head-on." Blakely, who teaches reading at Tampa's Middleton High School, hopes the book will provoke a no-holds-barred discussion about the role of skin tone on the African-American dating scene. She ends with a series of poems that pay tribute to black men.

Blakely describes her poetry as tongue-in-cheek, although one male reader e-mailed her to say it sounded angry. Nevertheless, on [MosaicBooks.com](http://MosaicBooks.com), a site that highlights the work of black authors, *I Want What Most White Women Got* is No. 4 on the 2007 bestseller list. Blakely plans to write a novel on the same topic.

"I said, 'No, it's not that I'm angry. It's that I'm telling the truth.' "