McKenzie Smith Smith 1

Salamone

English 9 Honors

3 March 2012

Elizabeth Alexander

On May 30th, 1962 in Harlem New York one of the most influential African American poets or all time was born. Her work is inspired, specifically by the twentieth century as well as her students she mentors at Haverford College, Northwestern University, University of Chicago and Smith College inspires Elizabeth Alexander. She has also earned her degrees at Yale, Boston University, and the University of Pennsylvania where she earned her PhD. Elizabeth Alexander is Currently the chair of African American studies at Yale, she also is the founder and mentor of Cave Canem which is an organization dedicated to promoting African- American Poets and poetry.

Her work has many reflections of earlier generations as well as the future or new generations. Alexander also emphasizes the life style of growing up as a young African American girl. The majority of Alexander’s work includes most notably race, gender politics and motherhood. Her poems are included in many different collections and have been translated into several different languages. Her work refers and talks to other people, texts and events in African American history.

Elizabeth Alexander has had many different styles and themes. Her main theme, being African American culture. In 2003 she wrote, *The Black Enterior*, a collection of poems that refers to how Alexander views the “black life and creativity behind the public face of stereotype and limited imagination”(Alexander 2) In this collection as well as others she

Smith 2

discusses the lives and work of famous African American artists, including Langston Hughes, Anna Cooper, Gwendoly Brooks and more. She also attempts to explain the cultural role that certain artists play in African American communities. She has also branched out to discuss the stereotype of African American males, specifically the murder trial of O.J. Simpson.

Elizabeth Alexander has changed the lives of African American poets for years, and with her hard work and dedication to making a better life, no doubt she will be successful for years to come.