



Department of

English

Melba Joyce Boyd

B.A. '71, M.A. '72

Distinguished Professor, Wayne State University
Adjunct Professor, University of Michigan

Dr. Melba Joyce Boyd is an award-winning poet, scholar, and documentary filmmaker, known for her contributions to African American literature, culture and film. She is the author of 13 books, including nine poetry collections and more than 100 essays on African American literature, culture and film. Describing her impact, Kresge Foundation president and CEO Rip Ranson noted that Boyd has “both reflected our times and fired up our imaginations. As both a scholar of important African American artists and in her own right, she grounds us in history and inspires us to think about the future.”

Boyd was born and raised in Detroit and earned both her bachelor's and master's in English from Western Michigan University in 1971 and 1972. After graduating from WMU, she earned her doctorate in English from the University of Michigan in 1979. Since then, she has held numerous positions in academia, including at the University of Iowa and Ohio State University. She has also been a visiting professor at the Fudan University in China and a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Bremen in Germany. Currently, she is a distinguished professor in African American Studies at Wayne State University and an adjunct professor in Afro-American and African studies at the University of Michigan.

Boyd's highly esteemed poems have been translated into French, Italian, Spanish and German. As a scholar and filmmaker, her work often focuses on Dudley Randall, founder of Detroit's groundbreaking Black-owned Broadside Press, home to prominent 20th-century African American poets including Gwendolyn Brooks and Nikki Giovanni. She served as Randall's assistant editor and authored “Roses and Revelations: The Selected Writings of Dudley Randall,” which won the 2010 Library of Michigan Notable Books Award. Her biography “Wrestling with the Muse: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press” earned a 2004 Honor Award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Boyd also produced and directed a 1996 documentary on Randall and co-produced another on poet Naomi Long Madgett. Among her nine poetry collections, “Dance of a Butterfly” received the 2013 Library of Michigan Notable Books Award for Poetry. Her other honors include the Spirit of Detroit Award, the Sojourner Truth Meritorious Award for Community Service and the Charles H. Wright Museum's Women's Award.