

AN OFRENDA HAIKU FOR

GRACE LEE BOGGS

Beloved Detroit

In Michigan time,
Detroit Summers last all year,
Even when snow falls.

Rich garden planting,
Claiming vacant lots for food,
Feeding hungry minds.

Lots, transforming time,
Fertilizing ideas,
Harvesting lost lives.

Murals document.
Art, reclaiming public space.
Revolutions make artists!

Renovating home,
Grace defined revolution
In Detroit passions.

We must do the same:
“We are the leaders [that] we
Have been waiting for.” *
—Lillian Stevens

*From Poem for *South African Women* by June Jordan

GRACE LEE BOGGS (1915-2015)

Grace Lee Boggs was a philosopher, author, social activist, and feminist. She was born in Providence, Rhode Island, the daughter of Chinese immigrants. She grew up in Jackson Heights, Queens, NY. As a result of joining tenants



protesting rat infestation in her neighborhood, Grace set out on the path as an activist for more than 70 years. Her activism was in many human rights movements, including civil rights, the Black Power movement, labor, environmental justice, and the feminist movement.

Ms Boggs and her husband, James Boggs (an auto worker and activist), founded Detroit Summer, a multicultural, inter-generational program in 1992.

The program is noted for its leadership training, creativity and collective actions which have taken many forms, including reclaiming vacant city lots and turning them into community gardens, painting neighborhood murals, restoring houses, and marching through neighborhoods calling out drug dealers and asking them to leave--all in the spirit of re-building Detroit.

Ms. Boggs wrote the last book of five, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (2012), at the age of 95. She is also the subject of the documentary, *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*. She turned 100 in June 2015; she died on October 5, 2015.

My heart has been heavy these last months because each time I turn on the TV, another black person is murdered at the hands of police. When I heard about the death of Sandra Bland in Prairie View—close to my home in Houston—I became personally involved in the rallies and vigils in honor of her. I can't find the words to express how I feel, so I found a poem (excerpted) that I hope will help you to understand my heartache.



—Tiffany Ross

Sandra Bland - Make Me Understand -

I don't care what the media say
They get paid to kill hope everyday
It paints a portrait of lies
Full of fuzzed out, fake alibis
Disregarding the people's questions
Of how and why ...

In a land of the free
Where justice is suppose to bring solace
Instead it engages in malicious violence
Perpetrated by some paid to protect
And you wonder why it's a lack of
respect...

Make me understand, how
Sandra Bland died
for a simple violation
That had no relation
To being locked up
And thrown in a cell
What the hell

Then you expect for me to believe
She died from suicide?
I rebuke that notation
In big flourescent quotations
Put 'Black Lives Matter' in heavy rotation
With each Rodney King, Trayvon Martin,
Eric Gardner, Walter Scott and Tamir Rice.
To survive, what's the price?
A life...

So many faces
In so many places...
Stop the nonsense
And be conscious
And Watch Your Back!
Because sometimes
it's just not safe
in America being Black.



—Monica Lanier, poeticmoonchild