

## Grace Lee Boggs

Dr. Grace Lee Boggs was the daughter of Chinese immigrants born in Providence, Rhode Island. Earning her Ph.D. in 1940 from Bryn Mawr College, Boggs, spent her adult life fighting for the rights of others by speaking out against poor living conditions that many faced, and focusing on struggles prevalent in the African American community. After marrying James Boggs, a black auto worker and fellow activist in 1953, Grace moved to Detroit where she would become a noted figure of the Detroit Black Power Movement and advocate of civil rights.

Dr. Boggs wrote five books in her lifetime, her last *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* coming four years before her death in 2015. Dr. Boggs continued to lift up her community in 1992 when she started *Detroit Summer*, a multicultural, intergenerational youth program that “develops youth leadership for today’s movement by involving university youth from all over the country with local youth.” In 2013 she helped open the James and Grace Lee Boggs School in Detroit, whose mission is to “nurture creative, critical thinkers who contribute to the well-being of their communities.”

Along with the civil rights and black power movements, Boggs was also active for more than seven decades in the labor, environmental justice and feminist movements. She said:

“We have to reimagine work—we can’t talk about jobs any more. We can’t beg for jobs or hope for jobs. And we have to recognize that jobs in the industrial period were actually a way to fragment our humanity. We began to depend on higher wages and consumer goods to compensate for our dehumanization. We have to create forms of work that create community and expand our humanity.

“It seems to me that we don’t need to talk only about the hours of work but about the difference between the way women look at work and the way you have a job. You have jobs that demean you, that dehumanize you, that fragment you; that make you an appendage to the machine. We make up for it by demanding higher wages or shorter hours. What we need is the kind of work that women do—not counting the hours because they care—and that’s a real transformation from a patriarchal concept of work to a matriarchal concept of work. That’s where we are. I mean we are fundamentally [challenged] in terms of our human identity at this moment. Until we approach this moment with that challenge in mind, we’re going to get lost.

“That’s why we have to talk about revolution these days. We have to get rid of the old ideas of leadership and followership and use our imaginations to create the new.”

Grace Lee Boggs died in 2015 at the age of 100. She continues to serve as an inspiration for community activists and we are thankful for her contributions to many of the social movements that occurred in her lifetime. CLUW salutes Dr. Grace Lee Boggs for her contributions to improving our world.

In Lasting Unity,

Sylvia J. Ramos  
CLUW President