



**LITERACY
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION**

Fenice B. Boyd



Biography:

Fenice B. Boyd is Chair and Professor of the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. She has taught middle school, undergraduate, and graduate students reading, writing, and literacy courses as related to languages, language variations and cultures. Her research agenda has focused on the literacy practices of adolescents from underserved communities. Recently, Fenice and her colleagues were awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to investigate culturally sustaining STEM (CS-STEM) pedagogy. Embedded within a Community-Based Participatory Research model, their feasibility study provides opportunities for people from Gullah Geechee communities to expand and build networks to sustain and promote human and natural resources, empowers teachers to design and implement culturally sustaining STEM curriculum, and invites dialogue that challenges and critiques narratives and perceptions about who participates in STEM scholarship, careers and practices.

Candidate Statement:

I am honored and proud to be a candidate for Vice President-Elect for the Literacy Research Association. It seems like yesterday when I attended my first annual National Reading Conference (former name of this organization) in 1991 in Palm Springs, CA as a doctoral student. There is a funny story about how I was to ride to the San Diego airport with the new President of the organization, but he was seen the night before loading his car, so the consensus was he had left me behind in Palm Springs—so I thought. I made it back to East



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Lansing safely and Jim Flood called me to apologize for the miscommunication. I briefly share this story to remind myself that for 30 years LRA (formerly NRC) has been my professional home where I am fortunate to have grown from my experiences, collaborations and contributions with a community of scholars associated with the organization. Further, my story reminds me that LRA is a professional organization that extends collegiality across race, ethnicities, cultures, interests and career paths.

I have served LRA in a variety of leadership roles including the Board of Directors (2010–2013), Chair for the Early Career Achievement Award Committee (2015–2018), Chair of the Oscar Causey Award Committee (2020–2023), and member of the P. David Pearson Scholarly Influence Award Committee (2014–2017). I was fortunate to be invited to serve as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of Literacy Research* (2017–2018). I started presenting at LRA as a doctoral student; I have reviewed countless conference proposals, and served as an area chair multiple times across the years. I served on several ad hoc committees such as the International and Long-Range Planning Committees (1993–1999). For my ongoing efforts to support LRA across decades, I am the 2016 recipient of the Albert J. Kingston Award for distinguished service to the organization.

I am Chair for the largest department in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina (2017 – Present) and a former Associate Dean for Teacher Education at the University at Buffalo, SUNY (2008 – 2013). While a university administrator I have remained active as a literacy scholar. Two broad strands are fundamental in my scholarship: (a) diversity as it relates to students' ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, academic abilities, instructional approaches, and curriculum, and (b) the impact of policy and politics on literacy and teacher preparation. Since my tenure as Chair I have worked with colleagues to nurture established partnerships and form new ones with school districts to provide professional development around equity, diversity, and inclusion to meet the needs of teachers, students, and the communities they serve. And I have mentored and supported faculty as they pursue their teaching, research and service agendas. If I am elected I will draw on my leadership experiences to support LRA and its members.

My future contributions to LRA are embedded within my past and current experiences as a leader and scholar. As I bring my statement to a close, I draw on another story to articulate my vision for the organization if I were to be elected. On the eve before I submit my materials, I attended a Virtual Town Hall facilitated by several advocacy groups in South Carolina (e.g., SC/ACLU). The purpose was to provide information about measures South Carolina legislatures are taking to pass several Bills that will make it illegal to teach content related to race, racism, slavery, diversity, equity and inclusion. Attempts to pass such Bills into law so as to censor and oppress truths about the history, experiences and contributions of marginalized people are perfidious and disgraceful. If passed, these laws will not only constrain the work of classroom



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teachers; they will constrain teacher educators, teacher education programs, and literacy research.

However, with challenges come opportunities. I admire the work of Septima Poinsette Clark, an educator, and teacher activist. Born on May 3, 1898 in Charleston, SC, her life's work entailed working to establish Citizenship Schools across the southeastern U.S. to teach Black adults how to read and write their name so that they could register and exercise their right to vote. It was challenging work and Septima Clark took that challenge as an opportunity to bring about positive change. In the very last sentence of her autobiography titled *Ready from Within* she states, "The only thing that's really worthwhile is change. It's coming."

These challenging times with respect to potential threats on literacy research, scholarship, curriculum and what teachers teach, and what students should not learn, offer opportunities for LRA to build on its dynamic and robust Strategic Plan. Keeping in line with the strands of the Strategic Plan, the mission, and my own scholarship, the South Carolina Virtual Town Hall I mentioned above is an example of how our organization must strategically collaborate with local, state, and national agencies to continue to advocate for progressive and diverse literacy research, methodologies, as well as inclusive curriculum content that is representative of varied races, ethnicities, cultures, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion, abilities, languages, histories, ideas and ideals.

I know LRA is strongly poised to address these challenge and, if elected, my vision centers on the following: a) initiate research-based responsive dialogue among and between conference participants, policy makers, and sister research organizations (e.g., NCTE, ILA, etc.) about potentially divisive and unjust legislation and initiatives; b) support interpersonal/intrapersonal diversity, equity and inclusion goals by creating a series of community-based virtual listening sessions/podcasts with diverse and underserved communities to engage and gather insights about literacy purposes, needs and support mechanisms; and c) promote existing pathways, and develop new pathways, to strengthen international connections via conference presentations, research studies, publications, and mentorship. With my record of leadership, these three actions would serve as the beginning of my platform, along with serving as a strong steward of LRA's fiscal health, and its mission in promoting rigorous research, methodologies, and diversity, equity and inclusivity.