Robert Hayden and Dudley Randall
Centennial Calendar 2013-2014

Robert Hayden was born on August 4, 1913 in Detroit, Michigan, and Dudley Randall was born on January 14, 1914 in Washington DC, but moved to Detroit with his family on January 1, 1920. They are two of the most renowned poets who grew up and began writing poetry in the Detroit communities known as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. Their literary legacies are grounded in Detroit, but their work extended beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of their lives into the outer reaches of the world.

Hayden and Randall were first introduced to each other because they were poets. This introduction in 1937 occurred during the Great Depression and when both were engaged in the labor movement in Detroit. This relationship evolved into a life-long friendship. Though they pursued higher education at different times in their lives, they both majored in English at Wayne State University, and they both secured graduate degrees at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor: Hayden in creative writing and Randall in library science. Ultimately, both poets achieved international recognition and critical acclaim as poets; and as editors and educators, they made major contributions to the African American literary canon.
The Robert Hayden/Dudley Randall Centennial Project will commemorate these poets through a variety of programs and activities at different Detroit area sites. The broader purpose of these events is to examine the two poets’ contributions to American culture, to expose their work to new audiences, to provide opportunities for creative and scholarly expressions that intersect with their poetic legacies, and to acknowledge the historical occasion.

Calendar of Events

On September 21, 2013, 2pm: Poet and professor Herbert Martin of the University of Dayton will read and discuss the poetry of Randall and Hayden during the Wayne State University Lit Walk. His presentation will occur at the WSU Welcome Center at 2pm. Poet ML Liebler and the Magic Poetry Band will also perform.

September 28, 2013: Hayden/Randall poetry reading in the Beatrice Buck’s Paradise Valley Park in downtown Detroit, at 4pm where facial images of Hayden and Randall appear in the artwork inside the park that celebrates famous persons from Paradise Valley. Detroit poet laureate, Naomi Long Madgett, will be the first reader and will reflect about Hayden and Randall. Poets, scholars, family and friends of the poets will read their favorite works by Hayden and Randall or poems they have written about for the poets. Participants include: Bill Harris, Detroit Kresge Eminent Artist; Aneb Kgositsile, Broadside poet and editor; Terry Blackhawk, Kresge Fellow and Director of Inside Out Literary Project; Melba Joyce Boyd, Broadside poet, Randall biographer, editor and literary executor; M. L. Liebler, award-winning poet and Wayne State University professor; Hilda Vest, Broadside poet and editor; Herb Martin, Broadside poet; Frank Rashid, Hayden scholar and professor at Marygrove College; Gloria House, Broadside poet and editor and professor at University of Michigan—Dearborn; Deborah Smith Pollard, University of Michigan—Dearborn professor; Kim Hunter, poet and community activist; Wardell Montgomery, poet and cultural activist; Marilynn Rashid, poet and translator; Mary Minock, poet and Madonna University professor; Dennis Teichman, poet; and many others.

The reading will be followed by a reception and jazz performance in the main gallery at the Virgil Carr Center, which is adjacent to the park, 311 E. Grand River.

October 3, 2013: ASAP/5 Conference, Wayne State University, 1:45 pm: The Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present will host a panel, Robert Hayden, Michael Harper, 1970s Detroit. Panelists are Janice N. Harrington, the University of Illinois, Brian McHale, The Ohio State University, and Frank Rashid, Marygrove College. Open to conference participants only.

October 10, 2013, 7:30 pm: As part of Marygrove College’s Defining Detroit series, Prof. Melba Joyce Boyd and Prof. Frank Rashid will give a joint presentation on Robert Hayden and Dudley Randall. Film clips and bio-critical discussion of the Detroit writers will trace the relationship between their lives and their writings. 7:30 pm, Marygrove College Theatre, 8425 West McNichols, Detroit. Free and open to the public. Call 313-927-1383 for information.

November 1, 2013: Robert Hayden: A Centennial Conference And Poetry Tribute Hayden at the Rackham Amphitheater at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, features poet Harriet Mullen, Professor of English and Creative Writing at UCLA as the keynote speaker. Other participants include Hayden editor Frederick Glaysher, poet Lawrence Joseph, UM professor and scholar Laurence Goldstein, and UM faculty members Linda Gregerson and A. Van Jordan.

November 1, 2013: At the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, the Department of African and African American Studies at the University of Michigan—Dearborn will host a seminar on the works of Hayden and Randall. Date and time to be announced.
An exhibit of books and broadsides by and about Hayden and Randall, historic photos, as well as rare manuscripts and papers is being prepared for the Centennial Celebration. These will be on display at various sites, including the University of Detroit Mercy, Dudley Randall Print Center, and Wayne State University, David Adamany Undergraduate Library.

January 12, 2014: Broadside Press and the University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) will co-sponsor a celebration of Dudley Randall's birthday, January 14, 1914, on Sunday, January 12 at 3:00 p.m. at the University of Detroit Mercy McNicholls Library. This event will be held in the Bargman Room of the UDM Library, where a national Literary Landmark plaque honors Mr. Randall's contributions to American literature. The program will feature readings by Broadside poets and other metro area writers. Refreshments will be served. Free admission.

February 2014: Black History Month: Wayne State University, Department of Africana Studies will host a conference on Robert Hayden and Dudley Randall. Selected poets and scholars will make presentations, and there will be a poetry reading in their honor. TBA.

March 2014: the University of Michigan’s Semester in Detroit Project will host a screening of The Black Unicorn: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press and Austere and Lonely Offices: The Poetry of Robert Hayden. A discussion with the filmmaker will follow the screening. TBA.

April 2014 Poetry Month will be dedicated to the Hayden/Randall Centennial. There will be a premier showing of the documentary film, Austere and Lonely Offices at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. A poetry reading will follow at the Ring of Genealogy in the Rotunda, where both poets have been commemorated. Reading of original works by the poets, as well as a performance by students in the Inside Out Literary Project will extend the Hayden/Randall legacy. TBA.

These events will occur at Wayne State University, Marygrove College, University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, University of Detroit Mercy, and University of Michigan Detroit Center. Most events are free and open to the public.

Affiliated Organizations

- Wayne State University, Departments of Africana Studies and English
- Wayne State University Library, Office of the Dean
- Wayne State University Press
- Wayne State University, Humanities Center
- University of Detroit, Dudley Randall Print Center and the African American Studies Program
- Marygrove College, Department of English and Modern Languages and Institute for Detroit Studies
- The Carr Center, Detroit
- Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.
- Inside Out Literary Project
- Michigan State University, African American Studies Program
- Eastern Michigan University, Department of African American Studies
- The Source Book Sellers
- University of Detroit's Dudley Randall Print Center and the African American Studies Program
- University of Michigan—Dearborn, Departments of African American Studies Program and English
- University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, Departments of Afroamerican and African Studies and English
- University of Michigan Detroit Center