

About the Professorship

The Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professorship was initiated in 1981 to foster multiculturalism, diversity, and academic excellence at Metropolitan State University of Denver. The professorship brings renowned scholars and artists of distinction to MSU Denver to conduct classes, seminars, performances, and lectures for students, faculty, and the larger Denver community.

MSU Denver has hosted numerous luminaries and highlighted each professor's unique background and experiences to the campus and broader community.

The two main components of the professorship are the Campus and Community events. The community event traditionally occurs at Shorter Community AME Church, where Professor Rachel Noel worshiped, and her stained-glass portrait is displayed. In addition to the Keynote address, the community event program includes the Hope for the Future Awards and the awarding of Rachel B. Noel scholarships.



Professorship Components

MSU Denver has a few components that typically comprise the activities of the Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professorship. These components may be adjusted based on the professor, their area of expertise, availability, and current events.

Primary components include:

- Campus speech
- Community speech
- Meeting with student and campus leaders

Additional components can include:

- Book signing
- Film screening
- Meeting with faculty and staff
- Classroom presentations
- K-12 student presentations



Awards and Scholarships

MSU Denver's Hope for the Future Award honors Rachel B. Noel's distinguished legacy as a warrior of the civil rights movement and her effort to integrate Denver Public Schools. The planning committee seeks nominations to recognize and honor individuals, groups, or organizations who demonstrate measurable progress in promoting inclusiveness, equality, and diversity. Their efforts may involve but are not limited to civic engagement, institutional leadership, and academic scholarship that has contributed substantially to Rachel B. Noel's vision of progressive social change.

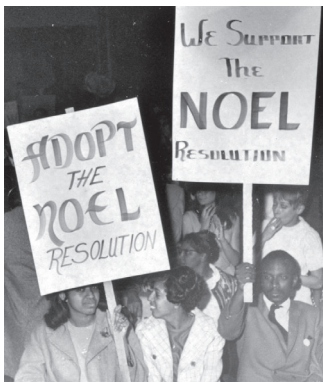
The Rachel B. Noel scholarship recognizes MSU Denver students who have carried on Rachel B. Noel's legacy and served as an exemplary model for fellow MSU Denver students. These exemplary activities may include community service, advocacy efforts inside and outside of the campus community, and academic excellence that echoes Rachel B. Noel's emphasis on the importance of education.

About Rachel B. Noel

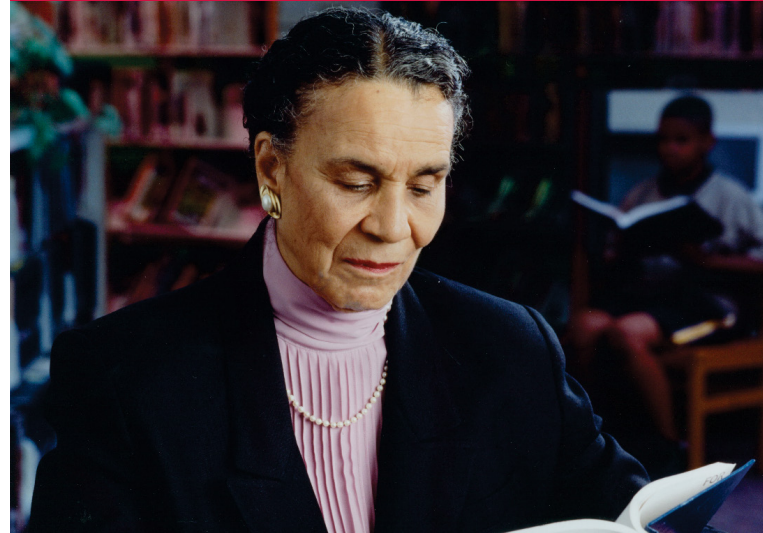
Rachel B. Noel is a legend in Colorado. She was the first African-American woman to be elected to public office in the state and the first African-American to serve on Denver's Board of Education and as a member and chair of the University of Colorado Board of Regents. She introduced the "Noel Resolution" in 1968, which aimed to provide equal opportunity to Denver's school children and led to a historic legal victory: the U.S. Supreme Court's first de facto desegregation decision involving a Northern school district. She was named by the Rocky Mountain News as one of Colorado's Top 100 Citizens of the Century in 2000, one of countless awards she won in her lifetime. And yet for those who knew her, for those whose lives she touched, Noel was simply a humble and gracious woman whose guiding principle was to live what she believed.

Noel also was a faculty member at MSU Denver from 1969-80. She built the African-American Studies Department and chaired it from 1971-80. She was known as a gifted scholar and perceptive colleague who often challenged the University community to practice what it preached. In 1974-75, Noel was recognized as ASMSC Outstanding Female Faculty Member. In her later years, she would receive honorary doctoral degrees from University of Colorado, University of Denver and MSU Denver.

A sociologist by training and a teacher at heart, Noel had a reputation for going above and beyond on behalf of her students. Her son noted that, "She enjoyed seeing her students progress as individuals and in their understanding of social justice issues as they played out in Denver, in particular the longtime struggle for justice in the African-American community."



Shortly after Noel's retirement, MSU Denver launched the Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professorship. The professorship was created to celebrate and foster the courageous commitment to multiculturalism, diversity and education that defined Noel's years at the institution. For the last four decades,



the professorship has brought renowned scholars, musicians, corporate leaders, writers, political trailblazers, actors and other luminaries to campus to conduct seminars, performances and lectures for the community.

Noel passed away in 2008 at the age of 90, but never lost her passion for education and activism. Both her children believe that if she were alive today, she would be involved in movements that advocate for fairness and inclusion. They are certain she would be concerned about the continuing racial disparities in Denver Public

Schools as well as racial injustices across the nation, and would encourage her students to be a part of the dialogue and the solution. After all, Noel believed you could always do more, grow more and learn more.

"She always wanted to push forward," her daughter observed. "If she were at MSU Denver today, she'd be asking 'what still needs to be done? Yes, we have accomplished some great things in the past, but how do we protect the advancements we've made and continue to push for more?'"

As MSU Denver celebrates 40th anniversary year of the professorship, what better time to ask those tough questions, to ensure that the University is true to its mission, for us all to live as Rachel B. Noel did — with authenticity.

"Rachel B. Noel was a trailblazer, an icon, and a fighter for civil rights and school desegregation in Denver and Colorado. She fought and advocated for the teaching of Black Studies at MSU Denver. Her legacy lives on and it is imperative to continue honoring her with the visiting professorships."

Douglas Mpondi, Ph.D.
 Professor and Chair, Africana Studies Department

Past Rachel B. Noel Professors

Phoebe A. Haddon, J.D.

Joy-Ann Reid

Melina Abdullah, Ph.D.

Philip S. Hart, Ph.D.

Aishah Shahidah Simmons

Wellington E. Webb

Wilma J. Webb

Janet Mock

Melissa Harris-Perry, Ph.D.

Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, Ph.D.

Brenda Palms Barber

Judi Hampton

Julius E. Coles

Al Young

Faith Adiele

Callie Crossley

Mannie Jackson

Dianne Reeves

Randall Robinson, J.D.

Nickolas Ashford

Valerie Simpson

Ossie Davis

Lerone Bennett Jr.

Alvin Poussaint, M.D.

Iyanla Vanzant, J.D.

Johnnetta Cole, Ph.D.

Cornel West, Ph.D.

Billy Taylor, Ph.D.

Ossie Davis was an American film, television and Broadway actor, director, poet, playwright, author, and civil rights activist. He and his wife were named to the NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame; were awarded the National Medal of Arts and were recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors. Davis, alongside Ahmed Osman, delivered the eulogy at the funeral of Malcolm X. He also delivered a stirring tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, at a memorial in New York's Central Park.



Philip S. Hart is CEO of Hart Realty Advisors, a division of Tanya Hart Communications, Inc. Hart is a noted educator, author and filmmaker. His books include: Flying Free: Americas First Black Aviator, Lever Books, Up in the Air: The Story of Bessie Coleman, Corolrhoda Books. Among his films is the documentary Flying in Search of a Dream, a non-fiction film now in distribution by PBS Video..

Joy-Ann Reid is the host of "The Reid Out", on MSNBC, the author of the books Fracture: Barack Obama, the Clintons and the Racial Divide, We Are the Change We Seek: The Speeches of Barack Obama and The Man Who Sold America: Trump and the Unraveling of the American Story. She co-hosts the podcast Reid This / Reid That with journalist and "New York Live" co-host Jacque Reid.



Iyanla Vanzant is an American inspirational speaker, lawyer, spiritual teacher, author, and TV personality who is best known for hosting Iyanla: Fix My Life, on OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network. She is also known for her books, her eponymous talk show, and her appearances on The Oprah Winfrey Show. In 2000 Vanzant was name one of the "100 most influential Black Americans by Ebony magazine.

Hon. Wellington Webb spent 12 years as the mayor of the Mile High City. Prior to being elected mayor, he served in the Colorado legislature; was appointed a Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under President Carter; Executive Director of Colorado's Department of Regulatory Agencies; and was elected Denver's Auditor. His first career was as a teacher and then faculty member at two state universities.



Hon. Wilma J. Webb served six terms in the Colorado House of Representatives and among her accomplishments was the introducing and passing of bills to establish Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Long-Term Home Health Care for senior citizens, and Drug Treatment Care for assistance to substance abusers. Her political involvement in civics began as a community organizer to register voters, assist impoverished families, and encourage equality in education.

Cornel West is a prominent and provocative democratic intellectual. He is Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. He has also taught at Union Theological Seminary, Yale, Harvard, and the University of Paris. Cornel West graduated from Harvard in three years and obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy at Princeton. He is best known for his classics, Race Matters and Democracy Matters, and his memoir, Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud. His most recent book, Black Prophetic Fire, offers a look at African American leaders.

