

FROM GROWING OUR ECONOMY TO GROWING OUR SOULS A BOGGS CENTER DETROIT TOUR



“I feel sorry for people who don’t live in Detroit.”

- Grace Lee Boggs



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James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to
Nurture Community Leadership

From Growing Our Economy to Growing Our Souls A Boggs Center Detroit Tour



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the tour's focus?

This is a tour of Detroit's East Side, hosted by the [James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership](#). The tour is rooted in the ideas and activism of James and Grace Lee Boggs, Detroit activists whose [lineage and legacy](#) the Boggs Center carries forward.

We host the tour for people who are eager to be introduced to, and begin to learn about and engage with, the story of Detroit as told from below. This is a story of and by people who are making a way out of no way, and who see opportunities amidst the crises of the present moment.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Cont.

Why does the Boggs Center offer the tour?

We offer the tour as a way of speaking truth to power, shifting and shaping the narrative of Detroit. This is particularly important now, as the dominant narrative of Detroit's "revitalization" (that is, displacement and gentrification) is extremely dangerous and filled with blatant lies.

We hope to nurture the development of ambassadors to our struggle who will go on to share the story of Detroit as told from below. By continuing to strengthen our global network of ambassadors, we are working towards winning an ongoing war of position.



Who has taken the tour?

We have hosted groups from across the world—Morocco, Indonesia, China, Mexico, Brazil, and many other places—as well as hundreds of Detroiters, including people from all walks of life, such as middle school, high school and college students, artists, journalists, educators, activists, writers, and documentary filmmakers.

We also regularly host groups attending Detroit-based gatherings such as the [Allied Media Conference](#), the [New Work, New Culture Conference](#), and the [Bioneers Conference](#), as well as people participating in more extended Learning Journeys at the Boggs Center.

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Tour Details

The tour begins at the [Elmwood Cemetery](#), so that we can see, feel, and walk the land as it once was, invoking our relationship to time, Indigenous peoples, and the resilience of the land and land-based resistance against colonial dispossession.



We then move on to the [Packard Automotive Plant](#), where we discuss the history of mass production, the auto industry, and the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North.



While visiting the Packard Plant we draw on several themes from Jimmy Boggs' 1963 book, *The American Revolution*, including the rise of industrial automation, the increasing pace of technological change, and the creation of "outsiders" and the "underclass."

We consider the rise and fall of the "American Dream," and how we have entered a new epoch in human history, focusing throughout on the importance of ideas and on the complexity of time.



We then move on to [GM's Poletown Detroit/Hamtramck Assembly](#), where we discuss the contradiction between the JOB economy and community. If creating ever more jobs isn't the answer to our problems, then what's the alternative? We explore what it could mean to redefine work beyond jobs, tracing the emergence of New Work, New Culture.

On our visit to Poletown our conversation also touches on the rise of Coleman A. Young, Detroit's first African American mayor; on the difference between Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution, following the Detroit Rebellion of 1967; and on the need for what Martin Luther King Jr. called a "radical revolution of values."

From there we go to [Feedom Freedom Growers](#) to visit Myrtle Denise Thompson and Wayne Curtis, learning about the rise of the urban farming movement and how to “Grow a Garden, Grow a Community.”



We may also find ourselves at [Earthworks Urban Farm](#), a 2.5 acre certified organic farm where Detroiters seek to build a just, beautiful food system through education, inspiration, and community development.



Next up is the [Heidelberg Project](#), where we discuss community-based art, the historical significance of the War on Drugs, the rise of gangs, and the response by community groups such as Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD), We the People Reclaiming Our Streets (WEPROS), and Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality (DCAPB).



We then drive over to the [Boggs School](#), where the children wear t-shirts that say “We are Solutionaries!” and where our conversation expands to include consideration of place-based education.

Our final stop is [Can Art Handworks](#), where we visit with Carlos Neilbock, learn about his craft initiatives with metals and windmills. We end where Bloody Run Creek is covered by land to be reminded of the resilience of land, imagination, and visionary resistance.



We often conclude our tour with an important debriefing session at the Boggs Center, where we are committed to creating a Safe Space and a Brave Space for asking questions, reflecting collectively and personally.

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Opportunities for Further Tours and Dialogues

We also offer visits to and tours of the following:

- [Incite-Focus Center for Community Production](#), where we discuss New Work, New Culture with Blair Evans
- **Birwood House**, where we discuss community-building with Kim Sherobbi; **Hope House**, where we learn about Restoring the Neighbor Back to the Hood with Yusef Shakur; then on to the **Brightmoor Community** and several other community houses
- [Allied Media Projects](#), where we learn about the Allied Media Conference and other AMP projects
- Meet with artists and activists, including [Tawana “Honeycomb” Petty](#), [Invincible](#), [Sterling Toles](#), and [Wayne Curtis](#)
- Visit murals across the city, such as the [Alley Project](#) and the [Nicole MacDonald Portrait Series](#)
- [Hush House](#), where we learn about the community work of Charles and Sandra Simmons on Detroit’s West Side
- [D-Town Farm](#), where we learn about community food security, food justice, and food sovereignty with members of the [Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#), plus many, many urban gardens across the city

In addition to **From Growing Our Economy to Growing Our Souls**, we recommend the following tours of Detroit:

- [From Rebellion to Creating Caring Communities](#), a tour of Detroit’s West Side, with Kim Sherobbi and Stephen Ward
- [Black Scroll Network History and Tours](#), a series of tours with Jamon Jordan, focused on Detroit’s rich African American heritage
- [Earthworks Farm](#), a self-guided tour on Detroit’s East Side

If you have any questions, would like to book a tour, or are interested in participating in a more extended Learning Journey at the Boggs Center, please contact Rich Feldman

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“It is only in relationship to other bodies and many somebodies that anybody is somebody.”

- Jimmy Boggs

<http://boggscenter.org>



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