



**NOAA** NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
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### **Awarding-Winning Poet and Author to Share Works at Woods Hole Juneteenth Celebration June 19**

The former Poet Laureate of Connecticut and a national award-winning author will read some of her favorite poems June 19 as part of the Woods Hole Black History Month Committee's celebration of Juneteenth. Dr. Marilyn Nelson's presentation of "A Selection of Poems for Juneteenth" will be followed by a social event to celebrate the day recognized internationally for commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

The author or translator of twelve books and three chapbooks, poet Marilyn Nelson was born to a career Air Force officer, one of the last of the Tuskegee Airmen, and a teacher. She wrote her first poem at age 11 and has been writing ever since, revealing a unique perspective from growing up on military bases and often focusing on her family and family relationships. She earned her B.A. from the University of California, Davis, M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

Her reading on June 19 is free and open to the public and will begin at 4:00 p.m. in the Speck Auditorium of the Rowe Laboratory at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) on MBL Street in Woods Hole, Mass.

Nelson began her teaching career in 1970 at Lane Community College in Oregon, spent a year teaching English in Denmark, and then taught at St. Olaf College in Minnesota before joining the faculty at the University of Connecticut in 1978, where she served as Professor of English until 2002. She also taught poetry at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and was Professor of English at the University of Delaware from 2002 to 2004. Since 2004 she has been Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Connecticut and director/founder of Soul Mountain Retreat, a writers' colony. She served as Poet Laureate of the State of Connecticut from 2001 to 2006.

Her books include *The Fields of Praise: New and Selected Poems* (1997), which was a finalist for the 1998 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize, the 1997 National Book Award, and the PEN Winship Award; and *The Homeplace* (1990), which won the 1992 Annisfield-Wolf Award and was a finalist for the 1991 National Book Award. *Carver: A Life In Poems* won the 2001 *Boston Globe/Hornbook* Award and the Flora Stieglitz Straus Award, and was a finalist for the 2001 National Book Award, a Newbery Honor Book, and a Coretta Scott King Honor Book.

More recent works include *Fortune's Bones*, a Coretta Scott King Honor Book and winner of the Lion and the Unicorn Award for Excellence in North American Poetry. *A Wreath For Emmett Till* won the 2005 *Boston Globe/Horn Book* Award and was a 2006 Coretta Scott

King Honor Book, a 2006 Michael L. Printz Honor Book, and a 2006 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award Honor Book. *The Cachoeira Tales and Other Poems* won the L.E. Phillabaum Award and was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award.

Nelson has also published two collections of verse for children: *The Cat Walked through the Casserole and Other Poems for Children* (with Pamela Espeland, 1984) and Halfdan Rasmussen's *Hundreds of Hens and Other Poems for Children* (1982), which she translated from Danish with Pamela Espeland.

Her honors include two Pushcart Prizes, two creative writing fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Fulbright Teaching Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the 1990 Connecticut Arts Award, and three honorary doctoral degrees.

Following Dr. Nelson's presentation, there will be a barbeque starting at 5:00 p.m. behind the main laboratory of the nearby National Marine Fisheries Service at 166 Water Street, Woods Hole. Guests are welcome to bring a side dish or dessert, and while contributions will be appreciated, they are not required.

Often cited as African-American Independence Day, Juneteenth has been deemed a special day of recognition by many municipalities and states. The observances commemorate June 19, 1865, the day the Emancipation Proclamation was enforced in Texas, the last of the seceding states to be occupied by the federal army. At the time, an estimated 250,000 persons were still enslaved in Texas, despite the signing of the proclamation more than two years earlier.

The Black History Month Committee comprises members from six scientific institutions in Woods Hole (Marine Biological Laboratory, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Sea Education Association, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole Research Center, and USGS Science Center for Coastal and Marine Geology). The committee organizes special events during February for Black History Month and throughout the year to promote diversity in the institutions and in the local community.

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Related links:

Marilyn Nelson Biography: <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/97>  
Poems by Marilyn Nelson: <http://www.poemhunter.com/marilyn-nelson/>  
Insight into Marilyn Nelson's Poetry:  
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poet.html?id=98059>  
Woods Hole Black History Month Committee:  
<http://woodshole.er.usgs.gov/outreach/WHBHMC/index.htm>