



Introduction to Carolyn Forché. 0:40 sec. Interview: Raymond Elman. Camera: Lee Skye. Videography & Production: Natalie Casabone. Recorded: 11/24/2019, Miami Book Fair.

# Carolyn Forché:

## Poet, Author, Educator

By Elman + Skye + Casabone

**CAROLYN FORCHÉ** is a celebrated American poet, editor, professor, memoirist, essayist, translator, and a human rights advocate. She has produced poetry since her early 20s and has won several awards for her work. Among these accolades are the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Lannan Foundation Literary Fellowship, and has received three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her first poetry collection, *Gathering the Tribes*, won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition, which was later published by Yale University Press, and her third collection of poetry, *The Angel of History*, received the Los Angeles Times book award.

Forché earned her bachelor’s degree in Creative Writing at Michigan State University in 1972, and completed her MFA at Bowling Green State University in 1975. Following her academic career she has taught at her alma mater, Bowling Green State University and Michigan State University, as well as the University of Virginia, Skidmore College, Columbia University, and San Diego State University. She is currently a professor at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1950, she has dedicated her poetry to highlighting the many voices and stories of oppression and what she coins “poetry of witness.” Her work is known for combining the sphere of the political world with the personal space. Joining these two perspectives to shed light on important ecological, political, economical, and personal issues that face the many communities she’s been a witness to, and translating other poets’ testimonials to these events.

Her initial journey into poetry began in her college years, and she was nominated for a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. Since then, she has published 11 pieces of literature. The most recent addition is a memoir titled *What You Have Heard is True*, that debuted in March 2019.

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 30 seconds and 4 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

### INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 0:52 sec.



*Where did you grow up, and what was your first awareness of art of any discipline?*

### SERENDIPITY: 0:33 sec.



*Where did you go to school and what did you learn that still informs you today?*

### EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 4:09 min.



*Describe the arc of your career.*

### SEIZES OPPORTUNITIES: 2:45 min.



*What’s the appeal of translating poetry from other languages?*

### OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 0:40 sec.



*When you were in Spain translating Claribel Alegria’s poems into English did she speak English well enough that she could challenge your use of words?*

### INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:38 min.



*What was your inspiration for applying for a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, and what was that experience like?*

### COMMUNITY VALUES: 2:13 min.



*Who were the people that became your friends after that group?*

### PERSEVERANCE FURTHERS: 4:03 min.



*What was the impetus to write a memoir about El Salvador at this point in time, and what was that experience like?*