

# SPELMAN Messenger



## Fantastic Four

Fierce and  
*Fabulous*  
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*40 Under 40*  
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*LaDonna Boyd, C'2007,  
taking up the legacy  
mantle as CEO of R.H.  
Boyd Publishing Corp.*

# LaDonna Boyd *Continuing a Legacy*

BY KIA SMITH, C'2004



LaDonna Boyd, C'2007, does not allow her chief executive officer title to isolate her. As CEO of R.H. Boyd Publishing Corp., Boyd is always looking for opportunities to partner with community organizations.

“I don’t need to sit in the office all day. That’s not helpful. If there are things in the community that can help R.H. Boyd and vice versa, that’s where I need to be; and, that’s where I often find myself,” said Boyd, who partners with organizations like Metro Nashville Public Schools in an ongoing literacy campaign.

Community engagement is not new to Boyd, who studied economics during her matriculation at Spelman College. In fact, it is in her DNA and is a foundational principle of R.H. Boyd, a publishing company that specializes in printing and distributing Christian inspirational, and historical literature, pastoral resources and church supplies.

Boyd’s journey began over a century ago with the creativity and innovation of her great-great-grandfather, Dr. Richard Henry Boyd, who founded R.H. Boyd Publishing, formerly National Baptist Publishing Board, in 1896. Born a slave in Mississippi, Dr. Boyd was one of the most successful businessmen of his time when he died in Nashville in 1922.

“His legacy is one that still carries on to this day. It is still giving a platform to the Black experience through our voice from the Christian perspective,” Boyd shared. “I literally have a lineage of entrepreneurs, innovators, and those who seek to be change agents by giving an unbiased voice to the narrative of Black experience.”

Despite the familial connection, Boyd did not just walk into the C-suite at R. H. Boyd Publishing. Upon returning to Nashville in 2008 to pursue her MBA at Tennessee State University, Boyd began learning the family business, starting as special projects coordinator and later being promoted to chief operating officer. In October 2017, Boyd became the fifth-generation president and CEO, and the first woman to serve in this capacity.

“I’m blessed. I was born into an expectation of excellence. The decision to lead the company was never forced on me. My parents said, ‘This is an opportunity for you and you can take it.’ However, it was not forced,” Boyd said, acknowledging the external pressure and expectation that is often projected onto individuals.

Whether she spends the day in the boardroom, on conference calls, in marketing meetings, working on her dissertation for her doctorate from Pepperdine University, or serving her community working with community partners, Boyd takes her Spelman College experience with her. “Spelman taught me the concept of leadership and sisterhood – being able to rely on the strength of others – especially Black women,” she said. “Spelman gave me that respect for the strength, intellect, and opportunities provided to Black women by Black women. That’s something I hope I can continue to do in my work and life each day, especially in the context of faith, family and community, while giving voice to women and young girls.”

Just as many people watched her great-great-grandfather, LaDonna Boyd knows people are watching her, and she embraces it and sees it as an opportunity for future generations to follow in her footsteps and give them something of which to be proud.

She also offers a simple piece of advice to those striving to excel in their careers: “Be kind and soft with yourself. Self-care is so important.”

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— LADONNA BOYD

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