

LAST COURSE

# *In Memoriam*



VALERIE J. BOYD (1963–2022) WAS A VERY GOOD EATER, AND A VERY good friend. For the past seven years, we gathered often at well-laid tables for wide-ranging conversations. In Athens, where she directed a narrative nonfiction writing program at the University of Georgia, and where she convened our mentor group at Seabear for mock arguments over student assignments and round after round of oysters on the half shell. In Oxford, where she served the SFA as a board member, and where, during one of our symposia, she conspired with chef Mashama Bailey to tell the story of author Zora Neale Hurston through a menu that ranged from roasted rabbit to smoked whiting. (If you have not yet read *Wrapped In Rainbows*, Valerie's biography of Hurston, today is the day to right that wrong.) And in Birmingham, where Valerie gathered friends at Highlands or Bottega or Chez Fonfon to talk with Pardis Stitt and eat slices of coconut cake baked by Dolester Miles. Valerie led by writing well and teaching well and caring fiercely. She showed us all profound new ways to join together and be together and work together. We mourn our loss and celebrate her too-short life. Valerie was our sun, shining with joy and possibility. Those of us who called her friend were very lucky to spin in her orbit.

JOHN T. EDGE

*Photograph by Pableaux Johnson*