

COMMENTS ON ACCEPTANCE OF THE
MARGARITA MCCOY AWARD
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I want to thank members of the Margarita McCoy award committee for selecting me for this honor. I also want to thank those who wrote letters supporting my nomination. You were successful in keeping this process secret from me. I was completely surprised and overwhelmed when I received the email from Ann Forsyth, chair of the committee, informing me that I had won. I am deeply honored to be the eleventh winner of the Margarita McCoy Award and to join a distinguished group of planners, scholars and feminists who have won this before me. They include from 1995, first co-recipients Sandra Rosenbloom and Eugenie Birch and more recently Dolores Hayden and Daphne Spain. I have personally been privileged to receive counsel from these predecessors in my 30 plus years in the US planning academy.

During my final dissertation-writing phase at UCLA Dolores Hayden, though not on my doctoral committee, strengthened my will to privilege the anecdotal and observational understandings about rural Indian women which I had gained during years of doctoral field work in a village in Maharashtra, India. That gender perspective influenced my first book, *Men to Bombay, Women at Home* and has continued to resonate through my scholarship including the foolhardy publication of my cook book, *Beyond Curry* before I was tenured at the University of Michigan. It influenced my forming a coalition of women scholars who addressed the meaning of housing for poor women in the book *Shelter, Women and Development*. And it is reflected in my latest book *Michigan Family Farms and Farm Buildings* which includes the poignant perspectives of farm women.

I was a California licensed, practicing architect in Los Angeles, with some ten years of experience, when I was converted to planning at UCLA. Trained at Sir. J.J. College of Architecture in Mumbai, India's oldest architectural college, I had learned to excel, but covertly. As one of only eight women in the entering class of one hundred, and the first woman to graduate at the top of my class some five years later, I had found technical proficiency as the way to make the case. It took UCLA and the exposure to the work of Dolores Hayden and scholars such as Ann Markusen for me to learn to be more assertive and forthright in addressing gender issues in my professional work.

Reflecting on this, I realized that all ten of the previous recipients of this award "are American," native born and stating their case within and from American culture. For me,

this is an adopted country, and an adopted culture. I am one who has “become American” through years of residency and a deep appreciation and gratitude for what is enabled by the values of equality, social justice, fair play and equal access that are deeply embedded in the ethos of this country. It shapes the U.S. planning profession and ACSP’s Faculty Women's Interest Group (FWIG) who make this award. This ethos fosters an attitude and a posture that has been professionally and personally transformative. Just as I have benefited from the legacy and stylistic approach of feminist scholars who have won this award before me, I hope my efforts as an educator, scholar and colleague at UCLA, MIT, Michigan, ASU and now at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo will be of service to planning academics that come after.

Margarita McCoy, pioneer planner, educator, Fellow of the AICP, recipient of the 2005 APA National Women in Planning Award, has been recognized for over three decades of work in California. It is symbolic for me to have won this award in the first year that I have returned to California to head up Cal Poly San Luis Obispo’s City and Regional Planning Program. It is the state in which I moved from being a proficient architect to becoming a humanistic planner. That journey continues. I am deeply touched by this award. It indicates that some of my journey was of value to some of my colleagues, and, to the U.S. planning profession, which I am inordinately grateful to be a part of.