

COMMENTS ON ACCEPTANCE OF THE
MARGARITA MCCOY AWARD

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I would like to thank Sanda Kaufmann and the selection committee, and the people who wrote letters supporting my nomination, for this award. I owe special thanks to Ann Forsyth for initiating the process. I am honored to be included in the sisterhood of prestigious recipients of the Margarita McCoy award. Since 1995, nine women have won this award, including Genie Birch, Marcia Marker Feld, Dolores Hayden, and Sandi Rosenbloom.

Margarita McCoy was a pioneer. She is recognized for more than three decades of work in California as a planner and educator, named a Fellow of the AICP, and was a recipient of the 2005 APA National Women in Planning Award. These are clear indicators of the breadth of her reputation. My own pioneering role is more modest, and on a much smaller scale. I was the first woman to be hired as an assistant professor in the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, and the first to achieve tenure. I rose through the ranks to become a full professor, and several years ago became a chaired professor.

The pioneering women who formed the Faculty Women's Interest Group in 1987 occupied a particular historical niche. We entered the profession as products of a women's movement that created new professional options. We considered ourselves feminists, and we endorsed Affirmative Action. In fact, my own career trajectory would have been quite different without Affirmative Action; I was hired the year after a PAB site team pointed out the absence of any women in UVA's planning department. Most of us were tokens in our programs, a situation younger women seldom face today. The first meeting of FWIG had about a dozen women, mostly white; now the group has more than 200 members and is more diverse. Not all members identify themselves as feminists, and not all endorse Affirmative Action.

Winning this award has given me the opportunity to reflect on what women like Margarita and I, and other award winners, have done for each other and for younger women in planning. And more important, it has led me to speculate on what younger women might do for subsequent generations.

I think the pioneers have done three things:

- 1) created opportunities for other women, and encouraged women to take up careers in planning with the expectation of being treated equally
- 2) legitimized gender issues in curriculum, research, and scholarship, thereby bringing a feminist perspective to planning practice
- 3) established FWIG to develop leadership skills and promote women's accomplishments

And, on a lighter note, I think the pioneers loosened the dress code. Most of the men at the University of Virginia wore suits when I was hired in the 1980s, so I wore dresses or skirts. I never wore pants to school until after I got tenure. For better or worse, women now have more wardrobe choices and can teach in almost anything.

Back to the serious. I hope the next generation will do at least three things:

- 1) continue to assume positions of leadership within planning practice and the planning academy that challenge the glass ceiling for all women
- 2) place women's rights, especially reproductive rights, at the center of democratic processes nationally and internationally, and to search for the subtle yet powerful ways in which the spaces planners shape affect those rights.
- 3) and, most important in regard to the McCoy award, support other women in their endeavors, to "lift as you climb", as apt a motto today as it was when the National Association of Colored Women adopted it in the late 19th century.

In closing, I am proud to be included in a generation of women who, like Margarita, recognized that personal accomplishments are compatible with sisterhood. And I am most proud of being recognized by my peers for having made a contribution to the advancement of women in the profession.