



MAC'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Award Presentation to Martha Minow by Hubie Jones
at MAC 40th Anniversary Gala Celebration

MAC is very fortunate to have established a wonderful partnership with our next honoree, Martha Minow, Dean of the Harvard Law School, through our innovative Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative which brings together the tremendous resources of the academy with MAC's signature multi-strategic approach to advocacy.

This partnership is but a window into the extraordinary accomplishments for which we are honoring Dean Minow. First and foremost, we are honoring Martha for her lifelong commitment to inclusion. Her brilliant legal scholarship dug deep into the thorny nature of the difference dilemma: asking hard questions such as: Does not the very notion of difference from a norm or a mainstream impede our ability to successfully integrate people who have special needs or other types of difference? Is equal opportunity best achieved by treating people the same, or differently?

But her scholarship does not just end with her asking the tough questions. What brings her close to MAC's heart is that she has followed the path of her inquiry to become a transformative thinker and doer. She has come to the understanding that, (quote) forging ways out of the difference dilemma require remaking institutions so they do not establish one norm that places the burden of difference on those who diverge from it (end quote).

Her scholarship on difference for children with limited English proficiency and for children with disabilities leads in a straight line to two-way bilingual schools, to true inclusive schools rather than merely mainstream, to differentiated instruction in the classroom, and to the application of universal design.

It is in that application of universal design where she put theory into practice. Through a partnership with the federal department of education and the Center for Applied Special Technology, she convened, and let me use her words here, a voluntary group of disability rights advocates, educators, publishers and technology experts who developed national standards for digital source files from which accurate and reliable alternate formats may be developed and distributed for students with disabilities-- students who would otherwise be unable to use books and educational material in school. Developing voluntary national standards for publishers of educational materials seemed impossible, but they reached agreement, and Congress, in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, the special education law, directed schools and publishers to use those standards in order to increase access for students with disabilities to the general curriculum.

That she brought her Harvard Law students into this real world process is the final reason we are honoring Martha Minow tonight – a brilliant scholar of inclusion, a transformative thinker and doer, and a teacher who changes lives. In the end, it is what is most gratifying to her: to nurture and challenge bright law students to do good and make change in the world. She follows with great pride her students who go off and become leaders, creating new non-profits, running schools, and infusing their energy into government and foundations to make change from the inside.

No greater testament to her calling as a teacher has been made than by a man who was her law student many years ago and who, inspired by her teaching and guidance, chose the path of public service that ultimately led him to the presidency of the United States. As a senator from Illinois, Barack Obama publicly spoke of Martha as one of the major influences in his life.

For that alone, we are all grateful, but for far more, we honor you tonight for your outstanding commitment to inclusive education for ALL children.