On the Passing of Judith Roy

January 5, 2021

The National Women's Studies Association mourns the passing of Judith Roy—former NWSA President, 2005-2006 and the chair of the Century College's Women and Gender Studies Program. In 2005, when Professor Roy was elected president, it marked the first time that a two-year college faculty member had been named to the top leadership role in an association that included public and private higher education institutions offering baccalaureate and graduate degrees. It also marked the last time that an NWSA president served only a one-year term. Under her leadership NWSA received a one-year $275,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to build our organizational capacity; and, laid the foundation for expanding the Women of Color Leadership Project.

She was a stalwart defender of women's rights, amplified the voices and contributions of women of color, and was also a major supporter of the NWSA Women’s Centers Committee. She was deeply committed to NWSA, having worked on the transitional team, along with Jo Trigilio and past NWSA presidents Colette Morrow and Jacquelyn Zita, to implement an organizational structure that repositioned NWSA to fulfill its goals of increasing membership diversity, showcasing rich scholarship in the field of Women and Gender Studies; and, reinforcing the recognition of NWSA is the primary professional organization for Women's Studies.

Professor Roy founded the Women's Studies Certificate Program at Century College in 1996, the first academic certificate program approved in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. She was deeply committed to providing academic rigor within the social justice mission of an open access institution, and was especially involved in gendered issues of public health and nursing. In 2018, as a testament to her work and academic contributions, the Roy-Hathaway Honors Scholarship (honoring both her work in History and Women & Genders Studies and the work of Robert Hathaway) was established in the Century College Honors Program.

In 2007, upon the thirtieth anniversary of NWSA, President Roy wrote in the NWSA Journal that the leadership of the organization learned from the past and had done the work to lay a foundation for an exciting future. Thirty years later, with the long eye of history on our side and as we begin to refocus our efforts on rebuilding our NWSA community, I know that NWSA became a much stronger organization under President Roy’s leadership. We became more focused and more committed to being the professional and intellectual home of academics, activists, and community scholars. As we move forward, we will find ways to honor and remember President Roy with a public tribute. For now, please join us in taking a moment, with solemn respect and gratitude, to remember her life, her scholarship, her contributions to the field, and the National Women’s Studies Association.

Sincerely,

Kaye Wise-Whitehead, NWSA President and Members of the Governing Council