

NEW ERA TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS, LLC

Health and Community Psychology Consulting

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Enedina Vazquez, PhD

Division 45: Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race

Distinguished Career Contribution to Service Award

Subject: Nomination of Melinda Garcia, PhD for Distinguished Service Award Nomination

Dear Dr. Vazquez and Division 45 Awards selection committee:

Please accept this letter as my recommendation for Dr. Melinda Garcia as the recipient of the Division 45 Distinguished Career Contribution to Service Award.

Dr. Garcia is a revered elder in both Indigenous and Latina psychology and she stands among very few Indigenous or Latina peers in her significant accomplishments and service to both cultural groups. She has been a role model, a teacher, and a healer in many ways and in her 40+ year career, has brought psychological services to communities that did not have them, helped people to rebuild their lives by cultivating their strengths and their relationships with family and community, and has continually helped in promoting balance where marginalization can be considered the norm. Dr. Garcia has also made major contributions to established programs by working as a community, life-span, multi-cultural, psychologist dedicated to empowerment of community members.

Dr. Garcia has been a member of APA since 1983 and has been notably served in a number of different leadership capacities. In her work with Native people she has written successful grants, secured funding for significant programs with several Indian Tribes in New Mexico including a complicated petition to the Indian Health Service allowing the Pueblo to gain control of their own mental health monies from the US Department of the Interior. This increased the provision of culturally appropriate psychological services to the people of Santa Clara. From 2008 through 2010, Dr. Garcia wrote new and renewal grants to State and Federal agencies resulting in funds to stabilize various behavioral health programs to benefit the people of the Pueblos of Zia, Santa Ana and Cochiti. These programs allowed the integration of traditional Pueblo values with evidenced based practices to create appropriate mental health treatment for the three tribes. According to the evaluation data, the services provided made a significant difference to the lives of hundreds of tribal members, many who had never received services previously.

Although Dr. Garcia is no longer affiliated with a formal university program, she still has doctoral students and clinical supervisees and is directly responsible for four Native psychologists being licensed in the State of New Mexico in the last 10 years, 50% of the Native psychologists in the state. Notably, one of her former supervisees went on to become the President of Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana.

Dr. Garcia has also served tirelessly in the Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP) and was instrumental in bringing about *The Society of Indian Psychologists Commentary on the APA Code of Ethics* (hereafter referred to as the SIP Commentary), which has been instrumental in transformation throughout APA since its publication. The SIP Commentary illuminated the inherent biases in the field of psychology, in addition to championing the profound need for actual cultural competence in many areas of psychology as well as in the area of ethics.

Wendy M. K. Peters, Ph.D.

Currently, Dr. Garcia continues to maintain a full time independent practice. Yet, she also manages to stay active with an APA CEMRRAT funded program, Reservation to Graduation (R2G), which provides mentoring to Native graduate psychology students and early career psychologists who do not have access to culturally competent faculty or mentors in their programs. She also presents workshops and colloquia to graduate psychology students and faculty at the University of New Mexico, at national psychology conferences and to various professional groups on ethics and culture, inherent bias, culturally competent communication, the integration of traditional Native and Western psychologies and many other topics to keep psychology relevant for all people.

In closing, Dr. Garcia's exceptional career as a psychologist has been a natural extension of the values instilled in her through family and culture: to educate in a positive way, work hard, be generous and hospitable, empower individuals, empower the community, respect self, and ultimately, to be the hands, feet and representative of the Creator. Her work has brought psychology education and treatment to many communities historically ignored by mainstream psychology and has illuminated the strengths and needs of Latina/o and Native cultures to the mainstream psychology community, bringing positive transformation both ways. Dr. Garcia's energy and passion for working with underserved ethnic minorities make her not merely a revered Elder among Native people, but also a well deserving candidate for Division 45's 2018 Distinguished Service Award. Should any additional information be required from me about this exceptional candidate, all contact information (postal mailing address, email address, and telephone numbers) for both the nominee and the nominator are noted below.

Very Respectfully,



Wendy M. K. Peters, PhD
Society of Indian Psychologists, Member

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