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Submission number: 124929

ID: 124929

Submission

Awards Program Information

Organization: **The American Institute of Architects**
 Application **2008 Institute Honors for Professional Achievement and Membership Honors**

Award Program

Award Program "Whitney M. Young Jr. Award"

Key:

- ✓ = **Section Complete**
- ✗ = **Section Incomplete**

Deadline and Procedures

Whitney M. Young Jr. Award

Eligibility

This award, in honor of the late Whitney M. Young Jr., who challenged the architectural profession to assume its responsibility toward current social issues, is conferred by the Institute's Board of Directors on an architect or architecturally oriented organization in recognition of a significant contribution toward meeting this responsibility. The type of social issue is purposefully flexible to remain eternally relevant. Current issues include, for example, housing the homeless/affordable housing, increased participation by minorities or women in the profession, access for persons with disabilities, and literacy. Members of the Institute's Board of Directors, a component, or a knowledge community may nominate architects or architecturally oriented organizations. Current members of the Board are not eligible for the award.

Submissions

All information must be submitted on-line by the submission deadline date listed below.

Submission Deadline: October 12, 2007

Award Category: Achievement

Agree Yes

Contact Information

Name of

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Nominee Norma Sklarek, FAIA

Board Member Name (or component or Knowledge Community) Pamela Tuschner, AIA

Contact Name (required if component or Knowledge Community nomination)

Address

City Sacramento

State California

Province (Outside US)

Zip / Postal Code 95814

Country United States of America

Phone Number

Fax

Email Address

Required Form Downloads

I have downloaded the required forms Yes

Nominee Information

Name Norma Sklarek, FAIA

Address

City Pacific Palisades

State California

Zip 90272-3909

Telephone Number

Fax Number

E-mail

**Nominee's
assigned AIA
Chapter** Los Angeles

**Nominee
Membership
#**

Upload Attachments

**Attachments
Uploaded** Yes

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2008 Whitney M. Young Award Submission

Norma Sklarek, FAIA

AIA California Council

The American Institute of Architects

September 19, 2007



Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Members of the Board:

On behalf of The American Institute of Architects, California Council, I nominate Norma Sklarek, FAIA, for the 2008 Whitney M. Young, Jr., Service Award.

This modest, unassuming woman has a professional career that includes numerous extraordinary achievements. She was the first African American woman owned firm in the nation, and she was the first African American woman to receive Fellowship in The AIA College of Fellows. However, Norma's life is much more than "breaking new ground," or her numerous awards and recognitions. By example, Norma's professional pathway is one of unwavering dedication to education, professional ethics, mentoring and coaching young people, as well as being a citizen architect in service to her nation, her state, and her local community.

Ms. Sklarek has built an impressive body of architectural work as the exhibits in this submittal clearly demonstrate. Her actions and accomplishments are well documented. She continually demonstrates how one person can make a difference in the lives of others. As a role model for women, African Americans, and emerging architects, her life embraces the passion, the duty, and the responsibility of the profession to improve the quality of life for all humanity, regardless of ethnicity, economics, or gender.

Through her mentoring and teaching activities she has been a dynamic force in assisting hundreds of others from non-traditional and disadvantaged backgrounds to enter and succeed in the profession. Her accomplishment in this area is absolutely unmatched in the architectural profession.

I encourage the Board to carefully review Norma's life experiences and her many contributions to the profession and society. Her leadership and service truly epitomize the purpose and intent of the Whitney M. Young Jr., Service Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pamela Touschner".

Pamela Touschner
AIACC 2007 President

Norma Sklarek Biography

Norma Merrick Sklarek, FAIA, was born in 1928. She was raised in New York at the edge of Harlem, New York. From an early age Norma exhibited solid artistic talents and excelled in school – especially in math. Her mother was a homemaker and her father was a physician. They instilled in Norma the strong belief that she could succeed in a profession, and in life, through hard work, education and a positive attitude.

Her grades were always excellent and she took the time to give serious thought to what she wanted to be when she grew up. She accompanied her father on his house calls during her adolescence. From that experience she determined that medicine was not for her. She decided to merge her love of art and math and pursue architecture as a career.

She was accepted at Columbia's School of Architecture in 1946, but, first had to prove her academic worth by taking her freshman year at Barnard College in Liberal Arts. She then entered Columbia and graduated in 1950 as the first African-American woman ever awarded a Bachelor of Architecture Degree.

Norma passed her licensing exam on her first try and quickly became well-known for her skills in the technical side of the architectural profession. She also began to tutor other architectural graduates in the ways and means of passing the licensing exam – eventually coaching hundreds of successful licensing recipients.

Norma was the first black female architect registered and licensed in New York in 1954. In 1962 she moved to California where she became the first black female architect licensed in that state.

She worked from 1960-1980 as head of the Architectural Department of the Gruen Firm in Los Angeles. Among the many projects for which she was responsible during that time were the Fox Plaza in San Francisco, the American Embassy Building in Tokyo, and the Queens Fashion Mall in New York.

From 1980-1985 she served as Vice President of the Welton Beckett Firm, where her major project was the Terminal One Building at Los Angeles International Airport.

In 1985, she became the first black female to form and manage an architectural firm: Siegel, Sklarek, Diamond. From 1989 to her semi-retirement in 1996, Norma was a principal with the Jon Jerde, Inc. firm, which was involved with major architectural projects throughout the world. One of those projects was the Mall of America, the largest shopping center in the U.S.

In addition to a career record of significant professional achievements and technical excellence, Norma balanced a family life, university teaching and lecturing positions, as well as non-stop mentoring and coaching activities.

She was recognized by her peers as a "Fellow" of the American Institute of Architects in 1980. She has served as a member of the Architectural Guild of USC; an NCARB Master Juror; a member of Goodwill Industries' Board of Governors, and was appointed by the Governor as a member of the California Architect's Board.

Norma has been given awards, honors and testimonials from countless professional and community groups over the course of her impressive professional career. Among those are recognition from NCARB; AIA; the California State University; Turner Broadcasting; Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs; Goodwill Industries; National Organization of Minority Architects; Hampton University; Association for Women in Architecture and the Y.W.C.A.

Norma is enjoying her semi-retirement while continuing to work as a consultant to professional colleagues.

RESUME – NORMA MERRICK SKLAREK, FAIA

NORMA MERRICK SKLAREK, FAIA, the first African American woman registered as an architect in New York and later in California overcame the double hurdle of being both Black and female in a predominately white male profession. She was also the second female architect in California and the first African American in the United States in almost 100 years to be honored by the American Institute of Architects with Fellowship for outstanding architectural contribution.

Starting in New York City, then relocating to Los Angeles, she worked primarily in large architectural offices where she gained expertise on major building complexes such as enclosed mall shopping centers, high rise office buildings, hotels, hospitals and apartment buildings, -- projects which require knowledge of high tech state-of-the art engineering, construction and electronic systems. Her projects are located not only in semi tropical areas of the United States but also in high seismic probability California and Japan.

In addition to her architectural office work, Norma Sklarek has balanced a family life, taught part time for six years at UCLA graduate architecture program, lectured at several universities throughout the United States, served as commissioner to the California of Architectural examiners and as Master Juror for NCARB, grading the Architectural Design and site Planning Exams.

ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIENCE

- NYC Department of Public Works
- Skidmore Owings & Merrill, NYC
- Gruen Associates, Los Angeles, CA.
- Welton Becket, Los Angeles, CA.
- Seigel, Sklarek & Diamond, CA
- Jon Jerde Associates, CA.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- NYC Community College
4 years part time in the evening session
- UCLA Architecture
6 years from 1 o'clock to 6 p.m. teaching architectural technology
- Private Coaching
20 years coaching Design and Site Planning for the Arch.Licensing Exam.

BOOKS IN WHICH NORMA SKLAREK HAS BEEN MENTIONED

- Encyclopedia of Architecture, Editor in Chief, Joseph A Wilkes, FAIA
- African American Firsts by Joan Potter
- Powerful Black Women by Jessie Carney Smith & forward by Camille Cosby
- African American Women, Crusaders, Creators and Uplifters by Tonya Bolden
- No Mountain High Enough by Dorothy Ehrhart Morrison, PH.D.

1950 Graduated from Columbia University School of Architecture with B.ARCH degree.
After taking the four day, 36 hour licensing exam in one week passed the entire exam and became the first African American Woman licensed architect in the USA

1960 moved from New York to California where she became the first African American Woman to be licensed in California.

1960 – 1980 Worked for the Gruen Firm as head of the Architectural Department where she was responsible for many major projects throughout the U.S. such as:
Fox Plaza, a high rise office and apartment building in San Francisco
USA Embassy building in Tokyo, Japan
Queens Fashion Mall, a three level enclosed mall shopping center in New York.

1980 – 1985 Vice President of the Welton Becket Assoc. Firm
Here her major project was the Terminal One passenger terminal at Los Angeles International Airport which had a completion deadline of the opening of the 1984 Olympics in L.A.

1985 – 1989 Partner with two other women architects in the firm Siegel, Sklarek, Diamond Architects, where we were responsible for much smaller scale projects such as schools and additions to existing buildings.

1989 – 1996 Principal with the Jon Jerde, Inc. firm which was involved with major architectural projects throughout the world. Such as the **Mall of America**, Minneapolis (largest commercial shopping center in the United States)

1996 – present semi retired but works as a consultant to other architects

Other Professional Activities

Became honored by the American Institute of Architects for outstanding contribution to architecture by being made a **Fellow of the AIA** in 1980.
Taught on the UCLA architecture staff for six years.

Guest speaker at the following architecture schools:

Cal Poly, Pomona, CA
Cal Poly, San Louis Obispo, CA
Columbia University, NY
Hampton University, VI
Howard University, DC
University of Idaho
Southern University, CO
Tuskegee Institute, AL
Yale University, CT
Scripps College, CA

VSC SCHOOL of ARCH, CA

- **OTHER ARCH. ACTIVITIES**
- Served as Commissioner to the California Board of Architectural Examiners
- Graded the national architectural licensing exams for NCARB
- Coached many for the Design and Site Planning parts of the architectural exam.
- A member and Chair of the AIA Ethics Council, 1993 - 1998

NORMA'S RECOGNITIONS & AWARDS

- 1950 GRADUATED FROM COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCH WITH A B-ARCH DEGREE (FIRST BLACK WOMAN)**
- 1954 BECAME LICENSED ARCHITECT IN NEW YORK (FIRST BLACK WOMAN)**
- 1962 BECAME LICENSED ARCHITECT IN CALIFORNIA**
- 1978 AIA CORPORATE MEMBER & BECAME AN NCARB MEMBER**
- 1980 MADE A "FELLOW" OF THE AIA
CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION**
- 1981 SANTA MONICA GEMS/JIMS
RECOGNITION FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT**
- 1985 WASHINGTON PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL
CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION**
- 1985 NCARB MASTER JUROR**
- 1986 ARCHITECTURAL GUILD OF U S C
CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP**
- 1987 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ARCHITECTURAL REGISTRATION BOARDS
LEADERSHIP AND ASSISTANCE AS A MASTER JUROR**
- 1988 CHANCELLOR OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**
- 1987 TURNER BROADCASTING SUPERSTATION
RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION IN SUPPORT OF BLACK HISTORY**
- 1987 ASSOCIATION OF BLACK WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
OUTSTANDING BUSINESS ROLE MODEL**
- 1989 BLACK WOMEN IN SISTERHOOD FOR ACTION
DISTINGUISHED BLACK WOMAN AWARD**
- 1988 ARCHITECTURAL GRAPHIC STANDARDS
FOR PARTICIPTATION IN CREATION OF THE GRAPHIC STANDARDS**
- 1988 LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
DRAFTING TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR**
- 1989 YWCA HONOREE**
- 1985-90 GOODWILL BOARD OF GOVERNORS
IN SUPPORT OF SERVICES TO DISABLED PEOPLE**
- 1990 NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS (NOMA)
HAWTHORNE PLAZA – CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION**
- 1991 AIA
CERTIFICATE OF APPRCIATION AS CHAIR OF FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**
- 1993 CALIFORNIA BOARD OF ARCHITECTS (CBA)
CERITFICATE OF SERVICE FOR THE ORAL EXAMS**
- 1993 HAMPTON UNIVERSITY
CITATION FOR LEADERSHIP IN ARCHITECTURE**
- 2002 ASSOCIATON FOR WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE
HONORARY MEMBERSHIP**
- 2003 GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA
APPOINTMENT AS A MEMBER OF THE CALIF ARCHITECTS BOARD**

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Los Angeles Airport



Fox Hills Mall – Culver City

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Fox Plaza – San Francisco



Horton Plaza – San Diego



Mall of America - Minnesota

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Mall of America - Minnesota

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San Bernardino City Hall



**Paul W. Welch Jr., Hon AIA, Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally, Norma Merrick Sklarek, FAIA State Senator Alex Padilla, and State Senator Sheila James Kuehl
On the floor of the State Senate while Ms. Sklarek is being honored
Photo Credit: Lorie Shelley, Senate Photographer**



**State Senator Sheila James Kuehl and other Senators present Norma Merrick Sklarek, FAIA with a Resolution honoring her
Photo Credit: Lorie Shelley, Senate Photographer**



State Senator Sheila James Kuehl and other Senators present Norma Merrick Sklarek, FAIA with a Resolution honoring her
Photo Credit: Lorie Shelley, Senate Photographer



State Senator Sheila James Kuehl and other Senators present Norma Merrick Sklarek, FAIA with a Resolution honoring her.
Photo Credit: Lorie Shelley, Senate Photographer

AIA California Council

The American Institute of Architects



List of references:

Camille Cosby, Ed.D.

Katherine Diamond, FAIA

Michael A. Enomoto, FAIA

Harvey B. Gantt, FAIA

Gail Kennard, President
Kennard Design Group

Cesar Pelli, FAIA

Carlton T. Smith, AIA

Pamela A. Tuschner, AIA

Jack Travis, FAIA

Chester A. Widom, FAIA

Joseph A. Wilkes, FAIA

Camille O. Cosby, Ed.D
P. O. Box 4049
Santa Monica, California 90411

September 11, 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Members of the Board:

Ms. Norma Sklarek's architectural skills are varied and consistently recognized as having a significant impact on the communities in which her projects stand. She is a true technical expert on major structural complexes such as enclosed shopping malls, high rise office buildings, hotels, hospitals and apartment buildings. She has always been on the cutting edge of high tech state-of-the-art engineering, construction and electronic systems. Also, she has been able to successfully adapt projects to seismic conditions that are problematic throughout California and Japan.

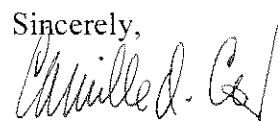
Ms. Sklarek has had a diverse professional life. She has been a teacher, a tutor, a private coach and a genuine inspiration to generations of architects and architectural undergraduates and graduate students. She has lectured and spoken to architectural students at universities throughout the U.S. including Columbia, Howard, Yale, Scripps, USC and UCLA among many others.

In 1950, Ms. Sklarek became the first female African American to graduate from Columbia University with a degree in architecture. She was also the first black female architect in New York (1954) and in California (1962). In 1966, she was the first female to be elected as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architecture (FAIA). In 1985, she became the first African American woman to form her own architectural firm, which, at that time, was the largest woman owned firm in the country.

Among her many awards and activities she has been honored by the Goodwill Board of Governors for her work on behalf of the disabled and the National Organization of Minority Architects.

Indeed, Ms. Sklarek is a genuine pioneer in the architectural profession. Her successes as an architect, as well as her personal achievements, have played a major role in opening the profession to ethnically diverse and underrepresented populations. With deep respect, I recommend Ms. Norma Sklarek for the Whitney Young Award.

Sincerely,


Camille O. Cosby

September 12, 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Members of the Board,

It is a pleasure to write a letter of recommendation for Norma Sklarek, FAIA; based on a lifetime of excellence in architecture and groundbreaking positions as the first African American woman architect, Norma deserves the recognition of the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award. On a personal note, Norma Sklarek is my hero, my ex-partner and my good friend.

At every step of her career Norma distinguished herself by the quality of her work. Immediately upon graduating Norma took the New York City Civil Service exam for a position in the City's Engineering Department. To the dismay of the still prejudiced senior staff, she received the top score, which meant that they had to offer her the position first. They promptly froze the hiring in order to avoid bringing the first African American woman architect on-board. Later when they could no longer delay staffing-up, they belatedly offered her the position. I am convinced that the technical excellence of her performance overcame the naysayers who did not believe that a woman or an African American could be an outstandingly valuable architect.

Later, at Victor Gruen Associates, they conducted a nationwide search for their new Director of Production before recognizing that, in Norma, they had the best, most qualified individual already. When Margot Siegel and I partnered with Norma to form Siegel Sklarek Diamond we knew that Norma was and is truly a world-class architect. I was thrilled to enrich our designs with Norma's technical expertise on major building complexes, and exploration of state-of-the-art engineering, construction and electronic systems.

At every step of her career Norma's success opened doors for minority and female architects to follow her. In 1950, Norma was the first female African American to graduate from Columbia University with an architecture degree. She was also the first black female architect in New York (1954) and in California (1962). In 1966, she was the first female to be elected as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architecture (FAIA). In 1985, together with Margot Siegel and I, Norma entered into a partnership that made her the first African American woman partner of her own architectural firm, which, at that time was the largest woman-owned firm in the country. In addition, she has taught, tutored and lectured architectural students at universities throughout the U.S.

The architectural profession and the AIA have been immeasurably enriched by Norma Sklarek, FAIA. She represents the highest value of diversity and is truly deserving of the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award.

Sincerely,



Katherine (Kate) Diamond, FAIA
Design Principal

GRUENASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTURE PLANNING INTERIORS

September 17, 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

KI SUH PARK, FAIA, FAICP, Hon. FKIA
KURT FRANZEN, AIA
MICHAEL A. ENOMOTO, FAIA
LARRY SCHLOSSBERG, AIA
DEBRA GEROD, AIA, LEED AP
ASHOK VANMALI, AIA

Re: Norma M. Sklarek, FAIA, Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award Recommendation

Dear Members of the Board:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support for Norma M. Sklarek, FAIA, for the prestigious Whitney M. Young Service Award. I have known and admired Norma since she first hired me here at Gruen Associates in 1973. Norma Sklarek is a genuine pioneer in the architectural profession. Her successes, as an architect, as well as her personal achievements, have played a major role in opening the profession up to ethnically diverse and underrepresented populations.

She worked from 1960 - 1980 as Vice President and Head of the Architectural Department of Gruen Associates here in Los Angeles. Under her direct guidance Gruen Associates achieved a reputation for having produced some of the finest construction documents in the nation. Among the many projects for which she was responsible during that time were the Fox Plaza in San Francisco, the American Embassy Building in Tokyo, the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood and the Queens Fashion Mall in New York. Though her professional records and activities are impressive and meritorious, Norma's influence on our profession is much more than a mere list of projects and buildings. She has been a teacher, a tutor, a private coach and a genuine inspiration to generations of architects, architectural undergraduates and graduate students.

During her tenure here at Gruen Associates, Norma made me aware of certain inequities in our profession and, by example, encouraged me to take on these inequities not as barriers but rather as challenges to be met and overcome. She was a great example to follow. In 1950, Norma became the first female African American to graduate from Columbia University with an architecture degree. She was also the first black female architect in New York (1954) and in California (1962). In 1980, she was the first female to be elected as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architecture (FAIA). Later in 1985, she became the first African American woman to form her own architectural firm, which, at that time was the largest woman-owned firm in the country. She has served as an NCARB Master Juror, a member of Goodwill Industries' Board of Governors, and was appointed by the Governor as a member of the California Architect's Board.

She is a true technical expert on major building complexes such as enclosed shopping malls, high rise office buildings, hotels, and apartment buildings. She has always been on the cutting edge of high tech state-of-the-art engineering, construction and electronic systems. Importantly she passed on these skills to countless numbers of Gruen Associates' staff like me.

Her impact on my career is just one example of how she has affected the careers of countless others as well. As a direct result of her example and encouragement, I have pursued positions that, as a minority, I might not have otherwise pursued, including the Presidency of the Asian American Architects/Engineers Association, the AIA/LA Chapter Presidency, and most recently for my Fellowship in the AIA. I wholeheartedly endorse her for this important award.

Very truly yours,
GRUEN ASSOCIATES



Michael A. Enomoto, FAIA
Partner

September 18, 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

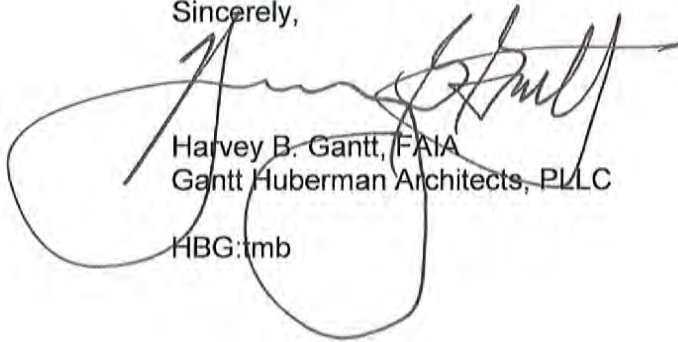
Re: Letter in Support of Norma Sklarek
For Whitney Young Award

Dear Members of the Board:

I am pleased to add my name to the many architects around the country who strongly believe that Norma Sklarek should be the recipient of the Whitney Young Award. She is deserving because of her record as a pioneering African-American who has played a significant role in moving the AIA toward greater diversity and recognition of the achievements of women and minorities. Her illustrious career as an architect, her strong and positive spirit, and her success in overcoming obstacles are all worthy of favorable consideration for this award.

She has my fully support and best wishes.

Sincerely,



Harvey B. Gantt, FAIA
Gantt Huberman Architects, PLLC
HBG:imb

kennard design group
architecture and planning

Founded 1957

September 12, 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Subject: Nomination of Norma M. Sklarek, FAIA
for the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award

Dear Members of the Board:

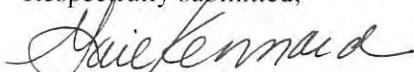
I am the daughter of the late Robert Kennard, FAIA, who was the 1991 recipient of this award, and who was a colleague and close friend to Norma Sklarek. I have known Norma Sklarek for more than 20 years. She has gained the respect of her peers as a practitioner and as a mentor for those taking licensing exams. She has contributed her professional expertise by serving on committees of the national AIA and on the boards of service organizations such as the YWCA.

But my experience has been that Norma's greatest contribution to the profession has been as a role model for other women and particularly African-American and other women of color who became architects or remained in the profession because she set an example of what was possible.

I recall a gathering of architects at Claremont College outside of Los Angeles several years ago. Norma had been asked to speak about her work, and many younger women architects attended. We came not only to learn about her work, but mainly to honor her and let her know how important she has been in our lives. While we were waiting to greet Norma after her lecture, one black woman architect said that she had recently been asked what she did for a living, and she said she was an architect. Upon hearing her answer, the man who asked the question immediately replied, "oh, do you do your drafting at your kitchen table?" Before reacting, this woman, who was head of facilities for a local school district, said she remembered Norma Sklarek and what she must have had to endure as a black woman architect in the 1950s and 1960s.

As recent statistics and experiences like the one I related above show us, minority women architects still have many obstacles to overcome in increasing their representation in the profession and gaining acceptance by the public. Because by her example, Norma Sklarek has increased the participation of minorities and women in the profession, she is without question a truly worthy recipient of this award. I am thankful to Norma Sklarek for being Norma Sklarek --- an accomplished and generous professional whose quiet determination in the face of adversity has made it seem so much easier for those who have come after her.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail Kennard
President, Kennard Design Group

Cesar Pelli FAIA
Fred W Clarke FAIA
Rafael Pelli AIA

12 September 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

William E Butler AIA
Mitchell A Hirsch AIA
Gregg E Jones AIA
Mariko Masuoka AIA
Lawrence S Ng AIA
Mark R Shoemaker AIA

David P Chen
Phillip G Bernstein FAIA

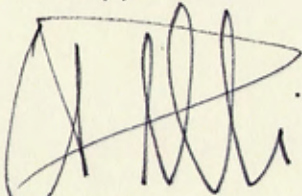
Dear Members of the Board:

I am writing in support of Norma M. Sklarek, FAIA's nomination to receive the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award.

I have known Norma since the mid-1960s, and when I became a partner of Gruen Associates I started collaborating with her as she was the head of the architectural department of the firm. I have kept in touch with her and have followed with pleasure her continued development and her many contributions to the profession. I was impressed with Norma's capabilities from the very beginning and I learned to rely on her knowledge. I have the greatest admiration for her as an architect and as a person.

Norma would be a most worthwhile recipient of the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award. I strongly recommend her.

Sincerely yours,



Cesar Pelli
Senior Principal

CP/cnm



c/o College of Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Sciences
Howard University - School of Architecture and Design
2366 6th Street, N.W. - Room 100
Washington, D.C. 20059 202.686.2780 www.noma.net

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September 18, 2007

Board of Directors

The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

Re: Nomination of **Norma Sklarek, FAIA**
for the 2008 Whitney Young Jr. Award

Dear Members of the Board:

I am pleased to write this letter in support of the nomination of Norma Sklarek for the 2008 Whitney Young Jr. Award. It is true that Ms. Sklarek has had a distinguished career in architecture. In 1950, Ms. Sklarek became the first female African American to graduate from Columbia University with an architecture degree. She was also the first black female architect in New York (1954) and in California (1962). In 1966, she was the first female to be elected as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architecture (FAIA). In 1985, she became the first African American woman to form her own architectural firm, which, at that time was the largest woman-owned firm in the country.

I submit however, that one of her greatest achievements is not reflected in the "firsts" that she has achieved, nor is it reflected in the honors and awards bestowed on her by various organizations. If asked, she would say that highest on her list of great achievements is the inspiration that she has provided for countless women and minorities in architecture. Ms. Sklarek has been a mentor and counselor to many young Architects. She has exercised bold leadership in a profession dominated by white males by deliberately seeking out and hiring qualified and talented people of color throughout her career. Many whose lives she has touched have gone on to distinguish themselves in their careers, and all credit Ms. Sklarek with having a profound impact on their success. Her strict adherence to standards of excellence is at the core of her effectiveness as a leader, mentor and role model. And while it is easy to talk of her commitment to people of color within the profession, the truth is that she has shared her gifts openly and equally across all ethnic and cultural boundaries.

With the limited number of Black architect "heroes" that have been promoted as such within the mainstream of the profession, the importance of having a Norma Sklarek to hold up as a model for all architects. Along with the Board and membership of NOMA, I wholeheartedly support and endorse Ms. Sklarek as a worthy recipient of the AIA's 2008 Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award.

Sincerely,

Carlton T. Smith, NOMA · AIA
President



Ltr

Board of Directors

The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Members of the Board:

It is a unique honor to write this letter on behalf of **Norma Merrick Sklarek, FAIA**, who is being considered for the **Whitney M. Young, Jr. Service Award** of the American Institute of Architects.

I have known Norma M. Sklarek for almost twenty years. In my opinion, she is without question a most gifted and accomplished design professional as well as a strong socially conscious individual whose legacy now spans over sixty years.

I first met Ms. Sklarek while researching and interviewing pioneering black architects for my landmark monograph, *African American Architects, in Current Practice*, (Princeton Architectural Press, 1991). Since that time Norma, her husband, Dr. Cornelius Welch and I have remained very good friends. Within the first moments of my first interview with her, I realized that she would surely be one of the only thirty-five architects profiled in the publication.

Her work in the prestigious offices of SOM and Gruen, at a time when promotions for blacks and women were severely lacking is a testament to the talent and the fortitude of this extraordinary person. Norma and I have been perpetually connected through our mutual interest in the cultural imperatives of access and excellence in architecture, generally, and our concern of the plight of blacks (both men and women), in the profession specifically.

Norma Merrick Sklarek's whole professional life has been a series of pioneering efforts advancing not only her cause but the cause for minority involvement in main stream matters of the profession and of the AIA. In 1946, Norma was accepted at Columbia University's School of Architecture here in New York City. This feat proved to be bittersweet as she had to first prove her academic worth by taking her freshman year at nearby Barnard College in Liberal Arts. She then entered Columbia and graduated in 1950 as the first African-American woman ever awarded a Bachelor of Architecture Degree. Norma was the first black female architect registered and licensed in New York State in 1954. In 1962, she moved to California where she became the first black female architect licensed in that state. In 1985, she became the first black female to form and manage an architectural firm: Siegel, Sklarek, Diamond. Then, in 1980 she became the first black female elevated to the ranks of "Fellow" of the American Institute of Architects.

Norma is without equal. She has championed the cause of access in the profession by deed and example as opposed to rhetoric and demonstration. Her firm voice on the inside has been constant, consistent and much needed in compliment with the voices of those on the outside in the agitation of agencies and persons to address and make right the inadequacies within our profession. Her track record allows her to wield great impact in this debate. Norma has thus become a symbol of awareness for all of us, our "Barbara Jordan" in the cause to make the profession responsive, as demonstrated by the national and international response to her accomplishments and legacy. She has truly become one of America's most highly respected professionals from both within and outside of the architectural world.

With clarity and demonstrated performance she has directly and indirectly influenced several generations of blacks and women architects in making visible the rewards of access and the power of cultural place making in the American architectural design and professional arena. Today, Norma enjoys her semi-retirement while continuing to work as a consultant to professional colleagues. But we feel her impact every day when we follow the careers of such notables as Allison Williams, Sharon E. Sutton, Cheryl McAfee, Ivenue Love-Stanley, Roberta Washington & Kathryn T. Prigmore, all FAIA.

In the panorama of American architecture today, I cannot imagine a more deserving candidate than Norma Merrick Sklarek for the **Whitney M. Young, Jr. Service Award**.

Sincerely,



Jack Travis, FAIA, NOMAC



Full-spectrum architecture
and design services

September 21, 2007

via E-mail

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

Re: Norma M. Sklarek, FAIA, for the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award

Dear Members of the Board:

I am truly honored to submit this letter of support for the nomination of Norma Sklarek, FAIA to receive the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award from the American Institute of Architects. I have known Norma for nearly thirty years and she is, without question, one of the foremost role models for architects in general, for female architects, for African-American architects and specifically for female African-American architects.

In addition to her accomplishments as an architect with a number of internationally known firms and her establishment of the first African-American women owned firm in the nation, Norma has made significant contributions in public service. She has been a leader in the Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs, Hampton University and has made major contributions to improving the quality of life by actively serving on the Board of Directors of the YWCA of Greater Los Angeles.

The Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award represents our commitment to assuming responsibility for improving the social conditions for all of our citizens. Norma Sklarek, FAIA represents the best of that commitment to social responsibility.

Very truly yours,

WWCOT

Chester A. Widom, FAIA
Partner

/kb

cc: file

Chester A. Widom, FAIA
Adrian O. Cohen, FAIA, LEED
Andrea Cohen Gehring, FAIA, LEED
Pamela Touschner, AIA
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September 17, 2007

Board of Directors
The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Members of the Board:

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the nomination of Norma M. Sklarek, FAIA for the Whitney M. Young, Jr. Service Award for which she is duly qualified.

Norma was a student in my class of Architecture at Columbia University, graduating in 1949. I have kept in contact with Norma over the years, and was aware of her many accomplishments in the practice of architecture, and her many services to the Institute.

Again, I sincerely offer my nomination of Ms. Sklarek for this award.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.A. Wilkes", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph A Wilkes, FAIA

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