

First, thanks very much to Dr. Sabina Deitrick for the kind introduction. It's great to see so **many familiar faces** in the audience from GSPIA and CLAS—Dr. Nelson among others. It's especially an honor to be with all of you here tonight, **gathered in the name of Iris Marion Young**, a truly exemplary figure in the movements of feminism and social justice. It's very humbling, and so thank you very much for **sharing tonight** with me.

I'd like to **mention two projects** that I'm working on currently in what I call my activist life. The first is very near and dear to me, and I've been working on it for **nearly five years now**. It's called Awamaki, and as Dr. Deitrick mentioned, it's a small NGO based in the Cusco region of Peru that works on **sustainable development**. We work with **cooperatives of indigenous women** who produce traditional, organic textiles. Over the years, the project has grown from a small group of women to a network of several communities. And this commentary is for Dr. Hartmann—today those women are the **primary breadwinners in their families**, and their female children are going to school in unprecedented numbers. It's a project I feel close to, and I'm very **proud of the results** we've seen thusfar.

The second project is with the Big Idea Bookstore, an independently owned bookstore in Bloomfield that specializes in **social justice materials**. We're in the process of transitioning to a **worker-owned** cooperative bookstore/cafe, thus creating jobs and a space for those interesting in alternative economic and social **ways of organizing our lives**.

But I didn't just sit up one day in bed and decide to start organizing these things. I don't believe in **“ah-ha” moments** where activism is concerned, and my level of activity today is directly attributable to **past influences** in my life. It's also **no coincidence** that both of my current projects are centered on **cooperatives and the idea of collectivity**.

I don't believe that individuals should be singled out for their efforts, but that's what we're doing here tonight. All activism is the **result of collectivism**—many people working together, often thankless jobs and long hours—for a common goal. Nonetheless, there are **individuals within the larger struggle**—often women, in my case—that stand out that have shaped my vision and work today. I'd like to say just a few words about some of them, and dedicate this award to their efforts.

Suzan Erem. A former SEIU organizer, she was my managing editor at a small, rabble-rousing independent newspaper called *Voices of Central Pennsylvania*. A newspaper is a classic example of a project that requires **cooperation and mutual aid**, and Suzan cultivates that in her staff. She taught me to ask hard questions, read between the lines, and speak up when I had something to say. Suzan is a leader who assumes the **critical role** of developing other leaders. She was tough and intimidating, but endlessly patient and encouraging with me, and I consider her my **mentor**.

Carmen Chazulle Rivera. At 22 years old, I arrived in Puerto Rico, terrified, completely out of my element, covered in mosquito bites and literally crying for home. I got off the plane and was greeted by Chazulle, as she is a known, **a well-known activist and professor of women's studies**. She was my supervisor at a nonprofit that linked college students with inner-city projects. She's been jailed for her actions of civil disobedience and is a vocal opponent of Puerto Rico's colonial status. I wish I could say that Chazulle **coddled** me, but she didn't. She was **hard on me**, and together we built an impressive project that made **real impacts in San Juan**. I became tougher and wiser while working with her. It makes me smile to think of her down there now, **fighting the fight**.

Anna Brewer. In this line of work, we need more than professional support—**we need friends**. We need someone who **opens us up** and keeps us moving forward. We need emotional connections. A sophisticated visual artist, relentlessly fierce feminist, and effective organizer, Anna is one of my closest friends. She continually gives me nuggets of wisdom and truth that I'm embarrassed I hadn't thought of myself. The conversations we share are times of those **“yes, yes, exactly!”** moments, and being with her is **one place I always feel understood**.

These are just a few names of individuals. I could name more from other parts of my life—Hannah, Kennedy, Aggy, Benjamin, and others—because **these collected influences** are what makes us who we are. The point is that although I am up here receiving an award for my actions in the realm of activism, this award is really for **all of us**—all of the women and men like **Iris Marion Young and Dr. Hartmann** who work everyday towards a vision of a more just, equitable future. It's about **none of us in particular**, but the results of our collective visions and efforts. **Thank you** all for your hard work.