

2008 MEDALS & AWARDS

2008 BROMERY AWARD FOR THE MINORITIES

Presented to **Lisa D. White**



Lisa D. White
San Francisco State University

Citation by Laura F. Serpa

The Bromery Award recognizes the outstanding education and service contributions and commitment to the advancement of minorities that characterized Bill Bromery's career. No person is more appropriate to receive the first Bromery Award than Dr. Lisa White, who has demonstrated the same commitment and drive to help minorities achieve success while maintaining a strong record of research and service to the geologic community.

Lisa received her B.A. in geology from San Francisco State University and her Ph.D. in earth sciences from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She comes from a family of high achievers who have gained recognition for both their career achievements and their contribution to the community. Not only does Lisa have the distinction of being a second-generation SF State alumnus, but she is also the second member of her family to serve as faculty and administrator at SF State. She credits her parents and an internship in the USGS–Minority Participation in the Earth Sciences program in the 1980s with planting the public service gene that sprouted a lifelong dedication to mentoring youth in geoscience. A member of the SF State faculty since 1990, she is now Associate Dean of the College of Science and Engineering and director of the SF-ROCKS (Reaching out to Communities and Kids with Science in San Francisco)

program. She was elected Fellow of the California Academy of Sciences in 2000 and was a visiting geology department professor at the University of New Orleans in 2005, where she mentored students and helped to promote opportunities for African Americans to attend college as geoscience majors. She continues to take an active role in recruiting minority students to geoscience and, through her leadership as administrator, teacher, mentor, and researcher, she is a role model who will inspire generations to come.

Response by Lisa D. White

I am extremely grateful to Laura Serpa for nominating me and citing me for this award. The Bromery Award is a very special honor and I am humbled to be the first recipient of an award reflecting the legacy of a man whose leadership and accomplishments have an impact far beyond our profession. I would like to thank the Bromery family for establishing such a generous award, and thank the Geological Society of America Committee on Women and Minorities in the Geosciences for selecting me. I am delighted to share this wonderful honor with my parents, Myrtle Escort White and Dr. Joseph White, who are here with me tonight, as is my sister, Dr. Lori White.

The Bromery Award recognizes those who have been instrumental in opening the geoscience field to minorities, and I was fortunate to have the field opened to me at the same public urban institution where I am now a professor and administrator, San Francisco State University.

I am often asked how an urban dweller like myself could become a geologist. I find myself asking the same question of my students each year as I try to make geoscientists out of the diverse urban, digital-generation students whom I actively recruit to the geosciences. I answer: there are multiple pathways to the geosciences and mine happened to start in San Francisco, in a city that is not typical, at a state university that is not ordinary, and in a family rooted in community and social activism.

It was my good fortune to be an undergraduate at a teaching-centered university in close proximity to the USGS in Menlo Park providing an opportunity to work side-by-side with professional geologists. Whether it was doing field work in the S.F. Bay Area or around the Pacific Rim, there was a sense of being part of a research team and of something even bigger. In graduate school at UC Santa Cruz, my advisor, Bob Garrison, created a broader sense of inclusiveness and community among his graduate students and research colleagues from all over the world. That spirit of community led me back to my community where I felt I could make the most difference in the lives of others.

There is no one pathway to the geosciences but there are experiences that seem to be staples for undergraduate students who aspire to become geoscientists today: mentors and advisors who provide a sense of encouragement; research, field, and internship experiences with professional scientists; and a culture of support from friends and family who are equally as passionate and invested in student success. For an African American young person, these kinds of experiences in science continue to be more unusual and much needs to be done to increase the pipeline of underrepresented minorities to the geosciences.

A special thank you to all my faculty colleagues in the Geosciences Department at San Francisco State, to my good friends in the geoscience education community, and to the National Association of Black Geologists and Geophysicists for their commitment to changing the face of geosciences. I hope to continue to embody the spirit of the award and the legacy of Bill Bromery as we work together to create a more inclusive geoscience community. Thank you.