

GENI ENG – A Celebration of a Marvelous Career

November 13, 2022, at the Rickhouse (<https://www.rickhousedurham.com/gallery>)

Agenda

5 - 6:00 Gathering and appetizers
6:00 Dinner and Toasts
7:15 Break
7:30 Dessert and Toasts

Speakers

1970 - 1980's: The Young Scholar
1990 - 2000's: The Change Maker
2010 - Present: The Community Champion Beyond the CV: Mom, Paw Paw, Partner
The Woman of the Hour

1970 - 1980's: The Young Scholar

Peace Corps - Nancy Lowenthal

By the early 1970s, both the independent Republic of Togo and Peace Corps were barely 10 years old. Geni armed with her undergraduate degree, advanced French language skills, optimism, and enthusiasm, flew thousands of miles from home to the bustling, tiny coastal West African nation, known as "*la Suisse de l'Afrique*." For Peace Corps Volunteers, Togo was a very friendly country, set back in time. Togolese welcomed foreigners with a resounding *wayzolo* and the children following foreigners endlessly singing *Yovo, Yovo, bonsoir. Ca va bien, merci*. Geni was posted near the beautiful mountains of southern Togo.

For a volunteer like Geni, with her strong desire to make the most of the Peace Corps, it was transformative. Geni's experience in Togo with shaping health education programs and working with pregnant women, inspired her future work, propelling her to graduate school – a masters quickly followed by a doctorate. Her connection to Togo did not waiver. By the '80s not only were she, Dan, and their children hosting the "Friends of Togo" returned Peace Corps Volunteers at their house, but Dr. Eng remained connected to Togo through former Togolese colleagues, her past and present students, and her continued research.

Dr. Eng's international work in Togo and beyond, included improving the discipline of health education. She helped transform it from a peripheral program, too often practiced by ill trained staff at health ministries who had neither behavioral expertise nor health education skills, to a discipline that ministries valued, seeking out a growing number of national health education experts. She teamed up with CDC and Peace Corps health education experts (including Kathy Parker, Joe and Gail Naimoli, Jim Harrington, among others), who together developed well researched and evidence-based behavioral interventions while advancing the discipline of health education through the USAID - CDC Combatting Childhood Communicable Disease (CCCD) project working across 12 African countries, including Togo.

Dr. Eng not only influenced my interest in public health and academic direction, but her work also impacted generations of students, and improvements in public health programming both domestically and internationally. Most importantly, she taught us to listen and learn from the community and project beneficiaries thus shaping the interventions through the community's understanding of wellbeing and illness. She also taught communities to organize for improved health. In a politically oppressive country like Togo, organizing around improving basic health care gave people a voice and avenue to control their wellbeing – serving as a foundation of taking back power over their lives.

Dr. Eng opened doors for vulnerable populations to achieve better health outcomes. As my masters' advisor, Dr. Eng also shaped my future by opening doors for me to a rewarding global public health career.

Chère Dr. Eng, Merci mille fois!

Grad School - Tony Whitehead

Good evening. I'm happy to be here, and thank you for inviting me. I came to North Carolina and to HEED in 1976, and I was here when Geni went on to do both of her degrees. And I was asked to talk about some of the impact that Geni had on me. . . .

Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis - Lynn Blanchard

In August 1983, Geni and I met when each of us was at a pivotal point in our lives. We were at differing phases of beginning the work that would largely define our careers over the next 40 years and connect us for that long as well. I was a stay-at-home mother, a former primary school teacher who was coming to graduate school to find my path. She had started along her path as a newly minted (that week!) DrPH; it was her first month as an instructor in the Department of Health Education. (HEED, as we knew it!)

Chair Guy Steuart had made Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis the foundation of the MPH field training, and Geni had now progressed from participating in it to advising a field team – and I was one of four students on her first team. (Show of hands – how many folks here took part in AOCD? And how many of you had Geni as your advisor?) In those days you were not assigned to a team – they basically locked the class in a room together – went over the options and, a la Hunger Games, you decided who was on what team. I won't go into detail about how I ended up on Geni's team – let's just say that the most defining aspect of it was that there was one person in our class who had already positioned themselves to be, shall we say, a challenge to work with. And it was clear we were not getting out of that room until SOMEONE agreed to have them on a team. So, several of us banded together and agreed to make it work. Thank goodness Geni did as well – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Thanks to Geni, we navigated an extremely challenging 18-month process that looked doomed at times – for several different reasons, sometimes directly linked to the attitude and behavior of our problematic colleague. Geni was able to help us to analyze, navigate and problem solve – always emphasizing and demonstrating how we could continue to build a community-centered experience. And she also supported us when, at the suggestion of Guy, we “fired” our team member. Geni and I

eventually co-authored an article on AOCD using our experience (less the drama) as a case experience. And an appendix from that publication has been included in Meredith Minkler's book *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Welfare*, the 4th edition of which was published this year.

The lessons I learned from this process, with Geni's help, were transformational - they have helped inform a number of aspects of the work I have done over the years. Geni and I have continued to work together and cross paths in many ways – and I have been witness to the role she has played as a true change agent in the training and efforts of untold numbers of students, colleagues, community partners and communities – and while informed by the added value of her years of experience, there is a fundamental core that is the same as in 1983...with everyone, she is collegial, knowledgeable, organized, focused, thoughtful, and more than a little fun! She is constant in her advocacy for and assurance of the centrality of the community voice in all we do – she walks the walk, and we can all learn from that.

Partners for Improved Nutrition and Health – Michelle Bressler

At PINAH, Geni modeled so much of what was to come in her career. A participatory approach to evaluation that involved stakeholders, including community partners, in identifying Evaluation questions, methods, and sharing results. As one of the program partners remembers, "She trusted people to know what they wanted and needed."

A deep commitment to eradicating racial disparities in health and Involving students in the work as an opportunity to learn by doing. Geni's decision to bring students along for a Board site visit to the Delta ended up changing my life's trajectory. For the first time I experienced rolling cotton field and catfish pond vistas punctuated by stands of oaks and cottonwoods.

While the project aims to reduce infant mortality may have been a big reach-- Freedom from Hunger's decision to include highly rigorous evaluation has been recognized widely and ended up affecting lots of us. The evaluation revealed there was an increase in the capacity of the community and an uptake in services by community members. This did not just end up in a report in the state health office in Jackson. Community members and students interacted in roller rinks and church halls when the results were presented and reviewed.

The Delta makes an impression on people--drinking Coke in green glass bottles in the old wood paneled office across the street from the Leflore county courthouse where stands a 20 foot Confederate monument. We drank weak coffee with strong people and used post it notes and copious flip charts to plot strategies, create plans and analyze situations. Now down the street there is an Emmett Till statue that was recently installed. And one of our community facilitators founded the Fannie Lou Hamer Cancer Prevention Foundation which broke ground this fall on a headquarters in Ruleville Mississippi. Geni also made parenting look possible to us grad students. I learned a few lasting lessons. Don't take it too seriously. When the kids asked for something, Geni would ask, "well what do you say?" in a typical parent fashion. Instead of the usual please Mom.... Gabe and Mira bowed down and said, "we are not worthy"— you must remember it was the 90s.

Lesson #2 was Bring the kids along for the work and the play. The kids were there to write stories and staple newsletters while we made plans with Dr. Rausa at the District 3 Health Office before heading out to Graceland.

And the final lesson for parenting which probably has a deeper meaning that I haven't figured out yet--- **you can stop and look at the dead Armadillo on the side of the road Gabe, but we can't bring it with us.**

We are so lucky that Mira has landed in Oregon so we can now learn the grandparenting lessons from Geni and Dan.

1990 - 2000's: The Change Maker

Community-Based Public Health Initiative - Lucille Webb

Well I met Geni when ____ thought I had retired, and that I needed something to do. And Margaret Pollard . . .

Kellogg Community Health Scholars - Derek Griffith

Thank you for this opportunity to honor my friend, my mentor and my muse. I met Geni when I applied for the WK Kellogg Community Health Scholars Program in late 2001- early 2002, right after September 11th. Around this time the landmark report – Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care – was released by the Institute of Medicine. This report was groundbreaking because it was one of the first major reports to name racism as a determinant of health and healthcare. We had to navigate the complexities of this context and determine how best to apply it to the work we were doing in health disparities at the time.

There are few inflection points that we can point to in our lives that we can point to that truly shape who we become both personally and professionally. I can honestly say that meeting Geni, working with Geni, and having her walk alongside me throughout my career has been nothing short of life changing. She brought things out of me that I didn't know existed and trusted me to do things when I wasn't sure I was ready to do them. I don't know that I'll call them the top 10, but here are 10 things that I learned from Geni that have shaped me as a person and a professional:

1. Be yourself, and encourage mentees to be themselves.
2. Sometimes taking the road less traveled will take you somewhere great; if that's where you feel your life and career take you, go!
3. Value relationships more than products.
4. Celebrate, honor, and maintain perspective.
5. Your job is not your life, nor is it the defining part of your identity or worth.
6. Mentoring is really friendship in disguise; get to know people, not just what they do.
7. Mentor people like you value, care for, and love them as people.
8. Always stand up for and do what you think is right.

9. Conflict is necessary for growth and change; there are healthy ways to disagree and bring different ideas to the table.
10. Acknowledge and be kind to everyone.

Thank you for being you.

Photovoice Class - India Ornelas

Hello, I'm India Ornelas, currently a Professor and the Interim Chair in the Department of Health Systems and Population Health at the University of Washington in Seattle. I first met Geni as a doctoral student in 2004. My second year in the program, I was hired as a Research Assistant on the Men As Navigators for Health project – or MAN for Health. This was a community-based participatory research project with Black and Latino men in Wake, Chatham, and Orange counties. Men were trained as navigators (lay health advisors) to share health information with men in their social networks.

Getting to observe Geni as the leader of this project was one of the most important parts of my doctoral education. During this time we did Photovoice projects with the men that had been chosen as navigators to better understand their experiences and what they were seeing in their communities. This was an old school Photovoice project where we gave the men disposable cameras, got the photos developed, held them in our hands and discussed them. I watched Geni lead the discussion and help the men pull out meaning in what they were seeing in the photos of their local churches, grocery stores and neighborhoods. When it came time to analyze the transcripts from the discussions, she sent copies to the community partners and had them participate in the discussion in her office on speaker phone.

Later when we would present the project at conferences, she showed me the importance of co-presenting the work. This was something that of course always took longer, sending slides back and forth over email, rehearsing so the community member felt comfortable with the presentation. But in watching her, I saw how important these moments of sharing power were. How the community partners felt more engaged in the project, how they could share their story in a way none of us could.

Later I would get the chance to take her Photovoice class and then was asked to be a TA for the course the following year. Anyone who has taken that class or been a guest, knows what a special environment she is able to create in the classroom. It was in that class that I found the words for the kind of researcher I wanted to be: post-positivist while centering the communities voice, letting them speak for themselves. I also learned what kind of teacher I wanted be.

After I graduated and struggled to find my way as a new faculty member, I would always go back to one question, "What would Geni do?" I would dig out my syllabus from that class, I would have students introduce themselves by telling the story of their name, I would share my own story with students knowing that vulnerability builds connection, trust and deeper learning. I am who I am today, because Geni let me be her shadow, taking me to community meetings, modeling what it really means to be in partnership. Now I am fortunate enough to create those relationships myself, and pay it forward to the next generation.

Geni – I know I speak for many – when I say I am so grateful that I got work alongside you, and so appreciative of the way you continued to be my champion and mentor long after I graduated.

Congratulations on your marvelous career – because of your mentorship many will continue to learn from you for years to come.

Geni Trivia Quiz

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Cancer Health Disparities Postdoctoral Program - Kristin Black

Good evening everyone! My name is Kristin Black. I've been blessed to work with Geni in various capacities since I was a 2nd year MPH student in 2010, so for 12 years now. I took the photovoice class and then assisted her and Alex with co-teaching it for 4 years. She brought me along to a Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative meeting in 2011 and I've been a part of that family ever since. Being in the Collaborative afforded me an opportunity to work on the ACCURE project as a research assistant. I also was honored to be accepted into the Cancer Health Disparities Postdoctoral Program and was a fellow in this Program from 2016-2018.

As you ALL know, Geni is ALWAYS making space and opportunities to mentor and nurture students, that extends well BEYOND when they move on from UNC Gillings. Which is evident by how many of her mentees are here with us today. She is a steadfast cheerleader of her mentees, and you can always expect her to speak her truth if you ask for her opinion (or not). Geni's level of transparency and honesty are characteristics of hers that I've grown to adore and value the most.

Her dedication to providing needed support to and championing burgeoning public health scholars is evident throughout her career, and I believe this dedication culminated into the Cancer Health Disparities Postdoctoral Program. After the Kellogg Health Scholars program came to an end, Geni worked towards building a program to continue supporting post-docs and providing them with training at Gillings. So, she sought out funding to establish the Cancer Health Disparities Postdoctoral Program. This NIH-funded training program provided post-doctoral fellows, like me, with an opportunity after jumping over the HUGE hazing process of completing a dissertation, to acquire additional training in cancer health disparities research and community-based participatory research. We were matched with stellar health equity scholars throughout UNC that worked with us to develop necessary research and professional skills as we prepared for careers in academia.

Many of the post-docs during my time in the program are now faculty at universities across the U.S. and are thriving as they pull in major research funding and career development awards from NIH, RWJF, and the like. You may be able to say that many of us were inevitably on this trajectory of success anyways. BUT I know that this post-doc was a CRITICAL moment in our development as health equity scholars. Many students do not have the opportunity to fully engage in community-centered research during their masters or doctoral training. This post-doc gave us the time, guidance, and hands-on experience to work on needed skill sets and acquire the knowledge to be true CBPR researchers.

Geni is a visionary. If she sees a need, she works on trying to fill it. The Cancer Health Disparities Postdoctoral Program is no exception to this. Under her mentorship over the past 12 years, she has given me numerous opportunities to hone my skills, build up my expertise, and thrive as a health equity & CBPR scholar. In all honesty, I can't imagine where I'd be right now if I hadn't taken that photovoice class and had that initial introduction to Geni and all her brilliance and passion for public health. Since

that moment, I have tried to soak up all her wisdom and learn from every moment I'm able to observe her. She has modeled for me what it means to truly lift as we climb. I hope to mentor future CBPR & health equity scholars with the same level of transparency, care, advocacy, foresight, and belief in their potential, as Geni has shown and continues to show me. Geni, I love your beautiful heart and wish you nothing but JOY in this next phase of your life.

Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative - Jennifer Schaal

I am so honored to represent the Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative, especially when so many of my fellow Collaborative members are in the room.

After looking at the trajectory of Geni's life and career, it is clear that her history and the evolution of her thought made it possible for the Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative to be successful. The GHDC or some facsimile would have been created without Geni's involvement, but I doubt that it would still be actively working today without Geni's input.

Geni and I are both founding members of the GHDC or Collaborative as we refer to it. The Collaborative has been together now for almost 19 years. In those years, Geni and her fellow collaborative members have come to know each other as fellow antiracists, colleagues and friends. We often refer to the GHDC as family.

When we share about the Collaborative, we feel the need to emphasize that it is a unique and groundbreaking collaboration. It was created **through antiracist community organizing** which led Nettie Coad, Suzanne Plihczik and Barton Parks to seek out an academic partner who could further their goal of addressing racial inequity in the healthcare system through research. Geni accepted their invitation to join and she introduced the other founding members to Community Based Participatory Research early in our development, She guided us through two major NIH grants that involved community members throughout **every part of the research process**.

Geni brought her years of experience in CBPR, her years of learning and making mistakes and her willingness to be a partner and not just a leader to a collaboration that became so much more than the sum of the members. For years Geni has driven to Greensboro at least once a month to be a part of the group and has brought many of her students and colleagues to broaden our base and their experience. Antiracism is about recognizing and dealing with **power** and power dynamics. Antiracism and true CBPR are messy and complicated. Conflict occurs and mistakes are made. Geni has been willing to acknowledge mistakes, apologize and move forward, one of the primary gifts of example that she has brought to our collaboration. She has helped us acknowledge that conflict is necessary to our growth and development as a collaboration. Geni shows up at the Collaborative with humanity and humility even as she brings her expertise in CBPR. She understands that true collaboration is about learning from those who have so much to share but are often not given voice because they do not hold the power. Thank you, Geni!

Graduate Certificate in Participatory Research - Pat Parker

Good evening. My name is Patricia Parker, and I am the immediate past director of the Graduate Certificate in Participatory Research and honored to call Geni a longtime friend and colleague.

Geni is one of the co-founders of the Certificate, which is a two-year interdisciplinary program for graduate and professional students at UNC-Chapel Hill who want training in participatory methods that focus research **with** communities instead of **on** them or **about** them.

To be clear, this Certificate program—its heart, its commitment to community expertise as central to research, and its interdisciplinary community—exists because of Geni Eng, and her fellow renegades in institutional change, Melvin Jackson and the late Dottie Holland.

I remember those early days in the mid 2000s, when the Certificate was not yet an attainable goal, Geni, in particular, was championing support for participatory research on campus. I recall being in one of the seminars that she and Dottie helped organize, and in her quiet yet commanding way, she let those assembled there know that participatory research was not a new thing. That she was in fact carrying on the legacy of the pioneers of this urgent and necessary work—pioneers in what later became known as the Gillings School of Public Health-- who had trained her in this tradition at UNC Chapel Hill.

That resonated with me so profoundly. I know a thing or two about the passion for carrying on the work of those who came before you. I enthusiastically joined the small group that eventually worked to form the Certificate in 2013. Geni continues to serve on the board under the current leadership of Director Angela Stuesse, and up until her retirement, co-taught the introductory course for the Certificate (for which I was proud to be the other co-instructor).

One thing is clear, Geni is a true champion of participatory research. Her legacy lives on in the many faculty, students, and communities, who benefit from this important work.

Community-Based Participatory Research - Barbara Israel

Geni is one of the foremost leaders, scholars and practitioners of community-based participatory research (CBPR), an approach to research that emphasizes power sharing, co-learning, equity, mutual benefit and social change, bringing together community, health systems, and academic partners. She embraced this approach early in her career – while still a student under the mentorship of John Hatch and Guy Steuart – long before it had the label “CBPR”. As many of you know, Geni and I were in the masters program together at UNC – and both decided to stay in the doctoral program together. We were on the same 3-person field team (along with Nancy Dean) – and were most notably referred to in the Burlington newspaper – along with photograph – as Charlies’ Angels for our community diagnosis work. You can well imagine how we reacted to that! Geni has always said that early on what brought us together was the fact that we were the only students who lived with their partners who weren’t married – a practice that was not highly supported at the time! I have had the good fortune to work and play with Geni ever since. We have shared rooms at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association for over 25 years, on several occasions with our partners in tow. Thus, the comments written in the program, some of which I will summarize here, reflect many opportunities I have had to collaborate with and/or see Geni in action.

The following are among her numerous contributions to the field. She was the Director of the Kellogg Health Scholars Postdoctoral Program at UNC-CH School of Public Health from 1998-2012. During that time, she mentored not only over 20 Postdoctoral scholars at UNC, some of whom are here tonight, but also influenced more than 40 other scholars at The John’s Hopkins University and the University of Michigan that were part of the program. Through her instruction and mentorship these scholars have

gone on to become faculty members (e.g., tenured and full professors), government officials (e.g., at NIH, CDC), local government leaders, and researchers at private institutions.

Geni has conducted numerous CBPR studies that have contributed to both our understanding of critical public health issues, and to addressing needed changes to reduce inequities. One of her most influential CBPR projects is the long-standing Greensboro Health Disparities Collaborative, initially funded in 2012 by the National Cancer Institute, which has been at the cutting edge of using CBPR to enhance racial equity and improve cancer care and outcomes through incorporating an undoing racism approach. The powerful results of this effort have been published extensively in highly regarded journals and book chapters, as have her other CBPR studies. For example, she was one of the lead editors of the book *Methods for CBPR for Health*, now in its 2nd edition; and she has written extensively about the use of different methods within the context of CBPR (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus groups, Charette Model, and photovoice).

Geni is a highly sought-after speaker and consultant on CBPR at local, national and international levels – and an excellent role model in co-presenting with her community partners. For over a decade, Geni has taught a fully subscribed course entitled “Community Capacity, Competence and Power: CBPR and Photovoice Methodology”. In addition to the use of lectures, small group discussions, and experiential learning activities, students work in teams with local community groups to conduct a photovoice project – using photography to document strengths and needs in a given community and identify strategies for change. With thanks to Alex Lightfoot – I want to share a few of the evaluation statements that students said about Geni and the course:

- Dr. Eng is brilliant and an excellent instructor. She brings an obvious wealth of knowledge and experience into the classroom.
- Geni challenged me to think critically and to push my learning further, even into the areas of discomfort and unfamiliarity.
- Having an instructor like Geni who is very passionate about CBPR makes the class more exciting and worthwhile. Also, learning from community members that Geni has partnered with provided a valuable and unique perspective.
- I feel so fortunate to have been able to apply the skills we learned in this course to a community setting with folks who walked beside me in co-learning.

Approximately 30 publications to date have resulted from photovoice projects by former students, post-docs and community partners that Geni has fostered. Throughout her career, Geni has received a number of awards in recognition of her accomplishments. For example, in 2008 I was particularly honored and humbled to receive along with Geni and Merry Minkler (who wanted to be here tonight but unfortunately was not able to attend) the prestigious Tom Bruce Award from the Community-Based Public Health Caucus of the American Public Health Association for outstanding contributions to CBPR and community-based public health.

Throughout all of these accomplishments – what is perhaps even more remarkable is Geni’s personal style, flair, wit and eloquence. She always handles situations with quickness and steadfast demeanor. For example, at a personal level, when her daughter Mira was born and I had “snuck into” the hospital room (back in the day) – when a nurse entered and very emphatically said that I had to leave – that only family members were allowed – without missing a beat and a totally straight face, Geni replied “She’s the grandmother!” Of course the nurse knew that couldn’t be possible – but she couldn’t refute Geni’s statement – so she responded with “well, at least put on a hospital gown”!

Geni also has the ability to put people at ease, develop relationships, gather meaningful information – all critical aspects of being a successful CBPR researcher – she has developed that skill into an artform – being able to get away with asking people questions that no one else would be able to do – and probably many of you in this room have experienced that “interrogating/caring questioning”!

And lastly, Geni is one of the most thoughtful and eloquent speakers you’ll ever hear. Her presentations are often poetic, always powerful, and she is not someone you want to follow after she has talked! In summary, clearly, Geni has had a major impact on the scholarship, teaching and practice of CBPR and has been instrumental in enhancing understanding and addressing racial and health inequities in the communities with which she has worked. The fact that we are all here tonight is testimony to the value we place on her personally and professionally. I feel so fortunate to consider her my best friend and look forward to many more years of collaborating, traveling, dining, and shoe shopping together.

2010 - Present: The Community Champion Beyond the CV: Mom, Paw Paw, Partner

Mira

To know my mother is to know that she instinctually gravitates towards gerunds—you know, those verbs that have an *ing* tacked to their tails. An example of this is clearly written in every card my mother has ever given to me. These cards typically begin with a statement to mark the time, followed by several personal observations she’d like to share with me about my evolution as a human in this world. And then, with a fierce consistency her cards end with the words *Loving You*.

Loving You. There’s that gerund I was talking about—the *ing* tacked to the tail of Love. Sure, it’s a subtle grammar move, but it gets me every time. She could sign-off like most of us, with love in its noun form (followed by a comma and a classy signature), but this would feel too static... too trapped in time. So instead, she chooses to end her cards with a simple gerund that indicates her love in action.

As I read my mother’s words *Loving You*, I know she’s reminding me that love is an everevolving process of discovery. That we are engaging in the act of loving each other every day. What a gift.

Another gerund my mother likes to use is *Learning*, which I’ve heard countless times over the last 5 months spent with my parents in Portland, Oregon—the place I call home. After my mother taught her LAST class, graded her last paper and packed up her office, she and my father headed west on a road trip to Oregon that would begin the next chapter of their lives: a retired mash-up of time spent in Durham and Portland. During their drive, I called my mother to get an estimated time of arrival and her response was “I’m not sure exactly what day we’ll arrive. I’m *Learning* to let go of schedules and deadlines”. *Learning* to let go.

Once my mother arrived in Portland, I found myself smiling every time she was asked what she’s been up to in her new part-time life in the Pacific Northwest. It could be a new

acquaintance, or an old friend and her response would be the same—I'm *learning* to be a grandmother. And there it is again. A simple gerund to let us know that she doesn't have all the answers—that in learning to be a grandmother, she's exploring another side of herself.

To be the daughter of Geni, is to be inspired every day by her humble, hopeful and enthusiastic belief that we are all in-process just like the gerunds that she gravitates towards. And that we can discover so much more when we embrace the idea that our potential to love and learn is unquantifiable and unending.

And so, I'd like to raise a toast to loving Geni. She is Dr. Eng after all.

Eugenia Eng: The Real Deal - Dan

I've been given the honor of being the last in line of speakers introducing Geni at this carefully curated event. Before I speak, however, I'd like to say a few words. (. . . *pause*) How many of you recognize that Groucho Marx line? For a long time now I've waited for an opportunity like this to say "a few words" before giving a speech.

As this gathering, I visualize Geni as a diamond -- not for being expensive or having hard surfaces, but for her many sparkling facets. Each facet catches our eye as we see her from different perspectives in our work and lives together.

We're here today--in speeches and conversations—among her friends, family, and colleagues to talk about the many facets of Geni. My dilemma—which facet to highlight in just "a few words"? Now, Geni's not known for her jokes. How many of you here have heard her tell a joke? To be fair, she's quite honest about this disability. However, is there anyone in the room that has not heard Geni's boisterous, infectious, joyful cackle of a laugh?

I highlight her laughter that comes from her heart. It's no chuckle or chortle. It comes from a heart that is deeply kind and fair and strong and loving. We all love to hear it. I've been most fortunate to have heard her gleeful laugh for almost 50 years. Let's laugh with her as we celebrate this day with her and with one another.

Since no one has spoken about Geni as a caregiver, let me also speak to that facet briefly. Some, but not all of you, know that Geni and I were a caregiver team in our home for my youngest brother suffering from early onset Alzheimers for the past 2 ½ years. She provided compassionate and loving care for my brother, while still teaching, mentoring, and working with community partners during that time. Once again she showed that her joy of living comes from a deep and loving heart. Authentic & genuine in all facets, Eugenia Eng is The Real Deal.

That's it. I've said a few words. Anyone who wants to read my speech for today, get up with me to provide your email and I'll send it to you. Also, I'll sign you on to help in setting up a support group. It's for the spouses, partners, and children of those in the field of public health. Sound like a good idea? Thank you all.

The Woman of the Hour - Geni

Room Full of Twinkle

Back in 1978, I had a conversation about my dissertation idea with Bill Dow, pediatrician-community organizer-organic farmer who started the first Farmer's Markets in NC and worked with a local high school shop teacher to have students build solar hot water heaters to install in clinics in Chatham County.

I wanted to examine in-depth what John Hatch called "natural helpers." In every community, no matter how isolated, poor, or marginalized, there are natural helpers who are known for having a listening ear, a caring shoulder, connections to resources outside their own community, sound judgment, and for being discreet. These qualities come naturally to natural helpers, and most of the time they don't even realize they are natural helpers. So, how do we identify them, find them, earn their trust, and collaborate with us?

Bill said these are special persons with "twinkle" and you know it when you meet them. Natural helping is not the same as charisma or leadership. It's much more. Hard to define and measure. But I tried and defended my dissertation in 1983.

Nearly 40 years later, my dream has come true. Gather together in one room all the special persons with twinkle, who have so graciously and generously helped me through my public and private life. For example:

- As a teaching assistant taking over my course, after I go into labor for Gabe's birth.
- As research assistants who took on caring for Mira and Gabe and house sitting, while Dan and I are out of the country.
- As a fellow field team member, who thought it would be a great idea to be photographed and interviewed by the local paper, but then we were mortified when it came out with the tag-line, "Charlie's Angels have landed in Alamance."
- As a community partner co-presenting on CBPR in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Albuquerque, NM, and we brought our husbands with us to stay a few days more to travel around together while listening to his playlist of songs about shoes...Blue Suede Shoes, These Boots are Made for Walking.
- As a co-consultant on Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis for UNICEF in Cambodia, who took me to a traditional healer to treat a mysterious boil on my neck by chewing up a cola nut and spitting on the boil. It worked!
- To Mira for sleeping in the backseat on our return home from a training for migrant farmworker women, where she helped with childcare; attending final presentations for my photovoice course and conducting a photovoice herself for a course at Mills College; and arranging for staff at her interior design firm to attend the Racial Equity Institute's Groundwater and Phase I anti-racism training.
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- To Dan for attending with me the Racial Equity Institute's Phase I, Phase II, Latino Challenges, and Groundwater trainings...so transformed by it that he's active with Durham's White Caucus and persuades close friends and colleagues to attend REI trainings.

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Know that I am forever committed to you and your work.