



Gladys Beckwith

(1929 -)

Inducted: 2012

Locale: Lansing and Flint

Era: Contemporary

Area(s) of Achievement: Education, Women's Rights

Dr. Gladys Beckwith is a pioneer in the fields of women's studies and women's history. As one of the first professors of women's studies in the country, Dr. Beckwith was frustrated by the glaring lack of course materials for and about women. In 1973, she and a small group of colleagues formed the Michigan Women's Studies Association (MWSA), the first professional women's studies association in the country. Its goals were to raise awareness about the role of women in history and to push for the development of women's studies programs in all of Michigan's colleges and universities.

In 1979, Dr. Beckwith negotiated a lease with the City of Lansing for the Cooley Haze House, which became the home of the Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame. Dr. Beckwith served as both the unpaid Executive Director and the President of the MWSA for more than 30 years. She maintains an active role in preserving women's history in Michigan and serves on the Friends Board of the MWSA. Dr. Beckwith's work and foresight made Michigan the first state in the nation to have a museum solely dedicated to women's history and Michigan remains one of only a handful of states to have a Women's Hall of Fame.

In addition to teaching at Michigan State University for 32 years, Dr. Beckwith served on the Lansing Board of Education for 18 years. In 1996, she was the recipient of MSU's Presidential Award for Community Service. In 1998, the Michigan Women's Foundation presented her with the Women of Achievement and Courage Award. In 2005, the Detroit News named her one of 12 'Michigianians of the Year.'