



2007 DirectWomen Institute Class Member Patricia A. McQuater

Patricia A. McQuater was taught from an early age to embrace challenges and view each day with eyes that look for opportunity. Despite the financial hardship that constantly tests the mettle of a single parent, she and her two older brothers were raised by her mother amid the rich cultural and historic environment of Washington, D.C. By providing an example that her daughter would follow, Patricia's mother volunteered diligently for school, church and civic organizations. But it was that one day in the seventh grade that marked a defining moment in Patricia's life. It was then that she knew she wanted to be a lawyer when she grew up because "lawyers accomplished important things and improved the world around them."

Patricia graduated from the University of San Diego School of Law in 1978, a time when job prospects for women in the private sector were less than plentiful. Many of her classmates left San Diego to pursue opportunities elsewhere, but Patricia's business acumen and accompanying talents were recognized by Foodmaker, who hired her as Corporate Counsel.

She left Foodmaker in 1984 for the Corporate Counsel position at Solar Turbines, where she presently serves as Senior Corporate Counsel. In this position, Patricia has been responsible for complex contract negotiations, developing standard contracting guidelines for international trade, and providing counsel and advice to management regarding employment and labor law. She has drafted and negotiated terms and conditions of confidentiality clauses to protect the company's proprietary information and trademarks. She also helped develop an internal process to ensure worldwide compliance with Commerce, Defense, State and Treasury Department international trade regulations. Patricia's true gift: the ability to take very complicated situations and make them easier for others to understand.

Given her mother's example, Patricia was destined to affect change beyond the professional environment and serve the

community in which she lives. Here again, she excelled. She assumed positions of leadership on numerous boards, including The San Diego Urban League, Girl Scouts, San Diego Convention Center Corporation, USD School of Law Alumni Association, Children's Hospital & Health Center, and the San Diego Unified Port District Board of Port Commissioners. Her goal in serving on boards and commissions is always the same: to leave the entity in an appreciably better condition than when she joined.

In recognition of her service to the community, Patricia has received numerous awards, including the California Women in Government award, the YWCA Tribute to Women in Industry award, the Gold Key award, USD Women's Law Caucus Outstanding Alumni award, USD Law School Distinguished Alumni award, Tribute to a Living African American History award, 20th Century Leadership award, Distinguished Community Service award, USD Career Achievement award, Honoring Women Rebels award and Salute to Women Pioneers.

One of Patricia's most stunning accomplishments was her election to the chairmanship of the Port of San Diego, the agency that oversees the protection and development of public tidelands surrounding San Diego Bay. To this position she contributed her personal skills on such problems as the Convention Center expansion, capital development projects associated with a proposed new ballpark and a controversial Airport Master Plan. She is only the second African American and the only African American woman to hold the Port Chairman position.

Patricia is a pioneer, someone who has plowed new ground to make it easier for those who follow. She has not only benefited the Black community, but, like her mother, helps others see the opportunity in each challenge and the promise of a better future. She inspires all to work together for a common good.