



The Lynde and Harry
BRADLEY FOUNDATION

**Eugene D. Genovese's
Acceptance Remarks**
February 19, 2010



I am, to say the least, honored by your Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick Academic Freedom Award. I can only hope that I have earned it. I am certain that Betsey did. At the end of the 1980s, when she founded and directed the Women's Studies Program at Emory University, she was a Marxist and feminist who, nonetheless, insisted that the Program have a variety of intellectual and political currents from left to right. She trained students to defend their own views intelligently while respecting people with other views. All she required was that they lay down plausible premises, proceed logically, and appeal to evidence. And by the way, she sponsored some 50 doctoral dissertations.

Sheila O'Connor-Ambrose, who edited Betsey's posthumously published book, *Marriage: The Dream That Refuses to Die*, told of being a Master's Student at the University of Dallas. She asked Professor M. E. Bradford where she might go for a Ph.D. He replied, go to Emory and work with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Bradford, the *doyen* of southern conservative intellectuals -- a man only slightly to the Right of Genghis Khan -- told Sheila not to worry about Betsey's being a Marxist-Feminist. Sheila approached Betsey uneasily, saying, "I am a serious Catholic. I am a pro-life Catholic. I would like to come to Emory, but I am not sure I belong in women's studies." Betsey replied, "Nonsense. You do belong here. I believe in diversity, genuine diversity, in women's studies." A year later, Sheila spoke to Betsey -- who was still pro-life, if unhappily so. Sheila reported that she had just become head of the Campus Right-to-Life Movement. Sheila commented, "She congratulated me, chuckled at my discomfort, and said, 'If you cannot be who you are, what on earth is the point?'"

When Betsey hosted her first party at our home for the students and professors" in her Women's Studies Program at Emory, "feminists, anti-feminists, radicals and conservatives, men and women, blacks and whites, gays and straights mixed together easily -- bantering, challenging, and teasing each other in a spirit of mutual respect and courtesy. There followed a number of friendships across ideological and other lines. But as word got around about the success of her Program, the radical Left, especially the feminists, unleashed a breath-taking vicious campaign across the country to destroy her career. Needless to say,

they spewed their poison all the more after Betsey entered the Catholic Church, embraced pro-life, and departed the Marxist-Feminist Left. No attacks, no matter how vicious, deterred her. To the very end, when crippled by MS and wracked by rheumatoid arthritis, and stenosis, among other diseases, she summoned her strength to fight for the things she passionately believed in -- high academic standards, academic freedom, and the rights of the unborn.

I am deeply grateful to you for recognizing her efforts. She was, as she was called by a wide range of admirers from the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm to Bill Buckley -- "a great lady."