

Margaret Sevy Affordable Housing Lifetime Achievement Award  
Washington State Housing Finance Commission  
October 2, 2022  
Maureen Howard

Grace and peace to each of you. Grace for the housing and homelessness work we all do; Peace for what we all want for the people, the communities, this beloved country of ours, this world in which we live.

I became an advocate for the child who asked “Lady, how long is my family allowed to stay?” For the woman who said “I was not raised to live without a home.” For the man who told me “before I tell you that I have no choices, I will tell you that this street IS my choice.”

I remained an advocate for the women who built their homes from the African sun baked bricks they had made and the men who took computer packing crates to use as building materials.

I anchored my advocacy in a right to housing and a firm belief that housing ends homelessness; that whether rented or owned, the housing was permanent, affordable, safe, and appropriate.

I returned to advocacy when tenants were legally evicted and I found a huge group of people working to help those without homes. Plus they had a weekly meeting and a listserv of 700 people - every organizer's dream.

I tried always to listen, to learn, to figure out a solution that met the need, and to tell the truth.

I was lucky. People helped me, taught me, gave me a platform.

Tonight's award belongs to all of us. If you are already an advocate, be bolder, smarter. If you are not yet an advocate, become one.

1. Know your values
2. Show up
3. Tell the truth
4. Listen, learn, reflect
5. Find a solution
6. Share what you know
7. Commit for the long haul
8. Be kind

Grace and peace to each of you and for those in Camp Hope, safe shelter and permanent housing. Thank you.