

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of Cynthia Canty's candidacy for the MAPB Public Media Impact Award. It would be hard to imagine a more deserving recipient.

First, her long career has demonstrated versatility (including TV, commercial radio, and public radio), excellence on all those platforms, and longevity itself. Those who know those disparate industries understand how succeeding at all of them takes a special talent.

After years of great work on Detroit TV and commercial radio, seven years ago Canty accepted the invitation of Steve Schram – who had already made a similar shift from commercial to public radio – to become Michigan Radio's first host of Stateside, its pioneering show covering the entire state. This not only entailed inventing the wheel, but learning new forms of journalism, including the long, in-depth interview.

In typical Canty style, she humbled herself to learn this new platform, and quickly mastered it. She demonstrated her ability to prepare for and interview politicians, business leaders, and celebrities, but her work on our weekly sports segments might be the acid test of her range.

Canty never covered sports before, and admitted to me that she was by no means an avid fan. Yet she did what she always did when confronted with a new challenge: she took it seriously, she learned the craft, and yet still allowed her guest to be the expert. She soon was putting in an hour or more to prepare for our 5-10 minute segments to find the right articles and clips, craft her questions, and set me up for a compelling conversation. After she did all that, she had the professionalism to pull off Johnny Carson's great trick: letting her guest be the star, even though she knew as much as I did about the subject by the time we sat down.

This is more impressive when you contrast it with the approach of many in media, and especially public radio, to sports, condescendingly (and ignorantly) calling it "Sportsball," and worse. Canty knew better. She understood that we were never really talking about sports, but using it as a prism to discuss people, our values, conflicts, and possible resolutions.

Given all this, perhaps it's not surprising that our most common comment from our listeners – most of them women – was this: "I have never cared about sports, but I love these conversations."

One more point: we did much longer segments on the four books I published during her tenure. She *always* read them cover-to-cover, took notes, and produced the best interviews of the hundreds I did on each book. That's depth, and dedication.

In short, I cannot imagine anyone more deserving of this honor than Cynthia Canty – and I bet Michigan listeners would agree. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

John U. Bacon