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Kaye Bock Tribute

Vaya Con Dios, Kaye

Alex Schafran

This issue of the *Berkeley Planning Journal* is dedicated to Kaye Bock, the longtime Student Affairs Officer for the Department of City and Regional Planning here at Berkeley. Kaye's death came as a shock to the Berkeley planning community; staff, faculty, students and the roughly 1,000 planners that have survived their planning education in no small part due to Kaye's seemingly endless supply of caring, creativity, and know-how, plus her unwavering determination that you succeed no matter the barriers that you may face.

Beyond the sheer sadness at not seeing her face every time I round the now infamous corner, and more than the fear of not being able to navigate the Byzantine bureaucracy that is Berkeley, there are two nagging feelings that have not gone away, even as the grief has dulled and we learn to navigate on our own. Both feelings are not only relevant to coping with Kaye's passing, but represent two fundamental problems we face as planners.

In the days and weeks that followed Kaye's passing, an unbelievable array of tributes and testimonials appeared, documenting just how irreplaceable Kaye was to our organization. Yet few if any gave credit to the organization for fostering an environment which allowed Kaye to flourish. It was Kaye who made us, not the other way around. For all that we in the department think about how to create healthy and humane places and processes, the question remains, how do we make more Kayes? Is there a design, a form of governance, a land use pattern, a transportation system, or a sociological critique that can produce more individuals that care so much about people they barely know that they can make an entire organization function?

I also cannot help but feel a certain amount of responsibility for Kaye's untimely death. Despite how integral she was to all of our lives, quite frankly, Kaye was overworked and underpaid. Although I doubt that Kaye lacked for appreciation and the love of those of us around her, words of thanks do not pay the electrical bill, and do not make up for not seeing your grandchildren grow up. None of us meant to overwork her, none of us intended for her to work nights and weekends, and many of us tried hard to make her stop working when we discovered her in the office at nine o'clock or on email on a Saturday afternoon. Few of

us had any control over her salary or benefits. Although some of Kaye's long hours were certainly of her own choosing, the fact remains that we who loved her so much and relied on her so heavily are in some ways complicit in her untimely passing, and it is a stain I can not wash off for the life of me.

I have no answer to the question of how to create more people like Kaye Bock. But I do know that we can not afford to let the other Kayes in our lives suffer the same fate. This organization, like all organizations, requires people like Kaye, people who as part of the whole become larger than their individual self. We may not know the secret formula to making great people, but we do know how to do more to keep them happy and healthy – pay them what they deserve, give them help when they need it, and remember that the organizations, processes, cities, spaces and regions that we study are made up of human beings.

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