

June 28, 2000

Dear Richard,

I just spoke with Richard Alo and Valerie Taylor and they mentioned that you expressed some reluctance at having the CDC establish an annual conference in your name to honor you. As a member of the CDC and as a person who considers himself an old friend, let me make my case for why the conference should carry your name.

You have impeccable scientific and research credentials.

You are the one person who is uniformly respected and admired by the black, brown and white communities nationally. Your few detractors are simply jealous of your talent, your dogged determination, and the fact that you demand intellectual honesty.

You put your money, your time, your energy, your intellect and your heart into gaining equity for minorities in math, the sciences, and the computing disciplines for over 30 years. Many of us (me, Roscoe, Valerie, Sandra, Richard Alo, Juan Meza, and countless others) realize that much of the opportunity we experience today in the computing disciplines is directly attributable to you.

You have distilled many basic principles and passed them along to us. One that comes to mind quickly – When invited to give a talk on minorities, insist on giving a technical presentation first.

Let me make an apt analogy. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. wiped out black political leadership. For the last 30 years no leader of comparable stature has stepped forward to take his place. In the math and computing disciplines, the reality is that we will probably not see another Richard Tapia for several generations. A conference in your name would be one way to create a lasting tribute to your life's work. Please do not underestimate the inspirational value to generations to come. I personally would like for my 9-year-old son to meet you and to some day tell his grandchildren that he had met Richard Tapia.

After the 1995 workshop on minorities in the computing disciplines, I had to give a report to the CISE advisory committee. They wanted to know how we could rapidly increase the number of minority PhDs in CS. My response was, "the only scalable solution is to clone Richard Tapia." Please consider letting us go forward with this important project.

Your friend,

Bryant