# Microchip Design Pioneer and Transgender Advocate Lynn Conway Dies at 86



Lynn Conway, a microchip design pioneer who faced and overcame discrimination as a transgender individual, passed away on June 9 at the age of 86. Her death was announced by the University of Michigan, where she was a faculty member in engineering until her retirement in 1998.

Conway, along with Carver Mead of the California Institute of Technology, revolutionized microchip design in the 1970s by creating a simplified method that employed algorithms to arrange millions, and later billions, of transistors on a chip. This technique replaced the traditional method of designing chips using paper and pencil, akin to architectural blueprints.

Conway began her career at IBM in 1964 after earning two degrees from Columbia University. However, she was dismissed in 1968 when she disclosed her gender transition. In 2020, IBM issued an apology and awarded her a lifetime achievement award, with company executives acknowledging her significant contributions to the computing industry.

Throughout her career, Conway also worked at Xerox, the National Science Foundation, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). In addition to holding five U.S. patents, she received honorary degrees from several institutions, including Princeton University.

Conway’s story and achievements continue to be recognized as groundbreaking contributions to both technology and social progress.