

A TIME TO BE SILENT AND A TIME TO SPEAK UP

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This narrative recounts the author's experiences beginning in 1965 as one of the first group of Black students to integrate a previous all-White high school in Halifax County in Virginia. She subsequently drew upon these experiences as a social worker and advocate for equality in public housing, and in doing qualitative research on the desegregation experiences of Black students in Halifax County. This research revealed the important roles of survivors, thrivers, friends, and supporters among the cohort of Black students on the frontlines of desegregation, following the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. The impact of the "silent majority" (those who kept silent in the face of racial injustice and oppression) is examined. Sharing this history provides an opportunity for "a time to speak up" and hopefully will encourage others to engage in acts of courage when they are in the presence of injustice.

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

There are many different roads with many signs that have led us to social work and the ongoing fight to end injustice. While some followed the route of social privilege, others capitalized on their experience as being a member of an oppressed group. As social workers, we have been influenced by our life experiences that define us as practitioners and educators. Part I of this narrative introduces the reader to my 1965-1969 experience with school desegregation that occurred as a direct result of the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark case and subsequent civil rights legislation. It uses examples from qualitative research conducted in 1999-2000 on this school desegregation experience to add depth to the personal reflection. The research sample included over 20 formal interviews and contacts with parents and educators and students. Also, the research included reviews of artifacts from the time period. Part II of the article uses my school desegregation experience as a platform to discuss how early experiences with social injustice influence career choices and carve out particular focus areas within the field. It specifically addresses how my experiences as a high school student informed me as I worked to desegregate housing as a social worker in public housing. My journey to social work as a career had many road signs, the most prominent of which

was a warning sign about the dangers of being silent at the wrong time.

Part I: My Personal Experiences With And Subsequent Research On School Desegregation

In 1965, at the age of 13, I made a decision that strongly influenced my becoming a social worker. The first eight years of my formal education took place in segregated schools. From grades one through seven, I attended a three-room school in rural Virginia. In 1964, I attended Mary McLeod Bethune High School, named to celebrate the accomplishments of its namesake who died one year after the 1954 *Brown vs. the Board of Education* landmark decision (Hanson, 2003). Ms. Bethune, the founder of the National Council of Negro Women, felt her duty was to work with the masses "to represent them when they could not act on their own behalf and further racial advancement by taking on a wide variety of community roles" (Hanson, p. 203). In the State of Virginia, "Freedom of Choice" replaced "Separate but Equal" as the law of the land. The separate but equal doctrine was not an affirmation of strength or equality but rather a veiled attempt to continue the philosophy of inherent inequality and inferiority (Davis & Clark, 1992). Along with approximately 40 other bold students, I exercised my option to leave the comfort and nurturing of Mary Bethune High School and enter an unknown environment with people with whom I previously had virtually no social interaction. Today, as I reflect upon this bold



The author in high school, 1966/67

action, I am awed by the act and vacillate between identifying myself as "a trailblazer" or "just plain naive."

Dismantling desegregation had unexpected costs as well as gains (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). From that first twelve-mile bus trip to school, I knew that I had begun more than a journey to a new school. Rather, I had begun a never-ending journey in the struggle for civil rights and empowering individuals to succeed against incredible odds. As my sister and I boarded the bus on that day, the usual excitement and jitters gave way to a deeper understanding of our youthful decision. Entering a bus filled with unfriendly faces, we quickly realized that we were in hostile territory. On that day, I truly understood what Rosa Parks had done almost 10 years ago. Before this day, the physical distance and my childhood naiveté had minimized the magnitude of Ms. Rosa Parks' protest action. Cocooned in the comfort of a wonderful Black family and community, I could not identify with the pain and unspoken fear that Ms. Parks cloaked with defiance.

That first day of school in September ended all of this innocence. By the end of the school bus journey to and from school, I clearly understood that there were two types of enemies: the ones that called us "coons from Bethune" and the ones who sat silent and allowed the verbal abuse. While television broadcast the enemies of civil rights by showing the horrors of verbal expletives, bulldogs, and water hoses, it had left out an equally egregious foe—the silent ones, those who watched in disagreement, but said and did nothing. Ironically, the silent ones made me aware that my survival would depend primarily on Blacks supporting each other. I had no intellectual knowledge of Dr. Barbara Solomon's (1976) empowerment theory. However, I knew about it at the "gut level" because my father, mother, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and church family had unceasingly indoctrinated us to "watch over one another." These daily words never had

more meaning than on that September day when I realized that my very survival would depend on my understanding of self-help and empowerment. Not only did I discover the real enemy—I discovered my power!

As I collected data five years ago from the local newspaper office to tell this story, the paper's editor asked what I was doing. I explained that I was working on an article about school desegregation in the county. She made the observation that the transition had been very easy for the county and there were no real problems like those encountered in Prince Edward County, Virginia, where the schools were closed. I was a bit taken aback, since in my opinion, she was totally unqualified to make this statement because she was never on the frontline. Then, I realized that she could only report what she knew. Nobody told her about the pain, so how was she to know. I decided then that, while it was noble to bear the pain and move on and get over it, a greater purpose would be served by having people understand the pain that their silence may have caused. I was a survivor and, if I ever attend a class reunion, I will ask the silent majority to revisit their silence and use it to strengthen them for future causes.

When I graduated in 1969, a fellow senior read the scripture from chapter three of Ecclesiastes that began: "To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under the heaven." As I listened to the scripture that defined this momentous occasion, I focused on the seventh verse that emphasized that there were "times to keep silent and times to speak." I thought that there could not have been a more appropriate scripture, since most of the teachers and students had excelled in the keeping silence while injustices were all around them. I wondered if they truly understood the scripture or would ever speak up on this time period and recognize their missed opportunity. (Interestingly enough, the only time that I ever called a White high school classmate was after graduation to get the chapter and verse of this scripture that she

read at our graduation). Today, as an educator and social worker, I often reflect on the Ecclesiastes 3:7 verse that there is a time to keep silent and a time to speak. I link it to our empowerment agenda.

At the age of 13, I was equipped with the "full armor" of self-worth not permeable by the racist acts of teachers and students. Although some Black students were permanently damaged by the cruelty, others, like me, survived. Some even thrived in the environment. The *survivors* and the *thrivers* caught my interest, and I am subsequently completing research on the experiences of the cohort of students who desegregated the Halifax County, Virginia school system in 1964-1969. This research led me to identify two other instrumental groups: *friends* and *supporters*. The *friends* are a group of Whites who enabled Black students to survive or thrive. The *supporters* were a cadre of Blacks who overtly or covertly offered various forms of assistance, ranging from instrumental to emotional support. Each group is discussed in greater detail in the narrative that follows.

Survivors

Survivors mastered the environment but, given the opportunity again, would more carefully evaluate their decision to transfer to the White school. Some would definitely not repeat the decision to transfer, while others would not change their choice. In speaking with survivors, there is a sense of loss or bitterness about how the experience deprived them of youthful experiences that others take for granted. For example, exclusion from the honor society, student government leadership, or homecoming court was a certainty. All of these things were possibilities at Bethune and giving them up never entered my mind. Ironically, I did not fully understand that by exercising my "freedom of choice" I had to relinquish my "freedom of choice."

Harriet Tubman, upon escaping from slavery, felt the same sense of disappointment with freedom because it also meant being free

of the people who nurtured you (Bradford, 1886). As one Black graduate from Halifax County High School (HCHS) put it, "I am jealous of the camaraderie that my siblings who attended Bethune continue to share. I don't have that." Caught in the middle, students like me were not fully accepted in either environment. While our new school enrolled us, we were on the fringes. Although we shared the classrooms, we were not assimilated into the cultural life.

Equally surprising, our former school kept distance from us as well. We had opted to leave them, which many perceived as betrayal or abandonment. Thus, we were not applauded for the bold action. Some felt that we were contributing to the demise of a strong Black institution that would be ultimately compromised by integration. Others chose to focus on the era leading to the dismantling of segregated education. For example, a book on the history of education of Blacks in Halifax County between 1866-1969 named students who graduated from the Black high school but failed to mention students who broke the color lines by attending the White high school (Edwards, Royster and Bates, 1976). As students in the middle, we bonded more closely with each other and accepted our unheralded place in the county's history.

Survivors think back to how they would do things differently today. For example, the only two Black girls in a gym class were given the role of being a human chariot (they grasped each other's hand and carried the White girls in a modern dance scene). Their resilience (or, perhaps, naiveté) allowed them to carry out their task without anger. Yet, reflecting upon the incident 40 years later, these two survivors really want the opportunity to go back and drop their passengers and especially the teacher who missed the opportunity to make a difference. While they understand the act within the timeframe, the thought that they were subjected to it angers them even today! Today, both are educators.

Another Black student was always matched in sports with the White student with a physical disability to ensure that she would never win. A further example was a classmate who recalled that the teachers stated that there were "20 girls and three monkeys" in the class. A young man recalls the celebration of Dr. King's death by a White teacher. Another young man made a point of walking with a fellow Black female student to class so that he would not be harmed by a group of White males. He discovered that being with a Black female student gave protection. This was a strategy that he did not share until 40 years later in a tearful interview that overflowed with the pain from episodes long past.

These are examples of the insults that *survivors* endured. While Blacks had some Whites that we could relate to, mostly we relied upon each other to meet our social and emotional needs. We sat together, ate together, and formed a stronger bond based on a mutual support network. Although friendly to all, most never felt accepted by the masses. We watched each other's physical and emotional backs. For example, as a student who graduated with honors, I often acted as though the work was very hard for me, so that some of my true friends did not feel bad about their poorer performance. With the help of *friends* and *supporters* that will be discussed later, we survived by making decisions that helped us to cope emotionally and academically. To give but one example, I desperately wanted to take Latin. However, I refused to enroll because I could not participate in "slave week" because I saw it as an opportunity for sanctioned abuse. (Slave week was used as an experiential opportunity for Latin I and Latin II students to better understand the culture surrounding the origins of the language. During this annual week, Latin I students were required to perform menial tasks such as carrying books for Latin II students). While most Black students who transferred under "Freedom of

Choice" graduated from HCHS, others retreated back to Bethune High School and finished high school in what they believed was a more supportive environment.

Thrivers

Thrivers were a special cohort of survivors, who celebrated the fact that they attended the White school and focused more on their successes. They not only would repeat the experience again, but also felt strongly that it was one of their best decisions in life. *Thrivers* generally had more social interaction with White students. They worked hard to be accepted and insisted on how well things were going on the integration front. They prided themselves in being able to crack the racial barriers. Additionally, they saw their education at the White school as superior and commented on what they considered to be a more wholesome environment for learning. Unlike the *survivors* who transferred because of the adventure, curiosity, and perhaps militancy, *thrivers* more often made the switch because they believed that they would learn more and were willing to forego the missed nurturing. While they, too, probably saw and experienced many of the atrocities of the *survivors*, they focused more on the glass not only being "half full," but "three-quarters full." The attribute of resilience, imbued with the power of positive thinking, best describes the *thrivers*. They focused almost exclusively on the "good times" and their ability to assimilate. On the other hand, the *survivors* openly discussed the negative events, reveling at the strategies that they used to overcome barriers and obstacles placed before them.

Friends

Friends were a small but important cadre of White teachers and students who reached out to help with the integration process. They did so in both overt and covert ways. For example, most White children would not sit next to Blacks on the bus. But a few did. They took the risk. Other White children would not

engage in conversation with Blacks—they carefully watched from afar. A select group exercised their “freedom of speech” and engaged in more than the obligatory “hello.” They even added a smile with the greeting and engaged in spontaneous social dialogue. These simple acts were enough to place them in the *friend* column. Today, I loosely compare them to the stations on the “Underground Railroad.”

There were a few White teachers that Black students felt were really instrumental to their “making it through.” First and foremost, these teachers were considered fair. Additionally, *friends* recognized the needs and strengths of Black students and encouraged them (usually in private), just as the friends of the Underground Railroad. My sister shared that her French teacher helped her tremendously by recommending books for her to read and getting her a position in the library. This act not only met interpersonal needs but also helped her academically. She subsequently majored in Library Science. Another student was given a secret place by the school principal to hide a note, if she felt that she was being harassed. Both *survivors* and *thrivers* valued these acts of caring.

Supporters

Supporters are the parents, siblings, Black teachers and workers at the school, and fellow students. Contrary to common beliefs, parents did not initiate the transfer of these trailblazing students. It was, for the most part, student driven. Based upon the research identified earlier in this article, I discovered that students decided to make the change for three main reasons: (1) obtaining a better education; (2) the adventure, challenge, or militancy; and (3) to support a sibling or cousin. Parent interviews confirmed that they did not force their children to make the choice. There were two exceptions—two Black males were asked to go “to support” their female siblings or cousins. (Maybe “to protect” is a better word choice.) It is

interesting to note that the first cadre of children who attended did not, for the most part, have professional parents.

Although parents did not initiate the move, they played important roles. First, they permitted their children to make the change. This was done often with a great deal of anxiety and fear that they carefully hid. In the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar, the poet, “they wore the mask.” As adults, they knew the cruelty of racism and they had shielded or prepared us in their own special way. As I interviewed parents 30 years after their children made the choice, I learned of their fears, tears, prayers, and advocacy for each of us. One mother said that she “prayed and prayed” as she saw the inward joy sapped from her son. Other parents guided their children with acts of wisdom. For example, my father asked me to stop pretending that I was having a hard time. He stated that the other Black students needed someone to point to who was doing very well, and downplaying my academic achievements was not in the “group’s best interest.” Race pride and collectiveness were in the message.

The message had greater meaning when I graduated with honors. My Black peers noted it with great pride at the time and still today will share that “Sandra was the first Black to graduate from HCHS with honors” (a designation that I have never validated). My father also spoke separately with my sister and encouraged her to temper her aggressive nature. He advised her that this was not a battle to be won with might but with “wit.” Ironically, it sounds a lot like the teaching of civil rights leaders. As stated earlier, the focus was redirecting the inner spirit to conquer rather than simply fight.

While there were some later regrets, parents who sent sons as protectors did so with the same spirit of collectiveness. A few parents exercised advocacy by confronting teachers, bus drivers, and school administrators about unfair treatment of their children. My mother described her anger with

a counselor who stated her doubts about my sister going to college. She advised her in no uncertain terms that she did not need her to get her daughter into college. My father, on the other hand, followed the school bus daily for months until he felt that we were safe. (We knew nothing about this until my mother revealed it during the research that I conducted 30 years later.)

Most of us had older siblings who attended Bethune High School. They were very important to our success. They kept us connected and encouraged us. They made the decision to remain at Bethune High School because the tradeoffs were too great during their junior and senior years. Many students stayed connected though relatives and friends who stayed at Bethune. I know this was true for me. I had an older sister who was a senior at Bethune High School. Her successes were my successes. In return, she helped with homework and learned from our experiences as she readied herself to be among the first Black women students to attend Virginia Tech in 1967. We shared our pain and successes with siblings—because it was safe with them.

Parents were not made privy to all of our experiences. After all, we were teenagers and too much sharing with parents was taboo. Therefore, sisters, brothers, and cousins became our confidants and, in some case, our defenders. One student revealed that her older brother went to the home of a particularly abusive fellow White student and advised him of the consequences of continuing to disrespect his sister. Needless to say, that behavior stopped! In interviews with parents, I discovered that many of them had limited or no knowledge of the problems that some children were experiencing. As children, we “wore the mask” of bravery and, for the most part, felt the need to finish what we had started. This was especially true, since some felt that returning to Bethune would signify failure. Others were determined to demonstrate their equality.

Another group of *supporters* was composed of Black custodial workers and the few Black teachers who joined the faculty. I always felt the watchful eye of the custodian as he engaged in his day-to-day work. As a result, today, I am always careful to stop and acknowledge all levels of staff in my travels. Many of them paved the way for those of us who have the stage. Yet, they do so in watchful silence. Black teachers who joined the faculty also served as supporters.

I will always be grateful to Mrs. Josephine Marshall, a Black French teacher, who took an interest in me as a person and as a student—something I never felt from my White teachers. She never felt the need to avoid the appearance of favoritism. Although fair in her grading, she understood the unmet socialization needs of Black children. For this, I thank her. Other Blacks who joined the faculty also greeted Blacks with a special sense of “you can do this.” Words were usually unnecessary—the encouraging smiles, nods, and “you go, girls” said it all and broke the silence. This was especially noteworthy considering that they too were experiencing discrimination and rejection within their chosen profession.

My fellow trailblazers formed an important social cohort within the school. We ate together and hung out together. Tatum’s book (1997), *Why Do All the Blacks Sit Together in the Cafeteria?* explains this phenomenon. The reason was simple—we gained strength from our association with persons who were genuine supporters. The hour at lunch broke the mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES) associated with being socially isolated in class. With one’s own group, there were not the micro aggressions (Pierce, 1974; Martin & Martin, 1995) that reminded you of their sense of superiority. For example, nobody moved rather than sit next to you. The friendship with other Blacks allowed for the semblance of a “normal” high school experience.

We plotted strategies like rushing to the bus and saving seats so that we would not be forced to stand as White students pretended to save a seat rather than have a Black sit next to them. We discovered a useful tactic using reverse discrimination. If they would not let us sit next to them, they certainly would not sit next to us; therefore, we also saved seats but for different reasons. Had seats been made available, we would have gladly sat next to anyone- Black or White.

During a recent celebration of 50 years of African Americans at Virginia Tech, the importance of seeing and being with other Blacks in a predominately White environment was affirmed. Blacks at the reunion recalled fondly the excitement of seeing another Black crossing the drill field or sitting in class. This was critical to our surviving and indeed thriving even at the next level of education. The *survivors, thrivers, friends, and supporters* were critically important to my understanding of racism and the power of people to make a difference in both minute and monumental ways. A career in social work offered an opportunity to use this experience to advocate for others who are in the trailblazing but often undesirable position of breaking down barriers of discrimination, oppression, and injustice.

Part II: Integrating Lessons Learned to Social Work Practice

As I developed as a social worker, the lessons learned as a high school student penetrated and resurfaced in my practice in housing. For over 20 years, I worked in the field of public and assisted housing. During my career as a social worker in housing, I was always mindful of the ways that housing choices influenced other choices. As strides were made in desegregating schools, much less progress was made in housing desegregation. Blacks were still often concentrated in neighborhoods lacking in instrumental resources but high in nurturing. This is an example of Leon Cheating (1976)'s

cultural-duality theory, in his concepts about nurturing and sustaining communities.

Today, I am convinced that I selected social work as a career because it afforded the opportunity to teach survival strategies to those faced with disadvantage and damaged by the lack of compassion and the "mean spiritedness" of others who were in a position to help because of their dominant status (Tatum, 1997). Also, the lessons learned from this early experience uniquely situated me for my career in affordable housing that brought me face-to-face again with blatant acts of discrimination. Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, housing remains a stronghold of segregation. This section of the article discusses in greater detail how the school desegregation experience became a powerful influence on me becoming a "housing" social worker centered by empowerment theory and grounded in the principles of self-help and mutual support that were anchors of Mary McLeod Bethune. In particular, I will address how it influenced my work in affordable housing and my specific focus on "informed housing choice" coupled with the provision of support. This support was and is important to families exercising their right to move to predominately White neighborhoods with their children. It addresses cultural isolation (Taylor, 1997) and strategies used by Blacks to survive in a hostile environment. It simultaneously advocates for the majority population and advocate organizations to take ownership of easing the burden of transition. It also reinforces the National Association of Social Worker's 2003-2006 housing policy statement that focuses on the need for social work to continue to address the housing inequities that exist because of historical patterns of discrimination (NASW, 2003).

Social Work Advocacy in Public Housing

During the 1970s, federally assisted low-income housing took on a new dimension. No longer was assistance concentrated in what was known as public housing projects. In an effort to achieve racial deconcentration, programs emerged that made housing opportunities available in new neighborhoods. The Sections 23 and 8 programs were federal programs that spearheaded this initiative. While noble in intent and successful in many ways, the burden to correct the ills of a segregated society fell again on the victims of discrimination. In order to improve their life and the lives of their children, they had to live in locations that were sometimes unwelcoming. They were subjected to scrutiny not required of others to make sure that they were "good" neighbors and that they brought no criticism to the attempt to right a wrong that they never caused. Like the school desegregation experience, the cost was much too great for some families. Giving up their nurturing environment left some of them scathed by insults to their persons and property. Children sometimes became prisoners in their homes to protect them from playground hostilities. Unwarranted complaints about the behavior of children, visitors, inappropriate window dressings, new cars (something poor people should not have), and other similar matters seemed to me to compromise the quality of life that these individuals were seeking and the system was promoting through the deconcentration strategy. I sometimes felt that there was a greater effort to appease the complainants than the victims of what seemed to be a backlash against them moving into their space.

In order to protect the programs from criticism and preserve the opportunities, I often felt we were violating the rights of the persons we were trying to help. I became more and more distressed by the stringent requirements imposed on persons of color and other low-income families to live in safe,

decent, and sanitary housing that was outside of traditional public housing neighborhoods. "Creaming" (labeled "screening") became a commonplace practice. I received a complaint from a neighbor about a recent "move-in" and counseled the family about the matter. I then agreed to meet with the complainant to discuss the problems. He was obviously surprised that I too was Black and refused to meet with me to discuss what he had heretofore called "an unbearable situation." This was the straw that broke the camel's back. I knew at that point that I had to do more to advocate for families and less placating of prejudice.

After speaking to my department head and sharing my concern about the well being of families that we were placing, he suggested that I use my social work advocacy skills and write a position paper. I did just this, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the scattered site housing approach. Drawing on my high school desegregation experience, the paper pointed out that irreparable damage is sometimes done to individuals when we place them in situations that they are ill prepared to handle and are sure to fail. I called for an end to some of the unfair screening and instead proposed orientation programs that prepared families for the harassment that they might encounter and allowed them to make an informed decision before leaping into a housing arrangement that would in the end sacrifice their quality of life. Also, I proposed engaging the community to help make the transition successful. After all, why should the entire burden fall on the person least prepared to change others? Living in a neighborhood in which you are constantly victimized certainly could not (and should not) be construed as "good" housing policy. In order for it to be good, both parties have to be served well.

My position paper caused quite a stir, but it achieved its purpose. Some agreed totally with it. Others felt that it was asking for a return to segregation. This response occurred, in part, because I insisted that both strengths and weaknesses of housing placements be

examined, without the automatic assumption that integrated always was better. Future housing programs and placement strategies began to recognize the burden placed on some families to live in neighborhoods where they were unwanted.

From that point forward, I aggressively evaluated policy to understand more clearly who is helped and at what cost. Also, the importance of self-determination was reinforced. This gave birth to my preference for ethnographic and other forms of qualitative research that focus more on depth than breadth. While progress often has innocent victims, sometimes the victimization cannot and should not be justified.

Conclusion

The lesson that I believe is most appropriate for the social work profession is that progress must evaluate the costs to all involved. Those individuals willing to be the trailblazers should be fully apprised of the short- and long-term implications of their actions. When seeking solutions, social workers must not only look to the trailblazers, but also call upon the silent majority to take a stand. After all, the hard fought victories will benefit them as well. We must make the silent ones uncomfortable with their silence.

Reflecting on the recent celebration of the 40th anniversary of the March of Washington, I believe that now is the time for the silent majority to make amends and unceasingly speak about injustices, wherever they occur. School desegregation was important to ending strongholds of racial bias. Its beneficial effects have included theories such as value adaptation, cross-racial ethnic contact, and the perpetuation hypothesis that posits the likelihood of the continuation of opportunity paths after the school experience (Trent, 1997).

As with most progress, there were some losses. Many Blacks mourn the loss of their schools that were replaced in structure and name. For example, Mary Bethune High

School had a short-lived life as a junior high school. The middle school now is named Halifax County Junior High School and the High School is named Halifax County High School. One is forced to ask the question, why? This pattern was played out over and over again in the South, another casualty of the silent majority who failed to fight for the continuation of the previous name and honor its strengths and achievements. The memory of the positive aspects of Black schools is strong among their alumni; however, this allegiance does not negate the understanding of the inequality of the time. Instead, many Blacks chose to elevate the strengths and mourn the loss of historic institutions that were a part of our family and community history.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, I hope the silent majority reflects on their role in making times better for today's disenfranchised, including the homeless, the ill housed, the unemployed, the poorly educated, our elders, the powerless, the hopeless, and the poor. The celebration of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* should be a time of self-reflection and renewal that elevates the principles of social justice. It offers social workers like me the opportunity to speak through history and weigh in on important current policy decisions that will influence the quality of life of our stakeholders. In the words of Mary McLeod Bethune, spoken shortly after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (as cited by Hanson, 2003, p. 203):

"History still speaks. It speaks for the rights of all citizens. And it will not be quiet."

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