

# A JOURNEY ACROSS SIXTY-SIX YEARS OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK HISTORY

**Jean M. Granger, Ph.D., California State University, Long Beach**

This article indicates that the Civil Rights Act and Brown vs. Brown have led to gradual progress. The CSWE non-discrimination decision has been effective in changing curriculum content. The author describes her experiences and explains her conclusions. On a hopeful note, the highly diverse student populations of many primarily White universities gives hope that the implementation of the decisions may gain momentum.

There is a saying: "The more things change, the more they stay the same." I am a 66-year-old Black woman, who is a professor of social work. I have lived my entire life in a world where discrimination, oppression, and injustice exist and in which there has never been a "level playing field" for Blacks. The difference has been that discrimination, oppression, and injustice now have moved from being overt to covert.

So much has changed since the 1954 Supreme Court ruling, which desegregated schools, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which desegregated higher education, and the first nondiscrimination standard of CSWE in 1963. Yet, from a Black perspective, so little has changed. Many schools all over the country have re-segregated primarily due to housing patterns. Most of these schools are as separate and unequal as they were before 1954.

I teach at a primarily White university that appears to have fewer Black tenured and tenure-track faculty than it did when I arrived in 1972. Latino and Asian faculty outnumber Blacks, but their numbers are small when the size of the total faculty is considered. However, the number of White women faculty has increased over the years: affirmative action worked very well for them. These patterns are not unique to my university. They exist at other primarily White universities across the country, and in the social work schools and departments in these universities.

My encounters with racism, discrimination, and injustice led me to the choice of social work as a profession. Using the ethics, values, and methods of social work as practitioner, administrator, and educator, I have been able to advocate and effect change leading to a more just, equitable, and pluralistic society in the settings in which I have been active. This narrative is written to recount this journey and to help others understand where I have come from and where I am now.

## **The Journey Begins**

Throughout much of my younger life, I lived on campuses that were protected, to some extent, from the very racist, often dangerous, environments surrounding them. My first eight years of life (late 1930's to mid 1940's) were spent at a segregated manual training school in New Jersey. The school had a *concealed* high school academic, college preparatory curriculum. My father taught English, mathematics, Latin, boxing, wrestling, and track. The graduates were then able to enter Black colleges.

The Black elementary and secondary schools were three miles away from the campus, up and down hills, on a major highway with no sidewalks. The older children of faculty and staff escorted the younger children through the weather of all seasons—rain, snow, ice, and 90-degree temperatures—to schools that had no



playground equipment or cafeterias and limited materials. School buses with White children passed us on the highway. If we were lucky, no epithets or missiles were sent our way. The White children went to nearby brand-new schools that had every amenity.

My father was spearheading a move to desegregate schools in this community when he received a job as chair of the language department in a Black college in Alabama. We moved in 1945 when I was eight. Black colleges were not able to pay large salaries, so instead they provided housing.

The college had an ethnically mixed faculty with an all-Black student body and private elementary and secondary schools attended by the children of faculty and staff and children from Black families in the community. The Black public elementary and secondary schools lacked almost all major facilities and services.

It was during these years that I began to understand the injustices that surrounded me. The most important injustice was my father's experience. In spite of enormous societal obstacles, he was a *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Rutgers University. He had a Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, was in the midst of getting a Ph.D. from the same university, and had a certificate advance from the Sorbonne University in France. He spoke six languages fluently. But no White university, including Rutgers, would hire him even though he was more qualified than the White persons who were chairs of their language departments.

Since we were living in the midst of Ku Klux Klan country, the mixed faculty and the private schools rankled the White community. Consequently, the city school board voted to eliminate the 12<sup>th</sup> grade from the Black public school and suggested that all of the students go to the campus private school. My father, who had been the first member of the college faculty/staff to vote in the city, suggested that the private secondary school be closed. It

subsequently was closed, and the fight began to get services for Blacks in the public school system.

In spite of parents' attempts to conceal information, we were constantly hearing and reading about lynching, castrations, imprisonment, and deaths of Blacks who had not committed the crimes with which they were charged. (These things happened everywhere in this country, but were "institutionalized" in the South.) The principal of the public Black secondary school, whose son was in my class in the campus private elementary school, was dragged from his car by the police and beaten almost to death. I could go on indefinitely. The deaths of the four young women in the Birmingham church and the dogs and police hoses during civil rights demonstrations were "old" news to Blacks.

This educational situation was so serious that I was sent to live with my grandmother and aunt in New Jersey where schools above the elementary school level had been desegregated for some time. I was ten years old, entering seventh grade, and was not real happy about leaving home. My mother had to insist that the principal accept me in the junior high school. He wanted to demote me to fifth grade because I was a Black from the South. I spent seventh and eighth grades in the North, went home in ninth grade, and returned North for tenth and eleventh grade. My father was finishing his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania and my mother and brother came north for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade year.

The big fight that year was the guidance counselor telling me I should drop from the college preparatory courses because I would never go to college. He did the same thing with the rest of the Black adolescents and White adolescents from families with low incomes. When my mother finished with him, he never spoke to me again. But what about the children who didn't have parents like mine? By the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, only three of the 75 Blacks



(out of a school population of 2,000) remained in the college preparatory track.

Throughout these years, my father, mother, and aunt consistently enhanced the quality of my education. It was they who taught Black history to me and made up the deficits in my education. In addition, my father taught me the first year of Latin so that when I entered 10<sup>th</sup> grade college preparatory, I was ready for second year Latin.

I was unhappy about remaining with my grandmother and aunt for 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but my parents could not afford to send me to a private school. Therefore, in 1952 I took an examination and went from 11<sup>th</sup> grade to college on a Ford Foundation scholarship. Because I was 15, Fisk University, which was closer to home and affordable, was chosen. I had my first experience with a mentor. A young, White, psychology professor took an interest in me and arranged for me to have a volunteer placement in a nursery school. I was assigned to work with a child who was considered to be a problem. It turned out the child did not get enough attention from his parents; he was extremely bright, but bored with the activities. I was able to help him integrate into the school and become a class leader. The school administrator worked with the parents. In 1954, at the time of the Supreme Court decision, I was 17 and a junior in college.

However, my brother, who was 10 in 1954, had an entirely different future as a result of the changes that were wrought due to the *Brown v Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the international recognition of my father. These changes made a difference in our educational paths. My brother went to Mount Hermon Preparatory School for 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades, to Swarthmore College, and on to the University of Pennsylvania for his Master's and Ph.D. My father was offered several positions in White universities as chair of the language departments (he chose to accept the

offer from Rutgers University) after serving the United States as the first Ambassador to Guinea and as the chief delegate for the U.S. at UNESCO in Paris. Financial and other opportunities were finally available. By this time, I had completed my MSW and was working in the New Jersey state public child welfare agency.

Two points of irony illustrate change, perhaps related to the court decisions. First, my aunt was the first Black teacher in the Bergen County, New Jersey school system. The KKK burned a cross on the lawn of her father's home and threatened the family, but this did not prevent her from reporting to her job. Now there is a middle school named after her. Second, Rutgers University has named a dormitory for my father in New Jersey in recognition of his outstanding service as a faculty member there.

### **The Decision To Become a Social Worker**

I knew I wanted to be a social worker by the time I reached 10<sup>th</sup> grade, even though I was only 13 at the time. My mother had been a "social worker" at the YWCA following college and prior to my parents' marriage. She (and my father) went to all of our PTA meetings and other community activities: our house was the gathering place for other children, regardless of ethnicity, even after she went back to work. No matter how bad things were, my parents had always taught me to be accepting (while not accepting inappropriate behavior), to be non-judgmental, to individualize people, and to believe in the good in people and the possibility of changing behavior and beliefs. I never forgot the treatment of the White people who were poor, particularly those students who had been in 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades with me. My parents believed strongly that helping others was a necessity in life. Both my parents had risked their lives in order to do "what was right." I had a desire to see what I could



do to prevent injustice to anyone, not just to Blacks.

However, I did not wish to remain in the South and attend a Black university. MSW students had to be sent north in order to have block field placements because most of the Southern agencies were White and refused to accept Black students. At 18, going on 19 (in 1956), I was considered too young to enter the Northern schools where I wanted to go and too young to work in the field. Fortunately, the new college where my father was chair of the language department had an introduction to social work and related courses.

I subsequently entered Fordham University School of Social Services, which was a marvelous experience. I had just turned 20 when I entered in 1957, and it was the first time that I really could say I "loved" being in school. More importantly, the student body was more diverse. It was primarily White, but had many Latinos (mostly Puerto Rican) and some Blacks. There were also nuns and priests of different ethnicities. Although the faculty (which appeared to be totally White) never addressed multicultural issues, the experience was extraordinary. My particular study group/friends consisted of three white women in their forties, two of whom were policewomen (one Irish and one Italian) who were happy to talk about their cultures, a Puerto Rican in her thirties, and a White student who also was 20.

I remember two faculty members in particular. One was a Jesuit priest who was the regent for the School of Social Services. He taught a class in the first semester concerning ethics, values, and professional relationships. A number of students were afraid of him and thought he was a difficult teacher. I enjoyed him: he had a very dry sense of humor and delivered amusing comments in class in a deadpan manner. Often, people didn't realize what he had said until I started laughing. More importantly, the lessons in

social work ethics and values, which he taught, remain with me still. Additionally, although he was no nonsense in behavior, I found him to be kind and concerned. Because the only school of social work in North Carolina was White, the state was paying part of my expenses and the money was usually late. Therefore, he and I had an ongoing dialogue.

The second teacher was the woman faculty member who taught the two semester child welfare course. One thing that was "drummed into" my head was to provide services to keep children with their natural parents, if at all possible. Although the pendulum has swung many times over the years regarding preferences for funding foster care and other "out-of-the home" care, the precept of keeping children with their natural parents has been with me through all of my years of practice and continued with me throughout my university teaching.

The first year of field was one of the biggest learning events of my life. The agency staff and clients were very mixed ethnically. I had a fantastic White field instructor who recognized that there were cultural/ethnic differences that impacted practice. In spite of the difficulty of the placement and my inexperience, the field instructor created an atmosphere of acceptance and expectation, demanding my best.

Social work was definitely the right profession for me.

The second year of field was one of the worst events of my life. I had no supervision for most of the eight months of a difficult placement. I figured I had to "stick it out." When I told my faculty liaison at the end of the year about the situation, she was furious and, after consultation with the agency and the dean, closed the placement. From this experience, I had learned how *not* to supervise/provide field instruction. One of the future goals of my professional life would be to prevent any one else from having this kind of experience.



My MSW record was outstanding and several faculty and family members wanted me to continue to the Ph.D. program. However, I wanted to get work experience but was ambivalent about what I wanted to do. Fortunately, at the time of graduation, my father and mother were headed to Guinea, West Africa, where my father was to be the first American ambassador. They suggested that my brother and I spend the next year in Africa.

I was stunned at what colonialism had produced. The Guineans were the first country in Africa to throw out the French government. In retaliation, the French took all the records of the country and dumped them in the ocean. The French had been there for years taking the natural resources out of the country for their gain, but had done nothing for the Guineans. There was only five percent literacy in the population, and health care was limited, with only one hospital. The Guinean government was doing everything it could to remedy the situation. Colonialism was definitely worse than racism in this country, although not as bad as slavery. I decided there was no better place to live than in the United States, but only if major changes were made here.

### **The First Destination: Public Child Welfare**

I returned from Africa comfortable with myself. I am an assertive, empathetic, concerned, independent-minded person, with a great deal of self-directed drive, who is often direct in manner. It has always been important to me to do any task or job thoroughly and well, which means learning as much as possible about how to do it right. If I have an idea of how to create something or make things better, I am willing to implement it myself. Faced with a problem situation, I can work out multiple scenarios of how to resolve it and anticipate the consequences of all of the potential resolutions. I don't suffer "fools"

gladly. However, this latter characteristic has been under control for many years, fortunately, since I have spent 33 of the last 35 years of my life in academia.

I had made a decision. I was never going to work anywhere except public agencies. These agencies served the population of clients who were disenfranchised, poor, and suffering all kinds of injustices. To the shock of everyone in the state agency, I chose to go to work in public child welfare in New Jersey. I was the first and only Black worker in the office and the only MSW, outside of my supervisor, who was also the administrator.

In public child welfare, I discovered generalist social work practice. Thank goodness for the extra, required courses in group work, community organization, and administration in my master's curriculum. Contrary to belief, child welfare social workers cannot, and should not, just work one-to-one with children, families, and collateral persons. In order to deal with injustices and disenfranchisement and to get the job done properly, social workers must develop different kinds of groups and collaborate with communities and members of institutions as well as develop administrative skills.

I also discovered multicultural social work practice. My first caseload was 90 White children, primarily in foster homes. All of the foster parents were early middle-aged and had been foster parents a long time. Although I was 22, I looked much younger, something that each foster parent commented on. They were shocked that I wanted to talk to them and each foster child alone, as well as together. However, as time went on and problems with the children were resolved, they learned to trust me. They told me that they had learned how a good child welfare worker *should* function.

Many of them were Italian, Polish or Irish. I learned everything I could about their cultures and customs. There were times when their expectations of how children should



behave and respond were driven by their own cultures, and these expectations were overwhelming and unclear to the children in their care. I had to make careful explanations about handling differences. One thing was apparent, "White" tells you nothing about who the person is.

My biggest problems during this time were with White high school principals. They wanted to push the 16 year olds and older White males who came from homes with low income out of the high schools on the basis that they wouldn't "amount to anything." After several confrontations with the principals, everything was worked out.

I once told my supervisor that I was puzzled by negative comments made about some of my foster parents that were contained in their home folders because I felt blessed to have such good foster parents. I have never forgotten my supervisor's response. "Jean, you have such good foster parents because you see the best in them and offer them the support that they need. Therefore, you bring out the best in them." I have operated in this same manner throughout the rest of my professional life, with the result that people I have supervised and students that I have taught have fulfilled potential that sometimes they didn't know that they had.

After six months, I became the intake worker (for one and a half years) for the office covering 72 towns and cities. I also kept an ongoing caseload of 30 children who were living in problem situations and/or were exhibiting problems. I had noticed that Black children were disproportionately represented in foster care as compared to the Black population and that there were very few adoptive homes for them. No one but me thought this was unusual. As word spread that there was a Black intake worker, a number of Black parents came to the agency, some of whom were relinquishing babies.

My supervisor spoke with me about the numbers of Black children needing foster and

adoptive care and asked for my help in linking her to the Black communities in the county to discuss the need and requirements. I did my community work the old fashioned way—I asked my aunt, who had taught several generations of children in the fifth grade and knew people in all of the Black churches in the county, to "smooth the way" for me to talk to ministers and women's groups. In the process, I handled the negative opinions they had of the agency. They became open to having the White district office administrator (my supervisor) come out and speak to them. I pointed out to her problems in the agency's expectations. I alerted her to ways to approach the people, explaining step-by-step why and what was necessary. (This was my second lesson in multicultural social work practice.) Ultimately, a project was created and homes came pouring in.

I moved rapidly up the agency hierarchy, becoming assistant supervisor in a large urban office and staff development specialist in the central office. In every situation, I concentrated on helping people to develop multicultural awareness as well as to become better social workers and supervisors. I discovered that I liked the teaching function and enjoyed resolving administrative issues.

Although I was only 26, the administrator of the agency asked that I return to the urban office as a casework supervisor. I was to become the district office supervisor for the suburban office that would be opened in 1965. Workers and supervisors would be split from the urban office. The suburban area contained some of the wealthiest communities in the state. The administrator made it clear that my age and ethnicity made no difference to the agency and that, although there might be problems, I could get the job done.

The next step in the learning cycle (that subsequently prepared me for my later career in academia) happened in the urban office where there were two workers with BSW degrees, one of whom I supervised. I was



very impressed with the degree of knowledge she had. Beginning with the years of 1963 and 1964, I set out to learn everything I could about generalist education and practice. I also supervised MSW students for the first time.

It wasn't until 1964 that the realization came that I was a "trailblazer" in this agency. The rapid movement of agency promotions was related to my demonstrated competence. However, when the news was released that I would become a district office supervisor at the age of 26, I was greeted by a number of comments, some of which were snide. White males and older White women casework supervisors made comments such as: "My, you certainly must be special" and "Why are you being given this opportunity after being with the agency such a short time?" Eventually, there were statements that implied that my appointment was only because I was Black and because the agency didn't have any Black district office administrators.

When the suburban office was ready, I was pleased to find that workers and supervisors whom I had considered to be excellent in performance chose to follow me to the new office. There was a very interesting outcome as a result. One of the assistant supervisors (the one with a MSW) was Black and one was White. Thirty two of the 33 social workers and most of the clerical staff (eight) were White.

I instituted several new administrative measures: Meetings were held weekly with each supervisor and monthly as a group. Assistant supervisors did the same with the workers in their unit. Every case was reviewed and a case plan was created. In-service training was held to train new workers and, monthly, for the whole staff. Much of this training incorporated multicultural content and I began to include content on Latinos in the material.

The caseloads were primarily made up of children, many of whose families of origin had been "lost," who had become long-term

foster care clients. Again, the numbers were disproportionately Black. I insisted that no children could be placed out of their natural homes until the supervisor and worker had met with me and proved that the family could not be helped while the child remained in the home. If children had been placed in the shelter and referred to us or placed out of the home, the first priority was reunification, if possible. Consequently, over the three-year period of my administration, 80% of new children, Black and White, coming to the agency remained in their own homes while their parents received help. The rest of the caseloads were clearly defined in terms of short-term foster or group home care and long-term foster care.

As a result of the above efforts, a number of fascinating things happened. My office had the lowest turnover of staff in the state. My workers were sought after for supervisory positions in other offices and I trained them before they left. We also routinely had the best statistics in the state in terms of children being seen and administrative functions being completed.

My central office liaison, a White MSW, came monthly and was available for consultation in emergencies. She had been the liaison for both of my previous district office administrators. I realized that she had followed my career closely and was partially responsible for my being given the office. She was a mentor and consultant as well as a supervisor. She had a comfortable, relaxed style and all of the staff liked her, but she also knew her job, was highly competent and very bright, and could be very no-nonsense. One of her evaluations of me remains in my mind: "Ms. Morrow is an outstanding administrator but she really prefers the teaching function in administration. She is strongly focused on the development of each staff member to his/her fullest potential."

I discussed many issues with her, including the disproportionate number of Black children



in foster care and the lack of ethnic understanding exhibited by members of the agency. She finally convinced the central administration of the need for multicultural training after the city where the urban office was located "blew up" in ethnic unrest, as did cities in other states. She then told me that she, my Black MSW assistant supervisor, and I were going to travel to every region in the state and provide multicultural training. She was very open in indicating that there would be resistance and that her presence as a White top administrator would give more "legitimacy" to the project.

It was an interesting experience. Reactions ranged from resistance, denial, unhappiness, and distress, to acceptance. With each group, we made a presentation, followed by a time for discussion. Mostly, the White workers, supervisors, and administrators were struggling to see the need for multicultural understanding but were willing to work on it.

### **Interim Destinations: My First Steps into Academia**

One day, I received a call from the Dean of the state Graduate School of Social Work, the only school of social work in the state. He had a faculty position opening as a result of a grant—an associate director of continuing education. In taking the position, I would have the opportunity to work with a nationally prominent child welfare expert.

The faculty discussed for many meetings the need for a course that would address poverty and multicultural issues. The course was finally approved by a faculty vote, but with much of the same type of dissension as I had seen at the public child welfare agency regarding the need for multicultural training. Interestingly, none of the faculty wanted to teach it. The dean then asked me to develop the course and to teach it.

This was my second step into teaching multicultural-human diversity courses. I started researching multicultural social work practice.

At that time (1968), there was limited curriculum content. I attended CSWE for the first time and found a whole new arena for researching multicultural and generalist practice. However, I was not happy at this Graduate School of Social Work because I would not be able to teach regular courses. I was contemplating what to do next when my husband's company transferred him to the west coast.

Once we had relocated, I applied to the public child welfare agency as well as other public social/mental health services. I was stunned to find that, regardless of my experience, background, and excellent references, no public agency would hire me as a supervisor or administrator. No one even knew when the next child welfare supervisory examination would be held. After two months, I decided to apply for supervisory jobs in the private, non-profit sector. Eventually, I accepted a job offer to supervise a social work staff of 13 in a large, private, Jewish general hospital that had 500 beds and 7,000 clinic patients—the demand equivalent of a public agency. I supervised the workers and a junior supervisor and developed an ongoing staff-development program. There were a large number of Blacks and Latinos among the clinic patients. Although everyone knew that the experiences and backgrounds of Jewish patients were different, it had not occurred to anyone to apply this information to other ethnic groups.

One day in early 1972, the hospital administrator suggested that we contact a nearby university about taking an undergraduate social work student who was working to complete a Bachelor of Arts Social Work degree (BASW). We met with the two senior faculty of the department (the social work chair and the chair of the personnel committee), who were both White, full professors with MSWs. The meeting was supposed to last for an hour, but we spent two hours talking about the department's



planned move to professional, generalist training for BASW students, as well as to the field instruction that I would provide. Subsequently, we did receive a student; however, one month into her placement, all middle-management positions, including mine, were eliminated by the hospital and I was laid off.

After making plans for the student's field instruction coverage, I contacted the university. Two days later, when the student arrived at placement, she told me that the professor in charge of personnel wanted me to contact him right away. The two professors had been excited about my knowledge of, interest in, and affirmative beliefs regarding the value of generalist social work education and the creation of professional, entry level, BASW generalist social workers. I was assured that not having a Ph.D. would not be a problem, because (at the time) the MSW was the terminal degree for the department. Publishing was not needed for promotion. Indeed, the full professor chair had not published. It was agreed that, in addition to teaching four courses (I was too dumb to know about released time), my job was to chair the curriculum committee and create and implement the curriculum for the professional BASW degree by 1975.

### **The Final Destination: My Journey as a Full-Time Professor**

Thus, in September 1972, I became an assistant professor in the social work department at the university. I knew that this was the most meaningful, and probably final, step of my professional career. I was excited by the non-traditional nature of the student body (e.g., older, working, commuting, and a small but growing number of ethnic minority students). The subphases of this part of the journey are as follows.

**The Early Years.** I was a trailblazer again. I immediately began developing the professional BASW program. I contacted

every BASW program in the country requesting copies of course catalogs and field manuals. At the same time, I reviewed all related CSWE materials. In 1974, I had an extensive meeting with our CSWE program director. We reviewed the departmental plans and decisions, and I received numerous suggestions for improvement. Subsequently, I created a model for the professional BASW program that eventually was adopted and implemented by the faculty. I wrote the CSWE accreditation narrative and coordinated the appendices in 1975, 1977, 1980, and 1988. In 1976, I received tenure and promotion to associate professor.

During this time, I created a screening and advising plan for students. I created and taught all of the sections of the generalist social work courses and the generalist individuals and families practice courses, and I became field coordinator. I wrote the field education manual and was field coordinator off and on until 1986. Ultimately, I would collect so much information in this area that I wrote a book-length monograph on undergraduate field education, which subsequently was published by Syracuse University School of Social Work in 1982 (Granger & Starnes, 1982).

**Racism and Discrimination.** What I had not expected to encounter was the racism that other ethnic minority faculty and I subsequently would experience. In spite of the Supreme Court decision, the Civil Rights Act, and the CSWE decisions concerning nondiscrimination in social work educational programs, racism was a serious problem. White women consistently were hired instead of ethnic minorities. I have never benefited from affirmative action (nor has my brother): whatever I have gained was because I did twice as much work as was expected of any White person. In spite of the CSWE decree, and the federal court decisions concerning higher education, racism related to faculty and staff hiring decisions was/is a very pervasive



issue at all universities, as is shown by the relatively small numbers of Black and other ethnic minority faculty in most primarily White universities. According to Alex-Assensoh (2003), five percent of full-time faculty are African American, five percent are Asian, two percent are Hispanic, and one percent are American Indian.

Black faculty on my campus consistently discussed how hard it was for Black faculty to get promoted. As we entered the 1980s, more Black faculty were hired by social work schools/departments. Suddenly, only having a MSW or not having published (like the White faculty hired previously) was considered unacceptable. With publishing now required, Black faculty would publish what was expected for White faculty, but subsequently then be told that it either wasn't enough and/or it was the wrong thing. At the CSWE meetings, I heard the same thing from Black faculty from all over the United States. For an analysis of organization barriers faced by minority faculty and students at the time, see McNeely and Oliver (1978).

My experience from 1980 to 1988 followed the same path as encountered by other Black faculty members in other universities. In 1980, I had finished half of my book on undergraduate field education and had a letter from a publisher showing that the book was under contract. Again, I requested promotion and was refused. The promotion committee implied that having a Ph.D. was now a requirement for promotion.

In 1982-83, my book had been published and the secondary author had written a letter documenting that I had done all of the work on the book. In addition, Betty Baer, Ron Federico, and 12 other well-known social work educators had juried the book. I also had entered a Ph.D. program. Although White faculty members were being told that a book counted for at least four to six articles, when I went up for promotion a second time, my promotion was denied.

During a subsequent faculty recruitment cycle, two White males who had published books (some pedagogical) were hired. Again, it was said that a book counted as four to six articles. In 1986, I had completed the Ph.D. program and had published two articles (one in the CSWE journal) in addition to my book, and applied for promotion a third time. It was denied on the basis that I hadn't done enough. At this point, I brought a grievance and the Vice President agreed in October 1987, that if I could have two more articles accepted in a year, I would be promoted. I completed three articles in one month and they were accepted by major journals within five months (April 1988). I received my promotion to full professor beginning fall, 1988. Subsequently, I learned that at least one White professor, who brought a grievance at the same time, was promoted retroactive to fall, 1987.

Ironically, I was made BASW coordinator from 1986-90. In the year 1988-89, the department informed students that I was being nominated for the university's "Outstanding Professor" and "Distinguished Faculty Teaching" awards. Over a hundred students (of every ethnicity) sent letters talking about the high quality of my teaching, my supportiveness, and my willingness to work with them on behavior that got in their way as professionals. Many of them said that they didn't think they would have finished the program and/or gone on to graduate school without my strong belief that they could accomplish whatever they wanted. Almost all of the BASW students signed a petition that had similar sentiments. Over and over again in these letters, the word *mentor* was mentioned. I won both awards! I am the only member of the social work department and one of the few faculty members on campus who has been named an outstanding professor.

The pattern of discrimination characterizing ethnic minority tenure decisions continued after my promotion. According to



the literature and statistics, primarily White universities tend to experience difficulties hiring and retaining ethnic minority faculty. Alex-Assensoh (2003) suggests that Black, Latino, and Asian faculty are "more likely to hold positions at community colleges and historically Black colleges and universities [than positions in predominantly White universities]... and to be heavily represented among faculty at lower ranks of lecturers and assistant professors as well as reporting lower levels of success and job satisfaction" (p. 5).<sup>1</sup>

I had always put the welfare of the students and the department ahead of faculty considerations. Although I knew from the EEOC that I had a case given the university's pattern of applying differential tenure and promotion standards along ethnic/cultural lines, it was not worth it to me to damage the department's reputation or to place myself under the kind of stress necessary to pursue a lawsuit. I had spent too much time building the professional BASW program to injure it. Besides, I really didn't care any more. Blacks who perform well in this country are survivors. I am a great survivor. Incidentally, in 2003, there are still only two tenured Black professors in this large social work department.

**Implementing court decisions and CSWE non-discrimination standard.** It has always been important to me to help students achieve their highest potential. I had to be the best possible teacher, making sure that students received the knowledge and skills needed to practice. I reached out to students who seemed to be struggling and offered help to them as well as being available to help all students on an individual basis. The large majority of our students, across all ethnicities, are first-generation college students. I was determined that, in every aspect of my academic life, I would fulfill the intent of the Civil Rights Act and the CSWE non-discrimination edict.

I functioned as an academic advisor, made referrals, and acted as an advocate when needed. Often students needed to think through decisions by learning what the alternatives were and breaking out the pros and cons of those alternatives. The students and I would address whatever was interfering with their academic progress and find ways in which these potential obstacles could be reduced or eliminated. I was always careful to keep the boundaries clear. I was not going to be anyone's therapist. If that was what someone needed, I made a referral to the counseling center.

As a result, as the years went by, more and more BASW students wanted to be in my field seminar. It was interesting to see the requests: they came from male and female students of every age and ethnicity. These students ranged from those who believed in advocacy and wanted to learn the best ways to advocate change, to older women who wanted to learn how to be assertive. I considered it my obligation to monitor field placements closely, arranging for more appropriate ones, if necessary.

Two very crucial things happened in 1988. First, I taught my first classes in the MSW program: thesis and the introductory multicultural/generalist practice course. The latter course was a perfect fit for me. Second, a Latina faculty member suggested that since I spent so much time mentoring anyway, why didn't I apply to the campus undergraduate mentoring program where faculty worked closely with at least six students a semester. The mentoring program existed to help retain ethnic minority students. Across the country, universities experience difficulty in retaining ethnic minority and/or first-generation college students for completion of the Bachelor's degree. I entered the undergraduate mentoring program and loved every minute of it. I never had only six students: rather, it was usually ten and ultimately 15 to 20. I saw each student 20 to 30 minutes a week.



Together we set the goals for what they wanted to accomplish. All several hundred students, both genders and all ethnicities, who worked with me not only graduated, but also went on to good jobs or to graduate school.

I continued to be assertive in demanding that the department adhere to principles of equity and fairness in hiring and promotion decisions. I also began to devote more time to advocacy activities on behalf of students and junior faculty. In the 1980's, the literature said that assertive Black faculty were often misunderstood because, culturally, they had/have different perceptions than White faculty. I cannot give a reference: I discontinued research in this area because it was so depressingly accurate.<sup>2</sup>

I got myself elected to the college curriculum and retention, tenure, and promotion committees and started teaching more graduate classes. More importantly, I immersed myself in working with students in the mentoring program, field seminar, and thesis. In 1994, I gave up field seminars in favor of thesis sections.

I began to take more than one thesis section. Thesis advising turned out to be an intensive form of mentoring. Sometimes, the graduate coordinator requested that I take a student who was having problems. Every thesis student had a specific time to meet with me every week. Every year, more and more thesis students requested me: many more than I could supervise. The word was that I provided structure, that I was readily available, and that my thesis students finished on time and completed excellent theses. Some of the students won best thesis awards.

I found that I often had to advocate for students (of all ethnicities) because they would encounter difficulties with faculty and field instructors due to cultural differences. Several students who were on the verge of being dismissed from the program were enabled to remain, did very well, and ultimately

graduated. As students become more diverse, these problems naturally arise.

In 1994, I was asked to take over a Saturday graduate level course with part-time students at the third week of the semester because the original faculty member wasn't able to teach it. I was told the students were very discontented with the department. It would be my job to distribute my outline, "increase satisfaction," and gradually help students catch up. When I walked through the door, a voice chimed, "They sent us Granger: everything's going to be all right!" There were three of my former BASW students in the class who previously had been in my field seminars as undergraduate students. I was the first full-time faculty member this group of part-time students had had, and I was senior faculty. Subsequently, the department began to schedule more full-time faculty to teach on Saturdays.

I almost fell over when I saw this class. Whereas the students in the full time graduate classes were primarily White, this weekend class was very diverse. I had finally discovered where the Black students were. This was the first of 12 semesters that I taught on Saturdays. I even took a leave of absence from a Black community organization that met on Saturdays in order to teach. Consequently, I had many Saturday thesis students: Asian, Black, Latino, and White. Gradually, as the full-time classes became more diverse, I had the same mixture in the full-time thesis students. The students in the part-time program worked full time and would not have been able to get a degree without our Saturday and night classes: full-time students attended school two weekdays with two field days per week.

In 1997, there were two momentous developments in mentoring. An older, Vietnamese, woman student told me that she was applying for a state fellowship for students interested in getting a Ph.D. and wanted me to be her mentor. This decision was one of the best of my academic life because the



student was extraordinary in her dedication and perseverance. I had two more students in this program in the next two years: one Chinese, one Cambodian. In my last year as a full-time faculty member, I had three students in the program. These students will be addressed subsequently.

I became BASW coordinator again in 1998 and had my first graduate assistant (White) who had a number of administrative skills. She was the parliamentarian for the Associated Students of Social Work (ASSW) and one of my thesis students. The president (Latina) and treasurer (Latino) of the ASSW were also my thesis students. I realized that I had also assumed the role of mentor to the graduate assistant and the ASSW officers. In summer 2000, because of accreditation activities, the only thesis students I could take were my two graduate assistants. Two Black students were able to be my graduate assistants. One of these students published an article from her thesis and decided to enter a Ph.D. program later.

After additionally being associate director for two years, I decided to retire in spring, 2002. The most important aspects of my last year (2001-2002) were my last thesis section and graduate assistants. The thesis section looked like this: four White students, one Latino, one Vietnamese, two bi-ethnic (one Persian and Irish, the other Black and White). The two bi-ethnic students were president and treasurer of the ASSW and my graduate assistants. One bi-ethnic (Black and White) woman, a White woman, and the Latino were in the state program for students interested in Ph.D.s. One of the other White students and the Vietnamese student were BASW graduates whom I had had initially in the undergraduate mentoring program. In addition, I had two older Black women who had been delayed by illness from completing their theses. When I wrote them that I would be leaving, they completed their theses and made the deadline with the other eight



Retirement party (May, 2002), Jean Granger and thesis students

students. Talk about going out in a blaze of glory!

My retirement party was held on a Tuesday at 5pm. I had requested that students be invited. Students of every ethnicity showed up. For students, their attendance meant that field and work hours would have to be made up. Some people had traveled great distances through rush hour traffic to be present. My former and present thesis students and graduate assistants, as well as faculty members, the department director, the dean of our college, the Vice President of Student Services, and a member of the counseling center with whom I had "shared" students for 31 years, made presentations. One Black student who had been my protégée in the undergraduate mentoring program and my thesis student said that I had been the "wind beneath her wings." In my remarks, I told the students that they, not I, were the real stars of my career.

### Conclusion

The court decisions and the CSWE non-discrimination edict had no impact upon my personal and professional lives and upon very few lives of my generation or of the next generation of Blacks. However, they did make a difference in the students with whom I



worked: students of many ethnicities, many from low and low-middle income families, most of them first generation to attend college. I was able to do for these students what my parents had done for me: help them negotiate a higher education setting, realize their full potential, and know that they could do whatever they chose to do. I implemented these decisions by my impartial treatment of these students and the provision of active, ongoing support that enabled them to meet their academic goals.

Two of my former students are applying to doctoral programs, one has finished a program, and another has just entered a doctoral program. They aren't the first of my students to decide they want to be teachers and impart knowledge and skills to others. Former BASW and MSW students are supervisors and administrators of agencies in many counties. The list of accomplishments of former students could go on for pages. The students are the tribute to the end of a career and the impact of the 1954 ruling that desegregated schools, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1960s CSWE non-discrimination edict.

### References

- Alex-Assensoh, Y. (2003). Race in the academy: Moving beyond diversity and towards the incorporation of faculty of color in predominantly White colleges and universities. *Journal of Black Studies*, 34(1), 5-11.
- Granger, J. M., & Starnes, S. (1982). *Field Instruction Model for Baccalaureate Social Work*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, School of Social Work.
- Hoffer, T., Dugoni, B., Sanderson, A., Welch, V., Guzman-Barron, I., & Brown, S. (2002). *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report 2001*.

*Survey of earned doctorates*. Chicago: NORAC at University of Chicago.

- McNeely, R., and Oliver, J. (1978). Two perspectives on organizationally-inspired barriers to innovation in schools of social work: Short and long term strategies to promote national minority group representation. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 5(4), 508-526.

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Examination of the hiring and retention of faculty of color necessarily must begin with consideration of the available pool of minority candidates with earned doctorates. According to the publication, *Doctorate recipients from United States universities: Summary report, 2001: Survey of Earned Doctorates* (Hoffer, Dugoni, Sanderson, Welch, Guzman-Baron, and Brown, 2002), 16% of all doctorates awarded to U.S. citizens in 2001 were earned by members of racial/ethnic minority groups (n=26,435). Blacks earned 6% of all minority doctoral degrees (n=1604). In social work, out of 259 doctorates awarded in 2001, 22 were earned by Blacks (8.4%). Black social work doctorates were 1.3% of all Black doctorates and .0008% of all doctorates earned by recipients identified by race/ethnicity. Excluding doctoral recipients in social work who were non-U.S. citizens, Whites earned 75% of all social work doctoral degrees (170 out of 228) in 2001. These figures continue the trends found in preceding years.

<sup>2</sup> Editor's Note: For a recent discussion of these issues, see the special issue of the *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 34 (1), September 2003.



Copyright of Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is the property of Cleveland State University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.