

Reflections from the Editor

Michael A. Dover

Abstract: This serves as the introduction to Volume 23, Number 2 (Summer 2017). In this last issue as editor, the author summarizes the included narratives, which responded to the editor's call for narratives on the personal, professional and political aftermath of historical events for the lives of the author. Specifically sought were narratives about the aftermath of the election of Donald Trump as President.

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Here in Cleveland and around the world, the 2nd anniversary of the historic Women's March took place in January 2018. January 2017 had come at a time when one might have thought mass protests would be diminished by the despondence so many felt about the advent of a US presidency built on a campaign which harnessed xenophobia, misogyny and outright racism to build mass support.

After the election of another retrogressive President, Ronald Reagan, the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. was accelerated with a series of sit-ins and other protests in January 1981. After the election of Donald Trump, mass protests about the Muslim ban and immigration rights, the continued work of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the historic Women's Marches have shown that the aftermath of historical events will include continued struggles against social injustice.

Just as a final decade of intense activism led to the downfall of apartheid, perhaps ten years from now we'll be able to have witnessed a truly revolutionary change in our body politic, one in which women have truly achieved the political power that women's suffrage a century ago promised. One lesson of the women's suffrage movement was how it formed coalitions. This story was told in Dan Okrent's book, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (2010), which discussed the alliance between the women's suffrage movement and the temperance movement.

Might there be another coalition to pass the Equal Rights Amendment as well as a constitutional right to a job at a living wage? Such an amendment was proposed in *Ending Poverty as We Know It*, by New Orleans activist and attorney William Quigley (2003)? Doing so would unite what I have identified as the maternalist and paternalist impulses in social policy advocacy into one united post-paternalist, non-maternalist movement which recognizes the reality that women are in the work force to stay. We do not need the retrogressive "family wage" of old. We need for every job to earn a living wage with adequate health care, child care, etc.

Might we also see a continued movement against gun violence, led by children and teens? We should not underestimate the possibility of fundamental social change in this country. After all, the persons living in these United States and in Puerto Rico are a very revolutionary people,

devoted to maximizing the potential of our constitutional democracy. Part of that democratic process should be granting full independence to Puerto Rico or admitting it as the 51st state. We always re-invent our movements for social justice, especially when racism, male supremacy and other reactionary social formations seek to reinvent themselves.

In the aftermath of historical events which shake us up and perhaps even shame us into resumed activism, it is certainly helpful to remember those who went before. One who did was Columbia School of Social Work Alumnus James Dunn, DSW, who was later a founder of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (www.pisab.org). He wrote a song with lyrics that said: "There is no such thing as burnout, once your vision's clear. Take strength from those who went before, and conquered doubt and fear." As we hopefully head into a period of heightened social activism, it helps to remember those who have inspired us, and to also look for new sources of inspiration. The narratives in this issue might be valuable in that regard.

The Powerful Cover Art of this Issue

But before reading the issue, mention must be made of the original illustration by Art Director Robin Richesson, which graces the cover. This wonderful cover has taken a certain unit of expression, namely a hat of protest and the faces and bodies who wore it, and built it into a lasting representation of the millions of voices that have spoken out. The cover of this issue evokes a power that is growing in ways which are far more revolutionary than may be immediately apparent.

Narratives in this Issue

In this issue, the first narrative, "Freedom and Diversity: Feeling Safe from Fear of Discrimination," by *Reflections* author and reviewer Patricia Levy, describes how traumatic events can threaten to place us in the role of victim. Whether victim of the harmful intentions of another person in our vicinity or of distant persons who set in motion historical events, we are often forced to spend a great deal of time reacting to these events. Often, as helping professionals, when these are historical events, we share with our clients the same experiences. In one example of how theory can contribute to narrative, Levy draws on theory to discuss how we and our clients react in the aftermath of changes in the social and political landscape. Levy points out that among those reactions can be a massive shift in our thinking as a population. That can be of a retrogressive nature, one driven by a process of moral disengagement.

Her analysis produced fear in me as I read it. Might we lose what we at least think we stand for as a nation? Levy recalls practicing social work for fifteen years in a society (Israel) which has lived in fear of war, terrorism and the reality of hundreds of thousands of Hezbollah rockets poised to rain death and destruction. It is easy for those of us in the West to fail to understand the fears and traumas faced by Israelis (Jews, Muslims and Christians alike). It is also easy to fail to recognize the fear and misery of those living in the West Bank, in Gaza, and throughout the Middle East. But Levy brought that fear home for us, discussing her own work here in the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center. Then, she provided an account of how anti-Semitism and the Shoah affected her own life. Starting from that standpoint, Levy discusses

practice, especially in response to clients affected by PTSD. She ends with a recognition, “But where everyone can become a possible target, whether it be from discriminatory acts, inequitable policies, or emotional and physical terror, an appropriate professional intervention becomes even more critical.”

As I write, mass movements have begun in the United States in response to just such an event: the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. The aftermath of that event will likely produce many new social activists, who will follow in the footsteps of the feminist and environmental activist for whom the school was named, Marjory Stoneman Douglas (1890-1998). Clearly, reactions to historical events can be retrogressive, but they can also be progressive. Sometimes it takes an event such as this to turn around people’s thinking.

As Orlando Patterson’s *Slavery and Social Death* discusses, we can be living with an ideological inversion, in which we see things exactly the opposite of how they really are (Patterson, 1982). Patterson (1982) explained that supporters of slavery often viewed slaves as parasites on the slaveowners and as utterly dependent. This was an ideological inversion. Slave revolts and the abolitionist movement reversed that kind of thinking. Clearly, it was the slaveowners who were parasites on the slaves. They were utterly dependent upon them for their work and their skills. In other words, there can be, in the wake of historical events, what might be called an inversion of the inversion.

Although it comes second in the issue, I will postpone discussion of “Reflections on the Election of Donald Trump: Uninspired and Inspired Responses from a Social Work Faculty,” by Jeffrey Dale Thompson. In “HBCUs Respond: Social Justice and Social Work Education in a Trump Era,” Anthony T. Estreet, Kenya Jones, and James T. Freeman discuss how faculty and students at three historically black university-based social work programs responded to the election and its aftermath. They sought to not only promote social justice, advocacy, and anti-oppression activism, but to turn the historical event into a learning experience. For Dr. Estreet, at Morgan State University, at first it was hard to do more than react together with the students to what happened. Soon, however, he and the students used an approach to learning which integrated discussion of the current political climate with study of a social issue that they were passionate about.

At Clark-Atlanta University, which uses an Afrocentric perspective to ensure culturally and linguistically sensitive practice, Dr. Jones also focuses on solutions to policy issues of concern to students. The focus of the common theme of the article, transformative learning, was applied to a thought experiment. Students imagined what they would do if they took over a large human service agency. They also discussed how to respond to impending cuts in basic social work services and social welfare benefits.

At Johnson C. Smith University, James T. Freeman begins by reflecting on his role as a father of two. Dr. Freeman then discusses how he engaged students in critical thought, as part of that school’s implementation of a transformational learning approach. In response to the confusion, fear, and apprehensive hope of the students, the university partnered with other universities and with the National Association of Social Workers to present panels at three locations. Students

also joined in a peaceful protest in Charlotte, North Carolina and made a commitment to increase both their volunteerism and their political action.

From initial shock, to anxiety about growing xenophobia, racism, sexism, and homophobia, in these three schools of social work there was a growing “sense of togetherness,” as the faculty, staff and students recognized the necessity of responding to the new political environment. Drawing on an innovative approach to transformational learning, the three schools sought to empower student learning, civic engagement, and social activism. They pledge to continue in that path.

THAT fall, within which September 11, 2001 fell, along with three buildings, and during which 2,753 died, and THIS fall, the fall in which President Trump was elected, are the focus of “After the Fall: An Inverse Apotheosis,” by Gregory Gross. Gross addresses the impact of the aftermath of historical events not only on the macro social environment, but on the individual soul and on he and his spouse Judi. He discusses his dual commitment to work and love. Throughout, it becomes apparent that both his relationships and his teaching were cemented and united through the use of the humanities. Accordingly, the article itself is presented via poetry, freestyle writing, and narrative. It is powerful. It is worth reading, line by line.

In “Disaster after Disaster: Unexpected Thousand-Year Floods and Presidential Elections,” Priscilla D. Allen and Jennifer L. Scott begin with a little-known disaster, the Baton Rouge flood of August 2016. That flood came shortly after 37-year-old Alton Sterling was shot in broad daylight by a Baton Rouge police officer. These social work educators and their students were already primed for the electoral disaster to come that fall. Due to the earlier experience of Hurricane Katrina, Baton Rouge already knew about the aftermath of historical events. As explained by the theory of *disaster capitalism* (Klein, 2007), a natural disaster often provides those with political and economic power a way to transform ensuing events for their own benefit. The authors asked what this meant for their student and colleagues and the communities with which they worked. Each author shared and reflected on their own reactions and those of the people with whom they worked. They concluded: “The lessons, and perhaps the silver lining of disaster aftermath, is that one ideally assesses what’s lost and creates a new meaning.”

In “Allies Rising: Stepping Forward in a Time of White Nationalism,” Ashley-Marie Hanna Daftary places the growing movement to defend the Dreamers in the context of white supremacy, xenophobia, and nativism. This narrative was designed to help us remember we all make mistakes and that we have to rely upon our compassion, both for others and for ourselves, as we respond to historical events. We have to find our allies, she concludes. Her article reminded me of something said once before: “Social work can defend its standards only if it realizes the organized nature of the opposition to it, why these interests are opposed, and where its own allies are to be found” (Reynolds, 1975, p. 166). Lest we forget, Dr. Daftary provides concrete suggestions of ways of acting together with those allies, including calling and writing our representatives, knowing our rights and those of immigrants and others, learning our history, understanding our role, and acknowledging the truth about the world around us. In this way, Dr. Daftary concludes, we can change our world for the better.

This issue really needed an account of the Women’s March. Kathy Byers, a long-time social activist and retired social work educator, provides one. She discusses how she and the other organizers used a “secret” Facebook page in their organizing of march participation in and from Bloomington, Indiana, with participation of over 1,500! Like several of the other narratives here, family was part of it. As *Reflections* learns more about how to include photographs, the narrative includes a memorable one of Kathy and her sister Laurie, from Inauguration Day. The narrative ends with an account of preparation for the January 20, 2018 anniversary march.

The issue ends with Ben Shepard’s narrative, which concludes with this important statement: “I fear we are entering a new gilded age, with more and more kids unable to afford school, find homes, or insurance. I fear our New York will become Sister Carrie's New York, a place where the poor face more and more challenges than they can endure. Let’s all work together to make sure they are not, we are not, no one is left behind to fend for themselves.”

As part of his activism over the years, Ben has been arrested one, two, three times at least, including at least twice since the election of Donald Trump. For Ben, as with others in this issue, solidarity is the solution. And it has been the solution during his 20 years in New York City. He tells of the lives of people like the late Gilbert Baker of Rise and Resist. He shares the wisdom of many other activists, quoting them. What a pleasure to have this important historical account in the pages of the journal, along with many photographs.

Jeffrey Dale Thompson’s “Reflections on the Election of Donald Trump: Uninspired and Inspired Responses from a Social Work Faculty,” begins on the fateful day, November 8, 2016. Living in a “Red state,” Thompson portrays the day, the day after, the wait, and then the inauguration. Thompson uses a powerful metaphor for this period: a deer seemingly immobilized by the headlights, but who eventually springs into motion. Which way into motion is the question, and Thompson describes seven: collaborating, researching, teaching, understanding, practicing, advocating, and reflecting. Thompson correlates each with at least one key social work value: the importance of human relationship, social justice, integrity, competence, dignity and worth of the individual, and service. The narrative shows how the author and those around him responded.

The Thompson narrative drew to a close in June 2017 (when it was submitted). Reading it leaves one with a realization of the power of narratives about our personal, professional and political responses to historical events. This issue was an effort to combine the role of editor with such a response. Early in 2017, I issued a public call for these narratives. I am grateful to the authors who responded. This issue is the only issue since Volume 18, Number 2 which is not double-blind peer-reviewed. The articles were accepted under condition of editorial review only, with the consent of key *Reflections* stakeholders. A similar issue was published as the Social Justice issue in 2010, and was edited by Paul and Sonia Abels.

Final Thanks

By and large, I said goodbye as editor (and hello as publisher) in my introduction to Volume 23, Number 1, published in December 2017. In that issue, I said I would try to remember any others

I needed to thank, and there are no doubt those I have still forgotten. One thing bears reinforcing. As I approach my 70th birthday this year, *God Only Knows* (Dover, M. J., & Jordan, 2015) where I would be were it not for my wife Giselle, my daughter Daniela, and my son Mark. I am also grateful to my current and former colleagues and students at Cleveland State University School of Social Work.

I would like to again thank the Abels, Sonia and Paul (now living in Los Angeles). Thank you as well to Abby O'Neill, daughter of Sonia and Paul, for her support in bringing me together with her parents on two visits to Cleveland, and for her contribution to the upcoming *Special Issue on Librarians as Helping Professionals*, to appear shortly (in March 2018) as Volume 23, Number 3, Fall 2017.

I look forward to continued service as 2017-2018 co-editor and as publisher. I am grateful to one of the co-editors in particular, Arlene Reilly-Sandoval, who has done most of the heavy lifting for us as part of the transition. She enabled our 2017-2018 graduate assistant Tara Peters and I to focus on producing this issue and readying three additional issues to be published by April. This will bring the journal up to date with the publication of Volume 24, Number 1, co-edited by Melissa Emmerson and incoming Editor-in-Chief Darlyne Bailey.

But one person who is relevant to this particular issue is my down-the-hallway colleague Patricia Stoddard-Dare, Ph.D. When I was suffering a bad case of deer-in-the-headlight syndrome, her enthusiasm about attending the Women's March in Washington DC in January 2017, along with her husband and three children, helped me spring into action. In fact, the idea for this issue, as one way I have myself responded to this historical events, came shortly afterwards.

A Narrative Ending

The longer I have been editor, the more I seem to think in narrative terms. My contributions to *Reflections from the Editors* have increasingly had a narrative component. After the election of Donald Trump, I attended one protest march against the Muslim ban, on a very cold fall day. I was pleased to see some of our CSU students at the march, as well as one other faculty member. But this didn't get me fully into gear. It was attending the Women's March in Cleveland with my daughter Daniela and daughter-in-law Lotte in January 2017 which did that, as well as hearing from Patty about her trip to Washington for the march.

Suddenly, I realized that I had to engage in the social movement organizing equivalent of "turning it over" to a power greater than myself: the vast and growing movements for social change that were springing up around me. I wasn't needed to help organize them. I could just follow. And follow I have largely done, although trying to contribute in my own ways. Below are some of the ways I have adapted personally, professionally and politically in the aftermath of recent historical events.

First, I resumed working with my colleagues in the Cuyahoga County Conference on Social Welfare (CCCOSW). The theme of the 2017 conference was What Happens when Everything Changes? NASW Ohio staff members Danielle Smith, Dorothy Martindale and Colleen

Dempsey proposed the title for the opening panel and the workshop: In Solidarity: Mobilizing an Intersectional Resistance, and Colleen moderated it (Dempsey, 2017). Although I actively worked with Joanne Hall and others as part of a group to organize this part of the conference, it was a labor of love and one which, in the end, I enjoyed from the sidelines.

Second, I turned to my students. I asked them to read the work of Patricia Hill Collins (2015) and *Reflections* authors Lee and Robinson (2015). Not only were they asked to summarize and discuss Collins, they were asked to theorize intersectionality in their own words. One of the students, long-standing CCCOSW organizer Katy Carpenter, took the definitions and combined them into a Word bubble, which was displayed at the above mentioned conference sessions. I also sought individual written permission from each student to quote their work. I then used it in a composite summary of their definitions, both for classroom use and for public presentation at the 2017 Cleveland State University Provost's Teaching Forum (Dover, M. A., & Cleveland State University Students, 2017). Later, I sent a copy to Dr. Collins, who reviewed it and responded (personal communication, August 18, 2017), "Sometimes when I publish something that is challenging for me, I wonder if anyone ever read it. Now I know that the intrepid students at Cleveland State did!"

Third, I took advantage of every form of training and education I could find, including Safe Space training (which I will take again this year). I found that making the time to attend campus events and sit and listen helped. This was, and is, a time when we need to find new ways of coming together and listening to each other. During this period as well, I concluded that perhaps we need to emphasize the importance of an old-fashioned concept: open-mindedness. Open-mindedness may be an important prerequisite to the critical thinking and diversity elements of general education curriculum. Student definitions of open-mindedness were also shared in the Provost's Teaching Forum poster.

Fourth, Giselle and I began a serious bout of movie watching and music listening. This included listening to the music of my son. One of his pieces was recorded in the aftermath of the Charleston Massacre: a somber rendition of *We Shall Overcome* (Dover, M. J., Crayton, & Jordan, 2015). Most recently, Giselle and I attended a movie I highly recommend, one which suggests the value of restorative justice as part of the prevention and resolution of social conflict, *The Insult* (Doueiri, 2017). To try to bring some order to the chaos, I began bookmarking events, news, and ideas emerging since the election, including a section on coping and self-care. This helped me make sense of what was happening around me. I publicly shared them on various social work listserves (Dover, 2018).

Fifth, due to the upsurge in bias incidents that have taken place since November 2016, I began looking for a permanent home for the Welcome in My Back Yard campaign (www.wimby.org), founded by Larry Fox and I in Ann Arbor in the early 1990s. The WIMBY signs were used on campus last fall by Student Affairs, and I also distributed them after a bias incident on campus. I took a pile to the Council on Social Work Education conference in Dallas in November. When I wasn't meeting with editors, publishing partners and prospective authors, I set up shop in the lobby, distributing the signs. My goal is to find a social justice-oriented center or institute which can provide a permanent home for the campaign, which is sadly much needed. The WIMBY

campaign is just one small thing that can be done to prevent and respond to bias incidents. It brings comfort to those affected to know that others publicly proclaim their opposition to bigotry. WIMBY also helps raise consciousness and contributes to discourse, as people ask about what WIMBY means.

Sixth, I have returned to my work since 1978 as a social worker who has been active in social activism designed to be true to the civil rights movement principle of working on one's own back yard (Dover, 2010). In other words, after a short break, I have resumed activism in relation to my profession, social work, both locally and through increased involvement in international social work organizations.

Finally, I continue to try to find a way to integrate my teaching, my service, and my advocacy work. Starting last Summer, I began reading a wonderful series of articles in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (www.cleveland.com/a-greater-cleveland), which involve the reporters in an unprecedented form of advocacy journalism. First, I spoke out about implications of the articles for changing social policies (Dover, 2017). Currently, in my teaching, students have been drawing on these articles for case examples that inform their policy practice and their application of theory to understanding the families and the communities and society in which they live. They will present them on March 9, 2018 at the Cuyahoga County Conference on Social Welfare (Dover, M. A., & Cleveland State University Students, 2018).

But if I am to teach students to speak out, I must speak out myself. There is one place within academia where professors have real power, and that is the power of the editor's introduction to issues of an academic journal. Not subject to peer review, the introductory sections of academic journals have long been a place where editors can address the issues of the day. That has long been the case for the editors of this journal. Accordingly, I will end by speaking out below.

Responding to the Outrages

In responding to historical events, it is often important in their aftermath to find ways to harness the anger and outrage that events have produced. For instance, in the aftermath of the murder of Matthew Shepard on October 6, 1998, there was a national and international outcry. At one rally, on the diag of the University of Michigan, something important was said, which bears repeating. Ann Arbor City Council member Chris Kolb spoke. He didn't shake his fist in anger and try to stoke the flames of outrage. He said, "Turn your anger into resolve." He repeated, simply and powerfully, "Turn your anger into resolve." It was that resolve which led to the strengthening of hate crime statutes, to include the LGBTQ+ community throughout the nation.

Once again there is outrage at the many bias incidents which have taken place in the aftermath of the November 2016 election. There is also outrage about sexual harassment, rape and sexual imposition, to which the #metoo movement has responded. Finally, people continue to die due to unnecessary use of deadly force by police, which shows the continued importance of the Black Lives Matter movement and other efforts to reform policing. Clearly, we still need to turn our anger into resolve, as many are realizing.

For instance, at the Strong Women, Strong Leaders awards ceremony at Cleveland State University on Thursday March 1, 2018, one of the awardees was Cammie Collins, who graduated with a degree in journalism and promotional communication in 2017, and plans to attend law school and work as a civil rights attorney. As a transgender woman, she described how she had “morphed her anger into activism.”

Likewise, the student survivors of the February 14, 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School have called for turning anger into activism. One survivor, a 9th grader, said: “We’re going to use this fear and anger to motivate us for change” (viewed on MSNBC, Wednesday February 28, 11:00 am). Turning anger into activism is now an important public discourse. Earlier dissertation research had shown the important link between moral anger and social activism (Master, 2009).

Just as the earlier anger about the murder of Matthew Shepard led to strengthening hate crimes statutes, today’s activism must succeed in strengthening laws about gun manufacturing and gun control. We must also strengthen laws about rape and sexual imposition (Falk, 2014, 2015). Sexual imposition statutes already prohibit sexual contact in a number of situations, including when one person is not aware it is happening or is unable to understand or resist (Ohio code § 2907.06). The statute also prohibits this: “No person shall have sexual contact with another when the offender knows that the sexual contact is offensive to the victim.” The law seeks to ensure that even in the absence of violations of the rape portions of the law, sexual imposition provisions may apply.

However, there is a need to strengthen provisions on sexual imposition to address what appears to be a grey area between current law on rape and sexual imposition and current policies on sexual harassment and discrimination in workplace and educational settings. As Cudd (2006) has shown in her book length study of oppression, oppression is typically rooted in coercion. Applied to the question of sexual imposition, the implication is that even in the absence of the use of physical force, and even in the presence of some form of consent, it should be considered sexual imposition when a person takes immediate advantage of their unequal possession of organizational or financial power and in a clearly coercive manner initiates sexual contact. There is considerable law which criminalizes commercial transactions involving inadequate consent due to fraud, extortion, and so forth. Current law criminalizes threats to the integrity of market transactions. Why is there not sufficient parallel law with respect to intimate human transactions? Why is the human body not equally sacrosanct? This is the question I feel compelled to ask, as we go to press with this issue of this journal.

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