REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Volume 3, Number 3 Summer 1997

A Journal for the Helping Professions

REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS' purpose is to publish narratives, personal accounts that describe and explain the process of helping others and shaping social change over time. The journal seeks to build a literary tradition and a record of wisdom for critical study and fruitful discovery. It encourages stories that convey a sense of immediacy, portray practice across diverse populations and capture the range and variety of strategies and systems within the helping professions. Priority given to articles that provide new understanding of practice. The journal publishes stories of professional helpers such as ethicists, psychotherapists, community organizers, case and group workers, policy makers, family and child practitioners, health and mental health care providers; and educators, researchers, and administrators in the helping and academic professions.

REFLECTIONS' central theme is narrative inquiry of professional practice. It publishes personal accounts of professional action designed to aid and support human and social development. The stories have a literary presence, offer new perspectives on practice, and demonstrate the conceit of failure as well as success. The narrator explains the reasons for the action and freely identifies the mistakes made in the practice. The purpose of the narrative is not to demonstrate achievement; rather, it is to capture the experience.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE. A narrative is a story worth telling. Narratives are personal stories that give readers a fresh perspective about the practice of change. Written in a temporal sequence and or within a thematic structure; narratives recount the helping process. Narratives are explored within a contextual frame and supply a rich textual description of the experience: they take into account time, place, action, persons, behavior and interaction. Narratives explain and describe events; results; conflicts; complicating actions; and how, why, and what was done. In narratives the writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there is a resolution. Some narratives end with a coda, that is, a perspective on what occured.

WRITING INSTRUCTIONS AND SUBMISSION: Manuscripts are peer reviewed. Articles appropriate to the journal's purpose are reviewed anonymously by members of the Executive and Editorial Board. Articles are accepted based on their contribution to practice knowledge. Publication decisions require about four months.

1. Authors are expected to use the most recent APA publication format.
2. The manuscript length depends upon the temporal sequence of the event.
3. Include on separate page a brief abstract written in the same style as the narrative.
4. Place identifying information such as name, affiliation, address, phone and fax only on cover page.
5. Send (3) printed double spaced hard copies of the manuscript to the editor.

Upon acceptance of the article for publication one (1) copy on disk in ASCII, WP or Microsoft format (for IBM compatible or MAC and one(1) hard copy will be requested. Submission of narrative poetry and photography is encouraged.

Names of persons and organizations mentioned in the articles published in REFLECTIONS **have been changed to protect their privacy.** REFLECTIONS **disclaims responsibility for statements, either fact or opinion made by contributors.**

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the journal people read!
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CALL FOR NARRATIVES: SPECIAL ISSUE
THE DANGERS TO POOR CHILDREN:
THE CONSEQUENCES OF WELFARE REFORM

Studies by the department of Health and Human Services and the Urban Institute predict that the new welfare laws will push a million children into poverty. This will drastically alter thenature of welfare by eliminating any entitlement to assistance. An article in the N.Y. Times noted "...recipients are required to work, and the law requires a five year life time limit on aid. Some states will use their power to develop innovative ways of providing work for adults and services for children. But all the incentives are there for them to cut assistance, impose shorter time limits and use Federal Block Grants to free-up state funds for more politically palatable programs.... Public monitoring of state programs to determine their effects of children is essential. The law needs to be strengthened to require more detail in state welfare funds, more public information on how states are using money and more tracking of and reporting on the well being of children...those who receive assistance and those denied it or cut off from it."
(M. J. Bane. Nov. 10, 1996. Section 4. p.13)

DUE SEPTEMBER 15, 1997

WE SEEK STORIES (NARRATIVES)

- On your success and failure in influencing state legislative welfare plans;

- On how you tried to influence the way your state allocates welfare funds;

- On tracking and reporting on the welfare of children;

- The work you did to protect children;

- You may have succeeded or failied our interest is to influence the discourse on the affects of "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families" through personal accounts of helping professionals working with adults and children affected by Welfare Reform.

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VOICES FROM THE DEPTHS

By Paul Abels

There are many persons whose voices are rarely heard. Among these are members of minority groups, immigrants, the poor, and even certain professions. Having a 'voice' has become a metaphor related to civil rights, equality, resistance, liberation, and power. Perhaps the most clarion calls for their voices being heard has come from women, exemplified by books such as *In Another Voice.* Being heard seems to be the major way a group is recognized, not to down play being seen, as in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* but the voice seems to be the dominant way of acknowledgment of existence. Even a person seen is usually acknowledged by a verbal message. Hello, how are you?

Persons whose voices are rarely heard at times find ways to reach society which may not be generally acceptable outside the group, and at times at great risk. Gangs may commit audacious acts, painting their identity on signs, railway cars, or walls. Subjugated people may paint a **V** for **victory, or . . . -s** on the walls, as the underground did in World War II. At the extremes, gangs may communicate by criminal acts, drive-by shootings, and on desperate occasions by riots and rebellion. Certainly the rebellions of the 60's gave many "under-voiced" groups access to the poverty programs they catalyzed.

To the degree that you have power you have a voice. Who speaks for the powerless, those whose voices are ignored? A difficult question to ask, since as social workers we have been alerted to the pitfalls of trying to represent the ideas of others, or to speak on their behalf, even for the best of reasons. But wouldn't it have been great if someone had spoken for those who would soon be victims of the Holocaust or of the Tuskeegee experiments. Is it not mandatory to speak for life? Perhaps we can proclaim that we speak for social justice and not for any one group that might be voiceless at the moment. At times we are authorized to speak for a particular group, authorized by our social contract with society. And certainly social work's mandate has always been to represent the best needs of the poor and oppressed in our society. That is our profession's historic mission. If not the poor, than us! If not the

oppressed, than us! If not us, than who?

In the narratives on the following pages, there are many voices heard, voices of conscience, of the dead, of prostitutes, of hurt children, of puzzled social workers, of homeless women, of a whistle blower, and more. These are strong voices because they are now public. . But their power will soon be relegated to the book shelves and the libraries. They will become voices in the depths...

Unless... unless our profession begins to deal with the critical core of our existence . We are neither radical social workers nor clinical social workers, a profession whose core task requires working for freedom, social justice, and dignity for people. It is our voices which have become too silent, it is our leadership (whomever they may be) who have become too timid. Our professional organizations have come to accept the current welfare scene without a scream! Making nice to political leaders who vote against the poor and the disenfranchised. Our educational leaders back down in the face of a dismantling of affirmative action and discrimination against gays and lesbians. There are some who still seem to understand what this profession is all about, but we all need to reiterate and reaffirm our critical core. What will be our forum? Who will take the leadership? Sorry, there aren't enough Bertha Capen Reynolds groups. Sorry there aren't enough *Social Justice Action* student newspapers. Sorry, there is no more safety net, never was much. . Sorry folks, we can't wait for another Jane Addams...we'll have to do it ourselves.

There are people out there whose voices need to be heard. They want the world to know about their struggles, their attempts to overcome, their oppression, their ignored needs, and of their bravery as they survive in the face of callous disregard. It is our job to tell their story. You are the ones they are counting on to tell their story. Eliot Liebow's book, *Tell them who I am: the lives of Homeless Women*, is just such a current narrative. It exemplifies our journal's stories of brave people whose daily struggles make them heroes, keeping families and lives together in the face of a "voice-proof " society. These are stories of oppression, but also of protest and rebellion against the odds, and the voices that label them and tell them they are unworthy and should "give up." There is great strength in the people we work with. At times we we add to the strength and together we we beat the odds. Our voices whisper our failures to us, urging us to find a better way, a new approach, to try harder. But we need to hear the voices of the past as well as of the future.

The voices of those who built our profesion, whose tasks were just as trying, funds just as meager, rewards just as thin, can give us the strength we need to beat the odds. They might tell us that our voice can be the bridge between client and community, and that there are still many stories that need to be told, that all persons voices need to be heard, that the odessy is not yet over.

TELL THEIR STORY! □

NOTES and MAIL

Thank you for your support. Much of your feed back tells us hat you read most of the articles in each issue. That is a remarkable and satisfying disclosure. We appreciate the wonderful letters, and encourage you to send us your critical reactions and opinions on some of the perspectives examined in the narratives. Your telling others about the journal has been the most effective way of promoting *Reflections*--our subscription base grows: libraries and universities, academics, and lots of practitioners; and more submissions with accompanying letters that describe the writer's excitement and satisfaction in submitting a story about her/his teaching, research, and practice experience. Our expansion is the result of your word of mouth.

This issue is thicker than previous ones, for several reasons. The narratives are "dynamite, " and we did not want to delay publishing them, hence the size. We hope you are pleased about getting more to read. Forthcoming, is a special issue "Loss of a Homeland" and we may not have space for general submissions. But again if need be, there will be more to read. It seems as "word" gets around, people recognize the value of sharing their narratives. As you may have guessed, I am joyful about *Reflections*.

Beginning with the next issue we start a new feature, "TRANSITIONS. " Its theme is: an exploration of how professional life/ behavior may change in response to a major transition in a person's life: a new baby, graduate school, marriage, a death, a new career, a tragedy, illness, changes in the socio-political context, retirement, discovery of a new way of thinking and so on. You name it! The focus is on how it affects your practice at all levels, teaching, research, administration. Narratives submitted for this feature are peer reviewed, and must fit the journal's criteria. For this feature there is a word limit (2400-2600). Dr. Jeanne Bader, the feature editort is the Director of the Gerontology Program at CSULB, (562) 985-4056.

We are also pleased that John A. Kayser, University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work, has agreed to become the Editor of " Writing Narratives."

We welcome some new staff: Vilma Chemers, lecturer in the English Department at CSULB, is the proof copy editor (Marilyn Potts, CSULB, Professor and Executive Board member of *Reflections* continues to volunteer to edit the manuscripts). Assistant to the Editor, James Conn, a graduate social work student, and computer whiz, has taken over the typesetting. At the end of this section are snapshots of the people who print the journal.

Finally, your editor attended an exhilarating meeting sponsored by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Family and Neighborhood Initiative, in which reports on community oriented programs with a collaborative and a grass roots focus were presented. We look forward to some powerful narratives from participants about their experience bringing together in partnership and collaboration, universities, service agencies and organizations, and community. □

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Dear and Respected Sir (Editor)
29-4-97
My love and prayers to you.

I am working as a lecturer in Social Work, teaching Community Development, interested in Yoga, professionally interested in participatory development, natural resource management, strengthening of self-help groups.

It was nice to read your letter* and 'Reflections' that too accidentally(*came*) in our college office. I have to frankly admit that I came to understand about Katherine A. Kendall for the first time that too from Reflections. Thank you for that.

Since the interview is about international practice, with all due respect for her contribution, I have few comments to make. Throughout the interview I found that there is a tendency to project the history of the organizations and the efforts of the persons who handled the organizations are equated with the history of the professions. If the organizations would have proceeded in the right direction, need would have not arisen as lamented by Katherine A. Kendall (Reflection/boxed item/page 78). International practice is not something to evolve universal standards. In the name of international practice, we have been either bulldozing certain things or promoting something else which is not relevant to the local culture.

USA and the European countries have their own specific problems. You have taken it as a challenge to solve it, and that is reflected in the voluminous literature produced in the form of journals and books (e.g. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*)... as it is mentioned in your letter. It is O.K. as far as yourself is concerned. What I am worried is about the adaptive strategies followed by the southerners (lowers) and the northerners (uppers).

Southerners (lowers; we) feel that the passport to international practice is to get a degree from a Northern University or spending some time there. If we want to reach you, naturally we have to speak your language... that means we have to please you by showing interest in the subjects/activities promoted by you... even if it is not immediate concern for us. When we try to speak your language/when we adapt ourselves to your priorities, in the process we lose ourselves socially, but profiting personally... by getting sponsorship/study grants/visits etc.... and we too become international.

But for the Northerners international practice means not any soul searching, tiresome seeking in the fields of south; but rather occupying prestigious positions in UN organizations or bilateral funding organizations. Though these out fits you just promote things which at many times (are) simply irrelevant for us.

I may be wrong but I feel that internationalism in the field of social work is characterized by deception and deceit (by us; southerners) and intellectual arrogance (by you northerners).

Your letter implicitly suggests that CSU have some sabbaticals for social workers to become internationalist. Those who want to become an internationalist in the conventional sense may write to you asking more details. But I have some thing to offer to you to promote true international practice.

Here apart from my regular full time teaching in the school of social work, I am also serving as a chair in one of the NGO (SPEECH)** which is promoting participatory development, sustainable agriculture, natural resource management prevention of child labor, promotion of micro enterprises and women empowerment. Much of our work is centered around community organization practice.*

If any one in CSU is willing to do sabbaticals in India, I can really support them with very decent accommodation, hygienic Indian food and travel within the service area at free of cost. The field area is located in one of the drought prone, backward district of Tamil Nadu, India.

On behalf of the NGO to which I am a chairman, we are happy to provide all possible help for an American Social Work Educator to become truly international.

This letter is written in good spirit... if you feel that there is an element of impoliteness, it is not my intention... it may be due to my limitation in vocabulary that too (is) in a foreign language.

I conclude this letter by submitting once again my respect and prename to you and your office.

Thanking you
Sincerely yours
S. Rengasamy

** In reference to a letter sent by James Kelly (CSULB) to international schools of social work.

*SPEECH has done some remarkable work in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) training; The founder-chairman Mr. John Devavaram is now working as a Senior Training Officer for FINNIDA supported by RIPS (Rural Integrated Programme Services) at Tanryania.

CHANGING DIRECTIONS

Anyone who has spent time working in a runaway shelter has stories to tell about the courageous kids who spin through the shelter's revolving doors. What follows are three of a number of mine. **(Practicing, The Bear, Zoe's Turn.)** *I started writing them to answer a personal question: what made a handful of these kids, out of the hundreds I worked with, so particularly special to me? I looked for the answers in them and ultimately saw reflections of me.*

By Karen M. Staller

Karen M. Staller is an attorney, and a doctoral student at The Columbia University School of Social Work

The instructions had been clear. Take the subway to the 42nd Street/Times Square station, look for 41st and walk west. "Don't worry," I had been warned, "if you feel like you are heading in the wrong direction, you are probably going right."

The journey that landed me at the corner of 42nd and 8th started underground 250 miles upstate in the basement of Cornell University's Law School. It had been a less-than-impressive summer job posting haphazardly thumbtacked to a bulletin board that had caught my attention. The hand written contents of the pink message slip were as incongruous as its presence among the meticulously typed offerings of respectable law firms posted alongside. It read:

> **Legal-1 internships available!**
> **Runaway youth shelter**
> **New York City**
> **Call!!**

There was a contact person and a phone number. I was transfixed by the quirky little phone message. It must have been posted just for me.

I was a second year law student who had drifted to law school with considerably less focus than my goal-oriented classmates. It had been my father who first suggested it—years earlier—over morning coffee during a visit to my parents' home from a distant city where I had been killing time working as the paperback buyer in a bookstore while my husband pursued his career. I was recounting the details of my nightmare--which had been produced by mixing Steven King's latest fiction release with anxiety over whether I had ordered sufficient copies to keep it on the shelves--to the breakfast table contingent when my father rolled his eyes. It was highly unusual. "For Christ's sake, Karen," he began. I sat up; even more unusual was using the Lord's name. "Oh for Christ's sake, Karen," he repeated, "if you are going to lose sleep over work at least do work worth losing sleep over. Why don't you go to law school or something?" It wasn't until several years later—as I supported my husband's progress through Cornell's business school by unloading

sleeper sofas off the back of tractor trailers—that I seriously considered the wisdom of my father's advice.

~~~

By the start of my second year of school, the only thing I knew with certainty was that my ambivalence in pursuing a legal career surfaced in peculiar episodes of rebelliousness that conflicted with my general tendency toward very proper behavior. Such was the case, when I dutifully joined the swarm of fledgling lawyerettes as they migrated to the local dress store in ritualistic pursuit of the perfect interview suit. The store racks were an ode to blue and black interrupted only by the occasional pinstripe.

I snarled a defiant dare at the chipper sales woman—at a time before flight attendants became gender diverse and better dressed— "I refuse to look like an airline stewardess." The woman met my challenge with professional good nature. I left with what was probably the only purple suit in a several hundred mile radius.

By the end o fmy second year the haze of career confusion began to lift following two discoveries. First, there were other skeptics like me. They congregated in an obscure wing of the law school which overlooked an asphalt parking lot, a loading dock, and the school's garbage bins— in direct contrast to the panoramic view of Cayuga Lake offered out of the Law Review windows. It also housed the Legal Aid Clinic. Second, I sensed the law school trek ultimately had something to do with my personal freedom. College commencement had graduated me from dependent daughter to dependent wife. By choice, I had picked a husband who excelled in perpetuating the dependency and, to be fair, I believed I had found true security. However, somewhere during the journey, what had previously passed as caretaking began to feel stifling. I came to experience marriage as a direct assault on my personal autonomy. It suddenly occurred to me that—with the help of a law degree—I might not need a caretaker. In my first-ever truly rebellious act of bad behavior, I walked away from the marriage. So when I boarded a Greyhound bus bound for New York City to meet the people at a runaway shelter who had called looking for legal interns, it was with a hunger for freedom, a mere kernel of self confidence, and without the protection of my familiar caretakers.

~~~

The crowd exiting the bus joined the mass of humanity in the Port Authority Bus Terminal and swept me through the underground maze up an escalator. It dispersed at the top leaving me disoriented. I instinctively navigated toward the natural light and onto a hot and noisy street corner marked 8th Avenue and 42nd Street. The energy of respectable folks swirled around anything stationary. That included structural impediments, stalled cars, the indigenous drunks, drifters, dealers, pimps, and cops—as well as a small town girl spinning in slow circles soaking it all in. "GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS" flashed in orange neon lights across the street; "LIVE PERFORMANCES" was posted underneath. I stood looking out on a sea of marquees promising stimulating performances of assorted varieties. I suppose typical reactions might have included fear or repulsion I only felt a sudden rush of adrenaline. For the good girl from the small town there was something invigorating about that corner where taboo and danger seemed to abut respectable life.

"LIVE PERFORMANCES"

I found 41st street sandwiched between the two bus terminal buildings. It was a questionable block: overhead bridges rumbled with bus movement and screened out the sunlight. At ground level bus fumes mixed with the smell of urine. The stretch practically broadcast: "You're-leaving-the-civilized-world." But I recalled my travel instructions. Since it felt so wrong I assumed I was heading right. With invincible determination, I took the block at an authoritative pace only to find the avenue at the other end even less inviting. A group of denizens were sitting on the sidewalk slouched against the exterior wall of the bus terminal sharing the bottled contents of a brown paper bag. They marked my progress across Ninth Avenue with a series of cat calls and whistles. The next stretch

of walk left all life forms behind. It was bound on one side by a red brick wall topped with barbed wire and on the other by Greyhound buses making subterranean escapes and merging with traffic heading into New Jersey through the Lincoln Tunnel.

In my eagerness to take the wrong direction by storm I walked briskly past the huge U-shaped building twice before noticing it tucked back from the sidewalk. An older man in a blue-gray guard's uniform was leaning out of a small glass sentry booth. He was engaged in a debate with a teenage boy which seemed to be escalating in intensity. Two adolescent girls with a pair of strollers between them were watching from a safe distance. A minuscule tot was curled up asleep in one stroller. The other partially contained a toddler-sized child wearing a NY Mets baseball cap. He was actively engaged in engineering a stroller escape while his mother appeared otherwise distracted. "Stay," she suddenly ordered. The toddler froze mid-maneuver, one leg dangling outside the carriage, apparently trying to gauge the seriousness of the command.

"Yo, man. That ain't fair," said the teenage boy shaking his hand at the guard and shifting his weight back and forth in an impatient dance. "The card ain't right. She said I could come back Friday, man. It izz Fri-day," h e said, striking the back of his fingers against his palm and momentarily bouncing in place for emphasis.

The security booth man looked like he had heard it before. "Uh huh, Tyrone. That's not what it says here." He paused to let that sink in and, having noticed me lingering at a respectable distance, addressed me politely. "Can I help you, Miss?" The youth continued to gesticulate in silent anger.

"I have an interview with the Legal Department,." I said.

"Just a second, I'll call up." The man picked up a phone in the sentry booth.

"You a lawyer?"The boy, finding himself temporarily without his primary audience, addressed me directly.

"Well, a law student really," I said. "I am studying to be a lawyer," I added, hearing an unfamiliar tinge of pride creep into my voice.

"I need me a *law*—yer," the kid said, immediately employing my help. "This guy says I can't come back in yet but I ain't got nooo place to go. I need a place to sleep."

"Why can't you go in?" I asked, too naive to realize I was out of my element and already over my head.

"Some bitch gave me a card for doin' nothin."

"Yeah," said the security guard dropping the phone back into its receiver and re-establishing control. "You were probably doin' nothin.' In fact," he said in mock discovery, "that's exactly what this card says. It says, 'failure to follow plan' That's about the same thing as doin' nothing. And watch your language around the ladies, Tyrone." With his admonition firmly delivered, the security guard turned back to me. "You can wait in A-reception, Miss." Then, without further explanation, he addressed the youth again. "You know the rules, Tyrone."

Although A-reception meant nothing to me, I had received my marching orders and was clearly on my own. I took his hand gesture as a clue and I walked passed the two mothers, the sleeping infant, the foiled escape artist who had settled back into his stroller but continued to fidget, and toward a set of doors.

"You want a sandwich, Tyrone?" I heard the guard say as I moved on.

"Watcha got? Peanut butter or that nasty mystery meat?" Tyrone sounded momentarily distracted.

"That's baloney, Tyrone," one of the girls interceded.

"What? You a food critic now?" The guard teased. "Don't matter," he said quickly, "I think we got peanut butter somewhere. Hold on, let me look." He searched as I pushed through a set of glass doors and into a world that would change my life forever.

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Under 21/New York is a subsidiary of Covenant House, the largest runaway and homeless youth shelter in the United States. It
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provides round-the-clock food, clothing, and shelter for runaway and homeless youth as well as a range of professional services including social work, medical, legal, pastoral, mental health, education, and vocational counseling. I arrived as a legal intern, later returned to head the agency's Legal Department and left on a journey through the doctoral program at Columbia University's School of Social Work.

Anyone who has spent time working in a runaway shelter has stories to tell about the courageous kids who spin through the shelter's revolving doors. What follows are three of mine. I started writing them to answer a personal question: what made a handful of these kids, out of the hundreds I worked with, so particularly special to me? I looked for the answers in them and ultimately saw reflections of me.

It took me years to understand that when I stepped off that Greyhound in the Port Authority, I was as much a runaway as the kids I am about to introduce to you. We all mixed escape with a search for love, freedom, and independence. For all of us, Under 21 was a juncture: a temporary weigh station for transients. It was a place to assess where we stood and where we wanted to go. It was a place to change directions. The kids changed my direction and my life. Sadly, but typically, I will never really know if I changed any of theirs.

What separates me from them is education, resources, opportunity, and family support. It is a list of things that most street kids noticeably lack. Given that, I've struggled—both intellectually and practically—with how best to help a kid seemingly headed in the wrong direction get diverted right. It is a question that haunts me but it is also a question that this dutiful and grateful daughter asks because I heeded my father's advice. I found work worth losing sleep over.

PRACTICING

"I just want my typewriter back,." Dorothy explained patiently. "I can't practice without my typewriter. I've tried in my head but I can't. It's too hard."

I looked at the pretty Jamaican teenager across my desk. She sat stiffly, with her shoulders back and her chin high, like a first-time job applicant trying to make a good impression. Her jaw was set rigid with deter-mination but she clutch-ed and unclutched a cheap leather hand bag that rested across her lap betraying her nervous agitation.

"Where is your typewriter, Dorothy?" I asked.

"Mrs. Jirmenez has it. She won't give it back."

I sighed. I occasionally suffered from the insecurity of suspecting I didn't practice "real" law. My measure wasn't based on my classmates' Wall Street salaries—after all my personal freedom wasn't for sale—but rather on the increased likelihood that they had clients who could identify a legal problem without a protracted game of 20 questions.

"Who, Dorothy," I sighed again, "is Mrs. Jirmenez?"

"Mrs. Jirmenez is my landlady. Well, she was my landlady, but she said I had to leave. She shouldn't have kept my typewriter, though."

"She made you leave? Why, Dorothy?" I excitedly seized hold of the suggestion of a legal issue. New York City has a highly regulated rental market. Landladies can't just make tenants leave without obtaining a warrant of eviction from a civil court housing judge first. Here was a *real* legal problem.

"The apartment was too crowded. She can have my other stuff but I want my typewriter back." Her eyes flashed fire.

She was adamant. I considered this unfortunate. After all, I knew exactly what to do with malfeasant landladies. Their bad behavior triggered a host of legal responses within my professional repertoire. I had spent three years litigating landlord-tenant cases. I just wasn't at all sure how to handle an interpersonal dispute over a Smith Corona. Besides I didn't really think it was a lawyer's job. I could send her back to her social worker.

"What if I talked to her?" I asked, suggesting the obvious. I figured an attempt at negotiation might get me out of further

responsibility for this problem. I could move on to the more pressing items on my daily agenda.

"I don't think so." She shook her head skeptically. "I mean," she added quickly, "she can be really stubborn."

"Well, I suppose we could try small claims court," I suggested reluctantly. It was the only legal recourse I could think of although the idea made me cringe. There were lots of practical problems associated with small claims court. I envisioned the endless wasted hours which could result from the landlady's indifference. Say she didn't show up on the first court date. We would wait around for hours and then inevitably be ordered to return again for a second time in order to preserve the claim. Even if the landlady eventually appeared *and* we won on paper, how was I going to enforce the order? Obtaining the right to the typewriter was different from obtaining actual possession. This had all the markings of a fruitless endeavor. At a crisis shelter, time invested in one case is rewarded with an accumulating pile of others back at the office. I liked this client. I wanted to help her but . . .

"Do you think small claims court is the best?" she asked anxiously. "The police officer said to go to the dispute resolution center in the Bronx."

I felt my jaw unceremoniously drop. open. "You went to the police?" I asked, in awe. Approaching the police with information about a homicide or robbery was one thing, but with a tale about a wayward landlady and an old typewriter? I admired her chutzpah. It was more than I could have mustered at her age.

Dorothy began an earnest search through her cheap leather handbag. She finally surfaced a vinyl wallet. She pulled out a neatly folded slip of paper. "The officer at the desk, told me to go to this room in the courthouse,"she said, handing me the paper.

"Wow, good for you, Dorothy. I am impressed." I usually delegated this kind of preliminary information gathering to my clients. I often felt guilty about it—like I was dumping the problem back on them—but it served as a resource conservation measure. I figured the ones who returned were the ones who really wanted help. I had never had a client arrive so well prepared before. I really was impressed. I offered the obvious next step. "So I guess you could go to this room and get the papers we need to file."

"Oh, I already did that." She said politely.

I pushed my chair back from the desk. "What the heck do you need me for, Dorothy?" I asked. "It sounds like you are doing just fine on your own." My role was superfluous.

"I want to make sure I get my typewriter back, so I need a lawyer." Her deep brown eyes projected a look of great faith. "I have to go back to court next Tuesday."

My stomach tightened. It was an involuntary response to my own conflict. She didn't need me to win or lose this case. She could do this on her own. If I helped her and we lost— a likely outcome in my mind— it was going to be my fault. I could think of a half dozen legitimate-sounds reasons to justify turning down the case. The real one would be about my own fear of failing and of disappointing her.

"Well, I could to go to court with you, Dorothy," I said hesitantly, "but I don't want you to be too disappointed if we don't get the typewriter back, OK? Maybe we could get you another one, if worse came to worse," I suggested tentatively.

"I have to have that one," she said, her eyebrows knotting in concern.

"Why is it so important, Dorothy?"

"I brought it with me from Jamaica. It was my mother's. I am learning to type—I was practicing every day—so I can get a good job. I want to be a secretary."

I thought about a gold pocket watch hanging under a glass dome in my apartment. It was the same gold pocket watch my Irish Great-Grandfather had used to keep the Erie Railroad running on schedule. It had been more than a simple tool of an immigrant's trade; it had been his partner in success. "Time," my mother said when she handed it to me, "was so very important to him." I suddenly sensed the importance of Dorothy's typewriter. It linked her past with her

future. It was to be her partner in this success. It was a gift from her mother.

Dorothy was an "illegal immigrant" or, as immigration lawyers prefer, an "undocumented alien." Either way, she was currently in the United States without the express permission of the U. S. government. She had arrived legitimately enough with a standard three-month visitor's visa, but that visa had expired a year and a half ago. Her continued presence on U.S. soil made her an unwelcome visitor. Dorothy, however, had dreamed of working hard and making her way in this land of opportunity. She wanted a different life than her mother's in Jamaica. I understood the philosophical underpinnings of national immigration policy, but I hated it when policy conflicted so dramatically with the simple aspirations on which this country was built. Dorothy's dreams were the same as my great-grandfather's.

I was suddenly grateful for the luxury of my job in a privately funded agency. This was a case that wouldn't survive intake in any other law office in the city. Not only was the subject matter too inconsequential for "adult" law offices, but federal funding restrictions prohibited Legal Aid or Legal Services attorneys from representing illegal immigrants. At Under 21 I had the freedom to determine what factors to use in making any intake call.

"OK, Dorothy, I'll go with you on Tuesday."

"You'll be my lawyer?" she asked earnestly.

"I'll be your lawyer," I assured her.

"And you'll get my typewriter back?" She wanted a guarantee.

"I'll do the best I can," I said with considerably more confidence than I felt.

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It was 8:05 Tuesday morning. I waved a hello as I whizzed by Charles, the kindly, fatherly gatekeeper, who had early morning sentry duty outside the building.

"Hey, Kar," he yelled after me, "there's a young lady been waitin' on you in 'A' since 7:00 this morning."

I stopped dead in my tracks and turned to face him. "Since 7:00, Charles?" I asked incredulously.

"Yea, since right after breakfast. Said she had an appointment with you and that you are gonna be gettin' her typewriter back."

I rolled my eyes. "Thanks, Charles." Dorothy's eagerness bore a direct inverse relationship to my confidence in this matter.

"I know you can do it, Kar, " he called after me.

I walked into A-reception. Dorothy was sitting primly in the corner chair wearing a slightly matronly suit that she had undoubtedly dug up in the Agency's "clothing room" specifically for this occasion. She clutched her purse on her lap.

"Good morning, Dorothy," I chirped, as best I could, before my usual infusion of caffeine. "I hear you've been here a while."

"I didn't want to miss you. Shall we go now?"

"OK," I said reluctantly, abandoning my unspoken plan of grabbing coffee before the trek. Her anxiety trumped my caffeine addiction. "Let's roll."

We exited the subway in the Bronx with plenty of time to spare. I offered her breakfast at McDonald's, but Dorothy declined, marching briskly up the hill toward the courthouse instead. I would have insisted on my coffee if I didn't sympathize with her need to get there. Waiting for a case to get called inside a court house is qualitatively different from killing time outside one even if the actual number of passing minutes are the same. For me, crossing the courthouse threshold usually produced a surreal state of welcome relief and heightened anxiety. It was like preparing for a final exam and finally walking into the exam room. Surprisingly, I felt completely relaxed this morning. Probably because I was so sure Dorothy's landlady wasn't going to show up.

We followed signs to the mediation area. It was strewn with decrepit, orange plastic chairs that reminded me of my high school cafeteria. They were tacky. Real justice, I thought disparagingly, was dispensed in the midst of mahogany, not orange plastic.

I settled in for a long wait with Dorothy perched beside me. "Want a section of the
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paper?" I asked, waving *The New York Times* in front of her.

"No thanks. I need to look for Mrs. Jirmenez."

"It's really early, Dorothy," I warned, continuing to harbor my private apprehensions about the likelihood of her appearance.

"That's O.K," she said, surveying the empty space from the edge of her chair.

I was well into the local news when Dorothy suddenly leaned over me and, without decorum, grabbed my arm. "There she is," she said in an excited whisper.

"Who?" I asked.

"Mrs. Jirmenez," she said impatiently.

"Your landlady?"

"Yes, Mrs. Jirmenez, she's the one in the red."

"Let's go check in with the clerk. We'll tell him we are all here," I suggested.

Dorothy and I picked up our belongings and trudged over to the clerk. The balding man looked worn around the edges. He peeked up at us over the rim of heavy eye glasses. He didn't actually raise his head, and his hands remained frozen, mid-shuffle, in the stack of papers he had been sifting through. He sat poised to dismiss us without further notice.

"Hi, I am Dorothy," she greeted him cheerfully. "I am here for this case," she said pointing to the documents she had filed the week before. "That's my landlady, Mrs. Jirmenez over there," indicating the woman in red. "And this," she said waving proudly in my direction, "is my lawyer." I nodded in polite acknowledgment.

The clerk, who had been taking the introductions in stride, suddenly looked up. "Your lawyer?" he growled raising an eyebrow. "No lawyers allowed."

"Exuse me sir." I stepped in. "I represent. . ."

"You heard me, Counselor, no lawyers."

"I don't understand." I stammered. I was surprised by his animosity.

"You don't understand?" he said, warming up to the exchang. "You can't go in—just the two parties. See, it's a mediation, between two parties, get it? No lawyers."

He was treating me like a two-year-old and I was embarrassed at the verbal thrashing I'd just received in front of my client. On the other hand, I appreciated the enormity of the snag. Court clerks have infinite power which is derived, in part, from their absolute discretion in the operation of things within their domain. There was an art to getting a clerk to lean in your favor. I had the housing court clerks wrapped around my little finger. This guy was new to me. I briefly considered my options. Anger sometimes felt good and it usually temporarily impressed the client, but it hardly ever produced successful results. I settled on compassion instead.

"She's only 17. Couldn't I go in with her, as a *friend?*" I pleaded.

"No friends either."he snarled, returning to his mountain of papers using complete inattention to summarily dismiss us.

I don't consider myself a quitter, in general, but the combination of his surliness and my insecurity in this unfamiliar setting convinced me the most realistic strategy was to cut our losses through retreat. "Dorothy," I said as we withdrew to our corner "this is actually good." She looked forlorn. I pulled a yellow legal pad and a ball point pen out of my bag in preparation for the next round. A tear welled up in the corner of her eye. I felt an empathetic pang. I knew she felt abandoned and that never feels good.

"Listen to me, Dorothy. You have been your best advocate all along. You're smart and persuasive. You know what you want and you know what is fair. You just have to say those things to the mediator, the same way you have been saying them to me all along." She looked skeptical.

"Sometimes, Dorothy," I continued, "people do a lot better without lawyers. Lawyers just get everyone all worked up. You're going to be better off if you just tell your story to the mediator. Really, you are." I believed that.

"What if Mrs. Jirmenez lies?" She wiped away a tear. She was with me so far.

"People lie to mediators all the time. If you stay in control and present yourself as rationally as you always do, the mediator will believe you. Here," I said handing her the pad, "we are going to write down your arguments so you don't forget what you want to say."

I put aside all notions of lawyering and began to teach. We spent the next hour in a crash course on advocacy techniques. We listed the things she wanted to say. She practiced how to say them. Resolve began to enter Dorothy's voice as we anticipated what Mrs. Jirmenez would say and she practiced how to respond. We moved on to consider what the mediator might say.

"Let's go," called the clerk called suddenly. A new wave of panic swept across her face.

"You can do it," I reassured her. I knew she could if she just believed in herself.

Dorothy and Mrs. Jirmenez disappeared behind a closed door. I waited. I paced. I waited some more. I began to sympathize with expectant fathers of yesteryear. I felt responsible and helpless at the same time. Finally the door swung open. Mrs. Jirmenez walked briskly out. Dorothy followed primly in her wake.

"What happened?" I could hardly contain myself. "Tell me what happened," I begged.

"She's giving me my typewriter back. I get to pick it up on Thursday morning" she said calmly.

"Yes!" I shouted with unrestrained glee, throwing my hand up in the air for a high five.

Dorothy's reserve began to erode as her hand rose to meet mine. She grinned. "I really did good," she praised herself. "I said every thing I wanted to say."

I basked in the moment. It wasn't very often that my clients recognized their strengths.

Dorothy practically floated back down the hill toward the subway. She was chattering through the details of the morning, when she stopped abruptly before a Korean grocer. "Don't you just love mangos?" she asked, looking an outdoor bin overflowing with the yellowish-red fruit.

I hesitated. "Actually, I've never had a mango, " I said. I grew up in central New York. I could distinguish a Rome from a Cortland apple on sight, but what did I know about exotic tropical fruit?

"You've never had a mango?" she asked in disbelief. "*Never*? In my country, in Jamaica, you get the best mangos. They remind me of home."

She suddenly turned her back to me and began to work her way through the pile of mangos. She picked them up, one at a time, testing for firmness, color, and smell, and rejecting each in turn by balancing it precariously at the back of the pile. She had rearranged the contour of mound when finally, she paused over one. She cradled it in her hands. "This one," she whispered, "this one is perfect."

"Let me see," I said, taking the ripe fruit from her.

She pulled out her wallet. "I am getting it for you. To thank you for getting my typewriter back."

"No, no no," I said. "I can't let you do that. Besides, I didn't do anything." I was trained to be wary about gifts from clients although, truthfully, the real source of my discomfort came from her genuine willingness to give me credit for the day's events.

She took the mango out of my hand and opened her wallet. It contained two, one dollar bills. The mango cost .89. She pulled out a dollar.

"Well, wait, Dorothy let me pay for it. After all, you did all the work picking out the right one." I couldn't let her sacrifice half of her total savings to celebrate her own achievement. After a slight struggle she relented. The grocer placed the precious mango in a brown paper bag and we headed for the subway.

Back in my office we scrounged up a knife and some napkins. "Let me show you," she said, taking the fruit and the knife from me. With deft and practiced precision she began extracting the pulpy aromatic fruit from its rubbery skin. I was mesmerized by the joy and confidence with which she attacked her task. It was one—of many—skills she had carried with her from Jamaica. We savored the celebration until it was time for both of us to move on to other things. She left promising to call after she retrieved her typewriter.

It was only after she left that I realized how deeply challenged I had been by her deceptively simple case. She had shamed me into realizing that my initial dismal case assessment was the product of substituting my judgment for her knowledge of her landlady. Perhaps even worse for my professional ego was the fact that my error

was a natural outgrowth of what I had learned practicing law. Legal success is so defined by winning that I had easily substituted winning physical possession of the typewriter with the importance of seeking justice. It was a profoundly troubling substitution to me.

My best work of the day, I thought bitterly, had consisted of not practicing law at all and that notion resurrected my insecurities about whether I was a "real" lawyer or not. I pulled out *Black's Law Dictionary*, the profession's most trusted lexicon, and flipped through the pages until I located "counselor-at-law." It said: *attorney. . . Member of the legal profession who gives legal advice.* So I paged backward to attorney and found a different definition: *an agent . .appointed to act in the place or stead of another.* There was no mention of giving counsel or advice.

The two entries helped resolve some of the struggle Dorothy had agitated. I was socialized into a profession that had once primarily defined itself as an association of counselors but now was a profession of agents for others. I wondered what historic trend explained a movement from advice-givers to agents but I suspected it has something to do with the financial rewards attached to being hired hitmen. Perhaps, by substituting counsel for agency for Dorothy, I hadn't drifted away from my core professional responsibilities but had moved closer to the profession's roots. If so, it was a day's work to be proud of after all.

THE BEAR

The Bear fit snugly between the wooden arms of a hand-me-down chair which had been donated by a local law firm. I had created him, on my mother's portable Singer, one Christmas vacation as I restlessly waited for the new college term to begin. It had taken repeated treks to the local Woolworth's to accumulate sufficient quantities of foam stuffing to bring his brown furry shell to life. In the end, he was huge and almost circular, his paws gently sloping forward in a permanent embrace around his well rounded belly.

The Bear had a snout by design, and two soulful brown glass eyes—but the vacation days evaporated before I had time to embroider his nose and mouth. I felt guilty about that. The character of a stuffed animal always emerges while affixing its features. It's a natural birthing process and no amount of fussing with stainless steel pins beforehand can control it. This poor bear, however, never stood a chance. In spite of his facial handicap, The Bear projected an oddly calm and non judgmental aura as he presided over the affairs of my office.

The Bear's original arrival served the dual purpose of relieving clutter from my cramped studio apartment and providing office decor, but he quickly assumed a more important role. He absorbed the emotions of others. Angry teenage boys punched him: needy teenage mothers; lovingly stroked him; fretting toddlers eyed him in wondrous suspicion from a safe distance. Through it all The Bear sat patiently on his leather throne, ready to accommodate the needs of any child.

I heard the phone ringing through the office door as I fumbled for my keys. I dreaded days that started like this. Reshuf-fling priorities on a moment's notice had become second nature to me even so, it was a bad sign when the demands began before getting through the door. It meant you were behind before you even started.

"Legal Depart-ment," I said, grabbing the phone receiver while shedding my outer winter layers onto a chair next to the desk.

"Karen, is that you?"

"Yea, Denise?" Denise worked on the younger boys floor. It was a tough crowd: 12 - to -16 year old adoles-cent boys who were old enough to be arrogant, but not old enough to have much practical sense. Denise could handle them though. She was capable of both compassion and command. I always thought she was particularly effective in Spanish. Either it rolled off her tongue with soothing tenderness or it barked orders that few would dare to ignore, whether they understood the language or not. I loved watching her with the kids.

Denise had been at the agency longer than

forever and she knew the street, and its children, better than most. She was a social worker by instinct and experience but not formal education. I didn't know her personal history, but I suspected she had gained some knowledge from first-hand experience. I had long ago learned to assess the quality of the worker making a call to my office. It saved time and energy. Denise was among the best. There were two things for certain about a phone call from her: the question would be good, and the dialogue would be tough. I knew she always dealt with the easy and the routine on her own.

"It didn't sound like you Karen. Do you have a minute?" she asked. "It's important," she added quickly, eliminating those crucial seconds which would have allowed me to consider my response. I would have been tempted to call her back after grabbing my coffee.

"Sure, Denise, what can I do for you?"

"I've got this nine year old over here. Well, actually, he's in Medical right now. He came in this morning about 1 am. He's been hit. We really think he should talk to you."

"Have you called it in?" I asked the routine question. We were mandated reporters, of course, so our suspicions of abuse or neglect had to be deposited with the State Central Registry. The State referred case to the local protective services agency. In recent history, it had been known as CWA (Child Welfare Administration); SSC (Special Services for Children), and before that BCW (Bureau of Child Welfare). Today it is ACS (Administration for Children's Services). Each name embodied new hope for greater child safety but it remains the same old agency. The greatest benefit in the constant reshuffling was that it provided an informal assessment tool. Listening to a family refer to its workers revealed how long they had been in the system. It was the child welfare equivalent of a fossil record.

"I'll call it in right after he sees medical." Denise knew the score. The abuse hotline operators, in general, were a jaded lot and convincing them to take a report could be dicey business. You had about 120 seconds to bring the child's pain to life over the phone line. Doctors, and their reports, added instant credibility.

"OK bring him over when you can, Denise. I should be here all morning, " I said, sinking into my office chair for the first time. "See you later." I started to hang up.

"Karen?"

"Yea, Denise."

"He's really scared." she said, starting to hang up. I was startled. It wasn't the kind of information Denise usually provided. She usually kept her interpretations separate from the information she passed on as referral facts. I liked that about her. There were other workers who were all emotion and no facts. I ended up judging their credibility as much as the kids.

"Denise?" I said, catching her on the line before she deposited the receiver.

"Yea, Karen."

"Does he have a name?" I was struck by how easily our conversation focused on the problem without even mentioning the child's name.

"Oh sure," she chuckled, "It's Warren.

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There was a knock on the office door. Denise cheerfully greeted me. Beside her was a boy, so small his head didn't even reach as high as Denise's short shoulders. I winced. It was so easy, over the telephone, to forget the essence of our work's raw material and I was momentarily struck by a simple truth: nine-year-olds don't belong at runaway shelters. I felt a wave of maternalism sweep over me. I wanted to take him home.

"Warren, this is the lawyer.She wants to help you." Denise launched into transitional introductions.

"Thanks, Denise," I said when she finished. "We'll be fine now. Have a seat Warren." I beckoned him into the office.

For me, seat selection was an assessment tool of sorts. There were four or five available
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chairs arranged in their natural state of scatter in my office. Warren took one against the wall, sheltered and removed from the open space of the room. He hoisted himself up and slid back into it. His legs didn't reach the ground. The seat I chose was in calculated response. Sitting behind a desk would be wrong in this *pas de deux*. I pulled up a chair on the same side of the desk and estimated what I thought was a safe but intimate distance.

"Hi Warren, I am Karen. How are you?" I asked quietly, instinctively matching the tone he set.

He didn't respond. The oversized conference chair engulfed him. His eyes focused on the clasped hands in his lap. It was as if all his energy was sucked inward.

I tried every strategy I knew for winning over frightened children but my gentle probes on innocuous subjects continued to be met with resounding silence. After 15 minutes I was frustrated and ready to quit. I felt like a failure for not gaining his trust. On the other hand, I figured it wasn't that important for him to speak to me. There were many others—social workers, case workers, doctors, lawyers, judges—inside and outside the shelter who would need to hear his story because they would become active participants in shaping his future. As I saw it, my role was to act as a buffer for him in dealing with all those adult professionals around him. I wished I could convince him that trusting me might be worth it but then, I never could be sure it was.

I glanced around the office in search of some relief. "Hey, Warren, do you want to look at my toys?" I asked with forced enthusiasm. I walked over to the bookshelf which housed a large wicker basket filled to the brim with assorted goodies. Kermit the Frog hung off the handle. Warren glanced fleetingly at the basket as I set it down beside him. Then there was a second furtive glance. It was directed, not at the basket, but at something behind me. I slowly turned in search of the intrigue.

The answer was immediately obvious. The Bear. I walked over and grabbed the creature around his waist. "Here you go," I said, sliding The Bear onto his lap. He disappeared behind it.

"Hey where did ya go Warren?" I teased.

"I am a bear, " he said, his first words muffled by the fuzzy fabric and ten pounds of stuffing. Lawyers aren't routinely trained in the art of play therapy, so I was genuinely surprised with what followed.

"What's The Bear got to say?" I asked playfully.

Remarkably, to me, it all spilled out—filtered through the back of a bear. How he had been home last night and how his mother had been drinking, again. How she always got mad at him when she drank—he didn't know why. How she had taken out an electrical cord and hit him—it didn't really hurt as much as usual, but he just got so mad about it. How when his mother fell asleep, he had snuck out of the house. He didn't know where he was going to go—just out. He met some older boys. They were hanging out on the street. They asked him what he was doing because, after all, it was past midnight and he was all by himself. The boys warned him about the dangers of their Brooklyn neighborhood at night and suggested he return home. He refused. So the boys told him he should go to the runaway shelter. They took him to the subway station and showed him how to hop the turnstile, avoiding the fare that he didn't have the money to pay. They told him to get off at 42nd street and to ask a cop where to go. Don't ask just anyone, they repeatedly warned, ask a cop. That's what he did. Here he was. Did he have to go home? Was he in trouble?

"You can stay here, for now, Mr. Bear," I said gently, "and you're not in trouble." I was overcome by a passionate desire to make things right and safe for him. I was struck by both his vulnerability and his strength.

A small face peer out from behind the bear. "Are you sure?"

We're going to do everything we can to keep you safe, Warren," I said. "How 'bout I take you back to the floor now? You've been a very brave guy." I was proud of him. Not for telling me his story but for his courage in doing so and

for all the courageous decisions he had madeen route to my office.

"OK," he said, sliding off the chair, still grasping as much of the bear as his arms could manage. I stifled a laughed. His attempts to control The Bear's enormous bulk were comical. Yet he seemed determined not to let go.

"Warren." I said, "Do you want to borrow the bear for a while? You can take it to your room and talk to him when you want." The Bear hadn't been out of the office since he had originally arrived, but it occurred to me Warren had found some security in it that went beyond facilitating his tale.

He smiled. His face shone with a mixture of relief and excitement. Silently, he began to drag The Bear, by the paw, toward the door. He stopped suddenly and turned around. "What's his name?" he asked.

"His name?" I was surprised. Dozens of kids had played with that bear. I couldn't remember being asked his name before. "Gee we always just called him The Bear." I paused thoughtfully, "how 'bout you think of a name for him and we'll talk about it later."

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A week later, I got another phone call from Denise.

"Karen," she sounded panicked, "I need your help right now."

I was used to workers insisting on immediate attention. Crisis can be contagious; workers catch it from kids and it is capable of clouding better judgments. I usually had the distance—created by being a department removed from the primary action—necessary to help talk workers out of their own crisis so they could get to the kid's. But this was Denise; she never needed that kind of help. I sensed trouble.

"What's wrong, Denise?"

"CWA is on the way to pick up Warren. The worker is taking him home." If CWA was intending to pick up Warren at this stage, it meant they had simply closed out the case.

"Home, Denise? Did you tell them about the medical records? Those records seemed to warrant at least some investigation. Children don't get welts on their backs without help."

"Of course," she responded with irritation. "We told the worker about medical, we told him the kid was wondering around Times Square, alone, at 2 am, we told him all that." She snapped, "he hasn't even interviewed Warren. They just want to take him home." I felt properly scolded.

Denise wouldn't have bothered me, nor would she have reached the point of irritation, if she hadn't already tried to calmly work through the facts with the CWA worker. I suddenly felt guilty. She was having to do battle with me, too, and I was on her side.

"Did they do any investigation at all?" I asked, knowing that Denise had already let me know that their investigation was inadequate but still needing to know what they had done.

"Oh yes, very thorough." Her voice dripped with sarcasm. "They talked to his mother, in front of his brothers and sisters. She denied ever hitting Warren." Denise, ever the child advocate, couldn't resist her last bit of information. "The worker says Mom is a very nice lady."

"They didn't talk to Warren at all?" Now I was getting agitated.

"Never."

"They never asked to see our medical records?"

"No."

"OK, Denise, call me when the worker gets here. You know, I really can't believe this is going to be a problem," I added. "We just have to explain the situation to the guy." I meant to provide optimistic reassurance but it fell flat.

"Uh hu," said Denise, with a kindly tolerance that barely masked her doubt.

I felt my own mounting anxiety. Denise—a worker whose judgment I trusted—had sent me plenty of unspoken warnings about her assessment of the unfolding crisis even though she had provided only the essential facts. I
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heeded her warning by crossing the hall to our minimally equipped law library where I pulled a copy of the Family Court Act off the shelf. I was pretty sure an interested party, like a runaway shelter, could by-pass CWA's authority and bring an abuse or neglect proceeding directly to court when necessary. It was something new. I had never done it and, from the limited research possible in our library, it didn't look like any other agency had tried before either.

The phone rang again. I jumped.

"He's here," Denise said, not bothering to identify herself. The presumption was that this was the case of the moment. "He's mad that Warren's bags aren't packed." I took her description of his attitude as supporting evidence of Denise's original assessment. We were in for a tussle.

"Where's Warren?"

"He's in school right now. We told him he might have to leave though."

"Leave him where he is for now." In that second, I instinctively substituted the agency for child as client. It was not an insignificant substitution. Attorneys, after all, are the agents of clients. Clients should be kept informed along the way. They should direct the work of their attorneys. Yet I was barely aware of doing it. Sheltering Warren from the swirl of activity around him seemed like what I was supposed to do on behalf of the agency.

I trotted down six flights of stairs to the ground floor. It was always faster than the elevator and besides it got my blood pumping. I paused at the bottom to take a breath and straighten my blouse before pushing my way through the door to the reception area. Karena, receptionist extraordinaire, caught my eye and nodded her head almost imperceptibly toward a young man, who was uncomfortably perched on a chair in the corner.

"Hi, my name is Karen Staller," I said approaching him, my hand outstretched.

He rose from his seat. "I am here for Warren, " he said, ignoring my extended hand. "I understand that there is some problem." He was clearly agitated.

"Well it's just that we're a little concerned about Warren going ..."

He interrupted me before I could finish my sentence. "You don't have any authority to hold him. You can't hold him. Its time for him to go home. We have finished our investigation."

"I'm sure if you talked to Warren first..." I started to say.

"Don't tell me how to do my job. Are you turning him over or not?" he demanded.

I was taken a little off guard. "No," I said cautiously, "It's just that we are worried about..." I started to backtrack.

"No?" he lowered his eyebrow authoritatively.

I wondered if he was always so adversarial. I faltered briefly, wondering about the source of his adamant position. Did he really believe Warren should go home? Or was he playing out some angry vendetta against us? I remembered our medical records.

"No," I said again, this time with a little more confidence. I could sense people behind me slowing their pace as they moved through the waiting area. A crowd was beginning to gather at a respectful distance.

"You can't do that. This is illegal. " He looked at me directly.

"I believe it's not." I said, meeting his stare. I had made a pledge of protection to a nine-year- old, and the agency's position was being threatened.

"I'll have to call the police," he said angrily.

"Do what you need to do." Anger at his unreasonableness edged into my voice.

I wasn't about to be bullied by him or the police. Nevertheless in contrast to my relatively calm appearance, I didn't like the sound of the police getting involved. It made me nervous. Testing new legal theory in the safety of a courtroom where the rules of the game are eminently clear was one thing—testing it in the reception area of a runaway shelter with police officers as arbitrators was another. It foreshadowed disaster. To make matters worse, there was agency precedent for such a showdown. Popular folklore glorified a brave staff member who, once upon a time, had been dragged from the agency in handcuffs by the police for upholding a child's confidentiality rights by

refusing to confirm or deny the youth's participation in the program. Although the staff member had become a legend, I always secretly wondered why the police wanted the kid so badly. Nevertheless the story was recounted proudly, as evidence of true dedication, to every fresh batch of new hires. The tale's conclusion involved a formal apology issued by the Police Department. The apology came only after the staff member had spent several hours in a holding cell. In spite of the potential glory, I wasn't eager to inhabit—even temporarily—a jail cell.

The CWA worker turned on his heels. "You'll hear from us," he said as walked briskly to the door.

"Buzz me through, Karena, " I said, indicating the locked door that separated the waiting area from the rest of the facility. I took the six flights of steps back up to my office two at a time, wondering how long it would be before the police arrived. The closest precinct was only minutes away. My heart was pounding by the time I reached the landing. I felt that nervous tension that accelerates time. I knew its danger. I forced myself to pause before opening the stairwell fire door. I needed to slow time down before it hurled me into crisis and clouded my thinking. It was a role I performed for others every day; it took a more concerted effort to do it for myself.

I pushed through the door ready for battle. I summoned the troops: attorneys, paralegals, and a secretary, and enlisted everyone's immediate support to the war effort. Some scurried off in search of affidavit information, others to get medical records. The Secretary began typing blue backs with the case caption. I worried about the time it would take to pull the papers together not just in terms of the legal drafting, but the mechanical production—like finding a working Xerox machine—could be a problem.

The phone rang an hour later cutting through my intense concentration. I paused in suspense. Nancy, my secretary, buzzed over the intercom.

"Karen, there is a Mr. O'Halloran on the phone. Says he is the head of the Office of Legal Affairs for the City." I breathed a sigh of relief. One of my own kind. No cops, just a lawyer who I had gone head-to-head with in Family Court before.

The case was resolved in four telephone calls which took place over the next hour. Warren stayed with us.

I had never seen a case reach the top of the chain of command so quickly. I suspect CWA didn't want to be a potential target for the evening news any more than I wanted to be its subject. I hoped I had done the right thing. I wanted Warren to have a home more than anything. I was just confused about how to best ensure that. I wondered if CWA got scared off or whether it actually had done a more thorough review.

I worried about the potential for creating chaos. CWA and Under 21 are both agencies dedicated to protecting children. We both want children to be safe. We both want them to be home if possible. How had this turned into a battle between Warren, Denise, me, and Under 21 and Warren's mother, his case worker, and CWA with police officers and family court judges on standby? I wondered how smaller child care facilities in the State—those without an attorney on the premises—would have handled this matter. Understandably, many might have handed the child over to CWA in the first place. Would that have been right or better?

Representing children at runaway shelters is tricky business. Their decisions and actions are almost always in conflict with their caretakers. In general, the agency throws its weight behind the child's decision. It is the easiest thing to do. The more perplexing question is whether it is always the right thing to do. I found it troubling that children set the wheels turning. Certainly, in a more perfect world, Warren shouldn't have had to wander into Times Square before adults took notice of his situation. On the other hand, what about the other kids—recidivists or those who ran from CWA placements— who set system chaos in motion? I worried about my role in the mix.

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Denise called to let me know that Warren was happily settled in a more permanent group home, surrounded by kids his own age.

"That's great, Denise," I said and started to hang up, but remembered one piece of
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unfinished business. " Denise, do you have my bear?"

"Oh yea, of course, Karen I locked him in my office so he would be safe," she said. "I have to come over to your part of the building tomorrow, I'll drop him off."

"Thanks, Denise."

Tomorrow came and went, as did the next several weeks. I kept reminding Denise about the bear. She kept not remembering him. It finally occurred to me that there was some passive resistance, as my social worker colleagues would call it, going on. One day when my secretary was heading over to the younger boys floor, I asked her to pick up The Bear.

"Karen," said Nancy poking her head through my office door ten minutes later, "look who's back!" She kicked the door open with her foot and entered my office, her arms wrapped around the belly of The Bear.

"Yippee," I cried, getting up from the desk to help her.

"There's just one little problem," said Nancy. "See." She let The Bear slip forward by the paw so the back of him faced me. In very large childish letters, stenciled in blue ink across the back of The Bear, was the name "Warren." The letters had been traced and retraced until they had worn away the fur and taken on a permanence that would never be erased.

My initial dismay was quickly replaced with acceptance. The Bear now had both a name and an identity. It was Warren. Like his namesake, Warrenbear would carry the scar of his encounter. That couldn't be changed. Yet he had also served a purpose. Somewhere, amidst the stuffing, floated the painful whispered confessions of a child. Warrenbear had locked them behind an expressionless face, so that Warrenchild could be temporarily safe and freed of them. At its best, it was what a short-term crisis shelter was all about.

ZOE'S TURN

"She's. . . she's, you know. . ." The worker at the other end of the phone line struggled to find the right adjective. "I know!" she said suddenly gaining confidence. "She's fragile. Yeah, that's it." She seized on the word, "She's very, very fragile."

They were all fragile but since vulnerability was a liability on the street, fragility routinely came encased in tough outer coatings. Girls were especially defended. I wondered what made this one's fragility so transparent.

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"Your client's here, Karen," my secretary announced. "This is Zoe." She waved in the direction of a blonde waif standing just beyond my office threshold.

"Come on in and have a seat," I called out cheerfully from across my office. Zoe silently accepted my invitation by sliding into a chair alongside my desk. I felt my own spirits plummet in response to something unspoken. Zoe was ethereal. Blue veins pumping under her translucent skin and bruise marks were the only signs of life on this side of the bright lights. I had the uncomfortable sensation I had already committed an error. I count on a child's energy to set my interview tone, but my initial cheer was already badly off pitch.

My name is Karen," I said quietly, changing tones. "I am an attorney. I am here to help—if there is something I can do for you— but, ah, I am afraid your floor counselor didn't tell me why she was sending you over." I felt an inexplicable need to apologize although I wasn't sure why. Zoe had been referred to me without the usual infusion of worker-provided information. I had assumed it was because the worker felt secure that Zoe could tell her own story, but I now sensed there was something more to it than that. I felt like every word I uttered violated her sanctity.

Zoe reached out and stroked the stuffed bear in the adjacent chair. "Mind if I smoke?" she asked, mesmerized by the bear's fur.

I handed her an empty Diet Coke can in answer. I knew I wasn't in a position to moralize. I sensed she was claiming a right. I could honor
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it or not as long as I was willing to accept her consequences. I watched her pull a slightly bent cigarette from her pocket. She stuck it into her mouth unlit and continued to fish around in her pocket. "Here, I have this," she mumbled, producing my reward—a folded slip of paper—from the same source. It had loose tobacco clinging to it.

She lit her cigarette while I glanced at the paper scrap. *This* turned out to be a summons for solicitation. The cops conducted sporadic sweeps of the West Side strolls. They hated wasting time on such nonsense, but it kept neighborhood block associations happy. Most of the ladies had already served their jail time before getting to court, so judges just set them free. All things considered it seemed like a fairly painless legal process to me.

"Spend some time in jail, Zoe?" I asked.

"Not yet," she took a drag on the cigarette and slowly released the smoke out of the side of her mouth. "Cops brought me here," she said on the exhale. It was clear that the cops thought she was better off doing time with us than in their jail. What was unclear was whether she wanted to be here. Crisis shelters are voluntary. She could walk out the door any time. She had reversed our roles completely and it stirred an uncomfortable sensation in me. Zoe was testing us out, testing me out. I was painfully aware that my words and actions might matter but I had no control over her final choice. I felt unusually helpless.

Zoe slowly rotated the cigarette around her fingers, completely transfixed by the wisp of smoke she was tracing in the air. The cigarette seemed like an extension of her being. There was both a presence and an absence to Zoe like the wisps of smoke dispersing in the air. It was a dichotomy I thought I recognized, being here while being distant often accompanied survivors.

"Do you want to be here, Zoe?" I asked gently probing. Experience had taught me that her answer could confirm or dispel my growing fears. I'd learned to trust my instincts in deciphering the cryptic code spoken by street kids long ago.

"Don't know." she said absently, continuing to watch the smoke trail.

I felt the kick of an adrenaline rush. I understood we were talking about something more than her presence in the shelter. She was in danger. It wasn't just the danger that lurked outside the shelter walls and came packaged as identifiable bad guys. It was much more insidious than that. I'd spent too much time in psych wards and hospital emergency rooms holding the hand of kids who had attempted suicide to ignore the warning.

I'd hit the core fragility her worker described on the phone. Everything hung in a precarious balance. Zoe wasn't sure if she wanted to be in or out. Shelter or street. Life or death. It was the pull of extremes. It was a battle for her being and I mostly felt fear. It wasn't only because the stakes had escalated. Nor was it just Zoe's safety I worried about. Deeply touching, very vulnerable but terribly troubled kids had brought sadness and pain into my life before. I had buried two and helplessly watched others disintegrate in slow motion. I knew that once they engaged you, no amount of professionally imposed distance ever really protects your heart. I feared Zoe was in the high stakes, high risk class. She had already made great progress down a treacherous path of self-destruction. I worried about me as much as her.

I wasn't alone. All her counselors worried. Staff watched the nuances of her behavior for weeks. She could be in or out, depending on the prevailing winds. There was always the lure of the street to draw her away. In the end, Zoe was as bound to us by at least as much fear and confusion as we felt for her. Her story emerged along the way.

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Zoe had come from somewhere south. She was only 16. But 16 was old enough to realize that she had put up with a drunken and sexually abusive stepfather for a decade too long. She summoned up the courage to run and thought she had escaped. Maybe she had, or at least she had until she got a first hand look at the seamier side of New York City.

Zoe's descent from Purgatory to Hell began on a Greyhound bus docked at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. It doesn't take long for a confused and frightened china doll wandering
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aimlessly around Times Square to get snatched up. Fund-raising brochures from Social Service agencies report it's a race against time. The race is between good-guy-outreach-workers and bad-guy-molesters, pimps, and child pornographers. The trophy is the kid but the competition is not clean. Runaways look for escape and for some way to fill a void. Their predators promise love, adoration, and special status. There is no truth-in-advertising in their business. They are peddling fantasies while the competition offers baloney and mustard on Wonder Bread and safe transport back to the home they had fled.

The man who picked Zoe up was, by her standard, to die for: tall, muscular, and handsome with an easy smile and a lot of gold. He knew how to dress and he knew how to make a lady feel loved. His name was Leo. It was hard for Zoe to mask her awe. The honeymoon period was heavenly—nice restaurants, a beautiful hotel room, and lots of quality time with Leo.

That changed the day he told her she needed to earn her keep. "Gotta work for your living," he said. "Gotta earn your keep." That was the night Zoe learned she had been hired for a job for which she hadn't applied but now found herself bound, irrevocably, by some contractual street clause. It was also the night she learned about the others.

Zoe saw the comparison. It was confusing, though. They were date stamped well past expiration. They wore too-dark shades of pancake carefully selected to cover the yellowing bruises left like calling cards by passing strangers. They painted on scarlet smiles designed to covered withered spirits. They were saturated with surface grime that had seeped soul deep. Zoe, on the other hand, was young and pretty. Men paid top dollar for her fresh baby-doll appearance. That made her special to Leo. She had a hard time sorting out Leo's true love from his business investment.

Zoe really didn't like the work, she reported matter-of-factly. It was the constant fear, more than anything else, that she found unsettling. The customers were so unpredictable. She worried with every new encounter if she would live to tell the tale. She and her "sisters" swapped stories of the abusive ones like combat veterans.

One day Zoe decided she saw her future too clearly in the eyes of her colleagues. In a second great gulp of courage she ran again. She didn't get far. Maybe it was down the hall or around the block. Maybe she was gone for minutes or for weeks. I wasn't even clear whether she had been hunted down or whether she had been drawn back by the fantasy of true love. It didn't matter. What did matter was she had breached the faith. She had clearly, and irrevocably, established her untrustworthiness. "Things," Leo warned her, "are gonna have to change now."

Change involved being handcuffed to a bed frame until she came to her senses and realized how much she loved him. Ultimately he won her over with his professions of true love and she came to understand he needed her to work. It was only fair. So Zoe earned her keep, until the day the police picked her up and deposited her at the runaway shelter. Leo, she assured me, would beat the shit out of her if he ever found her. "But then," she asked me on more than one occasion, "what's the worst he can do to me? Kill me?"

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In an attempt to limit temp-tation and under the guise of safety concerns, staff restricted Zoe to the shelter compound. Her con-finement made her restless. It also provided little time for her to do any-thing but dwell on the past or wonder about the future.

Zoe's restlessness propelled her into my office more frequently than legally necessary. On her bad days—those that dredged up the past—she talked about "The Life." On these days I learned the most, and felt guilty. I knew I was benefiting from her personal pain. She became my Calliope on a guided tour for which there are no supplemental textbooks. It was a man-dominated world of violence and abuse. I was both fascinated and repulsed by her vivid, verbal
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portraits of the flourishing subculture where sex is for sale. It was the same magnetic field I'd experienced when I first stepped out of the Port Authority Bus Terminal years before. The difference was in the directions Zoe and I took out the door. I head-ed right for shelter. She was sucked into the street.

Her stories enticed me to concentrate on the faces of the men who came and went from the porn theaters and peep shows on 42nd Street instead of doing them the favor of glancing discretely away. I stared at them looking for distinguishing features: something that marked them as consumers of this brutal and degrading stuff. I discovered none. That's when my anger finally overtook fascination. They looked like fathers, husbands, brothers, and lovers. The were lawyers, doctors, brokers, and real estate agents. They were young, middle-aged and old. They were white, black, and other. And, in my anger, I held them each individually responsible for Zoe.

In those moments, I tried to convince her to press charges against Leo. I asked her to talk to friends of mine—law enforcement agents—with whom I worked all the time. I came to realize that asking that by taking Leo on the legal system would be my way of cleansing him from my system, not hers It was asking too much of her to face him as an adversary. I respected that.

Instead, she focused on the solicitation summons. It had a magnetic hold on Zoe. In her private war for freedom, it was an identification card that tethered her to her past. It served to remind her who she had been and it challenged the notion of who she was becoming. The act of prostituting was so intrinsically interwoven with the label of prostitute that she had trouble sorting out who she was from what she did. From her vantage point, the act and the actress both deserved the full weight of societal scorn.

Throughout her struggle, I watched with fascination and pride as, second by second, hour by hour, she hung in there. She connected with counselors she liked. She found other girls she liked. She felt less and less like leaving. One day she began talking about Leo in the past tense. She talked about the future. The staff found a relative, an aunt who lived near —but not too near—her parents' home. The aunt was happy to take her in. In the end, after all the arrangements were made and Zoe seemed committed to her new path, she remained in New York only to answer a solicitation charge.

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The day finally arrived. Zoe and I traveled by subway to Court. She was quieter than she had been in a long time. I figured she was distracted by her own private musings. In hindsight I was wrong. She wasn't musing; she had begun a descent into a personal space she hadn't occupied in a while.

The court room was filled when we arrived. I was instantly struck by its unsavory atmosphere. I'd spent years in housing court—a 'snake pit' as a client had once described it—where your initial sensation was of lawyers and landlords in pinstripes preparing for battle. This room felt dirty. It was packed with middle-aged men in greasy parkas waiting to be judged.

Zoe walked two rows deep into the ten-row courtroom. She sank onto the hard wooden pew. I hesitated momentarily, surveying the 8 rows in front of us. I considered prodding her forward. I recognized the trade off. You had to make the stroll forward sooner or later. Right now, the center aisle was congested. The commotion served as cover. Later, in a hushed courtroom the same thoroughfare would become a solitary runway before an unseemly audience which I sensed was only once removed from 42nd Street. I looked at Zoe, she seemed immobilized. I easily capitulated.Sliding in next to her, I needed to begin my own withdrawal. For me, before every court appearance, there was a moment when my sight shifted from client to adversary. I mentally rehearsed my opening words as the courtroom was called to order and the wheels of justice began to turn.

"People v. Lapin," the court officer bellowed suddenly, startling both of us. It was our turn.

"Come on, Zoe, follow me," I said gently. I rose, instantly feeling the uncomfortable sensation of being watched, and walked toward the front of the court room. I resisted the urge to turn around and look at Zoe. Our dignity rested, in part, on the ceremony of this procession. It was a show of confidence. I knew—in this mostly
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male environment— that there was no room for maternalism. I felt her presence, though. She clung, like a shadow, at my heels. I stopped at the appropriate spot and waited for Zoe to draw up alongside me. I took a deep breath, estimating the expanse of space between me and the Judge. I needed to gauge my minimum voice volume. I hated broadcasting Zoe's story. It wasn't that I felt shame for her. In fact, I was very proud of her. I felt protective. The audience behind me had no business passing judgment.

"Your Honor." I plunged in and explained her past and present circumstances. The Judge listened with uncommon patience. He ruled with a sudden authoritative swing of his gavel, "Dismissed." He then did something extraordinary. He broke the rhythm and the routine of the process by leaning forward in a gesture embodying as much intimacy as the surroundings permitted. "Young lady," he said, altering the tone he had used to commandeer his way through the morning docket, "Good luck to you." It was gone in a blink. He signaled to the court officer who had been heralding in the day's cases.

"Thank you, Your Honor," I said gratefully. But his energies were already absorbed by the complex web of someone else's life. I looked at Zoe. She remained transfixed by some invisible vision. I walked toward the back of the court room pausing, at the door, long enough to make sure she was in tow but eager to get out of the courtroom.

I shoved open the heavy swinging door and instantly felt the wave of relief of being done with the process, out of the rarefied courtroom air and back in the world where a vibrant, colorful, noisy swell of humanity jostled its way through the corridor.

"Zoe," I said, finally noticing what I should have seen earlier, "Are you OK?"

"When do I go to jail?" she asked in a whisper.

"What?" I asked, in disbelief. I was surprised by the question. It was only in the asking that I realized how much I had missed. I was so busy trying to protect Zoe from bad outcomes, I had failed to protect her from the torments of the process. I missed the extent she had lived in fear of judgment and I wondered if I could have spared her this worry.

"When do I have to go to jail?" she clung to the question.

"Zoe," I said slowly, trying to catch her eye so our minds could meet. "Zoe, the judge dismissed the case."

"So when do I have to go to jail?"She repeated the question a third time.

"Zoe, the case was dismissed. The judge threw it out."

"What do you mean threw it out?"

"He threw it out. It's gone." I struggled for another, clearer way of explaining how in three seconds of discretion the Judge had lifted the concrete reminder of her past from her shoulders.

"Gone." she echoed my last word.

"Gone. Like it never even existed, " I affirmed.

A shudder rocked her tiny frame like an electric volt. She understood. It was only in that instant that I realized the extent to which she had been prepared to punish herself for the life she had left. It was far more harsh a punishment than the justice system disbursed.

"Really, gone?" she whispered.

"Really gone," I said with authority meant to reassure her.

I thought about the Judge's simple and routine act of discretion and I wondered at what moment he had decided to exercise it. Intentionally or not, he had paved the way for her psychological cleansing by using his legal discretion. I sometimes worried about missing those cues myself. I made discretionary judgment calls all the time. I lost sleep over the ones I might have called wrong.

"People v. Lapin"

Zoe's sudden smile brought me back to her moment. It was refreshing, like a storm clearing. She finally looked as young as 16.

"Come on," I said. "Let's get out of here."

"Can we celebrate?" she asked, galloping alongside me.

"I think that might be appropriate, I said. "Do you have something special in mind?"

"Can we get something to eat?" she asked

with excitement. Apparently her senses had been resurrected.

In a city which has one of the highest per capita eateries in the world, I couldn't resist teasing, "We might be able to find a place to eat *somewhere* in this City. What do you want?" In NYC it was never a question of whether to eat; it was a question of what—Ethiopian, Thai, Mexican, Chinese, French, seafood, steak... The list was endless.

"A cheeseburger and french fries," she paused briefly and chewed on her lower lip in serious consideration "and a chocolate milkshake." I felt the sudden rush of joy in a teenage celebration.

"I know just the place." I said eagerly. I led the way to a greasy spoon on Centre Street. The diner produced the stuff hamburger dreams are made of: thick oozing burgers accompanied by plateloads of steaming french fries—puffy crisp on the outside and soft on the inside— and tumblers of chocolate shakes with the spillover arriving in icy frappe pans. We slid into the only booth where the red vinyl seats weren't repaired with duct tape and ordered two of everything.

In contrast to the silent intensity of the morning, lunch talk was abundant and mundane. The babble even-tually moved from the relative merits of glass versus squeeze bottles of ketchup to the wonderment of the city just outside the door.

"That's why I came to New York in the first place," she said through a french fry, "you know, to see the city and everything. It seemed so exciting." Zoe shrugged and tossed another fry into her mouth. "I never got out of Times Square though. I never really saw any of New York. Now I guess I just want to go home."

"To get out of here?" I tested for her fears about the future and wondered what she thought about the approaching transition. I suspected that even familiar ground was going to look different after her brief, but intense, New York moment. That kind of discussion was not to be had. She was too swept up with relief and it was neither my job nor the time to divert her attention to more dangerous emotional territory.

"Yea, I can come back some other time." she said simply. "I can come back to see some of the stuff I wanted to see." I could relate the draw of the city. I had been drawn to it also, but under safer circumstances . "What stuff did you want to see, Zoe?" I asked. I was curious about what she thought would draw her back to a city that had caused her such trauma.

"Oh, I don't know. The Empire State building and..." she paused. "You know what I *really* wanted to see?" she asked excitedly.

"What did you *really* want to see, Zoe?" I asked relieved, at some level, that she had identified the attractions of a tourist and not those of a wayward wanderer.

"Chinatown,." she said matter of factly. "I don't know why. Just Chinatown."She dunk a french fry into a glob of ketchup for emphasis. "I never saw anything 'xcept Times Square, though."

"Ahh," I said letting further discussion go. "Maybe we should get the check. Unless you want some more french fries."

She laughed. "I think I am full," she said leaning back from the table.

"Small wonder." Zoe was half my size but had kept pace bite for bite throughout lunch. I was stuffed, and surveying the sea of empty serving dishes was making me nauseated. "Let's get out of here and walk off some lunch before getting on the train, " I suggested.

"OK," she agreed.

I steered her north, past the court houses, and up Centre Street. We traveled about four blocks when Zoe stopped abruptly. She turned around slowly taking in her surroundings. "Hey," she said with sudden excited realization. "This is Chinatown."

"Yup," I said, secretly delighted with myself for having maneuvered such a simple surprise. "I've got to get back to work soon but we can swing through."

She could hardly contain her excitement. We moved from store window to store window and her question at each was as repetitive as the merchandise inside. "Can we go in for a second?"

My view of Chinatown had been dulled by many previous tours but her excitement was contagious. It triggered memories of how stimulating wandering the streets had been when I first arrived in New York. I found myself, with her as my guide, swept up in marveling over everything: kimonos, firecrackers, rice candy,

Chinese yo-yos, dried seaweed, jade earnings, salted fish, and Peking duck carcasses. When we had exhausted every side street and seen every existing item at least four times, I glanced at my watch and felt a sudden pang of guilt. I could hear my world of responsibility calling. I had abandoned my staff for hours. In a department of six, the absence of one is always felt.

"Enough?" I asked.

"Enough," she conceded.

We found the subway entrance and headed back uptown to our respective work. As difficult as mine could be, I knew it was nothing compared to the one Zoe was facing. She was headed toward an arduous life-long journey of sorting out the pieces. It seemed time to close out the morning before moving on.

"Zoe, " I said as the train jolted its way home. "Did you hear what the Judge said to you today in court?"

"What Jud. . . " she started to ask and then laughed, catching herself and realizing that she had been before a Judge only hours earlier. She suddenly got serious. She chewed her lower lip and pondered my question. "No, " she said finally. "No, I don't know what he said." She paused in reflection. "What *did* he say?"

"Oh nothing too much really," I said, "except he wished you good luck." I paused before continuing. "It's just that I think he really meant it, Zoe. We all mean it, you know. We all wish you good luck."

Tears welled up in Zoe's eyes as she absorbed my words. I continued. "We all work with a lot of kids, Zoe. We always hope the best for them. But there aren't that many who seem so determined to both face up to the past and to move on. They are difficult tasks," I said, pausing again to see if I was making sense.

She nodded slightly.

"It's not going to be easy. In fact, it's probably going to get a lot harder, before it gets easier, but, "Good luck, Zoe." She nodded her thanks.

In that moment I saw her again for the first time. She still seemed outwardly frail. She reminded me of fine porcelain—beautiful, delicate, transparent, and easily damaged. I worried whether the feisty, tenuous strength that had carried her to this moment would sustain her and wondered what danger lurked for Zoe among those who might not fully understand her NYC experience. What would happen, I thought, once she left my sight?

I knew those were dangerous thoughts. My job, along with that of my colleagues at the shelter, was to send kids home safely yet most of us harbored the arrogant notion that somehow we could do better—we understood better, we cared more—than everyone else in a kid's life. I knew I shared this overblown sense of self-importance with many of my crisis shelter colleagues. It was a double-edged sword. It is what kept you in the work but it could also interfere. You had to not forget that success and failure came from within them. We were just the sideline cheerleaders; they were in the competition. Zoe had played an enormously courageous game. There was no reason to doubt her.

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One morning I found Zoe's name on the discharge list. I called her floor counselor who turned out to be the last remaining trace of her NYC existence. Zoe had left, I was told, on an early morning Greyhound bound for a new destination. The worker reported she had been excited. I never heard from Zoe again. I was sorry she hadn't said good-bye. I was even hurt a little bit. In moments of self-centered absorption, I wondered if she made a bigger impression on me than I on her. There are a number of creative ways to interpret no information. In the final assessment, however, I reasoned it had more to do with our perspectives. If I had been useful to her it was because I helped her close out a chapter and to look ahead. I hoped she had left New York behind. She, on the other hand, forced me to look back. I learned somethingabout about a path that might have been. □
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The Ultimate Termination: A Dialogue

Whenever therapy ends with the death of a client by suicide, the story continues until everyone involved with the client has achieved some level of understanding and acceptance. Never before or since have I had a client who decided to end his life (and therapy) in such a violent way, with such finality. Two weeks passed before I was able to get beyond my own denial, to begin to deal with this event. I had to find some way to ask the question for which there is no answer. What better way than to have the client come in for a follow-up session, to conduct a dialogue? My conversation with Henry clearly delineated the fine line between denial and acceptance. Understanding is something with which I still struggle.

By Danny R. Dixon

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PROLOGUE

During my doctoral internship at a rural Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, I worked with Vietnam veterans who came to the VAfor outpatient psychotherapy. What follows is the story of an event that occurred in one of those cases, and my reaction to that event. It was not difficult to put into words, but like many critical aspects of a person's life, you had to be there to get the full message.

Henry and I developed a close therapeutic relationship over the three months we worked together. He brought pictures into the sessions, as well as his combat medals from Vietnam. He also brought more baggage than most, more heart, and more pain. Looking back, I now realize we became fellow soldiers, fighting one battle after another, as he had done all his life. The event is told much as it happened. The dialogue is my own creation, my way of dealing with the pain, the disappointment, the shock. Any therapist who has ever been through this experience knows that there must be closure, there must be some gain from the loss. This is necessary, if one is to continue in this line of work.

For me, this was also a way of learning from an unforgettable experience. There was no choice. I had to write this.

THE EVENT

President's Day was just another Monday, a holiday like many others. The banks were closed, and certainly all the federal offices. Of course, the grocery stores were open all the time now, which was not the case when Henry was a young man, growing up in the small south Georgia town.

For some reason, the grocery store was on his mind. Yes, that was probably the best way. When the answer came to him, there was instant realization. He knew.

Henry was a large man, weighing over 400 pounds. He had always been large, but not quite this heavy. Whenever anyone wanted to pick a fight in the local bar, Henry always rose to the occasion, and was always the victor. He was proud of this feat, primarily because of the respect that seemed to follow each victory.

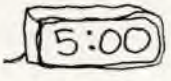
But that had been over four years ago. Respect was something that was lacking in his life, something that seemed in the far distant past. He thought he would be respected for going to war, but things hadn't turned out that way. When he lost his job as supervisor of a machine plant, the first real depression began. Henry told how he had quit the job, but his wife knew the truth. The job quit him, basically. He wasn't needed anymore since he had gained so much weight that he could no longer move among the equipment with ease. It was inconvenient to have a supervisor who was the butt of so many jokes, most of which were in bad taste.

Life had not been overly kind to Henry in the last few years. Oddly enough, things had gotten worse after he quit drinking. First his health began to fail. The doctors all said the same thing, that he had to eat the right foods and to exercise. The panic attacks had started to worsen after he lost his job. When the nightmares and flashbacks became so intense and frequent that he sought the help of a psychiatrist, he finally learned that the other problems were not as unusual as he had suspected, and that others were experiencing some of the same symptoms. He learned about a problem called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Another problem.

Last week he received notification from the Internal Revenue Service that he owed $4,000, and Henry knew he only had $7,000 in the bank. Nothing was going right. All the therapy and medication in the world couldn't help. He'd tried all that, and still saw no hope that anything in his life would improve. He was miserable. He couldn't sleep. He could definitely eat, but sleep was another story. As if that wasn't bad enough, when he did get to sleep, he would dream. That was not good. So he wanted to sleep, but he was afraid to sleep. Talk about frustration.

I had been surprised when he seemed almost happy in a recent session. That's because the therapist didn't know what Henry knew. Nobody did. Henry was thinking about how his father had died, 13 years ago, and the anniversary of his father's death was just a few days away. Henry had made a decision, and it had been easy. The relief had been immediate. He was still depressed, and life had nothing for him. The despair was still overwhelming. But somehow, making that decision, knowing what had to be done, and knowing with certainty that it would be done, made things right.

So, on President's Day, the thirteenth anniversary of his father's death, when Henry's wife said she was going to the grocery store, everything fell into place. She asked if he needed anything, and Henry asked her to bring him two cans of fruit cocktail, the low calorie kind, for people who need to watch their weight. And he told her to take the money from his wallet. His wife said she had the money, and went to the front of the house to get her purse.



Henry went to his bedroom and opened the closet door. The shotgun was already loaded, the note prepared. There was no reason to fool around any longer. He sat on the edge of the bed and looked around in time to see the digital clock register five o'clock in the afternoon. The shotgun felt cool in his hands, and the stock seemed like velvet as he turned it and placed the end of the barrel in his mouth. He sighed. He felt a tear begin to run down one cheek.

His wife heard the blast and knew instantly. Her life had just changed, and her husband had just died.

THE INVITATION

This was my first. Never have I had a client who decided to end his life (and therapy) in such a violent way, with such finality. Oddly enough, this has occurred during a time in my

doctoral education when I am taking a course in professional ethics, in which client suicide is one of many topics. Using this event as an opportunity to learn (and to bring closure), I hope to extract something positive from this experience.

For two weeks after the suicide, I did not look at this client's file, which included notes from our sessions. I realize now that I *could* not. However, one month has now passed, and the psychological autopsy was completed this past week. I have talked with the patient's wife, with other mental health professionals from several disciplines, and with other people whose opinions I value. It would seem I have spoken with everyone except the one person who could answer all my questions. I have not spoken with Henry. I have extended an invitation for this purpose, and I see Henry coming down the hall, with his by now familiar walking cane. His eyes seem different. He shakes my hand. We enter the office and take our seats.

CONVERSATION WITH HENRY

Instead of caving in to the perfectly understandable desire to rush ahead and ask the question for which there is no answer, I just sit there, waiting, fascinated, not quite sure what to do or say. Then I remember what Henry said in our first session: "I like for you to ask the questions, and I'll provide the answers." I take a deep breath, and begin.

"Henry, I didn't know. Maybe I should have. If I had suspected something like this was at hand, I would have done everything in my power to stop you from doing this. I have asked myself so many questions, some of the same questions your wife is probably asking. These are questions I thought I would like to ask of you, but now that you are here..."

Instead of trying to follow my somewhat convoluted line of thought, Henry surprised me: "Can you imagine what it feels like to solve all your problems at once, to know that nothing will ever hurt you again? I don't have to take medications anymore. I don't have to worry about my weight. I don't have nightmares or flashbacks. Hell, I'm not even depressed! I could take that damned depression inventory you gave me and my depression wouldn't even register! So you see, while I didn't get better by coming here for treatment, my own personal method of treatment worked...it provided fast relief. I just don't hurt anymore."

"But you are dead!"

"It beats the hell out of the kind of life I was living! I told you I had no fear of death. You remember that, don't you? Hell, the biggest fear I had was a fear of life. When I made my mind up..."

"When was that, Henry?"

"When I came in to see you before Christmas, when you said I seemed happier, I was smiling and talking. I knew then what I was going to do. I just didn't know when."

"Why didn't you say something? Why didn't you give me some indication that things had gotten that bad? Why didn't you give us a chance to help you through this?"

"Because if I had done that, you know what would have happened, don't you? You and everybody else here would have tried to stop me. And you probably would have, at least that time. But when I made my mind up to end it all, that was it. Remember how I used to whip all those guys in the bar, when I was younger and stronger? I would win every time. Well, I haven't won in a long time, and this time I decided I would call the shots. I would win, so I played by my rules, not yours. See, you want to do 'the right thing;' you want to do what is right from your own ethical standpoint. If you just read your books, you'll find some of the answers there, like the fact that moral arguments don't mean much to someone who has decided to do away with himself."

"Henry, I won't waste your time with moral arguments, since you've already decided they don't interest you. And I certainly don't pretend to know whether your action was right or wrong. But let me ask you some questions about ethics anyway. For example, do you think you had a right to destroy yourself?"

Henry was quiet for a minute or so. The eyes were more intense than before, but there was still something there that I couldn't grasp, something that seemed important, something I should recognize. He said he was no longer depressed, but when he spoke, there was a hint of sadness, similar to the old Henry, yet different in some unfathomable detail. "What does it matter? I made the decision, and I think I had the right to do what I did. It wasn't a decision to die; it was a decision to no longer live."

"What's the difference?"

"I'm not sure I want to answer that. I'm not sure you want to know. But I guess there's a reason I'm here, and maybe this is part of it. A decision to die is a thing of beauty, an act of courage. When I was in Vietnam, I saw people who made that decision. I know it sounds trite, but I actually saw one man throw himself on top of a hand grenade because he knew it would kill and maim several of his buddies. He made a decision to die. In that instant, he became a hero. There was a certain bravery. What he did took guts. What I did was different, but still right. I wasn't a hero, and I didn't save anybody. It didn't take courage or bravery. You want to talk about ethics, so think back to the fellow who jumped on the grenade. Was his choice rational, or impulsive? I mean, did he take the time to consider all the consequences of his action and then come to a rational decision, or was his action just an impulsive response? You can't know one way or the other, can you? And you know what else? It doesn't matter, does it? Not because there was a reason necessarily, but because of the consequence! There was a payoff for other people. There was something good that came out of this. Do you see what I mean?"

"Henry, I understand that. But what about you? What about what you did? You say it was right, but what possible good could come from this act?"

"You're the one studying ethics. You should know the answer to that question. 'Good' is a relative term. There are different types of 'good.' What about quality of life? My life was not good and certainly no longer meaningful to me. The good that resulted from my act, from my suicide, was the end of something bad!"

Well, at least I wasn't the only one using convoluted logic. "Henry, we aren't talking just about relativity or typology, we must also discuss degree! And we must consider balance! Was your suicide, the act itself, better than the alternative of living longer and continuing to try to find answers, solutions? You say the good that resulted from your suicide was the end of something that was bad. And I will give you that, there is undeniably both good and bad in this equation. Look at it from my angle for a minute. If I agree that the end of something bad, for you, is good, what effect does this have on your wife, your daughters? Is that not bad? By the very act of ending your life in such an abrupt and unpredictable manner, didn't this result in tremendous harm for those who were closest to you? How do you balance this harm against the relief you bought for yourself?"

"There you go again! If I didn't know better, I'd swear that you were trying to convince me that what I did was wrong! Sure, they will miss me for a while, and they will cry for me. But I was a burden to them. I know that in the long run they will be better off without me, and they won't have to waste all that effort trying to make sure I get my needs met. And don't you think for one minute that I didn't lose sleep wondering what they would think, what they would feel. But I am telling you, this act was not about them, it was about me. I didn't kill myself to meet the needs of someone else, or to extract revenge upon anyone else. I did it for me! If it affects other people, whoever, that's not my problem. I bought relief! And I just don't give a damn..."

"What? What is it you don't give a damn about, Henry?"

Henry had a strange feeling, like he had been here before. He even felt the tear begin to run down his cheek. The sadness he thought he had escaped, he had taken with him. And I began to see part of what I had missed earlier. I was beginning to recognize what was familiar, and to

tease out what was different, in Henry's eyes. He was right in saying that he didn't feel the same depression. That part was easy to see. No one outside his family could ever hurt him again. They couldn't even disappoint him again. But there was something familiar about the sadness. Henry knew. Henry understood more about self-determination than most people ever would. He understood autonomy. He knew he was free to make decisions and carry them out. But he knew something else. He realized there was a price to pay, either way. And he knew that I knew.

"There is a price to pay, either way. I stay alive, I continue to hurt. I die, someone else feels the pain. Those were the two choices. I decided I had hurt long enough." He looked directly into my eyes for a minute or two, and I knew what was coming next. "Have you ever hurt that badly? Have you ever considered taking your own life, destroying yourself?"

There's not much sense in lying to a dead man. "Henry... Yes. I doubt if there is anyone alive who hasn't considered suicide as an option at one time or another. I have, you obviously have, and I suspect every man, deep in the innermost private recesses of his heart, has told himself that this would relieve all the pressure, take away all the pain. But I also suspect there is no taking away all the pain. I would go so far as to say that taking away all the pain would not necessarily be a good thing. There is a reason for pain. And I'm not saying that what you did is a sin, or a cowardly act. However, I would not be worth my salt as a therapist if I didn't tell you that I personally think that what you did was wrong. I know I said earlier that I didn't know whether it was right or wrong. But I do know what I think personally, and I think it was wrong because you had other options. Of course, you decided not to consider the other options any longer. I guess I have to respect that, but I don't like it."

"No one asked you what you liked! And I don't want to hear about options. I opted to end the pain, the misery. And while you are at it, what about considering my option to end treatment, to refuse treatment? I opted for that, too, and there is nothing anyone can do about it. See, I'm not terribly concerned about the effects this had on my family, and I am definitely not concerned about the effects it has had on you. Besides, I know you. You are a young man, relatively speaking, and being a perpetual student, you will seek out the good that can be redeemed from this case. You will learn something from it. You will know what to ask next time, and what to look for. You knew those things already, but the next time someone mentions suicide, or a plan, you won't let it pass as easily. You will lock onto their statements, and they'll have more trouble trying to make you let go than a one-armed man trying to get a piece of tape off his hand. You knew there was a chance I would kill myself. But you didn't have enough evidence to try to put me in the hospital, did you? You believe in the least restrictive environment. That puts the responsibility right where it belongs, as far as I'm concerned. The responsibility was mine. I am responsible. Or, I was..."

That struck a nerve. I've read all the material about whether a person who commits suicide is really in his right mind, really mentally competent, capable of making this kind of decision. And the issue of whether the rights of the individual are violated if a therapist intervenes to protect the patient from death at his own hand. Somehow I think such a paternalistic act would have only strengthened Henry's determination, his resolve. Still, he definitely seemed to know where this was headed. So I had nothing to lose.

'IS ANYONE TO BLAME?'

"Henry, any talk of responsibility at this point is probably moot. I guess you are aware that we conducted what is known as a psychological autopsy this week. The question to be answered in that session was whether there was something we should have said or done, something that would have prevented your suicide. Of course, there is another unspoken question that assumes importance in this kind of meeting: 'Is anyone to blame?' And of course, no one was found guilty. The conclusion was that since there did not seem to be reason to suspect imminent death (in other words, intent was not

apparent), your act of suicide would have surprised anyone. But I still have to answer a question in my mind, one that bothers me. I have to ask myself where my responsibility as a therapist ends..."

"Let me answer that. First, let me remind you that I am the only person who can answer that, and I think I already have. I could have told you what I planned to do. I could have called you on the phone, and you would have had time to try to figure out a way to stop me. But, you see, if I had done that, I would have been giving the responsibility back to you. That would not have been the right thing to do, not in my situation. I've given up too much responsibility in the past, and I'm tired of doing that. That takes away my sense of being in control. And you know how important that is to me, don't you? No one else was in control when I put that shotgun in my mouth. I made the decision, I called the shots (so to speak), and I paid the price. You have a responsibility to your other clients, the ones who are still around. But they have many of the same options I did. You need to remember that. They have to choose their options. And if they decide to commit suicide, if they really decide, you won't be able to stop them. You don't have the responsibility to make that decision for them. You don't even have the right. If you see it coming, you do have a responsibility to make them aware of other options. But the choice is theirs. That's between them and God. You're not God. You're good, but you're not God. Remember that."

I knew our time was up. It seemed odd that this didn't make me sad. Actually, there was a sense of relief, of letting go. I looked at my former patient, who was leaning forward with both hands on his cane, the walking cane that had belonged to his father. "Henry, I appreciate your patience with me. I'll never forget what you've taught me. I guess some lessons are easier than others, and some have higher prices. I only have one more question. Why fruit cocktail?"

For the first time ever, I witnessed something that will be with me always. Henry, who never exhibited signs of joy or pleasure, threw back his head and laughed, with that deep-throated bellow that can only come from someone of his size. He was still laughing as he walked off down the hall. I'll never forget the sound of his laughter.

I sat there for a few minutes, unable to stand, not wanting to move on to the next mundane activity. Of course, life must go on. Finally, I rose, walked to the office door, and reached for the doorknob. I stopped. My heart stopped, my breathing stopped. There in the corner stood the familiar walking cane.

EPILOGUE

Clearly, the dialogue you've just read never took place. There are times when I wish it had. What did I hope to gain by writing this? Processing the event in writing has always been enlightening, providing insights I would most likely have missed had I not gone to the trouble to get it all on paper, to look at it that closely. The dialogue explains much of what I wanted to accomplish, much of what I sought.

The psychological autopsy was interesting and revealing. I now understand why it's referred to as an autopsy. Much like an actual physical autopsy, the patient is figuratively opened and evidence is examined to answer questions about his life and how he came to this place. This is all part of the effort to understand what actually caused his death. I am content with the findings.

I spoke with others (social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists) as much for their feedback and support as for help in understanding what had happened. By talking with them, I developed a clearer picture in my own mind of how the event unfolded, but not until I wrote the dialogue did I begin to feel some actual relief, and again, a sense of closure. I understand that this happened because Henry made a decision, a deeply personal and secret decision, shared with no one. That is the difference between a suicide and a suicide attempt.

For me, this is a catharsis, a cleansing. I only hope that another practitioner will read it and take it to heart. The family is allowed, even encouraged, to grieve. Therapists must also express their emotions in some way, instead of keeping secrets. As Henry and I both discovered, secrets can kill. □

THE HYPOCRITICAL INCIDENT: A CONFESSION
or
THE NIGHT I SAID "NO" TO A PROSTITUTE BUT DIDN'T REALLY MEAN IT

Who would have thought it...that a non-sexual encounter with a Waikiki prostitute would have re-created me as a post modernist. (Of course, a non-sexual encounter with a prostitute is a bit like telling the chef, "I'll have the coq-au-vin, but hold the sauce!!"—but I digress)... The Cowardly Lion has nothing on me!

BY GREGORY D. GROSS

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Beach came as a big surprise to this boy, then in his forties, who grew up with the Jersey Shore and the Delmarva strip. The Waikiki of 1990 lacked the smell of Idaho potato fries, lacked the lights of ferris wheels and tilt-a-whirls, lacked the rough, brown, stumbly surface of a boardwalk, lacked the cacophony of hawkers, stalkers, and nightmares.

Waikiki would have none of that. Instead Waikiki offered civilized commerce aimed at the sagging dollar and the climbing yen—each side of Kalakaua Avenue beckoning for one but not the other. The American side with its Woolworth and its Pearl Dip (every oyster guaranteed to contain a white pearl or your money back, $4.95) sold stuff to take home and give away. Souvenirs. The Japanese side, with its trail of Dunhills, Hermes, and Cartier, sold for keeps—watches, handbags, and dreams that would find a home in Kyoto and the Grand Eastern Beyond.

Sanitized for your protection, there was no Jersey there. Very little Hawaii either. No shoyu chicken barbecue to scent the air, no shaved ice syrup to trickle down tourist wrist and elbow, no slack-key guitar sounds to drown-out the unmistakable clatter of a MasterCard imprint. Those Hawaiian elements awaited the adventurist and the local alike just past the zoo, just beyond the Ala Wai Canal, just up Kapahula Avenue to the realm of ben to box, plate lunch, and ono ono shakes.

This boy—that is to say "this man," that is to say "me"—walked Kalakaua Avenue alone just about every night after the kids went to bed in our condo, rented for the duration of one mother of a sabbatical on an island far far away from the East Coast and the emerging Gulf War to come.

"Would you like..."

First a word about prostitution. In 1962 we boys had heard about prostitution. Right there somewhere inside the beast that was Utica, New York, there existed a place of mythic proportions: Ma Davis'. Among ourselves we called Ma Davis' place a whorehouse. We never visited Ma Davis'; we never saw Ma Davis', even in a drive-by; we didn't even know

where it was. But we knew "it was!" Ma Davis existed.

In 1962 sex did not exist. It didn't live in our own lives, nor in our parents', nor in our movies. Sex only existed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* under "Coitus" (which we read weekly), in Victorian novels like *The Pearl*, and in Elvis. Because sex did not exist, we could not imagine it as real. We could not imagine it as the *sine qua non* of Ma Davis'. No fantasy here, just amazement.

Amazed, Amazed, Amazed
That you could buy That
Buy That like a burger
Buy That like a double feature
Buy That like a Cherry Coke
Buy That like a bus to the beach
Buy That like "Mad"
Like a feast
Like redemption from a dashboard Jesus
Buy That!
Amazing Grace.

Beyond this amazement lay a promise, not a purchase; sex not bought but rented, not rented but promised, represented our only Hope. Sex didn't exist in 1962.

"Would you like some..."

Well, of course, sex did exist in marriage. Marriage had been built as the House of Sex, the way the Met is the House of Picasso. We would not reside in that former House for years to come so that hoping for sex seemed a bit like hoping for a Nobel Peace Prize—possible but for the few. We had only the House of Davis.

"Would you like some company..."

On Kalakaua Avenue (American side) she approached me from behind. She sidled up to my left and we walked together for one minute—maybe less. We walked together for a very long time—maybe until today. I had seen her before. She always wore white (really, this is no Melvillian metaphor here!). She wore white Corege boots to her knees. Above those a white leather skirt and above even that a white leather jacket with broad lapels whose open V pointed south to a white belt. White leather in Waikiki! Who wouldn't notice that? The whitest of white faces—kabuki-like—crowned her garb with such radiance that her blond hair, itself almost white, seemed more a halo that a hairpiece.

"Would you like some company tonight?"

My answer came as no surprise. I gave the correct response. It was all wrong. I spoke the answer and heard the answer and saw the answer not right there on Kalakaua Avenue but above Kalakaua Avenue. Out of body, out of mind, I spoke and heard and saw in a way heretofore reserved for the dead. Hovering and suspended a dozen feet above, I spoke and heard and saw a lie, a right lie that was at once all wrong. Heretofore reserved for the dead, I saw the lifeless nature of my own words:

"No, not tonight. But thank you for asking."

What could be more dead than that niceness? What could be more empty than this bottomless soul of a social worker without the passion of his own heart? From 12 feet above I spoke and heard and saw a "No" that meant:

Yes
I do want some company
tonight.
Are you an angel on the tip of a pin?
Are you my angel?

To see one's folly from 12 feet up magnifies that folly. At 12 feet up a person's thoughts cannot be ignored. I am up here alone at 12 feet and that folly down below that was Waikiki, that was the world I had escaped from to come here, is now my folly.

One pitiful sentence without a grain of truth in it down there 12 feet

out-my-mouth
like words dangling in a cartoon bubble, a "no" that meant everything in this world except "no," a politeness that protected only myself (not her), a vacuous kindness with no object but this fool, icy breath, who slurped it
out-his-mouth.
My own mouth, a fool who doesn't know his angel from a hole in the wall, 12 feet up here from the head of a pin and close enough to his own foolishness I can almost taste it, though it's so devoid of character it has no flavor, this poi, this paste splattered on Kalakaua Avenue 12 feet down! "No, not tonight but thank you for asking," barren phrases drooled across Oahu air:

Not tonight but thank you for asking.
Twelve feet up
Twel vfeet up
Twa - el - feet - up
Twal - effete - up
Twa - elf - eat - uh! - uh! - Uhp!
She moved on. Who could blame her?
And when she left, I descended.
Down like Newton's apple
Down like Rushdie's crashing pair
Down like a Hindu low-man
Reincarnated
one last time
'til he gets it right.

So this is what they mean by the Shock of Recognition.

Aftermath

That bout of self-hatred didn't last long, thank goodness. Instead, a celebration of the self crept in. A confronted self, an accepted self is a real self, after all. Touching the ugly face of my own cowardice, once denied, now known, helps me understand my own frail attempts at heroism at the same time that it helps me understand my fellow cowards, heroes all.

Several weeks later I volunteered to work the AIDS Hotline, housed in the Waikiki Health Center on Ohua Street, only four blocks away from the place where what I now call "The Encounter" took place. The woman who trained me was a wonderful person named Ann Leialoha. I to this day still wonder if she had made that name up—the symbolic gesture perhaps of a Caucasian mainlander re-making herself in the Paradise of her own choosing. Ann introduced me to a colleague whose name, I think, was Sally.

Sally referred to herself as the hooker-lady because she provided social and medical supports to the prostitutes working Waikiki Beach. Sally told of violent johns and even more violent pimps, one of whom kept one of "his girls" locked and bloodied under a sink in his apartment to punish her for disappointing receipts. Sally spoke of abuse, disease, and death. Sally, if that is her name, goes out on Kalakaua nights to help those women find some kind of celebration of their Selves. Angels galore!

If part of their celebration be a recognition of their connection to Everywoman or All-women (as it should be)—to all the sisters, daughters, lovers, and saints—then what of my own celebration? What of my connection to the Angel? Would a "yes" have contributed to her exploitation. Did my "no" contribute to her exploitation? At $200.00/hour, is she more or less exploited than the man or the woman selling macadamia nuts and key chains for $6.00/hour in the ABC Store?

Twelve feet up I learned I am at once john, hooker, and pimp,connected by some subterranean root system to all the other johns, hookers, and pimps—those who ever were and those yet to come. Every oyster guaranteed to contain a white pearl or your money back.

Epilogue

That's when I decided to become a post modernist. □

Strengths Despite Constraints: Memoirs of Research in a Slum in Calcutta

This narrative focuses on a powerful experience I had with Raquella, one of the respondents I met during my research in a slum in Calcutta. This encounter allowed me to identify strengths in Raquella that she did not identify herself. To enable readers to understand the context within which this strength emerged, I first share some observations, interviews, and thoughts related to what it was like to live in a slum. Then I will present Raquella's story reflecting her strengths and constraints. Finally, I will tell you about my experience with Raquella and my struggle to make sense of it; and end the narrative with some words on strength based social work practice, teaching and research.

By Mahasweta M. Banerjee

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On a hot and humid afternoon in June 1995, I drove toward Dhobiatalla Bustee, a slum in east-central Calcutta. The further I went from home and the closer I got toward Dhobiatalla, all familiar landscape of Calcutta changed. Gradually, everything looked, felt, and smelled different. The roads became dirtier, narrower, and more winding. The buildings displayed no architectural character. The air was filled with a putrid stench indicating that raw leather was being treated somewhere close by. I saw cow-dung cake- smeared walls, plastic bags heaped on street corners, rickshaws and hand-pulled carts, and poor people. I became apprehensive,wondering what it would be like going into an unknown territory. My entire body became rather tense, yet anticipation tingled all over. I turned a corner, and, sure enough, saw the large empty lot behind which lay Dhobiatalla.

I was going into Dhobiatalla because I wanted to study the interplay of strengths and constraints in the lives of people living in a slum in Calcutta. Having worked as a social worker in Calcutta, I was somewhat familiar with the many constraints slum-dwellers faced and lived with—dark and narrow alleys, unhygenic and overcrowded living conditions, unavailability of civic amenities, unemployment, poor health, illiteracy, and alcoholism. Approximately 20% of Calcutta's population lived in slums (Calcutta Municipal Corporation, 1994). It seemed that despite the known constraints, slums had some things to offer—strengths—that I was not familiar with. Similarly, perhaps residents had strengths that enabled them to survive, live, or thrive in a slum.

Overall, I wanted to find out what it was like to live in a slum. More specifically, I wanted to explore: a) how individual and community strengths influenced individuals' achievements and quality of life in a slum, and b) the impact of a micro-enterprise program on slum residents. I have written two papers that focused on my specific interests (See Banerjee, In Press; 1996). So, I will not discuss these aspects of my research here. This narrative will focus on my overall interests; that is, what it

was like to live in a slum and how people lived in a slum within a strengths-constraints framework. At the heart of this narrative, however, lies a powerfully thought-provoking experience I had with Raquella, one of the respondents I met during my visits to Dhobiatalla. This experience allowed me to identify strengths in Raquella that she did not identify herself. To enable readers to understand the context within which this strength emerged, I first share some of my observations and understanding of what it was like to live in a slum.

PREPARING FOR ENTRY

Before going to India, I reviewed the literature to find out what was already written about strengths and constraints. I found that some researchers (Acharya, 1988; Dahiwale, 1989; Sandhu, 1989; Sharma, 1989) had studied what it was like to be poor and the problems faced by people who were poor in India. Although these quantitative studies examined problems or deficits of people, they also suggested that people who were poor had many strengths such as ability to care and share, to encourage, and to provide support to one another. Additionally, I found that the strengths perspective (Rapp, 1993; Saleebey, 1992; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, & Kisthardt, 1989) believed that identifying and working with clients' strengths was more promising than focusing solely on their problems and deficits. However, it appeared to me that the strengths perspective had not been sufficiently developed to address poverty. Nonetheless, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) had identified and worked with the strengths and the assets of poor communities, and found that a strengths orientation had many potentials for addressing poverty in the US. Moreover, poverty is said to be more similar than dissimilar in developed and developing countries (Sen, 1995; Lusk & Stoesz, 1994; Midgely, 1990). Therefore, it seemed to me that if the strengths perspective worked with poverty in the US, it should work with poverty in India also. However, prior to conceptualizing how a strengths orientation would apply to addressing poverty in Calcutta, I wanted to find out whether poverty and strengths co-existed in a slum.

Initially, I was at a loss in choosing a slum where I could study both individual as well as environmental strengths and constraints. Intuitively, I knew that poor people living in a slum would have personal strengths, but I was unsure if the slum environment would have any strengths. Because I was interested in finding out how a micro-enterprise program worked, I contacted the Director of the Institute for Motivating Self-Employment (IMSE) and requested access to one of their program sites. IMSE was a non-governmental social service agency with a national reputation for its pioneering work in micro-enterprise development in rural eastern India. Dhobiatalla became the study site because it was the only slum in Calcutta where IMSE operated its urban micro-enterprise program.

Through maximum variation purposive sampling, I interviewed 40 residents of Dhobiatalla both individually and in focus groups in the slum. I used an interview guide, took still and video pictures, and observed the slum by visiting it at various times of the day and the week. Also, I informally spoke with many other individuals to get varying perspectives on living in a slum. I shared my preliminary findings with the respondents and the Director of IMSE; both corroborated the findings.

THE SLUM

In English, Dhobiatalla means a place where washer-men, or people who wash clothes to make a living, live. After visiting Dhobiatalla a couple of times, I was rather surprised when I did not see any "dhobis" (washer-men) or laundries or clothes being dried—typical images of a place where washer-men live. When asked, a resident leader informed me that the original name of the slum was "Dholai Talao," which literally translated into English means a "Beating Pond." The story was that many years back, criminals, alcoholics, and junkies lived in this slum. These men would take a cab to come home, but unable to pay the cabdriver his fare, they would beat him up and throw him into a nearby pond. Thus, cab drivers gave it the name Dholai Talao, a place where you get beaten up and thrown into a pond. Obviously, the name had a very negative connotation. Over time, residents

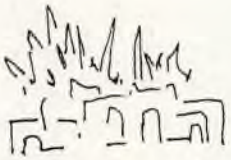
worked hard to change this image of the slum and the name has been transformed to Dhobiatalla. Later, I saw three ponds nearby, but no "dhobis" at Dhobiatalla. Perhaps, there was some truth to the story I had heard.

I vaguely remember the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1964. Apparently, 35 Muslim families afflicted by the 1964 riots took refuge in this god-forsaken fringe of Calcutta and slowly built their homes. During a similar riot in 1992, Dhobiatalla was burned to the ground. In 1993 IMSE started a loan extension program for micro-enterprises at Dhobiatalla to help residents restart their lives after the riot. Before beginning its program, IMSE surveyed Dhobiatalla and found that 1,006 families lived in a two and one-half acre land area. Assuming family size to be six, IMSE estimated that 6,000 people lived in Dhobiatalla. Dhobiatalla's residents were primarily Muslims, a minority population in India.

LIFE IN DHOBIATALLA

First Impressions

Walking through a large and desolate lot, I was im-mediately struck by the hustle and bustle along with the con-gestion in Dho-biatalla. In the main entrance way, everybody was busy doing something. I saw the startlingly black figures of working women and children who seemed like moving sculptures of soot. Soon, I learned that they worked for a battery recycling unit. I slowed down and saw women beating used batteries with a hammer and separating two aluminum items that came out from the batteries. Later, the aluminum items were collected and resold. The workers were paid an outrageously low wage. There was a lot of carbon inside the batteries and by mid-day, the workers were black with soot. I saw young soot-covered girls running around, their shy smiles very white against the soot. Some workers and the local doctor told me that the carbon was harmful for their lungs and their skin.



The main path was about six feet wide and pocked with potholes filled with monsoon rain. Even narrower side alleys jutted out randomly to the left and the right of the main path. There were houses scattered all over, most of them one-room and one-story. A "majhar" (sacred burial ground of a Muslim saint) and an unfinished mosque sat to the right of this pathway. I walked by two unassuming looking one-room schools that were next to the mosque. Some large, leafy "neem" trees were refreshing spots of green next to the dusty action. Near the gray concrete structures that loomed over the anxious micro-entrepreneurs, there were three tube-wells, the primary source of clean drinking water for Dhobiatalla's residents.

A bit bewildered by the unfamiliar landscape, I turned to the reassuring presence of the IMSE social worker beside me. She took me over to a small group of people who were busy cutting rubber. "This Didi (respected elder sister) has come all the way from America to talk with you. She wants to ask you some questions about your life, strengths, and difficulties," she said. I winced at the first part of this introduction because I would have preferred to be introduced by my name than as a "Didi" which connoted status hierarchy. However, within the cultural context "Didi" was acceptable because generally people do not address one another by their name only.

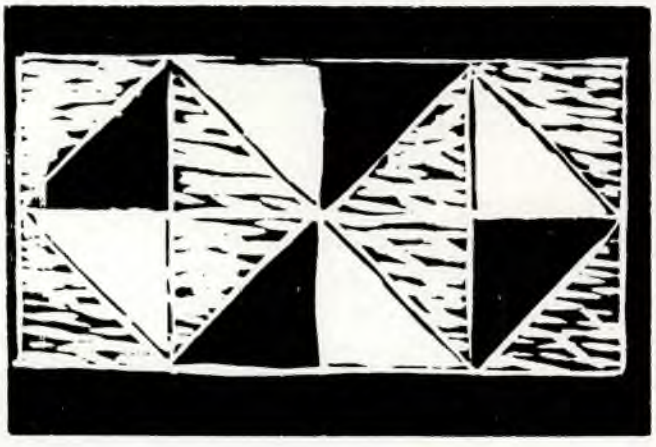
Wealth and Poverty

Within a very short time, I realized that a class system operated at Dhobiatalla. One day, I was standing and talking with a group of men and women on the main strip of Dhobiatalla. While I was talking with Raukat Ali, an elderly Muslim mason, a middle-aged, well-dressed woman suddenly stopped by and interrupted our conversation by introducing herself as Hira Bibi. I spoke with her briefly and then went back to talking with Raukat Ali. To my surprise, Raukat

Ali stopped speaking and allowed Hira Bibi to dominate the conversation. At first, I could not understand why an elderly male who traditionally had much more power than women would defer to her. After I visited Hira Bibi's home, I understood that socio-economic status played a key role in power, so much so that an elderly male subjugated his position of authority to a younger female because she happened to be the richest woman living in Dhobiatalla.

Just as there was obvious poverty, relative wealth was evident also in Dhobiatalla. Hira Bibi invited me to her home when I asked her for an interview. Upon entering her home, I was very surprised. She had two large fully and tastefully furnished bedrooms, a kitchen, and a private bathroom. Obviously she was very rich within the context of a slum. In fact, Hira Bibi's home was like any other lower middle-class home in the larger societal context. Further, she rented out many of her homes in Dhobiatalla. How did she accumulate so much wealth? She was one of the original residents of Dhobiatalla; she had moved in after the 1964 riots. Things were miserable in the earlier days, but her recycling businesses paid off; she diversified her businesses and employed local residents. Why did she continue to live in a slum when she had such a high income? Hira Bibi said, "Didi, could I possibly earn so much outside this slum? I couldn't run my businesses in proper Calcutta . . . I am happy here." She enjoyed being the queen of all she surveyed at Dhobiatalla!

Later, I categorized class into a four-tier system based on income, which ranged from a high of 7,000 rupees (US $233) to a low of 100 rupees (US $3) per month, and home ownership. The upper class owned numerous (10 - 20) homes, which they rented out, and a recycling business large enough to employ local residents. The middle class owned a one-or two-room home and either worked in a factory outside the slum, or owned a small business in which family members were involved. The lower class rented and worked in local businesses or owned an even smaller business such as selling fruits, vegetables, fish, and so forth. The poor lived in very low quality rental homes and were seasonally unemployed. The upper class of Dhobiatalla were extremely poor in relation to the upper class of Indian society, but were extremely rich in relation to many slum residents.



I visited homes only if invited. Thus, I visited a few upper-class and middle-class homes, but I did not visit any lower-class or poor homes because I was not invited into one. I don't know if it were I or they, but I felt unwelcome in poorer homes. They appeared embarrassed about their homes and I did not want to add to it. Standing at these doorsteps, I peeked in. It seemed that the upper and the middle-class homes were very similar but the lower-class homes were different. The lower-class homes were relatively smaller than the richer homes, with numerous family members, a clutter of utensils, and a general sense of disorganization. By and large, in these homes the walls were covered with pictures of Hindu Gods or film stars; sometimes clothes hung on a string which stretched across the room. Many did not have a bed or any other furniture.

I was told that some residents made a living by lending money to poor people when they needed it. They charged an extremely high rate of interest, 200% per year, for the supposed favor. These money lenders were very opposed to IMSE and its loan extension program at Dhobiatalla because of the autonomy it granted to poor residents. Many local residents brought up the issue of not having money and relying on money lenders at times of trouble. Mina Mondol shared one such story.

Mina, an elderly Hindu widow who sold fish to make a living, said, "This summer it did not rain very much, rivers and ponds dried up, and fish prices soared. I was afraid I would not

be able to make any profit from selling fish if I bought them at the prevailing high price." Thus, she had no income that summer and "lived on water for four months."

A few other residents echoed similar stories of not having enough to eat. Many residents were very small and thin; ill health was rampant and environmental health was terrible. Let me share a remarkable story of how residents addressed hunger. Mohammad Iqbal,the middle-aged Muslim leader who told me the story of the slum's name, told me that he could not bear to see his Hindu neighbors starve. He said that a widow with six children lived next door. Everyone in the family worked; yet there were days when this family did not have anything to eat. On such days, Mohammad Iqbal's family ate less and shared their meal with this family. Others told me of sharing meals with neighbors and beggars. I saw charity being given by residents.

Unity in Diversity: Regionalism and Religion

Mohammad Iqbal's disclosure that he shared meals with a Hindu family was an important feature in his story because historically Hindus and Muslims do not get along well. In India, race is not an issue; nonetheless, there is divisiveness as well as unity. The concept of "race" as used in the United States does not exist in India, where the term "race" is associated with sports, especially running, but not with ethnicity. Currently in India, divisiveness is rooted in regionalism and religion. Of course, caste is an issue among Hindus. However, as a majority of the slum residents were Muslims, caste was not an issue.

Despite sharing the same religion, many Muslim residents were divided because of their place of origin. People from Bihar spoke negatively about residents from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, and vice versa. Given this sense of separate identity, I thought they would have strong negative feelings toward the Hindus. However, they did not openly express any anti-Hindu feelings. I was not sure how much of this was a result of social desirability bias because it was obvious from my name and appearance that I was a Hindu.

When it came to discussing religion, I heard stories that I would never have imagined. Armina Begum, a young, divorced Muslim mother of three, said that she prayed to the Hindu Goddess Kali when she wanted something. "What does it matter if Kali is a Hindu Goddess? I am a poor woman. I pray to anyone who listens to me and helps me." I heard the same sentiment from Hindus who prayed to "Pir Baba," a Muslim saint. They said, "Hindus and Muslims are brothers." I felt very reassured upon hearing this because I had worried about how well they would accept a "Didi" who came from America and was not a Muslim.

Further evidence of integration between Hindus and Muslims came from stories about marriage dowries. Many told me stories of marrying off their daughters recently; some grumbled about the huge expenditure they incurred for their daughters' marriage. I was shocked to hear about dowry in Muslim marriages, because as far as I knew, every Muslim marriage had a prenuptial agreement, which was very progressive compared to Hindu marriages. Dowry is a peculiarly evil Hindu social custom which has been outlawed, but still accompanies most arranged Hindu marriages. When asked how dowry, a Hindu custom, was infringing on the lives of non-Hindus, I was told, "When we live in a diverse society, we adopt others' ways." I was outraged that dowry had been embraced by non-Hindus in the name of unity in diversity; exploitative customs had many ways of invading life.

I met Mulchand Mia, a man in his mid-40's, who was illiterate and sold fruit to make a living. He had seven children and had set the date for his eldest daughter Reshma's wedding. The combined family income of Mulchand Mia, his wife, and children was about 1,740 rupees monthly. Mulchand Mia said that he would have to spend about 20,000 rupees on Reshma's wedding.

Among the costs for marriage was an item—a marriage negotiation fee of 300 Rupees—which surprised and angered me at first. Armina Begum, a neighbor, had arranged the marriage and had asked for a brokerage fee. I was immensely angry that a family friend would charge a fee from a poor family when she knew

how expensive it was to marry a daughter. Armina laughed and said, "It's a low fee." Later I got to know 25 year-old, illiterate, divorced Armina, who identified physical stamina as one of her strengths. Armina made a living by buying, cleaning, and selling discarded ball point pen refills. Her three children, aged six to ten, also worked to supplement the family's income which was about 500 rupees per month. This meant that Armina's family income was 200 rupees less than the official Indian poverty level of 700 rupees per month. After getting to know Armina better, I understood why a family friend would charge a marriage negotiation fee—Armina needed the money for her family's survival.

The First Time I Saw Raquella

On a day soon after this, I sat on Hakim Mia's doorstep from afternoon until evening talking to people and observing their life style. I saw women and children clustering around a tube-well washing clothes, cleaning utensils, and even bathing. I noticed a tall, lithe woman squatting on the tube-well ground and quite unselfconsciously washing herself. That is how I saw Raquella for the first time—incredibly self-possessed, bathing fully clothed by splashing cool water on her body, soaping her arms, neck and face, and pouring more water again. We did not talk, but I became very curious about bathrooms in the slum. Folks around me told me that there were few bathrooms in the slum. Those who could afford, owned their own bathrooms, others rented bathrooms, and still others like Raquella bathed publicly.

Respite and Interim Lessons

Although rather slowly, I was learning not impose my middle-class values on understanding life in a slum. I realized that some aspects of life in Dhobiatalla appeared incorrect or unjust, but they were actually very functional when viewed from residents' perspectives. Very often, economic necessities of living propelled these apparently unjust behaviors and actions. Further, I learned that life in a slum is a refracted mirror reflection of life outside. I saw a mirror reflection in the way Dhobiatalla's residents lived their life—working very hard, caring, sharing, comforting one another. Residents had many strengths—capacities, resources, abilities, aspirations, talents. Yet, the mirror had been severely cracked by a lack of economic resources which made the images refracted, even wretched, sometimes. Just when I thought I had come to grips with understanding what it was like to live in a slum, an encounter with Raquella pulled this comfortable rug from underneath my feet. Raquella, one of the most wretched among the wretched of Dhobiatalla, behaved in such a fashion that I had to stop and reevaluate my nascent and simplistic understanding that economic necessities drove behavior in Dhobiatalla. Before I tell you about my experience with Raquella, let me first share Raquella's story of strengths and constraints.

RAQUELLA'S STORY

"I am intel-ligent," said Raq-uella, a Muslim woman in her mid-thirties. Instantly my gaze snapped to her face. Her slanting eyes stood out prominently against her hollow cheek bones. Her dry brownish hair was pulled tightly into a severe knot, as if to underline her look of sharp efficiency and stark poverty. I did not imagine that a poor, illiterate woman would identify intelligence as her strength. Intrigued, I asked Raquella to elaborate. Pulling the edge of her brightly colored, cotton-printed saree over her head, Raquella continued in a deep and husky voice:

My father died when my brother and I were very young. My illiterate, unskilled mother... came to Calcutta with us and begged for a living. There were many days when there was nothing to eat. My stomach would churn with hunger. Often, I would stand on others' doorsteps hungrily staring at people eating. Sometimes, I volunteered to help, in whatever way I could. In return, the householders gave me the excess water that they threw away after cooking rice. Rice water, given in charity, was my staple diet for many a

day in my childhood. I was not happy. My mother was helpless, my brother too young. I tried to find a way out of this hell. I would watch people ... what they did, how they made a living.... Slowly I figured out a way. ... I sell spice at Dhobiatalla. No one else sells spice here. I figured that since spice is essential to our cooking, I could make a living by selling spice.... I took out a loan from IMSE.... No one helped me. Things are better now because I am smart....

Living on rice water was the pit-bottom of poverty in Indian culture—things couldn't possibly get any worse. And yes, Raquella was definitely smart. Her decision to sell spice was a smart entrepreneurial move by any standards.

Raquella seemed to enjoy talking about herself and she talked a lot. "Sometimes, I also buy rotten mangoes from the market. Mangoes that you will not eat. I buy them at a low price and sell them cheaply here. People buy them." When asked about her monthly income, her eyes and her thin cracked lips broke out into a smile that said, "Oh! You foolish woman!" Immediately, I knew I had made a major mistake. I thought I was being pragmatic by asking about her monthly income instead of annual income. Slitting her eyes which intensified her gaze at me, Raquella said, "Oh, some days I earn 20 rupees, other days I earn about 50 rupees. Some days I don't earn anything.

Next, I asked Raquella about her family, her husband and children, and her life in general. Pulling the edge of her saree over her head once again, Raquella readjusted her posture, took a deep breath, and slowly replied:

My husband works as a construction laborer. You know how it is. Some days he has work, other days he just sits at home.... He drinks, gambles...with my money. I hide it. He beats me. Ask people around. Honest, he beats me. What can I do?.... I have two children. My daughter is five and my son is two years old. My youngest baby died within five months of birth. He had rickets. I work hard because I have to feed my children. My husband does not worry about feeding us.... I have to pay someone five rupees to baby-sit when I go to get spices for my business.... Life is hard.... My house is not nice at all. It is a make shift home. The roof leaks. The floor is damp in the rainy and winter seasons. I want a better home.

Raquella's children were with her and she was nursing her two-year-old as we talked. The children were severely malnourished and underdeveloped. Her five-year-old daughter appeared about two, and her two-year-old son appeared less than six months old. Both attended a preschool in the slum where they got breakfast, snacks, and clothes. Raquella dreamt of the day when her children would graduate from high school, get nice jobs, and eventually live in a nice home in Calcutta, far away from this slum. Raquella proudly asked her daughter to tell me what she had learned at school. Slowly, shyly, and softly, the child replied, "A, B, C . . ." Compared to Raquella's childhood, her children were better off; they ate one meal at home and attended school. However, Raquella believed a better home was the answer to her family's health problems. She pleaded, "Didi, please build some homes. I will move anywhere I have to. I can pay a higher rent because I will expand my spice business with another loan . . . ." I visited with Raquella a number of times during my six-week sojourn at Dhobiatalla, but Raquella never invited me home.

The Video Camera

Often, Raquella volunteered to carry the bags that I took to the slum. Generally, I took a duffel bag containing writing paper, pens, a camera, a water bottle, and my wallet; sometimes I also carried a video camera in its own case. Raquella's request to carry my bags was culturally conditioned and acceptable, but it reflected a status hierarchy. Initially, I ignored her request politely. One sultry evening, I was very tired after a long day's work. Again, Raquella offered to carry my bag. Since I felt more comfortable with her, without thinking I let her carry the video camera because she pointed toward it when making her request. Before I knew what was happening, Raquella had disappeared, and she had vanished with my new video camera. I went into a state of shock.

The project grant money was too little to pay for a video camera. Nonetheless, realizing its value to my research, I had bought a video camera. Standing on the main strip of Dhobiatalla, I looked around—Raquella was nowhere to be seen. I did not know what to do. About 15 minutes passed—I kept dragging my feet on the main strip, unwilling to share my concern with anyone. I was afraid that letting others know about Raquella's disappearance with my video-camera would jeopardize my tenuous relationship with the community. I thought, "Raquella will come back, perhaps she has gone home, or to her neighbors' to show off the video camera...may be something is holding her back...Probably she had to use the rest-room... Surely she will come back." Another part of me said, "Raquella may have stolen your camera." I went through the emotions of trust versus distrust, faith versus doubt with a poker-face, trying very hard to conceal my emotions. Half an hour or so elapsed, I kept dragging my feet, and wondered what to do. Suddenly, I saw Raquella. Smiling sheepishly, she came running toward me holding the video camera in both her hands. Relief. I cannot describe in words the relief I felt when I saw Raquella. I never asked her where she went because I did not want to embarrass her.

Raquella, still holding the video camera, accompanied me as usual to the parked car. She handed the camera over and waved good-bye. Driving out of Dhobiatalla, I looked at the beautiful sky. The monsoon clouds started fluffing into golden-pink feathers and the sun was almost ready to set. As always, I felt a great sense of peace and freedom when I looked at the vast open sky. Suddenly, this calmness was disrupted by Raquella's face, I recalled her sudden disappearance and dramatic return. I was overjoyed to get back my camera, but I couldn't make sense of what had happened.

Bewilderment and Clarity

I closed my eyes and breathed deeply for a few minutes. Raquella's tale of hunger pangs in her childhood, hardships in making a living, inadequate housing, difficulties in staying healthy, borrowing money, and marital discord started replaying. The extent of injustice! "Why did Raquella have to live under such horrible circumstances? Why did Raquella run away so swiftly immediately after she got the camera? Did she plan this ahead of time? What took her so long? Did she want to steal the camera? Why did she come back with the camera—intact? Why didn't Raquella run off with the camera, sell it, and live happily ever after? Why was she such a fool?"

The video camera cost me about US $1,000. Because of very high import duty in India, the camera would have fetched Raquella 75,000 rupees easily, enough to allow her to live modestly for about a decade. Moreover, she knew that I was visiting Calcutta temporarily and would leave soon. Had she disappeared for a few days, no one could have found her in the conglomerate that constituted Calcutta. Why didn't Raquella grab the opportunity to experience some economic comfort? Why did she rise above temptation and demonstrate valuable strengths such as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, courage, dignity, and self-respect?

I have struggled to make sense of this experience with Raquella because it failed to fit within dominant perspectives such as deficit and pathology, micro-economics, or Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Raquella taught me that human behavior is too complex to be understood through single lenses. Raquella's poverty, oppression, and otherness could not preclude the possibility that Raquella had many inherent strengths. My formal education which taught me the dominant paradigms seemed obsolete in helping me understand "the other." A new paradigm was needed to explain Raquella's behavior.

Slowly, the strengths perspective came alive. It dawned on me that despite dire poverty, Raquella may not have had any intention of stealing, or that she chose to return the camera despite its economic potentials. Within the first scenario, it is possible that Raquella ran away immediately after I gave her the camera because she was thrilled to get an expensive item in her hand. Delirious with joy, she ran away from me temporarily, perhaps to show it off, perhaps to make believe that she owned it. Once whatever she was experiencing was over, she came back

and returned it to me. Alternatively, the second scenario suggests that Raquella may have been tempted to use the camera for economic gains, but made a conscious choice to return the camera to me. Just as I did not want to be defined as "coming from America," Raquella did not want to be defined by her poverty. Raquella was much more than a poor woman. Raquella's actions exemplified the true meaning of the co-existence of strengths and constraints in a slum.

STRENGTHS BASED PRACTICE, TEACHING, AND RESEARCH

Weick (1992, p. 24) wrote, "The act of empowering reawakens or stimulates someone's own natural power. . . . A strengths perspective assumes that when people's positive capacities are supported, they are more likely to act on their strengths." In my struggle to understand Raquella's behavior, it seemed that despite deficit orientation, despite imposing middle-class values in understanding life in a slum, I did some things right. In trying to recall my interactions with Raquella, I remember that I was very respectful of her, expressed understanding and acceptance of her situation, and openly appreciated her. I focused more on her strengths than on what she did not have. All of these features and qualities are expected of any social work interview. However, in a class-conscious Indian society, where I was introduced as a "Didi" from America, handing over the camera, a valuable possession, to Raquella may have seemed an unusually loving, trusting, and respectful action. My sense is that Raquella was not used to being treated with respect, dignity, and trust by larger Indian society, which I represented. This was a test for me. How far was I willing to go in working with strengths? Raquella, the smart woman that she was, was perhaps not fully satisfied with my talk on strengths. She wanted to test my walk on strengths. I am glad I passed her test. Experiencing good feelings in the brief relationship that I had established with Raquella, she reciprocated with goodwill.

This personal experience with Raquella validated for me Weick's (1992, p. 24) note that "when people's positive capacities are supported, they are more likely to act on their strengths." I want to add that social workers may have to pass tests posed by clients in truly supporting people's capacities. For me, the strengths philosophy is no longer an esoteric concept discussed and debated in the ivory tower of Twente Hall; it is grounded in reality. Were I to work with Raquella in empowering her to move out of poverty, I would emphasize all the positive attributes in her which had enabled her to survive for so long. I would enable her to remember her strengths. Slowly, she would be able to unshackle the chains of oppression overburdening her and realize her dream of a "better home." Similarly, in teaching social work in the class room, I would draw on students' positive experiences with learning so that they could build on their strengths and move forward.

Last, I learned an important lesson I did not and could not have discovered these strengths in Raquella through mere questions or observations—the traditional modes of data collection. Researchers exploring or examining strengths would discover more unidentified strengths in people by creating simulations than through merely interviewing and observing. Social workers could create scenarios that have the potential for ambiguity so that true and so far unidentified strengths would emerge. Additionally, the existing social work literature on strengths does not explicitly discuss truthfulness, honesty, integrity, dignity, and self-respect as strengths. I too had not consciously considered these traits as strengths because they verge on the grounds of morality—often times a very slippery ground. Nonetheless, within the context of severe economic deprivation, choosing to do the right thing exemplifies enormous honesty, integrity, courage, and dignity—towering strengths which deserve attention and celebration in the social work literature.

Sitting many thousands of miles away from Calcutta, I often think of the people I met at Dhobiatalla. I dream of a day, a day when Raquella is sitting comfortably on a rocking chair in a cozy home, far away from the slums of Calcutta, with a grandchild on her lap. Gently rocking, Raquella is telling her grandchild a story. It is a story about how she met me many years back. Pulling the edge of her saree over her head,

Raquella tells her grandchild how she asked that I let her carry the video camera. Then Raquella tells what she did when she had the camera—her joy, her bewilderment, her sense of dignity... upon returning the camera....□

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FINDING HOPE AMONG SHATTERED DREAMS

I work in the Bronx where my clients are women deprived of resources that I have always taken for granted. The women I see are pregnant; for most of these women it is unplanned, unwanted, and a crisis situation. Because of the location of my job it often feels like a war zone and at times like my clients, I feel vulnerable. This narrative is about a time that challenged who I am as a professional. Life circumstances helped me to clarify the boundaries between myself and my clients and to reassess the use of self disclosure. It is a constant struggle to confront the realities of what my clients are lacking and yet, as a social worker, to bring hope to these people as the world tries to take it away This narrative is also about a season where our worlds collide and then, without completion, we are forced to go our separate ways.

By Gila Cohen Davidovsky

Gila Cohen Davidovsky, CSW, ACSW, is a Social Worker at Montefiore Medical Center Family Health Center, New York, New York

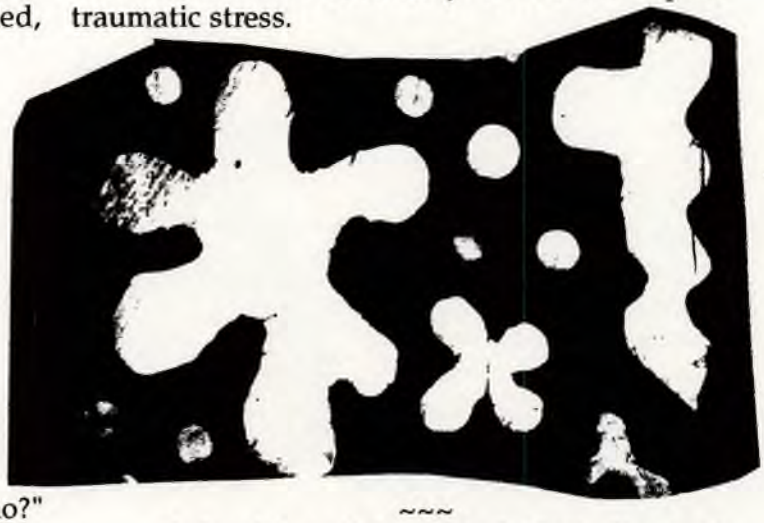
At times I am grateful that my mother and I share the same profession. I was influenced to pursue social work because of her dedication and commitment to social work values. At other times I wish she had been a computer programmer so that I did not have to listen to other people's pain or be so aware of my own.

I work in the Bronx as a perinatal social worker in a medical clinic. The clients are predominantly of Latino and Black descent. My pregnant clients are considered high risk pregnancies because of either social or economic limitations, including many teen pregnancies or medical complications, such as gestational diabetes, twins, and genetic abnormalities. In addition, I see women for grief counseling such as miscarriages or the tragic death of a newborn. I also help clients make choices about continuing their pregnancy, sometimes related to abnormal medical test results. We often discuss birth control methods including the possibility of tuballigation. I lead both therapeutic and psycho-educational groups about labor and delivery. Each month there are about forty newly pregnant women assigned to my caseload. Most come from two to ten times;thus much of my work is short-term crisis-oriented. A few continue treatment even after their baby is born. My work is often hectic, overwhelming, and fast paced but usually exciting and challenging.

On a Wednesday afternoon at lunch time in the beginning of the fall season, the weather was still warm. I decided to go for a walk. The first week of school had just begun and mothers were waiting outside for their

children's return, the younger ones already home. I was just leaving the building when I heard two men having an argument and then the sound I will always remember—a gun being fired. Two men raced off while another one helped the victim whom I saw clutching his shoulder or—chest I did not know which. Blood was every-where. I stood frozen and scared. There was an indescribable lump in my throat, I felt light headed, and my body was shaking. I stood there wondering if I knew this person. Was it a boyfriend of a client? I then saw the unknown victim with a friend; he ran up the street then back down into our clinic. Each step leading up to the second floor where the medical offices are was drenched in blood. He was superficially treated at our clinic and then the paramedics came and took him to the Emergency room. I learned that he would survive, but I kept thinking." Four inches to the right it would have hit his heart and four inches to his left then who?" How vulnerable I felt. I was interviewed by a policeman and reported to him what I saw. For days afterward I feared having to go into a witness protection program and never being able to see my family and those I love again.

The day after, I woke up, reluctant to commute to what feels like the drug capital of the nation and afraid of once again having to walk past the site of the shooting. I told myself to be brave and I did make it to work. The crime scene was surrounded by yellow police tape. The sidewalk was still stained with blood. I discovered that blood stains concrete. The victim fell and put his bloody hand on the ground. I wonder how many times I will have to walk by this and be reminded of the shock and horror. This is what children have to walk by on their way to school. Is this the beginning of what desensitizes our innocent childrento violence? The repeated sounds of a gun that traumatized me becomes as frequent to these children as the sounds of a siren that I hear as I go to bed in Manhattan. Who knows where I'll be 10 years from now. I never imagined, sitting in high school in California, that I would be working in the Bronx with people deprived of financial, educational, and social resources. I listen to clients over and over again struggle with such basic needs as food and shelter. Resources are limited and government wants to impose more restrictions. This is a free country and yet the neighborhood where my clients grow up is a war zone and clients are left devastated by the continual effects of deprivation and pain. It is no wonder that they suffer from post traumatic stress.



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I sit with a client named Maria.She is 22 and pregnant. She and the father of the baby are no longer together and she has no idea how to contact him. He does not know she is carrying his child and she does not believe he would care. She did not complete 9th grade. She has no work history and limited skills. Maria is living with her mother and two adolescent brothers in a one-bedroom apartment. She is crying because she is afraid for the future of her baby and of herself. Finding resolution is nearly impossible and I question the effectiveness of just simply listening to her pain. I later realize that she has no one to talk to. Her mother physically beat her; her step-father repeatedly told her she was unlovable and a failure. It was no surprise when she told me that at 14 she tried to kill herself. And yet this is her third time here and she wants to come back next week. I feel so helpless and have trouble understanding her relief. The power of attentive listening, compassion and empathy--I am supposed to teach it to my graduate social work students and yet I struggle with its benefits myself. I feel it would be more effective to hand her twenty dollars. [It would alleviate my guilt for having.] Fortunately this is just a passing
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thought and I will again have to struggle in my helplessness and try to convince myself of the work that I try to do.

As soon as this client leaves I am greeted by a new consultation, a 22 -year- old woman from Puerto Rico. She is beauti-ful and later tells me she had been an exotic dancer in Puerto Rico. Her history includes physical and sexual abuse, repeated rapes, and betrayal. She has a history of three suicide attempts. Two resulted in three-week hospitalizations with no follow up and she has never been in individual outpatient treatment. She tells me her traumatic story without effect and it is no wonder that when she leaves I am stuck with her pain. Projective identification they call it—I understand it, but how am I supposed to climb out of the hole I feel I have fallen into? I tell her it is important for her to come back. She is already seven months pregnant, and I feel pressure with time. I say she can come one or two times a week, the choice is hers, and she says two. I am surprised by her motivation and afraid of the task I have set up for us. She is living with the baby's father who drinks and is physically abusive. How much work we have in so little time.

Later I see a 27-year-old woman who works hard as a medical records file clerk making a mere $7 an hour. On this she supports a family of three. She is being mistreated by her boss and is quite tearful. She used to work at our clinic as a temp. She applied for the position and the managers wanted to hire her, but personnel refused because she does not yet have a GED. She can't leave as she has nowhere else to go—she wants me to help her cope with the situation. This woman inspires me. Although I find myself skeptical about believing this anymore, she was raised with love. She talks lovingly of her two sons, states they are good and they do well in school. They listen to her and clearly she loves them and is excited about a new baby. She seems in touch with the effects a new baby will have on her 7 and 8 year olds and she has good ideas on how to help them cope. Her problem is social isolation and her great pride in wanting to make it on her own and not go on Public Assistance. She even refuses food stamps. This woman grew up in the same neighborhood with limited opportunities, and yet she has managed to fight the vicious cycle of abuse and poverty that some clients stay trapped in. I wonder how. How did she become so resilient? I know it is an entire upbringing, but how can I help instill this strength into others. Although saddened by her situation, inspired by her strength and touched by her pain, I feel a small sense of hope and wonder if I was able somehow to let her know this so she can feel it too.

Many times I feel helpless and wonder how I will be able to get up the next day and be able to give. How am I going to teach a graduate student that the work she is doing is valuable and important when I feel so helpless myself? And yet at the same time that I feel so helpless I enjoy my work. Despite their difficult life situations, pregnancy is a time of positive change. I feel a sense of hope in spite of all the helplessness. This is what makes me stay—to be part of the hope for a better tomorrow for each woman in her own way.

When I feel overwhelmed and ready to give up, I take a step back and slowly realize that these could be the feelings my clients are having. To be helpful I have to continue to be hopeful. Sometimes I write, as I have here, to help me refocus and gain some perspective on my experiences and acknowledge my capabilities and accept my limitations. It is similar to watching the leaves turning shades of reds and yellows, shedding their leaves and slowly growing new ones; it is a process that takes a year and has to be done over and over again and connecting with clients and watching them slowly trust and share information they have never been able to talk about and their willingness to engage in a therapeutic relationship.

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Seasons change, and as fall came to an end, I experienced the bitter harsh coldness of winter. I went through many changes which became a time for personal and professional transformation. At the time of the shooting I did not yet know that I was pregnant. I spent the first trimester holding my breath, hoping that I would make it safely to the second--from personal experience I knew all too well the risks of a miscarriage. Feeling relieved to be safely in the second trimester, I began slowly to tell my colleagues. My clients seemed to notice early on; self disclosure began to take on an entirely new dimension. A client in her first session, when I was only nine weeks pregnant, said to me "you look pregnant, you look sort of green, you look how I looked 3 weeks ago." She in fact was three weeks further along than I was! I was surprised by her observation and then accepted that I would no longer be able to hide my pregnancy from my clients. I was growing and the news was spreading. My clients appeared to connect with me and I with them, in new ways.

I let them know that their anxieties, regrets, fears, and excitement were all part of the process of pregnancy. I was cautious and reserved in disclosing but realized that there may be appropriate times to share that I struggle with similar feelings. I often sat with a client and thought of the opportunities that my future child would be given and the unequal distribution in this world.

I was growing fast. Soon into my second trimester we found out that I was carrying twins! My feelings of trepidation and elation often were overwhelming and I had to contain my feelings while I continued to work with my clients. Twins! I could not believe it. I had financial resources and a supportive family and I repeatedly wondered how my clients managed one child, being single with limited resources. It was by seeing how much strength they had that I was able to believe I could cope with twins. I knew twins meant that I was high risk for preterm labor but I was being followed closely and felt optimistic that all would be fine. I knew the warning signs of preterm labor as I have a big poster in my office that lists the signs.

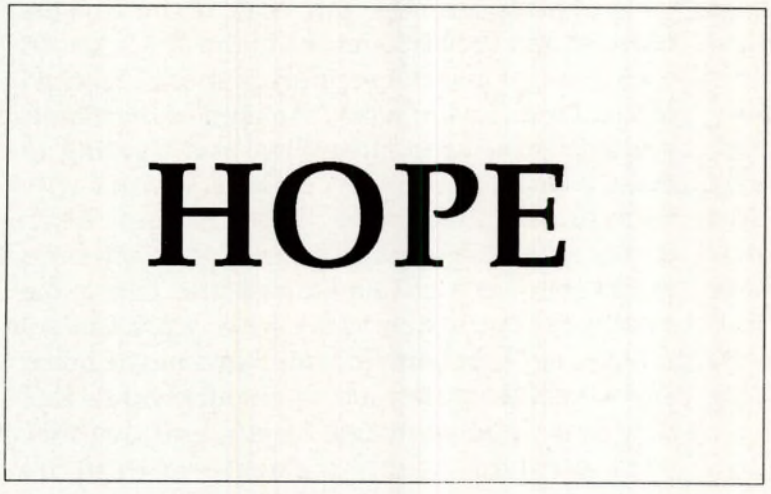
On the last Friday in January I went to a conference on high risk pregnancies, high risk due to economic and social reasons. The speakers rattled off statistics on mortality because of not receiving prenatal care. I felt confident that things were going to go fine for me and I sat back and listened and wondered how to do outreach with my client population and how to encourage compliance with medical care during pregnancy.

During the conference I began feeling physically uncomfortable and decided to leave early. That evening into rapid labor, I went to the hospital where my doctor tried everything possible to stop the contractions. I was only in my 23rd week and we all knew that if I could not keep those precious boys inside me, they would not have a fighting chance. Unfortunately, nothing worked and the following afternoon I delivered non-viable twins. What had been my hopes and dreams had turned into a devastating nightmare. My empty uterus reflected how I felt. I have learned that one's world can turn completely upside down and backwards in a matter of minutes. The only thing we can really hold on to, that no one can take away, is how we cope with these traumas. My clients are fighters and despite their lacks of ego strength they survive. I have learned from them a remarkable level of resilience. Their tenacious attitude keeps them standing upright despite the harsh realities of deprivation and isolation. My clients have taught me courage. While working with them I taught that talking about their experience, joining a group, and allowing time to grieve is all part of the process for healing. I now had to practice all that I had taught.

Spring arrived and with it the flowers blossom and the birds return to the city. Armed with courage and the support of those I reached out to, I returned to work. As long as my clients are willing to keep struggling and fighting to make changes, I want to continue to work with them to help them make those changes. When clients allow me to participate in their attempts to change, it is a gift and a treasure. This is the message I hope to give to my social work student --teach her that some clients have never heard anyone tell them they are a person of value, that they deserve to be treated kindly, and that they have strengths. These messages of truth are

powerful to ears that have only heard criticism, and to the wounded souls who have only been pushed down and beaten. They are the pregnant women who are bringing in a new generation and if they can feel a little better about themselves, then perhaps they can give their children words of praise rather than the destructive messages that haunt them.

On the day of my return I received notice that because of financial constraints the clinic had eliminated my position as perinatal social worker. Other social workers with already huge caseloads will absorb my patients. The sweltering summer will arrive and for many of these clients there will not be a place for them to vent and talk. The heat will be as oppressive as the world in which they live.□



REFLECTIONS ON HOMOPHOBIA, MY SISTER'S WEDDING, AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

This narrative tells the story of my reaction, being a lesbian, a social worker, a social work educator, and a homophobia educator and activist, to the wedding of my sister. We are not free from bias just because we ourselves belong to an oppressed group. I use the wedding as a backdrop to explore the impact of my homophobia on my teaching. Through these experiences and the writing of this narrative, my belief about the importance of self awareness for effective and responsible social work practice is reinforced. I feel joy, inspiration, and excitement at the opportunity to teach about self awareness and to travel this journey with my students.

By Stacey Peyer

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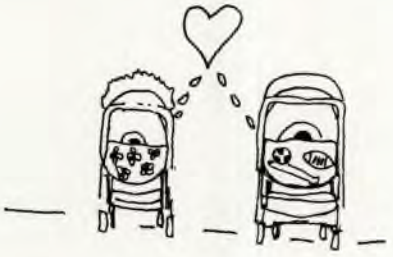
A recurrent theme at a recent meeting of field instructors was the importance of self awareness.One of the field educators told a story about a first year M.S.W. cross cultural practice course he'd just finished teaching. He had begun the class by saying that he was racist, sexist, and homophobic. His new and expectedly naive students grew wide-eyed, and one had the chutzpa to raise her hand and ask, "Isn't that bad?"

This story reminded me of a student I field instructed who was quite surprised when he heard me, an open lesbian, acknowledge my own homophobia. "You're homophobic?" he queried. Both incidents provoked discussions of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia, and the ways we all internalize the "ism's." I was also reminded of an experiential workshop entitled "Homophobia: Removing Barriers to Practice" that I developed years ago with my colleague, Bill Pederson and which we presented at numerous agencies and conferences.*

During one particular presentation, after I had offered an example about monogamy, a participant confronted me saying that I had communicated certain biases about monogamy. Taken aback, I realized that her observation held some truth. Acknowledging this, I said that in presenting this workshop I was by no means proposing that any of us could be bias free. The key is that it is always a struggle to know ourselves better and to become more conscious in our professional and our personal lives so that we can work toward not letting our biases impede our ability to live and work by the tenet of self-determination. And, as my colleague acknowledged to his wide-eyed and somewhat confused first year M.S.W. students, we must strive every day to be less racist, homophobic, sexist, and ageist. I have realized through writing this narrative, that while the word "homophobia" and its meanings are clear to me, some readers may be confused or unclear about my use of the term. Many people think that homophobia refers to negative feelings and/or beliefs held by non-gay people about gay people and/or about homo-

sexuality in general. I have occasionally been asked why I use "homophobia" to describe feelings I have about my lack of equal rights and the lack of institutional recognition for my relationship. Are my feelings not simply an understandable reaction to such deprivation and discrimination? Why do I label my sadness/anxiety/anger/envy as my own homophobia, as opposed to a reaction to a homophobic society?

The answer? I have lived in a world where I receive daily messages, through books, through media, and even through the mouths of treasured family and friends, that the world expects and



wants me to be heterosexual. These messages begin in infancy when colors first define expectations of girls and boys, and mothers in playgrounds play matchmaker with their toddlers. These images and expectations bombard us. As we grow aware of our attraction for the same gender, we struggle with feelings of shame, isolation, and self-loathing. Some of us die in this process, literally and/or figuratively. Others work through it as we mature and our experiences broaden. We learn that we are not alone and we discover a rich history that was previously denied us. We learn to undo the negative teachings of family, school, and religion, and to rejoice in the power, pride, and progress of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. And of ourselves.

Gay and lesbian persons often cannot and/or do not differentiate between their own internal self-loathing and the reactions of society. This is why I refer to my homophobia. When I go to a baby shower for a heterosexual friend, I often experience myriad feelings: pain, anger, sadness, envy. While my reaction is understandable, it also reflects an internalized sense of shame and wrongdoing, a feeling of being "less than." In situations such as this, the old questions resurface: "Wasn't I supposed to be straight? Why am I not? Have I hurt my mother by not fulfilling her heterosexual expectations?" This is my internalized homophobia.

I have always considered myself to have gone through the process of "coming out" relatively unscathed and have emerged strong, proud, and comfortable in my identity as a lesbian. I came out in a very conservative juvenile justice agency and have done a great deal of community service in the gay arena, including presenting my homophobia workshop innumerable times. I have been on radio and television shows talking about homophobia and homosexuality, and have participated (with my most-loved mom) in a number of video projects, speaking about coming out to family, being a gay adolescent, etc. I am known to many as a homophobia educator or, affectionately, the "Queen of Homophobia." A colleague recently said that she thinks that I am probably the most comfortably open gay person that she has ever known. I liked that. But lately, that status has been challenged.

My only sibling, my older sister, is going to be married. She is 39 and has never before come close to marriage. This has not been an issue for her but my family was hoping she'd eventually tie the knot. I think I secretly wished she'd remain single. Of course, I wanted her to love and be loved, but not married. Why not? Because I can't marry. It's a continuation of childhood sibling rivalry. I've always struggled with feeling that she was more this or more that and better at this or better at that. I think I felt that by having a long-term relationship (nearly 12 years now), which we acknowledged in a Jewish (though not legal) ceremony in the presence of our family and friends, that I had accomplished something that she had not. And now that is being challenged. Not only will she have the ceremony, but it will be all of the things that

mine wasn't and never could be.

My sister is pretty non-traditional. (She's included photos of her precious Border Collies, Pepper and Primus, in her wedding invitation). I was thrilled when she planned to wear a tux to her wedding. This was fitting, as she wears man-tailored suits and ties when she needs to "dress."

That she would not be wearing a wedding dress gave me some sense of relief. My mom and others had mixed feelings about the tuxedo. "It's your wedding, but I'd really like you to wear a dress." My sister held out, claiming that she couldn't imagine finding a wedding dress that would feel right. I was happy. Then she agreed that since it meant so much to my mom, she'd look for a dress and see if anything would suit her. And, she did. at the wedding show in Seattle. "The wedding show?" I shrieked. I was horrified. My sister was doing the hetero thing all the way.

What does this have to do with me and with social work education and/or myself as an educator? My homophobia was triggered by my sister doing something that I can't ever do. Giving my mother and grandmother something that I can never give. And whether I'd actually want to do it is irrelevant. Emotions can simply belie all logic. My sister's marriage has forced me to acknowledge that the world is a different place for me than it is for her. And it won't matter if gay marriage is legalized in Hawaii. It still won't be the same. My wedding would never generate the all-encompassing planning and excitement of friends and family all over the country. My dad, I'm sure, is telling casual acquaintances and business contacts that his first-born is to be married. Yet his closest friends and colleagues don't know that Sharon and I have spent the past 12 years of our lives together.

Accepting these feelings is difficult. It just doesn't fit my image of myself as a homophobia educator, an activist, a proud, vocal lesbian, a woman,a social worker, a Jew, a just plain proud-to-be-me sort of person. And yet it persists. I can't wish it away. I could trade the discomfort for denial. But I won't. I've worked too hard (and spent too much money) to acknowledge and accept my feelings. I am lucky that those closest to me understand. I am able to talk about it with my mother, my sister, and my grandmother, too. These three women are all secure and smart enough to know that this is about me and the world in which we live and has nothing to do with my not wanting them to be happy and joyous. I have been able to ask my mother whether she did feel deprived by not seeing her "baby girl" walk down the traditional aisle in the traditional white dress. The answer is not important. What is important is that I have been able and willing to face these issues in the mirror.

As I consider my response to the wedding and write this narrative, I've wondered about the impact of my homophobia on my teaching. I am on the field faculty in the Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach. Our social work students are required to participate in a mandatory seminar concurrent with fieldwork. I teach at least one and sometimes two sections of graduate seminar each year. The seminar is a place for students to learn about group process by being part of a group, to integrate field and classroom learning, to explore ethical issues as they arise in their practice, to provide support to each other, and to increase their self-awareness and nurture the development of a professional self. Part of the role of seminar instructor is to serve as the field liaison, visiting students in their agencies at least twice per year. As a member of the field faculty, I match students and field placements, develop new agency placements, and train new field instructors; and I work in the Department's child welfare training program. Additionally, I am the Faculty Advisor to the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Student Caucus in the Department. Prior to coming to the university, I worked in a residential treatment facility with delinquent adolescents. In that setting, I also served as a field instructor.

As I reflect on my work experiences, I can see many ways in which my teaching has been im-pacted by my homophobia. At times, the impact has been negative. I remember when I first

began to field instruct. Employed at the agency just over two years, and struggling with whether and how to be openly gay at work, I was aware that most of the boys in my cottage knew (or suspected) that I was a lesbian and this made me uncomfortable. How did they know? What "clues" had I inadvertently given? Examining my mannerisms and mode of dress, I wondered what I was doing "wrong" that allowed others to guess that I was gay. Soon I realized that the boys knew I was gay simply because it was true. That they knew was not an indication that I was doing anything "wrong." Conversations about this aspect of my life undoubtedly were occurring on the baseball field and at school, and even between my team of line staff and the boys. Seemingly, I was the only one not talking. This presented a dilemma and I agonized over how to respond. I knew that the kids focused on me to avoid their own work, and also because of their age-appropriate interest in anything connected to sexuality. I grappled with their need to know, with my belief in productive honesty in relationships, and with "rules" regarding self-disclosure. I was searching for my point of view and style about self disclosure and genuineness in the treatment relationship. Was my silence replicating unhealthy communication styles of the kid's families? As a field instructor, I was role modeling a professional self. My homophobia blocked me from doing my best. I knew that it was a serious countertransference issue. Yet I felt immobilized.

Perhaps a cogent example of this occurred when one boy received a write-up from school for saying out loud in class that his social worker was a "dyke." I knew I must discuss it with him as I would any other write-up. I was frozen with fear about what it might mean to enter such a conversation with him. So I did not. And my student sensed my dread. I wondered if the teacher had written the child up for using the derogatory word "dyke," or if it would have been the same if the child had said, "My social worker is a Lesbian." This was very significant, because in this conservative, often homophobic facility, it would not be out of the ordinary for a teacher or another staff member to consider"Lesbian" an inappropriate and insulting thing to say. I knew that I had to meet with the teacher to determine if there had been any misconduct on the child's part. Perhaps my perceived lesbianism was a treatment issue for this boy. What was the context of his comment? How would he feel if his perception were accurate? Maybe he was dealing with some sexual identity issues of his own or trying to understand a gay family member. I will never know. I was too fearful to open a dialogue. My homophobia won that round and my performance as a social worker and a teacher was compromised.

A few years later, again in the presence of a social work intern, a teenage boy who had been a resident for about eight months asked me at the end of our daily group session if I were gay. I felt extremely anxious. Yet I had been preparing for this question since the day I began the job five years earlier. I had struggled with my countertransference, processed and processed until I could process no more. And so, I was able to respond in the way that I believed best for my clients. I knew that this was a "doorknob" question, the kind a client might ask as he or she leaves a session, often indicative of some anxiety and/or ambivalence. And I knew that it demanded more time and attention than I could give it in the 30 seconds before the kids had to eat lunch. I told the group that we did not have time to address the question, but that we could come back to it the next day.

I have talked about this situation with many colleagues(heterosexual and gay/lesbian) over the years. Many acknowledged discomfort at leaving the group without answering the question. They believed that the kids would have probably assumed that the worker was gay; otherwise, he/she would have said "No, I'm not." Some colleagues confessed that they might not have been able to handle the anxiety and would give a quick answer based on their countert-transference, although they agreed that it was in the kids' best interests to delay it, as I had. It's not that I was comfortable waiting until the next day.. I was able to deal with my anxiety and respond to the kids based on what I believed was best for them. My intern and I discussed the group interaction at length that day, and explored the many issues and decisions.

I began group the next day by reminding the boys of the question I had been asked. I explained why I had not answered immediately, and told them I was a lesbian. Suffice it to say that the boys had many feelings and questions and continued to raise related issues in the group for weeks to come. The boys whose mothers were lesbians were able to begin to address some concerns that they had previously felt unable to discuss.

The boy who raised the question in group had given me a gift. It was a "teachable moment" for all. It gave me an opportunity to relieve any remaining sense of failure and guilt about the situation, years earlier with the write-up from school. My personal and professional growth were evident to me. This gave me peace. And pride.

When I was hired at CSULB in the Fall of 1994, I was aware that those who interviewed me knew that I was a lesbian because of personal connections, my workshops, and other professional activities. Soon after my arrival we developed a way to integrate my workshop into the curriculum. Anyone who did not initially know I was a lesbian learned this quickly. Since I was doing the workshops and advising the caucus. I was "out there." No reason to experience any of that nasty internalized homophobia, right?" Wrong. Dead wrong. This surprised me, the Queen of Homophobia. Just this morning when I informed my seminar class that we'd be joining another class next week and I would be presenting the workshop, I felt a familiar twisting in my gut. The class showed no signs of negativity, but I know from experience that many different feelings are provoked by the subject and that some remain unexpressed.

Weeks before, at a field seminar, a female student said that all of the women in the class had checked the posted lists to determine which "guys" would be in the class. Inside, I felt that twist again. Did she know that every woman in the class was heterosexual and was truly concerned with the question of male classmates? Maybe, maybe not. It's not important. . What is important is that I reacted internally to that-all too-familiar assumption of heterosexuality that I hear in my world everyday. On television, a talk show host asks a 12-year-old girl how she feels her situation (whatever it is) will impact her dating experiences with boys. Or in the supermarket line two young mothers talk about their opposite sex one-year-olds growing up to be boyfriend and girlfriend. This may all sound a bit nit picky, but as I've said before, everyday "the world" tells gay and lesbian people and their families and friends, in this back door sort of way, that they are not supposed to be who and what they are. I am confident that I made the right decision not to confront my seminar student's comment, for it was relatively innocent and certainly not malicious. .

I still feel that my teaching is occasionally negatively impacted by my homophobia. At times I want to make a comment or ask a question, but I stop myself, for fear that the student(s) will say to themselves, "Oh, here she goes with that gay stuff again." I know that some students have similar reactions to other content that they believe gets too much attention. But that knowledge does not stop me from raising those issues with them as often and as thoroughly as I believe necessary. Why? Because I have no personal investment. No fear that they will "blame" it on my belonging to a particular group. It's my homophobia, those bits of self loathing, guilt, and internalization of early messages to "just be quiet about it" that impact my teaching behavior and stifle my natural style and instinct.

A similar issue occurred at a faculty meeting when I spoke of how we can improve the way in which we integrate gay/lesbian content into our curriculum. The topic of discussion was program strengths and weaknesses. I began by apologizing for myself ... "I don't mean to seem to have tunnel vision or to focus on one single issue, but...." I suppose I was protecting myself just in case someone "accused" me of this. It would be less painful if I said it first. My homophobia was winning again. You may be thinking that no harm was done because I fought my fear successfully and said what needed to be said. But by apologizing, I gave the message that being gay/lesbian and/or focusing on related issues is something about which one must apologize. I most certainly reinforced that message for myself.

I realize that I have moved far from the topic of my sister's wedding. I began this article over a year ago, the wedding has come and gone. My initial intention had been to use the wedding to illustrate how consciousness of our issues is critical to our personal and professional development. Not only does it make work with clients and colleagues more effective, but it also allows us to enjoy richer and deeper relationships in all aspects of our lives. I hope that this narrative has succeeded in illustrating what I try to instill in my students. I try to teach about self-awareness with a passionate commitment. As I watch the process unfold, as I see my students growing and learning, I feel a sense of joy, of inspiration, of fulfillment. I am proud and happy to be a social work educator. As students enter the profession,they must let go of the naive myth that social workers must keep their feelings submerged. This is just not possible. Even if it were, we would be losing the invaluable tool of our own emotions. We all have biases and we all have transference and countertransference reactions. It's not so much what we feel that's important. It's about constantly working to learn about our feelings and struggling with ways to approach and manage them in the best interest of our professional relationships. □

P.S.My sister, dress and all, was a beautiful bride.

* The main goals(of the workshop) are to increase participants' awareness of their own homophobia and help them to recognize how it developed, and how to minimize its negative impact on their practice. We attempt this through didactic presentation and experiential exercises. The exercises require that participants take on the identities and situations of various gay/lesbian people and/or their family members and discuss and explore the thoughts and feelings that arise. We later ask participants questions that help them to reflect on their own childhood's and to and identify how, what, and when they "learned" about gay/lesbian people. Through this process, it becomes clear the ways in which each of us has been taught what and how to think and feel (positive, negative, as well as neutral) regarding homosexuality and gay/lesbian people. Connections are made to other "isms" as well. We then explore ways participants can begin to "unlearn" biases through consciousness and commitment. Using case vignettes, we end with a discussion of how this relates to practice, including work with peers, supervisors, clients, and communities. □

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A MALE SOCIAL WORKER TO BE A FEMINIST PRACTITIONER?

I am certain that I am not alone as a male social worker concerned about whether feminist perspectives have a place in my professional life as a teacher, practitioner, and scholar, as well as in my personal life as partner, father, friend, and, just recently, grandfather. For me, this search has now lasted over 30 years, and this writing represents a stopping-over point in the search, not a conclusion to the search.

By Dennis M. Dailey

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When I was about four years old, I fell down while roller skating out in front of my house and skinned both of my knees. You know, the one where it tears holes in your jeans and leaves those really mean red marks. It hurt a lot, and I cried. But when my dad came out to ask me what had happened, he knelt down, took my shoulders in his hands, looked me straight in the eyes, and said, "You know, Dennis, big boys don't cry." He had that serious, rational look on his face that said, "Listen up; this is important. " So I did. And I learned in that moment to bite my lip, choke back my tears, and stuff my emotions. What else could I do? I could not say, "Well, big ones might not but little ones do," or "Pardon me, sir, have you read the recent literature on knee injury?My knees are falling off." I did not have a Ph.D., so I did what I thought was right. After all, it was my dad talking and I knew he loved me and was always right. It is just that he had a little difficulty with my tears.

As I look back, I am so aware that the incident described above, and the thousands of teachings that followed, was the beginning of my socialization as a male. It also represents the beginning of the narrowing of my life, of being socialized to develop all of those attributes, characteristics, traits, and qualities that have been arbitrarily identified as masculine. It also represents the beginning of that process of stuffing and avoiding those attributes, characteristics, and qualities that have been arbitrarily labeled as feminine, such as emotional expressiveness, concern for relationships, gentleness, and nurturance.

In a strange way, that day when I was four was also the beginning of my search for wholeness, although I did not know it at the time. See, I kept slipping up. I cried at sad movies, such as *Bambi*, and was described as overly sensitive. What the hell does that mean? I did not want to fight, and I was not at all excited by football. Track and field I like, but football seems too harsh. When I was a teenager, I wanted to work with kids, even though a

construction job paid a lot more money. I kept slipping up. Then I decided I really did not want to be a pilot; rather, I wanted to be a chaplain. And finally I really slipped up. I found myself drawn toward the values, social justice issues, and service to others that are embodied in social work. Lots of folks did not quite get that choice back then, and my dad died not really understanding what it meant to be a social worker, even though he had hidden inside of himself many of the critical attributes of a good helper. Little did I know that his admonition not to cry, which I remember seemed a little odd and which I have heard some variation of almost every day of my life since, was in many ways a beginning point from which the question of a male feminist social work practitioner arises.

I am certain that I am not alone as a male social worker concerned about whether feminist perspectives have a place in my professional life as a teacher, practitioner, and scholar, as well as in my personal life as partner, father, friend, and, just recently, grandfather.

For me, this search has now lasted over 30 years, and this writing represents a stopping-over point in the search, not a conclusion to the search. It feels much more akin to pulling into a reststop on the highway during a cross-country drive.

BECOMING A SOCIAL WORKER

When I made the decision to become a social worker over 30 years ago, I remember some strange but harmonic feelings associated with the decision. First, I was aware that I was joining a profession that was composed predominantly of women, particularly at the level of practice where helpers hold out their hands to people in their environments who are hurting. I was also aware that most of the social work profession's heroes are women. This was not an awareness that was without conflict for me all those many years ago. I was not sure whether my choice was a negative comment on my masculinity or a genuine expression of my understanding of myself. I remember some of my friends and family being perplexed that I wanted to be a social worker, rather than a psychiatrist, or better yet, an industrialist. I suppose, given my socialization as a male, which began over 50 years ago, these feelings of uneasiness were to be expected (not that things have changed all that much). Did my desire to be a social worker mean I was less a "man?" Did it mean I did not have what it took to survive in a "man's world"? There were all kinds of questions, not of traumatic proportions, just uneasy questions. And maybe the saddest thing of all, this questioning leads some men, including myself, to hide their desire to be helpers under a basket, or to frame their helping in less open and genuine ways.

On the other side, the decision felt so correct. I knew that there were all kinds of things about who I was that naturally pointed me to helping and caring for others. I grew up in a

family where helping others was a natural expression. I can remember my father and other men going out to plow fields in preparation for planting because a farmer friend had had a heart attack and could not do it himself. Likewise, my mom was what I now know to be a natural helper. Her kitchen was often a safe place for people to come to talk over life's troubles. Further, some fairly strong values that emerged from an adolescence involving in church youth activities clearly had an impact. My choice as a teen-ager to become a Gandhian pacifist, and ultimately a conscientious objector (another unpopular decision), was leading me toward social work. Helping, caring, pacifism, relationships, etc. were all a part of the feminine in me, and that voice was stronger than I was really aware of at the time.

As I wrote the above, I experienced some of the twinges of contradiction all over again. I want this essay to be published, hopefully in a respected social work journal, but I am writing in the personal, not in the positivist, empirical voice. I had to fight the inclination to re-write the above, to take out all of the personal and interject the objective, empirical. I started to worry about citations and footnotes. In other words, I had to fight the masculine voice wanting to subvert the feminine voice. I finally decided that what was important for me was to finish this immediate search and hope that it is judged worthy of sharing with other men who are searching along the same path.

The story continues. I know that my first job, although one of the few opportunities I had coming right out of undergraduate study, was taken, in part, in response to the conflict I was feeling. I took a job as a probation officer in a large metropolitan corrections program. It was a very masculine place where power and authority were easily manifested, but which allowed for some caring for others, especially young people. This choice gave me some conflict. I was a "social worker," but I had a badge and an I.D., and I operated within the authority of the court (another very masculine social institution).

This was fine for a while, but it got old quickly. I cared about the kids and their families, but social control seemed much higher on the agenda than helping and caring. I know that the authority that went with the job was very, pardon the term, "ego-syntonic." It met some of my ego needs. I wonder if this is why so many of my colleagues at the probation office were retired military officers or why so many men who were really good caseworkers and therapists moved quickly to supervision or administration. So often, these promotions resulted in a genuine loss in service to people; they just could not resist the temptation for promotion, often to a position for which they were ill prepared and which gave them little personal reward other than the feelings associated with having some form of power. In many cases they were trapped into it based upon the related masculine roles it provided.

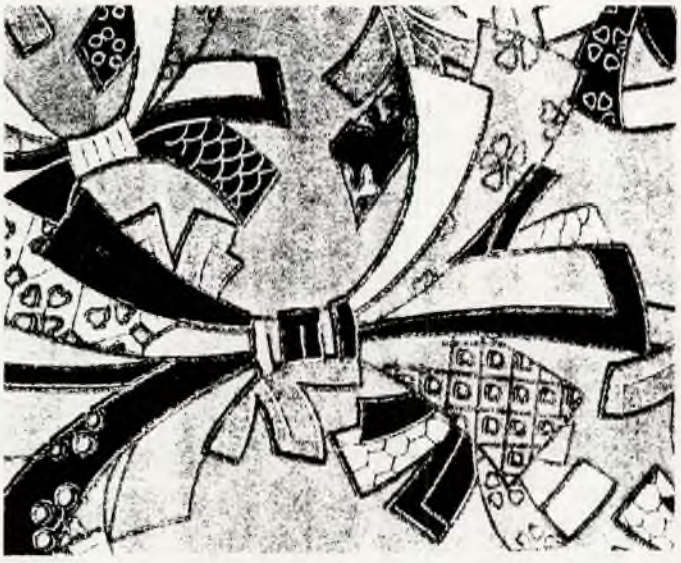
I left this first job and my position as a "senior" probation officer after only 14 months to pursue my master's degree. I knew then, as I know now, why I left. I hope this does not sound too harsh, but I left because it was not a helping place and it was excessively masculine. I think some kids were helped and their families strengthened, but it was not a helping place. Helping was not the primary goal, although it was on paper. It just felt uncomfortable, but I did learn a lot about myself. I learned that those things that initially pushed me toward a social work career did not have opportunity for expression. My supervisor often said that I got too involved, that I cared too much, and that I had to maintain distance and authority. All of that seemed incompatible with who I knew myself to be on the inside. By the way, those kids did not need distance; they needed closeness. On the outside, I played the game, as men have been socialized to do, but it was not the me I was most familiar with. I can still remember the scolding I received when my supervisor found out that I had cried during one of my sessions with a particularly sad and wounded boy who seemed to have no one who cared about him. I was humiliated by the scolding, not by my own tears. They seemed very appropriate, given the hurt.

CONTINUING THE SEARCH

It was during my graduate study, where over three-fourths of the students were women (not unlike today), that I first heard about

feminism and read some early feminist writings. I graduated in 1963, the year Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. I read it and it made me feel good and bad. Good because it had a very familiar, personal ring to it, something I kind of understood because of my own roots where male superiority was a given in so many ways. Bad because it aligned me with the oppressive, sexist half of the human population, something I understood again because of my own roots. It was in this context that the search truly began in an openly conscious way, although so much of my early experience was also deeply contextual for the process.

Early, the search was a very quiet one that went on in little corners inside of myself. There were not many people to talk with about this business. There were a few women and almost no men. The women, most of them, were sometimes understanding, sometimes understandably angry, and occasionally rejecting of my search. Some were also quite uncomfortable and that still happens today. This sometimes frightened me and I stopped doing any searching



in public. The saddest part was that I could not find any men who wanted to talk about this search until much later in the process. Alone again.

After I received my degree I worked in a large urban family service agency. That felt a lot better, because it seemed as if helping and caring for others was a top priority. My supervisor, a marvelously strong and caring woman, helped me to find avenues to express my caring for others. Her feminine voice was so natural for her, so comfortable to her, and so useful in the lives of hurting people; yet, she had a masculine voice that was so free and easy for me to hear. She became a model for me, and only later was I aware of the androgyny she represented. Now I know that is why we could yell at each other, and care for each other, in the learning process. Thank you, Minna!

Although the unfolding process is important, I want to jump to where I am today and reflect on the question posed in the title of this essay. Let me begin with a definition of the feminist perspective. There is no single, agreed-upon definition, so I share one that has particular meaning for me. It is found in Jo Freeman's book entitled *Women: A Feminist Perspective:*

The feminist perspective can be best understood in contrast with the traditional view, for each arises from a dramatically different set of premises. The traditionalist view looks at the many ways in which women differ from men and concludes that these differences reflect some basic intrinsic difference that far transcends reproducive capacity. The traditionalist notes that, historically, women have always had less power, less influence, and fewer resources than men, and assumes this must accord with some natural order. The feminist perspective looks at the many similarities between the sexes and concludes that women and men have equal potential for individual development. Differences in the realization of that potential, therefore that so long as society prescribes sex roles and social penalties for those who deviate from them, no meaningful choice exists for members of either sex.

It is the last sentence which feels so profound to me. Men stuck in masculine role prescription and women stuck in feminine role prescription cannot possibly become whole human beings and reach the fullness of their human potential. It is dying a male chauvinist

pig that really frightens me most because that would mean that I would die only having realized half of my human potential. I do not want that for myself and I do not want to play any role that would foster that outcome for my clients or my students or those I care for so deeply in my life, even though I do not always get it right.

I guess in some ways, that is what it means for a man to be a pro-feminist social work practitioner—he would hold as anathema the proposition that he or anyone else would die only half realized because of the perspective he took toward the human condition. I really do believe that the majority of men and women die stuck in sex-role constraints; thus, they die only half realized. So many men die not having recognized or owned or expressed the feminine side that all of us have as potential: the gentle, nurturing, caring, relational, emotionally expressive side. We fight crying, even at funerals; we stop hugging our sons and even our daughters as they grow, and some of us never hug our sons; we cover our emotional expressiveness, even in our closest relationships; we struggle to get to the top of the mountain only to realize that there is only room

for one at the top and this means living with a sense of failure; we focus on competition and achievement and care less for the meaningfulness of relationships. So many women likewise die only half realized as human beings. They subvert their capacities, especially in interactions with men; they do not get called upon as often as men when they raise their hands in the classroom; they get little societal permission to assert their power and thus accept a passive role; they are not taken seriously as presidential candidates; they wait and wait and wait for men to initiate in so many aspects of their lives. This is all toxic to the spirit of both men and women.

It may seem strange to put this feminist stance in death terms, but it is the only way I can think about this and make some sense of it for myself. Everything in my socialization and most of the reinforcement I receive as a male directs me to a "half -life" as a human being. I may end up an incredibly successful male, having fully claimed and expressed the masculine prescriptions, yet on my death be only half realized as a human being. What an ironic and sad passing.

ABANDONING POWER

About 12 years ago, in the depths of the search for fullness, I wrote another essay which was reviewed for publication no less than a dozen times, but it never saw the light of day. It contained the central idea for what I thought I needed to do to achieve wholeness and to become a more balanced and androgynous person consistent with my human potential. I concluded that I could not even get close to fullness as a human being unless I accepted and internalized the feminist perspective. The feminist perspective may very well constitute the transition to androgyny, and androgyny represents human health. The man who discovers, claims, and expresses the best of both his masculine and feminine (the definition of androgyny) is healthier than the man stuck in masculine sex-role scripts or for that matter, the woman stuck in feminine scripts.

The title of that earlier piece was "Abandoning Power: The Male Dilemma." If men are to achieve wholeness and become feminist practitioners, I believe that we all have to confront this essential dilemma. Put simply, I believe that all of us, at some level, lay claim to and assert a quality of power that is ours only by virtue of our possession of a penis (the great male identifier). That is power that is not earned, not the product of excellence or effort, but power conferred on us because we are male, because we have possession of a particular anatomical feature. I, with some jest, refer to this as "penis power," although it is

not at all that funny.

It was becoming clear to me that my upbringing as a male had in so many subtle, and not so subtle, ways socialized me to see myself as powerful because of my maleness. I understood male prerogative at a very young age. By 7 or 8 I knew that baseball was for boys, even though there was a girl in our neighborhood who could "whip all of our butts."

The dilemma produced by the prospect of abandoning power is a complex one. Because power is so intrinsic to the socialization of men, the resulting dilemma is enormous. Abandonment: "to give up or discontinue, weariness, distaste, or the like...To give up with the intent of never again claiming a right or interest in." Power: "ability to do or act...vigor, force, strength...authority, influence...a person or thing having great influence, force, authority...the product of the multiplication of a quality by itself." Dilemma: "any situation requiring a choice between unpleasant alternatives," (*Webster's New World Dictionary).*

So what is the dilemma? What are the two unpleasant alternatives? One alternative is to allow the world of man and woman to stay as it is, with men being dominant and women being subordinate. I experience genuine change occurring very slowly, which may suggest that this is the alternative of choice today. The other unpleasant alternative is for men to consciously and actively abandon the powers we hold which are invested in us merely on the basis of the possession of a penis (no matter its size!). Most men, and a lot of women, too, would find this alternative repugnant at best, especially since other men would seriously question their sanity, as well as their "manliness." The dilemma seems so clear to me. To choose to continue to lay claim to unwarranted power will rob me of any opportunity to become a fully functioning human being and, even worse, cause me to feel I have lived a life of fraud. To give up power, on the other hand, is to give up an advantaged position, and to be minimally labeled insane, unmanly, too womanly, or gay. Too many goodies come from possession of power, and only crazy persons would consciously, actively give up such goodies.

I recently attended a faculty forum on my campus, where extremism in the Middle East was being discussed. At one point the speaker said, "Only angels give up power easily," and I might add graciously. That phrase jolted me back once again to the dilemma of abandoning power and why it is so complicated and difficult.

But that is where it is at—abandoning power. A conscious activity, not a passive one. Abandonment is an especially good word to capture the struggle. I am not talking about giving up power as a result of women, for example, demanding or claiming power. I am not talking about using my power to simply redistribute power, because that always ends up smacking of charity for women and I would probably end up keeping at least one hand-hold on the key to power redistribution. It is paternalistic at best. Abandonment is an active word: to give up out of distaste and weariness, never to be claimed again or held as a right. Abandonment means that I would have to be about the business of identifying what power I have that derives from excellence or effort, or as a result of having been earned, and what power is merely conferred because of maleness. I knew that this was not going to be particularly easy for me or any other man, because I do not think we are often able to make clear distinctions between power claimed by virtue of our maleness and power earned by effort. The process will be further complicated by the general lack of support from our brothers who think we are crazy and by our sisters who do not want us to give up our powerfulness. See, if we do give up illegitimate power, vacuums will be created. We will have to fill some of that vacuum with genuineness, honesty, humility, etc. On the other hand, giving up unearned power leaves room for me to claim and express the feminine side of myself that I often push down in the name of holding power (read masculinity).

When I am working with a woman who hurts, for whatever reason, I have noticed that she often will accept what I say at face value. This occurs when I am suggesting even the most speculative of observations and I am sure it occurs when I say the dumbest thing possible. Now I know that that happens in lots of helping situations, irrespective of the gender of the helper,

merely because of the implicit authority of the helper. But I am absolutely convinced it is measurably more frequent when the helper is a male and the person seeking help is a female. It is in these moments that I have to be most sensitive to this occurrence and actively do something that builds the kind of intimate relationship that would make it safe for my clients to challenge me. Sometimes, simply describing this common situation can be helpful in neutralizing the power issues in helping. Divesting one's self of the need to always be right also helps. Even arguing with one's self can help to model an interaction that is less power driven.

Recently, I was working with a woman who was struggling with her sexual abuse history. We were discussing how she sees every interaction with a male, no matter the context, in sexualized terms. I said, "Well, maybe they are all sexual." I knew the minute I said that that it was a dumb thing to say. Her response was, "Well, yes, I guess you're probably right." She knew it was not true and so did I. I quickly said that what I had said was really dumb, that I knew that all interactions with males were not sexualized. She said, "Well, yes, I know that, but if you think it is probably true then I guessed it probably was true." Having resolved that what I had said was dumb and we both knew it, we went on to discuss our working relationship, her inclination to accept my utterances as the gospel truth and my inclination to say really dumb things at times, in part because I expected myself to always have some kind of answer. It was an unusually useful piece of work, which we have returned to often. We were able to use our working relationship as a metaphor for so much of her sex-role socialization which suggested deferring her own judgment to the opinions of the men in her life and the impact of the coercion that was a part of her sexual misuse experience. Realizing this further allowed me to do my work of abandoning power in a genuine way. She and I both worked hard on the consequences of patriarchal dominance and its impact on our lives and on our working relationship.

Abandoning power and beginning to give voice to feminist perspectives yield a strange mix of good and bad. I can remember too clearly when I began to really work at trying to frame my teaching in a more pro-feminist image. In a large undergraduate course I teach, called *Human Sexuality in Everyday Life*, I remember getting comments from men in the class, and a few women too, that I was a male basher, that I always sided with women, and that it just was not fair. Some even dropped the course because of this. But I was not male bashing; I just wanted men to begin to hear the impact of patriarchy in their own lives and in their loving relationships with others, especially the women in their lives. And the women who complained about male bashing seemed to be coming to the protection of the men, who did not really need the women's protection any more than they needed theirs. Some of the women even said that they did not want "their men" to change roles or behavior; they were looking for a "real man." And then there were a few men who would approach alone and in a whisper and tell me that they were very open to the feminist perspective and were trying to incorporate it into their lives. They often seemed fearful to be found out and apparently wanted and looked for some kind of modeling for their journey. I can really remember what that felt like for myself, when I felt so alone in this process.

On the other side of this coin is another strange mix. Many women reported feeling very affirmed and empowered by the stance that I took in this class. That was not my purpose, but I can remember that I began to question whether that was really my motivation. Since the class of 500 students always has more women than men, maybe I was non-consciously trying to earn their good evaluations. But the more I examined this, the more I was clear about my motive. I wanted them all to

hear what a different view one could get about human sexuality and close relationships if one brought a feminist image to the process of understanding and also how lived experience would change.

And then there were some women, both students and colleagues, who were openly suspicious of my voice. They had a hard time trusting it and believing that it was real and genuine. So did I in the beginning, but as I experienced the realness for me, their suspicions and even hostility were hurtful. I understood, but it still hurt, and it did occasionally quiet my voice out of fear of "not getting it exactly right."

FINDING THE BALANCE

I think we men who help others as social workers (or as any helping professional) get to feminist practice by seeking the feminine within ourselves and bringing balance between the masculine and the feminine. I do not think feminist practice is so much learned from others, at least initially. I think it is discovered within. I do not think women are responsible for teaching me to be more feminist as a practitioner, although I think their modeling and writings would be useful when things get really confusing. The motivation to search for the feminine arose for me out of a deep sense that something was wrong or missing in the helping process and probably in life as a whole. I became quickly aware that the stakes would be very personal.

In my clinical practice, this search for the balance between masculine and feminine, and the application of feminist perspectives, had an immediate impact on my relationships with my clients. Neutralizing the implicit power role of the helper is not at all an easy matter, but, all of a sudden, notions such as therapy, treatment, intervention, cure, fix, etc. had little meaning for me. What had meaning was the notion of joining with my client in an intimate relationship from which we could both draw what we needed to heal and grow. I found myself spending much more time nurturing my relationships with clients rather than searching around for some tricky technique or canned approach to problems.

This nurturing of relationship, which I had abstractly heard about throughout my training, was not an abstraction. It was all about intimacy, that is, making the choice to be known by others. If my clients did that also, then we had a more intimate relationship within which we could mutually search for the barriers that kept us both from claiming our strengths and using all of our resources. That is as much an issue for helpers as it is for clients, it seemed to me. The concept of use of self, which I had learned early in my training, took on a completely different meaning. I was much more present. I was much more self-disclosing. I was much less in my head and more concerned about the connection between my head and my heart. I was much less concerned about being in charge of either the content or the process of the work together. I was, interestingly, much less concerned about objectivity or the management of boundaries. I was much more relaxed and present in the moment. This all really felt good, although I confess to hearing in the back of my mind things like, "This will interfere with the transference and countertransference," or "Distance is essential in the therapeutic alliance," or "Don't get too involved." Like many, I found myself rewriting theory, much of which struck me as sexist.

And, of course, this struggle with intimacy could not help but influence all of my meaningful relationships. The same challenge for intimacy occurred with my partner, with my children, and with some of my dearest friends. The same emotional risk-taking involved in the choice to be known by others was real in my every interaction with those I cared about. Consciously abandoning the power implicit in the male role within the family was really difficult and not unlike the abandonment of power within the clinical moment. All of my models had been otherwise, as were the expectations from others. I can remember my kids kind of waiting around for me to give some kind of directive. When I started to recognize how terrible this felt and started not always doing that, but saying things like, "Why don't you decide? the balance in the relationships began to change. It never got perfect but it sure did improve.

Once the feminine is found, it must then be embraced, owned, internalized, and personalized, becoming a natural part of the

essence of one's being. That was easy at an intellectual or instrumental level and hard at a deeply personal, emotional level. I flash back to my first social work job in corrections. Intellectually, I could have known all about feminism, feminist practice, etc. and yet been diverted from expression because I had not yet really owned the implications of what I knew. The mental picture of feminist social workers (male or female) doing the work I did with juvenile offenders and gangs from a feminist perspective blows my mind. The whole business of use of authority would be so dramatically different. The badge I carried would have no meaning. I would have tuned in to the impact of male sex-role socialization so differently for the young men I worked with day to day. Most dramatic of all, I would have heard the voice of many of my female clients so differently, especially all of those who kept the secret of their sexual misuse. Makes me want to go back and do it again, to help in a more balanced manner.

So often in my work with men, I can hear the impact of sex-role socialization on how they define their hurts, how they have coped prior to reaching out for help (hard for men to do), and how they chose to relate during the helping process. So often this is allowed to slip by without notice or attention. I think the helper who works from a feminist perspective would never let this pass. He would name the struggle, no matter the resistance. He would model a more androgynous option. He would not get caught up in power games, including power games about the implications of the feminist perspective. He might use his own struggles as a basis for empathic response, including self-disclosure.

I can recall a recent interaction where a simple response from this perspective was useful in re-framing a client's struggle. I was working with a young man who had recently had a relationship end, largely due to unresolved sexual problems (erectile difficulties). He said, "I worked so hard to satisfy my girlfriend's sexual needs and still she didn't have an orgasm when we had sex." I responded that good sex usually was not work and did not focus on product outcomes (orgasm) as a measure of achievement, which is a particularly male way of experiencing sexual interactions. And then I said, "Don't you get really tired of all that work and taking full responsibility for all your partner's pleasure? It must be difficult for you to experience your own pleasure when you are working so hard." He paused, with a look of consternation on his face, and replied, "You know, I never looked at it that way, but you're right. I was always working and worrying about whether I was OK. And even though it felt OK, I don't think it was all that much pleasure for me, or her, for that matter." We talked at length about how his sex-role socialization had defined his sexual expectations, behaviors, and goals. We also connected this issue to other areas of his life that were dictated by stereotypic role expectations. The more we

talked, the more angry he got. Finally, he said, "Ya know, I think I got set up by all of that bullshit. I can even remember early messages from my dad about being a stud, even though the other messages were that I shouldn't have sex until I got married. That was really confusing." I agreed and then commented on the craziness that women must experience trapped in their sex-role stereotypes. We talked about their being viewed as sex objects and how that hurts, and how women are taught that men know everything about sex and will give them their orgasms. All of a sudden he said, "This is a crazy dance we are in, isn't it?" I think for the first time he really got it.

I have no doubt that most men in social work could get this whole feminist thing intellectually and instrumentally. Owning, embracing, and internalizing will be the real

challenge. We are not accustomed to embracing our emotionality with taking care of ourselves in a less selfish manner, with seeing ourselves through a lens more balanced between our masculine and feminine potential. It can be really scary, but it can be done, I think.

So, the initial part of my journey was a very personal search, followed by the struggle to own, embrace, and internalize a changed view of self. Next came the really hard part, the part that called for me to express what I know and what I own. I now had to try to behave in my lived experience in a way consistent with the journey. That is what brought me to the active abandonment of power unearned, power conferred, and power connected to my biological gender. If we men are successful in the abandonment of power, we are left with only one resource with which to do our work. We are left with ourselves and our willingness to bring ourselves into relationships with others that have the potential for healing consequence. We will not talk so much about treatment or intervention or curing or fixing. We will talk about being in a relationship with someone who hurts, and hoping that that relationship has within it what the client might need or draw from to heal. We will be certain that we do not have the answers, but that our clients do have the answers. We will not feel as if we are in charge of the process, but rather are sharing or joining in a process. We will give much less advice and more of ourselves. We will be sad if things do not work out for the better, but we will not assault our self-concepts for not being able to leap tall buildings and catch bullets in our teeth. We will seek or accept less often the promotion that takes us away from direct work with people. This will be difficult economically sometimes, but may be more rewarding. And if we do "move up," we will bring our feminist perspective to our roles in management and administration. Won't that be interesting?

This has been a useful process for me. Maybe my cake is cooked a bit more thoroughly, the toothpick a little less sticky when testing to see if the cake is fully cooked. I hope others who read this will find some connections for their own journey. My hope is that men will begin to search for and dialogue on how their own sex-role socialization and the absence of a feminist perspective impacts upon their helping activities and their personal lives beyond practice.□

DOING ALCOHOLISM TREATMENT IN NORWAY: A PERSONAL REMINISCENCE

This article provides an insider's view of work in a Norwegian alcoholism treatment center, not at a typical center in Norway, but at one modeled loosely (very loosely) on the American 12 Step approach. Because there was a lack of regulation externally and of professionalism internally, this American's experience was fraught with challenges of a most disturbing sort. Although social workers generally will be unable to preserve their ethical integrity in a system dominated by profit and interpersonal conflict, the rewards of speaking out and exposing ethical violations can make even the most unsavory of experiences ultimately seem worthwhile.

By Katherine van Wormer

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Last night I dreamed I was back at Gjovikseter (a fictitious name). The dream was one of those where you are a trespasser on forbidden territory and just about to get caught. Here I was an intruder, and there was no escape; feelings of guilt and shame were overwhelming as I found myself face to face with my former boss, the director. What am I doing here? How can I explain? I beg his understanding and forgiveness, but am ordered away. Even long after the particular images have faded in the light of day, the feelings of disquiet and trepidation continue to hang over me like a cloud.

THE HONEYMOON PERIOD

Perhaps I should start at the beginning. In 1987 I spotted a job ad that seemed too good to be true. "Alcoholism counselors wanted to bring the Minnesota Model to Norway." Being in Minnesota, I was at the right place at the right time. My family was more excited than I was as I went to Minneapolis for what turned out to be a delightful interview. Alcoholism counseling was my field, and though I did not know what the Minnesota Model was, much less how to teach it, my expertise was taken for granted. (This model was AA's Twelve Step program, I later learned.)

From 1988 to 1990 I spent two very exciting and fulfilling years as the treatment director of an alcoholism center. The center was located at a former ski resort on the top of a mountain with a view of the town below that was breathtaking. My role as the "professional in residence" entailed lecturing to clients (including family members) and modeling counseling skills for counselors-in-training—trainees. Trainees doubled as translators and therapists, translating for me and my fellow American colleague, Ed*, as we participated in group and family therapy.

Ed, an AA hard liner, tough on the outside but with a heart of gold, practically ran the place. Ed's charisma and hilarious first-hand stories of his drinking days and reluctant recovery made my contributions seem pale in contrast. What could have been a competitive situation—me with the academic credentials, Ed with

* All names are fictitious

the know-how—grew into a relationship of incredible sharing and kidding around and team play. Everything I was to learn about Norwegian culture—the school system, the mistranslation of words, the work norms — I was to learn from this man. I also got to witness some amazing treatment techniques.

A motherly figure, the assistant director, Inger, was everyone's caretaker. Her fluency in English, humorous insights, and utter efficiency in managing personal and administrative crises eased my transition into a foreign culture and very strange work atmosphere. "Katherine, this a crazy house," was Inger's constant comment. Much of Inger's frenetic energy, it later became apparent, was consumed with covering up the mistakes of her boss, Kai (pronounced to rhyme with high). A man of great charm, Kai dressed in a sailor jacket and flirted with any woman who trusted him enough to smile. Seeing himself in the role of perpetual victim, Kai was given to describe his feuds with people, men who falsely accused him of owing them money or women who cried out "sex-press" (sexual harassment). Inger's fierce loyalty to the director and to the mission of the treatment center stemmed from her very, very recent experience as a client there. In fact, except for the chef, every member of staff, from the cleaning crew to the director himself, was a recovering alcoholic, some with as little as two months sobriety.

While I was happily adjusting to the carefree schedule of my job — engaging in public relations work, visiting treatment groups, and delivering lectures on group therapy to trainees —Ed was growing more and more frustrated. Standards were declining, he said. Kai was more interested in newspaper publicity (and attracting celebrities to treatment who would be written up in the tabloid press) than in recruiting a professional staff or maintaining professional standards. Especially worrisome to Ed was the lack of required sobriety for trainees who were doing the therapy and relapsing as frequently as the clients, not to mention the frequent violation of clients' confidentiality in the interests of newspaper publicity and the frequent sexual liaisons between clients and staff.

Still, delighted to be living in one of the most beautiful and richest (no poverty in sight anywhere) countries in the world, gratified by the opportunity to help highly educated and well motivated clients, and intrigued by the daily soap opera of life at Gjovikseter, I managed to find a niche for myself. The only slight dampener to my spirits was the polluted physical environment — virtually every person at the treatment center smoked except for Ed and me. Staff meetings grew intolerable as we all got shut in as winter approached.

About this time Ed fell out of favor with the director. The latter took to reminding me that my loyalty must be to him and not to Ed. Meanwhile, Ed was growing increasingly wary as he watched his power base disintegrate slowly and surely. He confided in me, and only in me, of his misgivings. Staff meetings conducted mostly in English for the sake of "the Americans" grew increasingly hostile and belligerent. Kai, who earlier had ceded much of the decision making to Ed so that he could pursue an intense love affair with a young, former client and ex-prostitute, now, spurned by his lover, moved to regain his power base. Abrupt lower level staff changes followed. Bringing on board his ex-bodyguard and confidant from a rough former life, Kai ordered the program director's translator and right-hand man to a branch center in Oslo. My American colleague now found much to complain about: first there was the ex-bodyguard's — Gunnar's — very recent drinking episode; then there was the director's public involvement with a string of much younger women. Meanwhile, Gunnar, in a pre-trainee status, secretly moved in with the more mature and motherly assistant director, Inger. In the midst of the chaos, my colleague returned to America for a Christmas vacation.

SEPARATION

Upon his arrival in America, Ed had a stroke and died. He was 50 years old.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

A disclaimer at this point may be in order. Events that ensued at Gjovikseter probably say more about the pitfalls of alcoholism treatment and the nature of addiction and addictive relationships than they do about Norway. In Norway, alcoholism treatment ordinarily was provided free of charge by the state. Psychologists led treatment groups; the focus was on individual responsibility and control. The disease model of alcoholism was relatively unknown in the late '80s. Transported from America, this model guided treatment at the several private, unregulated treatment centers such as the one which is the subject of this article. Because there was much hostility to privatization in this part of Scandinavia with its shining socialist tradition, the private center operated entirely independently. The director-owner— "the chief alcoholic" as he called himself— answered to no one. In a country in which even the sales of used cars are closely regulated, the operation of this center was a strange anomaly. For a comprehensive view of Norwegian cultural traditions, traditions stressing humanity, equality, and cooperation, see *Social Welfare: A World View* (van Wormer, 1997).

A State Of Inner Turmoil

Several months later, five trainee therapists decided to "blow the whistle" to the press concerning certain unethical practices. Their concern was with the sexual harassment to which they had been subjected, the "kidnapping" of clients into treatment (staff members would get reluctant clients very, very drunk, then drive them up to the treatment center), and the lack of pay for trainees, who were instructed to pretend they were not working so as to qualify for sick pay money from the state. These disgruntled workers, their picture on the front page of Norway's major newspaper, were simultaneously fired. Newspaper headlines chronicled unfolding events such as a near fist fight between Gunnar and the union leader.

Then one night, I was summoned to a late night meeting where Gunnar and tearful staff members were coerced into signing loyalty oaths. Only a few of us refused to sign. My speech of opposition to the firings went untranslated. Without any training, Gunnar and Inger, now an obvious couple, ran the treatment program for alcoholics and their families. My role (I was now the program director) was secondary. Somehow, over time, thrown in continual contact, Gunnar, Inger, and I all became friends. It was then that Inger confided in me that Gunnar had physically threatened the late program director just before his departure from Norway. This happened at the airport; Ed had seemed to be in a state of confusion as he boarded the plane. Gunnar had been "under orders" from the director to frighten Ed so badly that he would never come back to Norway. Gunnar now blamed the director as well as himself and was no longer loyal to him. Overcome with guilt, he wanted me to know the whole story.

For guidance, I looked increasingly to professional ideology. Researching the social work code of ethics over and over, I pored over the part about one's professional responsibility to one's colleagues and to the community. Unable to eat (at work) or sleep, my mind began to race forward with possibilities and intrigues. Revenge plots occupied my mind to the point of utter obsession. I refused to sign the letter to the editor written by the remaining staff proclaiming our support for the director. I wrote glowing letters for fired staff members (these documents were later used in court proceedings in which the director was sued for illegal firings); I crashed into an executive conference with bankers and labor leaders to speak on behalf of the recently former staff. I stayed in touch with the fired workers. For the most part, however, although seething within, I acted loyally and friendly on the surface. And I continued to throw myself into addressing the needs of some very appealing and eager-to-learn clients and their families.

With the departure of Ed, use of the English language departed also. Effectively cut off from most communication, I became intellectually and socially isolated. New trainees, recruited from clients who stayed on at the half-way house, spoke only faltering English. Their sobriety was faltering also.

By now I had been in Norway six months.

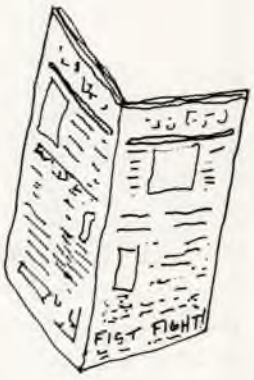
My children were thriving in school and my husband gloried in the delights of a caring community. My inability to speak the language wedded me to the job in what had now become in a literal sense "a crazy house." Inger and I alternated between being close and being caught up on opposite sides of the conflict between the top administration and the fired workers. Paranoia filled the air as the director and Inger sought out enemies of the center. Gjovikseter staff were instructed not to fraternize with former staff. Over a two-year period there were 50 former staff members scattered over Norway and Minnesota.

THE DECISION TO ACT

The dilemma — how to survive in a hostile work environment and how to maintain one's professional integrity while publicly representing an ethically corrupt outfit — was resolved early in the second year of my employment. Unable to simply "turn a deaf ear," I would become a spy. Gathering evidence, I would "come clean," I decided, by releasing this evidence to the public. Fortuitously, the editor of *Sosionomen*, the Norwegian social work journal, called to request an article. The issue was to be the need for regulation of alcoholism treatment centers. Forthcoming in May, the article would be professionally translated into Norwegian. Since I planned to return to the U.S. in June, the timing of the inevitable firing would be manageable.

One of my greatest fears concerning the pending article was my anticipation of utter rejection from Inger and her "sambor" (partner). As fate would have it, however, both of them were to break up their relationship, completely burn out, and depart well before the appearance of the article. "Kai is a psychopath," they declared. Still not trusting them, I said he wasn't that bad. However, their tales of Kai's earlier life were harrowing. Gunnar's return to his long-forgotten wife left Inger in a state of deep depression that was to persist for the better part of a year. Today, fully recovered, she is happily directing her own treatment center while her former partner has established a successful career as a family therapist in Sweden. Both have quit smoking.

In any case, when the article came out, the very people I dreaded facing were no longer there



and were now very supportive. My most immediate problem was to get the promised air fare for myself and my family (a total of $4,000).

When my article "The Need for Regulation" (van Wormer, 1990) hit the press, I was in the process of negotiating the return air fare for myself and my family. Characteristically, Kai had been stalling for weeks. Then all negotiations came to an abrupt end. "You will not get your air fare money now," he said. I had several hours to clear everything out of my desk and office. My salary and holiday money were confiscated. And what a shock when I got to read in the local paper that police charges would be filed for *underslag* — embezzlement!

With the permission of *Sosionomen*, I will cite the whistle blowing portion of that article. The local press highlighted my accusations. This portion chronicles the depth of my professional compromise:

Professionals who work for an organization which engages in questionable practices become necessarily implicated in the carrying out of those practices. Compromise becomes an essential form of survival in the unregulated, profit-oriented treatment institution. The social worker will try to work within the system to change the system and then one day, in anger and desperation, will turn to the outside . . .

I have survived at this treatment center because as a foreigner [unable to speak Norwegian] I have really had no option. Also, I thought I could have some influence. I have survived by uttering feeble protests, manipulating the situation where possible, but mainly by "turning a deaf ear." I have turned a deaf ear to some of the following practices in which I was directly or indirectly involved:

*Placing recent ex-clients on night watch duty; this entailed distribution of sedative medications.

*Training recent ex-clients to do therapy before they were ready, encouraging them to receive their money illegally from the government.
*The firing of the entire treatment staff (except for the director's ex-bodyguard) for disloyalty to the director.
*Pressing clients to proclaim their illnesses publicly to the press.
*Pulling clients out of treatment to perform duties "for the home."
*Getting clients drunk, then "kidnapping" them to treatment.
*Violation of health laws pertaining to rights of non-smokers.
*Turning former clients out of aftercare programs for disloyalty.
*Sexual harassment (sex press) of clients and staff.
van Wormer (1990)

The aftermath of the article—the confiscation of the money owed me and the false charges made the point better than the article itself regulation by the state was necessary to protect whistle blowers as well as the ordinary workers and clients. Writing the article, however, was therapeutic; it was catharsis in the form of revenge — revenge for Ed, the fired trainees, and the dozens of women who were sexually harassed. And now for a universal question: Can a social worker maintain his or her integrity in a treatment center run for the sole purpose of making money? In most cases, no. In a corrupt enterprise, in one way or another, all participants are corrupted.

CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

In the end, thanks to the formidable Norwegian Social Work Union, of which I had not even been a member, I won my case in court. The Norwegian social work organization was deeply shocked at the unprofessional practices going on at such private centers as the one in question. Just recently, Kai was found guilty in a civil case involving sexual harassment of a secretary and ordered to pay her a substantial sum. In his defense, the director was quoted in a newspaper article as saying, "I only touched her in the very best sense of the word," and in a TV interview as proclaiming, "I am impotent so how can I bother anyone?" Reportedly, Gjovikseter continues to thrive and clients continue on their tough road to recovery.

Writing in *The Whistleblower,* a book which provides an in-depth analysis of individuals who speak out against their companies, Glazer and Glazer (1989) quote one of their subjects as follows:

> *As a whistleblower you will experience every emotion known to mankind . . . Be prepared for old friends to suddenly become distant. Be prepared to change your type of job and life style. Be prepared to wait years for blind justice to prevail.* Glazer and Glazer(1989,p.237) .

I feel lucky that I arrived in Norway when I did and that I had the professional tools and connections to do what I did. The sadness that haunts me is that when I left, nobody waved good-bye. The joy is that now, several years later, all is forgiven (by my colleagues) and/or understood. Nothing in graduate school prepares us, nothing in the professional journals informs us of how tough it is to fight an organization. To be willing to blow the whistle, you have to be willing to be seen as a traitor. Still, support from a professional association can provide tremendous psychological as well as monetary support. Besides, helping to change the system, a corrupt and damaging system, is one of the most thrilling and meaningful things a social worker can do. But no matter how much self-congratulation there may be in the after years, there are always those haunting dreams....□

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BEING A VOICE IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

A Commentary on
"Doing Alcoholism Treatment in Norway: A Personal Reminiscence"
by Katherine van Wormer

By Dale Weaver, Ph.D.

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As a profession, social work is informed by both practice experience and scholarly activity, and effective teachers of social work rely on both academic material and lessons from their own professional careers. In teaching macro practice classes, one of the lessons I pass on from my own turbulent administrative career pertains to assessing for oneself just when decisive, ethical career action is necessary. I tell my students that such action is required when a point is reached at which there is significant disparity among the interests of one's own career, the interests of the agency where one works, and the interests of the population being served. We can call this guide to action the 'principle of mutual interests'. The application of the principle of mutual interests rests on a clear understanding of the power differences among clients, workers, and agencies.

The initial importance of this principle is to get students to understand that their interests, and the interests of their agencies, are not necessarily congruent with the interests of their clients; in fact, the interests are not expected to always be congruent in the real world. The second important purpose of the principle of mutual interests is to encourage students to continually monitor and evaluate the interests of these three 'interest groups.' Though it ought to be a simple matter to articulate one's own career interests, it is my experience that few of us consistently do this. Often we assume that by following the dictates of our public-spirited agencies and by concentrating our energies on serving our clients, our careers will naturally prosper. The idea of consciously pursuing our own career interests, possibly at the expense of the interests of others seems unsavory and at odds with the spirit of our profession. In fact, however, one is both less likely to engage in conflicts with the interests of others and more likely to prosper, if one sets clear personal career goals and milestones of achievement on the way to those goals.

Van Wormer was in a fortunate position, that is, understanding her own interests while in Norway. In spite of the difficulty of sorting out these issues in another culture, the

length of her stay there was proscribed ahead of time, and her career in the States was not threatened by her actions in Norway. It was her task in regards to her own interests to complete the enjoyable family stay in Norway, resolving issues of professional conscience as she left. She did accomplish this temporal balancing act, though cutting it a bit close, as she lost her air fare home at the last moment.

That the interests of our agencies may be incongruent with the interests of both organizational staff and clients is a truism of administrative theory and practice. Much has been written about 'goal displacement' and about the primacy of the need for organizational survival. Again, however, the pursuit of mere organizational survival is a reality which conflicts with the aspirations and world views of social work students. The principle of mutual interests serves as a reminder to social work practitioners of the need to separately consider and evaluate the impersonal interests of our host organizations.

At Gjovikseter no one, with the possible exception of Ed, seemed to be doing that. As described, the agency was little more than a setting for the pursuit of individual interests—professional, financial, and sexual. For van Wormer, the agency was a succession of personal and professional alliances, a system within which she generally felt comfortable, as she was able to establish separate personal and professional relationships with nearly all of the primary actors. However, identifying and articulating the interests of the agency itself, separate from the interests of a tangled web of scheming individuals, may have brought some clarity to the situation.

More troubling, however, in Gjovikseter as described by van Wormer was the lack of overt consideration of client interests. Determining, articulating, and evaluating the best interests of clients is the most difficult of all, because it begs the question of who has the right to speak for clients, and because this action cannot avoid the power differences between clients and helpers. Professionals are quick to appoint themselves the guardians of the best interests of their clients; indeed, professionalism can be defined in terms of the knowledge and values needed to articulate and represent those interests. But this notion of professionalism rests on the assumed right and power of professionals to speak for clients. Accepting the expressed interests of clients on their own terms is a more challenging method of practice. Never failing to consider the interests of clients is perhaps the most important challenge of our profession because of their frequent lack of power to be heard regarding their own interests. The "very appealing and eager-to-learn clients and their families" at Gjovikseter seemed to be receiving effective treatment at times, while having their rights violated at other times. I think that a clear articulation of the interests of clients in this organizational mess would have gone a long way toward clarifying the need for ethical action, as well as the urgency for that action.

How do we know when the need for action has arrived? Frequently, simply when the pain of continued inaction becomes too great. As social workers, when we feel that these moments have arrived, the principle of mutual interests may help us to rationally recognize and assess these moments. Usually, however, there is a simpler way. Professional codes of ethics, government licensing and oversight of professions, personnel policies and practices, and regulatory oversight of non-profit institutions are attempts to achieve a fair balance of interests by reducing the power differences among clients, workers, and agencies. These codes require that professionals do not discount the interests of their clients, and that agencies do not violate the rights of their workers. Hence, clear violations of written and normative professional and institutional regulations are a sure sign that the principle of mutual interests has been transgressed.

It is not clear from the article just when van Wormer felt the need for action. After "the frequent violation of clients' confidentiality..., and the frequent sexual liaisons between clients and staff," she was "still delighted to be living in one of the most beautiful and richest countries in the world." In spite of a number of egregious violations of ethical and regulatory guidelines, she remained passive until forced to publicly proclaim her loyalty. The difficulty for her must have come from her status as a cultural outsider. We know that rules are never applied exactly as

written; there are always customary informal norms governing the application and timing of formal regulations. How is an outsider to be familiar with these norms? Especially when direct understanding of these norms is cut off through lack of familiarity with the local language. And does an 'outsider', a guest in a foreign county, have the same rights, the same obligations to come forward, when the locals around her seem all too comfortable in the face of violations? It is telling that van Wormer turned to a professional code of ethics for guidance rather than to the local regulations governing her workplace, even though there were consistent clear violations of those regulations. "Increasingly for guidance I looked to professional ideology." Was it her status as a cultural outsider which led her to professional norms for guidance? Can a professional code of ethics guide behavior for professionals cross-culturally?

After determining that the present situation is untenable, what courses of action are available to us? Hirschman (1970) tells us that dissatisfied organizational members have three options for action, expressed in the title of his classic work, *Exit, Voice, And Loyalty.* In choosing exit, we avoid the conflict by leaving the situation and going on to another; voice means that we remain in our positions and work openly to resolve the conflict; and expressing loyalty means that we remain in the situation no matter what, tacitly accepting the violation of interests. Our choice of option depends on our assessment of the viability of the options and our own alternatives. Choosing exit implies generous career alternatives to the present situation. Choosing voice implies a belief in the possible effectiveness of this option, an investment in the present situation, and possibly the presence of alternatives if one is forced to exit. Choosing loyalty implies few alternatives and a belief that expressing oneself will not be effective.

Van Wormer's status as a visitor constrained the exit option in a unique way. While, as she stated, "my inability to speak the language wedded me to the job...," at the same time her departure from the job was predetermined. "Since I planned to return to the U.S. in June, the timing of the inevitable firing would be manageable." So, while exit was not immediately feasible, it was a certainty in the near future. Generally, this is the organizational situation not of regular employees, but of consultants or of employees on limited contracts. At the same time, her status as a visitor precluded the need for a deep or extended loyalty to the agency. She needed only to "...find a niche for myself." Indeed, her loyalty was to a succession of organizational actors, rather than to the agency itself.

Due to the constraints on her exit and loyalty options in this situation abroad, this article is a wonderful description of the voice option in the face of the need for decisive action, in particular the frustrations of exercising the voice option in a foreign land with an unfamiliar language. The first exercise of voice was a negative one and was forced by circumstances, as van Wormer refused to sign a loyalty oath. Her first proactive voice articulation was negated. "My speech of opposition to the firings went untranslated." What a frustration it must be to act, but to not be heard. She went on to refuse to write some letters, while insisting on writing others--manipulating her voice ethically. However, "effectively cut off from most communication, I became intellectually and socially isolated." Again, professionalism guided van Wormer toward action, as a professional journal came forth to finally provide her with an effective forum for her voice. Her voice was effective in that it led to the official regulations necessary to achieve a balance among interests in social service organizations. And the effective exercise of the voice option successfully resolved van Wormer's personal dilemma, as it "was therapeutic, it was catharsis in the form of revenge."□

Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

FULFILLING OBLIGATIONS TO ONE'S MOTHERLAND: HIV/AIDS PREVENTION IN INDIA

A STORY BY PALLASSANA R. BALGOPAL TOLD TO ROLAND MEINERT

Social work colleagues with a special interest in international practice invariably share stories about their work with one another. Drs. Balgopal and Meinert work closely on the CSWE Commission on accreditation and come together for extended meetings three times a year. During one of these meetings, Dr. Balgopal (BAL) shared the following story with Dr. Meinert (ROLAND). The story is presented in a question and answer format.

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Roland Meiner, Ph.D., is President of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare, a social policy and advocacy organization of about 1500 members.

Dr. Balgopal noted that he avoided writing about his work in India until now: (1) he was not finished with the work yet (2) and, too emotionally involved to share his experiences from a scholarly perspective.

ROLAND(R:) Since 1987 you have been going back to India every summer, but you've never said whether it was for family reasons. I know that during 1992-1993 you had a Fulbright and spent the time in India. What have you been doing?

BAL(B:) Well, I've been going back for both reasons. In recent years the professional activities have increased. In the beginning I spent a summer in Singapore in a program on HIV/AIDS awareness. The program was sponsored by the WHO (World Health Organization) to educate health service administrators and workers about its increasing magnitude in Asian countries. This took part of the summer and I wanted to spend the rest in India. My initial intent was to spend what remained of the summer relaxing with family and friends and to do some thinking about the upcoming semester back at the School of Social Work, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

However, during the first summer back in India, a series of events drew me into contact with groups who are profoundly impacted by HIV/AIDS. One group was part of mainstream society and the other was very marginalized and on the fringes. At the time I wasn't conscious of it, but both these groups tapped into one of my needs that had been present for some years. Like many Asian-Indian social work educators raised outside the USA, I felt an obligation to give something back to the culture that nurtured me. My initial purpose for coming to this country was to obtain advanced training and then to return to India to work. However, my decision to stay created a sense of guilt for having abandoned my original mission. The opportunity to work in India gave me a sense of consolation that I was finally able to do something for the Motherland. As an Asian Indian immigrant, I carry with me the belief of adhering to *"Dharma." Dharma*

is a set of beliefs and expectations which lay down a series of proper forms of behavior and steps in an individual's life. Loosely translated, *Dharma* means *duty* and distinguishes itself from conscience. While Indians may not always explicitly say that they adhere to *Dharma*, many of them implicitly follow its basic tenets. As a middle-class Indian immigrant, I have followed some of the fundemental tenets which include being a successful professional, raising and supporting a family, and being involved in my ethnic group's social and cultural activities. But at the emotional gut level, I feel a need to do something for my Motherland. One way of achieving this is by frequently visiting family and sometimes being involved in social welfare projects that are especially focused on helping the oppressed and vulnerable groups.

R: What were the two groups, and knowing of your long-standing commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention, how did they fit into this?

B: The two groups were cross-country truck drivers who are gainfully employed in what is considered a skilled occupation, and the other were Hijras who are institutionally marginalized and stigmatized in Indian society. However, both of these groups are directly involved in the spread of HIV/AIDS in India. Although efforts are being made in India to deal with HIV/AIDS, the level of awareness about it by the general population at large is not very high. In India there has never been an icon like Magic Johnson who has been HIV positive and received extensive nationwide publicity. The reason for this is the fear of stigmatization and of being ostracized by the public.

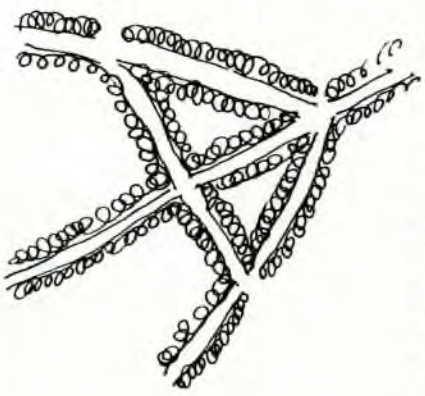
R: Tell me about the truck drivers, their involvement with HIV/AIDS, and the manner in which you began working with them.

B: My first contact with the truck drivers occurred when I visited the food stands, known as *"dhaba,"* in the outskirts of Madras in south India. In the North Indian language, this term means a roadside eatery where homestyle food is served. Most of the truck drivers in India are of north-Indian origin and they prefer to eat north-Indian style food, so *dhabas* are seen all over Indian highways. At the time of my visit to one of the *dhabas*, there were about 10 truck drivers who had stopped to have their evening meals. My contact with them began with exchanging pleasantries in the north-Indian language, Hindi. Most of the exchange was about the quality of food and whether it is as authentic as that which they are served at home, especially since this *dhaba* was located in the heart of south India. After discussing issues about adjusting to different environments with different languages, ethnicity, and customs, the conversation led to a discussion about their being away from home so frequently, for long periods of time, and what they

missed about it. One of the truck drivers said that due to the *dhabas* being located in southern India, one could find north-Indian food, but one could not get women. "Food, which one is used to, can be replicated, but when it comes to women, it is a different story." In time, our conversation led to a discussion about the increased numbers of prostitutes and road-side sex workers (who are frequently housewives and village women who engage in commercial sex to subsidize their family income). Initially, the drivers jokingly asked me whether I was looking for women. When I said "no," they wanted to know why I was so curious about their roadside activities with the village women. I was frank and told them about my involvement in doing HIV/AIDS awareness work. My frankness seemed to facilitate the drivers in opening up and having an honest discussion. We talked about the risk factors associated with such casual sex and contracting sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). One of the drivers, referring to his own

contraction of gonorrhea, chuckled and said, "You have a lot of heat in your crotch." Ultimately, this lead to our discussion about HIV/AIDS.

As an outgrowth of my work with WHO in Singapore, I began to visit schools of social work in India with the purpose of imparting information and increasing the students' awareness about HIV/AIDS. As I traveled from school to school, I became aware of the extent to which HIV/AIDS was being transmitted by cross-country truck drivers. It occurred at rest stops along the highways where women from nearby villages, invariably poor, would have casual sex with the drivers. The women at the rest stops would meet the drivers and their apprentices for a quick encounter, which in India is called "ejaculatory sex" for pay. Some of the women and drivers are now HIV positive, resulting in the virus being spread throughout the country along the highway network. Initially, I was at a loss as to how to approach the problem, but decided to use the time-honored principle of beginning where the client is. I simply began hanging around the rest stops where the truck drivers had stopped for a meal and for quick sex. I soon became a familiar face at some of these rest stops where I struck up conversations with both the owners of the *dhabas* and the drivers. I had two objectives for the contacts. The first was to pass out condoms to the drivers and information as to why it is important to use them. Second, if they seemed interested, I provided as much information as they were willing to listen to about HIV/AIDS itself and how it was spread. When I left at the end of last summer, I, along with the other local social workers, had become known as the "rest stop condom men." Probably anyone who did what I did would achieve some degree of effectiveness, but I had one major advantage. My ability to speak both "north" and "south" Indian languages, without a discernible accent, helped tremendously in establishing short-term focused conversations with the truck drivers at all the rest stops that I visited.



However, what has been most difficult for me emotionally is the plight of the poor village women. They must give up their dignity to engage in transient sex with the truck drivers to help support their families. These women rightfully claim that prostitution is not by choice but to supplement their income. They are able to make more money in an evening prostituting than in a whole month of farm work. There is nothing I can do to change the circumstances within which they live and that force them to sell their bodies. On the one hand it is important that I do whatever I can to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. On the other hand I feel guilty of depriving the village women of the meager money they get which is desperately needed to help support their families and children. My own observations of this culture and its economic disparity lead me to conclude that the real solution for these women rests in better employment opportunities. But this is unlikely to become a reality during their lifetime.

In addition, because of the cultural values, it is not easy for me as a male to work with these women on sexuality issues. After recognizing this limitation, I shared my concern with some professional colleagues. They, in turn, worked with the local public health officials which resulted in their recruiting female para-professionals to work with these village women at grass-root levels. Additionally, during my visits to the schools of social work, I met with female students and other professional social workers. We discussed ways of passing on the HIV/AIDS information to the village women and they (the female social workers) are being encouraged to design approaches using a social development perspective. In this regard, some very innovative and bold work is being done by Dr. Sunderraman and his colleagues in Madras

and Mr. Akash Gulalia in Delhi. Through their initiatives, "block" field placements have been developed. These placements include social work students living for a period of time in the villages. Their actual stay in the village has helped facilitate their acceptance by the village community.

R: Bal, the truck drivers and village women are certainly high-risk populations in terms of HIV/AIDS; however, you also told me about another high risk group. They are the Hijras. Tell me something about them.

B: The Hijras are also highly at risk in terms of contracting HIV/AIDS and ultimately spreading it. Unlike the truck drivers, the Hijras live in a state of institutionalized marginality and stigmatization. They have been in India for centuries. Some of them speak with a great deal of pride about giving up their male genitals as a homage to their patron Goddess to achieve spiritual transcendence. Not all Hijras are homosexuals, but they all dress in drag. Some Hijras undergo sexual surgery and engage in commercial sex.

R: Would you say they are similar to transvestites, cross-dressers, or those who undergo sex change operations in the United States?

B: There may be some superficial resemblance, but psychologically, behaviorally, and culturally they are totally different. The Hijras are a distinct community with a specific organized, hierarchical social structure. One of their most important functions in Indian society is, for example, to act as community entertainers during celebrations such as weddings, the birth of a child, and other holidays and festivals. They sing, dance, play the *dholak* (sacred drum), and give a blessing. Through such entertainment activities, they earn alms for their "community." In addition, because of recent economic depression, Hijras are increasingly engaging in prostitution.

R: How does an Indian male become a member of the Hijra community?

B: It is a matter of individual choice usually made during late adolescence and the young adult years. Some males are attracted to the prospect of living as a woman rather than as a man and to a lifestyle of institutionalized homosexuality.

R: What enabled you to become involved with the Hijras and how did it actually come about?

B: Via their prostitution activities, the Hijras are emerging as one of the major high-risk groups to be infected with STDs and HIV. They are often solicited for clandestine homosexual activities, mainly by married men. For some time I tried to achieve a degree of acceptance within the Hijra community, including through my contacts with their "*Naik*" or leader. Then a fortuitous incident took place. A colleague from the Delhi School of Social Work, Akash Gulalia, arranged for me to go to the neighborhood where Hijras hang out at dusk to procure "customers." At that time, we came across a Hijra who was being harassed by a motorcycle policeman. I was able to stop the harassment, which was escalating, by using a mild form of intimidation. One of my relatives had been a high police official in the area, and when I began dropping names, the policeman backed off and left. This rescuing incident facilitated my establishing confidence with this young Hijra. At that juncture, I also told her that I did not want to interfere with her "business activities" but would enjoy getting to know her.

R: Bal, you told me that you feel more confident about creating more extensive changes in your work with the Hijras than with the truck drivers. Why is that?

B: With the truck drivers and village women, the only positive results came about on a person-by-person basis with little chance of impacting the total population. On the other hand, even though it is an ambitious undertaking, by following the principles of social development practice, it may be possible to have an impact on the spread of

HIV/AIDS throughout the entire Hijra population.

There are structural and socio-economic changes that can take place within their communities and connections can be made with police, public health, and educational resources. By working with the Hijras on their turf, especially in their own neighborhoods, and by

developing an indigenous willingness, it is conceivable that basic institutional changes can come about. In my next meting with the Hijra whom I rescued from the police harassment, I greeted her as *thangachi*, an enduring Tamil (south-Indian language) term meaning "little sister." I used the Tamil term because it was easy to identify her as south Indian due to her distinct Hindi accent. She looked at me with surprise, as it is uncommon for Hijra to be treated with such acceptance. I apologetically added that I did not want to encroach on her business hours (*"dhanda"*), but that I would like to talk. She became receptive, stating, "You are a very unusual person," and invited me into her home where she served tea and southern Indian snacks. We spent more time talking about her life than about prostitution and AIDS. The Hijra preferred that her clan members did not know that she prostituted. This would be a shameful experience for her, if it became known. Also, due to my referring to her in the feminine gender, she seemed content by my acceptance of her lifestyle; I could tell by her insistent smiles. The norm is for the Hijras to be treated and stigmatized as "whores." But this norm was broken for the brief moment when I referred to her as my *tangachi*, younger sister.

In closing, I must clarify that in my recent trip, I learned how professional colleagues working with the truck drivers have been successful in getting the drivers to come to the roadside clinics for treatment of STDs. Most drivers infected with a variety of STD's stop to get medications, are informed about HIV/AIDS and the risks in contracting it from unprotected sex, and are given condoms.

R: As I listen to your story, it seems to me that you are optimistic and enthusiastic about your work in India. It also seems to me that there is something involved here that goes beyond the application of professional skills.

B: Yes, I am enthusiastic but not optimistic. It seems that for every progressive move forward, many more problems arise. The incidence and prevalence of HIV/AIDS all over India is increasing at an alarming rate. In fact, it has become the epicenter of this epidemic.

Like many academics, I sometimes wonder whether what I teach students actually works and makes a difference. My work with the truck drivers and the Hijras has re-confirmed for me that it does. However, my work in India has philosophical, spiritual, and psychological meaning for me. I find great value in being able to help my Motherland and to give back something to the people and culture who gave me so much. This is one way of fulfilling my *dharma*, a never-ending conflict.

Roland, as you are aware, I was reluctant to talk about my work. I appreciate your encouragement and enticement to share my story.□

ENDNOTE: Dr. Balgopal wishes to thank two persons who provided information and assistance in working with the two groups. Dr. Sunderraman, a UCLA-trained psychiatrist, assisted in developing contacts with truck drivers, and Akash Gulalia, a lecturer at the Delhi School of Social Work, helped in contacts with several Hijra groups.

FROM SOCIAL CASEWORK TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

This narrative traces the evolution of my ideas during the time that I worked and lived on three continents. Reflecting on my international intellectual journey, I am struck by the way my work evolved over time to adapt and synthesize the influence of many friends and colleagues in diverse international environments. The narrative seeks to demonstrate how international experiences can enhance knowledge and generate new perspectives that have global relevance to human needs.

By James Midgley

James Midgley is Dean and Specht Professor, School of Social Welfare, University of California at Berkeley

Twenty five years ago, I embarked on an intellectual journey which has taken me from South Africa to Britain and to the United States. Influenced by many friends and colleagues and diverse intellectual traditions, each geographic move has been accompanied by a major conceptual re-orientation. My formative training in social casework in South Africa was augmented by a social policy perspective which I acquired by studying and working with Richard Titmuss at the London School of Economics (LSE). After I was assigned by Titmuss to develop a new graduate program in social policy at the LSE for students from the so called 'Third World' nations, I was exposed to the literature of development studies, and particularly development economics. I was also strongly influenced by the overt internationalism which pervaded our interactions with the program's students. Most of them were administrators or policy makers who had come to London to enhance their knowledge of the social policy field. Their internationalism facilitated an ability to synthesize ideas and experiences from many different parts of the world. They also helped me to realize that in the Third World context, social policy could not be separated from economic considerations. This realization fostered my inter-est in the emerging field of social development which was, at that stage, poorly conceptualized but nevertheless capable of offering a synthesis of social policy and economic thinking. My own contribution to the conceptualization of social development has emphasized the linking of the social welfare and economic development approaches (Midgley, 1995; 1996), but originally, it focused exclusively on the so-called developing countries. After I moved to Louisiana, I realized that the social development approach had relevance not only to the developing countries but to the industrial nations where the problems of distorted development were only too evident.

The evolution of my writings over the years has reflected the influence of the diverse environments in which I have lived and those with whom I have interacted and

collaborated. I owe my intellectual development to these international experiences. My contention that a developmental or productivist approach to social welfare is urgently needed to respond to global social needs (as well as current political and economic realities) has not emerged spontaneously but is the result of my exposure to diverse international environments, intellectual traditions, and the influences of many friends and colleagues, and is clearly revealed in my book *Social Development: The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare* (Midgley, 1995) which seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the field.

PRACTICING CASEWORK IN CAPE TOWN

I was educated as a social worker at the University of Cape Town in South Africa at a time when rapid social and political changes were taking place on the African continent. My parents traced their descent from Dutch and English settlers who had come to the country in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively. Like many young South Africans, I was not fully cognizant of the evils of the apartheid system until I went to University and realized that the country's system of racial oppression was not, as the government's propaganda campaigns told us, a 'normal' situation which satisfactorily accommodated the nation's ethnic diversity. Those of us who entered social work and were exposed in our field placements to the awful conditions of poverty and deprivation in which most people of color lived quickly realized that this was not a 'normal' situation at all. The influences of our teachers, as well as a knowledge of the changes taking place in the rest of Africa, made us realize that the South African government's policies were anything but normal. At the time, many colonized African societies were in the process of becoming independent from European imperial rule, and many were attempting to promote economic and social development. In this way, the newly independent African nations hoped not only to secure political sovereignty, but to achieve liberation from the bondage of poverty and social deprivation.

The achievements of the African independence movements kindled the hope that white minority rule in South Africa would also be ended and inspired South African liberation organizations such as the African National Congress (ANC). But efforts to bring about meaningful change were met with brutal reaction from the government and social conditions deteriorated. The government's apartheid policies exacerbated existing inequalities and aggravated the conditions of poverty and deprivation.

Despite South Africa's institutionalized social injustice, the social work profession was highly conventional in its approach to social issues. Remedial casework dominated the curriculum at the professional schools, and textbooks and other teaching materials came either from Britain or the United States. Most social workers found employment in conventional casework settings which provided few opportunities to address fundamental issues of poverty, injustice, and oppression. This situation persisted until only a few years ago (Mazibuko, McKendrick and Patel, 1993; Patel, 1992).

The dominant imported casework approach which focused on individual pathology was of limited relevance to the South African situation. The treatment of individual pathology not only neglected to address issues of social injustice and oppression but proved to be hopelessly impractical in a nation where the mass of the population was living below the poverty line. Attempts to treat individual pathology could not be expected to succeed while basic problems of social and economic deprivation were ignored.

Accordingly, most of us who were motivated to become social workers because we wanted somehow to help bring about progressive social change were ineffective. We lacked an appropriate professional education as well as the practical experience to make a meaningful contribution. After graduation, I worked in a public child welfare agency in one of the worst slums of Cape Town. I quickly realized that conventional casework approaches were hopelessly inadequate for dealing with the

deeper problems underlying the symptomatic manifestations of child neglect, abuse, and deprivation. However, because of my narrow casework training, no alternative forms of intervention that might more effectively address these problems were available to me.

My frustrations were shared by several colleagues who felt equally powerless, exacerbated by our profession's unwillingness to campaign for change. We lacked professional leadership and were isolated from other progressive elements. As government oppression increased, it became apparent that opposition was politically dangerous and could result in arrest, torture, and imprisonment.

The social work profession failed to support African colleagues who were harassed or imprisoned by the government. For example, the arrest, detention, and banishment of social work colleague Winnie Mandela brought little response. As Leila Patel (1992) pointed out, social work in South Africa became increasingly marginal to the struggle for change. Feeling helpless and increasingly marginalized, I and many other younger social workers either kept our heads down or sought to escape from what was rapidly becoming an intolerable situation. My own response was to return to University and pursue graduate studies which would hopefully result in an academic job where I thought I could be of more value than in professional practice. In 1968, I was awarded a graduate fellowship by the University of Cape Town which enabled me to study overseas for a year. The fellowship was intended to assist South African graduate students enhancing their credentials by studying at prestigious British or American universities. On the advice of a close friend, I applied to the London School of Economics(LSE) to do an intensive one year master's degree in social work and social policy under the distinguished British academic, Richard Titmuss, who had pioneered the field of social policy in the 1950s and 1960s . Because of my limited casework training, I knew little about Titmuss or the LSE's Department of Social Administration. I went to complete further graduate work at one of the world's leading centers for social sciences research and because of the prompting of my friend. However, I went with a sense of awe and trepidation: awe because of the LSE's international reputation, and trepidation because of my total ignorance of the social policy perspective. Little did I realize that Titmuss would become my mentor and that my period of study in London would change my life.

TITMUSS and SOCIAL POLICY AT THE LSE

The London School of Economics was founded about a century ago by the Fabian Society, a group of intellectual socialists who rejected revolution and believed instead that socialism could be attained through electoral means. They believed that the labor movement could secure political office and introduce measures that would further the aims of socialism. The Fabians also argued that once the labor movement was elected to power, it would need a highly trained and committed cadre of administrators to plan the economy, undertake major social reforms and introduce extensive social programs. Scientific knowledge, gleaned from economics and the other newly evolving social sciences, would provide the basis for this technocratic revolution (MacKenzie and MacKenzie, 1977). The creation of the London School of Economics by the Fabians just a century ago (Dahrendorf, 1995) was, therefore, intended to provide an opportunity for training planners, administrators, and policy makers who would implement the labor movement's socialist agenda.

Richard Titmuss was appointed as the first Chair in Social Policy at the LSE in 1950. He was an active Fabian and had written several books on social policy issues. However, he had no university education and his appointment attracted a good deal of attention. But whatever misgivings his academic colleagues may have had, these were quickly dispelled. He was soon recognized to be a major intellectual figure at the School and by the time of his premature death in 1973, his contribution had been recognized by the award of no fewer than five honorary doctoral degrees from universities in different parts of the world (Gowing, 1975).

Together with colleagues such as David

Donnison, Peter Townsend, and Brian Abel-Smith, Titmuss shaped the emerging field of social policy. He wrote prolifically and formulated a systematic approach to social policy based on a clearly articulated set of normative prescriptions. Grounded in Fabian ideology, Titmuss's conception of social policy charges the state with the responsibility of promoting the well-being of its citizens, and it relies extensively on technocratic expertise to formulate and implement progressive social policies. Many of his students founded new departments of social policy at other British universities and his writings were influential in creating similar programs in other countries. His influence on leading social policy thinkers in the United States was profound. Titmuss made a cardinal contribution to the development of social policy as an academic subject (Donnison, 1979; Deacon, 1993).

My period of study with Richard totally changed my intellectual orientation. His social policy approach offered a radically different perspective to my narrow casework training. In keeping with the Fabian argument that it was more effective to drain the swamp of human need through massive social policy intervention than to pull people out of the swamp one by one through social casework, I realized that South Africa's social problems could not be solved through remedial casework but that a social policy approach of massive social planning and concerted national action offered the best prospect for change. This was, in turn, dependent on the election of a representative government which acted in the best interests of all its citizens.

At the time that I studied with Richard, he was engaged in discussions with the United Nations about the creation of a program at the London School of Economics.in social policy and planning for developing countries. Shortly after I completed my graduate studies and returned to the University of Cape Town in South Africa, he wrote to offer me a faculty position. Together with Margaret Hardiman, another faculty member at the LSE, I would be responsible for establishing and administering the program.

The idea for the program came from Richard's old friend, Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist and sociologist. Myrdal served as an advisor to the United Nations during the late 1960s. He was concerned with the need to balance the emphasis then given to economic planning in Third World development with a new emphasis on social development. Myrdal had for some time been critical of the way development was defined in narrow economic terms and he called for a broader conception that integrated economic and social elements in the development process (Myrdal, 1970).

Myrdal believed that trained social planners were needed to work closely with economists in government planning agencies to insure that development plans paid adequate attention to social issues. Economic development, he argued, should produce real improvements in standards of living for all citizens. He believed that the social services should be accorded major importance and in government's intervention in fostering social progress.

Richard had been approached, at Myrdal's suggestion, by the United Nations about the possibility of establishing the first program in social policy and planning for developing countries at the London School of Economics. The British delegation at the United Nations played an active role in supporting the creation of the program, and the British government's aid program provided financial support to assist in its development. Richard was excited about offering a new program in social policy for developing countries and agreed to the United Nation's proposals. I was thrilled to be a part of this new program and accepted without any hesitation at all.

THE THIRD WORLD PROGRAM IN SOCIAL POLICY AND PLANNING

When Richard assigned Margaret Hardiman and me to create the new program in social policy and planning for developing countries, there was practically no literature on the subject and no other program had, to our knowledge, been established elsewhere. We were accordingly compelled to conceptualize the

courses from scratch. Margaret, born in India, had previously worked in Ghana and so her experience was vital. We made extensive use of the documents produced by Myrdal and the United Nations on the subject of social development (United (Nations, 1971). Conceptually, we were grounded in the statist tradition of social policy which Richard had formulated. Although Richard's welfare state approach was vigorously attacked from both the Marxist left and the political right, it informed our teaching and featured prominently in the literature we subsequently published on the subject of Third World social policy.

Margaret and I were compelled to produce our own teaching materials. Initially, these took the form of class handouts, but later we were able to publish journal articles and eventually books on the subject. Fortunately, the program was expanding and international interest in social development was increasing with the result that more teaching resources became available. Apart from the United Nations, the World Bank and other international agencies were placing much more emphasis on social development and official reports and studies reflected these concerns. Publications produced by the World Bank in the mid-1970s were particularly important. Under the leadership of Robert McNamara, the World Bank published a series of policy papers on key social sectors such as health care, housing, education, employment, and rural development (World Bank, 1975). The approach used in these policy papers was similar to our own. We used this approach when writing our textbook, *The Social Dimensions of Development,* which has since been widely adopted in developing countries (Hardiman and Midgley, 1982 1989). Some of the other books we produced were not designed as textbooks but rather as issue-oriented analyses of key issues in Third World social policy. These included my discussion of social work in the third world (Midgley, 1981) and my analysis of the way inappropriate social security programs in developing countries heightened inequalities (Midgley, 1984). Our book on the state and community participation was intended to debate the merits of a statist versus communitarian approach to social policy in the Third World (Midgley, Hall, Hardiman and Narine, 1986).

After the program had been in existence for eight years, Margaret and I surveyed the program's graduates to determine what careers they pursued after graduating and to obtain further insights into their work (Hardiman and Midgley, 1980). We found that most of the students had indeed returned to their countries to work in the public social services. Most were middle-level managers in government social service departments dealing with health care, education, housing, and social welfare. However, a good proportion of the students were economists who had returned to work in central planning agencies. We had been particularly interested in recruiting economists to the program since they were influential players in national development and were gratified that they were making a difference at the national planning level. We also found that some of our students had returned to work in international development agencies such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization, and that some had been recruited to work in international non-profit organizations engaged in development. Both Margaret and I felt that one of the great strengths of the program was the diverse backgrounds of the students and their ability to bring their experiences to bear on the course content.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICA'S THIRD WORLD

In 1985, I emigrated to the United States to join the faculty of the School of Social Work at Louisiana State University. I was recruited by Brij Mohan who had been appointed Dean of the School of Social Work in 1982. Brij himself had emigrated from India to the United States in the 1970s and was familiar with my work and my interest in development. I had also met other American social work educators who were interested in development. They included leaders of the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development such as Dick Estes, Dan Sanders, Roland Meinert, David Hollister, and Ezra Kohn. All were actively

promoting the social development perspective in the United States and were eager to collaborate with me.

At LSU, I thought that my previous work in Third World social policy would not be relevant to my new role as a faculty member in a large, regional school of social work in the United States. However, I was soon struck by the way people in Louisiana talked about their state as 'America's Third World,' and also by the highly visible manifestations of poverty and deprivation in the area. These realities were confirmed when the Congress of the United States approved the creation of the Lower Mississippi Delta Commission in 1988. The Commission was charged with formulating a comprehensive development plan for the region (Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission, 1990). The Commission's report revealed higher rates of infant mortality, poverty, and illiteracy than high income, developing countries such as Costa Rica, Cuba and Malaysia. However, the region is not economically backward. It contains one of the world's great concentrations of petrochemical industries, a well developed agricultural sector, extensive tourist facilities, and other resources.

The Delta report called for the implementation of a comprehensive development plan which would not only stimulate economic growth and create jobs, but address the problems of poverty, racism, and inequality that characterize the region. The report's proposals were in many ways similar to the type of development planning which Myrdal and his colleagues had advocated in the 1960s. I recognized that the work I had been doing was not only relevant to the so-called 'Third World' but to all development situations (Midgley, 1994a).

However, living in the United States made me realize that the state welfarism we had promoted in the social policy program at the London School of Economics was unworkable in the American context. I recognized that Titmuss's emphasis on government intervention was ideologically unpalatable to many Americans. The strong individualist traditions of the culture and a deep suspicion of government favored an attitude which tended to denigrate state welfarism and particularly those social programs that focused on the poor.

The social policy approach suffered from the welfarist inadequacy of failing to integrate social interventions within a dynamic development process. The LSE program had intended to link social policy with development, but in reality it placed more emphasis on the provision of social services than on economic growth. It stressed the need for appropriate social service policies but failed to harmonize social investments with economic development activities.

The need for an integrated development strategy which fosters economic development but insures that social policies are intimately linked and harmonized with economic policies became apparent. This approach, which may be called the social development approach, transcends the institutionalist welfare statism of Titmuss, and requires that social policies and programs that contribute positively to development be given priority over those that serve a purely remedial or maintenance function. This requires a new engagement with issues of human capital mobilization, social capital formation and direct income generation through creating productive employment, and self-employment. However, the emphasis on integrated development which pays adequate attention to balancing economic and social goals does not abandon Titmuss's concern with egalitarianism. By addressing social needs within a dynamic development context, the social development approach seeks to foster growth and re-distribution.

These ideas are elaborated in several articles in *Social Development Issues* (Midgley, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b) and in my book *Social Development: The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare* (Midgley, 1995). They have also formed the basis for LSU's community outreach project (Community University Partnership) which Michelle Livermore and I implemented at the University's Office of Research and Economic Development (Midgley and Livermore, 1998). With the support of Ken Millar, Martin Tracy, and

faculty at other social work programs in the Lower Mississippi Delta region, efforts are currently underway to foster the adoption of a social development perspective among social workers in the Mississippi Delta in the hope that the social development perspective will form a viable intervention modality within the profession.

I moved to the University of California at Berkeley in January of 1997 to succeed the late Harry Specht as Dean of the University's prestigious school of social work. I am greatly honored to be occupying the Chair named for Harry and his late wife Riva. Although the demands of being a dean are limiting the time I have available to write, I intend to further develop and articulate my social development approach in terms relevant to mainstream social policy debates in the United States. In this way, I hope to demonstrate further that ideas originating in other nations can not only be relevant to social policy thinking in the United States but enrich our own perspectives and, enhance the effectiveness of social policy.

CONCLUSION: PROMOTING A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Each geographic move has been accompanied by major changes in my intellectual orientation as I have been exposed to new environments and ideas. Each change has been significantly influenced by the views of many friends and colleagues whose international experiences have assisted mein gaining useful insights into the potential effectiveness of different social interventions. My experience demonstrates the powerful contribution international experiences can make to the evolution of new ideas and social policy interventions.

My formulation of a social development perspective applicable, not only to Third World countries but to the United States as well, has attracted attention and support from a relatively small group of social work colleagues in the United States who believe that remedial— and --maintenance oriented social welfare interventions need to be transcended by a dynamic developmental approach. However, there is evidence of a growing interest in this approach. Together with colleagues working in the field, I have presented at several recent conferences and lectured on social development at several universities. Despite this interest, a great deal of work lies ahead if the developmental perspective is to gain widespread acceptance. Its central ideas need to be communicated in ways that have direct relevance to the situation in the United States and can be readily understood. I hope that more colleagues in this country and abroad will respond to the ideas contained in the developmental approach. In view of the worsening global situation, this will require more collaboration at the international level. The resurgence of poverty and heightened inequality in many countries, the overt expression of ethnic hatred by neo-Nazi and other racist movements in Europe and North America, and genocidal campaigns in the Balkans and parts of Africa require a renewed international commitment to the idea of social progress. I hope that my journey is not yet ended and that I can play a role in promoting greater international collaboration to address these challenges on a global scale.□

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Museum Review

THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM WASHINGTON, D.C.

"The things I saw beggar description."
General Dwight D. Eisenhower
Dachau
April 15, 1945

By Mary Ann Jimenez

Arts and Media Editor

I have an uncle who, along with Eisenhower, was present at the liberation of Dachau. He has only spoken of his experiences there once, after he was among the first visitors to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

He told me of eyes, bulging from invisible bodies shrouded by rows and rows of bunks, eyes that stared at him fixedly with no expression. These were the living of Dachau, whom my uncle helped to their salvation. Of the dead he remembers the mass graves of freshly dumped corpses; the bodies of young and old, silently screaming testimony to the inhumanity of so many—the guards he would arrest, the Nazis, the anti-Semites of Germany and Europe, the Americans leaders and others in positions of power who turned their back on this horror during the period of the Nazi regime before and during World War II.

My uncle will not say anymore about those days he spent at Dachau, but he will talk about the Holocaust Memorial Museum, what it meant to him and what it signifies to the rest of us. Never before, he reminded me fiercely a few days after I had been to the memorial, has an entire group of people been singled out for systematic extermination based on physical characteristics (or for any reason, I added to myself silently).

And that is the overwhelming impression I took away from this ineffably powerful experience of spending one day at the Holocaust Memorial. The designers of the Memorial, as closely as possible, have attempted to recreate the feelings experienced by Eisenhower at Dachau, filling the immense spaces with things which beggar description. Images of horror are piled atop one another—a mural of hair taken from victims of the crematoriums, actual suitcases left by Nazis by the side of the trains that unwitting Jews and other persecuted people took to their deaths, a railroad car that carried Holocaust victims to their death, which we were forced to walk through on this narrative of hatred and death organized by the Memorial's founders.

Perhaps the most poignant physical objects are thousands of shoes—some of them children's sizes, which line a narrow walkway. These shoes were worn by persons gassed in the crematoriums of Europe in the 1940's, left behind when Jews and other victims were told to undress to prepare for a delousing shower, a shower that sent them to an agonizing group

death. There are models of the crematorium which show vividly the bureaucracy of extermination.

Witnessing the orderly stages that those to be gassed were ushered through on the way to their end, it is clear how much the Nazis needed their victims to believe that everything was going to be all right (for instance, telling victims who had undressed to remember where they had left their clothing, just before they were gassed); how loathe they were to expend the energy, resources or emotion to confront those they were about to kill with the truth.

The entire "final solution" was carried out according to a false narrative of work: death camps became work camps for the victims, death trains became trains taking them to work camps, gassing became showers. The cowardice of the horror affects the visitor strongly. While Hitler was forthright about his hatred of Jews from the beginning of his life, while the Nazis gave every warning to the world that something terrible was happening beginning in 1933, with the segregation of Jews from the rest of Germans and the burning of suspicious books, after 1940, when it came to implementing the final solution, the great lie of work camps was summoned to lure Jews ineluctably to their grisly deaths.

Everyone who visits the memorial no doubt has their own view of the most searing, terrible image of evil. Mine was the archival film of Jews in the Soviet Union forced to line up, undress and face their graves as the SS guards blasted them into eternity with rifle fire. Such footage "beggars description." The infamous Babi Yari is depicted with still photographs, particularly painful to those who have read D. M. Thomas' *The White Hotel,* which tells the story of this massacre so beautifully. Another searing still photograph shows the frightened face of a 7 year old child as she is held by her neck, nude awaiting her death, in a facility for "mentally handicapped persons" in Berlin in 1939.

There is more than one set of tears for visitors to the memorial; we contemporary witnesses are silent as we shuffle from one moment in history to another. Many of us weep; always by ourselves. One room is filled with pictures of laughing, alive families from a village subsequently wiped out by the Nazis in a massacre; the photographers too were killed, the text informs us.

The power of the memorial comes from the juxtaposition of a fully informed historical account built upon three narratives that accompany the images. One is the narrative of the rise of Nazism in Germany; the second is the story of anti-Semitism in Europe from 19th century forward, and the most personally disheartening is the narrative of the United States response to Nazism and anti-Semiticism through the 1930's and early years of the war. It is made manifestly clear by headlines from American newspapers that public officials were aware of the persecution of the Jews, that American and British commands knew about the concentration camps through espionage and routine air missions over occupied countries during the war. Yet as the exhibition makes viscerally clear, America and other countries that could have served as places of refuge for the Jews fleeing Hitler refused to intervene. FDR refused to consider lifting the refugee quota to save Jews literally fleeing for their lives. While Britain did allow approximately two thousand children to emigrate, effectively saving their lives, the United States offered no parallel response, even turning away a shipful of refugees searching for safe harbor during the war, most of whom would be later gassed in concentration camps. Many Americans knew what was happening, including all the most powerful ones who were in a position to take actions that would have mitigated the disaster.

As an American historian, I have found a bounty of reasons not to be proud of my country's past. As a non-Jew, I thought I understood the injustice and horror of the Holocaust as much as any person in my situation could. After spending a day at the memorial, I realized that there was a great deal about these matters that I have never understood. There are several stories intertwined in the story of the Holocaust, and at least one of them is my story. My story and Pius XII's story and FDR's story and everyone's story who has and continues to witness evil and human suffering and does nothing to stop it. Every American who experiences this memorial is likely to feel the same way.□

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