REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Social Justice

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Letter from the Guest Editors: Social Justice Honoring Jillian Jimenez Reflections Editor, 2000-2009

Paul Abels and Sonia Leib Abels
Founding Editors

In the first issue of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping,* January (1995), Jillian Jimenez, (then Mary Ann), was the Arts and Media editor. I was the Journal Editor, and Jim Kelly—currently the Provost and Executive Vice President at Menlo College—was the Department Director. The issue was an auspicious beginning with narratives by Richard A. Cloward and Francis Fox Piven, Harry Specht, Suzanne England, Jane Gorman, Carolyn S. Carter, John A. Kayser, and Edward R. Canda, among others.

Social work faculty and practitioners write for publication in various literary styles. In *Reflections*, the narrative form was introduced and has gained acceptance as a significant contribution to communicating social work knowledge.

John Oliver, Director of the School of Social Work, invited us to edit this special issue on Social Justice honoring and memorializing Jillian Jimenez. Thanks are due to him for making this issue of *Reflections* possible. Social Justice is a significant objective facing our society and certainly our profession.

The purpose of *Reflections,* as described in the first edition, "To publish personal accounts (narratives) of professional action designed to aid and support human and social development," underlies this issue on social justice, celebrating Jillian's life.

Her decorum, sensitivity and brilliance provided a model of a great professor. I visited her classroom several times, listening to her lecture and watching the careful attention she gave both to the content and to the students as they reacted attentively to the complex social welfare issues she adroitly explained. She was affirming to students in the examination of their questions, and involved everyone in exploration of the meaning of the questions and her responses.

In 2000, Jillian took over as the editor of *Reflections.* Her commitment to social justice was reflected in her teaching, the respect for faculty and students, and her editorship of the journal.

Social justice, in all its rich meaning, is the purpose of social work. The response to the call for narratives on social justice has been powerful. Recognizable authors, a NASW administrator, a legislator, retired social workers, educators and practitioners from across universities, colleges, and agencies responded. Commitment to social justice created an excellent opportunity to put forth great stories. While these stories reflect the authors' lives, they also illustrate the range of efforts used to combat injustice. There are thoughtful memories and powerful explorations of different forms of practice, each trying to, and achieving, social justice.

The narratives help in the memorializing. Jillian's life had full meaning for those of us who knew her. We appreciate the effort and thoughts of those who contributed to this issue. We honor the work done to build a more just society.

JOURNEY TO JUSTICE

Mariko Yamada, M.S.W.
California State Assembly, 8th District

From a displaced family released from a wartime relocation camp to the California State Assembly, the author traces her journey to justice by way of social work.

The road began in the 1950s in a Denver, Colorado neighborhood known as the "Five Points." Google it and you will understand how it became known as the "Harlem of the West." Here is where my father moved our pre-war family of five—a block from the housing projects—after four harsh years behind barbed wire in a Japanese American wartime relocation camp called Manzanar.

I was the "oops" fourth child, born into a family struggling to re-establish itself after losing everything: a produce business in Los Angeles, our home, car, personal dignity and freedom during World War II. Little did I know that the bitter inheritance of the internment experience would propel my journey to a lifelong commitment to social justice.

My earliest memories are of my neighbors: La Senora Martinez who, despite being blind from untreated diabetes, could whip up the most delicious *tortillas de harina* (white flour tortillas) I've ever had; Miss Virgie, an elderly African American woman whose gnarled hands surely had their own story; the Eto Family, Peruvian Japanese also forcibly relocated to U.S. internment camps, whose son was deaf after a freak head injury; and the Teshimas, owners of a *shoyu* (soy sauce) factory, which they opened during the war years when trade with Japan had been cut.

When starting over my father, who had an eighth grade education, first took a job as a dishwasher at Denver's famous Brown Palace Hotel. He would bring castoff food home for the family from the dinner plates brought to him for cleaning. No Electronic Benefit Transfer programs back then.

For a short time, he worked at Mr. Teshima's soy sauce factory, but eventually opened his own business as the proverbial Japanese gardener. Most of his workers were Mexican. Before long, my father had three crews. He made another former internee, Mr. Matsunaga, his foreman, and developed a customer base of over 200. During the summer, I would accompany him across Colorado Boulevard—the dividing line—to help tend to the gardens of the wealthy.

Even then I could clearly see the disparities between neighborhoods. Although I didn't really understand why these differences existed, something just didn't feel right.

During elementary school, one of my nicknames was "Lemon Drop." Sometimes I was known as the "highest yellow" in the group. I also remember a freckled red-head named Susan Heath, whose family was poorer than ours. She was a frequent target on the playground; I would always try to stand up for her.

My siblings were already in high school. I recall one evening of particular household excitement when one of my sister's was picked up by her date to the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Ball. He was tall, handsome, and crisply dressed in military regalia. My sister looked like a princess to me. A few hours later, the calls started coming in to our old black rotary telephone. Words were exchanged in Japanese; I could sense the tension, but could not understand the language. My sister's date was African American.

I understand now that my father and mother, who today would have been 107 and 96, respectively, were way ahead of their time. For my sister to date interracially in 1957 with my parents' blessing put us at odds with other Japanese Americans. My parents considered it a non-issue, saying there were only two kinds of people in the world: good and bad.

But there were other issues in our family. As the years passed, my older siblings left for college, got married, moved away, and my mother's mental health deteriorated. Today, I believe she would have been diagnosed with untreated post-partum depression, exacerbated by the relocation experience. Perhaps she had a form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There were afternoons when I would find her in a darkened room, sitting in the same position she had been in when I first left for school in the morning. At other times, she would be greatly agitated.

When I left for undergraduate school at the University of Colorado, Boulder, as a Regent's Scholar, I had decided that I would pursue a degree in Psychology because I wanted to "save my family." In the meantime, the decades of gardening and manual labor had taken its toll on my father. After falling from a ladder trimming a customer's tree, his spine was crushed.

Shortly thereafter, his years of smoking also caught up with him. He was diagnosed with cancer that quickly metastasized throughout his body and brain. Within a few weeks, he was gone. I was 18. And as the youngest child and the only one left at home, I was responsible for my mother.

In 1972, my senior year in college, I was selected as a delegate to attend what was billed as the "First Asian American Mental Health Conference" ever held in the United States, which was underwritten by the National Institute of Mental Health. Asian Americans from all parts of the country and as far away as Guam and Samoa gathered in San Francisco. As the sole Colorado delegate (apportioned by state Asian Pacific Islander population), I decided to go straight to the conference chair to find out how this meeting arose. The organizers of this meeting were social workers from Los Angeles, including one referred to as "the Godfather," George M. Nishinaka, who encouraged me to apply to the social work graduate programs at UCLA and USC.

The rest is history. I was accepted as a Trojan and completed my MSW at USC in 1974. While there, I advocated for and established the first legislative field work placement in the school's history. Today, social work graduate students are regularly placed in legislative offices.

My specialization in political social work led to my being hired as an Assistant Deputy County Supervisor to longtime liberal Los Angeles County Supervisor Edmund D. Edelman. While there I worked on health, human services, Asian American, and women's issues. In 1977, I left Los Angeles and joined the Washington, D.C. national outreach campaign during the 1980 Census. I later worked as a civil rights investigator for the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Marriage and the birth of two children brought our family back to California, where my husband, Janlee Wong (current Executive Director of NASW California) had his roots. We relocated first to San Francisco, then to San Diego, and then in 1995 to the bicycle-friendly, liberal enclave of Davis, California, home to UC Davis. Remember the Allan Bakke case that went to the Supreme Court regarding reverse discrimination?

My early involvement as a parent in our local school district and my volunteer work in a variety of Democratic Party and other issue-based campaigns landed me another stint as a County Supervisor's Deputy. Once again I accepted a position with a leading liberal on the local Yolo County Board of Supervisors, Dave Rosenberg. When Rosenberg vacated his post to become a Yolo County Superior Court Judge, then-Governor Gray Davis appointed me to serve out the 13-month balance of his term.

Subsequently, I ran for and won a four-year term in my own right as District Four Yolo County Supervisor. As a social worker, I truly enjoyed working at the county level where, for me, social work policy meets the people.

Legislative terms limits opened an Assembly seat considered strong Democratic

heading into a June 2008 Primary. Running for a seat in the Legislature was not anything that I had planned to do. Such races are somewhat formulaic, with pundits, pollsters, and fundraisers making bets as to winners and losers. In fact, there exists an actual tome called *The Target Book*, that (for a fee, of course) will provide you with the latest in electoral predictions (see this site at http://www.californiatargetbook.com/)

I am reasonably certain I was nowhere in *The Target Book* when I put my hat-in-the-ring to run for an open seat against a well-funded, well-connected, and "heir apparent" candidate in the 8th Assembly District in northern California. "Mariko Yamada" –who is that?

Ultimately, my race became *the* most expensive state assembly primary race in the State in 2008. I ran against the "establishment" Democratic candidate who had run in 2002 and lost. As mayor of one of the ten cities in the district, he had established himself in the intervening years as a talented and articulate leader in the greater Sacramento area, a prodigious fundraiser, and a capitol insider. He came to my home town of Davis to announce his intention to run for the open seat a full eighteen months before the Primary surrounded by area elected officials and power brokers. He had a beginning campaign war chest of almost half-a-million dollars and almost every endorsement in the region. Surely, no one would dare run against him.

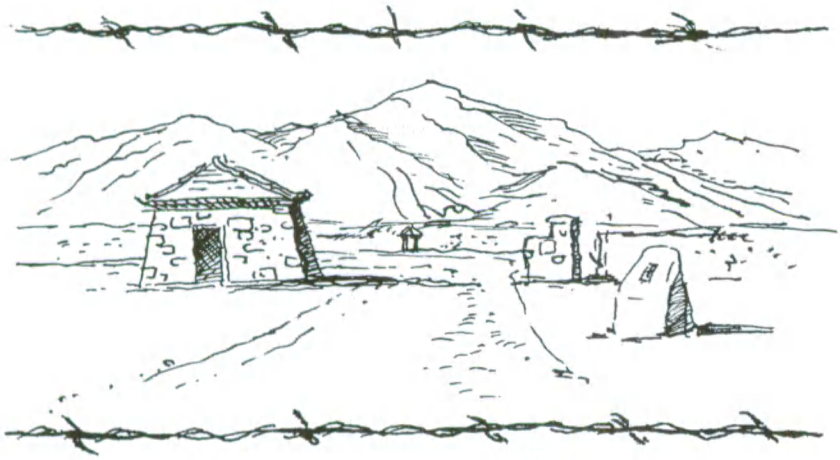
Although I was outspent two-to-one, through good old-fashioned social work community organizing, the help of legendary political consultant Bill Cavala (who passed away in December 2009), a grassroots "small donor" fundraising strategy, the incalculable value of boots-on-the-ground efforts in the final six weeks of the campaign (not to mention my own efforts at personally walking to 4,500 households in the district) we defeated our opponent by 3 ½ percentage points on June 3, 2008.

Why did I choose to run when I had only $10,000 in the bank, no pre-planned intent to seek an Assembly seat, and virtually no support from the local establishment? Frankly, because I did not want to be represented by someone whom I felt was a handpicked "heir apparent" who, although a Democrat, did not hold the same priorities as I did with respect to the mission of the social work profession: to work on behalf of those most vulnerable in our society.

I am now running for my second term during a time of unprecedented global environmental disaster, continuing high unemployment in a stagnant economy, drastic reductions in education, health, and social services spending, and increases in our jail and prison populations.

Social work has it roots in the horrific times addressed in the settlement house movement by Jane Addams—the "Mother of Social Work"—and refined in case management practice propelled by our other matriarch, Mary Richmond. Social workers specialize in taking on society's toughest problems, and seeking to help individuals as well as change the environmental forces giving rise to children, families, and adults with compelling health, mental health, economic, and other needs.

From the Five Points to the California State Capitol, seems my journey to justice has just begun.



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Teaching Community Projects

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The goal for community projects, a course which forms the foundation of the author's teaching, is to establish the grounding for the budding practitioner's subsequent social justice work. The following offers a narrative of his journey to community projects. In it, he reflects on his teaching, as well as his experiences as a student and community practitioner, and the ways these experiences informed his approaches toward teaching others about the subject.

For years now, I have taught community organizing and community projects. A common theme of teaching these classes is that no class is the same. No community project or even understanding of the concept of justice is the same. Everyone comes to these classes in their own ways, from their own perspectives. Yet, in each class, I hope for students to connect their lives with some notion of community and civic engagement. In doing so, students are invited to view their experience and story in relation to larger injustices, as well as solutions and possibilities. Sometimes awareness begins with something as small as a gripe about tuition increases at the school or a car accident. In other cases, it follows a friend or family member getting sick with HIV/AIDS or cancer, and finding a callous medical system; racial profiling; or an immigration policy gone wrong, etc. Along the way, many students come to see and value something larger than their own individual self-interest. Some find themselves in the middle of a struggle to create change on an individual or even community level, at a school, a clinic, or agency. Social work and human services—from Jane Addams to Harold McPheeters, from the Settlements to Welfare Rights and AIDS activism—has a long tradition taking on such macro level challenges. Most begin as individuals who trace a micro level challenge to its logical conclusion, from case to cause within larger social and economic system.

I was first assigned to teach Community Projects when I was on the faculty at the CSULB Department of Social Work, and later taught community organization and development at CUNY. In teaching these courses, I have always asked students to consider the links and divides between the history, theory and current practice of community projects and organizing, as well as agency based practice. Before teaching these classes, I spent over a decade consumed within the practice, in settings such as AIDS housing, harm reduction, syringe exchange, welfare rights, grass roots organizing, community gardening, and the like. Along the way, I also tried to keep up with the literature in social work. In doing so, I was constantly reminded that what was written about practice rarely matched my experiences in the field. For example, in 2001, Michael Reisch and Janice Andrew published the work *The Road Less Traveled*: A *History of Radical Social Work*. In it the authors ended the story in the 1970's, as if radical community practice ended with Nixon administration. As far as I was concerned, nothing could be further from the truth. So much had happened since the 1960's, as radical social work and community practice continued to shift and evolve with a range of issues: including immigration, labor abuses, deinstitutionalization, homelessness, environmental disaster, HIV/AIDS, anti-war activism, the advent of neoliberalism, and the movements to reflect these struggles. So I attempted to address this shift in my writing as well as activism (see Shepard 1997; Shepard and Hayduk, 2002). Over these years, I ran into many social workers involved in social justice struggles, yet I was also aware

that many were not. And those who were not didn't seem to identify as social workers, but rather as organizers. Theory seemed to be divided from practice; professional identity separated from political conviction and aspiration. My goal has always been to bring a rich range of practice experiences into the classroom, as well as student projects.

Throughout the classes, students are charged to take on the complicated circumstances of urban poverty, organizing, and community development as well as service provision. To develop as reflective practitioners (see Schon, 1987), students are given the opportunity to compare their hopes and desires with the realities on the mean streets. In order for social workers to deserve Schon's (1987) designation as a reflective practitioner, they will have to contemplate and study the basic tools of a field to the point where "knowing and action" become one gesture, a process in which knowing is in the action (p.25). To get there, students are asked to connect the pulsing work taking place in neighborhoods and communities with their budding development as practitioners. This interplay between community practice and organizing only infuses vitality and innovation into social services, especially when students strive to appreciate the complicated lives, circumstances, and struggles of individuals, families, and groups in their communities.

In each class, I ask the students to consider a few approaches to community engagement. Here students are asked to: let stories move them, build community and democracy in the streets and in the classroom, organize around strengths, go out and get the seat of their pants dirty with research, connect with a model, and "connect the dots" of a struggle within their own stories. These themes bear exploration.

Let Stories Move You

For community practice and organizing to be useful, many students develop a meaningful connection within their own communities. My first social work internship at the Chicago Area Project in 1995-6 had helped galvanize the point. As part of my orientation, I learned about organizers associated with the project dating back to the 1930's. The organization's founder—University of Chicago sociologist Clifford Shaw—collected oral histories of delinquent youth, documenting their stories to highlight the multiple dimensions of their worlds and the various impacts on their lives. The lesson from Shaw's work was that there is no need to remain detached when one listens to these stories, especially if one listens carefully with an eye toward changing social conditions (Shaw, 1930). Reading the stories of Clifford Shaw and his work with delinquent youth, I was lulled into participation.

By my second year in Chicago, I followed Shaw's calling, interviewing many of the organizers who had worked with him, starting in the 1930's. One of the first interviews for my oral history was with Billy Brown, a then 86-year-old African-American woman with short, curly brown hair and animated eyes. She explained what she had learned about neighborhood life from Clifford Shaw:

> *I think Dr. Shaw felt that this was yours. This was my plot where I belong so I want to make it the nicest part of my life and the nicest part of my entity to live here. It was just like a castle, like a castle that belonged to you. And he felt that for each person. Just wherever you went that was your home. If you were a part of it, you lived there. Its small neighborhoods, that's what it was, small neighborhoods. And he felt that you could organize wherever you went, you could organize. And this organization could be your castle* (quoted in Shepard, 1997A).

Brown was not the only member of CAP to reflect on the group's neighborhood emphasis. A love for community was intricately connected with this story.

Another organizer with the group, Tony Sorrentino, recalled Clifford Shaw's understanding of community:

> *Shaw's approach was, sure he wanted to bring about change in the community, but he believed very strongly in the notion that the way you do that is by neighbor helping neighbor. And so that was his experience of growing up in a very small town in Indiana in the early days of industrialization. He would give us examples such as, if somebody's farm or home burned down, the neighbors all automatically came together; they didn't apply for a grant or call in the government. They just did it themselves. Likewise, with the delinquent, he'd get out of line, they didn't call in juvenile court. They just handled it informally. So he hoped that some of these forces of the primary community of the rural small town could be utilized in efforts to deal with the problems of an urban community* (quoted in Shepard, 1997A).

Sorrentino's story places the conception of community as primary interaction at the center of the CAP organizing strategy. Here, community is understood in terms of people's interpersonal interactions and neighborhood members' personal relationships with each other (Effrat, 1974). Community conceived of as primary interaction includes aspects of Toennies's explanation of Gemeinschaft which, "included the local community, [it] also went beyond it...it referred to social bonds...characterized by emotional cohesion, depth, continuity, and fullness," (Effrat, 1974, p.3).

Shaw (1939, p. 4) outlined his community organizing philosophy in a 1939 report to the board of trustees. "[CAP's] activities are regarded primarily as devices for enlisting the active participation of local residents in a constructive community enterprise, for creating and crystallizing neighborhood sentiment on behalf of the welfare of the children and the social and physical improvement of the community as a whole." As for teaching community projects, the core lesson of this approach was that student organizers must respectfully engage those involved within the life of the community. In doing so, they would be well advised to cultivate the "active participation" of those in the community, just as Shaw had once done.

Yet to do so, one has to have an honest and comprehensive understanding of the conditions in the community. Community practitioners must assess the conditions of the social environment, using as many tools and methods as possible, then act on the results. For example, when Shaw first heard delinquents tell him they wanted to start a camp, he was distraught, but this is what they wanted so he followed their lead. The point of a comprehensive needs assessment is to act on the results of data one collects, not on one's preconceived notions (Bennett, 1981). Without this needs assessment, community practice is flawed from the start. Students are required to complete a community needs assessment in most community practice and organizing classes, including strengths with the needs.

Build Community and Democracy in the Classroom and the Streets.

Over the years of teaching community practice, my goal for each class has come to be threefold: 1) to build a community among students, 2) to connect the campus with the community outside it, and 3) to help students develop their own sense of social justice and democratic political engagement. When I first sat in Irving Spergel's community organization and development class at the University of Chicago, I was struck by his sense of connection with the community, its pulse, problems, strengths, and people. A scholar of gang life, he talked about the lives of the gang members he worked with and hired them to do research with him. He wrote stories about

them. He brought organizers into the classroom, and helped us feel like a community as we conducted our research studies. He also helped us to see where organizing fit into the larger picture of social work. Early in the class, he invited Saul Alinksy's protégé Ed Chambers to talk about ACORN's approach to organizing. Harkening back to Alexis De Toqueville, Chambers described an idea of democracy in the United States. Drawing on the board, Chambers suggested that our democracy was dependent on three elements: the market economy, government, and civil society. In between the market and government, there had to be space for civil society. Without it, democracy would be in peril. Over the next two decades, this idea would become more and more influential to my writing, thinking, teaching, and activism (Shepard, 2002). Civil society could be a word for public space and community. Without it democracy as we know it, would be doomed. In this way, questions about community organizing and practice would have to be fundamentally linked with questions about democracy, citizen participation, and public space. Movements from the Settlement Houses to Global Justice would build on a similar sentiment.

Organize Around Strengths

In Chicago, I ran across the writings of John McNight (McNight,1995; Kretzmann & McNight, 1997). Find a community strength, McNight implored community practitioners. Each community has one. Don't just look for what is wrong; that is too easy. It is the job of organizers to find community assets from day one. In communities, people know by stories, he advised (McNight, 1995). Solutions to challenges faced in community will be found within these stories, assets, forms of leadership, cultural capital, social networks and the like.

Research

"Go out and get the seat of your pants dirty in research," preached Robert E. Park, a luminary of the Chicago School. His point, of course, was to get out and there and get into the middle of your research; get into the action. If you were studying dancers at a club, go and dance with one of them; don't stand on the sidelines with a clip board. This tradition permeated the Chicago research tradition (Bulmer, 1986). If you are interested in learning about those looking for work, don't just study the census or unemployment rolls; go talk with the unemployed as well as those looking to hire them, as W.J. Wilson (1997) did. Talk to all the stakeholders and find out what they think is going on. Get out into the mix and try to learn from these experiences. Here students come to see that there is something to learn from almost everyone they meet, as Ray Raymond, one of the CAP organizers from my oral history implored. Yet the impediments to the recognition of local expertise over professional training are deeply ingrained within the history of social work practice. This point came through early in my oral history interviews of the Chicago Area Project. At first, the area project was not well received, especially among the social work establishment. As then 85-year-old Ray Raymond, a CAP organizer, explained:

> *The critics, you see, were the "experts." The University of Chicago Department of Social Service and the Abbott sisters, they frowned on this. And Shaw had practically no one to give him the respect except Earnest Burges. Ernie Burges was already ruminating over this whole question of community organization.*

The social work establishment worried about those without training counseling delinquents. However, Raymond believed "the experts," social workers and policy analysts, had no special insight into or solutions to neighborhood problems. The point of such an approach is to appreciate the assets which every community possesses, not just the letters behind their name.

Yet the question for students of community projects would remain: how do social workers collaborate with community efforts, instead of talking down to them or co-opting them? At the Chicago Area Project, Clifford Shaw had local leaders who would work with kids who

had gotten into trouble. The point was to prevent delinquency. So the group negotiated with the courts to have neighborhood youth spend time with mentors they trusted and stay in the neighborhoods under supervision. Social workers came in and said, "Now you have to have a social work license to do this." And community ties to the people doing the work were lost. The youth did not trust the social workers, they trusted the neighborhood mentors. They were no longer working with the people preventing delinquency that they trusted. Through community projects, I ask social workers to change the hat that they wear so they can actually collaborate and respect community practices. "And get respect in the community by doing things the community wants, by joining with them and enduring, for a time at least, the mistrust," elaborated Frances Fox-Piven in an interview with the author on the subject. "You have to expect mistrust because it is well founded. But I think only in practice can social workers become credible partners with low income people. It's a long term process," (quoted in Shepard, 2008, p. 11). Over the years, much of community practice would come to incorporate such a perspective (McNight, 1995).

Building on Shaw, Fox-Piven, and McNight's lessons, I stumbled upon the participatory action research tradition. Here, those studying an issue connect their research with those impacted by the problem or need. And research becomes part of a community based approach to addressing a given issue. Instead of looking at research in terms of natural science with a beginning, middle, and end, from a hypothesis, through the collection of data, interpretation, and publication of findings, action research views the process of inquiry as far from linear. It lasts as long as the issue continues, in an ongoing interplay with the challenges the community faces. Action researchers ask community stakeholders what questions they think should be answered. From here, they get out into the community to find answers, collect materials, experiment with ideas, and generate new questions, to be considered anew (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Stoecker, 2005; Stringer, 1999). The process

goes on and on, mirroring the pulse of neighborhoods in constant flux.

Connect with a Model

As I was finishing my masters at Chicago, Irving Spergel convinced me that Shaw and the history of Chicago delinquency advocacy was a topic which had already been well mined, so I decided to look to alternate subjects and movements. This challenge became all that much more feasible when I moved to New York after graduate school. It was a matter of days before I had plugged into the local activist scene and became involved with organizing around public space. After a few years of activism and research, I entered the Ph.D. program at Hunter College School of Social Work, where I hoped to reflect on what has happened out in the field. For my Ph.D. research, I collected the stories of organizers, who I asked to reflect on their own practice. One of the most pleasurable parts of the process was listening to their many stories. One garden activist counseled that activists involved in the movement recognized the utility of connecting multiple methods: from direct action to legal strategies, mobilization with street theatrics and art, as part of their city wide organizing campaign to save the gardens. Another cautioned that you may not win if you

only have a rally, but he explained that if you connect it with lobbying, direct action, research, mobilization, and media work, the perfect storm of actions may create power and change. As I listened, I realized that many organizers see their work as part of a coherent organizational model. Yet another organizer stated that, although we can't be guaranteed success in every campaign, we certainly court failure if we do nothing. So it is useful to fight back, with a coherent organizing strategy which includes a clear position statement about what one wants to see happen with a given issue, research around this issue, mobilization of allies, coherent direct action, media and legal strategies as well as a jigger of fun to sustain the campaign (see Shepard, 2011).

"Connect the Dots" of a Struggle Within Your Own Story.

I was drawn to my first demonstration with the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) after a close family friend suffered a long, painful period of mental and physical deterioration before succumbing to HIV/AIDS. On the ride to the action, I spoke with other AIDS activists about the experience. Many shared similar stories. After the action, I reflected on the ways our different stories interconnected. The experience of sharing stories inspired me (see Shepard, 1997B) to join the struggle (Shepard and Hayduk, 2002). This is part of the beauty of community projects; it allows us to be moved to take action as we revel in an interconnection between people and communities. Dr. Martin Luther King (1963) long ago suggested that our destinies are woven into a single garment of history. From this point of view, all of our lives are interconnected within a matrix of stories and gestures. The point of community projects is to explore connections between communities and stories. In teaching community projects, students consistently report that their favorite part of the class is the class presentations, in which they share their findings and reflections on their projects. I have had students stand up and narrative their family histories as immigrants, connecting their stories with intricate gaps in immigration policy. Other students have stood up to talk about their experiences with losses to HIV/AIDS. Others have talked about their experiences with shifting conditions in neighborhoods. One group of students created a documentary film project, with interviews with activists at an anti-war march. Others saw a lack of green space in a neighborhood and created a community garden.

The core point of community projects is to help students to connect their own lives and practice with stories of social or economic justice. Here, just as students created a community garden, they create an experience in democratic living. Such social experimentation, innovation, and possibility goes a long way. Mixing them together, organizers and practitioners draft their own chapter in a colorful history of practice. In doing so, they take their rightful place in the rich tradition of community practice I am fortunate enough to teach.

The author would like to thank Dr. John Oliver, Director of the CSULB School of Social Work, for suggesting this topic.

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Social Justice in My Life and Practice

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This narrative describes the life experiences that contributed to the author's understanding of socially just practice, including his childhood, adolescence, young adulthood as a college student, and his professional life. He believes that this process is lifelong and ever changing.

Introduction

In this narrative, I seek to reflect upon events in my life that molded my understanding of social justice and how to practice social work in a socially just way. I see this as an ongoing process that begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. This paper as such is a narrative of reflection on my life in relationship to understanding social justice. I begin with some definitions. Writers on this subject often refer to the work of John Rawls (1995) in defining justice:

> Justice as Fairness: According to this principle, each person has an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.
>
> Just Arrangements: Social and economic inequalities are arranged so they are both to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair and equal opportunity.

Dennis Saleebey (1990, p. 37) contends that the following conditions must be met to achieve social justice:

1. Social resources are distributed on the principle of need with the clear understanding that such resources underlie the development of personal resources, with the proviso that entitlement to such resources is one of the gifts of citizenship.

2. Opportunities for personal and social development are open to all with the understanding that those who have been unfairly hampered through no fault of their own will be appropriately compensated.

3. The establishment—at all levels of society—of agendas and policies that have human development and the enriching of human experience as their essential goal and are understood to take precedence over other agendas and policies, is essential.

4. The arbitrary exercise of social and political power is forsaken.

5. Oppression as a means for establishing priorities, for developing social and natural resources and distributing them, and resolving social problems is foresworn.

Childhood

As I reflect on how the idea of social justice has come to have a central role in all my current writings and other activities, I am sure that much of this is rooted in my childhood experiences. I am not claiming that the concept of social justice was in any way known to me but I am sure that I had a profound sense that I was disadvantaged and oppressed – although again I do not assert that I knew these words. I also was less aware of the fact that I was advantaged, and I will comment on this later.

One sense I had of disadvantage is that we were relatively poor. My parents owned a millinery store when I was born in 1929, but

lost it in the next few years as women were not buying expensive hats during the depression. My father had an 8th grade education and my mother had 3 years of high school. My father was born in Russia and came to this country as a young child, but my mother was born on the lower east side of New York (her father was born in Poland). Therefore, my father got a job selling vacuum cleaners and other appliances, my mother worked part time selling hats, and my sister and I were cared for by a series of African American women who worked for what I'm sure was, even then, a pittance. I don't think I had a sense then of the oppression of African Americans, although by the time I was in high school I thought about this very much (but more about this later). However, I did remember these women as being very nurturing to us.

Nevertheless, I was aware we had very little money. My maternal grandparents, my parents, sister and I, and an unmarried aunt all moved into one apartment so we could afford to pay the rent. Although we were Jewish, the alderman brought clothes for me and my sister at Christmas and various relatives donated clothing to us when their children outgrew them. A primary contributor was an uncle who was a successful writer (he wrote the original *Jazz Singer).* I was aware that my parents worried constantly about money. I was less aware until much later in life how privileged we were by virtue of our skin color, the fact that we lived in an apartment in a middle class section of Chicago (Rogers Park), and we had extended family who I am sure helped in many ways. My writer-uncle also took a shine to me (he thought I was bright) and paid for me to attend a small private school in kindergarten and 1st grade, which allowed me to start school at age 4; a year earlier than the public schools would. I was largely unaware of male privilege (I thought being male subjected me to more bullying) but I undoubtedly benefitted from my gender. I was given educational and other benefits by my parents and uncle that were not given to my sister, and I know through what she said later that she resented this. (Incidentally, she had been a heavy smoker and died from lung cancer over a decade ago.)

A second factor that I am certain contributed to my understanding of justice is that I was a somewhat fearful child. (Exactly *why* I was is something I'm still exploring.) I was afraid of the neighborhood bullies who undoubtedly come to exist in all or most communities, and who saw me as an easy target. I also saw myself as horrible at and fearful of sports, and this contributed to my status among my peers. In school I was always the last chosen for a team and justifiably so. (It wasn't until my late teens that I discovered I liked to play sports after my friends and I came to accept my ineptness.) I don't remember friends before the 5th or 6th grade, though I imagine I must have had some. I mark the beginning of friendships to 5th grade when my family moved and I changed schools. My first friends there were Arthur and Richard, and for reasons that seem to contradict what I have just written, we became inseparable - some of those friends I made back then are still my friends to this day...70 years later! I consciously knew that I was less likely to be picked on by bullies when I was with friends, especially those who were less fearful of fighting than I was. That probably accounts for my deep conviction that people can and should help one another and that "in numbers there is strength" (mutual aid).

A third aspect of my childhood that ultimately contributed to my concern for social justice was my developing awareness of what it meant to be Jewish. At first (in the 1930's), I heard relatives at family gatherings discussing how difficult it was to find employment because of their Jewishness. My own father changed his name from Garfinkle to Garvin so that prejudice would not stand in the way of his selling appliances. (My legal name remained Garfinkle although I was

entered in school, drafted in the army, and was married as Garvin. I legally changed my name in 1968 in order for my passport to show the same last name as my wife and children.)

In the middle to late 1930's and beyond, I was fully aware of the treatment of the Jews by Nazi Germany through reports in the press. I was moderately fearful that this could happen in the United States as I read about Nazi groups here. However, I narrowly missed being drafted in World War II as the war ended when I was 16.

Adolescence

As I moved into my high school years, I became even more concerned about anti-Semitism and at first dealt with this by supporting causes related to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. I "fell" for the distortion that this was "a land without people for a people without land." (Palestine was definitely not a land without people; it had a significant Palestinian-Arab population.) I was aware that there were few places for survivors of the Holocaust to go, including limitations on immigration to the United States. I was not a particularly observant Jew—nor was my family at the time—but I was proud of what I read in the Jewish history books. I tried to learn more about Judaism, so I briefly joined the local affiliate of a Jewish reform high school organization and even took some courses in Jewish history at the local college of Jewish studies. I was also a member (and eventually president) of the AZA, which was the Jewish high school boy's organization (which has now been replaced by a co-ed B'nai B'rith youth group) and relied on it for many of my social activities in high school.

To this day I'm not sure what brought about my shift of interest in my latter years of high school to radical political affiliations rather than Zionist ones. I did not reject my interest in what became Israel, but I am sure I saw the connections among oppression toward many groups, including African Americans, poor people, and people who labored in fields and factories. My father was a very loyal union member, and I remember our family struggling through many strikes that my father fully supported. For reasons that I do not have the space to dwell on here, I did not have a close relationship with my father, but I remember one incident that I valued with respect to him. We were at a family get-together where a number of family members who were small shopkeepers bemoaned the bad behavior of their employees. My father spoke up and said, "We working people see this differently!" In any case, I began attending meetings of the American Youth for Democracy (AYD) which was labeled by the government as a "communist front organization." I was aware of this and, I think, but may be giving myself too much credit, that I already held the opinion that conservative forces in the United States sought to stifle dissent and punish dissenters.

College Years

After high school I enrolled in a public junior college in Chicago. I had no money to attend any other college (the fee for that institution was only $10.00 a semester), and I was unsuccessful in obtaining scholarships to other institutions. However, I found that the Chicago junior colleges in 1946 had excellent instructors. I resumed the kinds of extra-curricular activities I had in high school, including the school paper and the college branch of the AYD. The former was very significant in my life, as I met people who have remained my friends for many years. The latter proved significant in the evolution of my ideas about social justice, which relates to the following incident.

One project taken on by the AYD was to oppose the call by President Harry Truman to resume the draft, which had been discontinued after the end of World War II. One part of this project involved the members (there were actually only a few of us; I believe less that 10) handling out leaflets across from the school asking people to write letters opposing the draft. On my first day of participation, the Dean of the college called the police. They forced me to go with them to the Dean's office, threatened me with arrest, and the Dean threatened me with expulsion. I can't remember how aware I was at that time that many free speech battles had been fought throughout U.S. history to safeguard such actions as distributing leaflets, but I must have

had some idea of this. To put it bluntly I was "scared shitless." Nevertheless, although I had previously thought of myself as somewhat of a coward, I didn't consider leaving the AYD or changing my beliefs.

The college veteran's organization called publicly for my expulsion. The faculty, who I knew to be left-wingers, whispered in my ear they were with me. The local community newspaper ran an article headlined: "Garvin, AYD, Flailed by Vet's Group." Such notoriety I didn't need.

Looking back on it now, I realize that despite my view at the time that I was being persecuted for my beliefs (an important lesson), I was still comparatively privileged. I was a middle class white person. If I had been a poor person of color, I think the police might have been less gentle with me. And despite my fears to the contrary, I remained in college and ultimately became a University of Chicago student. Others who were less privileged than I probably wouldn't have been able to develop their careers because of the stigma of being a "radical" and a "troublemaker."

At the next AYD meeting, our membership had doubled as other students who were concerned about civil rights decided to show their support. The actions of the Dean and the police seemed to have backfired a bit! At that time, I was an active member of a college sponsored social science club in which we discussed how various social sciences added to our understanding of ourselves and society. The club was sponsored by Meyer Weinberg, a history teacher at the college. I enjoyed talking with him as he had a passion for social justice and a conviction that social science had a strong role to play in determining the means for attaining it. We subsequently became friends, and we stayed in touch until his death a few years ago. I was also friendly with his wife, which became very important to me later, as she was a practicing social worker.

Another consequence of my AYD affiliation was that I was invited to attend a group studying Marxism. I found this to be very interesting as it sought to explain important issues such as major historical developments and current political dilemmas. I realize that this contributed to allegation that the AYD was linked to the Communist Party, but the meaning of and the judgments placed on this go far beyond the purposes of this narrative. At the time, many of us were either ignorant of the injustices and horrors of the Stalin regime or saw these charges as part of the "Red Scare." This was the period in which Senator McCarthy held sway, many prominent individuals were called to testify about their alleged communist ties, and the leading Communists were jailed. I, along with many others, feared that a fascist state might emerge here in the United States.

In 1947, another event occurred that was to have a large influence on my awareness of social justice. I had joined an organization called B'nai B'rith Young Men, which had sent out a call for members to volunteer in settlement houses, presumably to help other segments of the population get to know Jews personally. At the time I thought this was not a very powerful approach to the issue, but I had my own reasons for volunteering. Many of the placements were in African-American communities, and I had a strong desire to have personal relationships in one of those communities, as my social life in the north side of Chicago was limited to others of my same color.

So one Saturday during Fall of 1947, I showed up at the door of Henry Booth House on the west side of Chicago near the famous Maxwell Street. Fifty years earlier, the area had been Jewish, full of Eastern European immigrants. This neighborhood was also about a mile south of the original Hull House founded

by Jane Addams, which she had written about extensively. In 1947, the Booth House neighborhood was primarily African American and was one of first settlements for people from the southern United States. The houses were in very bad shape; the director of Henry Booth House, Edna Hansen, used to quip that the Chicago fire of 1971 began north of there and blew the wrong way. I became like "the man who came to dinner," as I was affiliated with Henry Booth House until 1956 - except for the two years in which I was drafted into the army (1952-1954). This settlement experience ultimately affected my choice of career, my close relationships, my values, and my identity!

My first work in the settlement involved working with the director who facilitated a group called "Leaders in Training." The teenagers in this group were being taught group leadership techniques, but we also discussed many issues of the day with them such as international conflicts, prejudice and discrimination, and the existence of oppression in the form of police harassment, denial of decent community services, and denial of opportunities based on their color. I was thrilled to discover that these teenagers showed intense interest in these issues. The reader should take note that many of these youth were in one parent families that subsisted on welfare. (The government assistance program most prevalent at that time was Aid to Dependent Children, or ADC.) They lived crowded together in buildings that often lacked adequate plumbing and heat, and they could be evicted easily if the parent failed in paying the rent.

I will never forget the time I met a six-year-old boy whose face was severely disfigured, because, as a baby, a rat had eaten his nose while he lay in his crib. He was a very angry, aggressive little boy who had bitten virtually every staff member at the settlement. Nevertheless, the staff vowed to treat him with kindness. Unfortunately, he could not have plastic reconstruction until he reached his teen years and his face had stopped growing. I came to meet his whole family: his sister got pregnant in her teens; his brother was killed by a train while he was playing on the tracks; but I remember little about his older brother or mother.

I was invited by "Head Resident" of the agency (as such directors were called at the time) to become a counselor that summer at a camp she directed on behalf of another settlement—the Abraham Lincoln Center—which was located in the heart of Chicago's south side African American community. Most of the staff members and campers were African American. The junior counselors were Leaders in Training from the two settlements. This was my first experience living in a primarily African American community. It was a fantastic learning experience for me as I was immersed in the music, language, and culture of that community. One teen even volunteered to teach me "how to talk." I don't remember any time feeling separate from these people, although as a result of writing this narrative I have begun to reflect on how privileged they must have perceived me to be. I became aware of the many ways these people had been oppressed, and I am sure that this continued to feed my commitment to attain social justice.

During my third year of college I was admitted to the Sociology Department of the University of Chicago, and returned to my part time work at the settlement. I may even have received some payment for my services. I had very little money, so in addition to working at the settlement, I became a field worker for the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, as well as a statistical coder for a large insurance company. The Sociology Department at Chicago was a very exciting environment, with faculty made up of famous sociological pioneers as Ernest Burgess, William Lloyd Warner, Louis Wirth, William Ogburn, and Everett Hughes. While I would hardly claim that these were the major thinkers about social justice, they helped me to become comfortable with terms I would later use to discuss the causes and consequences of social injustice.

As I noted above, I continued to work at the settlement house and I return to that experience as it significantly altered my college and professional career, and many other aspects of my life. The director of the settlement was a social worker and had

received her training at the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) of the University of Chicago. I met many other social workers through the settlement's relationship with other agencies and, it seems in retrospect, to have been an inevitable decision and no struggle at all to decide that the rest of my life lay with that profession. This was reinforced by my political experiences, as I was still a participant in radical/left activity. The social work profession seemed the best way to unify that activity, its concern with social justice, and my education for a career.

Many of my radical college friends were critical of my decision. Some of my friends thought they would unite their political convictions with their occupations by going to work in factories and becoming active members of a labor union, or by becoming staff members of radical organizations. Some sought to intellectually aid the struggle by becoming historians, focusing on such topics as labor history, Black history, etc. I was not strongly interested in becoming a historian and, based on some factory work I did while in high school, knew that I would be miserable in that kind of situation. I also admit that I feared some of the negative consequences of radical activity based on the "arrest" I had experienced back in junior college, and the conservative direction in the country in which Communists and others were to be persecuted. The social work profession seemed the right solution for me!

I notified the SSA that I wished to transfer to that department, and was readily accepted. At that time, SSA had an undergraduate program in which the future social workers enrolled in a well-rounded set of social science courses until they had completed four years of college. Then they would automatically be enrolled in the graduate social work program.[1] These two years were very intellectually exciting, as I studied with internationally renowned professors: Walter Johnson taught history, Ernest Burgess taught sociology, William Lloyd Warner taught social anthropology, Earl Hamilton taught economic history, and Hans Morgenthau taught international law. All of these studies at Chicago had a thrust toward what is now called the pursuit of social justice.

This was epitomized by the University of Chicago's chancellor, Hutchins, who was idolized by many students for his stand on world peace, an enlightened electorate (e.g. his participation in the creation of the Great Books Program), and his international perspective. During the McCarthy period, he hired faculty from other universities who had been fired because of their political beliefs.

It should come as no surprise to the reader that I was very active in extra-curricular activities. My favorite was the student newspaper, the *Chicago Maroon*. I had been active on the student paper in junior college; I enjoyed writing, and had previously thought of having a career as a writer due in large part to my identification with my uncle who was a well known playwright. (The editor at that time was a man named David Broder, who later became a well known columnist). I gradually worked my way up, and was elected editor-in-chief in 1950. I was a member of a group of *Maroon* staff members who made up the left wing of the staff. This enabled me (and us) to pursue editorial policies and to publish articles that were viewed by many as radical. To me, they represented what we today would call a strong commitment to social justice. The following are some examples:[2]

• I wrote an editorial entitled "To remove some barriers," that was a strong call for what we now call affirmative action. This was reprinted in Chicago's African American newspaper, *The Defender* (November 17, 1950).

• We quoted Hutchins (6/27/50) as saying, "The day of force as the determining factor in world affairs ended with our atomic monopoly."

• We reported that a dean of the school suspended a campus peace organization (7/14/50).

• We reported that 107 faculty approved an Einstein peace proposal (7/14/50).

• We published a review of a book that was highly critical of the University of California loyalty oaths (10/6/50).

• We gave extensive reportage to the suspension of a student for circulating a petition on campus (10/13/50).

• We reported on the attendance of a student at the International Union of Students in Prague (10/13/50).

• I interviewed Chancellor Hutchins and reported that he said, "The University of Chicago has no intention of infringing on student freedoms" (10/20/1050).

• We printed an editorial that criticized the tearing down of posters for peace organizations (10/20/50).

• We published an editorial criticizing the "McCarran-Wood Act," which was seen as allowing the government to interfere with the rights of communist front or action organizations (10/27/50).

It was inevitable that these and other things printed in the paper would provoke a strong reaction from some students as well as the administration, which was increasingly concerned about the political climate of the country. Even Chancellor Hutchins was called to testify before an Illinois legislative committee that was investigating so-called "un-American activities," and many students, including myself, went to the state capitol to hear him.

I recently spent a couple of days re-reading issues of the paper printed under my editorship sixty years ago. It would take an entire article to discuss what I found, and the purpose of this narrative is not to critique, condemn, or justify the newspaper's policies under my editorship. Suffice it to say, as a result of that experience I learned a great deal about how a major institution such as the University of Chicago dealt with a student paper that took what were undoubtedly left-wing positions by criticizing it for being biased, of poor quality, and undemocratic, and ultimately calling for a different way of selecting the editor than by a vote of the staff. This experience prepared me for many later events in which I sought to fight against injustice as I saw it, and to respond to the critical or oppressive reactions of others.

In addition to these extra-curricular activities, I was also a graduate student seeking to be educated as a social worker. I was much younger than many of the other social work students, and social work education was exciting. Like most students, I was most excited by the field work experience. My first placement was with the Cook County Department of Welfare, where I provided casework services to aged and disabled individuals, as well as to families who were receiving financial assistance because of their so-called "dependent" children. I learned a great deal about how the welfare system oppressed these people, yet they had one service that to this day I deem important: they had the use of a caseworker such as myself (if they wished to avail themselves of this) along with their financial assistance. In a later period, the country modified this and created a dual system in which one staff member administered assistance, and another administered services. In theory, this may have provided better service to those who wished to receive it; but in actuality, the service component became weaker and weaker.

My second year field placement was at a residential treatment center for children, Chapin Hall.[3] I don't think this experience added to my understanding of social justice, but it did help me to improve my skills working with children that had severe problems. I had been in this position for about six months when I was drafted into the Army during the Korean War. Some readers of this narrative might be confused about this fact since later, during the Viet Nam War, many young men left the country or became conscientious objectors. I was not of a mind to leave the country and I didn't oppose all wars, so this left me little choice.

The Army

The Army learned of my political activities and put me through basic training three times while the authorities considered what to do with me. This was very unpleasant as I was being trained as a fighter, which was an anathema to me. Additionally, there were all

the other unpleasant events: KP, being yelled at and punished by non-commissioned officers, and so forth. I learned two important things about myself. I was resilient, and managed to take a lot of unpleasantness in stride. Secondly, though I'd always regarded myself as physically weak, many weeks of physical training enabled me to do push ups, sit ups, and chin ups, all of which I never dreamed myself capable.

After basic training, I was put in a replacement company. I met another radical who seemed to be spending his entire army career in this company. Since I could type, I was utilized as a clerk. However, I was notified that I would be used as a social worker (I already had a master's) and was to be sent to a camp in Georgia. This surprised me, although several years later the settlement house director told me she had been visited by the FBI to inquire about me; she told them I was very patriotic! I don't know what the FBI made of my college activities, although I recently read some University of Chicago documents about the *Chicago Maroon* which left no doubt what the university administrators thought of my politics.

I had one other encounter with the Army bureaucracy. My first social work assignment was with the Disciplinary Barracks—referred to as the USDB (i.e. prison)—where men were imprisoned to fulfill sentences they received for offenses ranging from theft to desertion. Our job as social workers was to determine whether there could have been a psychological defense related to the crime and what type of rehabilitation was possible. I learned a lot from the inmates, such as the elaborate intelligence system they had in place to learn about matters such as changes planned by the administration. Several months after I arrived I was transferred to the post's psychiatric hospital as a policy had been put in place to prevent any "security risks" from having a position in that installation. I remained in that position until my official discharge in 1954. I learned a lot about the use of power there. One relatively minor event (although it didn't seem to at the time) was when the chief psychiatrist sent the non-commissioned social workers to be ward attendants in order to punish an allegedly lazy social work officer. The positive impact of that on my learning was that I worked with and interacted with persons diagnosed as mentally ill for 10 hours a day, and learned a lot about how capable and intelligent most of them were. The way I viewed people of that status was forever changed.

Return to Civilian Life and Career

I was offered two jobs around the time I was about to be discharged. One was at the Jewish family agency in Chicago as a caseworker. The other was at Henry Booth House. I made the decision to return to the settlement full time and to live there. I was attracted to the idea of working in a place where I could interact with individuals, groups, families, and community organizations to help solve problems rather than being restricted to primarily working with individuals. This required me to locate myself in an oppressed community, and to help individuals and community organizations, largely through groups, to pursue social justice. I also realized that I did not have sufficient understanding of group work theory and methods because my master's program did not offer these. I enrolled part time in the social work program at the University of Illinois in order to take all the group work courses offered there. (One important product of this experience is that the woman who was to become my wife was also studying in that school!) I studied with Paul Simon and William Schwartz, who both took a strong stance on the role of groups in achieving social change. The latter particularly incorporated this in his principle that the group worker "lends a vision" of what society can become, to the group and its members.

I also became the director of the settlement camp where I had been a counselor several years before. During the next two years, I worked on projects such as training teenagers for leadership. I helped a group of teens who termed themselves "Better Human Relations Builders" who approached the settlement for help, advocating for teens caught in the criminal justice system, advocating for families seeking assistance from the welfare system,

and supporting the development of so-called "block clubs."

At the end of two years, I resigned from the settlement and took a position with the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago (JCC). I wanted to hone my group work skills and, at the time, that agency had some of the most experienced group workers in the area. I also wanted to see if the Jewish identity I shared with many of the agency's members could enable me to motivate members to seek social change. I was ambivalent about this decision as it meant leaving the African American community, but I continue to this day—54 years later—to maintain some of the relationships I began then.

My first job at JCC was to direct a small program conducted by the agency in cooperation with a synagogue in the Hyde Park community near the University of Chicago. I continued to be very involved with the youth of that community, some of whom were the children of University faculty. I sought to be sensitive to their social and personal issues, such as struggling to develop their unique identities and values, ways of coping with school bureaucracies, means of relating to young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, their ways of dealing with prejudice against Jews, and their feelings about the adjacent African American communities.

My subsequent position with JCC was to work in a larger branch supervising work done with teens and pre-teens. My last position before leaving the agency in 1963 was as the Program Director of an agency branch in one of the less affluent communities, the Max Strauss Center in Albany Park. I continued to learn about how the people I worked with dealt with their privileges and oppressions based on religion, gender, sexual orientation, and age.

In the late 1950's, I enrolled in a four year part-time program at the Institute for Psychoanalysis, which trained professionals to use psychoanalytic approaches in work with children and adolescents. This had little impact on my understanding of social justice, but added to my skills as a social worker. I was deeply affected by a course I took with Bruno Bettelheim, who also consulted with me for an academic year on my supervision of social work students.[4] I also worked for a short time as a relief counselor at the institution he headed. What I learned from him was a strong commitment to penetrate more deeply into the undercurrents and meanings of everyday situations. However, I did not see him as a role model for teaching because I thought his strong confrontational style might be more harmful than helpful to many learners!

Doctoral Studies

By the early 1960s, I began to think seriously of working for a doctorate and ultimately teaching in a University. My reasons for this were that I thought I had accomplished as much as I could as a practitioner, and I could accomplish more toward the development of social work knowledge and the pursuit of social justice as a faculty member. I took one doctoral course at the University of Chicago, then applied for and was accepted to the doctoral program. One anecdote I wish to relate is that the director of the doctoral program confided in me that a faculty member (who happened to be related to the person who was Dean of Students when I edited the school paper) informed her that I was not suitable because of my history of radicalism. The doctoral director said that, to the contrary, that made me more desirable as a doctoral student!

The history of my tenure as a doctoral student merits more discussion than I have space for here, but I enjoyed the doctoral experience, as well as the opportunity to examine social work and social welfare with a more critical eye. One principle with reference to the application of social justice to social work is that the wishes and needs of the recipients of service take precedence over those of the practitioners. Therefore, for my dissertation, I sought to test the proposition that "when the practitioner is perceived by the group members as knowing and responding to their expectations, the outcomes of the process will be best." I obtained strong support for this proposition and presented my results at professional conferences and in print. I was grateful to William Schwartz, whom I consulted on that project, as well as my new colleagues at the University of Michigan.

As I was working on my dissertation, I received an invitation to interview for a position at the University of Michigan and this led to an offer—which I accepted—to join the faculty. Michigan is and was an exciting place. The campus was heavily involved in the struggle to end the war in Viet Nam and was one of the leaders, perhaps the originator, of the teach-ins on that subject. The campus chapter of the left wing organization "The Students for a Democratic Society" (SDS) was very active, and had many members among the social work students. These forces were highly influential in my thinking about social justice. There were many faculty members who were active in struggles for social change, and I learned from such people as Rosemary Sarri, Robert Vinter, Eugene Litwak, John Erlich, and, not least of all, our Dean, Fedele Fauri, who was a major contributor to the creation of social programs at the federal and state levels.

I never thought I would remain at Michigan for the rest of my career but that is what happened, mainly because the School of Social Work remained such a progressive and dynamic place. I was on the active faculty for 37 years and have been an emeritus professor for eight. It would take a volume to describe all my experiences there, but I will comment on a few that were most relevant to the development of my understanding of how to work toward social justice. But before I do so, I will digress to discuss a little more of how my family life related to this.

My Family

I have now been married to my wife, Janet, for almost 53 years. The story of those years would fill a book. We have three children—all adopted and now grown—with children of their own. I cannot claim that my relations with my family have always been egalitarian and just, but in my struggles to make it more so I have had a lot of opportunities to reflect on justice and equality in family life. One place in which I got help for doing this was through a men's group that has been in existence around 30 years. In this group, we frequently discussed how our relations with partners and children are affected by our experience of male privilege. Several of the men are gay and have shared with the members of the group their struggles to create a just world for themselves.

One major event in our marriage belongs here. Although my wife would undoubtedly tell the reader of my strengths as well as limitations with regard to justice in a marriage, she is unable to do so now as she suffered a stroke ten years ago, which left her with disabilities including aphasia which creates difficulty in speaking. I have learned much from being her caregiver about oppression of people with disabilities, such as the following:

• Physical and other barriers that prevent people with disabilities from using facilities, even in the presence of legislation that requires such access. For example, we face many hassles when traveling, especially with security and airlines. I sometimes think the authorities are more suspicious of elderly people in wheelchairs than of other people!

• Many limitations in the rehabilitation services available and paid for by health insurance, although our privileged status of having pensions means that we can afford some of these.

• Some individuals in the public are inconsiderate of people with disabilities.

• Limitations in the services available to support caregivers such as myself.

A second major event in our family that taught me a lot about social justice was adopting a child who had suffered a good deal of trauma before coming into our family. Concerns for his privacy prohibit me from telling more of his story, although he is now a fine man, father, husband, and worker. But in raising him I learned a lot about the oppression of children with special needs, such as lack of understanding and services in the schools, lack of supports for parents, and lack of adequate services in the community.

I will close this brief discussion of my family life with an anecdote that one of my sons has told on several occasions, the most recent being in a speech he gave when he

was awarded the state's recognition for being the outstanding social worker of the year. He recalled that, as his father, I had contributed to his sense of justice on several occasions, the most memorable being that when he was in grade school. He and an African American child were having serious conflicts with each other. I had requested a meeting with the other child and his mother (his father was not in the home) to engage in a true dialogue about their conflicts. As a result of this, he and the other child became close friends.

Years at Michigan

Now I will comment on a few experiences that, over a 37 year period, most tied in with my developing consciousness of social justice. First, I typically sought to hold membership on—and at times the chair—of any committees relating to social justice. In the early days these committees were often called "intercultural" committees and devoted themselves to critiquing the curriculum and its adequacy with regard to cultural differences. For example, during the early years I developed a course with Chuck Jones, an African American faculty member called "Ethnicity and Social Work." Later when such a course became mandatory, I helped to further develop teach the course. I also became very interested in feminism, writing several articles on group work and feminism with Beth Reed. At one point I taught a group work course primarily using feminist writings.

I also was very concerned about the power differentials between students and faculty. In the 1960s, I was strongly supportive of a change in school policy requiring that half the membership of school committees be students, although the chair always remained a faculty member. I was also supportive of what became known as the Black Action Movement, which on several occasions literally shut the university down in with demands for an enlarged Black enrollment and a revised curriculum. The 1960's were very heady times in universities, especially Michigan.

During these years, I was elected to leadership in two organizations: The International Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (AASWG) and the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE). The former was most important in my understanding of social justice because they stood for the idea that justice and democracy can and should be advanced through groups, which I strongly believe. In the latter organization, I tried to further the idea that doctoral education in social work should help students develop more effective means of changing social systems to be more just, rather than educating students to do research without this as a product.

Retirement (So to Speak)

I don't intend this essay to be a history of my perspective on the evolution of diversity thinking at Michigan. I should note, however, that after some years and by the turn of the century, this thinking was evolving into a multifaceted effort using the term social justice, as such, and incorporating the dimensions of privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice – or "PODS." I strongly supported this evolution, and as an emeritus professor helped to write a field manual on how PODS should be taught in the field, and participated in the committee working on other details of this. I saw this as another part of the evolution of my understanding of social justice.

As an emeritus professor, I am trying to draw on the various experiences I've described in this narrative to do work related to social justice. This includes helping direct a participatory action research project, which would train high school students to take leadership in the peaceful negotiation of group conflicts, co-authoring a book with Robert Ortega on a social justice approach to group work, and co-authoring another book with Richard Tolman on how to research group work. This also takes a strong stance on the relationship of this research to issues of social justice.

I view learning about social justice and practicing in a socially just way as a continuous and lifelong effort as I change, and as the world changes around me. I pray that I will have the energy and capacity to continue in this way, having reached the age of 81. So far, so good!

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Footnotes

[1] This arrangement was also a result of the reorganization of degree programs at Chicago under the leadership of Robert Maynard Hutchins in which students completed four years of college after two years of high school and received a Bachelor's degree at that time. I had gone to junior college elsewhere and was not eligible for that program and, thus, I have had the usual four years in college but never was awarded a Bachelor's degree.

[2] I am looking at my yellowed copies of the *Maroon* as I write this.

[3] After I worked for my Ph.D. and went to Michigan to teach, I returned to Chapin Hall on a monthly basis to help them develop a group treatment program. I did this for a year or so and then was abruptly dropped. I thought this was because I expressed opinions that may have been seen by the agency leadership as critical. This is another lesson I learned about the way some agency leaders use power. A few years later the board closed the agency, and I think this was because the leadership inadequately dealt with allegations of child abuse. The endowment of the agency was given to the School of Social Service Administration, to create a research center.

[4] I am aware of the controversies that surrounded him, especially after his death, in which he was accused of mistreating children. Yet I did learn a lot from his penetrating use of questions, and his confrontation of students. I thought the latter excessive but useful when used with more discretion.

Promoting Social Justice

Jeanne Gill, Ph.D.
San Diego State University

The author was inspired to write the following narrative, after visiting with colleagues who teach courses on social justice. Here she reflects back on her experiences with the topic.

Promoting social justice is very important to me, and has always has been a part of my psyche. I promoted it through my behavior as a teenager in Norfolk, Virginia. My mother was also born in Norfolk. She was a quiet, laid back person, so I never knew her attitude toward minorities. But there was no question about where I stood on the subject. For example, from 1943 - 1945 when I was an undergraduate student at the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary. I did not have a car so I took the bus to school. In those days of "Jim Crow" segregation, black people had to sit in the backs of buses, and I used to spontaneously follow them to the back of the bus. I never discussed this behavior with anyone, I just did it. As I think back about my actions, I do not remember anyone—black or white—responding to my behavior. I just fit in. I was on automatic pilot. This narrative is the first time I've ever discussed my non-verbal promotion of social justice during that time.

From 1945-1947, I attended the Richmond Professional Institute of the College of William and Mary. I served on the Intercollegiate Council, which was composed of black and white colleges. As a representative of RPI, a white college, I attended a meeting at Hampton Institute, a black college. At one of our RPI meetings, the black poet Langston Hughes, was a guest presenter. After listening to him, I purchased his book *Shakespeare in Harlem*. He wrote: "For Miss Jeanne Levinson" (my single name) and signed it: "Sincerely, Langston Hughes (February 12, 1947)." I would like to share a stanza from one of the poems in the book, entitled "Ku Klux:"

They took me out
To some lonesome place
They said, "Do you believe
In the great white race?

When I lived in Boston, I publicly advocated for women's rights. I paraded in front of the State House in Boston protesting against the Chastity Laws of 1865, which prohibited women from getting abortions. I met with doctors willing to perform abortions and made their information available to women who needed it. I also worked with William R. Baird, the Director of the Parents' Aid Society in Long Island, on birth control and abortion issues.

While I was still a staff member at Jewish Family and Children's Service in Boston, I helped people find affordable housing, jobs, and health care insurance. From 1954-1958, while I was a student at Boston University, I was placed at a settlement house in Dorchester, Massachusetts called Hecht House, and practiced group work with eight year olds to teenagers.

One of the most significant experiences I have had is related to my association with the Girl Scouts of America, beginning in 1933 when I was a Brownie Scout, and ending in 1952, when I was an assistant camp director. During that time, I learned many interactive skills that

I used as a college student. In 1952, I represented Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware at a Girl Scout leader training camp called Camp Edith Macy, in Pleasantville, New York. I appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* with 11 other Girl Scout leaders from the United States, and 12 Girl Scout leaders from around the world.

I received a Bachelors degree in Social Science from the Richmond Professional Institute of the College of William and Mary (now known as Virginia Commonwealth University), a Master's in Social Service from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in Human Behavior with a minor in nutrition from La Jolla University. When I attended Boston University, I met with students from Boston College. One of the students from there, whom I knew, Father Samuel Carter, became the Archbishop of Kingston, Jamaica.

Currently, I am an adjunct faculty member at San Diego State University School of Social Work. I tutor undergraduate and graduate social work students and help them with their written assignments. Most of the students I see are foreign students.

In 1993 I, along with Joan Parry from California State University, San Jose, helped form the Southern California Chapter of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, Inc. (AASWG), an international professional organization. In those days we sponsored group work training/peer consultation six times a year as well as four workshops. We provided CEU's at no extra charge for the registrants at the four workshops. We sponsored the 28th International Symposium of the AASWG in 2006, in San Diego. Each year I support a presentation at the symposium as a memorial for my husband. It helps further the important justice objectives we believe in.

Jeanne Gill, Ph.D., is an Adjunct Professor at the San Diego State University School of Social Work.

Distributive Justice and Inequality

Samuel A. Richmond, Ph.D.
Cleveland State University

In the following narrative, a philosopher long affiliated with social work's interest in social justice examines the issue of inequality in our society, the political background, and the burdens being placed on the poor. His ideas are supported by historical and current data and a concrete view of the situation in a particular city.

In 1956, I came upon a federal government report in the local public library showing Stark County, Ohio, where I lived, to have the highest per capita income in the nation. My county was more equal than other high per capita counties. The radio ad for the local electric company declared northeast Ohio, Greater Cleveland, "The best location in the nation."

1956 was the last century's peak of prosperity as gauged by average age at first marriage. At sixteen I had the option to leave school to earn nearly as much as my father in the steel mill; enough to start a family. I did not plan to go to college. Sputnik changed things. Out of the blue, the company that owned the steel mill where my father worked awarded me and other children of employees four-year scholarships to college, all expenses paid. I studied philosophy.

In 1967, I was hired at Case Western Reserve University as an assistant professor of philosophy. My scholarly ambition was to improve the case for consideration of equality in reasoning about justice. A philosophy colleague with interests similar to mine joined me in my desire to learn more about the disciplines of law, economics, and social work, which we thought relevant to understanding inequality.

Together we read constitutional law, especially the 14th amendment provision that "no state shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." This was a fundamental principle for the reasoning found in Brown vs. Board of Education and other judgments and legislation removing laws which denied equal protection. He collaborated with colleagues in economics in research, publication, and course development. I found colleagues among the members of the faculty of social work.

Through these associations I came to comprehend the scope and contours of inequality:

• *Inequality is increased or decreased by changes in law.* Changes in law in the 50s, 60s and 70s made it possible to think that progress toward elimination of inequalities of race, gender, class, and nationality, might be secured by judiciary, legislative, and executive actions extending equal protection of the law to all.

• *Inequality has measureable quantitative properties,* e.g., the relative *magnitude* of inequalities and the *degree* of correlation among inequalities of wealth, income, education and longevity. By these measures in the mid-1970s, U.S. statistical data showed that average income was high relative to other countries, and inequality of income was low.

• *Inequality has experience-able qualitative properties.* Social work colleagues took me into prisons, juvenile detention centers, facilities for children separated from parents, mental hospitals, assisted living locations, the free clinics, and public housing. It was apparent that those with the least were being denied too much. For example, Ohio incarcerations

rates of adults and children were among the highest in the world, and the results were painfully apparent: visible crowding and separation of children from parents and family.

Inequality had three faces. Legally, there appeared to be progress toward equality; quantitatively, inequality appeared not to be irreversibly unjust; qualitatively, the existing inequality was certainly unjust, it seemed to me.

In the 1970s, philosophers were discussing Rawls' *difference* principle, whereby an income inequality *might* not be an unjust inequality if, as a consequence, those with least income will have more than they would have under an equal income distribution. On this view, distributive inequality itself is not assumed to be unjust. It is to be viewed as an independent variable to be weighed according to its utility to the least well-off. Of course, an inequality causing the least well-off to be worse off would presumably be unjust.

Around this time, my social work faculty colleagues were discussing that inequality is systematic: the same people had more and the same less of everything. Increase in inequality is hard to achieve without taking from those with less and giving to those with more. Increasing inequality does not in fact generate utilities accruing to the benefit of the least well-off. In fact, more inequality is invariably more unjust. Colleagues among the social work faculty joined with members of community organizations in the early 80s to sponsor "Guns or Butter" conferences. These challenged the size of increased spending for war and preparation for war against decreased spending for pressing human needs.

In the 1980s, Conservatives gained political control of executive and legislative offices of government. Soon they changed the direction of public policy in favor of increasing inequality. Congress and the President cut taxes on capital gains and high incomes and increased social security "payroll" taxes on earned income. They cut benefits to the least well-off. The increase in social security taxes was sufficient to cause a surplus in the trust funds. This was invested in the bonds funding deficit caused on the income tax side of the federal budget by cuts on taxes for the wealthy.

Changes in federal policy were so sudden and so great that there was an explosion of hungry and homeless persons on the streets of Cleveland. I found myself volunteering in a food pantry and joining with others to study the federal budget and the impact of its changes on our lives. Under the rubric "Jobs with Peace," we constructed a "peace budget" showing how changed federal priorities were devastating our local community.

After thirty years of more and more tax cuts to the largest corporations and wealthiest individuals and benefit cuts for those with less, the distribution of income is as unequal as it was back in 1928. Low-income mothers and children come out worst. There has been a generation long change in distributions of wealth and income such that the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. See Figure 1.

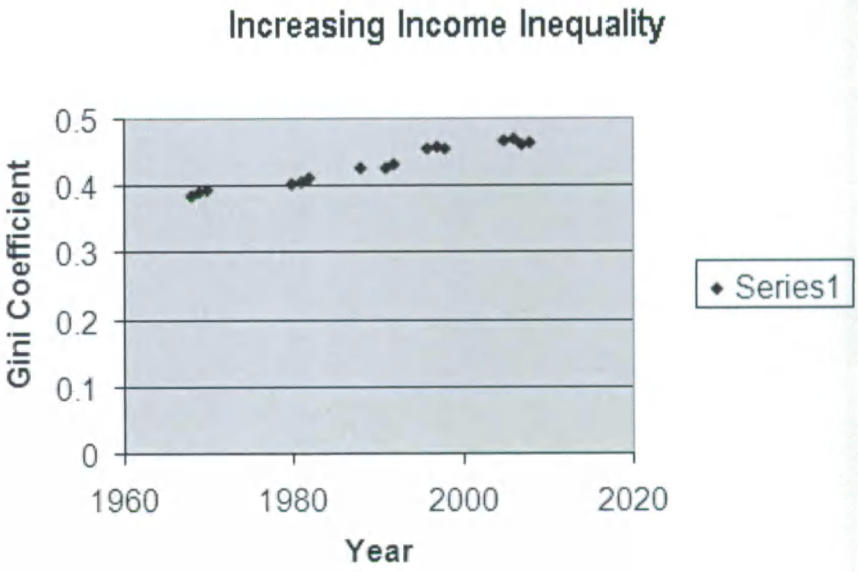

Fig. 1. The Gini coefficient measuring income inequality increased from .38 to .46 from 1978 to 2008. Each one point change reflects a shift of about $500 a year in annual income from those with less to those with more. The eight point change shown here indicates that, on average, the inequality between those with more and those with less is about $4,000 more each year. This is a shift from those with less to those with more that now comes to about $1.2 trillion each year it continues unabated.[1]

The shift in the burden of taxation to those with low earned income away from those with capital gains and higher incomes redistributed about $250 billion dollars away from those with less to those with more. Borrowing instead of taxing another $250 billion for the federal government benefits, again, our wealthiest citizens. Over a decade, the advantage to the advantaged comes to more than ten trillion of dollars. The share of those with more has grown at the expense of everyone else, including the least well-off.2 Today, five times as many people are incarcerated as in the seventies; U.S. rates are double the World's rates.

Cuyahoga County Ohio, once at the heart of "the best location in the nation," now hosts the poorest city in the nation: Cleveland. Median family income has fallen. A higher proportion of the city is poor, and the poor are poorer. More children are separated from parents.

How did Cleveland go from best to worst? Why would the entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic of Northeast Ohioans not be up to maintaining high mean income and low mean inequality for the region? Some blamed it on the unions and workers. Others blamed it on the companies, managers, and owners. I blamed it on federal policies increasing inequality in income and wealth.

Yet one feature of the flow of funds in and out of the region stands out above all the others. About $2000 per person (2010 dollars) more is taxed or borrowed out of Greater Cleveland each year by federal taxes than is returned by federal. These funds support military expenditures in other locations throughout the United States and foreign lands. There are nearly no military expenditures in the Cleveland area. Six billion (2010 dollars) have been taken away from the three million people of Greater Cleveland in taxes and loans for war and preparation for war over the last forty years.

Each billion dollars earned here but taken away for government expenditures elsewhere results in the displacement of more than ten thousand jobs. More than ten thousand persons must relocate to another region to find employment. Rates of unemployment and employment displacement are higher for those less well-off than for those better-off. Consider this report from George Zeller, a long term observer of Ohio employment numbers:

> *"The lengthy 2000s recession has been extraordinarily damaging in Ohio and within Cuyahoga County. Between 2000 and 2009 the county lost 109,694 jobs, which was 13.9% of all jobs in Cuyahoga County. Between 2002 and 2007 the county lost 25,527 jobs, representing 3.3% of all employment within the county. But between 2002-2007, these job losses were concentrated entirely within the city of Cleveland, not within the Cuyahoga County suburbs, where employment continued to grow. During the five year period between 2002 and 2007, employment levels actually increased by 0.2% in Cleveland's Cuyahoga County suburbs. During the same five year period, employment levels declined by 9.3% in the city of Cleveland while employment growth took place in the suburbs. That situation completely reversed itself during 2007-2009. Between 2007-2009, Cuyahoga County's suburbs lost 35,554 jobs, while the city of Cleveland lost 5,772 jobs during the same recent two year period. It is therefore clear that the suburbs in Cuyahoga County largely escaped the impact of the 2000s recession for five years, while the city of Cleveland accounted for all of the damaging net job losses within Cuyahoga County during the 2002-2007 recession years in the local labor market. But most Cuyahoga County net job losses during 2007-2009 were suffered in the suburbs, completely reversing the pattern for the prior five years."*[3]

Those with less lost more before those with more lost anything. Eventually all but a very few lose. The country as a whole suffers the same problem as northeast Ohio. Military financing taxes and borrows funds from the United States and spends the dollars elsewhere. Hundreds of billions are spent to support troops in Europe, South Korea, and Japan as well as forces occupying Iraq and Afghanistan. We have a deficit in exchanges with Europe, Japan, and South Korea before any "trade" takes place. Every gallon of fuel used for war, every air plane built for war, permanently removes from our economy all that went into its production.

On July 19, 2010, President Obama called on Congress to extend unemployment benefits and borrow if necessary to do so. The Senate Minority Leader and most of his party are against debt financing for this extension, but not against debt financing if necessary for funds to extend war or tax cuts for the wealthy.

The President has appointed a bipartisan commission to develop proposals for decreasing social security benefits, e.g., reducing future cost of living increases in income to those with less. This is an alternative to restoring taxes on the wealthy sufficient to repay the funds loaned from the social security trust so that benefits can be maintained. Here, too, placing a greater burden on those with less appears to the parties in power to be better than increasing taxes for those who benefitted so much from the recent history of increasing in inequality: of taking more from those with less to give more to those with more.

On July 23-25, 2010, there was a United National Peace Conference of people who want the United States to end the wars, bring home the troops, and invest the savings in human needs. Some attend because they were opposed to preventive war on principle; others because there appears to be something fundamentally wrong with the nation's priorities. I attended for both reasons.

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Footnotes

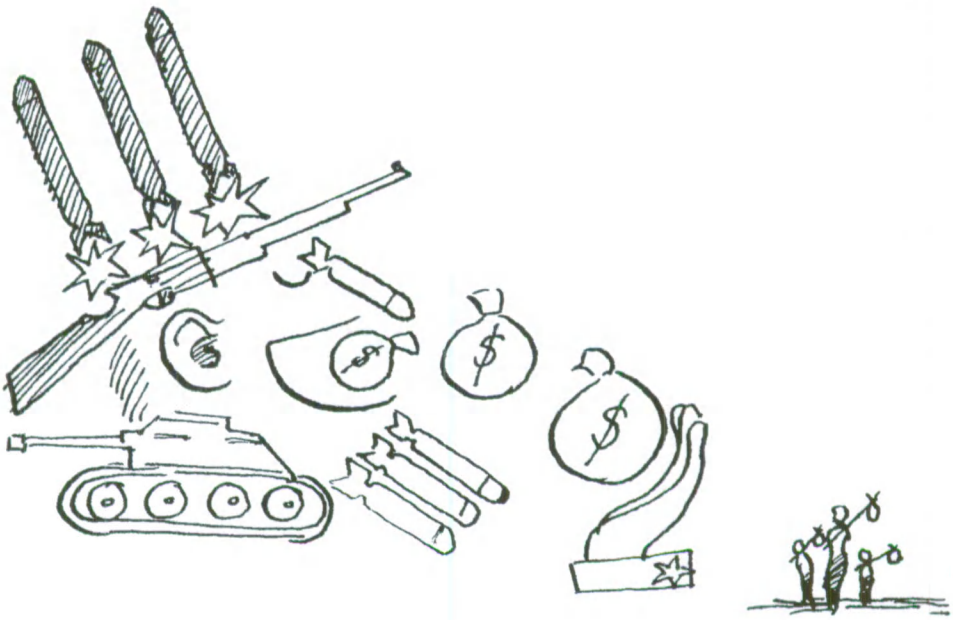
[1] US Census Bureau
From Table H-4.
Gini Ratios for Households 1967 to 2008

Year	Coefficient
2008	0.466
2007	0.463
2006	0.470
2005	0.469
1998	0.456
1997	0.459
1996	0.455
1992	0.433
1991	0.428
1988	0.426
1982	0.412
1981	0.406
1980	0.403
1970	0.394
1969	0.391
1968	0.386

[2] "Wealth inequality was up slightly from 2001 to 2004 and again from 2004 to 2007, whilethe inequality of non-home wealth was up sharply from 2001 to 2004, with the share of top 1 percent increasing by 2.5 percentage points after a marked decline from 1998 to 2001, and it was up again a bit from 2004 to 2007. Income inequality actually fell from 2000 to 2003, but then rose sharply from 2003 to 2006, for a net increase over the six years (an increase of 0.12 Gini points). The number of households worth $1,000,000 or more, $5,000,000 or more, and especially $10,000,000 or more surged during the 1990s and once again from 2001 to 2007. "The mean wealth of the top 1 percent jumped to $18.5 million in 2007. The percentage increase in net worth (also that of non-home wealth and income) from 1983 to 2007 was much greater for the top wealth (and income) groups than for those lower in the distribution. Moreover, the average wealth of the poorest 40 percent declined by 63 percent between 1983 and 2007 and, by 2007, had fallen to only $2,200. All in all, the greatest gains in wealth and income were enjoyed by the upper 20 percent, particularly the top 1 percent, of the respective distributions. Between 1983 and 2007, the top

1 percent received 35 percent of the total growth in net worth, 43 percent of the total growth in non-home wealth, and 44 percent of the total increase in income. The figures for the top 20 percent are 89 percent, 94 percent, and 87 percent, respectively." Edward N. Wolff, "Recent Trends in Household Wealth in the United States: Rising Debt and the Middle-Class Squeeze—An Update to 2007", *Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, Working Paper 589,* March 2010, p.35.

[3] George Zeller, "Cuyahoga County Job Losses since 2002 Drastically Different in the City of Cleveland and in the Suburbs; $4 Billion in Earnings Vanish in only Seven Years; 2007-2009 Recession Hits Suburbs Hard (annual)". Go to www.georgezeller.com.



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Social Justice and NASW

Janlee Wong, MSW
Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter

The Executive Director of the California Chapter of National Association of Social Work recounts the efforts that he, NASW, and the membership have undertaken to promote social justice.

Over the 15 years that I have been the Executive Director of the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), I've learned that there are many expectations for a professional social work organization, but the charge for social justice is one of the most difficult to understand. Social workers are idealistic and believe strongly in societal change, yet such change is slow and incremental. On a daily basis, NASW is guided by the quest for social justice, but it takes a long view to fully realize it. NASW is guided by the *Code of Ethics* (NASW 2008) and public and social policy statements written by social workers and approved by a nationally elected assembly of social worker delegates known as the Delegate Assembly. These statements are published in a volume entitled *Social Work Speaks* (NASW 2009). In contrast to other helping professions, what distinguishes social work is its strong ethical and theorectical base for social justice. However, while individual social workers have long been advocates for human services, there are few in the political and social policy arena (Midgely,1997).

Social Justice and Ethics

The *NASW Code of Ethics* effectively ties ethical behavior and practice to social justice. Of the six ethical values in the *Code,* one is devoted to social justice and the ethical principal that "social workers challenge social injustice." In support of this ethical value, one of the six elaborative sections in the *Code* is devoted to the "Social Worker's Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society." NASW uses this section as a guide to its efforts in social justice (NASW 2008).

Section 6.01: "Social Welfare," lays out the framework for NASW's advocacy for welfare, medical assistance, social and mental health services, economic development, housing, etc. Hence, NASW's advocacy program supports legislation and policies at the local, state, federal and global level that provides assistance to people and their communities usually through governmental and non-governmental organizational entities.

Section 6.02: "Public Participation," promotes social worker involvement in "shaping social policies and institutions." NASW members and staff contribute to the policy discussion at county boards of supervisors meetings, in state level policy hearings and forums, and in Congress or national policy discussions. NASW members and staff also participate in international conferences and forums to promote ethical public and social policies.

Section 6.03: "Public Emergencies," has been NASW's guide throughout the decade whether it was 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the Haiti earthquake, or the Gulf oil disaster. Often social workers are among the first to volunteer and work closely with disaster relief agencies and coordinating bodies. NASW cooperates regularly with other disaster relief organizations, such as the Red Cross, to train and prepare social workers for volunteer work during disasters.

Section 6.04: "Social and Political Action," guides NASW's work in promoting economic equality, non-discrimination, and cultural competency for practitioners. NASW has long provided leadership, policy and financial support for efforts to fight discrimination and to promote equal rights. NASW opposed the unconstitutional Proposition 187 which would have, among other things, barred education for immigrant children. NASW has consistently opposed anti-gay measures including most recently Proposition 8, which bans gay marriage in California. NASW has joined with other groups opposed to measures that would limit a woman's right to choose, and set up barriers to children receiving mental health treatment without parental consent. NASW's political program (CalPACE and other components) is the only social work oriented, comprehensive political action program at the state level. Our annual Lobby Days Program is the largest in the country, bringing over 1,000 social workers to the state capitol and lobbying nearly all of the legislative offices, as well as the governor's office.

Two Methods

When discussing NASW and social justice, a question often arises as to what should be the main method used in working towards social justice. While the methods discussed can vary greatly, they could be broadly categorized into two methods. The methods are community organization and "influence through lobbying." Traditionally, NASW has taken the "influence through lobbying" path while encouraging its leaders and members to organize communities. How NASW decides on which method to use is based on strategic directions set by its democratically elected leadership (national and state boards of directors and Delegate Assembly). There are other NASW activities that move the organization towards its goals of social justice but are less well known, including political action and professional development.

Influence Through Lobbying

The most visible method NASW uses in working toward social justice is its advocacy agenda, which utilizes the "influence through lobbying" method. In Washington D.C. and Sacramento, NASW leaders, staff, and lobbyists visibly lobby for programs, services, civil rights, and policies that promote help for those in need. It is a daunting task given severe budget constraints and a continuous counter effort that calls for no taxes, small government, and individual self help over societal help for individuals. Important policy and legislative efforts that NASW collaborates on include:

- expansion of in-home and community support services;
- expansion of medical coverage for children and families;
- supportive services for recipients in welfare reform;
- funding and redirection of the mental health system to focus on recovery and rehabilitation;
- early childhood education and development;
- corrections reform;
- support for foster youth;
- civil rights for oppressed and disenfranchised groups
- national healthcare reform efforts
- immigration reform.

NASW teams with major advocacy groups such as labor, consumer groups, county government and other professional associations. NASW is selective and only joins efforts where professional social work policies are in agreement with the goals of the other groups. As a collaborative member of these efforts, NASW joins in lobbying efforts with other lobbyists, urges action by its members and non-member social workers through legislative alerts and communicates its policies and positions through the media.

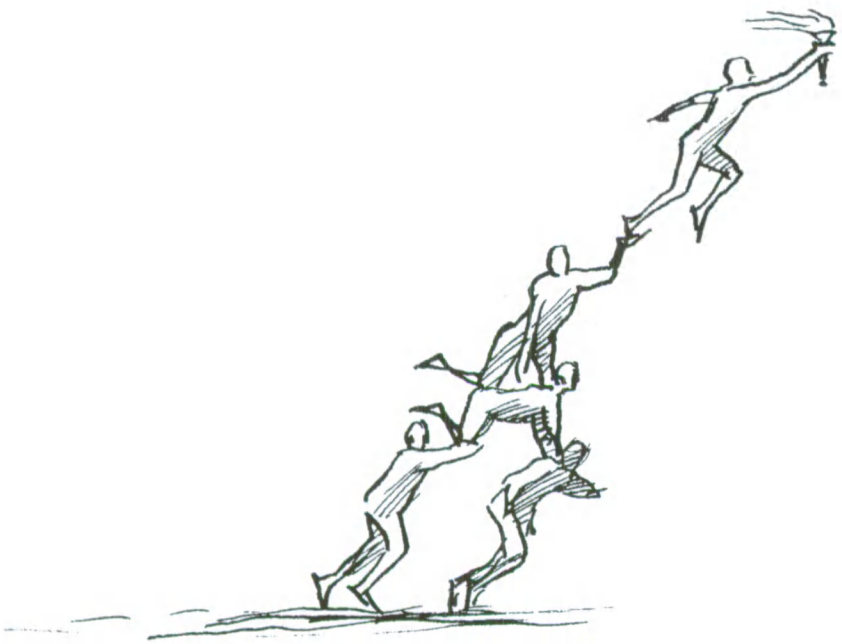
Political Action

A related but less known effort is NASW's political program, or CalPACE (California Political Action for Candidate Election). NASW doesn't have a large political action fund, so its influence is not led by political action committee contributions to candidates. NASW's political goals are to elect more social workers and social work friendly candidates, and to encourage grassroots efforts such as getting out the vote. Through NASW's

CalPACE program, NASW works continuously to inform and involve social workers in the political process. NASW promotes to the political system that social workers make good candidates for election, and educates those social workers who are candidates that billing oneself as a social worker is not a political liability.

NASW's CalPACE actively engages in raising political action money from social workers. Money plays an important role in opening doors to policy makers and getting their attention, as evidenced by the influence that labor and county government associations wield. Contrary to popular opinion, campaign contributions to politicians are not for the purpose of their enrichment. It is for the purpose of electing and reelecting them to office. Communicating to the voters requires substantial resources as California is the most populous state and state legislators represent 500,000 to 1 million persons in their districts.

It is important to view political action as directly related to the pursuit of social justice. Many important policy changes and reforms are accomplished by the slimmest of legislative vote margins, such as healthcare reform. Adoption of the state budget comes down to 3 votes in each house. Who will represent us in the legislature often is decided by a few percentage points in primary elections. NASW is engaged in continuous efforts through education with social workers to destimatize political involvement. By electing social workers and social work friendly candidates to office, we improve our chances of enacting policy changes that work towards achieving social justice.



Social Justice and Professional Development

Social justice is very much related to professional development in that social workers need the skills, knowledge and tools typically used in this area including grassroots and/or community organizing, and social policy courses. However, the link between social justice and professional development is sometimes not as clear as it is with advocacy and political action. There hasn't been much demand among social workers for formal training in this area, as evidenced by the few social justice conferences, forums, and workshops that are available. There seems to be few jobs in this area compared to clinical and direct service jobs. Nevertheless, professional development does present an opportunity for social workers to reconnect to the important social work ethical values of social justice. One of the key continuing educational requirements for license renewal is a mandatory law and ethics course (six hours) every two years. While these courses typically focus on such issues as confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and client consent, those offered by NASW also include a section on the *NASW Code of Ethics* in which social justice is covered.

At the national level, NASW has developed cultural competency standards for practitioners. A key element of cultural competency is for social workers to understand the individuals, families, and communities they work with from the standpoint of oppression and discrimination. Professional development involves individual social workers understanding "their own boundaries of moral exclusion and developing a stance of inclusion, in which all people are entitled to the same values, rules, and considerations of fairness" (Van Soest, 2003).

NASW established the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW) credential in 1960. The ACSW was the first—and for many years, the only—nationally known and recognized credential of the profession. Before individual states could license social workers, the ACSW was the only source in most states of acknowledging and, through NASW's professional review program, regulating the social work profession. One of the credentialling requirements is that all ACSWs have taken and continue to take ethical coursework, which would include social justice by way of the teaching on the NASW Code of Ethics.

Summary

Critics have often argued that NASW has done little to promote social justice, and that its efforts are feeble and ineffectual. They ask the question, "In the long run, what has NASW really done?" Since social work's modern historic roots in the 19th century, social work's voice has been one in a chorus rather than as a soloist. It is not the culture of social work to focus on the practitioner, but rather on the client, the community, and society. It is little wonder that, since social work promotes a spending, governmental solution to society's ills, that policy makers often relegate its voice to a stereotyped category that is criticized in some quarters as "liberal" or "bleeding heart." Nevertheless when economic and governmental budget conditions are optimal, NASW has been on the team of advocates able to achieve important objectives in social welfare, such as expansion of medical coverage for all poor children, improving wage conditions for in-home supportive services workers, and expansion of social workers in child and adult protective services. NASW has been a leading voice on anti-discrimination efforts ranging from fighting for marriage equality to condemning nations considering severe punishment for homosexual activities.

Could this have been done without NASW's presence? In today's world of collaborative alliances, it would be hard to say if the success of a collaborative effort would have been affected either way if one member of the collaborative was present or not. Sometimes, in the social justice world, there is a tendency to look for a savior or a champion and to ascribe phenomenal power to that individual or organization.

NASW serves as a vehicle for social workers to fight for social justice in the arenas that are covered in this article. Many social workers have used this vehicle to advance their social justice agenda. Whether the issue is small or large, NASW is the professional social work organization by which social workers can bring their voices to the forefront.

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Social Working for Social Justice

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This narrative is the story of the author's work in a profession he believed would provide him the ideal opportunity to both earn a living and work for social justice. He discusses his early social activism and social work in Ann Arbor, his social work activism and education in New York, his years in New Orleans working with Social Workers for Social Justice, the early days of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society (now Social Welfare Action Alliance), and the recent implications of his new identities.

Introduction

In this narrative, I describe the strategies I adopted as an activist and social worker to work for social justice while living in Ann Arbor, New York, and New Orleans. I discuss my efforts to organize students and colleagues in ways which also resulted in my undergoing personal and professional change. Along the way, I received advice from earlier generations of social workers and social activists and also adopted new identities that have influenced my activism. I illustrate how being engaged in social change work takes on many forms. I provide examples from a crude typology of six overlapping kinds of activism: multi-issue organization-based activism; electoral activism; writing for publication to influence public opinion; single-issue values based activism, identity-rooted activism, and organizational change work. This typology of activism forms may be of value for the introspection of activists, and for efforts at peer intervention and counseling with social activists. I know it has been helpful to me, as I have developed while writing this narrative. As may become apparent, over-involvement in one form of activism may not be the best way to make a contribution to struggles for social justice.

Early Ann Arbor Years

I had never known a social worker until one day in January 1969, when, having dropped out of the University of Michigan, I needed a job. I had arrived in Ann Arbor from Grosse Pointe High School in summer 1966. Despite being raised in a politically conservative home, I immediately realized our President was lying to us. That fall I began writing editorials with titles like "No Alternative but Protest," "The Insensitive Peace Feeler," "Grosse Pointe Integration," etc. I was promoted to assistant night editor and had my sights on eventually becoming a senior editor. I thought I was doing a good job as a reporter and might even make my father proud.

Journalism was in my blood. My dad had been a *Cleveland Press* copy boy, a stringer for *Stars and Stripes* during WWII, a public relations officer for UNNRA in Eastern Europe, and a writer and consultant in the field of employee communications. I avoided joining Voice/SDS and other campus radical groups that first year, in part because of the notion of journalistic objectivity.

In April 1967, I traveled by bus with Barbara Fuller and her Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice to go to a massive Central Park anti-war mobilization in New York City. I was now part of an intergenerational peace movement. This was my first involvement in single-issue values based activism. In May of the same year, I was arrested in Toledo while covering a demonstration against a National Guard training exercise that involved a mock attack on a Vietnamese village. In order to get out of jail, I pleaded "no lo contendere" to a disturbing the peace charge. That summer, I spent a couple of days in Detroit during the rebellion, mainly hanging around police headquarters and hoping to scare up a story. Slowly, but surely, I was losing my journalistic objectivity. I began taking sides.

A debate about taking sides emerged while organizing for the spring 1967 antiwar mobilization. Many felt that the radical thing to do was to take sides and express solidarity by raising the slogan "Support the National

Liberation Front!" Others said we should demand immediate withdrawal. The position which won out, demanding a stop to the bombing, wasn't the most radical position. But it was arguably the most progressive position, namely the one which would mobilize as many people as possible to speak out against the war. This debate about taking sides reflected a choice between a focus on peace activism and a focus on solidarity activism.

After the spring mobilization I met some of the people planning the Peace Torch Marathon, which walked across the country to the October 1967 Pentagon demonstration. I helped organize a local Peace Torch Coordinating Committee, with the idea of having a rally on the UM Diag (University of Michigan Diagonal Green) during the week of the demonstration in Washington. I proposed that, after the rally, we pass the peace torch hand to hand from the Diag to the Hoover Street athletic building. The rally and peace torch passing went off without a hitch, but we couldn't have done this without the help of older activists such as Gene Gladstone, who coordinated the National Mobilization Committee's plans for buses to the D.C. march. After the rally I joined the Marathon, walking with the group from Pittsburg to the Capitol.

In the Fall of 1967, I helped form the Ann Arbor branch of the Student Communications Network (SCN), with national headquarters in Berkeley. We set up telex machines including one at the *Michigan Daily*, which linked Berkeley, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, New York, Utica, and Oxford (England). This lead to a red letter front page December 11, 1967 headline in the right-wing *Berkeley Gazette*: "Student Network to Link Major College Campuses!" SCN provided a radical alternative press network which supplemented the work of Liberation News Service (LNS), with which we later merged. That fall, I represented SCN at the December 1967 University Christian Movement conference in Cleveland, where I first met Ray Mungo of LNS. LNS had grown out of a split within the United States Student Press Association. In early 1968, Ray, Marshall Bloom, myself, Paul Krassner, and Jerry Rubin attended the U.S.SPA conference in Washington D.C., and conspired to do some rather humorous guerilla theater at the plenary session.

No wonder I got an incomplete that term. I had enrolled in my first sociology course with Max Heirich (now Professor Emeritus). I finished it during the summer of 1968 by going to Detroit and interviewing twenty people living at the epicenter of the rebellion. I asked each why they thought the disturbances started. One of the people I interviewed was a pastor who said the cause of the rebellion was a troubled school system, due to school funding being adversely affected by so much property being exempt from taxation (including his church).

I filed the paper away, only realizing after I completed my dissertation on the property tax exemption in Ohio's urban areas that the idea had germinated a long time ago (Dover, 2003). My other notes from spring 1968 show that I felt the most important thing to focus on was not ideology but on the "real material human needs" which people had. That idea apparently continued to percolate for me (Dover, 2010; Dover & Joseph, 2008).

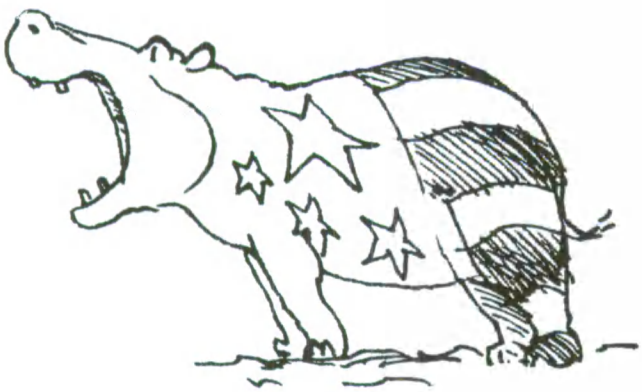
1968 was also a year of tremendous heartache as we saw the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, which led to disillusionment for many about the potential for electoral change. Although many activists of that generation "stayed clean for Gene" and supported the McCarthy campaign, I grew out my hair and beard. I attended the Peace and Freedom Party national convention in Ann Arbor in August. My main role was covering these developments for the SCN newsletter, which was published in mimeograph form in Ann Arbor by David Robbins, Tom Anderson, myself, and two dozen other contributors, typists, and co-conspirators.

By now I was getting pretty radical. I remained involved in alternative journalism (writing for publication to influence public opinion), but I was also involved in single-issue, values-based antiwar activism, and had now been introduced to radical third party electoral activism. Lorraine Hansberry's quote, on a Radio Free People poster, justified radicalism to me at the time: "Acceptance of the present

condition is the only form of extremism which discredits U.S. to our children."

Also, as I now see it, the 20th century was a century of partisanship: the pursuit of social justice involved taking sides. It involved being partisan to the cause of labor, or the cause of national liberation, or the cause of socialism, or to the cause of ending oppression of many kinds. It often involved an overblown belief that multi-issue parties or organizations were the best vehicle for pursuing social justice. In other words, it often privileged multi-issue, organization-based activism over the other kinds of activism in my typology.

The well known folk song *Which Side Are You On?* goes like this: "Don't scab for the bosses. Don't listen to their lies. Poor folks ain't got a chance. Unless they organize." I sang it then, sang it as a union-based social worker and agency-organizer, and sing it now. But the first time I sang the *Internationale,* I was troubled by these lyrics: "The international working class will be the human race." Billy Bragg's version now goes, "The Internationale unites the world in song." This change reflected a growing awareness rooted in new thinking coming out of the Gorbachev era that universal human values and a focus on human rights and human needs must inform our social action, in addition to partisan struggles for the immediate interests of that segment of humanity needing our solidarity.



My First Social Work Job

In January 1969, I needed a job. I discovered that Jules Schrager was friendly to young radicals and hired them at his group home, The Vineyard, which he ran on a farm outside of town. For instance, Skip Taube (later Minister of Information for the White Panther Party) and Bill Ayers both worked there before me. I worked 7 days a week in this live-in job, with a little time off as needed. The young men living there were all teenagers who were in group foster care. Their lives had not been easy. They hadn't had the benefit of the affirmative action of the day, such as the UM practice of giving bonus points on top of GPA points to students who graduated from high schools in places like Grosse Pointe or Birmingham. These young people came from poor and working class homes and had very little going for them, other than what had to be one of the best foster care placements around. It was sad to me to see the reality of their lives, and it gave me some secondhand experience of the nature of injustice. I did what I could to help with meals and outings. Jules provided psychotherapy, and met with the group home workers to make sure things were going smoothly.

One night, things *didn't* go so smoothly. I was awakened at 4:00 a.m. by a fight between two residents. I rushed up to see Bill straddling Steve, who was on his stomach struggling to get up. I didn't see that Steve had a paring knife in his right hand. Bill was pinning Steve's right arm to the floor, holding his wrist tightly. When exhortation to stop fighting didn't work, I came up from behind and grabbed Bill, pulling him off Steve. Steve felt the weight lifted off him and leaped to his feet, wildly swinging the knife at Bill's chest. Still holding Bill tightly from behind, I turned sharply to the left, trying to keep the knife away from Steve. Suddenly, I felt the knife plunge into my own back and fell to the floor. The boys started crying, saying they were sorry, that it was an accident. I was bleeding but it wasn't too bad, so I talked with them for a few minutes while someone called Jules. I tried to reassure them everything would be ok. Suddenly, I felt my right lung collapse. Now I was worried. Somehow we got to the hospital emergency room; eventually a thoracic surgeon arrived, put a tube through my ribs, and blew the lung back up. Jules was very supportive, and I returned to work. Supportive that is, until I was arrested again!

This time it was during the South University Street riots. In the Summer of 1969, the White Panthers wanted to turn the street into a pedestrian mall. Thousands gathered, only to be dispersed by the police. Three days of disturbances ensued. I had to cover it, no? Sure enough, another arrest. Although I was subsequently acquitted the following year, Jules explained that— what with the stabbing and the arrest—for the good of the group home, it was time for me to find another job. But we stayed in touch, and for several years we played poker together. During that time I drove a bus, worked as a cab driver/owner/dispatcher, and wrote for the alternative press. I was turning myself inside out in an effort to devote myself to movements for peace and social justice.

Perhaps most importantly, I was realizing that the heart and soul of the anti-war movement and other social justice movements in Ann Arbor was inherited from previous generations of activists. Yes, the New Left I had joined up with made up the bulk of the crowds at demonstrations. But on a day-to-day basis, it wasn't mainly the New Left organizing these events; it was veterans of the earlier social movements, their children, and new adherents. It was the CP, SWP, pacifists, and Christian socialists. They rejected violence and believed in coalition building, even lobbying and electoral work. Some of them, I noticed, were social workers!

Nevertheless, it was largely New Left forces which further involved me in electoral activism. The Human Rights Party (HRP) was formed; a hippo was our alternative to the donkey and the elephant. In 1972, we elected two members of City Council, and in 1974 we elected Kathy Kozachenko to Council. She was the first openly gay or lesbian candidate to be elected in the nation. I was involved in labor outreach for the party, organizing strike support and proposing an initiative petition that gained the support of the UAW and the AFL-CIO, and would have placed an anti-strikebreaking law on the books. Unfortunately, HRP withdrew its support after the petitions were already printed, insisting that "himself" be removed from the printed petition that referred to "any person who offers herself or himself for employment in place of an employee involved in a strike or lock-out." I was now involved in electoral activism, but had also learned a lesson about the way in which extreme positions can undermine social movement organizations.

By the time I left Ann Arbor, I played a key role in organizing the last large social movement in Ann Arbor of the early 1970s: the Chile solidarity movement. Within days of the coup in September 1973, our Chile Support Coalition had the support of the Human Rights Party, Young Worker's Liberation League, Student Government Council, Youth Liberation, the Tenant's Union, and other groups. We mobilized 2,500 people to a Diag rally. Afterwards, we marched downtown to Congressman Esch's office and later succeeded in meeting with him to demand that he oppose U.S. recognition of the Pinochet-led junta which had taken power in September 1973. Suddenly I was on the other side of the news, being quoted in *Ann Arbor News* accounts as the spokesperson for the Coalition.

Later that fall, I joined the U.S. delegation to the World Peace Council in Moscow. By meeting representatives of the African National Congress, other third world peace and liberation activists, and communist and socialist activists from Western and Eastern Europe, I began to realize more fully that activism was more than my little generational rebellion, organizing addiction, or typing predilection. It was a matter of survival and of basic freedoms for people around the world.

During my Ann Arbor years, I focused my activism in several ways: opposition to the Vietnam war as an unnecessary and immoral and to the violent overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile (both examples of single-issue values based activism); support for the Students of Conscience group that supported the Black Action Movement (an example of activism rooted in my identity as an upper-middle-class white person who felt a responsibility to oppose racism); work with the alternative press (an example of writing for publication to influence public opinion), and electoral activism. Up until now, I had hadn't become primarily involved with multi-issue

organization-based activism or organizational change work, but I was headed in that direction.

Moving On To New York

In March 1974, I attended the founding conference of the National Coordinating Committee in Solidarity with Chile, which was attended by 150 people from 97 groups. At the conference, Helen Winter of the U.S. Peace Council asked if I would like to staff the national office of the group. I moved to New York and also spent time in Washington D.C., helping organize a National Legislative Conference on Chile held in July. I also wrote an article about this work for *Grass Roots*, a movement publication. Within a few years this solidarity movement succeeded in getting military aid to the junta ended.

The cause of the Chilean people was an issue which continued to motivate me over the years. For many years, I served as membership database coordinator for the Committee on International Human Rights Inquiry, a social work group which defended Chilean and other social workers who were persecuted for their political work. Ruth Wilson, Phyllis Grunauer, and Sol Gorelick (all now deceased) and other social workers including Marilynn Moch (currently Social Welfare Action Alliance co-chair) were the core of this group, whose remaining members were recently invited to merge with the SWAA. This was another example of single-issue values based activism. It was really the issue which was heartfelt for me, not the organization through which I worked. In this case I was engaged not in peace activism, but in solidarity activism.

In 1975, needing a job, I once again ended up a social worker. I started working as a housing organizer in the Chelsea Action Center, an anti-poverty program. The job had an advantageous benefit: ten hours a week of release time if you went back to school! I asked Jules about applying to Adelphi's urban undergraduate social work program in Manhattan. "I think you've found your niche," Jules said, and his reference letter helped me get admitted. My decision to complete my BSW and enter right into the MSW program at Columbia was motivated by my belief that social work was an ideal profession within which to earn a living and work to change society.

After all, didn't all my social work professors stress the role of social justice in social work? My first social work paper was for Phil Coltoff of the Children's Aid Society. The title page had the following quote from Eugen Pusic: "We must ask ourselves who is in a better position and more called upon to act collectively, politically and responsibly for the goals of welfare than those who have made welfare their profession, that is, the dominant occupation of their lives."

Cleary, I was hooked. Hook, line and sinker, by the end of my first term in the BSW program, I had swallowed the idea that social work was for me. It would be an avenue for the organizing of my fellow social workers to participate in broader social justice movements. I set to work.

A Long March through Social Work Institutions Begins

As soon as I enrolled at the Columbia University School of Social Work in August 1980, I discovered that Verne Weed lived across the street. Verne (who passed away in 1985) had known Bertha Reynolds, and she knew a lot more besides. A 1941 graduate of the Columbia University School of Social Work, in April 2010, Verne was posthumously given the Pioneer Award by the Columbia University School of Social Work's Alumni Association. When I met her, Verne was active in the Radical Alliance of Social Service Workers (RASSW), a mainly New York and New Jersey formation, as well as in the Bertha Capen Reynolds Club, associated with the CPUSA. Along with the *Catalyst* collective (which evolved into the *Journal of Progressive Human Services*), social work involvement in trade unionism, and work within NASW, these were the primary poles around which the social work left revolved at the time.

Verne used to say, "Look out for live wires, and get them involved." By live wires, Verne meant people who were active, engaged, sane, and interested in becoming more involved. Such people don't come around all the time

and you need to find ways to help them get involved and stay involved, she would say. One day Verne dropped off some flyers at the CUSSW and heard of our efforts to organize the Open Letter Movement, which called for more curriculum content on racism, cross-cultural social work, and knowledge of ethnic cultures (in the policy, practice, and HBSE-like courses of the day). Verne approved, but warned me: "Be political, not politicized." Play it politically smart. Don't marginalize yourself by using political rhetoric, she explained. I don't claim to have always lived up to that advice, but I've tried.

The Open Letter movement originated with a group of us in Renee Solomon's practice class (and with her blessing, as I recall). At the time, I had a coveted first-year psychiatric social work placement, but I felt totally inadequate to be working with African-American parents of children with psychiatric or behavioral problems (Dover, 2009). After several mass meetings and an Open Letter with a couple of hundred student and faculty signatures, we obtained faculty approval for a review of the curriculum content in these areas. As long as Mitchell Ginsberg and George Brager were the Deans, the reviews continued every other year.

Perhaps on the basis of the Open Letter campaign, I was elected President of the Student Union. We formed a coalition with the Black Caucus and the Puerto Rican Caucus, and also succeeded in getting the School to hire a full-time recruiter who would focus half their time on minority recruitment. The person hired, David Yam, remains at the School as Senior Assistant Dean. This work around affirmative action in social work admissions continued my earlier activism with Students of Conscience at the University of Michigan. Later, I spent five years working in the admissions office at the University of Michigan School of Social Work (1992-1997), where I conceived of and successfully advocated for mission-oriented bonus points to supplement other forms of affirmative action. Later, I participated in unsuccessful efforts to defeat the electoral initiative which outlawed the use of race in affirmative action in Michigan. For many, defense of affirmative action is a single-issue, values-based form of activism, but for me it was identity-rooted activism; a reaction against the privilege associated with my identity as a white person.

For my second year field placement, I was at District 65-UAW, with Beth Silverman. This was a progressive, left-led union that represented workers in multiple industries in the New York area as well as legal service workers nationally. For my required second year change project, Irving Miller was my professor. My project idea was to set up a new program for unemployed members at the hiring hall on the ninth floor. However, this meant absenting myself from intake on the sixth floor one day a week. That didn't sit well with some of the staff and interns, who would have to pick up the slack. Bright ideas like this have been getting me in trouble throughout my career.

Beth told me at the time, "You're an idea person." And Irving told me that my greatest practice strength was program development. Perhaps they were being tactful. They might have said, "Mike, you may be in the clinical track, but we don't see you as a therapist." They tried to teach me how to generate and implement ideas without pissing people off, but I'm not sure I ever mastered that. Once a colleague told me, "Mike, you're really good at coming up with ideas that cause other people to have to do more work." However, at least the Hiring Hall Outreach project did take root and remained in place for another ten years after I left.

Now, I was not only hooked on widespread social change as the ultimate goal, but was also appreciative of small victories. Societies sometimes change fundamentally, but organizations seem to be more amenable to incremental changes. These were my first experiences with something I now consider a form of social activism: organizational change work. Such changes provide some consolation when large scale social change comes slowly, which can be discouraging, even for an optimist like me. Along the way, I found that cultural workers helped. One of my favorite songs was written by the late James Dunn, DSW, who in addition to helping found the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (http://

www.pisab.org) was a musician. The lyrics to his song "No Other Choice" goes like this: "There's no such thing as burnout, once your vision's clear. Take strength from those who went before, and conquered doubt and fear."

Heading for New Orleans

In August 1980, I graduated from CUSSW and took a job in New Orleans as the regional coordinator of Dan Molloy's National Maritime Union Personal Services Unit (Molloy, 2010). Giselle, my beloved partner and spouse since 1972, joined me the following spring when she got a job teaching acting at Tulane University. Our marriage followed in 1981, our daughter Daniela was born in 1983, and out son Mark in was born in 1987.

While I was in New Orleans, I felt what might be called the organizational impulse. I was seeking a multi-issue, organization-based home for my activism. Apparently, others felt the same way. A few of us got together and started a group called Social Workers for Social Change, which eventually attracted a couple of dozen supporters. Our recruitment slogan was, "Are you serious about social change? Join us!" We attended the 1983 Anniversary March on Washington, supported efforts to defend the local tax that supported the Welfare Department, defended senior citizens in a subsidized high rise which somebody wanted to turn into a hotel, attended local peace rallies, and held potlucks and fundraisers and such.

We also set up Health and Human Service Workers for Jesse Jackson, and Social Workers for Mondale. In other words, we started where folks were at and moved from there. Whenever you try to force an organization to have clear politics (usually, *your* politics), or complain the members don't "get it" and try to align the organization with your favorite cause or organization, you might as well close up shop. But thankfully we didn't make that mistake. We held it together. We were engaged in small scale multi-issue, organization-based activism. David Wagner (1990) has found that some radical social workers are highly identified with social work and some are highly critical of social work. Both kinds were attracted to our SWSC group.

Around 1984, Maryann Mahaffey visited New Orleans to speak at Tulane. She also met with Social Workers for Social Change. A former NASW President who had once visited Bertha Reynolds at her home, Maryann was a Detroit City Councilwoman and a person of the left. Maryann gave us some good advice, which was similar to advice that African-American civil rights activists had given to white folk interested in supporting the civil rights movement: organize in your own backyard. For me, that meant that social workers should organize to support social justice movements. I began to realize that there wasn't any real organizational home which could bring together social workers and human service workers on the left, like the National Lawyers Guild had long done for lawyers and legal workers. I remained active in both SWSC and NASW, serving as chapter membership secretary.

The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society and SWAA

One day in early 1985, the *NASW News* arrived. One article was about Bertha Reynolds and the upcoming 1985 Bertha Reynolds Centennial Conference at Smith College, organized by Jack Kamaiko and his colleagues. The article said that Bertha Reynolds had been ostracized during the McCarthy period, even though it had never been "proven" that she was a Communist! I was pretty upset. Since when was it okay to ostracize someone within a profession even if that someone was a Communist? And since when was trying to prove something like that legitimate? Hadn't the profession learned its lesson when CSWE honored Bertha after her death in 1978? Hadn't NASW re-published two of her books (Reynolds, 1951, 1963)?

After reacting to that article, I thought back to Stu Dowty and Janet Goldwasser, the couple who were central to the Ann Arbor based Radicals in the Professions group of the late 1960s and early 1970s. I started thinking about the many radicals in the professions and disciplines groups: from the National Lawyers Guild to the Union of Radical Political Economists, to the various caucus groups such as the Socialist Caucus of the U.S. Public

Health Association, which included social workers such as Beth Lewis. There were also a number of groups such as Psychologists and Psychotherapists for Social Responsibility. Why, I thought, shouldn't social work have a national organization of progressive social work activists? Although there was a history of local radical social worker groups in New York, Chicago, and now in New Orleans, not since the Rank-and-File Movement of the 1930s and early 1940s had there been anything close to a national organization of social workers devoted to social activism. The notable exception was Social Workers for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament (SWPND), a semi-independent body within NASW which had some local chapters and maintained a national newsletter and mailing list for many years in the 1980s and 1990s. Mary Rusak of SWPND used to tell me that one goal of progressives in social work should be to have an impact on the profession itself. She certainly did. In 1995, having just turned 90 years old, Mary received an award from NASW's New York City Chapter for "leadership promoting peace, nuclear disarmament, social justice, and the concept that activism is part of the social worker's responsibility to improve the policies that affect the people of New York City."

The Benjamin Rush Society was a group of radical psychiatrists, psychologists and some clinical social workers, mainly in the New York area. If radicals in one professional group could be named after a person, why not another? Why not a Bertha Capen Reynolds Society? In Social Workers for Social Change, we thought that forming a national group would be a good idea. The first step was to talk to those whose support would be needed for any such group, starting with Verne Weed. Verne was supportive, but said that one of the lessons from RASSW was the need to find a way to resolve tension between the old left and the new left.

Next, we asked Maryann Mahaffey at the NASW Occupational Social Work Conference in Boston in the spring of 2005. Maryann's answer was, "Do it!" This quote was later featured in the BCRS brochure, which was modified with her permission to say, "Do it! Join the Bertha Reynolds Society." At the same conference, Chauncey Alexander stated that, as important as NASW was, he thought there was a need for an independent group of social work activists that could help keep the progressive tradition alive.

Support from Maryann and Chauncey was encouraging, but it didn't seem to us that we could count upon established leaders in social work to do the Jane and Jimmy Higgins work of building an actual organization. Luckily there were people like Beth Lewis, who was working at an occupational health clinic in New Haven at the time (Lewis, 2010). As a side trip to the Boston conference, Beth, David Antebi and I jumped in a car and visited the homestead and hometown of Bertha Reynolds. On the way we talked, hoped, dreamed, and conspired a little about how we might build a Bertha Capen Reynolds Society.

We began talking about what the principles of such a group might be, and between then and the Centennial conference a draft circulated. It was at the Centennial conference in June 1985 that I met Marti Bombyk, the founding Chair of the Society. Implementing Verne's suggestion to reach out to the New Left, I approached Mimi Abramovitz, asking who from the *Catalyst* collective might be interested in helping launch such a Society. She suggested Marti, and a strong partnership between us was born. Marti and I immediately began talking about how to convene an organizing meeting for such a Society there at the Centennial Conference. About fifty people participated. The meeting decided to form a Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, to call a meeting in Chicago in November in conjunction with the NASW Conference, and to issue a Call to Join prior to the November session. Numerous suggestions were also made at the organizing session to amend the proposed ten principles of the society, which Marti and I had revised just prior to the organizing meeting.

Following the organizing session, I sent out a letter on July 7, 1985 to all those who attended the organizing meeting. The letter said, "Following your suggestions, deletions, additions, Marti Bombyk, Beth Lewis and I will finalize the Call, and possible signatories will receive the Call along with a response

form to return for those wishing to sign the Call." An initial Call to Join was included along with a draft cover letter and membership form. The cover letter that went out was signed by the Interim Organizing Committee of the Society, and was signed by Marti (East Coast), Beth Lewis (New England), Joan Dworkin (Midwest), myself (South), and Arline Prigoff (West Coast). The naming of the group after Bertha was explained in this manner in the original Call, issued in August 2005: "For politically progressive social workers, her commitment to humanistic practice methods, fundamental social change and the scientific study of society call for new efforts to study and continue the progressive tradition in social work." The initial Call to Join included an initial draft of a statement of principles of the Society. The principles were debated and amended and adopted at the founding meeting and later published in a brochure. In January, 1986, a revised call provided a history of the organizing so far and a list of the initial 150 signatories, which soon grew to 409 founding members and endorsers of the Call, including the founding editors of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, Sonia and Paul Abels.

From 1985-1991, Marti was Chair and I was Membership Committee Chair. During that time we exchanged hundreds of letters, calls, and later emails. Mimi herself also became involved in the Steering Committee, which met in her living room for many years. From 2004-2005, Mimi also worked with Joan Dworkin to help reorganize the SWAA Faculty Network, as membership had declined during the 1999-2003 period. Over 3000 people have belonged to BCRS and SWAA over the years. There have been approximately 20 national conferences during this time and dozens of issues of the newsletter, now archived for members on the website: http://socialwelfareactionalliance.org. In 1999, the Society was renamed Social Welfare Action Alliance (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). The principles of the organization have been amended in a minor way on a couple of occasions, with a view to increasing the focus on supporting the struggles of low income and oppressed people and making it more clear that the organization is open to human service workers as well as social workers.

A letter that Marti and I sent to the over 100 founding members who joined prior to the November 1985 founding conference of BCRS in Chicago was signed, "For a Lasting Struggle." I note that it said "for a lasting struggle," not "for a lasting organization." Richard Cloward had some views on this which bear consideration. Dick used to tell me that the goal should be to build social movements, not organizations per se. I countered that without building organizations, it is hard to build social movements. He admitted that this was the case but he had little tolerance for any kind of ideological dogmatism which would rule out creative tactics and strategies or give primacy to any particular organization's role in building social movements. It took a long time for me to realize that Dick was right.

I'm not sure I fully realize it today. Since leaving the leadership of SWAA late in 2009, having last served as Co-Treasurer with Herman Curiel and Gretchen Lash, I still harbor fantasies of new organizational forms in social work and on the left as the best way to work for social justice. For instance, I yearn for a more united and effective social work profession. Shortly before his death, Chauncey told me something relevant to the need for organizational unity in social work. I asked him what role the left in social work played in the 1950s during the formation of NASW from disparate groups. His simple answer is instructive today: "We demanded unity."

Will SWAA or even NASW for that matter be around in another 25 years? In my view, one can't take organizations for granted, nor should one become dependent upon the contribution of any one organization. I do think that the left in social work has played and should play an important role in helping shape the direction of a profession which ultimately reflects a broad range of social work political opinion. As for the role of BCRS/SWAA so far, there have been several accounts (Bombyk, 1995; Bricker-Jenkins & Joseph, 2008; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). However, for me, 25 years was not only enough, it was too much. I clearly overinvested myself in work on this form of multi-issue organization-

based activism, at the cost of time devoted to the other forms of activism noted in my typology, as well as to my scholarly work.

New Identities

While planning a workshop for the St. Louis conference of SWAA, I spoke with longtime social worker and left activist Chicagoan Mildred Williamson about how many activists complain about identity politics; i.e., that somehow the movement is being held back by the prevalence of identity politics, as opposed to people having class consciousness. But Mildred pointed out that we all have multiple identities! If that is the case, I reasoned that identity politics isn't a hindrance but one way of building unity, as long as we recognize that we shouldn't privilege one identity without recognizing the reality that we all have multiple identities.

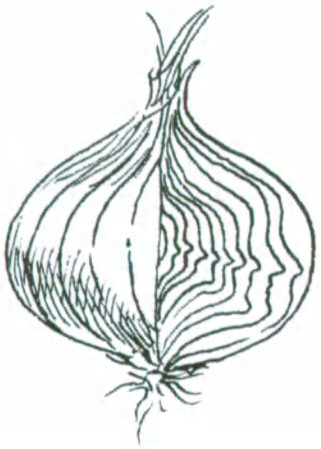
For instance, I had always resisted the notion that being white was an identity. I've argued that in privileging a discourse on privilege, we can actually undermine an analysis of racism and other forms of oppression (Dover, 2008). But in 2006, I undertook a two and a half day training session offered by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (http://www.pisab.org). The power-centered analysis of racism offered by the Institute used the concept of privilege, but didn't make it the center of an analysis which stresses group oppression to the exclusion of the role of exploitation (Johnson, 2000). The Institute has now trained over a thousand social workers and social work educators as part of its training of tens-of-thousands of activists and others over the years. I came away from this training realizing that I had to take my identity as a white person seriously, given the context of racism in this country. I realized retrospectively that in my activism on affirmative action, I had already engaged in identity-rooted activism.

I'm also a Jew. True, I'm a Jew by choice, having completed a Conservative conversion in 2000. I wasn't looking for a new identity. I was turning 50 and was no longer able to ignore the religiosity that I probably inherited from my Pentecostal Christian grandmother. I had long ago moved away from my childhood Presbyterianism, and my adult Unitarianism wasn't doing it for me. Reading University of Michigan anthropologist Roy Rappaport's *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (1999) convinced me that religion is central to human culture. Some of us need ritual and religion at various points in our lives, and even those of us who are entirely secular are essentially free riders on the existence of organized religions that are essential to society. My wife and children were Jewish and I had been attending services for almost 10 years; it made sense to convert.

But now I felt a responsibility as a Jew to work for peace with justice in the Middle East. I became an active member of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom and its successor, J Street, another example of identity-rooted activism. Here I also applied the distinction between peace and solidarity activism. I admitted that the causes of the Palestinian people and of the people of Israel have required active solidarity at key historical moments. However, I argued that at the present time we must demand active U.S. support for a just, two-state solution to the conflict, rather than building solidarity campaigns that can encourage one side or the other to eschew peace. After my conversion, I sought advice on this from the late Spanish Civil war veteran Saul Wellman. Saul said that sometimes we shouldn't take sides but rather demand compromise! As the example of demands from the anti-Vietnam War movement illustrated, the progressive thing to do at any one point isn't necessarily the most "left" thing to do. The progressive thing to do is the thing that needs to be done to advance the cause of humanity, not the "side" one may favor.

Suddenly, I was beginning to understand what Mildred meant by multiple identity politics. I was a person of the left, I was a social worker, I was a sociologist, I was a white person, and I was now a Jew. I had multiple identities, each with its implications for working for social justice.

Later, I took on a couple other identities. Around 2006, I became the husband of a person with cancer. I became the patient's husband/social worker/sociologist from hell. I began to realize how institutional sexism affects



the entire medical delivery system for women with cancer. Perhaps belatedly, I finally got it about how truly deep sexism is in terms of its institutional impact, and how it goes beyond household and relationship behavior or employment discrimination.

Then the other shoe dropped. We became a couple with cancer. They say cancer changes everything; if I didn't already realize that, I soon did from being diagnosed with early stage and treatable cancer myself. Again, I told myself, I wasn't seeking another identity. But there is no escaping the implications of a new role, such as the role of a person with cancer. I soon realized that it wasn't just sexism which infects the medical delivery system, it is also a dehumanization process. Dehumanization was something I had written about, having developed a typology of theories of oppression, dehumanization and exploitation (Dover, 2008). Now I was seeing it myself at a deeper level. I began to wonder, and I wonder more as I now reflect where this will lead me, in terms of the one constant that seems to be part of all my identities: the social justice implications.

Michael Austin once told me, "Everything is relationships." I resisted accepting that. For me, everything was building organizations, seeing clients for short-term service, organizing communities, and teaching students in ways that often involved transitory relationships rather than sustained ones. Steve Burghardt wrote once about styles of organizing, the hard and the soft (Burghardt, 1982). I'm pretty sure I never mastered either. That leaves me at a crossroads, forty-plus years since I devoted myself to social work and social activism as the primary activities of my life.

Conclusions

What seems to be missing for me, and what seems to have been at the center of my work when I was most effective, is a commitment not to an organization of progressive social workers, or a multi-issue organization of the organized left, or to a community of residence. It is to work around a single issue that is, itself, crying out for social justice work. I'm not sure what that will be, but with unemployment continuing to grow, I am inspired by the proposal of an activist attorney I worked with in New Orleans. Bill Quigley (2003) has proposed a constitutional amendment for the right to jobs that pay living wages, and recently spoke at a national conference co-sponsored by the National Jobs for All Coalition (http://www.njfac.org), chaired by social work educator Trudy Goldberg. This would be a great example of the kind of activism I started out in: single-issue values based activism. On the other hand, doesn't this account also show that writing was my first love? Should I perhaps consider focusing on making a contribution through my scholarly and public affairs writing? Upon reflection, it seems to me that I was at my best when I was working on an issue, with the organization being secondary, or when I was writing about issues close to my heart.

My quixotic quest for organizational development may have been where my own efforts to combine social work and social justice got off track. Perhaps I thought that I could organize myself a solution to the unresolved issues of my life as an activist, as a social worker, and as a person. For the BCRS/SWAA membership renewal letters, I chose the following quote from Bertha Capen Reynolds which has been used each year: "The fulfillment of individual life is in belonging with others who share the same purposes. In this relatedness an individual develops them and a sharing which gives glory and meaning to life." I now think that Bertha was wrong about this. The "belong" part is where it gets off track. "Belonging" assumes some organizational home that provides this relatedness, the very kind of timeless organization we should know by now doesn't exist and shouldn't exist.

Yes, social movements and social change often have organizational vehicles, but we must recognize that these are disposable and should be seen as such, or we end up misdirecting our energies, as I have probably done. The movement is much bigger than any one organization. In his Nobel prize address, Mikhail Gorbachev stated: "Life is much richer and more complex than even the most perfect plans to make it better. It ultimately takes vengeance for attempts to impose abstract schemes, even with the best of intentions." In 1992, I wrote an article for *Crossroads* (Dover,

1992). It included that quote, and it included an account of the Australian film *Winter of Our Dreams*, in which Judy Davis played a heroin addict whose best friend had committed suicide. Before her death, her friend had become involved in the peace movement. At the film's end, the Davis' character attended a disarmament rally, where a folksinger sang John Farnham's moving song, "'Til Time Brings Change." Partial lyrics of the song are instructive: "And so we share our common bond. And face the turmoils that surround. 'Til time brings change. 'Til time brings change."

While writing this narrative, I concluded that just as efforts to control clients—such as those with alcoholism—are fruitless, it is also impossible to build a just society by basing it upon a unitary political ideology or the work of a voluntary association or political party. Acting upon that belief myself, I stepped down from my role as the first BCRS Membership Committee Chairperson in 1991, around the time that Marti Bombyk stepped down as founding Chairperson. Marti immersed herself in her teaching at Eastern Michigan University and developed a consistent commitment to housing justice in Ypsilanti. I entered the doctoral program in social work and sociology at Michigan, and helped raise my two children.

But I don't think I fully learned the lesson of that song. Intellectually, I knew and had written about how we must give up the illusion that we can bring about social justice if only we can get our organizations right, or our theory or ideology right, or even our president right. But soon I was back barking up the organizational tree, resuming activity in SWAA in various capacities. I also supported the building of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, by attending the founding conference in Berkeley in 1992 and by publishing a discussion document which had been circulating among activists in 1991 (Dover, 1991). I remain a member of CC-DS and of Democratic Socialist of America to this day. I'm not saying I shouldn't have done these things, or shouldn't do these things. I'm not saying people shouldn't do these things. I'm just concluding that for me, at this time, a major involvement within multi-issue organizations activism is not the best way for me to work to oppose the sources of injustice in our world: oppression, dehumanization and exploitation.

A Chilean poet once wrote, "Stay on the left, as your heart desires." But the left has no monopoly on social justice. People of all political beliefs can and often do work in a way that is consistent with social justice. Social workers certainly confront such issues all the time in our work and in our communities and in our world.

I conclude that it is possible for social work to be a profession in which we can actively work for social justice while at the same time helping individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. But in order to do so, it helps for us to be aware of the range of different forms our activism can take. Checkoway (1995) identified six strategies for community change (mass mobilization, social action, citizen participation, public advocacy, popular education, and local services development). Here, however, at the level of the individual activist, I have presented a no doubt imperfect typology of six forms my imperfect activism took: multi-issue organization-based activism; electoral activism; writing for publication to influence public opinion; single-issue values based activism, identity-rooted activism, and organizational change work. If there is one conclusion I've come to from the work described here, it is that while organizations are important, it is friends, colleagues, and comrades who really count.

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Where Did It Come From?

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The following narrative discusses how social justice manifests itself through three generations of a social work family.

The subject of social justice was not offered in our graduate school curriculum. Now it is being offered in many departments all over the world. Our grandchild identified universities like Medill in Montreal and St. Andrews University in Scotland, and said that many American universities have it in their curriculum.

So how or when did we learn about social justice? Did it come to us while we were becoming social workers?

An answer may be found during the years after my husband, Milton Hyman, left Brooklyn at age nineteen. Before graduate school, he worked in the Navy Yard as a welder and started the Navy Yard union. When he started at Chicago's School of Social Service Administration (SSA), with his Union background he became president of the first student Social Workers' Union. It joined with the Chicago Social Workers' Union to achieve a first: a 40 hour week for social workers. What an accomplishment for student social workers! An injustice corrected.

Milton and I both happened to sit next to one another in the first Social Group Work class mandated by the Council on Social Work Education at the University of Chicago. We started our first jobs in Chicago, and moved to Hyde Park when the children began school.

One day, our seven year old daughter Amie excitedly announced she was going to a sleepover at a friend's house across the alley. I inquired as to where she would sleep. She replied rather indignantly, "Mommy, some people are poor; not everybody has their own bed! I don't know where I'll sleep but isn't it great she wants to be my friend?" How did she learn this?

We moved from the north side of Chicago to Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago. Not an easy decision. My mother—who lived near us and had recently been widowed—was appalled. "What's the matter with the north side? Why Hyde Park?" she asked. How could we explain why we would leave her alone on the north side and move so far away? We wanted our children grow up in a more integrated neighborhood. "What's wrong with the schools on the north side?" She wondered what was so bad about living in our north side middle class apartment. "Such a nice apartment," she said. "Mom, our social work buddies would be our neighbors." This she *did* understand.

Though we prospered some, how could we forget the depression years? We remembered growing up when my father did not have work and we did not have an income. How could we ever forget the feelings and the fears about my father's unemployment or how to make ends meet?

Mother finally found work in a dress factory. I recall us looking on with concern as she returned from work each day and counted her daily total of piecework coupons, which were an indication of how much money she had made. The faster she sewed, the more coupons she would accumulate. I remember Dad returning from job hunting without good news. Could we ever forget? We felt it again and again for each and every one of our friends and neighbors who'd been laid off or unemployed.

Each day we hoped that the mail would include some news about my father's family, who were still stranded in Europe where religious hatred was annihilating those left behind. How could we hold on to basic values while awaiting word from my father's family? All we heard was that Jews in Europe were being killed. At a very early age we learned

about injustice, with few opportunities to learn about social justice.

Later, life changed. With our similar interests, my husband and I united to create our future work life in group and community endeavors.

Years later, our daughter Amie proclaimed, "I'm not choosing Social Work as my graduate school coursework just because you and Dad did!" She stressed that it was her own choice. When our son Bill decided to forego social work training and major in business, did we feel we were failures? Our son didn't. He says he trains and provides jobs for people all over the world. Our third and youngest offspring, Karmit, chose a law school that specialized in Public Interest Law. They call her "The Bag Lady's Lawyer."

Milton remained in community service throughout his career, in state and national projects. His time in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was memorable. While there he was paired with what they call "Double Dippers," who are retired generals and colonels working for a federal agency once again. They tease Milton asking, "Milt, why are you the only division director who meets with your staff in a group seeking their opinions?" So why do people turn out the way they do?

Years ago when I was traveling and teaching Group Work and Family Therapy in Israel, I would stop in London to visit my son, Bill. I mentioned to him my interest (and reluctance) in buying some land near Chicago to build a community like those of the students I was teaching in Israel. We were just returning to the U.S. after two years of working in Israel; we didn't have jobs or enough savings to consider buying land. He loaned us the down payment for some land in Wisconsin, and we were able to open the Kopp Center for Continuing Education, offering workshops, training, and cooperative living to thousands of people for twenty-seven years.

Upon returning from another teaching trip to Israel, we received positive letters from soldiers and their parents about the groups we had started for them at the end of the war. We were the first to offer groups to discuss the soldiers and the parents' feelings. It was new for all of them.

There are so many other memories. I think back to when Bill was three years old and refused to go with us on a Peace Walk to protest the war. He said, "Boys like to fight. I believe in war." Yet later, when we moved to Israel and it was being attacked, he was appalled that the Israelis had so many arms readily available. He had eventually learned to believe in peace and the need to achieve justice.

We had not been exposed to the term "social justice" and did not think consciously about it as we reared our children during our education and working years. So how did we turn out the way we did? We learned as we experienced injustice around us. Social justice action occurs when we *feel* the injustices experienced by others.

And we are delighted that our first grandchild, Elana, is enrolling in a University with a major in social justice. Of course! How fortunate! social justice continues!

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Out of the Lower Depths: The Power of the Arts for Social Justice Transformation

Sarada Eastham, Jessie Negropontes, Christine A. Walsh, Max Ciesielski, John Harris, Shannon Jones, Gayle Rutherford, Ian Prinsloo, & Shirley Aarrestad
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Arts-based practice creates space for individual and collective learning as a means to give voice to issues of social justice. The Lower Depths Project, a collaborative theatre-based initiative, created a powerful experience for participants, community members, social service agencies personnel, and academics to transform their understandings of 'home' and 'homelessness.' One year after the final staging of the Project, seven of the original cast members met to reflect on the impact that this experience had on their lives. Themes identified through dialogue and written reflections of the cast members included: an evolving conceptualization of home and homelessness; a re-imagining of personal identity; an ability to be more fully-present and authentic; the creation of deepened, trust-filled relationships; and the power of voice to affect social and collective change. In the telling of this story, the authors reveal possibilities for social justice through arts-based research practices.

Arts-based research practice involves entering into a collaborative, creative, expressive dialog with the specific intention to discover and act for broader social change (Weber & Mitchell, 2007). While this process can include the utilization of fine-arts media such as painting, drawing, or theatre, its main intention is not teaching specific arts-based skills; the arts are used as tools for exploration and expression of personal and communal knowledge (Weber & Mitchell). This expression occurs through whatever medium has been selected for this purpose, and can be defined as a form of storytelling. In other words, "art demands action from the midst of living, and makes a space where growth can happen" (Bogart, 2007, p. 4).

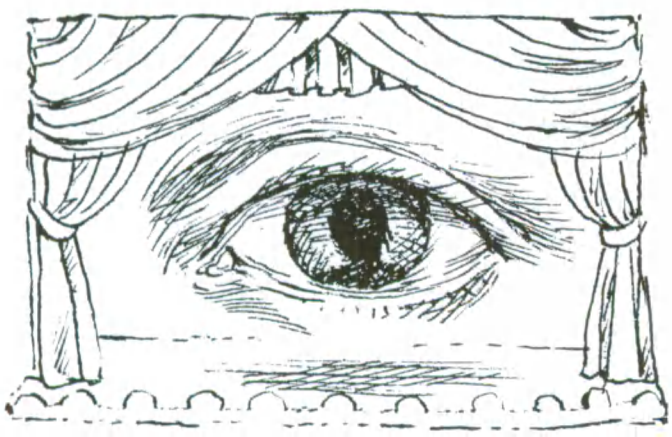
Cohen, de la Vega and Watson (2001) remind us that stories provide a "tremendous source of power – to both the narrator and those listening" (p. 23). They note that by enlisting the power of story, arts-based practice helps people connect their own personal stories to the stories of others, develop abilities to navigate life's struggles, and "inspire realistic hope that unyielding forces can be overcome" (p. 23). The cycle of experience, discovery, and action present in participatory practice (Kolb, 1984) can be captured through creation of and sharing stories. Learnings are expressed in the stories told by participants and researchers about their personal journeys before, during, and after the project takes place. It is these stories that create opportunities for engagement, dialogue and reflection on the individual level and perhaps more importantly the emergence of new stories. MacDonald and MacDonald (2003) articulate the necessity of moving "beyond the personal lens to one's story to examine the interplay of experiences within their social context (p. 35). Arts have had a long history of inspiring individuals and communities towards social justice (Bradley & Esche, 2007).

Arts-based research is ideally placed to investigate social justice concerns including homelessness and poverty (see Sakamoto, 2008; Wannamaker & Walsh, 2009). By providing a format that is generally more accessible than many other forms of academic discourse, arts-based research practices offer avenues to recognizing and communicating research findings. Within arts-based research practice, citizens with diverse cultural, social, economic, physical and intellectual histories can have an equal voice (Weber & Mitchell, 2007). Arts-based research intrinsically offers a sense of hope; by linking stories and people to broader social issues and creative solutions, participants and audience members are motivated into action for social justice. In this article we reflect upon the individual and collective changes that emerged from a

theatre-based project focusing on the issue of homelessness.

The *Lower Depths Project* was initiated by the steering committee of the "Growing Home Conference," a national Canadian conference on housing and homelessness held in February 2009 (authors own, in press). Using knowledge of experiential learning theory and training in theatre work, facilitator Ian Prinsloo guided a diverse group of individuals into a collaborative ensemble by adapting Maxim Gorky's 1902 play, *The Lower Depths*, into a performance that told a story of the modern experience of homelessness. Amateur participants included current and former residents of a large homeless shelter, individuals involved in the provision of social services, and academic educators and researchers.

Over a six-month period of exploration, the group brought the play to life and simultaneously gave voice to the players' own experiences. The rehearsal process was carried out within the shelter facility, contributing to the authenticity of the experience. The final product was a staged performance, which involved periodically freezing the action of the play during which cast members came forward and presented their individual reflections about homelessness. The process of writing these reflections allowed for new personal understandings to emerge for the participants. Thus, the scripted play and the players' personal contributions became a richly layered opportunity for the audience members' own transformation. Their collective emerging awareness paved the way for opportunities of social justice and social change.



Within this narrative we reflect upon the experiences of the *Lower Depths* players as they learned about themselves, their connections to homelessness, and each other. In the first section, *Inside the Lower Depths,* we share the written reflections that seven of the cast members originally presented on stage. Approximately one year later, seven original members, along with two co-facilitators, gathered to remark upon their ongoing personal and collective learning since that time; these are presented in the second section, *Gathering to Remember*. We summarize by sharing the ways in which social transformation was achieved at the personal and collective level through the power of this arts-based practice.

Inside the Lower Depths

Max, a long-term resident of the homeless Shelter, coordinates the Shelter's art studio, where he paints and writes from his soul. **Max's reflection:**

I am a father, a son, a brother, an uncle, a friend.

I am an artist, a musician, a wood worker.

I laugh. I cry. I hurt.

Which of these is diminished because I am homeless?

Shannon describes herself as a human being. **Shannon's reflection:**

There was a young couple that I worked with. They got caught having sex...in the showers, in the laundry room, beside the building, beside the dumpster, in the dumpster.

There was one day when she had fallen asleep and I asked him to wake her up.

As he gently rocked her shoulder and softly repeated her name, soothing her into wakefulness, I watched as her eyes opened to meet his. I could see in her gaze and could feel in the energy that passed between them that they were each other's safe place.

I was watching the most intimate of connections because this couple had no privacy; they had nowhere to go where they could just be together. I had become so used to watching people look at each other with hate, with fear, with contempt, and with judgment. I was expecting to see pain and suffering, despair, or at its worse "that glaze" that means the person inside is gone. I was so accustomed to watching people look through each other trying to gage and assess how the person that stood before them could benefit them. I was not expecting to see two pure, true, souls connecting.

My realization in that moment has forever changed my search and has inspired me to always look deeper into my own relationships. This couple had nothing. Nothing but what they carried in their backpacks and yet they possessed the very thing that I still long for.

I could see and feel the power of their connection to each other—their love for each other—was what was keeping them alive much, much more than the sandwiches, showers and clothing that our program provided.

In my work and in my life I have seen far too much of "sex" used as a commodity, a way to get money or power - a means to an end. Watching these two gave me hope that what I longed for actually did exist.

Christine teaches and researches in the field of homelessness and poverty. **Christine's reflection:**

Have you been to the lower depths? I have.

As a child, entangled in a family "hidden by homelessness."

As an academic, researching "issues of poverty and homelessness."

As a woman, coming to know, coming to understand and becoming friends;

Come, see the lower depths...

Come see the endless lineups; the crowding; the continual waiting to meet even the most basic of human needs.

Come smell the poverty; the scent of misery; the stench of despair.

Come hear the voice of anguish; the sound of desperation; the roar of tormented mind and body.

Come feel the draft; the suspicion; the cold wet feet; the hard mat beneath your body; the profound emptiness of belly and soul.

Yet dare to go deeper into the lower depths.

Begin to know, to understand, to care.

See the smile radiating genuine warmth, the eyes that cautiously meet yours.

Hear the lingering melody; the laughter; the sounds of comforting.

Feel the courage; the strength; the desire to carry on...despite...

For deeply-rooted within the lower depths is hope.

Just hope.

Shirley is currently living in transitional housing; she hopes her life experience can help other women who have been homeless to find hope. **Shirley's reflection:**

I am coming out of the lower depths. Yes, my soul has lived in the lower depths of homelessness. I became homeless long before the actual facts.

I think I may have found what it is, so deep, deep within me and carried it around as a homeless person...hopelessness.

Somewhere along the way I became hopeless. I got lost in my soul. I lost hope and this is a way to being homeless. My eyes show this. Homeless people's eyes also show this.

Look, look closely; open your eyes to my soul. Do you dare? I am right here, please don't look away. I was one of the homeless people out there and you walked right by me. Look, look I am here. I just wanted to say to you: "Have a nice day." But you just walked right by me, looked right through me because I was homeless. Was it the clothes I wore? Was it the backpack I carried? Why did you walk by me and look right through me?

Look, look around. There is Carla, who opened her heart and soul to me. How could she do this for a homeless person like me? She stepped out of her comfort zone and took me in, and accepted me...yes, a homeless person. She put out a hand and I took it.

Look, look around...Gayle. This woman's soul is so huge; the beauty in this woman's heart will change many. She took me in, and accepted me...yes a homeless person. She put out a hand and I took it.

Look, look around...Liz, yes Liz...a woman that breathes the same air as I. [Her] acceptance of me is unconditional understanding, and accepted me...yes, a homeless person. She to put out her hand and I took it.

Look, look around...Christine. This woman opened her heart to me and accepted me as a homeless person...She has walked right beside me not once closing her heart to me. Christine put out her hand to me and I took it.

These four women put their hand out for me to take when I was hopeless and homeless. Yes, I took their hand and they gave me hope and they are bringing me out of the lower depths of homelessness.

Interesting...when I was hopeless, I was homeless. Funny how one simple letter can change one's whole worth. Where there is hope there is a home; and that doesn't have to mean four walls because I lived in four walls. Home is where the heart is. These women's openness to homelessness has given me hope. Are you willing to look into a homeless person's eyes and see their soul and give them hope as these four women have for me? These four women are my walls of a home and they are still here with open arms and have given me my life back. There is hope in that.

Gayle is a former public health nurse with a longstanding interest in social justice. **Gayle's reflection:**

When I look around the second floor of the shelter, the setting we have chosen for this play, this is what I see: I see a massive number of tables with a massive number of people holding space around those tables. I see people finding their safe space, holding their space, and finding their way within the unwritten rules of the spaces - people who may not have any other space to call their own.

I see people who all have a story, looking for who they are now and what they can become. I see people who wear masks and guard their emotions because if they begin to show emotion they may not be able to stop.

I see people who have lost hope. At the same time, I see people who have strength, the strength to survive, and the strength to carry on.

I see people who are at the edge of society and yet are very much a part of our society, and are where they are as a result of disparities within our society - people who have so much potential but, for some reason, have lost connection in the outside world and somehow found connection within the inside world of the shelter.

John has lived at the Shelter since 2002. After a period of time working as a day laborer, he now focuses on his two loves: music and art. **John's reflection:**

I live a dog's life
So many have said,
But my master won't answer
He just draws a circle instead.

Now that orbit could mean
Lie down or play dead
And some throw me bones
So I can't go ahead.

From inside the circle
Described by my leash
I often think life is a
Son-of-a-beash.

So life on the outside is
Roses and myrtle,
But I live the life of a
Near-sighted turtle.

But hark, have I heard
From my circle of friends
That life on the outside
Also depends
On crossing the boundaries
Of the circles we draw
To bring meaning to feelings
From which I'd rather withdraw.

So I entered this play
From a round point of view
Not certain if I was a pit bull
Or a small cockapoo.

But one conclusion I found
That was inescapable
My circle's expanding
Of that I am capable.

Ian is a theatre artist who now creates experiences outside of theatre. **Ian's reflection:**

In theatre, we always have the option of hiding.

We put on costumes, do make up, become a character, and we always have the option of saying, "Oh that's not me, I am just playing a character."

We also have another way we can hide in that if it doesn't work out—the play, the role, whatever—we can say, "Oh well, no big deal, it's not my life, it's just a job."

This experience has shown me a level of courage from this group that is humbling.

They were given no place to hide, and were always willing to stand forward and declare, "This is who I am," willingly giving voice to their experience and sharing it with others.

And I have also come to understand the risk that they each embrace.

If the work we do goes badly, hits a rough spot in the process, there is no safe place in which to retreat. It is our own selves at stake in each moment.

The work has a deep and personal cost. And yet everyone shows up each week, and takes that risk because they want to.

Gathering to Remember

One of the characteristics of arts-based practice is its ability to capture the ineffable (Weber & Mitchell, 2007). There are some experiences that can be articulated through art which cannot be easily expressed through more structured or academic discourse. In the *Lower Depths Project*, the stand-alone reflections give voice to homelessness in a dynamic and powerful way. Beyond the individual transformation, players developed a strong bond such that one year after the play was performed, these seven friends reconvened to explore their learnings since the closing of the curtain.

Upon reflection and dialogue, members identified that there were still important connections to unearth and share with one another and with wider audiences. This led to four group meetings co-facilitated by the first two authors, graduate students in social work with an emerging interest in the role of arts-based practices for social justice. We audio-recorded the group meetings and members offered further written reflections and interpretations through additional in-person meetings and via email. We examined these conversations and writings to identify themes about how our individual and collective experiences continue to inform our present lives. Among the themes we found most engaging were: (a) an evolving and expanded understanding of the concepts of home and homelessness; (b) a deepening sense of self and a re-imagining of personal identity; (c) an ability to be more fully-present and authentic; (d) creating deepened, trust-filled relationships; and (e) the power of voice to affect social/collective change. Each of these themes is described more fully in the following sections

with illustrative quotes drawn from written or spoken text.

Evolving Conceptualization of "Home"

Investigation into the multiple meanings of *home* and *homelessness* was a core goal of the *Lower Depths Project*. Throughout the rehearsal, writing, and performance process, the players entered into a dialogue with each other and with the audience about the meanings of home. The reflections speak of home as a state of mind, a place where one feels accepted, supported and safe.

In her reflection, Shirley described the centrality of the metaphorical four walls of home, which players created through the *Project*. Within the facilitated rehearsal process, with its many exercises focused on developing understanding and acceptance of one another, the group itself became a holding place where each participant was welcomed and supported in the framework of the collective space. For example, despite a hectic work and travel schedule that often required her to miss rehearsals, the group always intentionally held a place for Christine to return to. "We always held a space for her [in the *Project*]," Shannon recalled.

Understanding and Re-Imagining Identity

Through the *Project*, individual members of the group were each able to develop an evolving understanding of their own personal histories. This further contributed to the group cohesion and new understandings about their identity within the construct of homelessness. For example, although Christine had taught and conducted research on the topic of homelessness for a number of years, she had not fully realized her personal connection to these issues until she worked on the *Project*. As she connected with the other cast members and thought about her life story she realized her own history included the role of "the hidden homeless".

John shared that he first joined the Project expecting to play music for a typical theatre production. As rehearsals went on, he somewhat hesitantly agreed to take on an acting role in the play. By participating in the rehearsal process, he became engaged in the work in a new way and found a voice of which he was not yet fully aware. At one group meeting, he shared a poem he had written about the impact of the *Project*. He described how seeing himself as an actor has helped him feel more comfortable both on stage and in his own life:

Now I might do more
In a playful way
To talk to the madding crowd,
But it was the Lower Depths
That first pushed me to speak out loud.

Through encouragement into a new way of being, and discovering the courage to step outside of the known, John was able to put aside roles that he was more comfortable with and explore a new way of interacting with others and expressing himself. After the *Lower Depths Project*, John went on to act in other community theater initiatives related to promoting awareness and social justice for the homeless community, and said he will seek other opportunities to continue this work in the future.

In Max's reflection, he raised a concern that the label of "homeless person" overshadows his multiple layers of identity. He shares a deeper understanding of who he is in relation to the roles that he has adopted in his life, and what they mean to him now:

When I first heard of the Lower Depths Project, *I was heavily involved with a visual arts program at a large homeless shelter and was well aware of the power of art to portray the homeless and the issues surrounding them. I was intrigued by the idea of using the performing arts to the same end.*

One scene in the play particularly resonated with me, and I wrote a reflection inspired by the scene that answers the questions Gorky addresses in the play: "Who am I, and what am I worth as a person?"

A year later, I realize how much I measured myself by what I did and what I was. A trap comes with this external form

of worth and security. I found myself adrift and vulnerable when those things (that measured my worth) were lost to me.

The experience opened a door and started me upon a journey of self-reflection.

Today I am less driven and more reflective. I am able to feel some freedom to face and talk openly about my fears, doubts and insecurities.

Being Fully Present and Authentic

Through the rehearsal process, the group established deeper knowledge of the realities of their daily lives and a richer sense of identity. An important factor in this development was the cultivation of mindfulness, or the ability to authentically be in the "present" moment. Many of us are used to the constantly too-fast pace of life, and have become skilled at *multi-tasking*: doing more than one thing at a time, or doing one thing while thinking ahead to the next two or three steps. In doing this, we are forced to ignore the more subtle thoughts, emotions and physical sensations that give richness to life and often surprise us with new discoveries about the world and ourselves (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005).

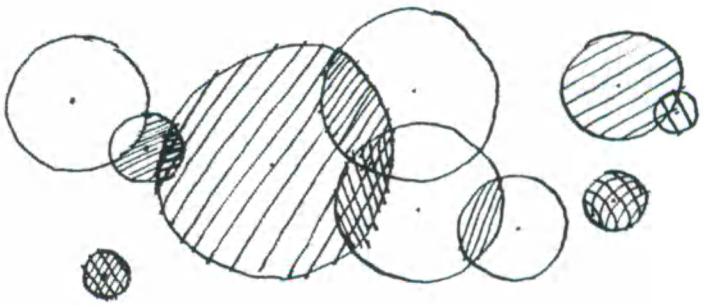
Shannon referred to this presence when she spoke about the "Three Conscious Breaths," a warm-up activity that the group used on many occasions. In this exercise, members hold hands in pairs, look into each other's eyes, and breathe deeply three times in unison. This activity encourages individuals to meet each other, to recognize the truth of the other, and to see and hear the experience of another living being. Shannon shared that this "almost spiritual" experience allowed her to enter into a deeply intimate relationship with other cast members and resulted in her feeling an ability to be more present in her life. As she described:

I must have done [Three Conscious Breaths] 15 times with Max before Max was there; and lots of times with Shirley before Shirley was there. And so once they were there, I couldn't leave.

The change that I felt in myself is that I'm more willing and open to have things just be. That I don't need to know the end, I don't need to know the lines, I don't need to know what's going to happen; in every area of my life now, I can just let it happen because its going to be fine.

Gayle described the importance of being present to her own learning process during the *Project*. She noted that she had some difficulty at first "getting out of [her] head." As a university professor, Gayle said she is used to thinking about things in academic terms, which often means removing emotion or sensation from the equation while systematically analyzing and organizing information. She described that although her first instinct was to try and make sense of the *Project* in this way, through mindfulness cultivated during the rehearsal process she was able to open up in a more holistic way and tune in to deeper insights, relationships, and understandings.

Shirley used the metaphor of the snowflake to describe her experience of working collectively within the group:



We dance, we wonder, some of us are even very direct, we stagger, some free fall, we see the beauty in flight, we hesitate, we fear, we are excited, we laugh, we cry, we feel proud. But as we gather, we are snowflakes forming a snow bank.

During the rehearsal process, the players experienced highs, lows, rewards, and challenges as a group and as individuals. In the end, they found that it was often the shared experience of being present together in the moment that gave strength to the group when they needed it, and provided deep meaning to otherwise ordinary situations.

Creating Deepened Trust-filled Relationships

With each rehearsal, group members were required to stretch their existing sense of self, and to open to emerging possibility. Doing so required that they take personal risks in sharing their thoughts, ideas, and emotions with one-another; that they allow themselves to be vulnerable. With practice, cast members learned to trust each other, take risks, and move beyond their preconceived boundaries or limitations.

One simple way that the group created a trust-filled space together was through the sharing of a meal at the Shelter each night before rehearsals. As the group sat and ate together, chatting informally and getting to know one another, they developed habits of trading and sharing the food that they each had on their plates. Christine remembered that through this engagement, "We developed trust...We grew to know what each other liked and disliked. We developed relationships that are deep." As a result of deepening relationships and trust, a greater potential for sharing, co-learning, co-creating and transformation became possible.

The practice of *deep listening* became a powerful tool for the cast members to practice and develop trust. Deep listening requires that we go beyond a simple auditory process; we stop simply observing people's words as facts that for us to collect, and open our hearts to the whole person. Through deep listening, we allow ourselves to understand the other's experience in a holistic way, which opens us to the awareness of new learning. Deep listening involves the same kind of trust, generosity and intimacy that creates a safe space and the possibility of home.

To be truly seen, heard and accepted as a whole person is rare in our society and even rarer for individuals who are labeled, stigmatized and marginalized. Deep listening challenges this state. Gayle noted, "We all had to learn to listen, and to make our mistakes be heard as well." Max reiterated an important life lesson that was reinforced for him during the Project, "The first thing you have to do is listen. That is the basis of establishing a dialog. If you don't listen, you forfeit your right to speak." Deep listening allowed participants to experience the support of being heard and honored in this way, as well as the privilege of listening to others. Many group members shared that this sense of connection was the reason why they stayed on with the Project, even during challenging times.

Individual and Collective Change

When asked why he became involved with the *Project*, Ian shared that he believes that "knowing" and "experiencing" are different from one another. Through experience, Ian suggested that we learn a new sense of self and gain the opportunity to re-imagine our emerging personal identity. For him, the *Lower Depths Project* offered the opportunity for personal change and awareness, as it became a systematic process of turning inward: experience (rather than turning outward for all the answers) = knowledge. In considering how he was changed by the process he commented:

Every single night, I was changed. I was changed by walking into the space, and by being comfortable in this world...Now I can stand in the middle of the shelter and feel comfortable. We are still people, and now I know who these people are. [This experience] changed me as I walked through the city. I say hello. It changed me in the fact that it helped me see what is going on in the world around me...It changed me in the process of doing this idea, living this idea. It humbled me deeply in the way that people were willing to give, the fact that people would show up on a volunteer basis...I was allowed to enter into peoples' lives and conversations, and enter into peoples' lives in a way that was very intimate, and it changed me.

As a result of this conscious presence, deep listening, and growing respect based on mutual collaboration and shared relationships, the group moved away from a focus on the cognitive or the *Project* outcome. Slowly, group members learned to "hang out, and be" in the present moment. It actually became difficult to determine whether change

originated from the personal and moved to the collective or vice versa; what was obvious was the fact that both were interwoven and taking place simultaneously. Christine described the transformative process made possible through the *Project:*

We all talked about the power of connection, of collaboration. But to see it really happen! Some of us came together because we wanted to learn to act, or to do something good, or to have something to do on Wednesday night, or whatever. But to see how we rose above all of that to be something else, to be something more powerful than any of us could have imagined! It was powerful personally and collectively.

As a social worker, I always thought of it as the power to transform the other. The audience will be moved, we will make changes in social justice...But I didn't really think about the power individually, and the power collectively. It is really important for me personally and professionally to recognize and remember the power of this.

Personal transformation occurred at many levels for all of the group members. Relationships were altered and reframed as group members learned about shared space and commonality among diverse community members. Shirley shared how she was able to reach out and be touched by others. She felt recognized, supported, and heard as a woman, and as a person. Max remembered that he holds the power to communicate and to create and build strong relationships. Ian learned that relationships help him to feel safe, and the need to recognize a common and shared experience of humanity. Shannon was deeply changed through authentic seeing and understanding of another, and being in turn seen and understood by others. John was able to expand his circle, to embrace relationships, and to share himself with others in the context of his work. Christine recognized herself in the story of "homelessness," while Gayle learned to be more fully present in creating meaning and knowledge.

Moving Forward with Hope

The *Lower Depths Project* offered an embodied experience for participants. As Ian reflected during one meeting, there are many arts-based initiatives doing art *for* people. What about doing art *with* people? Just the doing of the art is important. He believes that "it is the process of doing and engaging that matters more than anything." In the doing, change is possible. In the case of the *Lower Depths Project*, doing art together resulted in powerful personal and collective transformation. Max shared a visual image to summarize what happened.

He put his pencil in the middle of a piece of paper, and said, "We all started here [pointing to the pencil tip], in the *Lower Depths*." He began circling his pencil, drawing a wider and wider spiral on the page as he spoke:

Through the Project *we spiraled up, learning more about ourselves, and we spiraled out, meeting others along the way. It's about being part of something bigger than who we are as individuals, so we're going deeper into ourselves and widening our circle of community at the same time.*

Through exploration, the *Lower Depths Project* achieved personal and collective transformation through the experience of arts-based research practice. While the members of the play have reentered their lives, their lives have been altered; the ways of being and knowing cultivated through the *Lower Depths Project* continue.

It is not fully possible to clearly articulate the change process begun through the *Project.* The authors hope, through sharing our experience of the staging of the play and our continuing reflections, others may be moved to the possibility of reflecting upon, creating and sharing stories of their own. This is how arts-based research practices can open possibilities for transformation within individuals, and foster social justice in communities. Through this process, audience members and readers have the chance to observe what becomes illuminated in them,

and to share these experiences in ever-expanding circles of learning.

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My Final Lecture Explained

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After many years on the job, the author ended his official teaching career in 2009. In this narrative, we are presented with some of the most prescient ideas on the mission of the profession of social work, as well as the responsibilities of the social work practitioner and educator. At the same time, the author shares some of the experiences and persons that shaped and influenced his life and beliefs.

In May 2009, I decided that I would stop teaching in the University, not for any other reason than 38 years in Academia is quite enough. I wished to leave in my prime and not to linger as some colleagues do after the waning of their energy and creativity. Having limited financial resources and a family, I was unable to afford a sabbatical leave at any point in my career; this gave retirement an added allure. I had received many honors and rewards for teaching and felt that I had nothing further to prove. I longed to engage in independent scholarship and in free unencumbered community service; but upper most in my mind was the opportunity to spend time with family and friends. I joked with my friends that I wanted my final epitaph to be "Enough Already!"

Yet to bid farewell to a major activity that defined me to others and to myself could not be taken lightly. I felt that I needed some private ritual to commemorate this significant life transition. By chance, I was asked to give a concluding lecture "On Representing the Profession" in a class for first year M.S.W. students that was taught collaboratively by colleagues. When I realized that this would be my final lecture, I decided to tell my students of my complete retirement at the conclusion of the presentation. Little did I know that this was the title of a popular book written by a young, gifted professor who discovered that he was dying of a fatal disease (Pauch & Zaslow, 2008). Although to the best of my knowledge, my death was not imminent; this lecture could be construed as a final testament to what I believed as a Social Worker. It was my hope that this might be of interest to students as they enter the profession. I would risk this presumption in doing my presentation.

Many years ago, in looking at the life review process of the elderly, I was fascinated to discover the Jewish tradition of composing ethical wills before death that are statements which do not deal with distribution of material possessions, but instead are spiritual statements to the younger generation. Typically, they contain principles of conduct and espoused values for living an ethical life (Abrahams, 1926). The oldest ethical wills were written in Medieval Europe, and the practice has continued to this day among observant Jews. Some exquisite Biblical models for this custom are Moses' final song to Israelites after he is told by God that he cannot lead them to the Promised Land (Holy Bible, Deuteronomy: 34:1-12), and King David's final statement to his children with his late life recognition of glaring human flaws as well as achievements (Holy Bible, Kings: 2:1-10). These Biblical examples are efforts to confront human finitude and represent symbolic thrusts at intergenerational immortality.

The writing of a testament to a younger generation must be carefully undertaken so as not to be scolding or overly sentimental. What I write must reflect the assumption that

the students before me are decent human beings who share a belief that they can contribute to the making of a better world.

What to Write?

For maximum effect, I knew that my lecture must be short and touch on what matters to the students. I believe the current economic crisis and uncertain times cannot be far from their minds as they contemplate a profession that deals with a multiplicity of social problems. I imagine they are rightfully concerned about the availability of jobs and their capacity to succeed after leaving graduate school. Cheap platitudes and shallow statements of uplift must be avoided. I know the tendency is to put a shine on the apple when discussing the profession. I decided to avoid this at all costs and share my strong belief that we are a *Pariah Profession* despite all efforts to avoid this painful recognition. At best we are disregarded and at worst we are disliked or hated by segments of the public for the work we do and especially our association with the poor and persistent issues like homelessness, mental illness, domestic violence, addiction and other disturbing societal blights.

I have written that the motivation to be a social worker realistically cannot be based on remuneration or societal acceptance, and have argued that we are *another worldly vocation* motivated by a peculiar sense of altruism and a *calling* that is not dissimilar from the historic role of the religious ministry (Getzel, 1983). I have long been persuaded by Halmos's argument that Social Work and counseling has grown, as religious faith and its institution have declined in England, the United States and elsewhere (Halmos, 1970). It is my belief that what is most unique of Anglo-American social work is a particular set of beliefs about the reciprocity of human beings and society that has had grudging acceptance by society. In short, we are a *reluctant welfare state* expressed powerfully in the ebb and flow of our national history.

In some respects the profession is a microcosm of this struggle of ideals. The perennial debate whether social work should address the root causes of social ills or primarily treat the victims of societal failure just does not go away. Also, social workers are deeply preoccupied with issues of credentialing and acceptance as a mental health profession worthy of third party reimbursement from private insurers and the government. Concern with social change, while deemed worthy, often takes a back seat to clinical matters. The current vogue of evidence-based clinical practice in health and human services exacerbates the historic dualism of social work's obligation to address the cause of social ills versus working as a functional entity of society to assist individuals adaptation to crises or manage acute personal needs.

One of the luminous figures in my development as a social worker was the late William Schwartz who, although not my formal teacher at Columbia University School of Social Work, became a good friend as we worked together during a student strike protesting the Vietnam War. I was impressed by Bill's ideas in his articles on group work practice and the notion of the organismic nature of the small group, which in turn is a reflection of and the nexus into all social relations. These concepts captured my own intuition about the reciprocity that abounds in work with people who function in different social systems (Schwartz: 1961). His Organismic Model—later called the Reciprocal or Interactionist Approach—represented an innovative framework to reconcile the needs of individuals, while simultaneously effecting change in the small group and larger social systems. Schwartz (1969) developed this idea in a seminal article entitled "Private Troubles and Public Issues: One Task or Two?" Bill was in an argument with my friend and beloved teacher, George Brager, at Columbia who insisted that social change was the core mission of the profession (Specht & Courtney, 1994). Those were heady times, with debates about practice conducted by first right thinkers at Columbia University and elsewhere.

Reciprocity is a core idea undergirding my thoughts on the human condition and function of social work. Schwartz (1961) described reciprocity as the universal human striving for connection or union required for health, growth, and change, and to counter isolation and

despair. Simply put, the assignment of the social worker is to abet a process with people to create new and more fruitful need-meeting arrangements. I believe this approach allows for the reconciliation of the private problems of persons with the public issues embedded in the environment that are the sources of much human misery and harm. The so-called "helping process" is not linear, authoritative, and impersonal, but reciprocally circular, participatory and personally engaging. When you read my Last Lecture, this message of reciprocity permeates my thinking.

I believe the conceptual and the personal are wedded in the practice of social work, whether you are working with individuals, groups, communities, and organizations, or engaged in social policy development, research, or professional education. In this vein, permit me to be selectively self-revealing. In doing social work, this faith in reciprocity and the sister notion of mutual aid opened new unimaginable worlds of experience.

I grew up in an impoverished working class Jewish family that was disordered with a psychotically depressed mother and infantile father who showed little interest in my brother or me. My mother's depression affected my fetal development, because I—a child of New York City and not Appalachia—was born with congenital Rickets from her failure to eat foods with Vitamin D and absorb sunlight. Deformed legs and soft bones did not allow me to begin walking until after the age of two. I could not keep up with other children, and was prone to falling over my own feet for years.

Beginning at the age of five, I was physically beaten daily by my mother for not being a "good boy" based on her delusional ideas and suspicions of disobedience. I routinely anticipated being hit and hoped it would be not as severe as the prior day. It sounds gruesome, and it was. But when I was nine years old, after living in a tiny studio apartment in an isolated part of the East Bronx, our family of four moved into a one bedroom apartment in the West Bronx. A profound introduction to the experience of health-giving reciprocity occurred on the street outside our walk-up apartment building. I found five boys my own age with whom I played games in the street and experienced the rich urban culture kids' play. I could stay out late with my buddies and avoid some of my mother's violence. The succor of peers was a revelation; they were mostly very kind and more uninhibited in their language and behaviors. I felt that I was in heaven. I now believe this first conscious experience of reciprocity gave me a faith that human beings need each other, and without others they will fail to have happiness and experience their potential. I developed a bashful but persistent interest in new and different persons. I somehow acquired the faith that different people offered the possibility of learning something new about myself. My experience with disability made me particularly interested in people who might be construed as outsiders by their ethnicity, race, appearance, or odd behaviors. I wanted them to be as happy as I hoped to become, and somehow I felt that was now possible.

Profess and Confess

I will soon be 68 years old, and with longevity comes a special kind of tenure to say what you please. At worst, you will be called demented or, by wearing the stigmata of white hair and creased skin, dismissed as an irrelevant pariah with nothing worthwhile to say or contribute. So throwing caution to the wind, I am ready to profess my vital value commitments as a social worker. By forthrightly professing these ideas and beliefs, I am also revealing what matters to me as a breathing, feeling, and thinking being; what gives me joy and sometimes breaks my heart. I have, in published works, expressed these core values as they animated my practice with the aging (Getzel, 1983), people living with HIV/AIDS (Getzel, 1991), and homicide survivors (Getzel & Masters, 1984). I long felt

an obligation as a practitioner and educator to leave the protected confines of the ivory tower and enter the hurly-burly of the community to experience emerging developments faced by social workers in the field. These so-called "external activities" were an antidote and escape from the clawing, competitive environment of Academia, which belies the myth of a community of supportive scholars sharing common interests. Far too often, Academia incorporates the spirit of the times with its own special forms of venality, opportunism, gratuitous cruelty, and pettiness.

A central challenge of being a social worker is how to enter into the world of people seemingly different from yourself who might conventionally incur pity, fear, anger, revulsion, or any combination of like emotions. During times of stress, social workers may say to themselves or out loud to others, "Why am I doing this work? I could be making a lot more money and benefits working at something else, as many of my family members and friends are too quick to remind me."

I guess by calling yourself a social worker serving the poor, the oppressed and the excluded, you are in effect eschewing lots of money, celebrity and influence; thus, you may feel you are out of synch with the general value drift of contemporary society. Oh well.

It is then reasonable to ask: What do I receive as recompense for the deprivations that I have elected by becoming a social worker? The rewards are non-material ones, for sure. Such as making a difference in peoples' lives that are fraught with pain, trauma and hopelessness, often invisible to the rest of humankind: the homebound elderly man who has out-lived his family and age cohort becomes your vital concern, as does the transgender youth suicidal after finding out she is HIV positive. The neighborhood of immigrants about to lose its firehouse and library because of a local government's budget crisis becomes your central interest. You see the injustice and the tragic human consequences that follow, if the powers that be have their way. Your engagement of people in each of these instances can result in concrete and beneficial consequences or failures.

Social work is all about entering into the life of the *other* and into your own inner life mediated by current and past experiences. The rewards of such encounters and self-examination are intellectually and emotionally challenging. It involves the courage to open yourself to personal and cultural diversity.

I remember in 1972 when Michael, a student in my group work class, entered my office looking very distressed. He told me he was gay and that life at Hunter College was hell for him, because he sensed that revealing his sexual identity would be lethal. Michael said he was not alone in feeling this way. He shared instances when a faculty member's comments were, on the face of it, highly homophobic, abetted by the Freudian concept of homosexuality as an abnormal developmental condition. I explored with him why he reached out to me and not other faculty. We discussed strategies on how he might safely engage faculty and students, while presenting his Gay-affirmative ideas and supporting theory. Michael was one of the founders of Identity House, a self-help program to assist gay men and lesbians develop a positive sense of themselves in a very homophobic environment, even in New York City. Michael continued his battle for human rights and understanding until his death from complications from HIV/AIDS some twenty years after graduation.

Michael and so many other valiant souls—clients and students—have allowed me to enter into their lives as a social worker for which I am very grateful. The fearsome challenge of meeting and understanding people seemingly different from you has been one of the most significant rewards of the work. Bill Schwartz emphasized the innate drive for symbiosis or union of all living things, human beings no less. Schwartz (1961) wrote about the need to overcome the barriers from within and without that block people from making-life affirming connections to each other. To the extent that I could give ideas, data, and value messages to people in need that allowed them to connect to me and others, I succeeded. Together with people, over time, new visions of a better life appeared. The student recovering from a bipolar condition sees the possibility of being a

social worker, despite a brief hospitalization prompted by not taking medication. The group of gay men living with HIV/AIDS, while mourning the youngest member's death, start a conversation about how they wish to live with a renewed sense of meaning in the time that remains; and I do not escape self-examination and reflection a bit later, when group members ask me how it felt knowing they will be all dead and I alive? After a pause and some tears, I say that I will miss and never forget them; this is my burden and gift. Now more than 20 years later I still love and miss them. I guess those connections will end with my death.

Concluding Thoughts and Resolutions

I was born at the beginning of World War II in the Bronx, separated by the Atlantic Ocean from the destruction of European Jewry. My grandparents' kin and culture was destroyed in the furnaces of the Third Reich. Because of my grandparents' desperate efforts to escape persecution and make a better of life for their children in America, I am here at this moment and not bone meal at Auschwitz. History always lurks as an explanation of our condition.

I feel peculiarly fortunate to be a witness to the second half of the Twentieth Century. I experienced some of the crudest forms of anti-Semitism growing up from the police and bus drivers. I was refused service in a German restaurant in the Catskills. My physiognomy was a certain indicator of my Jewishness. I was told, in matter-of-fact ways, that Jews should not bother working for the phone company, commercial banks, or insurance companies because they had Jewish quotas, as did certain private universities. All of this was the received belief and knowledge of my household and neighborhood. Enough examples of prejudices against Jews in daily life reinforced these sad and troubling ideas of oppression.

Growing up in the shadow of Yankee Stadium, a childhood preoccupation for me were professional baseball players who were Jewish. Although we were ardent Yankee fans, our team was among the last to have a black player and a Jewish one. Hank Greenberg—formerly of the Bronx and a Cleveland Indian player, was a demigod—particularly as he had 58 home runs one year, nearly equally the immortal Babe Ruth. Our parents frequently discussed all the movie stars with Anglo-Saxon names who did not look Jewish, but were.

Despite the disorder and dysfunction of my family, my parents were adamantly opposed to the use of racial and ethnic epithets by my brother and by me. There was sympathy for black people explicit in the oft-repeated statement of the time: "Do you think Jews have it bad? Look how Negroes are treated." This all seemed very real when I witnessed Moe, the black laborer who stoked the furnace of our apartment building, insulted and ridiculed by the white caretaker and his wife. Moe taught my friends and me how to carve wood sculpture out of sticks when his boss was not around.

These experiences at the social base made the public school introduction to the Preamble to the Constitution spine-tickling and elevating: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident that all Men are created equal." Years later, I had a similar gut response to the International Declaration of Human Rights by the valiant efforts of Eleanor Roosevelt, an early idol (Glendon, 2001).

I am grateful to social work for availing me exposure to the rainbow of humankind, and with this the recognition that all human being have basic human needs. The privations of others with whom we work make the notion of human needs that more poignant and powerful. Schwartz's notion of symbiotic striving for union and wholeness was expressed by Martin Buber (1970), the great religious philosopher, as the I/Thou experience. To know *the other* is to know *thyself*. We may fight the feelings of connectedness and union girded by our individualism, intolerance, and insecurity, but the gift of loving connection is not to be spurned.

The Buddhist notion of compassion for all sentient life affirms that connection and enlightenment arise from the recognition of suffering in the world and its causes. This perspective has strong intellectual and practical utility for me in so many ways.

Stephen Bachelor (1997) describes the Buddhist experience of compassion:

> *...I inhabit a world where all living things are united by their yearning to survive and be unharmed. I recognize the anguish of others not as theirs but as ours. It is as though the whole of life has been revealed as a single organism...*(p. 87)

I am most fortunate to have been witness to important human rights movements that have changed received belief and knowledge in amazing and radical ways. The extraordinary civil rights movement associated with such pioneers as A. Philip Randolph (Bynum, 2010), W.E.B. Dubois (1968), Rosa Parks (Brinkley, 2005), and Martin Luther King (2000) created inconceivable changes in my lifetime. The struggles were accomplished through non-violent actions inspired by the ideas Jesus, Henry David Thoreau (Lawrence & Lee, 2001), Leo Tolstoy (1984), and Gandhi (1983). The movement for equal rights and the participation of black Americans gave impetus for similar efforts by women, farm workers, Native Americans, people living with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people, and others. The fight for full human rights continues and unfolds in often expected ways.

I have found comfort and personal validation in the late life writings of Leo Tolstoy, who believed that the words of Jesus (Tolstoy, 1994b) are an argument for active nonviolent resistance to overcome human oppression and other forms violence (Tolstoy, 1984). The list includes war, the death penalty, colonialism, and a myriad of conditions which deny human dignity to the oppressed and the oppressor. Tolstoy was a direct inspiration for Gandhi's (1983) nonviolent efforts to free India from British colonialism and later Martin Luther King (2000) in the United States.

Tolstoy (1991a) wrote resistance to malignant evil involves the simple recognition:

> *In order to have a good life, you should not be afraid of any good deeds. You should have no less power or strength for small acts than for the biggest or great good deed.* (p.191)

The social construction of human identity which seemed so fixed in my childhood was shattered through the decades following World War II beginning with President Truman's desegregation of the United States military forces in 1948. In my ethnic Bronx neighborhood in the 1940's and 1950's, it was a scandal if a woman worked instead of being a full time mother or, for that matter, if she wore slacks or cut her hair short. Divorce, like cancer, was not spoken about out loud. Persons who might now be called gay met covert pity and condescension; and elsewhere, derision and violence.

Allow me the share one extraordinary experience I had as a teacher. In the 1980's, a charming and charismatic young student named Scott was admitted to the school. He was confined to a motorized wheel chair and spoke with the assistance of a microphone. Scott's legs and arms were disabled from birth by neurological damage, which also interfered with his speech when he became stressed. He was an intellectually gifted student whose joy of learning and enthusiasm was astonishing to his peers. Some faculty were discomforted by his presence and questioned his mental capacity to be in graduate school. He did well in classes when teachers were welcoming and imaginatively engaged him. Scott would invite discussion of his disability and felt that he had role in helping others understand the plight of person like himself. In stark contrast to classes that were inviting, Scott would become anxious when he sensed his presence was creating discomfort, readily picking up nonverbal signs of strong discomfort when he tried to speak to an instructor. In some cases, his efforts to speak were disregarded. Scott said that he was made to feel invisible.

I will never forget a session that Scott attended during the first semester of our class together. Traditionally, I used simple children's games to give an *in vivo* experience of group consciousness and sentiment growing through shared activity and interaction. I decided that

Scott and the rest of the class would do these activities despite the inescapable presence of a motorized wheelchair. I will never forget Scott doing the simple line dance "The Noble Duke of York" with the other students. My eyes welled with emotions watching the students imaginatively incorporate Scott into the dance with joy and laughter. After these activities, the students had a profoundly moving discussion of their reactions to Scott and the challenge they mastered in supporting normal activity for him and themselves. Some students said they would never forget the experience, nor would they ever see persons living with disabilities in the same way.

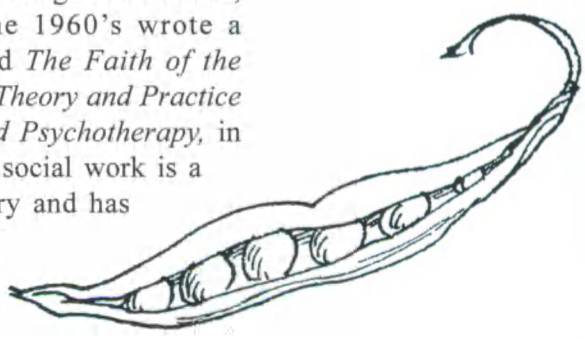
Despite progressive federal, state, and local laws, the struggle for human rights does not disappear. We are daily confronted by the condition of people who face massive discrimination, and subtle and not-so-subtle forms of oppression. I am so fortunate to have known social workers who fought against de facto segregation in social service organizations, schools, and housing, subjecting themselves to threats of bodily harm, job loss, and social ostracism. These social work role models in the past, and my students with their own advanced sensibility about social injustices, have served as internal guides throughout my professional life.

Innovation and social change are not possible unless we defend the free expression of thought and ideas. The defense of civil liberties, which is far too often taken for granted, must receive the highest priority. I have always trafficked in controversial ideas. I guess if you want to make a small difference in the world, you are likely to turn peoples' heads and annoy someone. My heroes are the likes of Jane Addams (1930) and Lillian Wald (1934)—pioneer social workers and founders of early settlement houses in Chicago and New York City respectively—who questioned the idiocy of World War I; and Margaret Sanger (2004), the inspiration for Planned Parenthood, who was imprisoned for advocating a woman's right to birth control by distributing contraceptives.

The artistry of social work practice with people must be passed down to a younger generation, if it is to survive. I am fortunate to be beneficiary of some extraordinary educators and practitioners in the field. By teaching students, we continue the genealogy of practice that preceded us. My *Final Lecture* is also in thanksgiving statement to my teachers, living and dead, for their kindness, wisdom, and courage. I celebrate this legacy today and everyday.

George Getzel's Last Lecture:
May 2009
Representing the Profession

My brief talk will focus on the tasks and obligations of all social workers to represent the profession. To get down and ugly, let me ask the question: Why am I still a social worker after nearly 50 years? Masochism alone does not explain why I continue to identify with this often maligned profession. Perversely, I seem to wear the mantle of social work proudly. What is wrong with me? My job, if I succeed, is to convince you that I do not occupy a new diagnostic category in the soon to be released DSMV. The argument that I will make for many of my colleagues and myself is that we are not crazy, but we have found a home for the values we cherish through a vocation that makes them public and of use in the world. In some way, by calling yourself a professional social worker, it becomes incumbent upon you to represent the profession. This does not occur by calling yourself a therapist or passively being a role model for others. I contend that representing yourself as a professional is related to the more arduous challenge of standing for the core values of this historic profession, even if society does not understand or value them. If you look at the etymology of the word professional, it comes from the Latin to bear witness or publicly state. Since clergy are one of the earliest professions, it fits rather well with that religious calling. Paul Halmos, an Englishman, in the 1960's wrote a fascinating book called *The Faith of the Counselors: A Study in Theory and Practice of Social Casework and Psychotherapy,* in which he suggests that social work is a form of secular ministry and has grown with the decline of traditional clergymen in Britain. Don't we



minister to folks, hear confessions, and bear witness to what we believe? In this class, we have given heavy attention to knowledge, ethics and skills; all necessary to prepare you to weather the challenges that you will face as a social worker.

By way of ending this year together, let's look at the underlying faith or core values which undergird this wonderful, crazy profession. To abet this process, I took a personal inventory. In this, our final class together, let me share six of my personal core values as a social worker. You are welcome to steal them. I, as social worker, profess that:(1) The well-being of all human beings and their environment is the highest priority, more important than wealth, celebrity, individual advantage, private interest, or any other prize that comes in the way of humankind's health and potentiality.(2) Cultural and personal diversity are an intrinsic aspects of working with people. I wish to be open to the rich varieties of humankind and the attendant challenges and conflicts. No person should be excluded from my concern.(3) Human experience and received beliefs should be subject to critical scrutiny and the needs of people must be explored with empathy and respect.(4) The basic needs of people must be regarded with equal concern regardless of a individual's station, condition, or situation in life. (5) Violence or any other form of oppression does not represent the solution to human problems, but only contributes to their creation. Long term solutions to human misery should be addressed through non-violent action and mutual aid. (6) The free expression of ideas and beliefs creates the conditions by which comity, cooperation and communication among human beings occur. Such expression is the building block of all social institutions that meet basic human needs. Assisting others to have voice in human affairs is the highest calling.

In practical terms, the professing of these values will motivate the following resolutions: I will write and think about the work I do with people after I graduate. I will write not just to meet bureaucratic requirements, but to deepen my practice. This is no one else's responsibility but my own. I will seek out the counsel of caring supervisors and peers to discuss my work; it is the only way I can succeed and grow as a sensitive, reflective practitioner. I will think about the cumulative misery and strengths I see when working with people and consider how environments and policies thwart human development and must be changed. I will join with colleagues and communities to create vital social change. I will seek out public forums, be they governmental entities, agencies or professional gatherings, to share my insights in solidarity with others. I will challenge unethical conduct that weakens service to people in need. I will seek professional education as a lifelong process, and persistently search for intellectual and ethical guidance. I will succeed and I will fail. I will be wounded. I will lick my wounds. I will come back with the force of my convictions. And the next time I return, there will be more people at my side.

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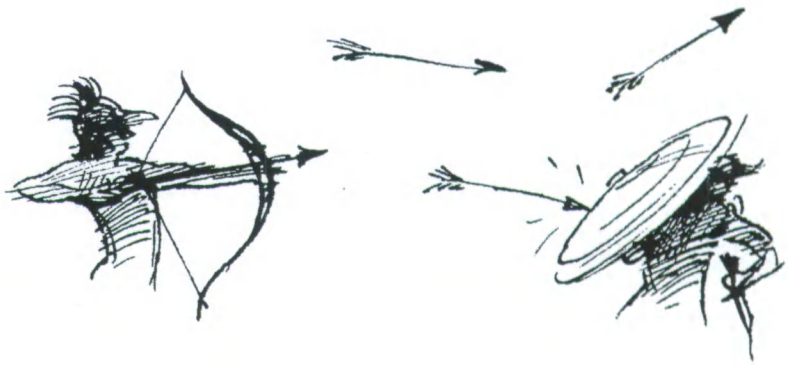

Refugees, Social Justice, and Reflexive Practices: A Critical Account of Social Services in African Refugee Camps, From My Journal

Julie Drolet, Ph.D.
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This narrative provides a critical examination of the policies, programs, and practices of social services for refugees and asylum-seekers in Africa based on original field research and field experience. Ethnographic research methods based in two refugee camp sites in Malawi provided information on the host country, the role and function of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the challenges it faces. Vignettes of two case studies are provided based on the experiences of rural Mozambican refugees in Nsanje and urban refugees in Dzaleka.

Believe in people,
In their strength,
In their ability to change,
In their desire to help each other,
And in their capacity to solve problems.
(UNHCR Social Services)

In recent decades, the numbers of refugees and the seriousness of their predicament has grown significantly. With the rising frequency of civil and regional conflict in many different parts of the world, many more people have been displaced from their homes and sources of livelihood. With 43.3 million forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2009—the highest number since the mid-1990s (UNHCR, 2010)—the question of how best to alleviate their suffering and promote social justice has gained currency among all concerned. The global refugee problem requires solutions which involve the international community as a whole in both the prevention and containment of those factors which cause people to flee their homes and seek refuge in other countries. It also requires a greater commitment to assisting refugees in obtaining their human rights through service provision. Ultimately, however, the refugee problem can only be solved if the international community takes steps which will either help refugees return to their homes, or to adjust and integrate into the host society.

Struggles for political and economic power between different factions, ethnic and national groups are the single most important cause of displacement and they are, unfortunately, the most difficult to manage. The international community has generally not shown much willingness to work collectively to prevent conflicts of this kind from spiralling out of control. Despite the potential of the world's multinational institutions to act decisively to reduce conflict, concerted action has seldom been taken to contain sources of conflict and to prevent hostilities from escalating into open violence and warfare.

According to Mullaly (2002), oppression is understood as a social justice issue. Lacroix (2006) explains that it is the precariousness of immigration status that defines asylum seekers as a marginalized and oppressed group. The call is for social workers to adopt a social justice framework in understanding the social structures, processes, and practices that have caused oppression, and advocating for the rights and opportunities of oppressed groups. Social work is well placed to serve refugees and to help meet their unique social needs. Unfortunately, social workers do not have a great deal of experience working with refugees; relatively few have been engaged in this field, and the social work literature on the subject remains underdeveloped. The contribution of social workers at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

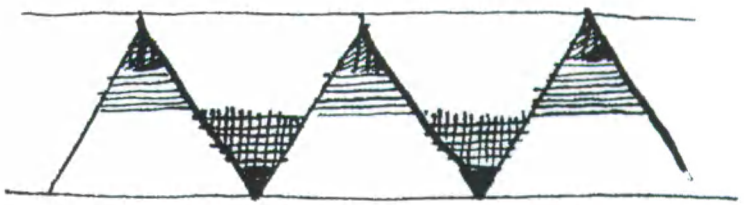
(UNHCR) and similar organizations represents a relatively small but worthwhile effort to articulate social work with refugees as a substantive field of practice with its own goals, methods, and knowledge base.

This narrative is the result of four months of ethnographic research conducted while I was a social services intern at the UNHCR Branch office in Malawi, Africa. My field experience has shown me what it means to be a refugee in human terms. The approach of this narrative transcends formal legalistic definitions of refugees by providing insight into the social dimensions of the problem. My experience in the field has shown me that it is not enough for governments to provide accommodations for refugees; their social, health, and educational needs are equally important and must be attended to. It is important to learn about the international practice context given the state of global migration in the 21st century, and the unjust practices associated with controlling migration by states.

Reflexivity is the act of becoming aware of the self as learner/researcher. My epistemological knowledge encourages the use of reflexive practices to locate the learner/researcher position. My personal experiences, thoughts, and reflections are used to communicate learning and knowledge by showing how students can explore and understand their multiple selves during their international field placements. In reflecting on my journal, I am now aware of how my journal texts become my way to re-express how I experience a pivotal learning experience as a social work researcher, practitioner, and academic. The role of reflexive practice to promote social justice is a valuable tool that can contribute to the process of educating social workers. A critical account of social work practice with refugees in Africa is an attempt to provide further assistance and information for social workers interested and involved in work with refugees.

I was surprised to learn of the limitations on international organizations in providing refugee assistance as they relate to the government of the host country. The degree of control exercised by Malawi officials showed me how the work of the UNHCR was subject to the consent and approval of the host government. I was amazed by the sheer complexity of refugee work, the merging of social, political, economic, environmental, and legal issues, the long hours demanded by the field, the extensive international experience and varying degrees of personal commitment to the staff. Based on my experience in the camps, I found that community-based approaches cannot be presumed to be the preferred method of intervention, as they often do not recognize unique identities and personal histories. The social work profession needs to make an effective case for involvement in the protection function, encouraging a move beyond the predominant legal function of obtaining refugee status, toward supporting protection assistance: it is useless to be recognised as "a refugee" if your status does not provide you with food to eat, a safe place to live, and opportunities to grow and develop as a person.

Few governments have recognized social work's potential contribution to providing services to refugees. Despite the fact that social workers have been involved in the activities of UNHCR, the organization does not always seek the involvement of social workers. The profession needs to articulate its role more forcefully and demonstrate that it has the knowledge and skills which can make an effective contribution to solving the refugee problem.



Historical Context of Social Work Colonial Practices in Africa

Mupedziswa (Uprooted, 1993, pp.158-9) argues that even though social work in Africa is still a young profession, it has inherited a Western bias due to colonialism and the adoption of theories from British and American practitioners during the 19th and 20th centuries,

reflecting Western academic analysis and culture. By the mid-twentieth century it was widely believed that social work had a universally relevant methodology and an international identity, ready to be exported through the world. Patricia Kelley (1994) shows that in most developing countries students of social work were educated abroad and obtained Western or Western-oriented degrees. As they returned to their countries of origin with higher status than their locally educated colleagues, it was assumed that the knowledge and expertise they had acquired abroad could be transferred and applied to me local needs (Kelley, 1994, p.56).

Some have argued that in the Global South the "foreign" nature and character of social work is responsible for its ineffectiveness there, resulting in repeated calls by its critics for politically, economically, culturally appropriate, and relevant methods for solving social problems. However, not only does this apply to social work: some authors have shown that the inappropriateness of imported ideologies has proved detrimental in other areas as well. For instance, Apt & Grieco (1994) have shown that in Africa, the concept of development in general has been greatly influenced by the colonial experience and Western modernization theory which posited that economic development and growth, mainly through industrialization, would automatically raise the living standards and meet the social needs of the population. Further, social welfare was viewed as non-productive activity and therefore accorded a low priority in national development planning and resource allocation. Therefore, in such a context, the scope of social policy is limited and cannot deal with the critical problems of mass poverty and deprivation afflicting the majority of African peoples, especially in rural areas (Apt & Grieco, 1994, p.111).

Social work is a profession concerned with the promotion of social justice, human rights, equality, and the alleviation of human suffering; the well-being of people and the systems within which they are functioning; and with strengthening the coping capacities of people to changing environmental situations. As professionals, social workers are regarded as change agents who initiate action to bring about planned change that promotes optimum growth and potential of people and contributes to personal as well as national development. Taolo Boipuso (1994) has traced the concept of social justice and the safeguarding of human rights in social work literature. Additionally, Allan Halladay (1985) presents the suitability of front-line social workers to act on justice and human rights, given their ability to translate private troubles into public issues (p.48). Gil (1993) further demonstrates the importance for social work of understanding oppression and injustice, since the conditions which cause people to seek help from social services are usually direct or indirect consequences of oppressive and unjust social, economic and political institutions. Because the profession of social work is ethically committed to promoting social justice, insights into oppression, injustice and ways of overcoming them are essential aspects of the foundations of social work knowledge. Human rights are inseparable from social work theory, values and ethics, and practice.

The legacy of colonial social work education in Africa is a call for change in making the profession more responsive to local needs. Innovations in the social development approach to social work education and practice in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is offering a new paradigm that is capable of addressing effectively the numerous social problems faced on the continent, including the refugee problem.

Methodology

Most researchers begin with a plan, a focus, and a research project. In international field work, the research preparation also includes visas, proposals, government approval, vaccinations, grants, literature review, and other organizational procedures (Agar, 1996). As a social services intern with UNHCR field office in Lilongwe, my multiple roles as an intern, social worker, and researcher offered a variety of personal and professional relationships. My experience in the field included working in two refugee camp sites (Nsanje and Dowa) in different regions of

Malawi, participating in planning and organizational meetings, implementing my own action research project, observing the management of other projects, and analyzing policy directives and their implementation in refugee camps. The research methods utilized during my four month internship are consistent with those used by ethnographic research. An "ethnography" is defined as any written report based on fieldwork (Werner, 1987).

World University Service of Canada (WUSC), a non-governmental organization, provided me with information on the geographic area and gave me assistance with my pre-departure preparations, as well as provided ongoing support in Malawi. The assistance of a Canadian organization in the field was crucial in realizing this international practicum given their experience in the country, their ability to coordinate personnel, their financial support, and general assistance provided to me. I was also offered the opportunity of meeting Canadian volunteers working in Malawi through WUSC, and of participating in a weekend seminar to discuss participatory rural appraisal methods used at that time in community development.

Ted Swedenburg (1995) has written about the way in which researchers choose their research interests and describes the complex mix of attachments, investments, relations, experiences, emotions, and understanding that connect them to the trouble areas in which they work. Such links usually cannot be defined as "academic," and we, as researchers and social workers, have therefore not been encouraged to speak about them. The usual assumption is that the "field" is unexplored territory for the researcher, and therefore ethnographic accounts—particularly in anthropology—are full of "first contact" fables (Swedenburg, 1995, p.29). My interest in the workings of international organizations and the field of international social welfare began during my undergraduate studies in history and political science. I often questioned the impact of institutions appeared to have on people, sometimes creating the same situations that led people to seek help in the first place. While a student at the University of Toronto, I became interested in refugee issues through a sponsored student program organized in cooperation with WUSC, and subsequently hosted a provincial symposium with WUSC on the world refugee crisis. As I began my training as a social worker, my interests broadened to include Canadian and international refugee policy, mental health issues, and the consideration of social work practice. I sought to increase my own understanding of the circumstances surrounding refugees' flight from conflict and their experiences of life in refugee camps, as well as to consider how applicable or suitable social work might be in non-Western settings.

Throughout my four months as an intern, I kept a journal which I used as a retrospective record for my learning process. According to Agar (1996), the personal journal focuses on the reactions of the ethnographer to the field setting, the general sense of how the research is going, feelings of detachment, and involvement. These personal accounts bring the ethnographer's role more explicitly into the research process, and moreover provided a tool for retrieving memories and references in writing this narrative. It also became possible for me to reflect on my experience and include other reactions not recorded in my journal at that time. Writing in my journal allowed me to record and express my anger at certain things I witnessed in a "safe" way, as well as increased my ability to understand and reflect upon the contradictions apparent in the role of the United Nations in relation to a sovereign nation and a government responsible, in part, for the conflict in Mozambique, and later for providing assistance to the victims. El-Bushra and Mukarubuga (1995) further explain the operation of contract culture in emergency relief operations, whereby many international agencies see themselves accountable to their paymasters (mostly Western governments, and in terms of the provision of quantities of supplies), rather than to the communities they serve (p.22).

The ethnographic method used in my field work includes what Pieke (1995) describes as an evolving fieldwork experience known as dialogical fieldwork. This form of research differs from conventional fieldwork. It is not shaped by the researcher's preoccupations but

focuses on reality as it presents itself to an outsider who makes the effort to sensitize him/herself to it. In the case of my own fieldwork, there were two practical aspects to this. First, during my conversations and interviews, I did not pursue what *I* thought to be important, but tried to let my informants talk about what they considered to be meaningful events in their lives. While listening, I developed an understanding of how my informants gave meaning to their daily experiences, and how they shaped their own behaviour accordingly. Second, considering fieldwork as an experience which would develop rather than as a research plan to execute enabled me to make the best of sudden shifts and changes in circumstance to negotiate difficulties and to grasp opportunities presented. As I learned more about what was happening and about the people involved, my work became progressively easier. I had to struggle less and less for things to observe or people to talk to. Events occurred, and people eventually had fewer inhibitions in talking to me.

As a social worker, I chose to learn from people's lived experiences. My experience differs from traditional anthropology as described by Green (1995), as well as other UNHCR staff, who have traditionally approached conflict, war, and human aggression from a distance, ignoring the harsh realities of people's lives. Workers in conflict areas often become inured to the violence in order to survive emotionally and produce measurable outputs. Having trained themselves at first not to react, then later not to feel (or see) the lived experiences of others means that the context in which people live is ignored; including the context of the workers themselves (Green, 1995, pp. 108-109). The environment often includes what Robben and Nordstrom (1995) described as one of the most common and also complicated problems of fieldwork: how to deal with rumours. These authors show how every field worker runs across a good deal of gossip, hearsay, slander, rumour, and even character assassination while carrying out research in conflict areas. I agree with Nordstrom's (1995) position known as "the tragic fact that I can leave" (p.130). Working with victims and survivors of war, studying, writing, and living in close proximity to conflict, calls into question some of our most enduring notions of reason. One of the most powerful aspects of studying war is not merely the deconstructive violence which attends it but the creativity of people on the front lines in reconstructing their shattered worlds (Nordstrom, 1995, p.131). Mozambique's "internal" war was developed and guided externally to undermine a democratically elected black-majority Marxist-Leninist government: the human rights violations that occurred in this country have been recognized by the international community as being among the worst in the world. My return to Canada and graduate studies in social work provided me with an uncomfortable period for reflection. However, the role of reflexive practice as a tool to promote social justice is important. Canadian refugee workers appeared to mirror Western governments' arrogant position as the providers of development assistance. I could not be persuaded to ignore the true providers and humanitarians in the international community, the refugees' hosts as donors who provided land, resources, and facilities, often at severe cost to their people and their environment. This position subsequently alienated me from several refugee assistance organizations in Canada and has further led me to question and redefine my own role as a social worker in this context. Fifteen years later, I find myself engaged in research on global migration issues.

Malawi as Host Country

Malawi is a geographically small, densely populated, land-locked country in South-eastern Africa. It is surrounded by Mozambique to the south and southeast, Zambia to the west, and Tanzania to the north. Malawi provided asylum to more than one million refugees at the height of the Mozambican influx—a ratio of 1:10 of its own population—along with countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa. Dr. Kamuzu Banda, head of the Malawi Congress Party, achieved political independence from Britain in 1964 and then instilled a single-party system under his personal dictatorship.

Interestingly, during the time of my field work some Malawians continued to support Dr. Banda, revering him as the father of Malawi despite the widespread human rights violations during his thirty year rule, when political dissidents were silenced, tortured, and sometimes killed. On June 14, 1993, a referendum was held to decide whether or not Malawi should revert to a multi-party system after thirty years of single-party dictatorship; over two-thirds of the electorate rejected the single-party dictatorship. The results of this referendum made it possible for pressure groups to become legitimate political parties when parliamentary and presidential elections were called for on May 17, 1994. The United Democratic Front won the elections, bringing Bakili Muluzu to power as President of Malawi.

Historically, the flow of refugees into Malawi began in the 1960s when Mozambicans were fighting for their political independence from Portugal. During the Cold War, independence in Mozambique brought a socialist government to power when Mozambique was surrounded by capitalist countries such as Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). Within Mozambique a destabilization campaign was sponsored by South Africa, with the support of the United States. During this period, in order to protect its economic interests, Malawi remained an ally of the apartheid regime in South Africa; as such, it provided assistance to Renamo, the destabilizing political force in Mozambique. Interestingly, at the same time and of its own volition, the Malawi government graciously accepted Mozambican asylum seekers even before signing international refugee protection agreements. As the refugee influx increased, with thousands of refugees arriving in Malawi, the government acceded to the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol, formally acknowledging its protection role and inviting international refugee assistance. Many researchers have posited explanations for the government's overwhelming generosity in providing for the refugees. A number of these hypotheses were presented to me while in Malawi.

First, it is believed that Malawians felt a deep sense of guilt for having contributed to the creation of these refugees as an ally collaborator in the destabilization campaign. Second, many believed Malawi needed to improve its international reputation from being a human rights violator under Dr. Banda's dictatorship, to a human rights supporter in the international community. Third, and perhaps most important, it is widely believed that the Malawian people viewed the incoming refugees as family, due to the close cultural ties they shared with their neighbours. The refugees spoke the same language and shared the same customs and traditions as Malawians. It was largely believed that the borders which separated the two countries were the product of their colonial past and served an artificial purpose. Fourth, the Malawian people had themselves suffered under the structural adjustment program imposed by the World Bank, which resulted in reduced spending for social programs in order to reduce the debt. Thus, foreign aid money to support social services and other essential programs for refugees was also used by Malawians, particularly food aid during the drought of 1992. In this sense, Malawi benefitted from its open door policy when building structures, motor vehicles, and computers amounting to $37 million US dollars arrived. Moreover, government ministries and staff were provided with financial support to care for the refugees, and international agencies were invited to complement the Governments' activities and efforts. This was viewed as a highly successful initiative, using local expertise and supporting the Government's ownership of the refugee protection function.

Without a doubt, Malawi has proven to be a generous host with Mozambican refugees. However, it has proven to be less open in its accession to the international instruments governing refugee protection, since it made numerous reservations which, to a large extent, diminish the protection afforded to refugees in the country. For example, the Malawi government refuses to recognize the rights of refugees in the following areas: Article 7 relating to exemption from reciprocity; Article 13 concerning the acquisition of property by

refugees; Article 15 relating to the right of association; Article 17 concerning wage-earning employment for refugees; Article 19 concerning the practice by refugees of liberal professions; Article 22 on provision of public education to refugees; Article 24 concerning labour legislation and social security; Article 26 relating to refugees' freedom of movement; and Article 34 on naturalization and assimilation of refugees.[1] Even though all Mozambicans have left, Malawi continues to receive refugees into the country, although much more reluctantly. The situation of the new arrivals in Malawi will be discussed later in this narrative, because it is now necessary to look at the role and function of the UNHCR.

The Role and Function of UNCHR

When UNHCR was first established, material aspects and social services of refugee relief were seen to be the responsibility of the government which had granted asylum. However, as many of the world's more recent major refugee flows have occurred in less developed countries, UNHCR has acquired the additional role of coordinating material assistance and social services for refugees, returnees, and, in specific instances, displaced people. Initially, UNHCR's mandate was limited to people outside their country of origin. Over time, however, as part of its duty to ensure that voluntary repatriation schemes are sustainable, it has become involved in assisting and protecting returnees to their home countries.

The UNHCR's general mandate is to seek durable solutions for refugees at the same time that it offers international protection to refugees and coordinates assistance from the international community to assist governments and NGOs. The basic structures and legal instruments to ensure the protection of refugees was established when the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was adopted in July 1951. The purpose of the Convention was to provide a general definition of who was to be considered a refugee and to define his or her legal status. Paragraph 1 of the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950) formally mandates the High Commissioner to provide international protection to refugees falling within his or her mandate, and to seek durable solutions to their problems. Since then, in accordance with the Statute, the UN General Assembly has extended the competence of UNHCR through a series of resolutions to cover returnees and displaced persons of concern to the Office. In addition to international law, the national law of the country of asylum governs the protection of refugees. Signatories to the 1951 Convention of the 1967 Protocol agree to cooperate with UNHCR in the exercise of its function and, in particular, its duty of supervising the application of the provisions of the Convention and Protocol (Article 35 and II, respectively). Further, national laws and policies determine what legal status an individual receives, where he or she will live, and what assistance will be provided.

The 1951 Convention is considered to be the most universal of the universal instruments relating to refugees. Within the meaning of the 1951 Convention, a person is a refugee as soon as he/she fulfills the criteria in the definition. However, a person does not become a refugee because of recognition, but is recognized because he/she is a refugee. Thus, recognition is a declaration of status. Persons who meet the criteria of the UN Statute qualify for protection whether or not he/she is in a country that is party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol or whether or not he/she has been recognized by the asylum country as a

refugee. Such refugees are called mandate refugees. In an attempt to broaden the definition the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1969 embarked on a major distinction by defining refugees to also include "those compelled to leave their country of origin on account of external aggression, occupation, and foreign domination events seriously disturbing public order." This definition takes account of the particular nature of refugee movements in Africa, where large numbers of persons have been forced to cross international borders to seek asylum in other countries due to civil strife or internal disturbances in their country of origin.

Social Services: Moving Beyond Legal Principles

Yet international protection goes beyond adherence to legal principles. Equally important, the protection of refugees requires planning and enforcing priorities which will support their safety and well-being. There exists an intrinsic relationship between protection and assistance: protection concerns can often be best addressed through assistance-related measures (UNHCR, 1991, Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, p.9). Thus, the protection function of UNHCR cannot be seen in isolation from the mechanisms established to assist refugees. From the initial decisions that are made on camp design and layout, to the longer-term programs to assist refugees in finding durable solutions, the choices made in assistance sectors have profound effects on the protection of refugees. For example, the physical circumstances in which refugees are housed affect their safety. In many refugee situations, strangers are thrown together in new settings, expected to "suspend" their very identities that brought them to the camp as refugees in the first place. Access to services and information is often limited even when it is available to women and men in the host country. Serious mental health problems are not uncommon, arising from abuse prior to or after flight; depression and post-traumatic stress disorders often follow such experiences. The most serious mental health problems of refugees may manifest themselves in severe depressive behaviour, self-destructive behaviour, violent or disruptive behaviour, alcohol or drug abuse, and a high degree of psychosomatic illness. The right to education is universal, although millions of refugee children are without education, even at the elementary level. Opportunities for secondary and university education for refugees are limited or nonexistent in almost all locations. Many skills which refugees bring with them are not immediately or directly relevant to their experiences in refugee camps or settlements. Although many of their skills are transferable, refugees often need training to undertake new roles in support of themselves and their families.

A social services officer of Malawian origin explained to me in the field that...

> *...international protection forms the basis for security and rights of refugees which are necessary for any assistance to be effective. Social services fit into this broader programme of international protection and assistance and as such, are more effectively used in coordination with other efforts to protect and assist refugees. Most social services are directed towards refugees achieving durable solutions* (Nyirenda, 1995).

However, this same officer wrote:

> *Unless the basic physical needs of refugees are adequately provided for, social needs cannot be met effectively. The psychical safety of refugees must be secured. They must have access to adequate water, food and the means to prepare it, shelter, clothing, basic household items, and preventive and curative health services* (Nyirenda, 1995).

Even though UNHCR acknowledges a recent increase in the number, size and complexity of refugee situations, and

recognizes that additional social services are necessary to meet immediate and lasting solutions, in practice a marked preference exists for the protection function, toward obtaining status as "refugees" rather than in providing needed social services.

"Social services," as defined by the UNHCR Handbook for Social Services, are measures taken to improve the ability of refugees to prevent, reduce or resolve their immediate problems and to achieve adequate and lasting social, psychological and economic well-being (UNHCR, 1991). In this way, social services are distinguished from other forms of assistance by their emphasis on improving the abilities of refugees to meet their own needs and solve their own problems. From its early years UNHCR has been involved in providing refugees with such social services as counselling, basic education, assistance in obtaining employment and rehabilitation.

The UNHCR continually emphasizes that its role in providing international protection primarily involves ensuring that national governments protect refugees and asylum seekers who may be refugees. Thus, the fulfillment of UNHCR's protection mandate, it stresses, requires active cooperation by governments, whose political and material support is, of course, crucial. Issues which are identified as meriting ongoing attention in this regard include the non-accession to the basic international legal instruments of refugee protection by a number of States as well as various restrictions in the interpretation of the refugee definition itself. It is recognized that even when States are not a party to the relevant international conventions, they have generally accepted the need to provide protection to refugees fleeing armed conflict and civil strife, whether or not such persons are deemed to fall within the terms of the Convention.

Simultaneously, UNHCR recognizes that many low-income developing countries whose resources are already strained face destabilizing social and economic effects from a sudden, mass influx of refugees. Their capacity to absorb these increases in population—often in fragile and remote regions—requires reinforcement through development support geared to both physical and institutional infrastructure. The sectors which are particularly exposed in cases of sudden and large-scale influxes include security, water, sanitation, the environment, health, and law enforcement. With few exceptions, however, implementation of refugee aid and development projects has been seriously hampered by a lack of adequate funding, and past efforts have rarely addressed the full range of emergency and short-to-medium term inputs needed in the context of mass influxes.

Parallel and equally important measures of international solidarity are needed with respect to countries of origin, which may be seeking sustainable solutions to refugee problems as well as preventing their recurrence. In addition to early warning and prevention activities, this concern in particular supports voluntary repatriation programs and broader efforts to effect lasting solutions, including conflict resolution and reconciliation. The principles of international protection have been developed and strengthened, over time, by positive state practice. Conversely, actions by States which depart from these basic principles inevitably contribute to their overall erosion. This is particularly so when States traditionally regarded as standard-bearers of refugee protection, even in difficult circumstances, became unable—for economic, social or political reasons—to maintain their commitments in the face of new needs. Such practices are liable to be noted and even emulated, easily encouraging a general trend of more restrictive responses.

At the field level, however, the attitudes of some UNHCR staff towards their world, and their perceptions of the refugees as unreliable informants, has led to a more general tendency among a few administrators to characterize the refugees as dishonest, prone to exaggeration, and untrustworthy. In the eyes of UNHCR, refugees have become persons who are always "telling stories." Refugees are not trusted as the narrators of their own predicament and needs. When there is testimony about refugees, it tends to be testimony by "refugee experts" and "relief officials," not by refugees themselves. It is

necessary to state that these forms and practices of humanitarianism do not represent the best of all possible worlds, and that it is politically and intellectually possible to try and come up with something better. Acknowledging narrative authority, historical agency, and political memory is vital for those who are refugees, in Malawi and elsewhere.

Whether consciously, unconsciously, or through blind fortune, every organization has an implicit and preferred practice model. This model may be informed and consistent with one or more of the "defined" models. It may not. Either way it's there; reflected in what the workers are asked to do, in how they are asked to do it, and in how they are trained to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills—the competencies—they need. Similar competencies do not necessarily result in similar practice. One manipulates, labels, and controls; the other engages, explores, makes alliances, and empowers. What accounts for the difference? Ideology formed of beliefs and assumptions about "what is" and "what ought to be" profoundly shape practice and the way in which we develop practice knowledge. In addressing ideologies, we have to wrestle with our most deeply held (and unquestioned) cultural beliefs, values, and purposes, and the way they are reflected in our practice, and organizational structure and processes. Ideologies are not competencies, but they determine the competencies for which we strive. This is particularly true in UNHCR.

Social Service during the Repatriation of Mozambican Refugees

The refugee programme which served Mozambican refugees is remembered as an overwhelming success by UNHCR and the Malawi government alike. When I arrived in Malawi in May 1995, preparations were underway to close four refugee camps in Nsanje district, Southern Malawi. Approximately 55,000 Mozambican refugees remained from the initial influx and were to be repatriated in May 1995. The delivery of social services in the context of repatriation will be examined and the conditions inside Mozambique will be explored as they presented themselves during this period, as well as the impact of the refugees' presence in Malawi. Contradictions will be explored regarding the UNHCR's and Malawi government's views of the repatriation, as will be shown.

The "success" of the Mozambican programme begins with the way in which the refugees arrived in Malawi, with their family units and social structures virtually intact. Given the circumstances inside Mozambique, their arrival was expected and perceived as legitimate by Malawians, the Malawi government, and UNHCR. The adaptation and integration process of the refugees into the country was facilitated by the similarity of the geographical environment, and the refugees' expectations beyond the border. The refugees shared the same rural landscape and living conditions, and it was often discussed that the borders which separated the two countries were artificial and the product of colonialism. Having lived for many years in close proximity to one another, the refugees expected that Malawi would be a safe country. Additionally, Mozambican refugees shared strong cultural and ethnic ties with the Malawian population among whom they have settled. Very few have an education beyond the primary level, although some of the more educated speak Portuguese and English. Both shared a Christian faith.

As mentioned above, the Malawi government adopted a generous open door policy with regard to Mozambican asylum seekers. The Refugee Act of 1989 validated Malawi's liberal policy and made it legally operative. Though some of the provisions of the 1951 Convention are not binding on Malawi, any reservations were implemented with flexibility. For the refugees the benefits included a broad education program for Mozambican refugee children, as well as the opportunity to be employed albeit within the

refugee community. Furthermore, refugees moved freely within the country without hindrance.

Thus, these factors show that the Mozambican refugees indeed shared many ties with Malawians. Recent studies also demonstrate a co-existent relationship between the two groups. Msuka (1992) describes how the health situation in refugee camps is closely related to conditions in the local Malawi communities where they are located. A good harvest by Malawians in the past gave Mozambicans greater access to food. Crop failures, on the other hand, promoted Mozambican refugees to share rations with their hosts. Msuka (1992) further explains this relationship in the context of the drought of 1992 when severe food shortages were experienced across Southern Africa, and the harvest in Malawi was expected to be less than half the previous year's total. The districts hosting the majority of the refugees were also the most severely hit by the drought. Even in the best of times, there is a high level of malnutrition among children in Malawi: one-third of them die before reaching the age of five; and of those who do survive, 56 percent suffer from permanent nutritional defects. An estimated 1 million Malawian children were affected by the drought. Without massive food aid for Malawians and Mozambican refugees, a sharp increase in infant and child mortality rates was likely, but was prevented because of sharing.

According to UNHCR, their experience with the Mozambican caseload in Malawi has indeed been very positive and valuable. UNHCR claims that by adopting a holistic approach, maintaining lean functional structures, supporting government-line ministries, involving non-governmental organizations and the refugees themselves, the daunting task of providing international protection and assistance to such a large number of refugees was carried out efficiently and cost-effectively. Another contributing factor cited is the hospitality of the Malawian people at the grass-roots, district, and national levels, which came not only from the commitment which Malawi undertook when it acceded to the international and regional refugee conventions, but was enhanced tremendously by the grace, generosity, and goodwill of its people. While this is true in substance, I will later point to how the impact of the refugees' presence in Malawi brought out other perceptions, emotions, and realities rarely spoken of.

With the signing of the 1992 peace accord in Mozambique, promotional activities within Malawi were used to encourage the refugees to return to Mozambique on their own; a process known as spontaneous repatriation (UNHCR, 1994, September). In 1994, the repatriation process gradually shifted towards "assisted spontaneous repatriation," when transport was provided for those refugees who wished to return home, but could not easily do so on their own. Finally, the organized repatriation resumed at the end of the rainy season in April 1995, to provide transport assistance for the remaining 55,000 refuges (UNHCR, 1994, September, p.2).

From my journal:

> My practicum has now taken me to Southern Malawi, an area where a relatively large number of Mozambican refugees are awaiting transport to assist them in their return home. This repatriation operation, as everyone at the office refers to this task, is very hectic and demanding. Approximately 10 buses arrive in the refugee camp at 6:30 am. Prior to the official announcement, an information campaign was held to notify all Mozambican refugees that transport would be provided until the 9th of June. My role in the repatriation is multifaceted: to listen to the concerns of returning refugees and provide assistance when needed; to assist in the repatriation process; to supervise the loading of buses; to examine the provision of social services in reception areas in Mozambique and to locate and record the addresses of foster families returning to Mozambique with unaccompanied minors.

As this describes my internship in Nsanje, social services were provided in the context of repatriation. As much as possible, social workers had to incorporate their interventions with the repatriation programme to prepare refugees for their return to Mozambique. The tracing of unaccompanied minors was intensified, and subsequent changes in the location of foster families were documented.

From my journal:

> One day, I accompanied a Malawian social worker on a few follow-up visits in Mankhokwe refugee camp. There was one particularly interesting case. It involved an unaccompanied minor, a boy about twelve years of age. His mother had died of tuberculosis and it was believed his father had already returned to Mozambique. The boy was being taken care of by a distant relative, who was willing to provide for the boy as long as he was willing to work on his fishing boat. This raised some concerns among the social workers because a young boy cannot work or be held in ransom by his family. During the interview, the uncle mentioned that he had spoken with some of the boy's closer relatives who were willing to care for him beginning in July 1995. The social worker thus planned the necessary follow-up on the Mozambican side in order to locate the father and other relatives.

During the repatriation phase, campaigns in the camps provided information on the possible conditions in Mozambique. But rumours were rampant, and many questioned the legitimacy of the information presented. UNHCR vehicles with loudspeakers would announce the availability of transport for a given period, at which time all refugees were expected to pack their belongings, board the buses and boats, and travel for the last time from Malawi to Mozambique.

From my journal:

> I traveled with the refugees back to Mozambique in buses and boats along the Shire River. Sacks of maize, grass mats, bicycles, clay pots, goats, and chickens can be found on top of the buses. There are more than 100 refugees in each bus. From Mankhokwe, the journey takes about 1.5 hours in each direction. The refugees are greeted in Mozambique at the reception centre and provided with additional transport to their home provinces. It generally takes between three to five days before a refugee family actually returns to their place of origin.

The repatriation of vulnerable groups often requires special assistance (Mupedziswa, 1994). Conventional definitions of vulnerable groups include the following categories of refugees: the physically and mentally handicapped, the elderly, unaccompanied minors, single women and widows, single parent families, and unaccompanied women. Vulnerable refugees are also identified in outreach assessment by field workers in camps or settlements, and using information from the elders, community leaders, and other members of the community.

From my journal:

> Some very interesting cases arose throughout the course of the repatriation. For instance, one refugee male approached the UNHCR with a special request – he wanted UNHCR to provide his family with a bus of their own! At first, staff was quite critical and actually laughed at his proposal. But then, the officers began to look into the issue and found that this man had 7 wives and 24 children, not to mention about 25 chickens and 10 goats! His family did require an entire bus to move themselves across the border.

Outreach and assessment involves walking around the area or sending word through various channels, appealing to those

who are vulnerable to show themselves so that they can be assisted.

> From my journal:
>
> While it was officially stated that pregnant women were not allowed to board buses or lorries returning to Mozambique without a medical note certifying their safety, a pregnant woman was forced to leave a bus at the border in order to give birth to her child in the bushes behind the immigration office – I later visited her at the health centre on the Malawi side of the border and found a few essential items for her.

It is important to ask: how voluntary is voluntary repatriation? The question is posed in light of past experiences which have shown that, in some instances, people have been coerced into going back to their country of origin. Many writers argue that voluntary repatriation, particularly in the context of Africa, is sometimes happening under duress. In the past, Mozambique has not escaped accusations of inducing refugees to repatriate. According to Plugge (1995), a protection officer within UNHCR, "the free choice of the refugee remains the most important element of repatriation." Part of the protection task of UNHCR is to ensure that no pressure is exercised. The question is: how spontaneous is this form of repatriation when refugees return to circumstances in which their basic needs are not met? While spontaneous repatriation occurs at the initiative of refugees themselves, usually with little or no assistance from the international community, international organizations do play a role in encouraging groups to return home. It is said that the role of UNHCR in facilitating and assisting this form of repatriation is still underdeveloped due to the unpredictability of its nature. However, with increased economic and political pressure, the organization does in fact place pressure on groups to return.

> From my journal:
>
> The reception centres in Mozambique are operated by UNHCR – Mozambique. However, it is necessary for each Branch Office to coordinate the movement of refugees on each side of their respective border. On Wednesday, the representatives of each branch office met in Mutarara. At this point, UNHCR Malawi was capable of moving more than 4,000 refugees a day. UNHCR Mozambique was unable to respond to this increase, and asked UNHCR Malawi to stop the repatriation operation until the following week, so that they may move those refugees already in the reception centre. UNHCR Malawi refused – and suggested each side find a local solution to a local problem. This actually meant that each side should continue as they have been doing. I could understand this position because Malawi does not have the sanitation facilities in the area where the refugees are waiting for the buses. The field officer in Nsanje was afraid that if the refugees were left to stay in Malawi until the following week, severe health problems would spread in the camp, especially cholera. It was thus imperative that repatriation continue.

Felsman (1994) highlights some of the problems associated with voluntary repatriation. He identifies a policy of humane deterrence in Malawi where food rations were used to control the movement of refugees; for example, that feeding centres were closed in Malawi to deter refugees from crossing the border and returning to their asylum communities (Felsman, 1994, p.74). The question remains: how voluntary is this form of repatriation, if, for survival purposes, a person is forced to leave their asylum home and seek their basic needs elsewhere?

In a statement by UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Gerald Walzer (1995), it is shown that areas to which refugees return typically have been devastated by the effects of long periods of conflict, economic decline, and neglected infrastructures.[2] When conflicts

are resolved and fighting subsides, countries must be reconstructed so that they can support their: returning refugees and displaced persons, as well as those who never left. Thus, UNHCR proposes that the success of the repatriation which has so far been achieved in Mozambique will depend ultimately on the resolve of its people and the commitment of the international community to contribute to a sustainable economic and social development.[3]

From my journal:

> Inside Mozambique, there is very little infrastructure standing after 16 years of civil war. The roads are terrible – it can take almost an hour to travel 20 km. We saw what was left of the Bank of Mozambique in Mutarara. The roof was bombed out, the walls were cracked, and the windows were just empty square spaces. As my first war experience, I felt very perturbed by the widespread devastation and destruction. It's hard to believe so many people are returning to these appalling conditions.

For returnees to Mozambique, many challenges exist. International organizations recognize that for refugees to return and reintegrate, peace alone is not enough. Conditions are far from ideal since peace is fragile and relatively new to the country; land mines are abundant, and roads, water supply lines, and basic amenities have been all but destroyed. In addition, the country's regional administration only functions with great difficulty and risks being overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of returnees, internally displaced, and demobilized soldiers. Furthermore, Mozambique still suffers from recurring drought. According to a UNHCR officer:

> *People should not be brought back to conditions that may be worse than in camps. If they don't have food, schools and health centers they'll go elsewhere to find these basic needs. And where? Back to the refugee camps.* [4]

Regardless, Mozambique is an overwhelmingly rural society, and well over 90 percent of returning refugees are expected to resume their existence as small-scale farmers. The long war and severe drought of 1991 and 1992 have badly damaged the country's ability to produce all the food it needs. Although UNHCR provided some tools and seeds to the returnees, Mozambique's agriculture still remains vulnerable to climatic and natural change. UNHCR relies on the creativity and endurance of the farmers to ensure that the country can become self-sufficient in food.

Despite numerous rivers and lakes, much of the country faces acute water shortages. The war left most of the water retrieval and distribution system in a drastic state of disrepair. Successive droughts have dried up many rivers. As a result, 8.4 million people living in rural Mozambique had no adequate access to clean water. After 16 years of conflict, the scars of war are visible everywhere. Up to 2 million land mines are planted throughout the country. If normal life is to be re-established, for residents and returnees alike, demining is essential. However, for UNHCR, Mozambique is a story with a happy ending. UNHCR has stated that "the environment of confidence and security prevailing in Mozambique has provided a durable humanitarian solution to the problem of its returnees." Thus, it is clear where responsibility lies in the development of Mozambique.

For Malawi as the host country, the impact of the refugee influx is not difficult to imagine. Refugees arrived with nothing in a densely populated country where there was already a serious shortage of land. It was Malawian villagers, already suffering from the impact of drought and local economic disruption caused by security problems in border areas, who bore the brunt of the emergency. Stanley Moyo, a Divisional Chairman of the Malawi Red Cross. explained that:

> *The real problem is a shortage of land. There is just not enough. In some areas the refugees are able*

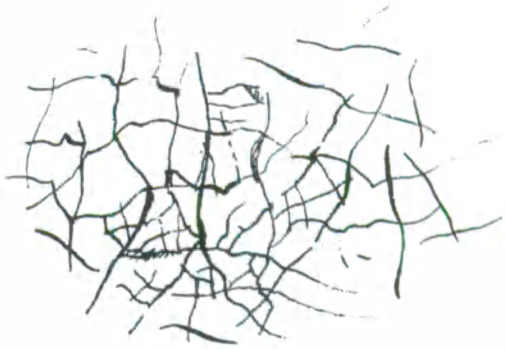
> *to establish small vegetable gardens to supplement their rations, but they will never be able to achieve self-sufficiency, they will need food aid for as long as they remain in Malawi, and they will continue to place serious strain on local resources* (Msuka, 1992, p.18).

Serious land and environmental degradation resulting from the presence of refugees will continue to be felt in Malawi; unfortunately, the international community has only been able to make limited contributions to offset, at least partially, the impact on the environment. The phase-out period of the Mozambican program will continue until all areas are vacated and demolished (huts were to be destroyed and pit latrines filled) to prevent refugees from resettling on a permanent basis, and to encourage Malawians to once again use that land for cultivation.

According to Chadza's (1995) work on the impact of refugee settlement on selected rural communities in Ntcheu, at one time (1992) the refugees formed almost a tenth of Malawi's entire population. As could be expected, mass refugee populations have an impact on the country's socio-economic infrastructure, and on the overall development process itself (Chadza, 1995, p.2). Chadza found that many Malawians in the Dedza district lost their land in order to make room for refugee settlements, which resulted not only in low food production but rendered them destitute (p.3). Approximately 93.3 percent of the Malawian respondents lost land which was used for farming (Chadza, 1995, p.8). The refugees were allowed to cut trees for fuel and construction of their homes, which the local inhabitants had been denied for years. These trees protected the hills to avoid erosion, conserve water, and maintain fertile soil (Chadza, 1995, p.10). Large scale deforestation was the result.

While refugee host countries pay a high price for their hospitality given increased competition for scarce resources such as land, water, housing, and food, Malawians also benefitted from the refugees' presence. Chadza (1995) reported that in some locations it is known that refugees supplement their rations by providing cheap labour to their hosts, and are likely taken advantage of (p.4). Malawians also benefitted from income-generating projects operating for refugees by the sale of products at affordable prices (Chadza, 1995, p.14). Shallow wells and boreholes were drilled to provide additional water sources for everyone. These resources continued to be of benefit to the local inhabitants, even in the absence of the Mozambican refugees.

According to UNHCR, Malawians received Mozambican refugees with open arms and warm hearts. They selflessly shared their meagre resources, and the two communities lived side by side in harmony as members of the same African family. The government and the people of Malawi have made enormous sacrifices to accommodate the massive influx of refugees from war torn Mozambique. Nevertheless, there exists another reality which remains to be told: the plight of urban refugees from other African countries seeking protection in Malawi.



Urban Asylum Seekers in Dowa Refugee Camp

Unlike the Mozambican refugee camps in rural Malawi, the UNHCR and Malawi government created a very different camp in 1995 near the capital city of Lilongwe. With the unexpected arrival of refugees in the capital city, new issues presented themselves to those already experienced in refugee organization and management. The arrival of refugees from other African countries with special and unfamiliar needs surprised many, especially at a time when large numbers of refugees were returning home. Given the

increased number of conflicts, a new phenomenon began to emerge: the movement of refugees traveling hundreds of miles, often crossing several countries, to seek asylum. A new refugee programme was established to organize the determination process. With the differences between this programme and the program for the Mozambicans, it is important to examine the presenting issues of this group compared to the former.

In 1991, the first refugees to arrive—in small groups or as individuals—were from South Africa, Somalia, Tanzania and Zaire. By May 1994, approximately 1,308 persons from Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Angola, and Zaire also sought refugee status in Malawi. These asylum seekers, though small in number compared to the Mozambican caseload, "present[ed] new and peculiar challenges" to those involved in their management. From 1991– 994, the urban refugees lived in Lilongwe; in 1995 a decision was made to relocate the group to a government-provided site which would serve as a refugee camp.

When I arrived in May 1995, UNHCR staff were not permitted entry to the camp for security reasons, due to a riot in February 1995 in which several UNHCR staff were physically threatened. Unfortunately, the provision of service to many vulnerable groups including women, children, the elderly, the handicapped, and unaccompanied minors was delayed owing to the precarious situation in the camp. My intention was to work as a counsellor in Dowa with refugee women and children, though I was unable to do so for various reasons as will be shown. I quickly learned how important it is for social workers in international settings to operate with maximum flexibility, as it is often impossible to predict events.

With the arrival of non-Mozambican asylum-seekers, a decision was made by UNHCR that these persons' claims for refugee status would be determined on an individual basis; unlike the Mozambican programme, where refugee status was conferred upon the entire group. At first, asylum-seekers were detained by the Malawian authorities upon their arrival, but that stopped due to increasing UNHCR representations. The Malawian Refugee Committee, formed in 1989, considered these individual claims on an individual basis. The Committee was composed of representatives from the Office of the President and Cabinet (O.C.), Ministries of Justice, External Affairs, Health, Community Services, Police, and Immigration. UNHCR participated as an observer in this process. Initially, UNHCR took full responsibility of this group by providing a monthly allowance sufficient to cover subsistence living expenses in the township of Lilongwe. However, as the numbers of these urban asylum seekers grew, the question became what attracted these asylum seekers to come to Malawi in the first place, crossing countries which could have been a country of first asylum.

According to UNHCR staff, the urban asylum seekers were attracted to Malawo because they sought much needed peace; second, the cash handouts were an incentive; and third, the non-availability of camps in which they could be kept. To be more explicit, there was no camp available to lodge and keep the new arrivals, which was considered an attraction. This in turn brought about its own problems. The government attributed increased lawlessness in the capital city to the presence of asylum seekers; and the UNHCR found that scattered urban residences hampered the effective delivery of protection, community-based care, and maintenance. The steady increase in numbers also exerted pressure on the government's and UNHCR human and financial resources.

The diversity of the caseload further compounded the problem in terms of culture, languages, and disposition of services, since non-Mozambican urban asylum seekers in Malawi had come from Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, Zaire, and Liberia. As of January 1995, the caseload constituted: 74% young single males, aged 17–28 years old; 18% families (couples, widowers), and 8% single females. It was found that the majority of these people were literate in their own language; however, only a few of them had a high school education and could speak English. These same factors were believed to contribute to the public's negative perception of the non-Mozambican asylum seekers.

Thus, the Government established a camp at Dowa—formerly a prison known as Dzaleka—used by former President Banda to punish and silence political dissidents. The government's stated aims in creating this camp were to restore a sense of security and spirit of self-help and self-reliance amongst refugees and asylum seekers; to improve the image of the asylum seekers who threatened the country's security; to create a sense of community and oneness among the refugees and asylum seekers; and to return the responsibility regarding issues in their lives to the refugees. During my internship, the government and UNHCR were unsuccessful in meeting these broad goals.

While some renovations and improvements were made to the old buildings at Dowa and other facilities, it soon became overcrowded. The camp was initially meant to accommodate six hundred yet, as was previously mentioned, over 1,300 people resided in these facilities. The establishment of this camp remains controversial at best. Should UNHCR have provided consent to house refugees in a former political prison, with few minor repairs? Rather than conducting an information and education campaign to sensitize Malawians to the difficulties experienced by this group, it seems that the Malawian government and UNHCR sought to remove and isolate the problem. Yet the problem was far from being resolved.

The government and UNHCR concurred that "as is normally the case, change brings about mixed feelings – good or bad." Thus, when the decision was made that all refugees were to move into the camp where they would receive rations as opposed to cash handouts, the asylum seekers were perceived to have very high expectations. According to government and UNHCR, their expectations were not fully met, which led to staged demonstrations and protests on various occasions and culminated in extensive damage and loss to the government, Malawi Red Cross and some individuals' property. The causes of such disturbances appeared to be what the asylum seekers and refugees termed as "DEMAND OF THEIR RIGHTS." Perhaps more aware of the roles and responsibilities of asylum, governments, and UNHCR, these refugees were not afraid to present their claims for food rations and other commodities. Yet according to a paper written by government and UNHCR workers,

> *...although this was their cry on the surface, it was noted that there was rather a hidden agenda – namely dissatisfaction of the decision by UNHCR in consultation with the Government to stop the cash handouts. In view of this, most of them resorted to cheating during time of distribution and verification to enable them to obtain more food and non-food commodities which once their plans were achieved were sold for cash. It is a fact that many asylum seekers/refugees, how enlightened they may be, employ all sorts of methods to defeat Government's system and thus achieve their ends. It is here where the difference between rural refugees/asylum seekers [Mozambican refugees] and those from urban areas [Dowa asylum seekers] can easily be seen. At Dzaleka, refugees/asylum seekers have not been connecting electricity in tents and houses that did not have power. Refugees have been seen to unlock cars that were locked, stole drugs that were good and left those that had expired. The list of examples is inexhaustive* (p.7).

In a 1995 paper entitled "Malawi Red Cross Society's Activities at Dzaleka Refugee Center," prepared by the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Relief, and Rehabilitation Department, a list of physical problems were identified in the camp. Given the camp's location on a hill, pneumonia cases were rising due to the cold; malnutrition cases increased, and supplementary feeding programmes were suggested; the behaviour of refugees was sometimes worrisome; and environmental activities needed strengthening. It is important

to note that while the relocation of this group to the camp was completed in January 1995, no action was taken to address these problems until June 1995. Thus, the refugees' claims of neglect were validated to a certain extent. Nyirenda (1995) stated that the situation in the Dowa Refugee Center was unique, and had no precedent to learn from. The camp housed refugees with varied cultural backgrounds, interests, and beliefs.

The Malawi Red Cross Society was chosen to work in Dowa based on their success with the Mozambican refugees and local non-governmental organizations, and also because UNHCR wanted to support local indigenous groups. The framework developed to implement social services in Dowa was conceived as a community-based approach. The principle that continues to guide all social service work with refugees is that they should be helped to meet their own needs. As can be appreciated, trauma caused by different aspects of war is very evident in this group.

From my journal:

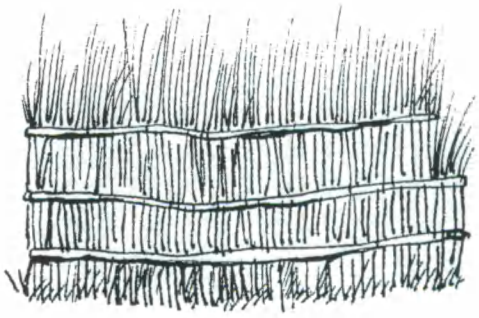
> Within my first ten minutes inside the camp, a young man who presented himself to the staff of the health clinic grabbed a bottle of pills and swallowed them whole in an attempt to kill himself. The social worker I was with began to scold the man, demanding to know why he would try to kill himself in Malawi, a safe country, when he could have died at home in his own country?

It must be stressed that social services are results-oriented, not ends in themselves, trying to resolve immediate problems as well as achieving adequate conditions over the long-term. Approaches which are integrated mean that refugee needs and problems are seen comprehensively, since action in one area is likely to affect others. In this regard, social services staff must have a clear overall picture of protection and assistance efforts; ensure that staff in other areas of assistance and protection understand how social services will contribute to meeting immediate need and achieving durable solutions; and plan and implement social services in coordination with other activities

From my journal:

> While fleeing Somalia, he was shot, and must undergo a series of operations. Arrangements were made for him to travel to Nairobi, as they have the hospital facilities to care for his leg. However, he refused to go because he was afraid of returning so close to Somalia. Other arrangements were made for him to seek medical treatment in South Africa, except that he must have an HIV test prior to the operation. If he is HIV positive, his leg will be amputated; if the test is negative, the operations will be carried out. The problem is that this Somali man does not want to know whether he is HIV positive. The social worker will continue to offer counselling and support until he makes a decision.

Community-based approaches and social work with individuals and families are two different but complimentary ways to meet refugee needs. The goals depend on the shared needs of a community or groups within it. However, a case-by-case approach is often used with individuals and families whose problems cannot be solved through broader community efforts. Consequently, when social services are considered in UNHCR, attention is first given to establish community-based programmes.



Conclusion

The voices and experiences of African refugees in Malawi have taught me a great

deal about the organization and management of the agencies and institutions responsible for their care. Certainly, refugees flee their homes because they cannot avail themselves of protection in their country. Their protection needs are great, but cannot be satisfied only by the legal status conferred to them. UNHCR and government within the international community must recognize the value of moving beyond the legal status of the refugee. The acknowledgment of refugees' unique identities and personal histories not only affect but define their protection needs. This narrative argues that, given this scenario, there is an urgent need to take a fresh look at the intervention strategies currently in place. To this end, I feel that there is a strong case for social work intervention and for applying accepted social work strategies to refugee work.

Humanitarian work must be strengthened in a way that acknowledges personal experiences and histories. My fieldwork in Malawi showed me the evolution of a host country's support, as well as the importance of perceptions in deciding the terms of assistance which can change over time and diverge according to the characteristics of the refugee population. The influence of the host government is perhaps the most significant factor in determining refugee assistance, as these officials have the ultimate power in deciding who receives protection and what services will be provided.

The growing emphasis on community-based approaches in social work is not always an appropriate intervention with refugees, as demonstrated in the Dowa case study with urban refugees. Financial restrictions have an impact on protection and the services rendered for their survival. Greater cooperation is necessary among all concerned to meet their needs, particularly in family planning issues and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. It should be noted that when assessing a situation and deciding on action, preventative measures should be emphasized over services that respond only to the effects of a problem. Most importantly, the needs of the refugees should be considered according to the standard of living of the surrounding host community, with due regard to the resources and services available to that community and to recognized minimum standards of well-being. Problems often result when the resources available are inadequate to meet the needs of the entire population; are not appropriate to certain needs; are not accessible to all who need them; and are not culturally appropriate or acceptable to some or all concerned. And yet, while appreciating this fact, it is important to remember that refugee needs and resources change over time. Social workers are well placed to carry out periodic need assessments to determine whether priorities should be shifted. Refugees may be able to solve their own problems if certain restrictions are removed. This may involve international protection rather than assistance.

UNHCR is uniquely equipped to reflect on and recommend preventative strategies, but their preventative role is a limited one. Prevention is essentially political, and is made ineffective by the inertia of governments. Early warning is abundant, yet rarely followed by early action. A key concern is thus, "the future of humanitarianism in the absence of political will." Despite its critical impact on issues of peace and security, the refugee issue has failed to reach the political prominence it deserves, and is frequently used as a cloak to avoid decisive action to resolve conflicts. We can recognize the paradox between the political and the humanitarian, between the security of states and the security of people. Reflection on human issues should take into account of political realities. In taking these issues into account, social workers are, therefore, well placed to serve refugees and to help meet their unique social needs.

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Footnotes

[1] The Articles are found in greater detail in the UNHR's Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, Reedited in January 1992.

[2] Statements of the Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Gerald Walzer, at the Handover ceremony in Nsanje, Malawi, 29 April 1995.

[3] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[4] As recorded in my journal.

Remembrances of Things Past

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As social workers, our context is almost entirely related to working for social justice. It is our heritage and our commitment. Enclosed are a few extraordinary situations in which social justice became a major factor in the author's work.

A Day at the Beach and the Wade-Ins

It was a wonderful day. The sun was out, and it was nice to get out of the Chicago heat to spend a day at the beach, but we were not looking forward to it with eager anticipation. For us, my wife Sonia and three daughters, Chicago was a wonderful place to live. We were directly across from a fine school in the Hyde Park/Kenwood area, and five minutes from my work. Our major concern that morning was that we had the children with us, and we were worried about what to expect when we all walked together onto Rainbow Beach. While the Chicago beaches were open to all, Rainbow Beach, on the south side of Chicago, was different. African Americans had been hassled, jostled, insulted, and physically attacked when they went to that beach. There were varying degrees of welcome on the other Chicago beaches, but not Rainbow. It was the site of a series of "Wade-Ins," and we were on our way to a sit in at the beach. We were to be joined by other African American and White families. We were told by the wade-in organizers that there would be police on the beach trying to insure that the demonstration did not lead to any violence; but in the 1960's, Chicago was not known for its tolerance of equality. We were also given some information as to how to maintain decorum if we were harassed. We were almost certain there would be verbal abuse, and hoped that would be the worst of it.

I was the director of a Jewish youth center on the South Side of Chicago. It was in an area close to Rainbow Beach, in a predominantly white community that was quickly changing and apprehensive about it. Most of the board members did not live in the community, but more likely in the high rise buildings along the lake. The parent advisory group consisted of neighborhood people.

It was not the most peaceful day at the beach. At times it was down right scary, particularly when small groups went into the water. I do not remember the numbers actively objecting to our presence, as the beach was crowded; but the degree of verbal abuse seemed to change up and down frequently during the day. I did not observe any physical actions, but there was a great deal of name calling. It was the first time I had heard the "N" word used along with the word "lover." It was a rather difficult experience, and I must admit it was not the best place for us to have taken our young kids. My hunch was that along with the number of police, the presence of reporters and cameramen served to keep the protesters more subdued than was the case at some of the other wade-ins. When the press interviewed some of the wade-in group, I was one person interviewed. I noted that I was director of the nearby youth center, but was not there in that capacity. Our family was interested in equal rights etc., etc. Part of that interview was broadcast on television, and I am not sure how it was received by the board members at the youth center, although one of them spoke to me about it and thought I had made a good presentation. But he was the only one. In the face of the agency being in a community that was changing, my position was bound to create mixed reactions among people who felt that this kind of change was going to negatively alter their community.

Without writing my autobiography, I will just say that one of the reasons I became a social worker was due to my belief in the contribution the profession was making to a society in which all people were entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, and I was

committed to working for a more just society. My wife felt the same way.

It was during that summer that I completed my Doctoral courses at the University of Chicago. That was soon followed with an invitation to teach group work at the School of Applied Social Sciences (SASS) at Case Western Reserve University, an exceptional opportunity to work for social justice at a school which was noted for work with groups, and the social justice advocacy of Grace Coyle. While I had not had any thoughts about teaching, the concern with my future at the youth center helped me to accept the offer.

VISTA, Me, and the Riots

While in Chicago I had been a field supervisor for some social work students at the University of Chicago, and started to understand how much students looked forward to real life experiences. When I began teaching at Case Western Reserve University, I believed it was important for me to continue with some social work practice so as to keep current with issues and trends. I felt it would also be helpful in teaching. Over a period of ten years I worked with various groups: blind people, cancer patients, unmarried teenage fathers, and alcoholic teenagers. I supervised a Settlement House worker who refused to pay income tax, because the money would go for war. I also worked on a committee for equality in public housing, which was known for segregating people in areas of the city. These were tough, but powerful practice/service opportunities which helped shape me, and which led to experiences around practice and social justice that I brought into the classroom over the years.

One of the most poignant experiences took place in the summer of 1966. Knowing that I was not teaching during the summer, Robert Bond, the Executive Director of the Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Associations, asked me if I would be willing to develop and run a summer VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program for which he had received a grant. It would require the training of thirty six young volunteers. VISTA was a Federal program consisting of a corps of full-time volunteers living and working with the poor on the front line of what was then called the "War on Poverty." The volunteers trained by VISTA brought various opportunities and assistance into the neighborhoods and homes those in need. The volunteers could be requested by local agencies, public or private, that were serving the poor directly. VISTA was open to all who were willing to give a year of service. There were no educational requirements. Applicants were given some options as to where they wanted to serve and what type of work they wanted to do. The National Federation of Settlements was developing six week training courses, and Cleveland was selected for one of them.

I had to recruit and supervise five trainers as well as develop the training program. The Phyllis Wheatley Settlement, which was located in the center of an almost totally African American area of Cleveland, provided living accommodations for the 36 volunteers over the summer. The settlement was named after a famous African American poetess and was founded over a hundred years earlier, mainly to serve women. The VISTA volunteers were made up of males and females, mostly in their early twenties, college students or graduates, and all were white. I had little information on the volunteers other than how many there were, their ages, and sex. In the month prior to their arrival I recruited a staff of five; some were associates of mine from Case Western Reserve. There were three women and two men; two were African American.

My own orientation to VISTA came from Bob Bond and an afternoon with a person from the national VISTA office. None of the staff lived at the settlement with the volunteers, but they were there for about twelve hours a day. Except for a few special events, weekends were free for both the staff and the volunteers.

The six week program consisted of classes and field placements of the volunteers in settlement houses two full days each week. Speakers included Carl B. Stokes, who at that time was an Ohio State Representative (later mayor), the superintendent of the Cleveland School System, and the head of Urban Renewal. Evenings after dinner were generally free, with a few planned outings such as a

Cleveland baseball game, and seeing *My Fair Lady*. There were small group discussions and supervisory sessions related to field experiences. Class sessions included educators, a psychiatrist, civil rights leaders, city planners, the Welfare Department director, and speakers from groups representing the poor. All went well... until the **Hough Riots**.

On the evening of July 18, 1966, a group of African Americans gathered outside a bar on 79th Street objecting to a sign in the window which displayed a number of anti African American racist comments. A number of police arrived, and soon a melee took place. It continued for about eight days and led to deaths, injuries, and property destruction that increased the fears and hatred that already existed in that area and in parts of Cleveland. The initial site of the riots was about a mile from the Phyllis Whitely settlement and soon spread to the surrounding areas. The major impact was felt the following day and evening as word of the riot spread. Governor Rhodes ordered the National Guard to come out the next day, but they did not arrive until about 11:00 p.m. that evening. Soon there were jeeps with National Guardsmen and machine guns on many of the corners leading to downtown Cleveland to protect people going to work, and to keep the rioting contained.

My wife Sonia took the trip to her job downtown at the Welfare Department, and was one the many who called the mayor's office urging him to get the National Guard out to the riot area. I drove to Phyllis Whitley each day. Schools were closed down, as were many area businesses. The trainees remained in the settlement. They were living in a well-guarded, untouched but troubled zone. They had a lot to think and talk about. "Just treatment" was no longer a theoretical topic: it was a real living experience.

During that week the training program continued, with a few changes. The staff came to work and the speakers showed up, but we did cancel the field work assignments. It was a difficult time for the trainees as they were basically forced to remain at the settlement house for five days and nights. The staff offered a few programs—a dance, and movie—but the trainees were frightened, bored, interested, excited; all of which led to new experiences and ways of viewing themselves now that they were in the middle of a riot.

Discussions related to poverty, slum housing, fair treatment, police-community relationships, the use of force, and the reasons the riots might have started were shaped by their new life experiences. The weeks following the riots were a continuing series of trainee motivated sessions where they tried to make sense of the experiences they had witnessed almost firsthand. It brought the trainee group together as persons who had shared a rough experience which they were not able to do anything about, but was strongly related to why they had offered to serve their country. The question of how such things could happen and why became an important point of discussion, and source of evaluation of themselves and their country. The questions that went through their minds and voices were echoed in return in the minds of the trainers, and in me. We had a number of staff discussions on how to proceed in the face of what the students had experienced.

Personally, having gone to the March on Washington in 1963 with my family and heard Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, I wondered if there would ever be an end to racism, hatred, and the unjust use of power in my lifetime? Was I really battling the problem, or was I part of the problem? The weight of that idea enforced the notion that, as a teacher, I also had to be involved in the practice of change, both in and out of the classroom. The classroom had to be a place to learn not only from books, but from students' experiences with me and each other in the classroom, and hopefully from my practice. Was that, too, just a dream?

No Rent! No Rent!

The Cleveland riots, which have been duplicated in various ways throughout the country over the years, had a strong impact on the development of programs to help mediate some of the social problems they reflected. One problem was in the area of housing for the poor, and in some cases for the middle class. In American cities like

Cleveland and Chicago, the tenants had no rights. They could be put out of their homes without being given a reason. Not only was slum housing overpriced, but repairs were not made, complaints from tenants were ignored, or worse, tenants were simply given notice to vacate within 30 days.

In 1967, Bob Bond asked me to undertake a major project of the Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association, working in partnership with the Legal Aid Society and the CEO. The task was to help organize tenant unions in Cleveland by recruiting tenants, helping to develop the organization, and offer leadership to the program. The goal was to not only develop the union but to train tenants on how to deal with landlords; and in public housing, to carry out management tasks. It was to be a "from the ground up" project. The organizers, once they were selected and trained, would be tenants. A staff member from GCNCA carried out inter-organization contacts and functions, and handled financial affairs and support services. By-laws for the union would have to be developed, and rules had to be agreed upon. It carried the risk of tenant eviction, and so safeguards had to be established. If there was to be a strike of any kind, it had to have the support of the union, and could only be held in the spring and summer so that if a strike resulted in evictions, tenants would not be "out in the cold." It was hoped that strikes, while sometimes effective, would be avoided.

I recalled the power in the threat of a rent strike from Arthur Arent's play *One Third of a Nation.* President Roosevelt, in his second inaugural address on January 20, 1937, proclaimed: "I see one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." Arent used that part of the speech as the title in his play about poverty and the lack of housing. The following excerpt from the play deals with the gouging of the poor in run-down housing. (Arent uses the accepted language of the time.)The men are tenants in a room with a number of beds. Each man rents a bed for part of the day. In their despair, they seek change.

FIRST NEGRO: When you don't like the way things are, and you want to change 'em, don't try to do it all by yourself. You can't...You got to get 'em all together; then gotta do somethin' together!

(There is a pause.)

SECOND NEGRO: (slowly) Do something? Like what?

FIRST NEGRO: Like this...(Slowly he turns facing out; then, addressing an imaginary landlord) You go to the landlord and say: If you don't stop gougin' us – if you don't fix them rusty pipes and clean up this here house, you know what we're going to do? You know what? (Pause) We ain't gonna pay no rent!

SECOND NEGRO: No rent? But they won't let me stay here. They'll kick me out.

FIRST NEGRO: Sure they will—if you do it yourself. But suppose everybody in this whole house didn't pay rent until every man had a bed of his own and that sink downstairs was fixed. Would you get it fixed or wouldn't you?

(There is a pause, the SECOND NEGRO regards him for a moment, then, joyously.)

SECOND NEGRO: (shouting): No rent! We ain't gonna pay no rent!

TWO NEGROES: No rent! No rent!

The goal of the Tenant Union program was to develop organizations made up of tenants (those who pay rent) to bargain collectively with landlords. Any tenant in an area served by the program could join. There was no fee, but as a local group organized, they could establish some membership dues. It was the hope that tenants, with the help of a worker, could negotiate a suitable rental lease, contracts to establish grievance procedures, and a steward system so that complaints of a neighborhood could be voiced effectively. They could work for needed repairs and insure proper building care by the landlord. The following announcement appeared in the initial recruitment flyer.

Who Will Run The Tenant Union?

You!!! Staff workers will help you to organize, give you technical assistance and training, but you will run the unions. You will establish the rules, the contracts, and the method for solution of problems. This will be Your Tenant Union

At the time that the unions were being developed in Cleveland there were already a few in other parts of the country. One was in Chicago, and another was in the Watts area of Los Angeles. They were showing positive results, and the idea was beginning to catch on nationally. From the beginning of our initial efforts to recruit tenants, we found a great deal of community support, and the program showed signs of being a success. About half a dozen communities began to organize; after two months, some had started to discuss issues with landlords. In the meantime, my staff and other support groups started to deal with the city council and some of the political leaders of Cleveland. A decision was made to have a citywide convention to draw up by-laws and promote the idea of a citywide tenant committee. During that time, Martin Luther King was approaching Cleveland and supporting the Garbage Collectors Union, Housing Improvements, and other projects for the poor. The convention organizers planned to invite King to be a guest speaker. I am not sure if he was ever asked, although I was working on lists for guests and his name was given as a possible speaker. Some of his aides were working in Cleveland, and I believe there had been some cross contact at the time around housing concerns

The Tenant Union movement grew. There were a few rent strikes, and many tenants were hired to work at and even manage some of the apartments. A number of laws were passed to help tenants; some landlord restrictions were passed to keep housing safe, and even laws were put into place to prevent tenants from being evicted without cause. Over time some of us were able to deal with some of the public housing segregation, but not as part of the tenant union movement. But that's another story.

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The following is a reprint of another narrative written by Paul Abels for our special issue on **FORGIVENESS**. It appeared in *Reflections* Volume 4, #4 - Fall, 1998.

The Last of The Just

by Paul Abels

There is a legend that says that in every generation, the world is supported on the shoulders of thirty-six "Just Men." The world is permitted to survive because they witness and take on the suffering of humanity, and because they behave righteously during their life span. As the legend goes, neither they, nor anyone else, knows who they are. They might be anyone. They might be you. They might be me. Any man, any woman. We have reluctantly chosen not to change the gender terms of the legend, which is ancient, from a time when language was used differently.

Andre Schwarz-Bart uses this legend as the basis for a wonderful novel that won the Prix Concourt, France's most prestigious literary award. On the final page of this marvelous book, the last Just Man dies in flames in a concentration camp during the Holocaust (1959).

Please allow yourself to join me in a reflective creation of what might have happened in the next seconds of eternity following the last Just Man's death.

The last Just Man came slowly back to consciousness; surprisingly, he felt very light. At first all he could make out were voices, but no particular words. Then he made out the images of a number of people standing over him; they seemed to be welcoming him. He knew, somehow, that they, too, were Just Men. Before he had time to gather his senses and even ask a question, the voices hushed and they all turned their heads in the direction of the door, their eyes turned down as if not wanting to stare. Truthfully, it wasn't really a door, because they weren't really in a room. It was more like a space surrounded by thin curtains that seemed to be flowing, maybe blowing in the air, and in no particular direction. Yet he felt as if he were on solid ground. A form came through the door... well not really, because the form didn't really come through but engulfed the entire space. The last Just Man knew immediately that the form was the HOLIEST ONE. The last Just Man couldn't think or move. "Welcome, and come with me—I will show you around," a voice seemed to say in a muted, mellow, but certain tone.

He and the great form walked, no, it was more like a glide, in spaces between other gossamer-like curtains, the other Just Men now accompanying them. "We should start here," said the HOLIEST ONE, and the curtain seemed to part. The sight was impossible to encompass. There were countless people. It seemed they extended into the horizon, except that he knew there was no horizon. Many seemed to look like people he had known, strangely familiar, though no face was recognizable. They all appeared to be busy and looked satisfied, though the last Just Man could not see them doing anything in particular.

The other Just Men were observing the same scene, but they saw different people. Some saw Asians linked to various invasions, another saw Africans they knew were linked to slaves. One Just Man saw descendants of women who had been sterilized because they were not thought worthy of having children. Another saw Native Americans, Mexicans, and Canadians connected to the first people on the continent. Still another only saw people dressed in ancient caftons, chitons, togas, and djellabahs. Another saw Armenians. In essence the entire history of oppressed people in the Universe could be seen by all of the Just Men, and all the people seemed well and pleased with what they were doing. None of the Just Men knew that the other Just Men were seeing other persons from other times. None knew that they only saw those who had been victims of injustice during their own time on earth. Perhaps this was a well deserved reward, to spare them the additional pain of knowing that injustice had continued past their own times.

"Who are all these people?" asked the last Just Man.

"These are all People who never were, and never will be," answered the HOLIEST ONE.

The last Just Man was puzzled. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"They are all the people who were never born because of injustices, such as slavery, the holocaust, or ethnic cleansing," was the reply.

"But they all look so happy," said the last Just Man.

"That is because a world has been created for all of them," was the response. "Each has a world in which all the wonders of life have been presented to them. For each, a world for them alone, although sometimes a few paths do cross as they might in real life. Of course, they are unaware of not being alive. To them the world is real, as is everything in it. Yes, it is true that they have problems to deal with, and sorrows, even death, but no slaughters; it is a world of Justice."

The remorse the last Just Man had first felt on hearing that these were *people who never were, and never will be* lessened as he understood how good the life could be they now had. He raised no further questions, and they continued their walk. There were beautiful gardens and other groups seemed to be involved in activities the last Just Man could not make out.

They arrived at a space similar to the others, and as a breeze wisped the curtain aside, the last Just Man noted many people scurrying back and forth, not seeming to be getting anywhere, but eager in the search. They were each speaking, but not to each other. The scene engulfed him like a heavy perfume, leaving a discomforting presence. "Who are these people," he asked, "What are they doing?"

"They are the ones seeking people to forgive them for what they have done," was the almost immediate reply. "But of course they will never find them, because they are searching for the *people who never were, and never will be*."

In a while, the last Just Man turned, with tears in his eyes, looking at the HOLIEST ONE. He murmured, "But you could forgive them." The other Just Men stood dazed, breathless.

The HOLIEST ONE was silent for a moment. Then, with a slight, warm smile, he slowly turned and walked away. □

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Schwarz-Bart, Andre. (1959) *The Last of the Just*. Bantam Books. New York, N.Y.

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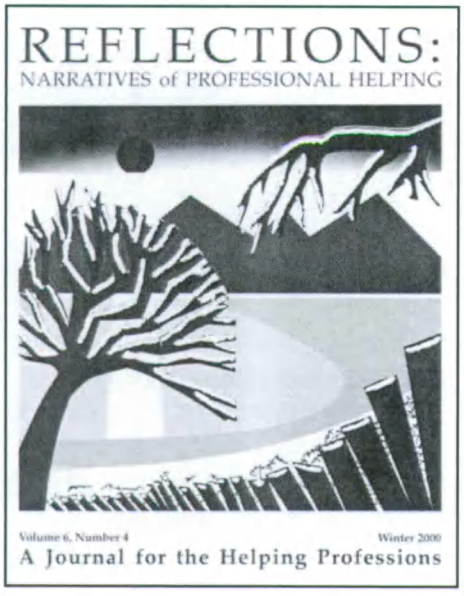

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