

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

"We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN
UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT MONDAY, MAY 17, 1954

SPECIAL ISSUE

50th ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Volume 10, Number 1

Winter, 2004

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NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING (ISSN 1080-0220)

is a refereed journal published quarterly by the Department of Social Work,
California State University Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Boulevard, Long Beach, California, 90840-0902
Periodicals postage paid at Long Beach, CA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping, Department of Social Work,
California State University Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Boulevard, Long Beach, California, 90840-0902

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Volume 10

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Special Issue: 50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education

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Cover and original artwork by Daniel Jimenez

PRINTED QUARTERLY BY THE CSULB UNIVERSITY PRESS

LETTER FROM THE SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR

John Kayser, Ph.D., University of Denver

I write these words of introduction, appropriately enough, on January 19, 2004—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. This year marks the 75th anniversary of his birth. There are other important anniversaries occurring this year: May 17th is the 50th anniversary of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which outlawed segregation in public schools; May 23rd marks the 45th anniversary of the first Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) policy proposal prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, or creed in social work educational programs; and July 2nd is the 40th anniversary of the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that desegregated higher education. This special issue of *Reflections* was conceived as a time of taking stock—to see where we have come from and where we are now in the struggle for social equality—with particular attention to how the helping professions themselves have done in this regard.

The history of segregation and desegregation in the helping profession has long been a research interest of mine, and the impetus for this special issue arose out of that research. Twelve contributors share their firsthand experiences of the impact of racism and discrimination during their formative years; in their undergraduate and graduate professional education; in their subsequent careers as practitioners, educators, researchers, and advocates; and in their personal roles such as spouse and parent. The authors' own cultural backgrounds are diverse, coming from African American, Latina, and White (including Scottish, German/Irish, and Greek) ethnic groups and heritage. The helping systems the authors write about include social services and

child welfare, juvenile court and probation, education (primary, secondary, undergraduate, and graduate school), housing, mental health, nonprofit community organizations such as the YWCA, religious organizations and churches, and professional accrediting organizations. The authors and/or subjects of these narratives come from interdisciplinary backgrounds, including social work, nursing, and lay religious studies. Among the unique articles in this issue are the following:

- *Brown's* impact on Black high school students attending segregated schools in 1954, their choice of whether to transfer to hostile, previously all-White schools or remain in nurturing Black schools, and the subsequent impact of this decision on later life opportunities, decisions, and career choices are explored by two authors. John Oliver shares the richness and perceived limitations of having received secondary education in a segregated, Black high school. Sandra Edmonds Crew interweaves her own personal story of integrating a previously all-White high school with the initial findings of a qualitative research study on a cohort of Black former high schools students in Virginia.

- Two articles by social work pioneers in multicultural practice, Elaine Pinderhughes and Jean Granger, chart their evolving understanding of multiculturalism in social work practice and educational settings, based on their own personal encounters with racism and oppression, and in their professional work with clients, trainees, and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.

- Georgia Burnette shares her own story and those of three colleagues as African American women in the nursing profession,

seeking admission to nursing schools and work opportunities in hospitals, physician offices, and health clinics.

- Ruby Gourdine examines her experiences as an African American social worker in child welfare and juvenile court in working with White social workers and Black social workers, and the role each played in her subsequent professional development. In addition, she recounts her courageous work in publicly exposing segregated practices in a juvenile court in the South.

- Overlooked, forgotten, and/or previously hidden histories are recalled in the works of several authors: Rebecca Lopez shares her discovery of the *Mendez v. Westminster* desegregation case in California, a Latino precursor to the later *Brown* decision; Annie Woodley Brown shares her experiences regarding the impact that Lester Blackwell Granger of the National Urban League had in encouraging generations of African Americans to enter social work in order to fight for social justice; Katherine Kendall (former Executive Director of CSWE) recounts her early work as a caseworker in Louisiana in working with poor, disenfranchised Black clients during segregation, and her later work with Whitney Young, Jr. in developing the first CSWE organizational policies and accrediting standards in social work education prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnicity, color, or creed; and John Kayser provides an oral history account of the Bishop Tuttle School of Social Work, an all-but-forgotten training program for African American women, as seen through the life of one of its last graduates, Mrs. Fannie Jeffrey.

- Two current social work students provide contemporary accounts of the continuing presence of racism and racial conflict within the helping professions, social services, and higher education. Mercelle Seale-Pierce shares the experiences that she and her husband had, an African American

couple, in attempting to adopt an African American child through the public social service system. Chrissy Davis tells of the impact she experienced, as a young African American undergraduate student, when racial slurs and derogatory comments about people of color were allowed to go unchallenged in a predominately White social work program.

- As a bonus addition to the 12 personal narratives described above, Agathi Glezakos reviews a recent film, *The Human Stain*, for its portrayal and insights into racial and ethnic identity conflict, and the effects of racism and oppression on individual characters as well as on an institution of higher education.

The painful stories shared in this issue are infrequently told. For people of color to share these stories means revisiting hurt, anger, grief, loss, and sadness experienced from their encounters with racism. For Whites, it means listening to stories that challenge the psychological benefits and privileges that they have received by virtue of being members of the dominant, majority group. This silence of stories and the suppression of history have perpetuated ignorance of the truth about the tragic cost of racism to both Whites and people of color in the helping professions.

My hope is that this special issue helps us talk about these issues and histories more forthrightly and honestly, as they have affected our own discipline groups and ourselves. These stories help us honor the struggle and the pain of our contributors, while also learning about the strengths, coping and survival strategies, and advocacy efforts they displayed in finding ways to combat racism, injustice, and oppression. Despite (or perhaps because of) the obstacles authors encountered, each of them embraced a career in the helping professions as a means to effect social change and achieve social equality. Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, their stories help us take stock.

My thanks to Jillian Jimenez, editor of *Reflections*, and John Oliver, director of the

Department of Social Work at California State University Long Beach, for their support and advice in developing this issue, and their courage in publishing it. Special thanks goes to Dr. Virginia Gill, an African American alumna of the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver, who first stimulated my interest in this topic, and to Charles T. Morrissey, an oral history consultant working out of the Oral History Project at the Baylor School of Medicine, who has taught me a great deal about oral history methods and research.

A final word on the use of photos in this issue. When segregation was legally practiced in the United States, many professional education programs in public and private colleges and universities required applicants to submit a personal photo along with their application materials. The photos subsequently were used as a means of identifying and excluding persons of color. As a deliberate counterpoint to this practice, I requested from each author a photo either of themselves or one related to their narrative story. While not all authors replied to this request, the inclusion of photos in this issue is meant as one more way to acknowledging the diversity and history of people within the helping professions.

Editors Note: Reflections would like to express deep appreciation to John Kayser for his creation of this important issue commemorating the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Because of his commitment, this issue represents a significant contribution to our mission, to social work and allied professions, and to those whose voices have previously been silenced.



WE'RE GOING TO GO TO SCHOOL WITH WHITE PEOPLE

John Oliver, Ph.D., Director, Department of Social Work, California State University, Long Beach

This narrative provides a snapshot of the author's "separate but equal" high school educational experience. Challenges inherent in this experience are discussed in relation to Brown vs. Board of Education and its effects on subsequent periods of his life.



The author in elementary school

"We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Chief Justice Earl Warren, United States Supreme Court. Monday, May 17, 1954

Prologue

Before sharing my personal story with you, I think that it might be of value to convey how difficult it was for me to unearth this period of my life. It has been many years since I allowed myself to embrace willfully the choice of risking the danger of examining events and circumstances (intentional or unintentional) that were designed to harm me and other members of my race.

In order to write this article, a retrospective review of the context that shaped my formative years was necessary. This process of review aroused feelings associated with unhealed wounds and residual scars that bear witness to my past. The process of review also prompted a reassessment of the extent to which I still might be held captive by oppression that was disproportionately lodged in a bygone era. The degree of personal risk associated with this undertaking was considerable.

In spite of my concerns, I recall promising a valued friend of the journal that I would write an article for this special issue of *Reflections* celebrating the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Since keeping promises are of vital importance to

me, I have endeavored to stare trepidation in the face, breathe deeply, and tell you my story.

One additional point before beginning: On the occasion of promising to do this article, I recall a brief discussion with guest issue editor, John Kayser, and the Editor of *Reflections*, Jillian Jimenez, regarding the idiosyncratic nature of a personal reflection on how my education and subsequent life choices might have been impacted by the *Brown* decision. Unlike the question, "What were you doing when you heard that President Kennedy had been shot?" What a Black person remembers about what s/he was doing and/or did shortly after 1:00 PM on Monday, May 17, 1954 is exceedingly complex. What is intended by my use of the word complex will, I hope, become more apparent as you read about my experience.

A Brighter Day is Comin'

"Vester Lou, Vester Lou," Bill shouted as he rushed down the crowded second floor hallway, "We're going to go to school with White people." Appearing annoyed, Vester Lou responded, "Oh shut up, Bill, you're always lying. Why do you make up stupid stories?" Undaunted by Vester's rebuke, Bill turned to me, "Tell her Johnny! That's why Mr. Lewis has called an assembly this morning. You know that we never have an assembly on any day but Friday, unless we've won a football or basketball championship." Unconvinced, Vester Lou turned and began

walking toward the north staircase that led to the first floor auditorium.

Bill and I remained on the second floor hastily developing a plan about what we would say if Annie Elizabeth or Carrie walked by. Surrounded by slamming lockers and a sea of gleeful boys and girls contemplating the prospects of missing Mr. McClure's algebra class and perhaps even Ms. Savage's biology class, Tuesday morning suddenly appeared to be more promising. Enjoyment gleaned from contemplating the prospects of missing one or two challenging classes was, however, short lived. Teachers with purposeful intent descended on the hallway, corralling malingering students and issuing explicit orders regarding our immediate presence in assembly.

The auditorium, which also served as our basketball gymnasium and theater, was filled from front to rear with metal-bottom chairs that were in various states of disrepair. The teachers always sat on the sides, front, and rear of the students, forming a perimeter. They clustered in two's and three's awaiting the arrival of Mr. Lewis. As always, he entered the auditorium walking briskly. Acknowledging no one, he ascended the five-step staircase leading to the auditorium stage. He stood erect behind the podium and, for a fleeting moment, whispers of "Be quiet! Be quiet! Sit down!" could be briefly heard. When there was absolute silence, Mr. Lewis spoke: "Yesterday, the Supreme Court of the United States decided that White children and Negro children would attend the same schools. Some of you have applied yourself, but some of you aren't ready. You will embarrass the race. You know who you are."

Regrettably, this news, which he delivered as an admonishment, was too brief. Only one half of Ms. Savage's biology class was cancelled and none of the algebra class. The remainder of the school day was uneventful. As I walked the three-and-one-half miles from Bridgeforth High School to my home on College Street, there were no indications

of the decision reflected in the behavior of local residents or merchants.

The historic decision made by the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954, did not result in celebrations by Blacks who lived in Pulaski, Tennessee, nor did it produce acts of recrimination by Whites who opposed the decision. In the immediate period following the decision, the number of special events, emergency municipal meetings, dramatic newspaper headlines, and radio shows devoted to shaping an acceptable public response were insignificant. Thus, emergence of a local socio-political context that could have defined and attached an affirmative definition and meaning to the decision for public education was essentially missing. The net impact of this non-response served to constrain the importance of the moment and to support the absence of an intended outcome.

In the days, weeks, months, and years following this historic decision, Tennesseans continued the practice of differentially allocating societal resources and opportunities along racial lines. They remained oblivious to a decision that would, over time, fundamentally alter the course of American history.

In 1954 when the decision was made, I was a freshman in a segregated high school. Four years later, I graduated from the same segregated high school. Although I was in a position to be a beneficiary of the *Brown* decision, it did not affect my high school experience. My secondary educational experience, while not contoured by the *Brown* decision, was indeed colored by the myriad disadvantages of segregation and adjustments made by Black educators to the limitations inherent within this form of social control.

Pulaski Public Schools: Pre *Brown v. Board of Education*

Pulaski is located in Giles County. The 1950 U.S. Census listed the county

population as 26,961; the population of Pulaski was less than 5,000. The town of my birth is located 73 miles south of Nashville and only 17 miles from the Alabama state line. This small town served as the point of commerce for surrounding farming communities. It was also the seat of the county school district, and the headquarters for one of the earliest Ku Klux Klan chapters in the United States. In the years preceding the *Brown* decision, Pulaski was rigidly segregated. But like most systems of exclusion and separation, one can always identify exceptions to the rule. For example, in the 1950s, while Blacks were allowed to purchase food and clothing from local outlets, separate customer lines were provided. At the two local theaters, Blacks used a side entrance and were segregated in the balcony. Blacks seldom received treatment in the local hospital, nor were they the patients of White physicians. In public venues, Blacks were expected to drink from separate water fountains, use separate restrooms, and be buried in separate cemeteries. We were barred from eating at restaurants owned by Whites, attending common church services, entering public libraries, swimming in municipal pools, and, of course, attending the same schools. Signs were frequently posted to remind Blacks of expected behavior: "Colored entrance," "No colored people allowed," "Whites only." Adult men and women were seldom referred to as Mr. or Mrs. or by their family names. First names, and "Ace," "Tom," "Jane," and "n*****" were commonly used.

Pulaski contained several elementary schools. One school educated Black children. There were two high schools: Giles County High School was attended by Whites and Bridgeforth High School was attended by Blacks. Noteworthy, the White high school was less than six blocks from my house. Bridgeforth was over three miles.

In the period from 1896 to the *Brown* decision in 1954, public schools were

operated under the separate but equal doctrine established in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision. Under this doctrine, equality of treatment is accorded when races are provided substantially equal facilities, even though these facilities are separate. My classmates and I were the products of exceedingly oppressive aspects of "separate but equal" education. I will share a few select examples of my experiences that will help to convey the scope of psychic and cognitive damage unfurled under this doctrine.

School Supplies

There are endless pre-*Brown* reports and audits that consistently show the discrepancy between school supplies provided for Black schools and those provided for White schools. The shortfall of resources allocated for Black schools was all-encompassing. Janitorial and general cleaning products were always in short supply; so were books, laboratory equipment, reproduction and copying equipment, and classroom materials needed to enhance learning effectiveness. I remember that there were never enough books. Indeed, a disproportionate share of the ones we did receive were in need of repair, often with missing pages, cracked and brittle spines and partially anchored or completely separated covers.

At the start of each year, most of our teachers would encourage us to purchase and/or make covers to protect the books. Focusing on our sense of racial pride and their belief that we all shared a collective obligation to always engage in behaviors that advanced the race, they would say: "We must show that we value books and public property, by returning these books in better condition than we received them." I remember feeling confused and hurt that my teachers expected such behavior. After all, some of my classmates didn't even get books. I remember one year asking my mother to help me make book covers. She looked at me puzzled and

sternly explained that I should spend my time learning what was in the book, not worrying about protecting it.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of a shortage of school supplies was experienced in biology classes. Our school was allocated one microscope. This piece of equipment remained covered almost all of the time because of a concern that we might break it. Apparently, the hypothesis was that if we didn't break the microscope, it would provide a signal to the school board that we knew how to use it, perhaps resulting in an increased allocation. In the absence of slides, microscopes, and dissection supplies, our mastery of the content was dependent on the artistic talents of our teachers and, in particular, their ability to paint verbal pictures of vital information.

While it's virtually impossible for me to calculate the degree to which the denial of the necessary tools needed for learning might have eroded my chances of establishing a sound foundation for future asset development, I am acutely aware of select losses. My experience in applying for college at both the undergraduate and graduate levels provided reminders of the disadvantages associated with having attended segregated schools.

Regardless of one's level of achievement or ability to meet published standards, a past mired in unbounded assumptions associated with being a Black student who was a product of segregated schooling was, and is, often unbearable:

Mr. Oliver, you scored very high on your entrance examination. We also wish to congratulate you on achieving the second highest grade point average in your high school graduating class. However, we can't admit you at this time due to your science background. We would be happy to consider you again next year, if you were to complete three science courses at Santa

Monica Junior College with a "B" or better average.

I had a similar experience when I first applied to graduate school: "Mr. Oliver, not everyone should attend a graduate school of social work. Your background will make it hard for you to succeed." Although I had a good undergraduate academic record, once my past segregated school experience was factored into the decision, my chances of admission were compromised.

School Relationships

In the period following the *Brown* decision, Giles County School administrators initiated contact with Bridgeforth High School to propose that we exchange tickets to football games and theatrical performances. In retrospect, the exchange, when fully implemented, was as imbalanced as other initiatives designed from segregationists' philosophical framework and value stance. For example, football tickets to Giles County High School's games were subject to game attendance. The seats were clustered in the end zone section on the visitor's sideline and segregated from other fans. When tickets to Bridgeforth games were redeemed, our Giles County High visitors sat on the 50-yard line on the home team's sideline. The same inequity existed with respect to the theatrical performances. We reserved front row tickets for Giles County faculty who redeemed tickets. Often, when Bridgeforth faculty attempted to attend Giles County plays, they were turned away. If admitted, they were restricted to the rear of the auditorium, separated from other persons in attendance.

When I was in the eleventh grade, I was selected for a role in our annual school play. I recall being happy that I was chosen for the production. On the night of the play, when my parents arrived, they were unable to find a seat. As I waited backstage, a separation in the stage curtain permitted an observation of

their challenge. The gap in the curtain also provided a clear view of our guests from Giles County High being escorted past the standing Black parents to reserved seats at the front of the auditorium.

I still remember the feelings of embarrassment for my parents and my classmates' parents. I also remember discussing my discomfort and anger regarding the situation with my mother and daddy. Their immediate response was to discontinue granting permission for me to attend the Giles County High Bridgeforth events. They explained the importance of self-love and self-care. In this instance, it meant not exposing myself to situations where the outcomes were predictably negative.

While I no longer sit in the end zones of football stadiums in a segregated section, or witness the anger and pain on the faces of parents being discounted or rendered invisible by segregated education practices, I still carry permanent images that were a part of my youth.

Differential Staffing

During the decades of the 40's and 50's, many U.S. secondary educational systems were characterized by differential staffing patterns. While the patterns varied across states and along regional and county lines, the most extreme variations occurred within segregated school systems along racial lines. Disparities in the quality of staffing were particularly noticeable in schools located in small towns and in rural settings. For example, in these schools Black children were frequently taught by non-credentialed teachers whose mean educational level was significantly lower than teacher qualifications in segregated White schools.

In prior sections of this narrative, brief examples were provided of how critical resources needed for learning and teaching effectiveness were withheld. If one added poor teacher preparation to the resource

deficiency, a disturbing picture of education as a means of controlling Blacks by educationally handicapping them emerges. I hasten to add that this picture is contrary to the dominant one espoused by Blacks during this era. Since early emancipation, Blacks viewed education as the great equalizer. Education was the path to a better future and it was believed to be our ultimate salvation as a people.

In spite of unjust and unequal allocation of school resources, students who attended Bridgeforth thrived. Bridgeforth was not characterized by a deficient teaching staff. Instead, all of our teachers possessed college degrees and were credentialed. Therefore, my "separate but equal" educational experience produced a variety of positive unintentional outcomes. Most significantly, my high school experience provided an opportunity for me to consider, internalize, and assimilate salient aspects of Black culture that filled me with pride, resolve, and a vision of life unbounded by circumstances of birth or country.

"Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmonies of liberty; let our rejoicing rise high as the listening sky, let it resound loud as the rolling sea" (Gannett, 1961, p. 277). During my years in high school, my classmates and I would stand and sing these words every Friday morning in assembly. Professors from Tennessee State and Fisk University would often provide inspirational speeches regarding "our obligation." We were expected to advance the race. The ideas of Booker T. Washington, Franklin Frazier, Paul Robeson, Mary McCloud Bethune, Fredrick Douglass, William Trotter, William Burghardt DuBois, John Hope Franklin, and countless other Black scholars were provided as beacons of hope. Photographs of Black intellectuals, poets, and industrialists were passed among students in classes for inspection and as a means of identifying with those who had succeeded against great odds.

Because the school board provided only marginal oversight for Bridgeforth, teachers enjoyed considerable latitude in determining significant aspects of the curriculum. In literature, we read, memorized sections of and debated the works of major Black novelists and poets. It was not uncommon to overhear my peers reciting sections from poems in unison. "Little brown baby with sparkling eyes/ Come to your poppy and sit on his knee./ What you been doing sir, making sand pies? / Look at that bib – you's as dirty as me" (Hill, 1964, p. 269). When they finished, they would chuckle, and invariably someone would scream out the poet's name: "Dunbar! Dunbar!"

High school, in part, provided an insulation against the injustice of daily life in Pulaski. High school helped to cultivate my dreams and nurture my aspirations. My parents and my teachers expected me to succeed. Repeatedly, we were told that the windows of opportunity discovered and pried open by our grandparents, parents, and community were to be opened wider for those who would follow. For me to fail to try my hardest, or to not do so, was unthinkable. When my efforts didn't measure up to expectations, Daddy would firmly place both of his hands on my shoulders, peer directly into my eyes, and simply say, "Always remember that we are Olivers."

Ain't Nutin' Gonna Happen: Post Brown Experience

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling in 1896 by the Supreme Court declared segregation legal, provided separate but equal facilities existed. This decision by the Supreme Court established the basis upon which most twentieth century segregation laws were based.

The legal fiction of separate but equal gave moral sanction to a process of social interaction that applied to most aspects

of daily living. The ruling has a lasting effect on residential housing, family and community fiscal assets, residential housing patterns, type and patterns of employment, quality of public education, and relative position in the social order. (Oliver, 1974, p.22).

Uncle Thomas owned the local Black pool hall. The pool hall was a large room at the top of two flights of stairs on the second floor above a Black barber shop and restaurant. Periodically, Uncle Thomas would allow me and my two friends, Bill and Haywood, to rack balls and fetch sandwiches for his customers from the downstairs restaurant. Occasionally, the men would discuss the *Brown* court decision. Always, the overwhelming consensus among the men was that the schools would never be integrated. Silas, an older man of about 60-65, would always become animated during the discussions. To insure that he commanded everyone's attention, Mr. Silas would bellow, "Ain't gonna happen, ain't never gonna happen. Y'all must be crazy! Do you really think they would risk you gettin' their jobs, hurtin' them playing football, or datin' their daughters? Hell No!"

Although the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court gave legal force to and reaffirmed ideals of the American dream, Black Pulaskians greeted the decision with mixed emotions. For example, many of the Black men and women who attended Daddy's church believed that the decision provided hope. They viewed the prospects of change embedded in the ruling as a badly needed balm from periodic cross burnings by the Klan and the largely ignored mysterious deaths of Black adolescent and adult males. The display of will and moral fortitude by the Court provided a degree of encouragement to risk the hazard of again contemplating a world where social and political decisions were made according to the precepts of justice and equity. Sunday after Sunday, Daddy would

lead the congregation in prayer, asking that the suffering and injustice that we endured at the hands of others be forgiven. He would stretch his arms high above his head, and in a calm and reassuring voice repeat his mantra, "God will provide. God will provide."

On the other end of the spectrum were those who were skeptical of White promises of a better life. The Supreme Court decision, they reasoned, like many others dating back to the 1865 Freedmen Bureau legislation, and the 1860 and 1870 Civil Rights bills, would most assuredly die due to an absence of public will. For them, the lists of betrayals were simply too numerous to sustain a belief that Pulaski's public schools would be integrated. Their truth was reflected in the words of Mr. Silas, "Ain't never gonna happen."

In the short run, Mr. Silas' words proved prophetic. Pulaski schools were not integrated during my high school years. They were, however, integrated eleven years later during the period when my baby brother was enrolled in high school.

On May 17, 1965, Bridgeforth High School held its last formal ceremony as a Black institution. Following failed attempts by local Whites to establish a private school system, plans to desegregate the county schools moved forward without incident. In its report to the U.S. Commission on Education, the Fisk University Desegregation Institute noted that "Giles County School System is the only county system in the state that completely desegregated without incident" (Giles County Historical Society, 1986, p. 69).

Aspects of the county school desegregation process that were exposed to the public assumed a posture of fairness and equity. However, operational aspects of the Pulaski desegregation process adhered rigidly to past oppressive practices. Black teachers were transferred in mass to county schools. Blacks were not among the cadre of newly hired teachers, nor were Blacks awarded

service contracts. Bridgeforth High School historical documents and memorabilia (i.e., class photographs, band uniforms, literary works by Blacks, trophies) were carelessly tossed away. No provisions were made to preserve these treasures. The state public speaking trophy that I won now exists primarily in the memory of my family, children, and Bridgeforth classmates. Aspects of the public record that depicted the texture and substance of my high school career await the erosion of time.

Now That I'm in Charge

Perhaps the major overarching lesson learned from being socially marginalized and deprived of an array of opportunities is the importance of inclusion and social justice. The social reality of inclusion encompasses the full entitlement to rights, roles, assets, and obligations. Inherent in the recognition by others that you are included is a fundamental decision about power. To promote faculty, student, and staff decisions that are equitable and socially just, power must be conceptualized as a collectively generated and shared resource. To this end, I have endeavored to make collaborative program and organizational decisions by using broad-based input and consultation.

Other valuable lessons from my past that have shaped my management style include an understanding of the power of forgiveness. By embracing forgiveness, I have developed the capacity to be as generous toward others for their faults as I am toward mine. This non-judgmental approach is not only freeing; it also establishes the foundation for faculty, student, and staff interactions that are more formative and less evaluative. Significantly, the past has also taught me that the experience of the oppression of segregated schooling is mediocre when compared to the exhilaration produced by the joy of discovering the magic of cognitive transcendence. For example, during my formative years, the presumed

"mark of oppression," whose shelf life was extended by an ever-present white voice, was kept at a safe distance from my family's interpersonal norms by a historical commitment to what Frederick Douglass (as cited in Quarles, 1960) called *intellectual heroism*. Douglass believed that as a people, we had an obligation to discover and then to accept a higher purpose that exceeded a purely self-serving existence.

Adherence to the tradition of intellectual heroism has served me well during my academic career. For example, as a Black faculty member and administrator, I am acutely aware of my relative standing and power in university interpersonal and organizational situations. I am also appreciative of the need to establish often the credibility of my ideas and the validity of data supporting my positions. The unending cycle of proving oneself, disproportionately so, remains as a manifestation of a bygone era of Black exclusion. My past has taught me that when my power is minimal, active opposition is not a viable option. Experience has also taught me that the credibility of my voice is enhanced by anchoring my expressed preferences and positions to moral and ethical principles of fairness and equity. This posture has mitigated against my voice being easily discounted.

Other lessons learned from my past experience include patience and sacrifice as an administrative tool. Taken from my past experience, patience and sacrifice are among the primary tools that I use almost daily in my work at the university. During the pre- and post *Brown v. Board of Education* period, my high school teachers, parents, and church leaders presented patience and sacrifice as desirable virtues that one should strive to develop. During my teen years, these virtues were often cast as desirable future accomplishments because they served as a means of protection in a society where insistence by Blacks that their preferences be acknowledged could prove life threatening.

In my work with students and faculty, patience and sacrifice are used as tools to stimulate dialogue and to signal a willingness to be influenced by ideas that are at variance with my preferences. Patience with the ideas and vested interest of others lets them know that you value and respect their input.

The differences between my segregated high school experience and the texture, pulse, and complexity of my current academic position are immeasurable. Although my past experiences continue to provide periodic insights, progress in the development of personal enlightenment often requires a relinquishment of this attachment. With regards to negative aspects of one's past, the words of Eckhart Tolle (2002) have proven instructive: "Living in the present removes time. Without time, no suffering, no negativity, can survive" (p. 52).

Epilogue

Twenty-nine years ago, in the preface of my dissertation, I wrote the following:

Perhaps more damaging than the great disparity between Black and White educational services were the psychological scars that resulted from this system of education. The terrible feeling that somehow my classmates and I were not good enough, along with the culturally induced notion that we would never become anyone of value to society, often resulted in reduced expectations, lowered self-esteem, and a preoccupation with the unsatisfying details of being second-class. (Oliver, 1974, p. ix)

In conveying my story regarding the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, I have emphasized that due to my exposure to a cadre of educated and committed teachers and the good fortune of being raised by parents who disdained the lack of personal effort, morality, and fairness, I was spared

the deep scarring associated with prolonged oppression. I was not, however, able to avoid a preoccupation with unfairness and unjust acts.

At times during my pre-college years and early phases of my career as an academic, I was often consumed by words and deeds, which I disproportionately defined through a prism of the past. My intense experience with discrimination resulted in my being locked in an ongoing state of emotional and mental alertness. I always responded quickly to actions which I perceived as unfair denials or as losses directly associated with my racial classification. Over time, as the losses mounted, and as perceived race-based unfair decisions that weren't based on performance or merit persisted, I became increasingly angry. Of course, I felt that my anger was justified because, after all, unfairness had to be confronted. I reasoned that if I stopped instances of personal unfairness, it not only modeled positive behavior for other Blacks, it also demonstrated the power of self-reliance.

As the years passed, I won and lost many battles. Similar to a "fire house dog," when the racial injustice bell rang, I rushed forward. My anger increased. In retrospect, I now know that I was slowly moving through the process of grieving losses associated with a past that labeled me as inferior. Kenneth Doka (1989) labeled my type of grieving as *disenfranchised grief*. He described this as grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported.

I can only speculate regarding the number of opportunities that I was unable to seize due to years of obsessing, grieving, and feeling angry about an unfair and confining past. It is plausible to assume that the magnitude of the loss is significant.

My mother was fond of saying, "in darkness there is always light." With the help

of caring teachers, wise students, a loving family, and a confirming and reaffirming community, I eventually discovered a path washed in the light referenced in my mother's saying. My journey along this path began with discovering the power and healing embedded in forgiveness. For example, I have forgiven the army staff sergeant who ordered me to eat in the kitchen of the hotel instead of in the restaurant with my fellow soldiers. He didn't fully appreciate that as a volunteer, the act of making my life available to protect my country, I was as valuable and equal to any of the White soldiers. I have forgiven the police officers who savagely beat my brother to solicit a confession from him regarding a robbery. Upon failing to gain the confession, they committed him to a state mental facility. I'm certain that they believed that these measures were necessary to curtail crime. I have forgiven the priest and ministers who refused to marry my wife and me. They couldn't have known that our love transcended social conventions or sensibilities.

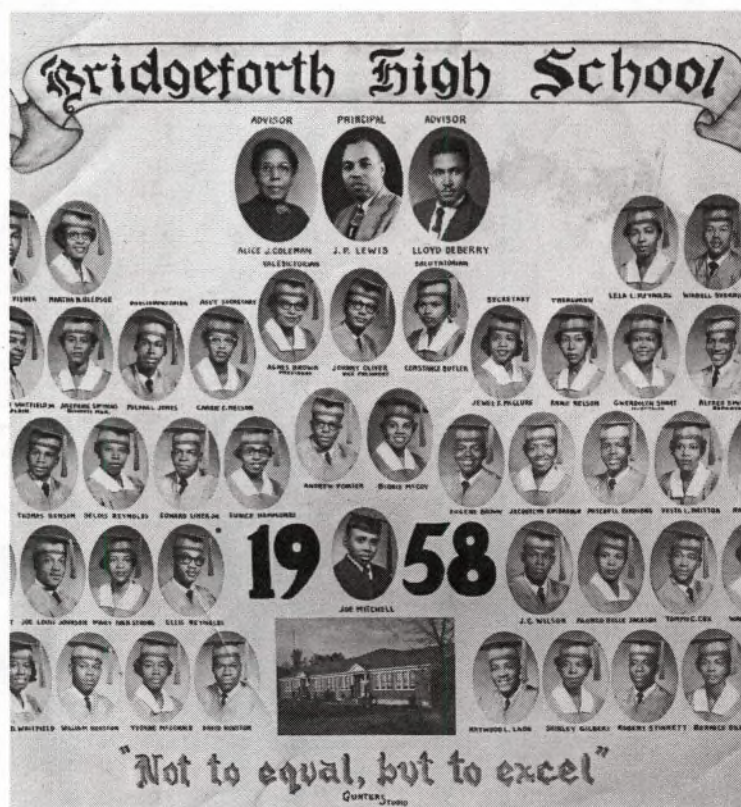
A second critical discovery that assisted me with addressing the disenfranchised grief associated with discriminatory losses was that of continuing education and re-education. For example, I now ascribe to theoretical perspectives and inclusive frames of reference grounded in precepts of equity and justice. This has enabled me to greatly expand how I define my experience and my reaction to them.

In summary, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision helped to transform the American landscape. I am mindful of my debt to Thurgood Marshall and countless other men and women who made it possible for me to receive a quality education.

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The author's senior class picture, 1958. He is pictured as class vice president

CALL FOR NARRATIVES

Special Issue

The Spirituality of Human Service

Guest Editor: Edward Canda

This special issue focuses on the role of spirituality in social work and allied human service professions. **Reflections** seeks narratives that encompass diverse religious and non-religious spiritual perspectives about such topics as:

- Ethical dilemmas encountered when addressing spirituality in professional service and how they are resolved or lived with
- The sense of spiritual calling to service, how it was heard and responded to
- Spiritual bases of practice wisdom
- Ways that helpers connect their personal spiritual life and traditions together with professional helping contexts
- Applications of explicit spiritually based helping activities in professional work
- Connections between spirituality and practice as a social administrator, community activist, or political and social policy advocate
- Spirituality as a source of resilience, strength, and empowerment for both worker and client/consumer within the helping relationship
- Moral imperatives for compassion and justice in human service
- Experience as an innovator who brought spirituality into clinical practice, macro work, or social work education
- Spirituality in relation to the work of the researcher, teacher, and scholar
- Spiritual wellsprings for theoretical and philosophical innovation in human service

Contributions should blend significant personal stories, accounts of professional work, self-reflective insight, lessons learned that may be helpful to others, and connection to relevant background literature.

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Manuscripts are due by: January 30, 2005

A TIME TO BE SILENT AND A TIME TO SPEAK UP

Sandra Edmonds Crewe, Ph.D., Howard University

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

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

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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

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

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

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



The author in high school, 1966/67

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Survivors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thrivers

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

Friends

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

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

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

Supporters

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part II: Integrating Lessons Learned to Social Work Practice

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

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

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

Social Work Advocacy in Public Housing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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MY STRUGGLE TO UNDERSTAND RACISM AND INJUSTICE: HOW I KEPT MY SANITY AS A PIONEER IN MULTICULTURAL PRACTICE, TEACHING, RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

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Editor's Note: Elaine Pinderhughes, Professor Emerita at Boston College, graciously agreed to contribute a narrative to this special issue of Reflections. Her seminal contributions to multicultural clinical practice are well known to generations of social worker practitioners, educators, and students, as well as to professionals in many other disciplines. This narrative intertwines the story of her personal experiences with racism and the story of the development of her social work practice and theory-building in understanding the dynamics of power, difference, race, and ethnicity as they occur in clinical practice, with particular attention to their impact on African American clients. Her pioneering work in multicultural theory, practice, research, and education has made an enduring contribution to the development of culturally competent clinical practice.

We who do battle against racism, discrimination, and injustice are rarely asked to tell our stories, particularly in a context where we can be assured that our voices will be heard. I am, therefore, grateful to be a contributor to this effort at celebrating the struggles of social work to fulfill such a mission.

The primary arena of my efforts has been teaching and publishing. I have sought to disseminate understanding about the systemic operation of difference and power in human functioning and how they operate in our work to maintain racism, discrimination, and injustice. As I have written elsewhere, my attempt to apply conceptualization of these dynamics to multicultural practice and to write about them has become a personal mental health issue (Pinderhughes 1996). This thrust, which began early in my career with efforts to understand African American identity, the dynamics of race, and the enigma of racism, became central in my work as practitioner, educator, consultant, and author. My journey, marked often by bewilderment, frustration, stress, and pain has also brought rewards. As with most, if not all, African Americans, my encounters with racism, discrimination, and injustice have occurred in every area of my life, as social worker, community resident, wife, and parent. But I have always been aware that I was among those who have been somewhat privileged, and that for many others,

the impact of these societal processes was far more devastating.

I am the mother of five children, four of whom are sons, so that there is much to tell about our encounters with racism. However, I shall confine my focus to my professional efforts to cope, particularly to understand and to conceptualize the purpose racism has served in our society, its cost to everyone, and its effect on our work.

The combination of sound clinical training, work in excellent settings, combined with a later move to academia, facilitated my survival. Being able to use theory to conceptualize the confusion, conflict, and stress I had found in practice became a therapeutic act and an unexpected source of liberation. Grounding my rich (though stressful) experiences in theory led me to develop concepts of my own to explain the dynamics in which I had been trapped. This, in turn, led to writing and publishing and a palpable sense of control over the overwhelming sadness, confusion, pain, and sense of powerlessness I had internalized.

A major soapbox issue for me for nearly 30 years has been the critical importance of a focus on *power* in any consideration of diversity or multicultural issues. My growth, in terms of the theories I learned and the concepts I developed, has served as the basis of my tools for coping. This growth has proceeded in five phases:

1. My early work experience in the inner-city sowed the seeds for all that I have done since. This experience taught me the insanity of racism, its entrapment of everyone, and its apparent intractability.

2. My experience in academia where I was required to develop a high level of theory mastery in order to teach human behavior, personality development, family therapy theory, systems functioning, and advanced practice. Three theories, in particular, shaped my thinking: ecological/systems theory of Carol Germaine (1981); the societal projection process of Murray Bowen (1982); and post-modern constructivist theory.

3. My experience developing a diversity training model deepened my understanding of cultural/social identity and connectedness, the emotionality of culture and social functioning. This led to my discovery that experiences of subjugation/victimization and power/privilege are key related dynamics.

4. My experience in 1974 conducting research among the Yoruba in Nigeria examining family and group bonding behavior in an effort to understand residuals of African culture in current African American life.

5. My experience conducting genealogical research and revisioning the history of my own African American family, an effort that constituted a truly transformative experience in my life.

Early Years, Graduate School, and Preparation for Practice

Since I had grown up in a sheltered, middle class, very stable community with excellent, though segregated, schools, the pain of being African American was for the most part distant, but never completely absent. I had learned to read on the headlines of the

local African American newspaper at a time when there was at least one lynching a week. In school, we were taught many facts about our history that could not be found in our textbooks, particularly about the courage of African Americans and their many unacknowledged achievements. Interestingly, the emphasis was less on the injustices (we never uttered the word "racism") and more on preparing us for the future. Thus, the full horror of the plight of African Americans remained unknown to us, as was our teachers' pathetic collusion in covertly perpetuating self-hating attitudes. For example, we learned to sing (unthinkingly, and with much gusto): "Rule, Britannia, Britannia rule the waves! Britons never, never, never will be slaves!" As I matured, I became increasingly concerned about these matters, such that my activism in picketing against segregation during the summer after graduating from college landed me in jail.

In order to get through graduate school, I suppressed my curiosity and growing concern about these issues until it was time to write my thesis. I chose as my thesis topic "The Meaning of Being Negro as Seen Through Parental Handling of Minority Group Status." In this research project, I studied 30 families, 10 so-called "middle-class," and 10 so-called "poor," and 10 so-called "upper-class," according to certain criteria used at the time. After I finished collecting my data, I found myself unable to bring to it the needed organization and meaning. I remember vividly the frustration and helplessness I felt. This topic was clearly ambitious, and beyond the expectations of a student at that time. I later discovered that many African American graduate students were wary of using topics of race and culture for theses and dissertations because they believed it was a sure way to sabotage their degree pursuit, since most advisors and dissertation committee members (usually White) did not understand and could not help. Getting through would inevitably

result in compromising one's convictions and even colluding with the perpetuation of racism.

My advisor, apparently as stuck as I, clearly was unable to give me the guidance I needed. So I left after two years without finishing my thesis, promptly got pregnant, and had a baby. When I finally completed it two years later, with the generous assistance of my husband, I recall an intense sense of dissatisfaction, even shame. It seemed woefully inadequate to the task I had set for myself, and in my disappointment, I promptly misplaced it. My point is that these issues of difference and power have been burning issues with me for a very long time.

The Clinical Years Working in the Inner City

After a number of years spent in child-rearing, I worked for seven years in the child psychiatry clinic of a well known teaching hospital where I acquired a solid formal background. However, we paid little or no attention to diversity. Working primarily with Irish families from the clinic's catchment area and ignorant of cultural influences, we labeled these Irish clients as pathological because "they managed feelings through denial." I remember an encounter with one of the few African American clients with whom I worked that was both perplexing and stressful. Only later did I understand her behavior of "acting dumb" as a survival strategy. Her stupidity and non-response, which we knew to be assumed behavior after she scored high average on an IQ test, was totally baffling. I had never known anyone who used dumbness as a defense to the extreme that she did, and my struggle to reach her and get behind that defense left me with a headache every time I met with her.

Around this time, the Civil Rights Movement was heating up, forcing into my consciousness all the issues I had kept on hold in order to get my training and start my career. I decided that it was now time for me to take

my skills to the inner city and I went to work in a preschool psychiatric clinic that was located there. World-renowned, this agency had trained 75 percent of the pre-school child psychiatrists in the country, was psychoanalytically-based, and was staffed by outstanding, internationally-recognized clinicians, including social workers. There it sat, in the middle of the inner city, limiting its patient load to only a very few people of color and the poor. Community people were routinely referred to the Family Service agency for "supportive treatment" since it was believed that such patients could not benefit from psychoanalytically-based treatment, because they did not have the ego strength for insight therapy. So these talented therapists, who specialized in severe emotional dysfunction and who had done outstanding work on autism, treated very few of the neighboring inner city population. When the decision was made to change this policy and to open the doors to the community, I jumped at the opportunity to be chief social worker, having little idea of the "baptism by fire" that awaited me.

There was fear and anxiety from the moment the decision was made and I, as the first Black professional, arrived. I was stunned to hear a departing psychoanalyst say that the agency would regret this move, because it would not have "intact families to train the psychiatric fellows with." As more and more African American staff joined the agency, questions were raised in terms of what constituted appropriate treatment with these families. A new day care center for "normal" children was set up to help delineate "normal" behavior for this population. It was, indeed, a beginning move toward cultural understanding. The questioning continued as even more minorities joined both the educational and therapy staffs. Tension grew in terms of how these families were being assessed, what was considered normal, and what techniques worked best. For example,

questions were raised when so many clients were diagnosed as anti-social or character-disordered rather than neurotic, when anger was automatically seen as a sign of pathology, or when an African American mother was labeled as rejecting because she wasn't planning ahead for her child's departure from his residential treatment center. Many of the newer staff believed that the problems of African American families were being compounded by the pathologizing assessments and treatment strategies being used on them.

Black practitioners, and some Whites too, raised again and again issues concerning: (a) the relationship between the behaviors being labeled as pathological and people's systemic realities; (b) the lack of understanding about how Black people viewed dependency, which frequently was seen by practitioners as a sign of dysfunction and developmental problems; and (c) the eagerness of practitioners to encourage regression in treatment. This treatment approach was based on psychoanalytic theory, which held that problems due to arrest in a given developmental stage could be addressed through treatment that allowed the child to regress back to that stage and receive "corrective nurturing."

One day, an African-American mother looked through the one way mirror and, seeing her four year-old child who was in treatment being cuddled and rocked by his very young therapist who was White, became frightened and screamed, "I didn't send my kid here to learn to be a baby, I want him to learn to use a knife and fork."

In demanding that this regressive treatment stop, she was confirming what some of us suspected - that focusing on dependency and forcing regression can be terrifying for people to whom survival, being strong, and being able to cope with awesome realities are major issues. More appropriate, we were beginning to think, would have been

immediate enhancement of strengths for both the child and family, perhaps addressing dependency later. There were lots of battles about how to view what we called passivity, aggression, and manipulation that we saw so many of the clients using. Were these signs of pathology or were they behaviors adopted to deal with painful realities? It was in the attempt to answer these questions that I first placed notions of adaptive behavior in a context that later became known as systemic process but was then merely identified as the environment (Pinderhughes 1972).

I came to see manipulation, for example, which was one of the most frequently found behaviors amongst this mostly poor population who had so few resources, not necessarily as a pathological response but as an attempt to cope with a sense of powerlessness and to gain a sense of power. Such a perspective met with immense criticism. I will never forget the group of psychiatric residents to whom I was serving as consultant, whose disrespect for these ideas was flagrant because they were not anchored in psychoanalytic theory. I felt that it was a good thing I knew this theory, because I wasn't as frightened as I might have been or put off by these confident young people's rejecting responses. But as we began to formulate some of these ideas about what constituted adaptive behavior and what was pathological, and to discuss these in our meetings, some of the Whites began to be more defensive, refusing to share their work because their assessments of Black behavior were being questioned and they felt criticized. The more that they refused to share their work, the more others were sure that they were doing harmful things to clients.

Among the stressful incidents that occurred was one involving a very talented young White student whose work I have cited often. She was working with a latency age Black boy who became anxious in the treatment session and ran out of the room.

On the stairway, a Black teacher from the day care center grabbed the child and said: "You shouldn't pay any attention to that White woman, you are an African prince." This, of course, catalyzed the agency. How dare she interfere with the bond between patient and therapist that had been so carefully nurtured? The inappropriateness of this teacher's behavior and the suspicion of some that she was encouraging out of control behavior were contending perspectives on the incident, creating a patent polarization around the issue. Many of the African American staff, and others too, believed that treatment for these children should center on emotional control and structured sessions rather than permissiveness.

At another time, a White social worker asked one of the Black day care instructors out on the playground to help her handle a child who was getting out of control. The child, apparently aware that the social worker couldn't handle him, promptly kicked her, making for additional polarization around the issue of the effectiveness, and even dangerousness, of some White therapists. There was also questioning concerning the number of young female trainees who, seductively dressed in short skirts and wearing long flowing hair, were therapists for latency-age Black boys. Questions were raised about the kind of seductive messages being given to these children.

At times, attempts to dialogue, while painful, appeared to lessen the polarization. It was in observing people's behaviors in those meetings that I first began to formulate ideas about how people behave when they are oppressed and under stress and how they behave when they have privilege and are under stress. Here are some quotes from those stressful times:

When it was decided that sharing experiences related to race might be helpful, one social worker reacted: "I'm not going to

talk about what it means to be White because I feel bad about too many things."

Another said: "Well, look, it won't work if you make us angry and frustrated; we won't hear and understand what you say."

A Black educator commented: "We have felt such pain all along. Why can't Whites feel some pain too? We *have* almost gone crazy"

Another White said: "I am angry at the thought that I'm incompetent because I'm White. I want to know what it is I need to know to be a therapist for Black children."

A Black said: "Well, that's what it's all about; we have to go through this, dealing with these feelings and questioning what we know, if we are going to be able to figure that out."

To which a White psychiatrist responded: "The worst part is my analyst is no damn help!"

Attempting to understand these behaviors led to some of my early conceptualization around the dynamics involved in having and not having power. Demonstrated over and over was the difficulty that Whites had with the shift of power from sole experts and persons in authority to learners about cultural dynamics they did not understand. To soften the polarization and the tension, which was now extreme, engulfing everyone in severe discomfort, we again made a plan to share among ourselves our personal perspectives and experiences concerning race. After several Blacks had spoken, a White psychiatrist, who was a very warm and caring, person began to speak. Breaking off his initial statement about himself, he launched into a review of a journal article he had just read concerning the stages that Black people go through in clarifying their identity. (I later learned that this article was the early work of William Cross.) Becoming anxious about the vulnerability now being demanded of him in the process and about the pressure to participate as a group member and peer, he resorted to his role as White expert and

teacher. This angered many people. Here are some responses to his behavior:

A Black community worker responded (in tears): "I'm disappointed in all of you mental health experts. Dr. O. showed a lack of respect for us. He didn't have to theorize and intellectualize, all he needed to do was to listen to us right here in this room and share his experiences, but Whites can't do that."

Later Dr. O. came to my office and he said: "I made a terrible mistake; it all came out wrong, this polarization is no good; it only alienates people. I'm a fool to stay here and feel hurt this way. I ought to go out to a suburb and work. But there is no hope of solving it if I and all Whites run, but if I stay here, there is the pain and the fighting with neighbors and friends about all this."

When I commented: "This is what we have had to put up with all our lives," he said (and I'll never forget this): "But you're stronger and you can take it. I thought I could too, but I can't." I never forgot that lesson, that behind all of the polarization between people, there always is a great deal of pain.

The behavior of some Blacks concerning the resistance of Whites to the demands for change was another issue that presented problems. Some of their responses also were unhelpful, as seen in the example of the day care teacher who grabbed the child. I sometimes felt, as I have stated elsewhere, trapped between "White racism and Black craziness" which I jokingly labeled "heart attack time." I personally struggled with being a target of anger and distrust, not only from Whites who felt they had brought me there and that my actions in questioning traditional concepts were a betrayal, but from some Blacks who felt that, in not pushing for more rapid change, I was colluding with those who wanted to maintain the status quo and exploit Black people.

I began to realize by now that I was struggling with powerlessness on a variety of levels. There was the powerlessness that was

so pervasive in the realities of the clients that involved poverty, school failure, severe disabling illnesses, histories of poor medical care, multiple losses due to illnesses, death by lynching and murder, and few to no resources. I recall the day I was reduced to tears by the story of a father whose mental illness and physical problems were all intricately connected with racism despite his heroic struggle.

There also was the powerlessness embedded in the organizational processes now occurring in the agency, which were marked by demoralization and polarization. In addition, there was my personal sense of powerlessness as a supervisor whose questioning of traditional ideas and treatment strategies placed me in conflict with much of what I had been taught, and with many of my colleagues; and all of that created a sense of powerlessness for me as an administrator—the chief social worker whose responsibility it was to manage a department composed of professionals, strongly and equally committed to both sides. When I began to react to the stress with physical symptoms, my husband suggested that I record my experiences as a way of coping.

Among the things that impressed me deeply, as I began to see patterns, was the disorganization that can happen to a power group, in this instance to Whites, when there is a threat to what they believe and to what has sustained them in terms of their status and position. I noticed the escalation of conflict among them as they took opposing positions and began to fight amongst themselves. At the same time, the increasing unity developing among the Blacks brought them a sense of confidence. However, the most valuable lesson I learned concerned the way that confusion and misunderstanding could be reduced and crisis avoided when people under stress are able to feel safe enough to be vulnerable with one another, to share personal experiences, and to consider how these

experiences may have shaped their perspectives on the situation.

For example, on one such occasion where staff were tense and Whites were silent amidst complaints about the inappropriateness of agency policy, programming, and treatment strategies, a social worker who was White, spoke up and said: "I'm scared. I feel I'm being driven away and I know that I'm valuable. I am a White who is saying teach me, show me." Her value, I learned in that instance, was not only in her expertise but in her willingness to listen, become a learner and, thus, to adapt to a shift in power. It was unmistakable since, at that moment, a Black responded: "We need people like you. We want you to stay; we don't want to drive you away."

There was agreement that what was needed were practitioners strong enough to deal with the complexities involved in the struggle to understand and able to tolerate the pain endemic to the realities of African Americans' lives. Practitioners cannot create the empathic closeness needed for clinical effectiveness if these awesome realities frighten them, pushing them to distance or to run away.

When a Black administrator arrived, I learned more about the kinds of behaviors people use when they have been trapped in racism, and how these behaviors are not easily altered even when the context changes. Despite the change in leadership and the pursuit of goals for which they had struggled, a few Black staff were so rigidly locked into the reactive behaviors they had developed as responses to racism they continued their opposition, manipulation, and passive aggressive behaviors, blocking his attempts to secure their cooperation and collaboration.

Despite all this turmoil, the agency devised programs that became more effective, and those Whites who (a) were able to question the appropriateness of traditional thinking about the effect of racism upon our client

population, and how to intervene effectively with our client population; and (b) did not feel threatened by the need for new understanding and new strategies, stayed. We now had services that empowered clients, although we didn't use that word and many of the strategies we used were innovative at the time (Pinderhughes, 1972). I remember supervising a worker who, because her client, a single working mom, had difficulty getting to the agency, decided to go to the client's workplace to hold their sessions during the client's lunch hour. We discussed what it felt like to wait for the client to appear in the reception area, examining this role reversal and its relationship to the later positive outcome.

Another example of power role reversal illustrating the success of practitioner vulnerability, when appropriately timed, is one I have used so many times in teaching:

Mrs. H., a Black middle-aged client, was judged by her first therapist, a White social work student, as too resistant to engage in treatment. Her second therapist, also a White social work student, engaged her rapidly in discussing her concerns about her grandson. However, it was not until several months later that a real change occurred in the relationship. The worker received a sewing machine for Christmas. She noted that Mrs. H., despite the poverty and other reality problems around her, had developed a talent in handwork, and asked if Mrs. H. would teach her to sew. After several lessons and shopping for material, Mrs. H. felt safe enough to reveal herself to the worker. What she had guarded carefully was a fear of falling apart, of disappearing, or going crazy. After several months of work, some modest treatment goals, thought to be impossible by the first worker, were realized.

My thinking about this case evolved into my early ideas about the significance of vulnerability in human behavior and in practitioner stance, the dynamics of power sharing (when appropriate), and strategies for turning powerlessness into power. Applying these ideas to our clients led to deepened understanding of the victim and the survival responses African Americans had developed and they pointed the way to the need for treatment strategies based on such understanding. My earliest papers (still unpublished) presented some of these ideas at conferences, hospital grand rounds, and clinical meetings (Pinderhughes 1972, 1978a).

Our struggles with racism occurred outside as well as inside the agency. We were startled to learn that similar clinics in suburban and other non-inner city locations were being reimbursed by the Rate Setting Commission for services at a much higher rate than we were. We could not understand the logic of this disparity since the work with our inner city population required more service hours in terms of additional clinic visits, home visits, school visits, and developing community supports, while many of these other clinics were able to operate using the traditional 50 minute hour for clients. This condition of inadequate funding kept the clinic in a state of financial stress and under constant threat of cutbacks.

Around this time, I began to get requests to consult with agencies that were having similar problems with staff suffering deteriorating relationships, alienation, and burnout due to conflict about programming strategies for this population. At one child treatment agency, a case was presented of a Black mother with three daughters, each of whom had a social worker. Two of the social workers were Black and two were White and, at that moment in time, there was war on the team. For example, one of the White

social workers was criticized by a Black team member for allowing her young client to stroke her hair during a treatment session. This was seen by the Black social workers as encouraging the child to see Black hair as unattractive. On another occasion, a party was held at the end of the treatment year with music and dancing. When another of the little girls tried to get her White social worker to dance with her and was refused, the Black social workers again conveyed their displeasure and perception that the White workers were insensitive, after which the White workers refused to share their work in team meetings. When, during the consultation, they were able to discuss some of their own personal experiences related to race, there was some reduction in the distrust.

Research in Nigeria

In 1975, just prior to my shift to academia, I joined a team of African American and Nigerian psychiatrists and sociologists conducting research on bonding patterns among the Yoruba and other groups in Western Nigeria. It was hoped that findings would: (a) elucidate some of the complexities involved in identity issues and in the adaptations of African Americans; and (b) provide guidance regarding "the grouping and federating behavior needed by Black Americans as they seek to recover from the handicap which slavery and oppression have imposed on their ability to form groups for the exercise of power" (Pinderhughes 1978b, p.212). Western Nigeria was chosen as the research site because it was the locale from which a large number of slaves was taken. It was assumed that in traditional non-Western influenced communities, grouping behavior would be similar to that to have been found before the advent of slavery.

We found a culture that emphasized a predominantly affiliative orientation through values, symbols, and rituals that supported joining, connectedness, inclusion, loyalty to

the group, and expected accommodation of individual interests to the group. This contrasted sharply with our American individualistic, competitive orientation. There was a high degree of organization and stability found in the kinship, family and clan structures; in rituals and ritualistic markers for all life events—birth, education and socialization of the young, marriage, and death; in the orderly decision-making procedures; whether by decree or consensus; in the values of obedience to authority and respect for traditional rulers which promoted strong and effective family and clan (community) functioning (Pinderhughes, 1978b).

The loss to African Americans of such cultural order and stability because of slavery and the racism that has prevailed in this country has been enormous and its profundity has yet to be understood. For example, the difference in identity clarity between our research participants and African Americans was immense. Whereas persons there knew their lineage from as far back as 30 generations, Blacks in this country have no knowledge of the location, clan, family, and language of their African lineage and limited knowledge of previous generations here. Slaves were stripped of their stable and solidly rooted identity, families were torn apart due to slave sales, and individuals forced to become “Mr. Henry’s Boy” or “Miss Sophie’s Gal.” Whereas all children in Africa had a legal father and every mother had a legal husband through polygamy, in this country single parent families, “fatherless” children, out-of-home children, and children in foster care have become numerous among African Americans. These are all patterns that were not found in the traditional communities in 1976 but which developed out of the African American experience in the United States. Many such contrasts could be observed concerning the two groups. This emerging recognition of what African Americans have lost now stoked the fires of my determination to understand the

damage of racism and the purpose it has served in this country.

Teaching and Consultation

At the time I moved into academia, I was also receiving more requests for consultation. As in the examples above, I focused on setting up relatively safe situations in which people could discuss their differing perceptions of African American clients and how to work appropriately with them. On one occasion, as participants were examining their experiences concerning race, tension began to build concerning which cultural group’s experiences had been the most painful. To help manage the palpable discomfort and forward the use of some logic about these emotionally-loaded and conflicting perceptions, we constructed a chart with lists of the feelings and behaviors related to the experience of being White and Black. The lists grew as Whites spoke of feeling competent, lucky, comfortable, entitled and superior, but also guilty, confused, and afraid. Blacks identified feeling frustrated, angry, trapped, and at times hopeless, but proud of their ability to cope. This conceptualization did not solve the distress of some Black and Jewish participants who strongly objected to the chart as it was constructed. One participant exclaimed, “I’m White and I belong on both those lists.”

In the long and heated discussion that followed, some Whites insisted they often experienced the feelings and behaviors we had identified as Black while some Blacks suggested that many of their feelings and behaviors more approximated those we had labeled White. Eventually, it became clear that everyone had experiences that placed them on both sides of the chart. This all made sense when we changed the headings of the chart from “*White*” and “*Black*” to “*Having Power*” and “*Lacking Power*.” Everyone felt satisfied.

This shift highlighted the complexities involved in how power operates. It was soon becoming clear how power and powerlessness were significant not only in terms of racial dynamics, but in any situation where a power differential exists such as in roles and behavior related to ethnic group status, class status, sexual identity, and sexual orientation. Therefore, in what was clearly emerging as a model for diversity training, the focus expanded to include experiences related to class identity, sexual identity, or other experiences related to identity and connectedness where power had been significant. The constellation of feelings and perceptions that people identified in relation to these experiences became known as one's "*power gestalt*."

Finally, modifications were made to start the exploration with a focus on early and significant experiences with differences, since this expanded understanding that: (a) differences of any kind are emotionally laden and usually negative; (b) our automatic responses to differences have roots in the earliest developmental experience; and (c) these responses to difference can become automatically triggered in our interaction with culturally and socially different others (C. Pinderhughes, 1979; E. Pinderhughes, 1984, 1989).

I was now getting requests to teach part-time courses on work with African American families. Although my teaching was well received by students and some faculty, I was turned down for at least one full time academic position because of fears that I was too radical. However, I persisted in my effort to join academia because of my conviction that the perspectives on the dynamics of racism and work with African American families which I had gained through my unique experiences needed to be taught and written about. It was my good fortune to arrive at Boston College where the leadership encouraged rather than disparaged my ideas. Of course, despite such

leadership, I encountered racism. My first student advisee was clearly upset to have been assigned to me, and one well-meaning colleague doubted my ability to write. However, it was gratifying that, despite ongoing mini-manifestations of racism, my reputation grew as an instructor who understood theory, and who also challenged it.

The deepened understanding I had to achieve in order to teach human behavior and practice theories gave me an excellent background for refining my ideas about culture, difference, and power, and their relationship to racism, discrimination and injustice. Teaching a course on racism and oppression greatly expanded my understanding of the commonalities involved in the experiences of people of color. Like most other people, I was astounded, despite my discoveries during our research sojourn in Nigeria, and outraged to learn about the details of slavery and the making of a slave; the near extermination of Native Americans; our treatment of Mexicans who had lived in this country long before it was "discovered"; and our treatment of other people of color around the world.

Functioning effectively as an instructor with this material was a challenge, since it meant managing my own personal reactions while keeping one step ahead of the disbelieving, outraged, guilty, and sometimes angry students. Knowledge gained at the inner-city child guidance clinic and my now growing consultation experience helped keep before me the necessity of creating a safe-enough environment for students to engage in some useful, substantive discussion of their differing perceptions and experiences. Of course, I sometimes failed but I became unalterably convinced that while conflict can interfere with learning, it also can become an effective tool for growth when people feel safe enough to speak honestly and are required to do so with respect.

As the number of consultations increased, my approach was becoming more and more experiential. As the interactive complexities arising from dialogue became more clear, I could see that the primarily conceptual approach of the classroom gave students an incomplete understanding, particularly of their own biases and erroneous perspectives about people who are different. It was this realization that drove my determination to refine the conceptualization of the dynamics of difference and power and apply it to intervention with particular emphasis on practitioner self-awareness and bias.

Genealogical Research and Revisioning My Own Family

The final significant growth experience (so far) in my effort to understand racism, discrimination and injustice was my genealogical research. Research on my own family of origin offered new insights into the pervasiveness and the systemic nature of racism's effects.

The first clues came in the background reading I did on slavery in Louisiana—the locale of my family into the early 1900s. (I was actually able to trace one branch of my family back through slave sales to 1792.) The numerous publications picturing the grandeur of the lifestyles of the slave-owning families on the plantations bordering the Mississippi outside of New Orleans described in great detail the elegance and opulence of those times where slave owners sought to replicate the life of European royalty. The sadness and nostalgia concerning the loss of such a way of life was palpable in every publication. This sense of mourning for such lost riches contrasted sharply with the total inattention to the price paid by the slaves whose unpaid labor and exploitation made possible such largesse. There was no mention of the pain, poverty, humiliation and debilitating effects that persist for some to this day.

In studying slave documents, I found that the names of the fathers of slave children were omitted in birth records. Because only the name of the mother and the owner of the mother were recorded, my findings were limited to female ancestors. Elsewhere, I have concluded that this practice is reflective of the long-standing tendency in this country to nullify and neglect maleness in African-African families. For all intents and purposes, the African-American male was a zero: he did not exist (Pinderhughes, 1998).

Within my own family, evidence of the effects of racism were found not only in the nullification of the male but in the near total ignorance of family lineage and in the many gaps in knowledge about family realities; in the poverty suffered by family members; in the multi-generational sexual exploitation of females by slave masters and White employers that reached into my mother's generation. I have described the shame, pain, humiliation, and secrecy attendant to these conditions that led to such dysfunctional behaviors as fragmented family connections, emotional cutoffs, rigidity and fusion in functioning, identity confusion, and depressive tendencies that engulfed my generation. I was also able to observe and describe the transformative benefit to family members of undoing some of these dysfunctional consequences of racism, and replacing shame, pain, ignorance, and confusion with knowledge, pride, and understanding (Pinderhughes 1982, 1998).

I reflect, with some sadness, that my 1982 paper describing my genealogical research and its effects upon the family was rejected by the journal *Family Process*, with an explanation that it was unsuitable (meaning not theoretical enough). However, six months later the journal published a very similar article by Sigmund Freud's granddaughter about the Freud family. A colleague, Connie Lemon, who had seen the Freud article, which I had not, became outraged at "the blatant racism"

and promptly sent my article to the *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, which subsequently published it (Pinderhughes, 1982). When I sent to each member of the Editorial Board at *Family Process* a copy of my published article along with a letter accusing them of racism, I received a letter of apology, along with a comment that my published article was essentially the same one that had been reviewed by their Board. Ironically, many years later, I myself would serve on the Advisory Board of that very journal.

Conclusion

This story of my personal encounters with racism and the lessons I have learned has been told primarily in terms of my efforts through teaching and publishing to make sense of the complexities, intractability and destructiveness of racism. As I write this conclusion, I realize that I have centered my story on how I have coped and survived the struggle to make sense of racism's insanity. Only now am I aware of the strength of my compulsion to focus on the coping rather than on the victimization. There have been other encounters, particularly in relation to my family, where personal victimization was more costly. For example, there were the barriers my husband faced in securing an office in locations where his White colleagues practiced; barriers that our family faced in buying a home in a location of our choice; and the thousand-and-one other ways our family, especially our children, were affected by racism. However, my deepest pain occurs in relation to the effect of the stress upon my husband's health.

I believe that our profession, having been in the vanguard of the battle, has made great strides in its struggle against racism. However, the prejudice that underlies our system of racism, discrimination, and injustice constitutes a most formidable barrier because it is part of the human condition. For this

reason, I have dedicated much of my publishing effort to explaining the universality of our negative response to difference and its connection to the erection of power structures and the exercise of power. To teach people to manage prejudice and their personal power needs toward the attainment of a just society requires resources and commitment, including education, in gargantuan proportions. For racism's strangle hold on our lives is so tenacious because of the psychological benefit that it confers to Whites. This benefit of White privilege, along with ignorance of the truth about the tragic cost of racism (both to Whites and to people of color), continues to fuel an absence of national will to change it. While there are now, and always have been, efforts to challenge racism, these initiatives have never been strong enough. Effective challenges are soon jeopardized by backlash endeavors so that they conveniently disappear in the face of economic crises, war, or other social system emergencies.

The lessons I have learned are many and powerful. I have used them to make sense of my own personal entrapment in the powerlessness that stems from the racism, discrimination, and injustice embedded in our society and, I hope, to help others understand their entrapment. For me, these efforts to understand have moderated the sense of powerlessness and of abiding sadness about my people, providing guidance in the struggle to live, teach, and practice in such a context.

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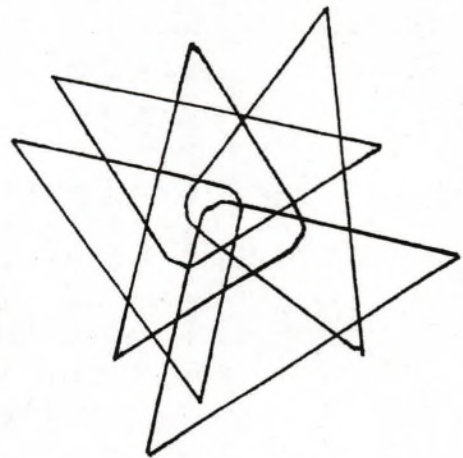
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MENDEZ V. WESTMINSTER: THE LATINO BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

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A piece of forgotten history reveals that many of the issues and parties to Brown v. Board of Education of 1954 were instrumental in the desegregation of California schools in 1947. The class action discrimination suit brought by the Mendez family produced a rippling effect felt all the way to the United States Supreme Court. With the help of a television producer who produced a documentary on the Mendez case for public television, the author tells the story of the discovery of a missing piece of history.

I was excited to hear of the celebratory issue to be published by *Reflections* that would focus on the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This landmark decision has long been a fixture in my comprehension of the evolution of equal rights in our country. As a social policy instructor, I teach students about the history and impact of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* on ensuring an element of advancement of oppressed groups. As a social activist, I base many of my community change activities on the premise institutionalized by *Brown v. Board of Education*—that racial inequality in separate but equal facilities is unacceptable. I stand in awe of the actions of African Americans, people of color and people of conscience who contributed to this landmark desegregation event.

To most social and legal historians, and as I believed it, *Brown v. Board of Education* was essentially a “Black and White” issue, as was much of the ensuing litigation related to school desegregation (Contreras & Valverde, 1994; Franklin, Gordon, Schwartz-Seller & Fass, 1991). It had always been framed as a “...battle that was fought and won solely in the American South” (Robbie, 2002a, p.1). While later legislation in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 expanded equal rights to other oppressed populations on the basis of color, religion, sex and national origin, the initial impetus for this movement has always been the “Black and White” *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Those of us who are not Black, but who are Mexicans (or the current designation of

“Hispanic [not White]”), may have felt a little bit like late-comers to the civil rights movement, and have sometimes been viewed as just another of the many immigrant and minority groups who have ridden the coattails of African American efforts and sacrifices in our country. To be sure, sacrifices have been made by African Americans, and there is a rightful pride and legacy that every African American child can learn about and carry into the adult world. They can enjoy a sense of empowerment that African Americans struggled for and made lasting changes in how we go about the business of ensuring social justice in our country. African American children can marvel at the wonderful and historic role models that played a part in creating, literally, revolutionary changes in our social structures.

But I have always been dismayed by the general absence of any discussion of the experiences of other diverse groups who have also suffered the experiences of exclusion. Issues of not only racial discrimination, but also language discrimination and discrimination due to national origin would certainly have been the experience of many diverse groups prior to 1954 in California. In the California of the 1950s where I was raised, my neighbors were Latino and Chinese and Filipino immigrants and numerous other non-English-speaking émigrés. As a social scientist, I know of the power of inaccuracies of social constructions of history particularly given the power of the majority to carve their own forms of history. Despite the sanitized, prevailing curriculum of that era, I had learned

early on that California had historically (and legally, since 1855) barred Black, Asian and Indian children from attending White schools (NPS, 2003). With the tremendous influx of Mexicans following the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the importation of Mexican laborers during World War I, and the growing need for farm laborers in California's citrus belts beginning in the 1920s, the Mexican American population grew to be an identifiable ethnic minority group whose presence in "American" schools was unacceptable. Segregated classrooms and then segregated schools grew in favor and in numbers in California communities. By 1919, the first "Mexican school" was built in Orange County, California. Throughout the southwestern United States, 80-90% of Mexican school children attended segregated schools mirroring Orange County, which, by 1930, had 15 "Mexicans-only" schools (Robbie, 2002b). These were separate and unequal schools housed in substandard settings and with inferior facilities. At that time, Mexicans were also confined to segregated seating in movie theaters, Mexicans-Only-Mondays at the community swimming pools (after which the pools would be emptied and cleaned for White patrons), and other forms of discrimination (Robbie, 2002b). These practices enjoyed the full support of the 1896 Supreme Court decision (*Plessy v. Ferguson*), which affirmed that states could provide "separate but equal" facilities, particularly with regard to education.

I knew of these injustices against Mexicans, Indians and Chinese Americans, particularly because I was raised amidst the diversity of San Francisco. But the social studies classes I took never really mentioned any organized opposition to this treatment. Having undergone kindergarten through college education in California schools, I, for one, had never been taught about any early efforts by Mexicans or Latinos to combat discrimination. I was left to wonder what was wrong with my ancestors, that they would tolerate the status quo until *Brown v. Board of Education* paved the way for major changes

for all minorities. Could a lack of a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy given an oppressed, minority status and, perhaps for many, a lack of language skills help to explain the dearth of efforts by other minority groups to combat these injustices to our children? I believed, as many believed, that our own experiences as Brown Berets, members of *Venceremos* (the Latino "We Shall Overcome") and as Latino social activists of the late 1960s and 1970s meant that our generation *alone* invented social activism and we *alone* rallied against the injustices of the status quo in fighting for equal protections for Latino communities. Missing was the cognizance that we were but one piece in a tradition of activism of previous generations.

Para Todos Los Ninos

These were the misconceptions resounding in my mind when, serendipitously, I happened to view a brief film on the local PBS station, KOCE. It was the documentary "*Mendez v. Westminster: For All the Children, Para Todos los Ninos*" (Robbie, 2002b). I could hardly believe what I was hearing and seeing. It was an unnerving challenge to everything I believed about the progression of events leading up to *Brown v. Board of Education*. It forced me to reconstruct completely my beliefs about the place of Mexicans and Latinos in the history of civil rights struggles in our country, and to this day, it still shakes me. I am angered that my generation was denied this piece of our history.

Essentially, the film tells the little known story of the desegregation case of *Mendez et al., versus the Westminster, Orange County, California School District*. This story begins during World War II with the internment of the Japanese American Munemitsu family of Westminster, Orange County. In 1944, Gonzalo Mendez and his family made arrangements to lease and manage the farm while the Munemitsus were forcibly relocated and interned at a camp in Poston, Arizona for the duration of the war. The three Mendez children were taken to the

local school in Westminster to enroll along with their cousins, who happened to be one-quarter French. Their cousins, who had light skin and eyes, were accepted; but the Mendez children, who had dark skin and a Mexican last name, were denied admission to the school and were told to attend the Mexicans-Only school located a greater distance away from their home and farm. For several years, the Mendezes and other Mexican families filed a series of complaints and attempted to seek resolution from the school district which would not move from its position that they had the authority to maintain White-only schools.

Because the Munemitsu/Mendez asparagus farm prospered under the demand for fresh produce to supply the war effort, Mr. Mendez had the means to hire an attorney, David Marcus of Los Angeles, who had made some advances in fighting other discrimination cases and who, ultimately, successfully brought the case to the California Federal District Court. He successfully argued that California's school admission policies violated both the Fifth Amendment which assures that no person can be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law, and the Fourteenth Amendment which provides that no State can deny to any person the equal protection of the laws. The case was a rallying point for many individuals and organizations interested in ending segregation. Amicus briefs in support of the Mendez complaint were filed by the ACLU, the NAACP, the American Jewish Congress, the Japanese American Citizens League, and the National Lawyer's Guild. The 1946 decision in favor of Mendez was written by federal district court Judge Paul J. McCormick who stated, "A paramount requisite in the American system of education is social equality" (Robbie, 2002b). Much of the wording surrounding this decision contended that "separate" was not "equal."

An integral player in California during the Mendez litigation was none other than Governor Earl Warren. He was to sign subsequent legislation in 1947 in support of the Mendez

finding prohibiting segregation in California, stating that, particularly in the educational arena, the doctrine of "separate but equal" could not be justified (Robbie, 2002b). This legislation also repealed existing laws allowing segregation of Asian and Native American students in separate schools. Seven years later, Warren would preside over and write the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision as the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. An equally important role in the Mendez case was played by then-prosecuting attorney Thurgood Marshall, who filed the supporting NAACP briefs. He would later go on to present the same arguments on behalf of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and would eventually become the first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

Throughout 1947, *Mendez v. Westminster* served to provide legal precedent for many similar class action suits throughout the state of Texas and other areas of the Spanish-speaking southwestern U.S. (Contreras & Valverde, 1994; San Miguel, 1983). The NAACP, led by Thurgood Marshall, succeeded in making incremental advances towards desegregation on behalf of African Americans in South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware (Adams, 2001). These numerous, individual state decisions provided a momentum for the ultimate challenge to discriminatory educational policies—*Brown v. Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas. But the "dry run," so to speak, would appear to have been *Mendez v. Westminster*—a California connection for all that would come to pass later at the highest level in Washington.

Conversation with the Producer, Sandra Robbie

To be able to feel a greater kinship with all these distant struggles has been a revelation. As a college professor who may teach the same courses semester after semester, year after year, it is important to me to remember why I became a teacher. I am a teacher, not only to impart information and a love of learning in students; but also because of my love of learning and my

love of personal growth in encountering new paradigms and new perspectives. It had been some time since I felt that excitement of discovery, that sense of being "bowled over" by such a departure from my view of the world. I was fascinated to learn more about how and why, 55 years after the fact, I was just now hearing about the Mendez case. I was delighted to learn that the film was produced in my own backyard, at an Orange County PBS affiliate television station. I made a point of meeting the energetic and exuberant woman who served as writer, chief researcher, and producer of the film. I was intrigued to learn of her inspiration and her experiences in the re-education of so many viewers to a new historical perspective.

Sandra Mendiola Robbie is of third generation Mexican American descent, originally from Arizona. Her family moved from Tucson, Arizona to Westminster, California when she was one year-old. In fact, her parents' home in Westminster was built on land that was once the Munemitsu/Mendez farm. Currently, she is an editor and reporter for a variety of public television projects and hosts a bi-lingual series directed at parenting skills. She graciously offered me her insights to the process of uncovering lost histories and to the importance of the Mendez legacy for Latinos nation-wide. I first asked her to recount her discovery of the Mendez case and its far-reaching impact:

***Robbie:** I remember I was sitting at my mom's kitchen table when I read about a school that was being built in honor of the Mendez family who fought segregation and won this case. And it was one of those moments—a paradigm shift. It was one of those moments when I literally felt the walls turning around me. I remember looking around me and wondering, somebody read this paper before me and why is everyone acting the same? I'm reading the paper and I was floored to find out that segregation had existed right here in California where I grew up and that a historic landmark case*

happened that changed schooling for every child in California—and that I didn't know anything about it. There was a flood of emotions that happened for me. First, there was shame in having been part of a group that had been segregated; and then guilt for not having known about this history. And eventually it exploded into feelings of pride and excitement that people like me had fought to make this change. And that this was a history that needed to be known by others. All of these emotions tangled all together in one morning. It was an amazing time for me. I just knew this was a history that was very important to me and from that point, it changed the way I not only looked at the world ahead of me—my future, but also it changed the world I had lived in.

Because of her experience and relationship in working with the public television station, Ms. Robbie had an opportunity to suggest the production of a documentary on the Mendez case. I was amazed to hear of the many necessary events that seemed quickly to fall into place as she describes the people and connections which came about in building support and momentum for the film:

***Robbie:** I told them I have a story which, if KOCE doesn't tell it, it would be the biggest shame, because it is huge. This is huge. And so I told them about Mendez and nobody here had known that segregation happened here. I had enough of a relationship and experience with them that they trusted me, even though I had never done a documentary before. So they said they wanted me to do it. I started making phone calls and I had spoken to Silvia Mendez (Gonzalo Mendez' daughter) before on several different community projects, because I had always been interested in civil rights. Silvia is listed in the phone book. You could look her up. And that's something I tell students when I go speak to schools. Many of the people that*

you read about in newspapers, that seem so far distanced from you, very often you can call them up and talk to them that very day. It's an amazing thing, and sometimes I even assign students to do that. Find somebody in the newspaper that you are interested in and call them. You can talk to them; they are real people.

So I called Silvia and I told her I was interested in the project and I asked her if they had ever had a documentary done on their family before. They had had a couple of interviews and brief segments on different shows, but nothing that really told the family story. They were very interested and right away wanted to participate. In doing a little more research, I met another gentleman named Christopher Arriola who is an attorney and a graduate of El Modena High School (one of the original test schools which contributed to the Mendez case) and he was also emphatic about this history and was ecstatic that someone was going to do something about it. He had also done a bit of research. He had received a grant to study the Mendez story and he came on board right away. Then through talking to other people in the community, I realized this story was bigger than just one family. But because of the limitations of funding (as I wasn't being paid to work on this) and because of the limited time (we wanted to have this ready for September's Spanish Heritage Month), we decided that this first telling of the story would focus on the Mendez family. Knowing that there were over 100 people who participated in the case and knowing that there were thousands of Mexican children who were attending schools at that same time, we knew each of them had a story to tell. But we wanted to focus on the Mendez family first.

So, little by little, we started collecting information, going to different resources, doing individual research. One aspect of the story that was really important and that I

felt needed to be told was one thread I wanted to bring to the surface—to make sure people understood that one of the reasons this is such a surprising story is that America's study of civil rights has basically focused on the Black and White issue. And that's why this is such a surprise for most people. We think we know something about civil rights and then to find out that this was happening here and involved Latinos, Asian Americans—that is just mind boggling.

Along with the excitement of learning radical new information, there is also the excitement of sharing that process with someone. I felt as if I could completely empathize with the producer's passion for spreading this new information. To be presented with the challenge of shifting conceptualizations about people and events which contributed to social movements was an exciting challenge for me. I could relate to that sense of urgency that the producer must have felt in getting this story told. Also, I could share in her amazement that Latinos are connected to other ethnic minority groups in more ways than mere oppressive socio-economic indicators. There is now a stronger connection of a more positive nature. There is now pride in many diverse ethnic minority groups working together toward a shared goal. As Sandra Robbie puts it, "It's like waking up one morning and discovering that I was related to Thurgood Marshall and Rosa Parks. That was that kind of a revelation for me." She was able to further elaborate on the contributions of history and social policies of that time which all contributed to the Mendez case outcomes.

Robbie: *One of the reasons the Mendez family was able to afford the lawsuit was because they were tenant farmers. They were leasing land from a Japanese family who were interned during World War II. So we had all these layers of history involving discrimination against many, many groups. I wanted to make sure that in the telling of*

our story we did not overlook other stories that were happening at the same time. Our histories touched each other—they intertwined. And without the Munemitsu family, the Mendez family story would not have been told. So I really wanted to tell a story that was inclusive, that showed the strands of so many voices and histories of people touching each other and working together to make history happen. I had to talk to 5 degrees of people to track down Janice Munemitsu who is the daughter of one of the owners of the farmland. I started to tell her about this story. She was amazed. She knew that her family had been interned when she was very young, but she did not know of her family's tie to the Mendez story. When I talked to Aki Munemitsu (Janice's aunt), Aki said I remember Silvia as a childhood playmate. The first time when we interviewed them for the documentary, that was the first time Aki and Silvia had seen each other since they were children. That was a really, really important piece to bring together for me. I was joyfully fulfilled by that.

There was one problem I had with this show trying to pull everybody's story together is that a lot of people don't realize that their family photos are important. Finding photos to tell the story was very difficult. Most of the Mendez family photos had been lost for generations. The Westminster School District was very helpful. They had the archives from the original documents and correspondence from when the case first started. They had the original business card of David Marcus as well as phone messages and records. That was just chilling for me. I did go to UCLA to collect photos available there with the help of a gentleman named John Franklin, who happened to grow up in Santa Ana. And he introduced me to a gentleman in the special archives section of the UCLA library who might be able to help me find a photo of the

attorney. And sure enough, he was able to find some photos that we were able to use in the documentary. And so it has been a lot of happy coincidences and confluence of people understanding and bringing this together. And also, one special person who helped a lot was Luis Acosta, who at the time was a librarian at the Howard University Law School. I believe he is now a librarian with the Smithsonian. I think librarians are magic people. The amount of information and resources that they have at the tip of their fingers is magical. Within three days I had copies of not only the NAACP brief that contributed to the Mendez case, but notes of the NAACP correspondence back and forth with different states, like Texas, who requested the documents after the Mendez verdict so that they could fight the segregation there. Luis was also able to give me names of several people associated with the case who might still be alive. It's just amazing. Through that research we were able to validate almost everything the Mendez family had said. So it's been wonderful.

One of the remarkable pieces of this story has to do with the belief that this transforming information could have remained buried for another generation if a Latina-American hadn't happened upon it. When we don't have a diversity of people in the media, or in educational institutions, then we are destined to maintain the status quo of information, perspectives and "realities." Each time I show the Mendez film in my classes, I think about the "what ifs?" What if Sandra Robbie had no access to media resources to bring this story to us? What if she had not been persistent in her efforts to get it produced without pay and with meager budget constraints? What if I had no education and no professional degrees allowing me to present this information to hundreds of students and to the readership of *Reflections*? The realization that this was a remarkable opportunity to influence the understanding of many ethnic minority group

members was one factor in Sandra Robbie's drive to complete the film. She persists in the world of media and I persist in the educational arena for similar reasons—because we may find opportunities to offer alternative paradigms for the young. She speaks of her specific motivation in bringing this topic to new audiences:

***Robbie:** My motivation to really explore the topic further was the reason I became involved with television. To be able to tell a story through visual medium...I had always wanted to pursue television, but was afraid to do it. I always thought that was something that was unapproachable — was unachievable for someone like me, because I had never seen someone like me on TV. The only Latino I remember seeing on TV was Ricky Ricardo. I loved that he looked like my dad to me, but I never really thought that was something you could achieve. And then, when I became an adult, I realized that those are just regular people, and I'm regular people, so I can do that too. I knew how much this story meant to me. I did not want another child in Orange County—Brown Black, White, Asian, any background—not to know what had happened here. That it happened here, and that people like them fought for them, for their education. That's how important it was. And that when you tell history, when you tell stories about people that you can relate to, people can identify with that story much more. They are empowered by it. And I didn't want any child in Orange County not to know this, to feel that coursing through their blood every day of their life. I wanted them to have that story and to feel proud and to carry that with them. That is really my motivation to tell this story. When we did the documentary, the furthest thing from my mind was that we would achieve any award or any attention from anybody else. The biggest prize in my mind was for all our children to know this story. That was my goal, with all respect to my*

colleagues who have given us this acknowledgement. I've gotten emails from people who grew up in Orange County and are stunned that that had happened here. We've also gotten calls from across the country—University of Michigan Law School, public schools in New York, Texas, Berkeley, who have heard about this and have called to take it back to their schools. And that's amazing to me. I think the individual stories are great. I was at a conference in Texas over the weekend with the American GI Forum. People are hearing their story and they are just amazed and they applaud, they cry, and they come to me and tell me, "I went to a segregated school" or "My mother went to a segregated school," and they tell me what it was like. (One woman) said her father taped the show and made everyone in the family come over and see it on the big screen TV. Nobody could talk; they all had to sit and watch this show. And that is powerful to me. That we could share people's stories, and that everyone identifies with it. That's what it's about, and that's why it's so important for me to get it out to everybody.

From a social policy perspective, an important piece of "discovering" the Mendez case and all the events and people who contributed to its success is that it underscores the reality that social movements are incremental and that there are opportunities for many individuals, families and communities to contribute to a shared outcome. My own education in civics and history taught me that *Brown v. Board of Education* changed the world one day in 1954. Even as I struggled in social movements where change seemed almost imperceptible, there was the belief that, somehow, progress against injustice was being made. The appreciation of the many years of struggle on opposite coasts, with different groups, brings a sense that, as long as we are moving forward, we are making a contribution. I often tell social work students to "fight where you

stand”—meaning that they need not wait for a massive movement to join. They can create their own movements as leaders in directing social change. Social justice, then, becomes a life-long occupation in creating partnerships in advancing your cause and in taking a circumspective accounting of what has contributed to the “small wins” of each day’s efforts. Ms. Robbie speaks of similar lessons she hopes to impart to younger audiences:

Robbie: *Brown v. Board of Education is the civil rights case that most Americans know about. They know about the end of Black and White segregation. But what became apparent to me after learning about Mendez was that history does not just happen ‘cold turkey.’ People do not just change their minds in one case. There has to be some kind of legal or social evolution that led up to that. Having that understanding now is so important for students to have. That what you want doesn’t just happen because you say you want it and you fight for it. It takes years and months of changing people’s thinking about what society wants and could be. It takes that time for it to happen. And so that’s why I think it is so important for our students to know, too, not just that it’s their history, but that it gives them that reality of what change requires. When I go to schools now I ask teachers to ask their students to go home and ask their abuelas and abuelos (grandparents) if they went to a segregated school. To ask them ‘What was it like for you?’ I talk to them too, about how you can make history now. Because a lot of people think it takes organization, and yes it does take organization and you have to have a plan. And on top of all that if you don’t tell the media and if you don’t tell them over and over again—your story doesn’t get told. And so I try to teach them how to tell the media so that their story gets paid attention to. I think that is as important a part of making change as anything else.*

In many ways acknowledging the struggle that happened pays respect to the people who may have been forgotten. Because you know we live in a society that is not just all young people. It gives due respect to the abuelas and abuelos (grandparents) who have the memories. My grandmother, as we’re making tamales, always reminds us that we don’t make tamales the way she did when she was a girl. They had to butcher the cow and cook the meat that day, because they didn’t have refrigeration. Everything was done that one day. And we complain now because we have to sit for 3 hours putting masa in the corn husks.

It’s important for students to know about this story, but what I think I love about this story is I am hoping it can build a bridge between cultures. As I said earlier: that morning when I woke up it was like finding out I was related to Thurgood Marshall and Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. And the whole civil rights struggle suddenly became my struggle. It wasn’t about people far away. And I’m hoping others can start to feel an identification with that struggle, too.

To appreciate the common ground and realize that this was an evolution of litigation and laws fought by a diversity of people over decades is an important lesson. Particularly interesting is that many of the important legislative and judicial players contributed to both the Mendez outcome and the *Brown v. Board of Education* outcome at different points in their careers. They may have moved through different states and different legal cases, but they converged in 1954 with the Brown case. Ms Robbie describes the movement of Mendez arguments to the national arena:

Robbie: *...even though it was not a direct legal precedent, it (the Mendez class action suit) did in fact serve as a direct legal and social precedent because it made California the first state to end school*

segregation. Then, as former Governor of California, Earl Warren went on to sit on the Supreme Court, I don't understand how, having been the governor who desegregated schools in California, that he could now turn and say that segregation was any different at the national level. I don't see how he could argue that. Even though it was based on the 14th amendment, he still pushed through legislation in California to end segregation for all people of all colors, not because of their Latin origin or Asian origin—he just dismantled that totally in California. Even though it didn't serve as legal precedent, it did serve as grounds for ending segregation across the country. And so that is so important for people to recognize the seeds that were sown here. Also, the NAACP brief that was written was critical to this success. Robert Carter actually was the attorney who wrote the brief, and he was the attorney who served under Thurgood Marshall. I was fortunate to go out and interview Robert Carter who is still alive and is a judge in New York. The local organization One Hundred Black Men of Orange County and the Black Chamber of Commerce of Orange County both contributed money to fly me out to interview Judge Robert Carter. And he said that the brief that he wrote for the Mendez case was the dry run for the argument that eventually became *Brown v. Board of Education*. And so the legal thinking, not only in the African American community, was moving toward *Brown*. So that contribution to Mendez with Earl Warren reading that brief and being familiar with the arguments of Mendez changed not only an entire state's school policy, but had to influence that line of thinking.

May 17, 2004 is the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* and it is Ms. Robbie's hope is that everyone knows about Mendez and everyone begins to appreciate how social and legal change happens. In particular,

she sees a role for teachers in accepting this history that is theirs.

Robbie: *Not just California, but Texas, and New York. And not just Mexican Americans. Mr. Mendez was Mexican American, but I want everyone to know that Felicitas Mendez was a Puerto Rican. I want New York to know and to celebrate this too, because that's how all of America will know. We can't overlook this history of all of us working together. Everyone has to own that civil rights struggle—has to feel a part of it; and if Mendez can make that happen, I want all of America to celebrate. When they celebrate *Brown v. Board of Education*, I want all of California to stand up and say "Yea, Brown!" We helped, and this was how we did it.*

Conclusion

With this discovery of forgotten history, many thousands of Latino children in California and hopefully nation-wide will feel the empowerment of a shared culture and a shared history with those who have struggled and prevailed. We are, today, painfully aware that many aspects of educational advancement for Latinos and other oppressed minority groups in California and nationwide suffer *de facto* inequality and deficits. Somehow, as in my own social and political activities, there is some solace that can be drawn from knowing of shared aspirations and commitment. Hopefully, the Mendez case will resound for many more Latinos who can now better perceive a distinct bridge between ourselves and other populations in America who have historically suffered discrimination, and who have engaged in efforts, big and small, to ameliorate it.

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Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez (photo with permission of Sylvia Mendez)

FILLING THE RANKS: LESTER BLACKWELL GRANGER'S VISION OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING RACIAL EQUALITY

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Before social work education embraced the idea that the social work profession had a significant contribution to make in the struggle for social and economic justice and against discrimination, Lester Blackwell Granger, longtime head of the National Urban League, pushed and prodded the profession to broaden its perspective. He had greater success, at the time, in convincing young Black students at Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana, to enter the profession and use the tools of social work to effect social change than he did in getting the profession of social work more involved in the struggle for civil rights. This narrative documents his vision of the potential of the profession and his influence on some who entered it.

Introduction

"Behind Him, A Trail of Opened Doors," was the headline of a close-up profile of Lester Blackwell Granger in the *New York Post, Sunday Magazine* (Eckman, 1960), the year before Granger retired as executive director of the National Urban League (NUL). Many social workers are aware of Whitney Young, the social worker who succeeded Granger as executive director of the NUL. Few are aware of Lester Blackwell Granger, who headed the NUL from 1941 to 1961. But, I am getting ahead of my story.

When I left home to attend college in 1961, I headed for New Orleans to attend Dillard University, a small historically Black liberal arts college. I had every intention of pursuing a degree in nursing; and I did, until the second semester of my sophomore year. By the time I completed my liberal arts courses and before I began any practical introductory courses in nursing, I knew my career path was not to be nursing. Oh, I had done well in the science courses required for nursing—microbiology, organic chemistry, physiology, and anatomy—it was the practical part of nursing that I knew in my heart would be my undoing when that part of my studies began. I don't know if I ever really wanted to be a nurse, but choosing that area of study gave me the reason I needed to attend Dillard University. It had the only college-level nursing program in Louisiana open to Blacks at that time. Although Dillard University started as

third on my list of United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Schools that I wanted to attend—I considered Howard University and Fisk University but did not get the level of financial assistance I needed—it eventually became in my mind the place I had to go, my destiny. With a small scholarship and little else, I left for Dillard in the fall of 1961, as my mother said "on a wing and a prayer," uncertain that I would be there come spring. I had turned down a scholarship at another college in Louisiana that would have covered most of my expenses. But it was a large state university (historically Black) and I did not think it would provide the kind of spiritual and intellectual nurturance I needed. It was a fateful decision to enroll at Dillard that fall, though I had no idea at the time how fateful it would prove to be.

Meeting a Social Work Leader in the Struggle for Racial Equality

The year 1961 was a pivotal year in another respect; it was the year that the newly retired Lester B. Granger, former head of the NUL, came to Dillard University as a distinguished visiting professor. He came for a year and stayed long past the four years I matriculated there. He came to Dillard as a famous "Negro leader," a champion of the race. Most of the students knew about the NUL but, sad to say, most of us knew little about Mr. Granger (we called him Dr. Granger; he had several honorary degrees).

He started his tenure with a series of lectures in the chapel followed by small discussion groups in the social room of Lawless Memorial Chapel. An articulate, affable, charismatic, and witty man, he quickly became the toast of the campus across the entire student body; budding sociologists, theologians, athletes, nurses, all came to appreciate his contribution to campus life. He was popular not because he was "a famous Negro leader" that we should pay homage to. Rather, he was challenging and argumentative, and he forced us to think and support our arguments with logic, not the muddled, pseudo-intellectual discourse common among most college freshmen. He sat in the cafeteria with students, played tennis with us, and patiently tried to move all of us to a new level of thinking. We tried hard to understand his position on the civil rights movement, for he was not as militant as we thought he should be. It was not until I changed my major from nursing to sociology and took his classes in urban sociology and social disorganization that I began to understand, but not necessarily agree with, his position on the politics of mass protest.

Mr. Granger eschewed anything he perceived as mob psychology or following the pack. One of his favorite books was Le Bon's, *The Crowd*. Reflected in his philosophy for social change was his work for many years with the NUL and a commitment to "scientific social work," which emphasized rational education and persuasion as the way to effect change; and he remained committed to this method when many inside and outside the NUL had embraced the tactics and strategies of direct social action and mass protest as the tools for struggle against racial inequality and for social justice and civil rights (Moore as cited in Brown, 1991). Of course, as young Black students, we were drawn to the politics of confrontation. He did not try to stop us from becoming actively involved in the civil rights movement, participating in

protest marches or freedom rides. He just made us think about what we planned to do and the cost to us and to our families if we decided to "join the movement." He didn't think everybody had to do the same thing or to use the same tactics in the struggle for racial equality. He wanted us to think of other ways we could contribute to the civil rights movement – participating in leadership councils, teaching in universities, managing social service organizations. Mr. Granger really worked to get us to think about going to schools of social work – to equip our minds for the struggle. Despite his grumbling about the shortcomings of social work, he really believed the profession had the potential to make a significant contribution in the area of racial, social, and economic justice. Some years later, in research for an article I was writing on Mr. Granger, I came across one that he had written that seemed to capture the vision of social work he tried to impart to us:

What is required . . . is that the social worker shall join the battle against social injustice, shall help to remake or eliminate those forces that have twisted and blighted the lives of millions of Americans in our own generation. No one is better qualified than the social worker to bring to such planning a shrewd analysis of the individual and family needs of the community: no one is more responsible for devising ways of serving these needs. (Granger, 1940)

Mr. Granger's philosophy reflected the tenets of the NUL, the organization that he headed for twenty years. From its inception, the NUL was "an interracial organization committed to constructive and preventive social work among Blacks. It sought to improve the social and economic conditions under which they lived, to secure and train Black social workers, and to provide research

and information on urban conditions that could influence existing policies and create new policy initiatives in response to the needs of urban Black Americans" (Moore as cited in Brown, 1991, p. 270).

I did not know anything about social work as a profession. Coming from a small town in central Louisiana and shaped by the prevailing social conditions of segregation at the time, the professions I knew to be open to Blacks were teaching, law, medicine, preaching, and mortuary science, all of which you could do with minimal contact with the White community. Mr. Granger himself was the only one of six brothers who did not pursue a career in medicine. I had had exposure to a county caseworker through my uncle and aunt's adoption of a child after realizing that my parents would not follow the custom of one or two children from a large family going to live with childless relatives. There were nine of us, but my parents insisted that we had to be kept together in the same household. Our home was evaluated because my mother agreed to provide childcare for my uncle's adopted son. The caseworker was White, and there was nothing on the horizon to indicate that a Black person in Alexandria, Louisiana, could ever get that kind of a job. Therefore, I was not inspired by this contact to pursue a career in social work.

But when I arrived at Dillard University, there was change in the air and a sense of anticipation of better things to come. Suddenly at the end of my undergraduate matriculation, those of us who had barely been able to afford a baccalaureate degree were considering graduate school. And for more than a few students, the choice of study for graduate school was social work. If any of us had Lester Granger in any of our sociology classes, he introduced us to the social work profession as one compatible with the struggle for racial equality. He believed that the profession should be more involved in civil rights issues because of the many opportunities

for "intelligent, planned, collective efforts... He had little patience with the voices in social work councils that dismissed racial problems as political or ideological and therefore outside the realm of professional social work. He argued instead that the patience, courage, and skill required to do social work were the characteristics needed to solve the racial problems of American society" (Brown, 1991, p. 276). He encouraged a number of students to pursue careers in social work, so much so, that in private correspondence to the author in 1966, he admitted that one of his colleagues at Dillard was worried that too many of the best students were choosing to do graduate studies in social work instead of sociology, history, or political science. He said he told the person that "that was just too bad, that social work needed first-class minds too" (L. Granger, personal communication, April 8, 1966). He was not unmindful of social work's reluctance to assume the role he envisioned for it and spoke candidly of its failings that he described as "many and sometimes serious." Yet, he thought social workers of intelligence, training, and experience had much to offer in the development, implementation, and delivery of national social programs and in addressing issues related to racial inequality. He thought sociologists tended to regard social work as a vocation; he envisioned social work as a discipline on the cutting edge of social change (Brown, 1991).

Filling the Ranks

I wish I knew exactly how many students from Dillard University actually pursued a graduate degree in social work because of contact with Mr. Granger. It was probably too many as far as the chair of the social science department was concerned. But Mr. Granger did not just persuade students to consider social work as a profession; he identified schools, wrote letters of recommendation, and assisted students in

applying for financial assistance. He was thoroughly respected in the social work communities, both education and practice, national and international. He used his network of contacts to recommend students to schools of social work—University of Denver, Atlanta University, Washington University in St. Louis, Columbia University – and visited the students once they were in the programs to see how they were faring and to provide moral support. I was the recipient of one of those visits while attending The George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. I was one of only a handful of Black students in the school of social work in 1965. It was a source of comfort and pride to think of myself as part of a group of students mentored by Mr. Granger and sent forth from the South to attend graduate schools in far and distant places. Fortunately for me, I had worked summers at private camps (Mr. Granger provided recommendations and encouragement) that hired college students as staff for work-study programs. The study topics reflected the times and were usually about race and the civil rights movement even though there were only a few Blacks in the programs. These experiences were invaluable and gave me a comfort level that assisted me in my adjustment at Washington University. I did not have to deal with the culture shock of transition from a predominately Black environment to one with very few people of color, and my education at Dillard University had prepared me for the rigor of the MSW program. Mr. Granger's emphasis on "scientific social work" (perhaps a precursor of evidenced-based practice, but that is another article), critical thinking, and analysis gave me a sense of intellectual security and confidence in my ability to survive. Whenever I had doubts or felt lonely, I could go to the library and get the proceedings of the 1952 National Conference on Social Welfare, see

Mr. Granger's picture, read his speech, and know that I belonged where I was at that time.

There were other students at Dillard who did not choose to get a graduate degree in social work, but were influenced by Mr. Granger, and used their undergraduate sociology or political science degree to enter some of the new jobs opening up for Blacks in community development and community action programs in Louisiana and elsewhere in the country. The fervor of the times, the intellectual stimulation of the learning environment at Dillard University, and the coming of Mr. Granger to campus at that time all combined to produce a group of students with a worldview dramatically different from the one they had when they entered college. We transitioned from the parochial constraints of our mostly segregated upbringing to viewing ourselves as citizens of the world with unlimited opportunities. The irony was not lost on me a few years ago when I heard that one of my classmates from Dillard was president of the Louisiana chapter of the National Association of Social Work (NASW). She did not graduate from Dillard but had married and moved to California and completed her education there. Her exposure to Dr. Granger remained with her, and years later she earned a Master of Social Work Degree at Northwestern University in Louisiana, a school we could not have attended without a fight in the mid-1960s.

Another incident that forced me to recall how I chose social work as a career was my experience as a delegate to the NASW Delegate Assembly in 2002. Mark G. Battle, executive director of NASW from 1984 to 1992, was the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award at that assembly. The award was to honor a lifetime of accomplishments and to recognize demonstrations of social work values during a career that spanned 50 years. I was stunned when, in his acceptance speech, Mr. Battle mentioned Lester Blackwell Granger as

someone who had greatly influenced his life and the trajectory of his career. He had been a student of Mr. Granger's at the Manual Training School for Colored Boys in Bordentown, New Jersey. In one of the crowning moments of his professional career, surrounded by his peers, Mr. Battle paid homage to Mr. Granger. What a tribute to the influence of someone who is barely remembered today. In a subsequent telephone conversation I had with Mr. Battle, he reiterated his admiration for Mr. Granger and his influence on him. He described Mr. Granger as "a giant whose size and impact has not been fully realized" (Battle personal communication, December 5, 2003).

Granger on the Role of Social Work

The social work profession embraced Granger even though it did not fully accept his view of a role for social work in the struggle for racial equality. In 1952, he became the first Black person to be elected president of the National Conference on Social Welfare (NCSW), one of the precursors of NASW; he was chairman of the United States Committee of the International Conference of Social Welfare (ICSW) and in that position led delegations to India in 1952 and Toronto in 1954. In 1956, he was elected vice-president of ICSW and in 1961, he was elected to the presidency of that organization. Granger was the first U.S. representative to serve as president of ICSW. He was elected honorary president of that organization in 1964 "amidst expressions of acclaim and affection" (Pettiss, 1965, p.78).

Mr. Granger had an undergraduate degree in economics from Dartmouth College and completed one year of social work education at the New York School for Social Work. He operated at the highest levels in the profession, and he worked to ensure that there would be other Black social workers to fill the ranks when he was no longer on the scene, that there would be others to carry

forth a broader vision of social work, similar to that which he expressed in a speech in 1950:

What about the nature, as distinguished from the practice of social work? Are our services to be deftly palliative, or boldly remedial? . . . Are we handmaidens of the public interest or partners in a great enterprise? . . . Social work can be – and if it is to fulfill its function, must be – a dynamic force keeping man's progress along this road.... Such an interpretation of the responsibility of social work is a long step away from the original concept of our calling as noblesse oblige. There was always "something strongly condescending" in that early concept, and faint traces of condescension must continue to linger as long as we concentrate on the needs of the disadvantaged to the exclusion of social and economic forces creating those needs. (Granger, 1951)

Granger was committed to the social reform tradition of social work because he saw that stream of the profession as an important tool in combating discrimination and inequity. He recruited Black students to enter the field of social work because he wanted to make sure that Blacks would have the opportunity to help shape the direction of the profession through education and practice.

Conclusion

As I have had occasion to study the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education, the accrediting body for schools of social work, I see standards that mandate curriculum content on human diversity and social and economic justice, where social policy is firmly rooted in foundation content. On the NASW website, we can find a statement on affirmative action. Social work education and practice are

reaching out to the international community as the changing demographics of our own country have brought the people of the world to our cities and towns. Social work is concerned not just with the provision of services to populations at risk, but in changing the policies that negatively affect those populations. One of the purposes of the social work profession as discussed in the *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education* (CSWE, 2003) is: "To pursue policies, services, and resources through advocacy and social or political actions that promote social and economic justice" (p. 31). We sometimes forget that the knowledge content now included in education for social work practice was not always so inclusive, sensitive to issues of race and ethnicity, cultural competency, or populations at risk. The social work profession is not yet leading the struggle for social justice, but its schools are preparing social work practitioners to think critically, to understand the impact of social forces on individual problems and the need for change at the systems level as well as the individual level. I am reminded of a letter from Mr. Granger written in March 1969 when he was teaching at Park College in Parkville, Missouri (according to him, he had "temporarily integrated the faculty"), that expressed some of his frustration with the profession.

I speak next week - the 19th - at the closing luncheon of the Kansas State Welfare Conference in Wichita, to the theme "Social Welfare and Social Policy." Of course I'll tell 'em that the only relationship is coincidental so far as N.A.S.W. is concerned - that welfare administrators will have to establish a rationale and a method, if a significant (not "meaningful") relationship is to be established. How to win audiences and lose speaking invitations, you say? And you are

right, but I'm tired . . . of hearing social work conferees chirping about "Social Welfare and Social Policy" when the bulk of them really don't know what involves social policy in their own towns. L. B. Granger (personal communication, March 14, 1969)

I think the social work profession is slowly embracing for itself the vision that Mr. Granger championed for it so long ago - a role in shaping social policy and in the struggle for racial equality, social and economic justice, and civil rights. And what would he think? Well, I think he's probably smiling up there in social work heaven, shaking his head and saying, "It's about time."

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Lester Blackwell Granger at the Royal Embassy of Greece with Ambassador Alekas Matzas conferring the medal of rank of Commander, Royal Order of the Phoenix, in the name of King Constantine (September 8, 1966).

UNFORGETTABLE EPISODES IN FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

Katherine A. Kendall, Ph.D., Former Executive Director, Council on Social Work Education

***Editor's Note:** Katherine A. Kendall is one of the founders and former Executive Director of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Currently, she serves as volunteer consultant and honorary life member of the CSWE Board of Directors and International Commission. In addition, she is the retired Secretary General of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and currently serves as Honorary President and honorary life member of the Board of Directors. Dr. Kendall is the author of numerous books and scholarly works on social work and social work education, the most recent (2002) of which is Council on Social Work Education: Its Antecedents and First Twenty Years. In this narrative, Dr. Kendall shares for the first time in publication historically significant recollections about her early work with poor and disenfranchised Black clients as a social worker in Louisiana during segregation, and her later work at CSWE with Whitney Young, Jr. in developing the first organizational policies and accreditation standards prohibiting schools of social work from discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, and creed.*

A social work career that spans more than sixty years is certain to have had some unforgettable episodes. Of the many I could recount, there are three that bear directly on this special issue of *Reflections*. Two of the three occupy a special hidden corner in my memory. These two are unique because of the special circumstances involved and the ethical dilemmas that were faced and resolved.

The first episode recounts my work in promoting the self-efficacy, aspirations, and education of an impoverished Black female client who understandably was enraged at the system of segregation as well as mistrustful of a White welfare worker. The second episode details my efforts to circumvent segregation policies in the South, when I had to work within the existing values and structures of the times. These earlier practice experiences predate the Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawing segregation. The third episode occurred not long after the Supreme Court decision and describes a shared experience with Whitney Young, Jr., then Dean of the Atlanta University School of Social Work, to frustrate an attempt to continue segregation in a proposed new school of social work in Atlanta. It is these latter two episodes that have remained hidden because deception was involved. While I knew I had unquestionably done the right thing, I had no desire to reveal fully what had been said or

done to uphold what to me was obviously a greater good.

Discovering Social Work and Segregation

During 1937-39, I was a graduate student at Louisiana State University (LSU), which just had established a school of social work. But before I tell that story, I must let you know how I happened to be in Louisiana and the discoveries I made there.

From high school through my undergraduate years, I set my sights upon a career as a foreign correspondent. That all changed during a period of three years in Europe following graduation from the University of Illinois. Those were the years of the Great Depression. Left-wing influences while living in London, Oxford, and Madrid opened my eyes to the injustice of poverty and all its miserable consequences. It soon became clear to me that fighting that kind of injustice was infinitely more important than writing about it.

I became determined to do something "social" with my life but didn't know what until I found social work. My husband, a Rhodes Scholar whom I had married in London, had been recruited to teach political science at LSU in Baton Rouge. That was where I discovered the profession that has



since shaped my life. It was also where, for the first time, I discovered at least some of what it means to be Black in a racist environment.

When I entered the newly established School of Social Work at LSU, my idea of what social work should do leaned heavily toward preventing and eradicating the causes of poverty and injustice, even to the point of the profession eventually no longer being needed. However, it wasn't long after my introduction through field work to the victims of poverty that I recognized the importance of the remedial and therapeutic functions of social work. Ever since, it has been my belief that the profession must be centrally involved in the dual mission of helping individuals and actively working for social change. It was in field work, too, that I found myself for the first time face-to-face with the injustice of racial discrimination. Most of my clients were Black and it was not easy to bridge the color gap. But there was one client in particular who trusted me enough to take me deeply into her world of segregation with its many obstacles and dehumanizing elements.

The Case of "Mary T"

Mary T. applied to the Baton Rouge Parish (County) Department of Public Welfare for Aid to Dependent Children. Prior to the passage of the Social Security Act, she had off and on received poor relief. This was one of the cases assigned to me as a first-year student in field work. I couldn't have had a better introduction to the challenges and rewards of social work.

On my first home visit, it was a blow to my naive expectations of a warm welcome as a messenger of hope to be greeted with open hostility. Mary made no secret of the fact that welfare was a last resort, a hateful necessity because no other source of income was available to support the family of five children. Her husband, now permanently disabled with a heart condition, had formerly

done well as a skilled construction worker. Unemployment during much of the Depression period, followed by illness, effectively put an end to his role as a wage earner and as the head of the family.

My own aversion to the giving of assistance as a charitable handout and strong conviction about the responsibility of government to provide economic support as an entitlement probably had something to do with a warming of the relationship. By the end of the academic year, Mary had begun to talk freely about discriminatory treatment in her experiences with government agencies. She could hardly contain her anger as she described how White children, but no Black children, were given orange juice in the emergency relief programs. It was the injustice of it as much as the deprivation for her children that fueled her anger.

There was not much that could be done in my first year as Mary's caseworker to help her achieve the economic independence and respect as a human being that she so deeply desired. Fortunately, thanks to the State Department of Public Welfare, we had a second chance.

Upon graduation, I joined the Baton Rouge Welfare Department as their first qualified social worker (meaning the first person employed who had received a master's degree in social work). The State Welfare Department, located in Baton Rouge, was created after passage of the Social Security Act. Staffed by a number of highly qualified social workers, several imported from the North, it had promoted and, to a considerable extent, supported the new School of Social Work at LSU. To further their special interest in training, they persuaded the local department to use my appointment to demonstrate what could be achieved through professional education along with access to adequate resources.

My assignment was to put together a specialized case load and work intensively

with some 20 plus cases where I saw potential for independence. Mary T. headed the list. We had previously explored employment opportunities so I already knew it was her great ambition to become a midwife for the community in which she lived. For that, she needed training not available in Baton Rouge. However, a course was available in New Orleans at Charity Hospital, the major resource of medical care for welfare clients throughout the state.

An ambulance made daily round trips from Baton Rouge to New Orleans with welfare patients. It was not too difficult to arrange for Mary to become a regularly scheduled passenger. With transportation arranged, we then concentrated on completing the course. When she got stuck, she called me. Together, we struggled with the medical terminology. Although limited in formal education available to Blacks, Mary had a strong native intelligence and an even stronger desire to make something of her life, and she succeeded.

She also had ambitions for her children. One of her sons was doing well in school and she wanted him to become a lawyer. For her two daughters, she had a different kind of ambition. She wanted them to be admitted to mulatto society in New Orleans, with all the perks associated with what she regarded as a great distinction, especially at Mardi Gras.

I left Baton Rouge just as she was finishing the midwifery course. I often wondered what she had finally done with the training and her life. Imagine my delight and complete surprise when she turned up some years later at the front door of my apartment in Chicago where I was working on my doctorate. She had learned in Baton Rouge that I was at the University of Chicago. To find my address, she went to the Council on Social Agencies where she happened to ask someone who knew me.

I was absolutely flabbergasted when I saw her, and could hardly wait to hear what

had brought her to Chicago. She had come to enroll her son in the pre-law program at Loyola University for which he had received a scholarship. As for her own ambition, the midwifery course had a very different and much more profitable outcome than either of us had anticipated. Not long after she had completed the course, she was recommended by a white obstetrician to a patient with a newborn child who needed help upon leaving the hospital. This led to recommendations by other doctors and from other patients. Her practice with white clients gave her financial security and a new career, although it did mean not working in the Black community, which was her original intent.

There were other success stories in that year of working with a small caseload and the possibility, although no guarantee, of adequate resources to support treatment plans. But the story Mary told me on that long ago surprise visit in Chicago remains one of the happiest memories of my career.

An End Run on Segregation in New Orleans

In the summer between the first and second year at LSU, I took a position in New Orleans as a junior caseworker in the newly established Parish Department of Public Welfare. Louisiana had in many respects the good fortune of starting its welfare programs from scratch, as a result of New Deal legislation. There was no problem in getting rid of what had existed before. I was assigned to a section of the French Quarter, with a diversified caseload that included certifying clients for the different categories of public assistance.

In my first round of visits, I was particularly attracted to two elderly sisters living in a rundown apartment in genteel poverty. Everything was worn but clean as a pin, with lace doilies on the arms of shabby chairs. They had dressed for the occasion of my visit in their very best clothes, again very

worn, but neat and tidy, with touches of lace at the neck and wrists. In their person and in their home, they seemed to belong to another era of Southern gentility. They were living on a pittance from what had previously been parish poor relief, with some additional funds from their church. Introductory visits clearly established their eligibility for Old Age Assistance.

As they had always lived in New Orleans, I experienced no difficulty in finding official records of their birth. What I found, however, was the surprising disclosure that they were officially classified as mulatto. They looked white and, from what I had seen and the little I had learned about them during my visits, it was clear they had no idea they were other than white. I'll never know how they became registered otherwise, but my fantasies about how it happened had a strong romantic flavor. Was this a story of love made legally impossible because of segregation—a man and a beloved mulatto woman who, perhaps, died early leaving him with two baby girls whom he brought up as his own? Did the doctor or midwife, unbeknownst to him, reveal their origin?

What I did know was the devastating change it would make in what was left of their lives if I used those birth certificates as proof of age. This was the deep South and I shuddered to think of the humiliation to which they would be subjected. I could picture them coming to the Welfare office in their best clothes, wearing hats and gloves, and finding there was a separate entrance for Blacks. They would be called by their first names and because of their "uppity" appearance, they would face other humiliations as well.

The idea of exposing those two very old ladies to the fact that they were registered at birth as mulattos and what that would mean was more than I could bear. Leaving the birth records behind, I heaved a sigh of relief because there were other ways of proving age. With the help of church records, they were approved for Old Age Assistance and

continued the quiet tenor of their lives with the security of an assured income.

Facing an ethical dilemma, I kept silent about what I had discovered. Perhaps my supervisor and other qualified social workers in the Department would have backed me up, but I couldn't take the chance. Fortunately, no one asked whether I had checked for birth certificates, so I did not have to lie. However, deception was involved. Having been brought up in the Highlands of Scotland under the unbending rules of conduct of strict Presbyterianism, this troubled me. But not for long. The sin resided in the system of segregation, not in my concealment of damaging information that would unalterably change the lives of two dear old ladies.

Looking at this episode from contemporary values that celebrate multiculturalism and racial and ethnic diversity, readers of today might question why the sisters' mixed race heritage was not acknowledged. In making the decision at the time, I struggled with a number of ethical questions and dilemmas. Was it right for me to make a decision for clients of sound mind? Practice principles are not immutable. In this situation, I could see no conflict with good practice. If the sisters knew they were mulatto but had always passed as white, how could I expose their secret? If they did not know, what good would be served by making it known to them? Ultimately, I was satisfied I had done the right thing and could only pray that there would never be another occasion for the Welfare Department to check their age. If I could not directly challenge segregation practices at the time, at least I could take steps to circumvent the devastating impact they would have on vulnerable, elderly clients ill equipped to handle it.

On Shaky Ground in Atlanta

Whitney Young, Jr., at that time Dean of the Atlanta University School of Social Work, is the major actor in the last episode I shall

describe. During my tenure as Educational Secretary at the Council on Social Work Education, I was in charge of accreditation and consultation services. In the course of working together on accreditation and curriculum development, Whitney and I became good friends and trusted colleagues. Sometime in 1958, in the years immediately after the Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawed segregation, Whitney called with an urgent request that I come to Atlanta. He had arranged for me to attend a meeting to advise a group that had been organized to start a new school of social work. He was convinced that the main purpose was to circumvent the Court decision by making available another option for white students in the Atlanta area. (At the time, many Southern states were actively defying the Court's ruling by reaffirming segregation laws and practices, particularly by seeking to establish private, white-only educational institutions.)

When I arrived in Atlanta, instead of our usual kiss-kiss on the cheek greeting, he motioned me to stay at arm's length. He also asked me to ride in the back seat of the car, which I absolutely refused to do. I remember him saying something to the effect that feelings were running high in the community and it would be my fault if anyone threw stones at us. But no one did.

What transpired next was never recorded because Whitney and I were not sure of the ground on which we stood. Thus, my memory is weak on a number of important details. However, I do remember clearly going into a meeting of some 10 or 12 people, almost all from the Atlanta community. An educational institution was involved, but I no longer remember its name. It was not the University of Georgia. It may have been a women's college, as that would have been a logical location because it already limited admission on the basis of gender.

In my role as educational consultant, I followed the usual routine of exploring their interest, the need in the community for another school of social work, its purpose, and so on. Eventually, we got around to practical questions about recruitment and admission of students. They openly declared that it would be restricted to white students only. I immediately replied that, after the Supreme Court decision, the Council on Social Work Education would never accept such a program. I told them that without CSWE accreditation, their students would not find positions as qualified social workers. This put a stop to their efforts and nothing further was heard about a school of social work in Atlanta for white students only!

However, Whitney and I realized we were on shaky ground. At the time, there was no specific CSWE accreditation standard prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race. Nevertheless, I was positive that the values of the profession, as reflected in accreditation standards, would uphold the position that the school could not be accredited. This was the ethical dilemma and the reason the episode was not recorded. No definite standard existed other than clear professional values. Was that sufficient justification for my statement that the Council would not accept a segregated school as a member? Whitney and I were convinced of the rightness of our decision, but had no desire to broadcast it widely, although Whitney did refer to it with pride at a dinner meeting of the graduate deans with Council staff at the Annual Program Meeting in Chicago in 1960.

After making a verbal report on the Atlanta meeting upon my return to the office, the staff immediately moved to develop a nondiscrimination standard for inclusion into the Manual of Accreditation. Council archives reveal that the Board of Directors and the Commission on Accreditation were quick to respond, but with a generalized policy statement rather than a specific standard

(CSWE document # 9-12-27M). The Board referred the question to the Commission, asking whether the subject should be dealt with in the Manual. The Commission believed that an interpretation of the admission standard already in place would cover discrimination on the basis of race, creed, or color without further specification. The issue of an explicit standard seemed to them to be a question of professional ethics, better to be addressed by the Board of Directors in an official statement of policy. Following preparation and adoption of a position statement prepared by a subcommittee, the Commission concluded that the question was broader than the development of a standard on discrimination.

The position statement, approved by the Commission in May 1959, outlined the ways in which discrimination on the grounds of race, color or ethnic origin was inconsistent with the philosophy, objectives, and methods of the profession and thus with social work education. The statement concluded with a request to the Board to promulgate as official policy that no discrimination be practiced by CSWE in *any* of its activities or by *any* of the commissions, committees, or other bodies associated with it. The action taken by the Commission reflected its belief that the question needed broader discussion and action by the constituency. And that is where the problems arose, greatly delaying the final adoption of a specific accreditation standard.

Part of the problem had to do with a touchy power relationship between the Board of Directors and the House of Delegates. The original CSWE bylaws designated the very large delegate group, then called the Council of Delegates, as the major legislative body of the Council. Their responsibility included approval of accreditation standards, bypassing the Board of Directors, which was given the minor charge of appointing a committee to consider appeals from Commission decisions (Kendall, 2002).

Vesting policy-making in a body that met once a year with no payment of expenses and little opportunity to study the issues requiring policy decisions almost immediately proved unworkable. A six-year process of revision of the bylaws ended in 1958 with a number of significant changes, giving full legislative authority to the Board, with the House of Delegates serving as an advisory and consultative body to the Board.

This shift in relationship may have affected the way in which the Board dealt with the recommended policy statement on discrimination. It concluded that the statement referred by the Commission covering all the operations of the Council needed the widest possible consideration. The House of Delegates was asked at its Annual Meeting in January, 1960, to appoint its own committee to draft a statement that, after review by the delegates, would be referred to the Board. If approved, the policy would be returned to the Commission of Accreditation as the basis for establishing a binding standard in the Accreditation Manual (CSWE document # 60-26-3).

Reporting back at the Annual Meeting in January, 1961, a committee of the House of Delegates presented a statement of the responsibilities of the Council in relation to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or ethnic origin. The spirited discussion that followed introduced a new issue that further delayed a decision. A question was raised about the omission of creed. In reply, it was stated that no reference was made to religion because earlier attempts at a more comprehensive statement proved too controversial. Whitney Young, speaking as a delegate, strongly opposed the wording of the statement, finding it vague and meaningless and called for a specific reference to segregation.

Two amendments, passed by large majorities, added creed to the list as well as wording that assured access to social work

education without discrimination or segregation. Upon receiving the revised statement, the Commission on Accreditation in December, 1961, produced a two-paragraph standard in which creed and the specific reference to segregation did not appear (CSWE document 61-12-31B). The standard was based on the requirement that the ethics of the profession mandated a school of social work to conduct its program without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or ethnic origin. In April, 1962, reconsideration of the question of creed led to its inclusion in the final version referred to the Board of Directors. Finally, a standard on non-discrimination was adopted by the Board in March, 1963.

Conclusion

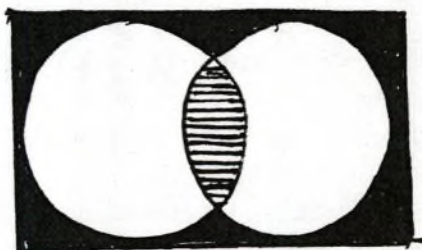
It was a long journey from my social work training and early casework experiences with Black clients in Louisiana, to the meeting in Atlanta in 1958 with a group seeking to establish a white-only school of social work, to the adoption of a CSWE binding accreditation standard against discrimination on the basis of race or color in social work education. In retrospect and in spite of the delays, it seems to me the underlying belief on which all agreed throughout the process was exactly what had motivated Whitney and myself in 1958. Given the ethics and philosophy of social work and social work education, no other outcome was possible.

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