

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

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NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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Volume 10

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BLACK NURSES STRUGGLE FOR ADMISSION TO PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS: FOUR RETIRED NURSES LOOK BACK

Georgia Burnette, RN, MSN, MS Ed.

This article traces the personal history of four women in journey to enter the nursing profession during a time when most schools were all white and closed to Blacks. To understand these personal stories, the history of nursing and nursing education is provided first as context and broad overview. The narrative concludes with a reflection on why preserving and passing on this history is important not only for the nursing profession in general, but in particular for Black women entering or already in the profession.

African American nurses have three strikes against us. We're Black, female, and work in a profession still striving for equality and respect within the medical community. It has been a battle all the way, but fortunately things are moving in the right direction. To understand my story and that of my nursing colleagues, a brief history of nursing and nursing education is required. Understanding how the nursing profession moved from segregation to desegregation likely is new information to the predominantly social work readership of *Reflections*.

A Brief History of Nursing and Nursing Education

The history of nursing usually begins with the story of Florence Nightingale and her assistants during the Crimean War. But women of all cultures have nursed the sick from time immemorial. Nursing was simply another aspect of family life. If, by chance, one became particularly adept at the task, word of these skills became known throughout the community and that person was called upon in special circumstances.

When I attended nursing school during the 1950s, the history and struggles of Black nurses were accorded a few pages in most texts, if any at all. According to Althea Davis (1999) in her book, *Early Black American Leaders in Nursing*: "Nursing history as presented in the past taught only selected aspects of nursing history while excluding Black nursing leaders and Black nurses'

experience, as evidenced in nursing history texts. On rare occasions, these texts included fleeting attention to or inaccurate information about Black nurses. But nurse historians and historians have begun to fill the void" (p. vii.). Over time, as values changed and legislation was enacted, nursing texts began to include a broader and more enlightened scope of information about the Black nurse and her struggle for acceptance into the larger professional medical community. Nevertheless, the history of Black nurses cannot be told in isolation, since cultural values of the time heavily impacted the struggle.

Care of the sick. Nursing during the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was simply the care of the sick by family members or by slaves in the South. Some religious orders assumed that burden as their calling, specifically the Sisters of Mercy who had charge of Illinois' first hospital in 1849 (Frank, 1953). By and large, however, before the turn of the 20th century "nurses," both Black and White, were untrained. Their care consisted of comfort measures, poultices, wraps of heat and cold, and the compounding of herbs and potions to help their patients.

Few Blacks and many poor Whites could ill afford a physician at the time of birth, hence the extensive use of midwives, especially throughout the southern states. Midwives subsequently attained a modicum of prestige that lasted well into the twentieth century,

when obstetricians began to improve childbirth practices.

We credit Florence Nightingale with the beginning of modern nursing, in that she advocated an organized system for the training of nurses. Hospitals rose to the occasion, and the hospital training system was born. But as the schools proliferated, few accepted Black students. Responding to this dilemma, Black educators, "colored women's clubs," and several prominent philanthropic organizations worked together to establish Black nursing schools in the eastern and southern United States.

A national survey commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1925 examined the admission policies of nursing schools throughout the country regarding Black students. The resulting report simply documented what was already well known. Of the American Nurses Association's list of 1696 accredited schools, 1588 schools did not admit Black students. The majority of the schools accepting minority students were in the South, and nineteen had a bed capacity of fifty beds or less. Twenty-five of those schools admitting Black students were connected with hospitals for Black patients or had a (segregated) department or wing for Black patients maintained by city institutions (Davis, 1999).

Professional organizations. As a profession grows and matures, it seeks to upgrade the educational standards of its schools, improve working conditions, and provide continuing education for its practitioners. Professional organizations have traditionally provided these services; thus, at the turn of the century, four major associations were formed to serve the several specialty groups that had emerged: (a) The American Nurses Association, established in 1896; (b) The National League for Nursing, established in 1893; (c) The Red Cross Nursing Service, established in 1905 as a branch of the

American Red Cross; and (d) the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, established in 1912. These organizations sought to foster high standards of nursing practice, develop educational standards for nurses, and improve the health care of the general public.

The National Organization for Public Health Nursing was the only organization to accept Black nurses since membership could be gained by directly joining the national body. Other associations required state membership as a condition of participation, but Black nurses were denied membership in the majority of states' associations until after World War II (Davis, 1999). Finding closed doors in most areas of society, the road to professionalism was especially difficult for Black nurses. According to Kalisch and Kalisch (1995): "Advancement for the Black nurse came slowly, because she was a member of an emerging group that had not been fully recognized on a merit basis by other groups; professionally, she was part of an emerging group whose worth to society also had not been fully recognized" (p. 389). With few alternatives remaining, Black nurses formed their own professional organization in 1908, The National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN), to advance the standards of their nurses, break down discrimination in the profession, and develop leadership within the ranks. It was not until 1951 that NACGN was dissolved and membership for Black nurses was granted in the American Nurses Association.

Wartime advancements. Discrimination against Black nurses also existed within the armed forces. Yet, paradoxically, war and the need for nurses in the military eventually opened the doors for Black nurses. According to Hine (1989): "It is an extreme irony that nursing's fortune is so often connected to war. Florence Nightingale's experiences in the Crimean War, the appalling casualties during

the American Civil War, the death and destruction of World War I all influenced the emergence and development of nurse training and practice. In the wake of these episodes of massive carnage, nursing reaped increased status and greater public esteem" (p. 162).

Initially, all branches of the service rejected the direct admission of Black nurses. During WWI, a small number were accepted into the Army Nurse Corps through the Red Cross Nursing Service, but few were called to active duty. Those Black nurses were permitted to care only for Black soldiers, and their quarters and activities were as segregated as those of their patients. The Bolton Bill of 1943, also known as The Nurse Training Act, significantly expanded and improved the educational opportunities for Black nurses. Finally, in 1948, by President Truman's Executive Order, the armed forces began to desegregate. This paved the way for minorities to move into the ranks of the various services, ostensibly without bias and prejudice. Nevertheless, the admission policies of most nursing schools changed little or not at all, as they continued to discriminate against Blacks.

Personal Histories and Reflections from the 1950s Onward: The Stories of Four Nurses

Our own stories start in the 1950s. Our parents told us, "Go to school, get an education, depend only upon yourself." We listened and attempted to follow their advice. But the white world was not ready for us. These narratives illustrate the struggle by Black high school graduates as we sought entrance into the nursing profession. The stories describe experiences in Buffalo, New York; Flint, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; and New York, New York. I begin with my own story, followed by those of my nursing friends and colleagues whom I interviewed for this article: Willye Tillman, Wilma Watts, and

Bronte Blenman Mostiller. They graciously have allowed me to retell their stories.

Georgia (Mackie) Burnette, RN, MSN. MS ED (Buffalo, New York)

I am an old Buffalonian, born, educated and residing in the Western New York state area for the past 70 years. There was a brief five-year "excursion" to Chicago during the early 1960s, but illness and death in my family brought me home again, and I've remained here happily amongst family, friends, and colleagues.

Following graduation from high school in 1946, I worked briefly at unskilled jobs, married in 1947, and shortly thereafter gave birth to a son, Dale. However, my goal of becoming a registered nurse surfaced again and I sought admission to three nursing schools within the city. At this time, to become a graduate nurse one was required to complete a three-year educational program at a hospital school of nursing. The graduate was then qualified to sit for the licensing examination leading to state registration. In several parts of the country, a few colleges offered a baccalaureate degree in nursing, but I certainly could not afford the tuition. The fact that I was married also became a deterrent, as I was soon to discover. At the time of inquiry to three or four schools of nursing, I might have been accepted into the County Hospital's program, but their policy excluded married applicants.

The remaining schools simply did not admit Black students. Their policy of rejection was common knowledge within the Black community. However, I was brave enough to speak to the admissions clerk in the school office of the hospital where I was employed as a nursing aide. I will NEVER forget her smile as she shook her head to indicate that I could not expect to be admitted to *their* school of nursing. Undaunted, I began to search for a school as close to Buffalo, New York, as possible.

Although I was married and mother of a four year old, my commitment to becoming a registered nurse did not falter. That my marriage was floundering badly only moved me to increase my efforts to locate a school. My parents were supportive and not only offered to cover my tuition, but also agreed to care for my son while I was in school. I soon discovered that the Lincoln Hospital School for Nurses in the Bronx in New York City was the nearest school to Buffalo to accept Black applicants. Founded in 1896, it was an all-Black school with tuition of \$278 including room and board for the three years. This was a princely sum of money at the time for a working class family in a blue-collar town. Also, I'd be required to relocate, and this was to be my first time away from home except for short vacations. Nevertheless, I applied and was accepted. I closed my flat and my parents assumed care of my son. I entered nursing school in New York City, September 1950.

The Bronx wasn't Manhattan, but for me, this was the big city! Yet I was to see little of the outside world due to the demanding curriculum. The classes in anatomy/physiology, microbiology, and chemistry were rigorous, and there was also a requirement to learn the hands-on aspect of nursing. We began our first practicum three months later, newly outfitted in blue and white uniforms and black stockings, providing basic care for patients in the adjacent hospital. A major problem for me, however, was being away from home. I missed my family and the transition from home to school and dormitory living proved difficult.

As the academic period drew to a close, but prior to capping ceremonies, I learned from my mother that a new collegiate program in nursing had begun at the University of Buffalo (now SUNY, Buffalo). Despite the fact that four years seemed a lifetime as compared to the twenty-eight months remaining in the current program, I never

hesitated. I returned home and shortly thereafter was accepted into the university's school of nursing, September 1951. *This was absolutely the very best decision I've made in my entire lifetime!*

Racial overtones still prevailed in Buffalo. Nevertheless, during student affiliations in the very hospitals that denied me admission, I was warmly welcomed as a University of Buffalo student! One overt act of racism did occur when I was denied an affiliation to a small community hospital located in a town north of Buffalo. I later learned that this lumber town had at one time been a seat of major Ku Klux Klan activity, hence their views on minorities (Lay, 1995). The affiliation was completed, however, in a similar hospital thirty miles away where everyone was friendly and helpful. *I truly enjoyed that experience.*

It appears, though, that some things do change over time. I've been a participant in the cardiac rehabilitation exercise program of the northtown's hospital for the past three years. As I related the story of discrimination to the young, white exercise physiologists and nurses, they shook their heads with surprise and disbelief. Yet today, few Black Americans live in this town, there are few minority employees in the hospital, and I am the lone African American patient in the cardiac rehabilitation program. Some things just take longer to change.

Upon completion of the university program in 1955, I entered the (subtly) segregated nursing community with a Bachelor's degree in Nursing, a rarity in the 1950s. The adage, *for all the wrong reasons, the right thing was done*, was certainly true in my case. In spite of being denied admission to their schools, I stumbled into a collegiate program providing a foundation that assisted in my rise through the ranks of the nursing profession and helped in achieving lifetime goals.

Looking back, my career has been enjoyable for the most part, and I was

fortunate to have been selected for the majority of positions I sought to attain. I enjoyed stints in all the "fast services" (emergency and operating rooms, labor and delivery suites, newborn nursery) before returning to graduate school for Master's degrees in education and nursing. I was appointed assistant professor of nursing at Niagara University, Assistant Administrator for Nursing at Roswell Park Memorial Institute, one of the prestigious cancer hospitals in the country, and retired as director of nursing from a New York State Mental Health facility in 1993. Retirement is fulfilling and I have embarked upon a second career as a freelance writer.

**Willye Tillman, RN, BS,
CRNA (Chicago, Illinois)**

Willye was a 1951 graduate from Chicago's Provident Hospital School of Nursing, an all-Black hospital founded in 1891. Her applications to white hospital schools had been denied, although she was advised to apply at a later time. Their quota of two Black students

per class (to share bathroom and sleeping facilities) had been filled. She later learned the skin color of those accepted was "light, bright, and almost white."

Following graduation and licensure, Willye moved to New York City to work in the recovery room of a large New York hospital. In 1956, she applied to three Chicago schools for training as a nurse anesthetist. At one facility, as she headed for the operating room for an interview, she was asked, "Where are you going?" Upon learning the reason (and discerning her color), she was told forthwith, "We have no openings."

Willye was denied admission to several other schools of anesthesia before acceptance into St. Francis Hospital's School of

Anesthesia in Peoria, Illinois. When her Black roommate from the South failed to attend, she shared facilities with the white female students in the convent. For the time, the composition of the class was a major departure from the norm. Willye was the oldest and only Black student in her class, while a female Chinese student further integrated the small group of eight aspiring scholars.

Incidents of racism were few in the school setting, although physicians were often biased in their comments and actions. Movement throughout the city of Peoria was, however, another matter. Restaurants were not opened to Blacks. Once when crossing the street, she was told "N*****, go back to Mississippi."

Willye graduated in 1957 from St. Francis Hospital's School of Anesthesia in Peoria, Illinois. Upon her return to Chicago, she applied to three hospitals, but all reported that they had no openings. Race was definitely a factor at a private dental office where she was denied employment. This area of the city was an all white, upper-class neighborhood where Blacks were permitted to enter only as domestics, maintenance workers, or laborers. In one employment interview, she initially was cordially received; however, it soon became clear that she would not obtain the position. She recalls: "He exhibited a very condescending demeanor which spoke volumes and seemed to imply, 'How dare you come here for an interview!' He indicated he was looking for a 'more experienced professional,' and that other applicants were being considered." Willye was not requested to call back, nor advised that notification would be forthcoming about the position.

Shortly thereafter, Willye secured positions at two Gary, Indiana, hospitals where she remained from 1957-77 (St. Francis 1957-67 and later, Gary Methodist Hospital from 1967-77). But over the years, the 30-45 minute commute from Chicago to Gary and back again proved exhausting; thus, in 1977 she sought a position closer to home.



Willye Tillman (1951)

While being interviewed at an Oak Lawn, Illinois, facility, Willye was advised that a prominent local Catholic hospital might offer a position more suited to her needs.

Her employment at Holy Cross Hospital in 1977 began during Chicago's violent civil rights struggle for social equality. The facility was located in Marquette Park, another all-White neighborhood from which Dr. Martin Luther King had been evicted on numerous occasions as he and his supporters campaigned for minority rights. To enter that neighborhood, Black folk understood that they risked life and limb. But Willye accepted the challenge and the position, remaining at the hospital without incident until her retirement in 1984.

During those years Willye became active in the Illinois Association of Nurse Anesthetists and was elected its President from 1978-79, the first and only Black professional to hold that position. Today, she works with worldwide service organizations that seek to improve the legal, political, economic, and professional status of women. She says with a smile, "I've had a good life,



Willye Tillman (1980s)

an interesting career, and am enjoying a satisfying and rewarding retirement."

Wilma (Brady) Watts, RN, MSN (Flint, Michigan)

Wilma graduated from high school in Flint, Michigan, in 1953. She developed an interest

in nursing following her sister, Mary, who had entered nurses training in 1950. At that time, Mary, aware that hospitals in Flint would not admit Black students to their schools of nursing, simply applied to an all-Black school in St. Louis, Missouri. In the meantime, however, the Flint Urban League had worked diligently and successfully towards paving the way for an open admissions policy at the various schools of nursing. By 1953, when Wilma and her cousin, Sharon Simpson, sought admission to Hurley Hospital's School of Nursing, both were quietly accepted. Nevertheless, they were aware that one factor weighing heavily towards their acceptance was that the two could share bathroom and sleeping facilities in the student dormitory.

The nursing school experience was unmarred by overt racism; however, many of their classmates from the upper peninsula of Michigan had never met a black person, and asked, "Do Blacks run so fast because they have narrower heels?" Or, "We've always been told that Blacks have tails. Is that true?" Wilma commented, "My classmates were friendly and cooperative, yet some were more 'standoffish' than others. I soon became involved in student nurse activities, was elected class secretary and later class president. When we attended regional conferences, we shared rooms with White students without any problems whatsoever."

Wilma and Sharon graduated from Hurley Hospital's School of Nursing in 1956. Following graduation, Wilma remained at the hospital as an operating room nurse for a short time before moving to San Francisco. She entered Michigan State University, East Lansing, in 1958 to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing.

It was during this period that Wilma experienced an appalling episode of discrimination while working part-time in the operating room of a local hospital. Her assignment was to "scrub" (i.e., pass instruments, sutures, and sponges to the



Wilma Watts (1956)

medical team during a surgical procedure). One morning, things were moving along smoothly until the surgeon arrived. When he saw Wilma, he demanded angrily, "What is *she* doing here? I don't want her to scrub for me." He continued this tirade by throwing instruments on the floor, loudly voicing his displeasure. Staff from adjacent rooms slipped quietly in to watch his display of ill humor and bad taste. When the O.R. supervisor arrived, she listened, quietly remarked to the surgeon, "She's your scrub nurse today," then turned and left the room. *And that was the end of that!* But it was a most disturbing incident Wilma recalls with emotion, one that *she will never forget.*

After receiving her undergraduate degree in 1960, Wilma assumed the position of director of in-service education at Hurley Hospital until 1962 when she entered graduate school at Wayne State University. Upon receiving her Master's of Science in Nursing, Wilma joined the faculty of the School of Nursing of Wayne State University. It was there she met Henry Watts, a professor of sociology. They were married and eventually settled in Buffalo, where both joined the faculty of their respective disciplines at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

During her twenty years on the faculty of the School of Nursing at SUNY/Buffalo, Wilma held the positions of Assistant Professor of Nursing and Assistant to the Dean. From 1980-1984, she established and directed a \$522,000 federally funded program for the recruitment and retention of disadvantaged students. When the grant ended, Wilma recommended that a position be created and funded within the School of nursing to continue the work of the program. However, it was not until 1988 that the post of Assistant to the Dean was established. Wilma was appointed to the position with release time from teaching duties so the new responsibilities could be undertaken. During

this time, she also published several articles that described the program.

In 1991, Wilma retired and, with the appointment of a new dean, the position was eliminated. Minority recruitment for the various schools is now a university-wide program. Wilma feels strongly that this is not the best approach, that working with these students who are often from a disadvantaged background requires an "up close and personal approach" that cannot be provided and sustained in the larger programs. It seems the need is there, but the commitment to



Wilma Watts (2002)

increasing minority representation in the School of Nursing is lacking.

Bronte Blenman Mostiller, RN, BSN (New York, New York)

Bronte was a 1949 graduate of a local Buffalo high school who soon discovered that employment for unskilled high school graduates was difficult to obtain. She commented, "I couldn't find work anyplace although I scoured the entire downtown area seeking positions in the retail clothing field. But I was told each time: 'Sorry, there's nothing available.'"

Bronte was successful, however, in finding employment at Sister's Hospital in the maintenance department. The assignment to



Bronte Mostiller (1953)

the workroom of the operating room was interesting, but she was soon asked to replace a worker on maternity leave. Mopping the operating room floors was not the work Bronte envisioned, and within the week she resigned. She recalls, "Finally, I found work as a domestic for a dentist's family for a short period of time. But my goal was to become a nurse, and I sent applications (with photograph) to nursing schools within the city. I guess I must have led a sheltered life, because I'd somehow missed the fact that Black students were not accepted to most local hospital schools of nursing. The exception was the City Hospital, *if their quota had not been filled*. I really felt bad. I thought I was not bright enough or smart enough."

An older friend and registered nurse said to Bronte: "Forget it. Apply to a Black school. Apply to Lincoln, where I trained." She took her advice, all the while praying, "Dear Lord, just let me get into school and you'll never see me in this city again."

In 1950 Bronte entered Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing and graduated three years later. She found employment immediately and specialized in maternity and pediatric nursing for her entire career.

Bronte received her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from St. Johns University in 1971 and remained in New York City for

the next thirty-three years. She retired in 1986 from Maimonides Medical Center, New York City, and later that year returned home to Buffalo, New York. Shortly thereafter, she married a native Buffalonian, Carl Mostiller.

Since retirement, Bronte has remained active in the community and has become an avid genealogist. She and her husband have researched and successfully identified descendants from the early 1800s. Looking back, Bronte says, "I loved and enjoyed my career in nursing, mainly because I was fortunate to work with a group that were like family. I was not denied promotions or raises, and moved easily into nursing supervision as positions became available in maternity and pediatrics."

Conclusion: Reflection on Social Equality in 2004

There is absolutely no doubt that we've come a long way toward righting the wrongs of racism, sexism, and the low status of the nursing profession. *But we still have a long way to go.* Race still counts, and will continue to do so for untold generations.

On August 28, 1963, speaking in Washington, D.C., on the steps of the memorial of the president who had abolished slavery a century before, Martin Luther King Jr. described his vision of a society in which barriers to Black equality were removed: "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (quote retrieved from www.quotationspage.com). My own dream in 2004 is the belief that the only way the issues of race might vanish or diminish appreciably will be when the races intermingle to the extent that racial features and colors are not readily discernable. Perhaps then, one can be accepted upon his/her credentials, character, and/or demonstrable work ethic.

The glass ceiling remains firmly intact for the professional woman seeking entrance into



Bronte Mostiller (2002)

the higher echelons of the corporate world and their respective boardrooms. Occasionally, a few of the smart and the brave will be permitted to slip through, but sexism is still an issue to be confronted. At the lower end of the spectrum, women are still slated to perform the menial tasks of the world. Thus for Black Americans and women of all races, colors, and creeds, hear me when I say, "*Credentials are Essential.*" You need education, brains, and chutzpah to make it in this world.

The problems facing the nursing profession today are the quantity and age of the workforce, staffing and quality of care, salaries, unionism, shift work, and marketing of the profession. In years past, women were restricted to teaching, nursing, social work, and clerical positions. But now the door is wide open and opportunities abound in most areas of the labor force. It's been a tough sell to persuade the young women of today to choose a profession where evening and night shifts are a given until you reach the managerial, educational, or certified clinical practice hierarchy of the profession.

Due to the 1964 Civil Rights Act enacted in the decade after *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, minority nurses cannot be refused admission to a school of nursing. The problem now (as before) is whether the applicant is educationally qualified. Obtaining an adequate elementary and high school education in most inner cities is one of the Black community's greatest challenges. Reading, writing, and arithmetic remain the cornerstones of a basic education. Yet, because of the country's "social promotion" policies over the past several decades, students graduate from high school ill equipped to enter college. One has only to witness the plethora of remedial courses in the freshman curriculum to see that we are not educating our children to enter the mainstream of society. While President Bush mouths the slogan, "No Child Will Be Left Behind," he has cut educational funding and

is currently attempting to revamp the Head Start Programs (translate: push funding costs off to the already financially strapped states).

The problems facing minority nurses today are not the overt denials to recognize, honor, and promote, but the subtle, covert actions more difficult to document and quantify. Sometimes racial attitudes are so embedded that perhaps the person is not totally aware of core beliefs that influence his/her decisions. Look around you. How many minority nurses have been appointed to the highest administrative and top educational posts throughout the country? I grant you other factors weigh in, but it appears the glass ceiling is also operative at lower levels of the occupational ladder.

Nursing organizations created to promote professionalism within the field mirrored the workplace. After the American Nurses Association (ANA) began accepting Black nurses in 1951, it took only twenty years for Black nurses to again form their own professional organization. Feeling their needs were not being addressed and noting the lack of minority nurses in leadership positions within the ANA, a small group formed the National Black Nurses Association in 1971, which continues to flourish today.

Having been retired for over ten years, I no longer hold memberships in the local, state, and national nursing organizations. Thus, I can't specifically speak to whether the lack of minority nurses in leadership positions in those organizations continues today. However, as in the larger society, I believe improvements continue to be made. Minorities in the United States continue to overcome the barriers in our path to equal employment, housing, and education. It has been a long, difficult struggle, yet we continue to fight the good fight. We must continue to work within our health care system, even when it is in shambles, and within other established systems to promote social equality. We also can emulate our early

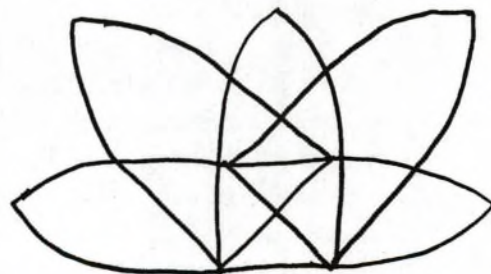
leaders by initiating and developing *alternative alliances* to better meet our needs. And we must preserve our history. As Althea Davis (1999) has observed: "The value of knowing one's history, its context within American history, and the leaders that shaped the profession inclusively as it grew, instills a pride about the leaders who made it possible for Black women to have access to success. *We did not merely arrive on our own*" (p. vii).

End Note

Preparation of this paper has been a revelation to me. I was educated in a university school of nursing at a time when issues of race were not discussed. Colleagues from minority nursing schools smiled and nodded knowingly when I mentioned readings that described the struggle by Black women to enter the profession. Their history of nursing classes had exposed them to these early conflicts. I have always loved history, thanks to the wonderful instructors who taught this fascinating subject, and I have thoroughly enjoyed this foray into the stories of early nursing.

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A BEGINNING PROFESSIONAL'S JOURNEY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK

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The following narrative is a discussion of the experiences of the author's ascent into the profession of social work shortly after the passage and implementation of civil rights legislation. The beginning experiences helped shape the social work philosophy and practice of the author. The lessons learned are the need for equality in the work place and the impact that older workers' workplace behaviors make on impressionable young workers.



The author during her employment at the child welfare agency

This narrative discusses my experiences within two social service agencies that were created under a segregated society and poised to address the changes demanded by the passage of civil rights legislation. The legislation was pivotal in the desegregation of facilities and services. This article is important because it focuses on the social service agencies that are associated with the profession of social work. Today, social work education programs address issues of social equality and justice as they train helpers in the profession. However, these reflections offer a perspective of the professional climate existing in the early 1970s in social services for me—an African American. [In this article, African American and Black are used interchangeably.]

Personal Background

During my twelfth year of life I chose my profession—social work. Specifically, I wanted to be an adoption worker who found homes for needy children. I did achieve this goal. However, in my youthful immaturity, I believed that these children and families would live happily ever after, achieving a storybook ending. Ironically, the variety of placement situations available to these children did not consciously resonate with me even though I am a product of an extended family in which both formal and informal adopted children were plentiful. In addition, my family bound-

aries were penetrable, as I had many fictive kin as well.

Further, I am a child of the 1960s—the civil rights era. As a young high school student, I decided not to participate in integrating the White public schools. My friends and I were quite comfortable and happy with our school. We believed that we were receiving a good education despite the inherent inequalities in the school system. We had excellent, committed teachers and many social supports that allowed us to demonstrate leadership in our schools and communities. The reason we supported the civil rights movement was to freely obtain access to all of life's potential opportunities. It was our belief that all opportunities should be available to all people. Furthermore, both individuals and society have a collective responsibility for the quality of life of the society's citizens. The tenets of social work support the circular notion that individuals affect society and that society (institutions) affects individuals (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 1997).

I believe my family's beliefs and my experiences during the 1950s and 1960s determined my worldview by shaping my sense of fairness, equality, and responsibility to make social changes. Schiele (2000) defines worldview as "the overarching mode through which people interpret events and define reality. It is a racial or ethnic group's psychological orientation toward life" (p.1).

Growing up, we listened to the radio to hear how the latest civil rights struggle was faring—cheering loudly at any achievements made. We marched with the NAACP youth; we sang protest songs during lunch hour at school; we debated both at home and at school the merits of the civil rights struggle. My belief in equality, fairness, and doing what is right was intense. It is probably these early experiences that propelled me to consciously choose social work as my profession. During my graduate school experience, one of my field instructors described me as having “an intense sense of human rights and dignity.” These are the words we hear used in social work to describe the value base of the profession. In fact, some see the intensity demonstrated in one’s commitment to social change as imbued by a strong sense of spirituality, especially in the African American community. My intense emotions were the results of my own family’s strong connection with spirituality. My family view was that difficult times required the backing of your “God”—and your “God” was able to give you the strength to change yourself as well as others. In the Black helping tradition, spirituality tends to supercede religiosity (Martin & Martin, 2002). The church and religion played a significant role in the attainment of Black civil rights.

The following reflections explain how my entry into the field of social work helped me anchor myself as a teacher, consultant, change agent, planner, and advocate (these are the roles that my graduate education in social work taught me as I became an “autonomous social work practitioner”). My family’s influence and my personal experiences provided the foundation for my choosing social work as a profession. These same qualities are the ones that influenced my thinking about and participation in the civil rights movement. These experiences were significant in shaping who I am as a social worker.

Early Job Experiences

My reflections include two early job experiences at the undergraduate level. This is the point when I first saw myself becoming a social worker (social services worker). Upon earning my bachelor’s degree, I sought a job in social services and became a juvenile probation officer. I was emboldened by my undergraduate experiences in understanding and striving for an equitable society. As a student at a predominately Black university, addressing social issues was an essential part of my education. I participated in the marches for movements such as the Welfare Rights Organization, the Poor Peoples Campaign, and student protests about social inequalities. Obtaining a job in the social services field seemed to be a natural extension of my belief, and this achievement began my career as a social worker. I was eager to make a contribution to society and saw my background as being sufficient to do so.

Domestic and Juvenile Relations Court

After completing undergraduate school at age 20, I returned to my hometown to look for employment. I was interested in social work but was told that entering teaching might be easier. As a result, I went to the school system to apply for a job. There I met with the person in charge of social work for the school system. After an interview, I was referred to the supervisor of the probation officers at the juvenile court, as the supervisor at the schools knew that a position was available there and knew the court supervisor well. The supervisor at the school system was a White man and the supervisor at the court system was a Black woman. At the time, I was unaware of the segregated work policies at the court.

However, I was excited about working with young people (especially young Black females) who were referred to the court for a variety of offenses, from status crimes to murder. I really thought I could make a difference. A cordial work relationship existed be-

tween the Black and White workers, but there was little opportunity for professional interaction. The Black workers took me under their wings and supported me through my first professional job. This environment was very supportive despite the segregation, and, as a newly-minted worker, I initially focused on the help I received rather than segregation and other inequalities in the workplace.

The judges at the court were White, but many of the lawyers handling cases there were Black. I developed good working relationships with the Black lawyers—most notably, the Black state senator and first Black governor of the state, who later gave me a reference when I applied to graduate school. My work on his senatorial campaign was my first organized attempt at that level of politics. I avoided problems with the judges, as my supervisor made sure I prepared my work so well that seldom did questions arise about my recommendations; when they did, my supervisor discussed with me how we could have handled the case differently and taught me to anticipate what reactions might be to certain cases.

The following are descriptions of the workers with whom I developed a close professional relationship while at the court.

Worker Descriptions

PN was the supervisor of the Black unit of probation officers. She was a very pleasant woman with a young family consisting of her husband and three children. She appeared to be in her mid-30s. During our weekly supervision meetings, her children's pictures were prominently displayed. She would share some of their milestones and antics with me. She told me that I reminded her of herself when she first began her career. She was an excellent supervisor; she challenged me to analyze my cases and also presented theories and scenarios for me to consider when counseling my clients. She provided opportunities for training and was supportive of my work. I felt very comfortable talking to her

about my cases. If one could have chosen the perfect supervisor for a first job, she was it.

HG was the only other Black female worker besides me in the unit. The other four workers were Black males. HG was pregnant at the time with her first child and was probably feeling somewhat maternal toward me. She was a protector to me, telling me the little things that I needed to watch for at the job. She seemed genuinely happy that I, as a young African American woman, had the opportunity to work this job. She was probably in her early to mid-30s.

RL was the most senior person in the unit. He was probably in his 50s. He was very supportive as well. He would tell stories of how things had been at the court and other situations that affected social services in the city. He had extensive experiences in social services. He was a sage. We attended a graduate class together while I was employed at the courts.

HC, the next most senior person, appeared to be in his 40s. He had a great sense of humor and teased me a great deal about my youth. His nickname for me was "Naïve Nellie." He had a lot of Naïve Nellie stories and would select one to tell when he wanted to make a point. Because I have an unusual sense of humor, I enjoyed these stories and they were a source of levity at a job that was quite serious. He encouraged me to go to school while I was still young because some of the older workers with families did not envision themselves going back to school at that stage in their life.

EH was an ambitious young man around 30. He was planning to attend law school, and after I left, I learned that he did indeed go to law school. He seemed to have the least patience with the "racism" as he saw it at the court. I believe he saw the younger workers at the court as having more opportunity to move on and not be "stuck" at doing probation work. I listened to him and his views; sometimes I agreed with him and other times

I did not. I enjoyed debating him. We both respected each other's viewpoints.

JJ was the next youngest to me. He was about 25. He and I talked more about our careers. He thought the court could do more, and questioned why decisions were made when they did not make sense to him. He and I had the most in common as we shared some friends and were contemporaries. Through our discussions, we ultimately were led to challenge the segregation at the courts.

Analysis of Job Experience at Juvenile Court

At times the job was very challenging as I had a very high caseload. This large caseload meant that I had to work very hard to complete my court reports on time. In addition, the caseloads were segregated by race and gender, meaning that I was assigned exclusively to clients who were Black females. Because more Blacks than Whites were referred to the court, this caused a disproportionate number of Black youth to be involved in the juvenile court system. This is a concept now referred to as overrepresentation of racial groups in certain social systems. After discussing the inequalities at the court with JJ, we agreed that the workload was unfair and wondered why this organization still supported segregated practices. After all, this was 1970!

JJ and I believed that we had not only the responsibility but also the right to change society to be more equitable, so we decided to question this practice of segregation in a very public way. We lived in a Southern town that had a long history of discrimination and segregation, and it was our belief that the public just accepted the practice of segregation as routine. We took an opportunity during a court-sponsored public forum on the radio to raise the question of why the courts continued to support segregation. The judge who was conducting the forum stumbled through a response.

Upon arriving back at the court, the judge contacted our supervisor and we were called in and questioned about the public disclosure of the court's practice. Clearly we had embarrassed the courts. As awkward as our attempt was to confront this problem, it was an earnest attempt at advocacy as we saw ourselves as "championing the rights of individuals and communities" (Barker, 1996, p.11). As bold as we were in publicly identifying the problem and forcing the courts to address the issue, we were disturbed about how the desegregation actually happened. I do not remember staff being asked the best way to desegregate and whether workers had any problems working with persons of different races.

We achieved the goal of desegregation but did not participate in the decision-making process of how best to desegregate the courts. Years later, I better understood the social work practice of using a process to prepare persons for social change. Typically, a social worker applies the problem-solving model as a way to identify problems and determine solutions. This model requires an understanding of research principles as it seeks evidence that a certain solution is the one that might work in creating change. If this change does not work, then it is reevaluated or another test or solution is applied (Goldstein, 1995). More recently there has been a greater focus on the strengths-based perspective, which can help in solving human problems as it recognizes the strengths individuals, groups, and communities bring to the situation (Billingsley, 1968; Saleebey, 2002). This recognition allows individuals, groups, and communities to unearth their capacities to alleviate human problems. The tactic the courts used did not meet the standard of using an inclusive, problem-solving process to determine the best way to end segregation. Such a process could have been empowering for both the staff and community.

The helper is a conduit to assisting with the problem but does not own it. The empowerment model is one that allows the persons most affected by a problem to help pose the strategy and solutions to the problem (Solomon, 1976). Social work readily supports empowerment models. None of these principles was evident to me in this process of desegregation at the court. I believe my co-worker and I were empowered to change the court system's segregated practices by seizing an opportunity to highlight the problem. However, there were some questions that resonated for me: (1) Did desegregation change job opportunities for Blacks and Whites? (2) Did the courts believe any training was necessary for this transformation? (3) Did clients receive better services? This process taught me a valuable lesson: You can be the impetus for change but not necessarily an active participant in making the change.

My experience at the juvenile court was one of "cocooning." In my unit I received unconditional support that made it possible for me to feel successful as a professional. The workers had a great deal of faith in me and for a while kept up with me and my career. This was quite satisfying. I often thought of them when I faced difficult points in my career. I was a child to be protected on the one hand, and on the other hand an adult on the verge of making some life decisions that would have varying consequences for me. I had faith that I could make it. The support I received in this environment was probably more valuable than I realized as I moved on to another job. My colleagues prepared me to sometimes walk alone.

Child Welfare Intake

The next social work job I pursued was child welfare intake. This was a position that came available after an older Black man who held the job died unexpectedly. The desire of a socially active group in the community was to ensure that a Black person be considered for the vacancy. This socially active tactic was

not initiated to replace the gentleman who died with a Black person, but to ensure that Black applicants had access to the position. As a result, young Black college graduates were encouraged to take a state-required examination and pass it to become eligible for the position. Affirmative action was not yet in vogue. In fact, Blacks were not looking for any special consideration but simply wanted an opportunity to qualify and be hired if they met the criteria. I passed the exam, met the hiring requirements, and became a child welfare intake worker. This job helped me realize my childhood dream of working in adoptions.

This was another extremely challenging position. Not only was I a new employee, but I was the only minority in the unit as well as its youngest worker. Being 22 years-old in a unit that had all White workers was an awesome experience as a beginning professional in child welfare. I was five years younger than the youngest worker and about forty years younger than the oldest worker. My perception of each worker was important to my development as a social worker. I believe these relationships began to significantly shape my view of social work and impacted my beliefs about civil rights and its relevance to social work. This was not my first experience with White people, as I had attended integrated schools when as a child I lived in the Midwest. I did have significant life experiences as a Southerner as well.

I did have the understanding that on this job I had to make it on my own and prove my ability to others. I had a very supportive environment and family support, but there came a time when I realized that this was my job to do and to do it well. In this job I was more cautious and less relaxed. I came to learn that some of these workers had uninformed or unfair views about Black people. Being the only Black worker forced me to deal with these views. I went home angry sometimes, disappointed, but not ready to give up. I had friends with whom I discussed these prob-

lems and I believed we were still energized by our work in civil rights and social justice. We knew this work would not be easy. I still had hope that things would change for the better for Blacks in the United States. The people I worked with in this job again helped shape my view of equality and social justice. Their personal descriptions follow.

Worker Descriptions

PD, the supervisor of the unit, was an older White woman who had white hair that was rinsed with bluing, a fashion practice of the day. She was a stout woman with a good sense of humor. She once told me that when a person reaches her age he/she no longer needed "laurels or morals." She was retired from the military and enjoyed talking about her experiences. I had a great-aunt who had also served in the military and I am sure this helped pique my interest in PD. When she was upset, she could use some colorful words. She also had a deep commitment to Black people. She had worked with some Black families for a number of years. In fact, I learned recently that she left her estate to a Black woman with whom she enjoyed a good relationship. I believed her to be inherently fair and supportive in my work and development.

Even though I believed her to be fair and an open person, PD would say some things that I perceived as racist. An incident that stands out in my mind happened one day when a colleague and I were going to lunch. The supervisor seemed to like us both. My colleague was a light-complexioned Black woman who was often mistaken for White. We were both young and single. Using skin color among Blacks to determine status was a common practice. The supervisor suggested that since we were both single, we should go to a county just south of the city and find some nice light-skinned high school graduates to marry. We were both offended as we were college graduates and one of our criteria for marriageable mates did not require men to

be light-skinned. She never knew our reaction to her statement. Sometimes making a response to insensitivity is not necessary.

The above incident is an example of Pierce's (1970) concept of the Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress Syndrome (MEES). This theory refers to the many minor insults that Black people experience daily. It is the consistency of these insults that lead Blacks to experience undue stress that can ultimately lead to depression and other stress-related conditions.

PD supported me in my work when it was not always easy to do so politically. I often had different opinions and perceptions than the rest of the unit. My presence, as the only Black worker, challenged others on the staff to think differently, just as it challenged me to think and approach situations differently or with passion.

MM was an older White worker who was nearing retirement, and I felt that she had begun to distance herself from the workplace, as she often told stories about her grandchildren and was looking forward to retiring so she could spend more time with them. I felt she was the most distant with me. This was not necessarily negative but she had other concerns than work. We had a very limited relationship, although we did share a few cases together.

EB was an older worker as well who was quite thin and frail. She smoked cigarettes incessantly. Those were the days when smoking was allowed in the workplace. EB loved to tell stories of the old "First Families" of the state. She did not seem to notice that that these families were more than likely slaveholders. She was, however, a gifted storyteller. She wrote voluminous notes on her cases in beautiful handwriting. Most of us took brief notes and dictated our reports to the secretarial pool. EB remembered many interesting cases that she took time to tell us about. She introduced me to Welsh rarebit and popovers and prissy little teasshops. We really enjoyed these special lunches. She was

afraid of escalators and requested that I stand in front of her so she could ride them when we went to lunch. I learned to pay attention to detail from her. She marveled in the state's past history and seemed to wish that she had more status. She didn't seem to be aware that the history she loved was the history of pain for Black people.

MA was my nemesis. She was blatantly racist to me. She used the word "niggra" in my presence more than once, prompting me to ask her to say the word "Black" when referring to African American people. She appeared to revel in people's pain and suffering. She was a difficult person to understand. She actually preferred to work with Black people and tried to manipulate her way out of working with White people if they were poor. I finally surmised that she could not understand why Whites were poor, but she accepted Black people as being poor.

At one point, I realized I was working with mostly White people on my caseload and had to ask to get Black clients assigned to me, as I had entered into the field to assist Black persons as well. This was in total contrast to my situation at the courts when the cases were segregated. Sometimes life offers conundrums. MA continued her negativity up until the date I left the agency to attend graduate school. In fairness to MA, it was not just me who evoked her negativity—it seemed to be most Black people.

GN was the next youngest worker and the one with whom I had the best relationship. She was a Midwesterner, confident in her intellectual capacity, and assured that her beliefs were right. Her youth was certainly a unifying factor for us. Our supervisor dubbed us the "Mod Squad." This nickname came from a popular television show that depicted an interracial team of police officers. GN and I hardly saw anything the same way. She would share her stereotypes of Blacks and I would share mine of Whites. At first, she was shocked to realize that Black people had some unflattering beliefs about Whites. I think our

discussions allowed us to understand what perceptions existed in both communities. We discussed policies, politics, and other social issues of the day. I know we exasperated each other, but we maintained an open forum for these discussions. We both had our aspirations. She was involved with an older man and married him during my tenure at the agency. I was encouraged by my family, friends, and colleagues at the agency to pursue a Master of Social Work degree. We worked together for two years, and I was hired to work in the summer during my break from graduate school.

Analysis of My Job Experiences in Child Welfare

This agency was different from my first agency in that caseloads were not segregated. The process for case assignment was typically fair, in contrast to my first job where all assignments were made by race and gender. However, if we requested a specific case or substituted for a worker, we could get cases that would not be typically assigned to us. Each worker was assigned a day of the week and whatever cases came in on your day were assigned to you. The schedule rotated each week because Mondays and Fridays were high-volume days. The intake office not only dealt with poor people but with all people who had difficulties with their children, although most of the cases involved people who were poor. There were clear views about poverty and race at the agency.

All of the workers contributed both positively and negatively to my growth experiences while I was employed there. Older workers do provide a model for younger workers. However, younger workers must be able to critically assess what goes on in an agency and decide how they will develop professionally in, or in spite of, the work environment. These relationships affected me professionally because I decided to pursue macro social work as a result of my experiences at this agency. I wanted to have a greater role in

changing agencies and institutions and saw this happening through macro social work rather than micro social work. Institutional racism needs a macro focus as it is based on power and the ability to use it to effect change (Hamilton, 2001).

This job experience either changed my personality or brought out what was there already as I transformed from a rather shy person who realized that if I did not speak up for me and "my people," I would become angry or hostile. I often sought counsel from older Black workers in the agency on how to handle what I perceived as racism and social injustice. They would support me by observing and advising me on what to say and do. However, in the end, I had to make decisions for myself and accept the consequences. This was not an easy task. I stood at the crossroads and it was up to me to make a difference for the people with whom I worked, no matter what race they were. I felt very much responsible for representing my race in a favorable light. These tensions are ones that I do not perceive that majority workers face. Their successes and failures are their own and not those of the entire race. Hamilton (2001) asserts that White people's perception of color reflects ambivalence and contradiction.

Moving On

After two years of employment at this agency, I applied to graduate school at three prominent universities and was accepted at all of them. I chose to go to a school in the South, both because of its reputation and because of positive feedback from others who attended it. My graduate experience built on my beginning social work experiences. In some classes I felt I had a better understanding of the dynamics because of my work experience. This choice of school seemed right for me given its history with civil rights and the fact that right away we participated in an effort to elect the city's first Black mayor. The opportunity to meet and see prominent civil rights figures going about their daily lives was

inspiring. We felt so fortunate. Students often ate at a popular restaurant where all the civil rights leaders met and dined. We felt that we were watching and participating in the changing of history. Interestingly enough, my job experiences and graduate education provided me the opportunity to work with African American pioneers and exemplars and enhanced my ability to believe that the sky is the limit.

At the juvenile court, we were faced with a large number of Black youth charged with status crimes (running away and truancy), some acquiring juvenile records. It seemed that for many of these young people, a diversion program with counseling components was needed. I provided a number of services in the child welfare intake unit, such as protective services, out of town inquiries, and adoption home studies. At the child welfare agency, the transracial adoption controversy had not yet affected the system, but efforts were underway to recruit homes for Black children. Today, social justice and economic issues are more complicated and need both advocacy and cultural competence as a practice technique.

The agency supported my decision to attend graduate school and expected that I might return to be a supervisor at the agency. However, I chose a job in New England after my graduate studies.

Summary

As I look back on the 50 years since *Brown v. The Board of Education* and the 40 years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act, I recognize that many of us have traveled a very long and arduous road. Yet we have been able to see the effect of our work on both a community and a professional level. However, when it comes to understanding the basic rights of individuals and living by a code of conduct that honors human dignity and the assurance of economic and social justice, we have more road to travel.



Ruby Gourline shortly after her arrival at graduate school

These reflections allowed me to do what all good social workers are asked to do—assess ourselves so we may use ourselves effectively in the helping process. The fight for equality and economic and social justice requires tremendous use of self along with the inherent strengths that come from our ancestry. We are still expected to respect people's differences and yet, at the same time, not forget what is a very painful past for many American citizens. An important lesson for experienced social workers to learn is that their behavior affects young beginning-level professionals as they watch what those more experienced do. Using these observations as a guide, young professionals may become either good, competent social workers, or ineffective social workers.

This article serves as documentation of one social worker's experience in helping to desegregate social services, serving as a voice to the voiceless, and providing culturally relevant services. These experiences are useful to social work students—particularly African Americans students—who may need inspiration to believe that they, too, can make a difference in social work. The future of social work relies on all of us to be effective in what we do. To those who labored to make civil rights a reality and who used themselves to change the lives of people for the better, I dedicate this article.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Journey Begins

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Decision To Become a Social Worker

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social work was definitely the right profession for me.

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

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

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

The First Destination: Public Child Welfare

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interim Destinations: My First Steps into Academia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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(Endnotes)

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

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

BLACK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: A STUDENT'S REFLECTION ON RACIAL CONFLICT IN A BSW PROGRAM

Chrissy Lynn Davis, MSW Student, University of Denver

This narrative is a reflection about the author's recent encounter, as a young African American woman, with racial conflict in an undergraduate social work program at a predominately white university in the Midwest. This narrative tells not only the author's response to this racial conflict with one non-minority student, it also tells the story of the silence and complicity of the undergraduate program in letting this incident and similar derogatory incidents experienced by other students of color go unchallenged. This narrative suggests that, long after the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, racism continues—even in a social work education program.

As a young African American woman, I have grown up in a society where racially derogatory terms are "supposed" to be a thing of the past. It is no longer socially acceptable or politically correct for whites to refer to minorities in a racially degrading manner. However, with the recent trend of some African Americans referring to themselves by the "*N-Word*" (pronounced with an "a" instead of the "er" at the end), it becomes confusing for some white Americans. My own view always has been that the "*N-Word*" is inappropriate in any context, whether used by non-minorities or minorities. However, it was not until a classroom incident in my undergraduate social work education that I realized exactly how much weight that word carries, both past and present.

Before proceeding further, it is important to clarify the reason the offensive term in question is not being published in full. The editorial policy of *Reflections* requires that this racially derogatory term be referred to only through the use of "n*****," rather than spelling out the entire word. In my view, the unfortunate effect of this policy is that it disconnects readers from the emotions that I felt, which are of central importance to understanding my experiences and those of other students of color who have heard these types of derogatory terms in the course of our personal and professional lives.

I share my story because it is a recent incident of racial conflict. I hope that fellow social workers and colleagues in other helping disciplines can feel the pain that I went through because words do hurt, more than we think. And if we do not share our history with one another, then we cannot assist in improving the problem.

The Storm of a Word

At a predominantly white university I attended as an undergraduate, the ethnic minority population made up approximately 2% of the student population, and African Americans were less than .08%. The university acted as if they cared about the "at-risk populations" (apparently meaning anyone outside of the "norm") because they allowed minority student organizations to host a variety of consciousness-raising programs. However, attendance by the white administration, faculty, staff, and students was scarce at these programs.

I decided to take a course entitled "multiculturalism/diversity and social work" because I thought it would be a good learning experience. It was the first time that this course would be offered as an elective to students. Also, the course was to be taught by a professor of color. The course syllabus stated that students would learn in-depth history about minorities in America. The course was different from all of the other social work



Chrissy Davis, graduate social work student

courses because it specifically focused on "disadvantaged/at-risk" populations, which made it different from the "cookbook approach"¹ to diversity used in other courses. This course, in contrast, was intended to educate students on the historical content of race relations, gay/lesbian issues, and persons with disabilities, and to help students become aware of their conscious and subconscious biases, in order to best serve clients.

Following the first session, which focused on introductions and a discussion of classroom etiquette, the students began their voyage in learning about multiculturalism and diversity. I was extremely interested in the professor's instructions on classroom etiquette, which emphasized the importance of respecting one another, validating history, respecting peers' point-of-view, and asking questions if one was unclear about a subject matter. The overall importance of the classroom etiquette was to embrace similarities and respect differences.

The second session focused on the Native America/American Indian population. At the beginning of our discussion, the professor again reiterated the classroom boundaries. The professor then began the lecture in a unique manner, opening up the floor for discussion on the different stereotypes held about Native Americans. Students and the professor alike had the opportunity to share various mythologies about Native Americans/American Indians. The shared experience was progressing well until a white student in the class began making fun of the way Native American/American Indians spoke. Apparently, this was a form of mockery that people from the student's hometown did quite often. Initially, I did not know what the student was doing. It was not until later that I understood more clearly what the student was doing and why it was wrong.

The third week of class was focused on a discussion about African Americans. Once again, we began class by talking about the

various mythologies and stereotypes we had heard about African Americans. The students, including myself, began saying different things we had heard; yet, we kept in mind classroom etiquette. Unexpectedly, a firestorm was lit. The same white student who earlier had mocked Native Americans/American Indians used the term n***** in a phrase to refer to African Americans. The student did not direct the phrase at me *per se*; rather, the student used the term to refer to African Americans in general.

I sat there in this multicultural/diversity course for social workers dumbfounded because the truth had slapped me in the face. It was not as if I had never heard the term before or that I was naïve enough to believe that people do not make racist slurs anymore. However, all of us in the class were supposed to follow the same social work code of ethics that emphasizes the inherent value, dignity, and respect for all people. I believe that I took the statement so personally because I was the first and only African American in this BSW program; therefore, I knew the American historical context behind the word. The student's words made me initially feel helpless.

I never imagined that I would hear such a derogatory term from a social worker (or future social worker), so I sat angry, restrained, and feeling quite irrelevant. Perhaps I did not have the right to be upset since the term was not directed at me personally? Maybe it was okay since the class was discussing stereotypes and myths of ethnic minorities in America? However, the major difference between this particular student and the other students was that the rest of us used the euphemism "n-word" in order to respect one another. Finally, I wondered—perhaps the student really had racially derogatory beliefs?

The entire class sat there in silence. My white classmates looked at the floor, or one another, or at the professor. No one looked in my direction. I could feel the professor's

displeasure, as s/he glanced at me. I sat there observing the behavior of the other students, and I could smell the trouble in the air. In my heart, I knew that some students felt embarrassed—their faces screamed embarrassment—but the sense of mutual accountability, guilt, or shame was absent. Some students no doubt felt sympathetic for me, as an African American; however, their silence suggested that the racist words and behavior of a fellow white peer did not offend them. Perhaps this was because the statement was indirect (or general); or perhaps, they were in shock; or perhaps, as whites, they were not offended because they had never experienced derogatory racial comments directed at them or members of their racial and ethnic group. After approximately two minutes of uncomfortable silence (which felt like a lifetime), the class proceeded on, as if nothing had transpired.

During the remainder of the class, my mind reflected on the historical wrongs to African Americans. The first incident that popped into my head was the “Little Rock Nine.” In 1957, the Little Rock Nine referred to the first group of Black students to be admitted into Central High School, a public school in Little Rock, Arkansas, that previously had been segregated, as an all-white school. I thought more specifically about one student in particular, Minnijean Brown, who was kicked out of Central High School for dumping a bowl of chili on a white peer who had been harassing her. Now, I could understand how Minnijean was provoked to take such actions.

I then moved backwards and thought about the U.S. Supreme Court desegregation case that established Little Rock Nine, *Brown v. Board of Education*. I am grateful for the outcome of that decision because it is the reason why I could attend a predominantly white university. However, I soon learned that physical desegregation is not the equal to mental integration. After replaying several

historical events in my mind, my anger was replaced with frustration. Following this particular incident, I thought that the educational system was probably better off when it was segregated—yet, I knew better.

When class concluded for the night, I moved swiftly to my car. Once inside, I felt safe, so I cried. I was no longer crying for myself. My soul began to cry out for my grandmother, my ancestors, and other African Americans who had experienced racial hatred behind such an ugly word. For the remainder of the week, I went through a full cycle of emotions because I knew about the hatred that the *N-word* carried. I felt alone, sad, ashamed, and then irritated by the incident. I kept trying to analyze where the class discussion went wrong? And how was this different from the others?

The Final Outcome

The next class session was peculiar because no one other than the professor spoke. The entire class appeared apprehensive about participating in the current topic’s discussion. The professor ended class a little early that night, but before dismissing the students, the professor talked about the incident from the preceding week. The professor began by apologizing to the class for what happened.

The professor mentioned that s/he had spoke with the director of the BSW program and the director did not know what to do or say about what had occurred. The director stated that the professor should share what happen with other faculty colleagues and brainstorm solutions. The professor indicated that the only thing learned from faculty colleagues was that this was not the first time that a white student had referred to African Americans as n***** in this BSW program. Further, there were other times when faculty had not addressed these behaviors occurring in class. The difference between those earlier incidents and mine was that, previously, there

were no African American students in those courses.

There were several problems with how the course professor, the department director, and other faculty members responded to this incident. First, the professor apologized to the entire class before apologizing to me. Yes, the entire class was indirectly affected in a roundabout way, but I was the one most directly affected because the comments were against my ethnicity. (There was a part of me that felt empathy for the professor. As the only African American and one of three students of color in the program, I could relate to the course professor in terms of race relations, since the professor was only one of two professors of color in the social work department. I also found it ironic that the professor assumed responsibility for "fixing" the problem that, perhaps, the professor was not trained to handle. I assumed that directors of programs were well-equipped with tools for this type of problem solving. I wondered if perhaps the director did not feel comfortable addressing a situation involving race or racism because the director was from the majority race.)

Second, the professor waited until the end of class to talk about the problem, instead of making it a priority for the beginning of class. Third, apparently neither the program director nor faculty had a plan for addressing racial conflict in the program, whether occurring among students, faculty, or staff. It was hard for me to understand how leaders and educators in the profession could not have a plan for resolving racial conflict. Situations like these are kind of like that saying, "expect the worse—hope for the best," which simply means, be prepared. Fourth, although the director was made aware of what had occurred, I was never contacted to make sure that everything was okay, or even asked if I were still interested in the program. The lack of accountability on the part of the students, faculty, and administrators could have altered

my perspective on the social work profession. And in the end, that could have persuaded me to change professions. Lastly, to hear that a similar situation had occurred in previous classes made me upset. I could not believe that a profession that teaches conflict resolution and values fighting social injustices would allow such indecent behavior to occur within the classroom.

After the professor voiced his/her concerns regarding how racial insults previously had been handled in the BSW program, the professor turned to me and apologized. The professor expressed sorrow about "the confusion" and said that s/he could not even imagine how this would change my life, both personally and professionally. The professor also apologized to the entire class for not handling the situation sooner, stating that the professor felt uncertainty about where or how to begin the conversation.

I accepted the professor's apology. Yet, I was perplexed about the word "confusion" because I felt that the incident was much more than that. However, I decided not to harp on the terminology. After the professor finished, I chose to share with the class how I felt about the situation. I told my peers that this one incident changed my perception toward social work. I looked at the white student who had made the comment straight in the eyes and said, "If you would have said that word around the Chrissy from six months to a year ago, you would have been picking your teeth up off the floor. Yet, I have changed and for the betterment of myself. When you said that word, I found myself speechless because I could not believe that a fellow social work student would use such horrible language." I told my peer that the word n***** is full of hate, and it is used by whites to make African Americans feel inferior.

My white peer sat there looking guilty as charged. When I mentioned that the "old me" previously would have responded to that type of language with physical retaliation, the

student began to cry. I think that the student cried because of the realization that the word would have evoked a violent response, had the incident occurred a few months ago. If the student previously did not know the impact of the *N-word* on an African American, the student certainly knew it now. I concluded by stating to the white student, "Somewhere in my heart I have empathy for you because you do not know the extent of your words. The old saying about 'sticks and stones' is not true because words do hurt. No scab will ever cover the wound I endured from hearing a fellow social work student use such a vulgar word."

I thought that the student would have apologized then, but the student did not. The apology only came later—much later. After speaking directly to my peer, I turned to the rest of the class.

"You all let me down. We are taught in social work to respect and fight social injustices. And I want to know how can you fight social injustices for your clients, if you cannot stand up for a peer? You all know me, you all have been in classes with me for over two years, and you allowed another social worker to degrade African Americans. I figure, if you cannot defend a colleague, then how can you stand up for your 'disadvantaged/at-risk' clients?"

It took a minute for someone in the class to step up to the plate. Nonetheless, someone did and said that s/he felt bad about the situation. This peer (another white student) stated that s/he did not know what to say after the other white student made the comment. The peer said that s/he felt embarrassed and compassion for me because s/he had not a clue about how I felt. After the first student spoke, other students became involved, which made the student who made the racial slur feel worse. Finally, that student broke down and apologized to me for the comment. In my heart of hearts, however, I knew that the student did not mean it because, afterwards,

even as we encountered each other around campus, the student never acknowledged my presence again.

After the Storm

I am proud that I let everyone in class know how I felt. Initially, I was hesitant to share this anger. I did not want to fit into the typical portrayal of black women, which is perceived by many white Americans as ANGRY. I accepted the fact that on that night I changed several of my peers' insight as to who I am; but I no longer cared. My intention was to prevent this from happening to another social work student of color. I left class that night with my head held high. I did not rush out to my vehicle this time. Oh no, I strolled with pride because I had empowered myself.

There was tension in my classes for the remainder of the year. I had several social work students come up to me and ask what happened. And then, there were students who spoke to me frequently prior to the incident who hardly said two words to me or ever spoke to me again. I believe that the students in the program were split on how they felt about me. I overheard some students say that they thought I was violent because I stated how the "old Chrissy" would have reacted, but I heard no acknowledgment of how I had changed. I fought back mentally because it would have caused me more professional damage to fight back physically. I did not give in to the anger, but I used that emotion as a tool to better my personal and professional growth.

The remainder of my senior year was awkward. I always felt like an outcast in the social work program; however, I began to feel the wrath after the incident. Some students and professors began to treat me differently. I can recall three separate occasions after that night when I knew I was being treated differently because of what had happened. The first occurred the following day when I walked into one of my morning classes, which

had several of the same students from the previous night, and they were discussing the incident with other students. The small groups hushed when I walked into class. Another example was the professor for this particular morning course. This was someone with whom I thought I had a good rapport. However, the professor did not look me in the eye for several weeks following the verbal altercation. A final example was a comment from an older white student who asked me, "Why do ethnic minority students feel they can walk around campus with an attitude?"

I was baffled by this comment because I was making an effort to apologize for what happened the night before out of respect for my elders. I was raised in a family where I was taught to respect my elders. In my family, children and young adults are taught to respect older adults, and if you do disrespect an older adult you must apologize for your discourteous conduct. I stated to this older student, "I am not the spokesperson for ethnic minorities on this campus. You should take this up with the persons with whom you are having the problem." I was puzzled and angered by this older student's comment. That was the moment that I realized I would never "fit-in" with some of my white peers. Initially, I tried to "fit-in" and befriend all the social work students. However, I resolved a long time ago that I would never jeopardize my blackness (or my heritage) just to "fit-in."

The final outcome was that I found my passion in the field of social work, which is to educate and advocate. I have moved forward in my life and I am currently pursuing my master's degree in the field of social work. One day, I hope to teach at the college level in a school of social work, in addition to obtaining my doctorate degree.

The Cycle Continues

Initially, I was hesitant to share my story because of my love for the profession. I did not want to embarrass the profession, the

college institution, or the BSW program because that was the bridge that crossed me over. I had to sit down and seriously weigh out the pros and cons of such a narrative. During my deliberation, I decided to contact the director of the BSW program I attended.

I wrote in the email that I was considering sharing the racial incident that had occurred in my undergraduate studies. I asked the director why I was never contacted after the director had learned about what had taken place. I also inquired further about whether similar occurrences had happened to other students of color in the BSW program. The director of the program wrote back immediately, stating that s/he had heard about the verbal altercation in the classroom, but wanted to give the professor a chance to resolve the situation. The director indicated, however, that if the professor did not resolve the dilemma, then it would be left up to director to address it. The director mentioned that another incident had occurred in her/his class the night before I wrote my email. In a course taught this year (2003) by the director of the program, a white student had used a racially derogatory term in the presence of students of color. The director asked *me* what steps should be taken to resolve the situation.

I stated that the director, as the professor of the course, should speak with the class as a whole, advising them of classroom civilities and the NASW Code of Ethics that each signed their names on. Finally, I told the director that, if I were still a BSW student in the program, I would have liked for the director to acknowledge that the incident occurred through a phone call or a meeting. I said that I believe that it may be helpful to the students of color (currently in the program) if the director met with them, either individually or as a group to validate their feelings.

After much thought and reading the emails from my former BSW program director, I knew what I had to do. I decided that it was time to share the story experienced by many

students of color, whether it is on an implicit or explicit level. I realized that I am not writing a narrative solely about my racial experience, but I am also describing the negative racial experience of other students of color in predominately white programs. I wanted to share the experience that some students and faculty of color have experienced; yet, they have remained silent, as they experience a lack of programmatic response to these types of episodes. I hope my narrative serves as a vehicle for change, so that this cycle does not continue.

Macro vs. Micro Problem

Race remains a taboo subject in America. In classes, we try to talk around the issue, or not address the topic at all. From my experience in different social work classes, some professors choose not to touch the issue of race at all, and, if they do, it is with a "cookbook" methodology. What I mean by this is that professors use the same approach when attempting to teach about racism, as if all clients are exactly the same. The "cookbook" approach makes me feel that professors do not want to get their hands dirty while talking about race.

From the confession of this professor, I gathered that this was not the first time that a student in this particular program had used a derogatory term to refer to minorities. As a minority social work student, I get frustrated in speaking with other minority students and learn that they have encountered some form of implicit or explicit racism from a professor or fellow peer.

Do not get me wrong, the world should not have stopped; yet, the feelings of students should be validated. The issue should not go unresolved for weeks, months, years, or never be resolved. I believe that all social work programs (not just a few) should have implemented a plan of action for situations of this nature. By implementing a plan of action in each social work program, racial

discrimination and other forms of discrimination based on differences can be resolved at their early stages. And the issue will not be taken out of context or control. *Limit the flicker before it becomes a flame.*

Conclusion

This is a narrative about one young African American woman's experience in a BSW program. I cannot speak directly about the era of *Brown v. Board of Education* because I was not yet born at the time the Supreme Court made its historic ruling. However, I have researched and spoken with people who were around during that time and through them I have obtained a thorough knowledge base about the outcomes of the case. If it were not for *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the history of desegregation would be written entirely differently. I can honestly say that I do not know where we would be as a country if it were not for *Brown v. Board of Education*.

I am sharing my story because I want to let all persons in the helping professions know that explicit and implicit racism is wrong. Today, there are no laws on the books restricting minorities from equality in America. However, there are persons who disagree with the laws of the land and apply some type of "ism" in their life. I hope that this narrative has opened the hearts and minds of minorities and non-minorities, alike. The purpose of this narrative was to share the importance of racism (whether individualized or institutionalized) and of communication etiquette for all people. All educational programs must develop an *active response* to incidents of racial intolerance and prejudice.

(Footnotes)

¹ As discussed elsewhere in this narrative, the cookbook approach refers to a "generic" type of approach, rather than discussing each cultural group in a manner appropriate to each group's own cultural uniqueness.

MY ROAD TO THE HELPING PROFESSION

Mercelle Y. Seale-Pierce, MSW Student, University of Denver

This article tells of the author's journey (currently in progress) to the social work profession. Her initial contact with professional helpers and helping agencies occurred when the author and her husband sought to adopt African American children from Colorado county departments of social services who claimed to be "in desperate need" for adoptive parents of color. Their painful experience with multiple failed adoption processes is described. Although not specifically focused on the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, this narrative raises the question of whether the vestiges of racism continue into present day practices of child welfare agencies that discourage qualified parents of color from adopting children of color.

My road to the helping profession is long and winding. It is the combination of failed adoption attempts; life in West Oakland, East Oakland, and Berkeley, California; the Black Church; self-efficacy; private school education; my birth into the revolutionary movement of the 1960s; education at a predominantly white university (where I was one of 250 Black students in a population of 23,000); and a low tolerance for BS from people. I am an African American woman, a Christian, and I was born a Black Panther in 1964.

The combination is explosive. It is coupled with intense moments of prayer and deep thoughts of anger about a society that continues to mistreat and displace poor people and people of color. It was my utter disgust with my family's personal experience with Colorado's adoption system and my view of the placement of children of color in permanent homes that made me believe I'd experienced a "calling." I do not know if my experiences are any greater than white families' adoption experiences, but what I do know is that my journey through Colorado's bureaucratic adoption maze led me to social work, eager to put my Black Panther foot in Colorado's social services' behind! God put something on me, as the old people used to say, and made me believe a difference can be made. Quite possibly, I was not meant to be an adoptive parent. Maybe I was meant to take my place as a freedom fighter and fight the powers that keep children of color out of permanent homes — our homes.

Our Initial Adoption Attempt—Urban County "D"

When my husband and I began the process in the early 90s, the Department of Human Services in County "D" was singing the "we need families of color because the majority of children available for adoption in Colorado are in an ethnic minority category" song; but each day, week, month, and year my husband and I were involved in the adoption process, I would ask myself repeatedly what is so complicated about adoption and why is it so hard for us to adopt a child of color? I would keep asking myself this question throughout the entire process. Why has this state taken what I believed should be such a simple process and turned it into such a mess? Black families had been helping to raise or were raising nieces, nephews, grandchildren, younger siblings, even neighbors' kids for years. Adoption should be a simple process. All this extensive application process, these training classes, the videotape viewing, paying for mother's hospital fees and living expenses, waiting to learn if birth parents could successfully complete parenting classes, unwanted inquiries, and unnecessary comments were more than I could comprehend. Now, my views about Black families being able to adopt Black children do not mean that Black folks are "automatically conferred with the ability to be successful as adoptive parents" because we've raised nieces, nephews, grandchildren, younger siblings, even neighbors' kids. It simply means that our displacement throughout American history and our

tribal ancestry have made us good at stepping up to the plate and very capable of fulfilling this need.

As a lay person with no understanding of social work or social service agencies, I held fast to my belief during my family's adoption experience that we (African Americans) were quick in our community to make a difference where needed. At least that's the way I remember growing up. It was clear to me that our unity is what helped us survive hundreds of years of slavery, kept us fighting after cases like *Dred Scott vs. Sanford*, kept us strong through our so-called emancipation, and enabled us to keep our heads up high after being labeled a fraction of a man. Our unity is what gave us the power to face death as we watched our friends and relatives hang from trees or easily trampled by the power of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1900s. Our unity kept us marching through Jim Crow and made us believe in our own power—Black Power. So, if our children were in need, as expressed by Colorado's various departments of human services, and we know how America feels about us, why couldn't Black families adopt Black children quickly and easily in the state of Colorado? Who else would want our children?

"'Take this baby,' she said..." How simple my life would have been if my husband and my first attempt to adopt had been as simple as Taylor Greer's had in Barbara Kingsolver's novel, *The Bean Trees*. How utterly romantic to have a child in need waiting for you when you pull up to an auto repair shop on your life's journey; then you take her and go on your merry way. Now that's the way it should be, right? Need expressed and need met. Of course, there should be background checks, trainings, meetings, possibly a few other steps, but the road to a safe, permanent, welcoming home should be unwinding for children in need, shouldn't it? I mean, the *Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997* was designed to move children quickly to safe, suitable, loving homes within a minimal

period of time. Is that unreasonable? This law focuses on establishing specific time frames for terminating parental rights; is designed to guarantee health insurance coverage for children with special needs; should force child welfare systems to be accountable for the children trapped in faulty systems; charges states (counties) with creating innovative permanency placement strategies; and promotes foster care as a temporary system and not a system children should grow up in and out of. This law, signed by President Clinton, even offers states incentives to find adoptive or permanent homes for foster children. And I didn't even need to be a social worker to understand the premise of the law. So, what was the problem? I guess I should be grateful for the multiple problems we experienced in Colorado because these problems were the catalyst for my application to the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work.

Anyway, after my romanticized view of what the adoption process should be and my belief that Black families can make anything work, I convinced my husband that natural birth was out and adoption was in. Not only did I convince my husband but I also tried to convince all of my friends, relatives, and everyone I met. I was on my own personal crusade to save Colorado's African American children. I would tell my girlfriends, "Now you know we have always taken care of each others' children, so we need to stop trippin' and get out there and make homes for our babies." I'd constantly tell people, "Don't nobody want our children but us, and ain't nobody gone' love our children but us!" My conviction alone should have gotten several children placed. But adoption in Colorado is not like our (African Americans') traditional communal way of raising families with grandparents living with children and their children. Or aunts and uncles sharing their homes with newly wed nieces and nephews, or generations of family members living under one roof all sharing in the responsibility of the family's

care. In African American families, we used to truly believe and live "It takes a village." But the reality of being American has changed that and us quite a bit. So, you can love Black children all you want, but when it is all said and done, their fates are in the hands of a faulty system and that faulty system makes permanence virtually impossible.

Persons wishing to adopt in Colorado will learn that most counties have the same criteria: adulthood as defined by age, agreement of one's spouse to join in the process, stable employment, stable living conditions, no criminal records or histories, willingness to deal with loss and grief issues of children, willingness to seek professional help, and so forth. No physical forms of discipline may be used with an adoptive child. If the adoptive child has had excessive grief and loss, the adoptive parent must be willing to learn about how to effectively deal with issues of grief and loss. The counties also recommend that adoptive parents learn about attachment issues and child development.

Now those requirements seem simple enough to me, but our adoption experience in Colorado was an unbelievable process. Adoption in Colorado was not timely, efficient, or for the timid. It required flexible expectations, like a contortionist; tolerance of rejection, criticism, and ridicule from those working in social services agencies; training sessions that would scare the Incredible Hulk; the ability to delay parental gratification; willingness to meet the special needs of case and social workers who are overworked and underpaid; tolerance for ambivalence; negative behaviors from social service agency administrators; an undying sense of humor; and the patience of Job. At least that's what we experienced and to our untrained eyes, that's exactly how it appeared after *three years* (!) of attempting to adopt in Colorado, to no avail.

My husband and I began the adoption process in Colorado in 1996 when our daughter was five years old. Over a period

of three years, we worked with three counties in Colorado. The processes included adoption preparation classes for approximately three months to learn about the realities of adopted children. I called them scare tactic classes. They were conducted with large groups of families, couples, and individuals and were designed to weed people out, to eliminate the faint. You've heard of Scared Straight? During the course of the training classes, we were asked to share our prejudices, talk about our religious convictions, exchange phone numbers, dig through the dungeons of our childhoods, review old dating experiences, talk about our siblings, examine our professional lives, assess our educational pursuits, compare our living conditions, argue our cases for wanting to love a child and provide him or her with a stable home, talk about our hobbies, listen to others talk about their hobbies, question one another, and form bonds with our slowly diminishing group. I almost gave up when we were forced to endure regular adoption class potlucks designed to encourage eating different ethnic foods. Does eating other ethnic foods or foods prepared by others make us better adoptive parents? Does it help us work through our prejudices? Does it help us understand attachment issues? No. It's just more bureaucratic BS keeping us from the children that need us! There were times when I wanted to scream, "Let's cut to the chase!" Why do I care if this couple has three bedrooms or four? Why do I care if that man rides a motorcycle? Besides, I have no idea if girlfriend washed her hands before she got all up in that macaroni and cheese you want me to eat and right now, that's my focus.

We were required to provide letters of recommendation from friends and colleagues, autobiographical essays, family portraits and family trees, and pages and pages of personal information. We had to undergo background checks, fingerprinting, and completion of documents verifying our character. We signed disciplinary agreements and opened our

homes to home inspections and re-inspections. We even listened to recommendations about home decorating. We welcomed excessive visits from approving or disapproving social and caseworkers, and subjected ourselves to medical examinations, health verifications, and shots we had not had since we were children. We provided employment verifications and financial documents. We listened to comments about our pets, even questions about our water source. We managed to pass, but there would be no prize. There would only be a series of nightmares.

Our attempt to adopt through "D" County ended unpleasantly. Each month our caseworker would visit our home. She'd sit in the same spot at our kitchen table and ask us how things were going. We'd provide the same answers to the same questions each month. We'd search for bogus topics to discuss to justify the hour she was required to visit with us. Each time she'd assure us things were good. We'd done well with our home study and she promised to let us know as soon as she found a suitable match for our family. She never took her coat off and always appeared uncomfortable. After the ninth or tenth visit, my husband asked her what was up. She replied, "I never get any African American children across my caseload." She never got any African American children across her caseload (!) and it never occurred to her to talk with other caseworkers who might get African American children across their caseload or share our names with caseworkers who were looking to place African American children?

I refused to argue with her because as far as I was concerned, she was unconcerned and ill prepared, so the next day I decided to call the department and complain. "Make me understand this lack of African American children when they (African American children) are your greatest number of children in need," I demanded. I called the state as well. My repeated phone calls that week to managers and directors did provoke some action. That

following week my husband and I received a phone call from our caseworker's supervisor. She thought they'd found a great match for us and wanted us to come in right away. We made an appointment and met with our caseworker, her supervisor, and a four-year-old girl's social worker. We took our adoption/family photo album, our marketing piece, to the meeting and we were excited. It was explained to us that this little girl had been living with a family for four years (her biological great aunt and uncle) but was being removed from the house because of some type of violation. No could explain what type of violation. They also indicated that she had a sore on her thigh that never healed. When we asked about it, no one really knew what it was, but we were told "it was under control" and there was medication for it. Most of the files we were permitted to read were sketchy; nevertheless we were excited.

The next step was to see her in person. I recommended we bring our daughter to the office so she could get a chance to meet her. That idea was quickly shot down and we were told that we could meet at a McDonald's to "observe her." Well, since my daughter would not know who she was, I recommended we bring her and encourage her to play with "that little girl over there." That was out of the question. So my husband and I met after work at a McDonald's near her home. We don't like Mickey D.'s, so we ordered two orange drinks and sat in the Playland. Yes, we sat in the Playland with no food and no children. Just two adults staring at a little girl playing and each time she looked our way, we turned our heads. We sat there for about 45 minutes. Now what do you think was running through the minds of the other parents and adults in the Playland? I know what would be running through my mind if I saw two adults in the Playland staring at little children, with no children of their own and no food.

After the little girl finished eating and playing, her social worker sent her to get her shoes. Quickly, the social worker slithered

over to our table and said, "What do you think?" Uh, we did not have time to answer before she then added, "You have 72 hours to make a decision. I need to hear from you by 7:00 a.m. Tuesday morning. You can leave a message on my voice mail." She quickly slithered off and she and the little girl left McDonald's. Five minutes later, my husband and I left too, wondering what had just happened. Were we really just in a McDonald's Playland trying to decide the fate of a child?

To make an extremely long story short, we could not make a decision in 72 hours and opted out. Why were they willing to remove this child from her extended family? Away from her cousins, aunt, uncle? Away from the family she'd been living with for four years? These were biological relatives she'd been living with since birth. There were biological cousins in the house that this family was also caring for and she'd grown up with them. This was a family that was not abusive, but had some "violation" that no one was willing to talk about. Could this "violation" be fixed? Was the house in need of repairs? What was this never-healing sore? Is this how the county treats the children in its custody? What was really going on here? Was this what happens to African American children in the county's system? They say these children are not a part of their caseloads and then they snatch one from her family to cut down on the complaints?

Our Second Adoption Attempt—Suburban County "J"

I was so disappointed with this urban county that I called another county in the area, located in a suburban area, to learn if this behavior was the norm. When I explained my situation to a director in their adoption division, she told me "J" County desperately needed families of color. As a matter of fact, they needed an African American family immediately for an infant boy.

Now here's the kicker. Colorado's counties are not networked and they do not

share information with one another about prospective adoptive parents. They do not share information about children in need. It does not matter that there are children in this state who need families. It does not matter that a simple photocopy or transference of a file could expedite a process. What does matter is that one county owns the paperwork, has paid to have it processed, and sharing it requires lots of begging and pleading. *The Adoption And Safe Families Act of 1997* indicates that geographic barriers are to be addressed and should not be a hindrance to the adoption process. Well, my experience told me someone seriously missed the boat or neglected to read this part of the act. So, we went through the process again—fingerprinting, home inspections, background checks, the completion of documents verifying our character, disciplinary agreements, home inspections, health verification, yadda, yadda, yadda.

Our last attempt to adopt in Colorado made me want to puke and made my husband almost give up. We were in the process of adopting this eight-month-old boy whose mother had already lost parental rights for her two older children and was in the process of having her parental rights to him terminated. This was "J" County where we were told a baby boy needed an African American family desperately and they'd not been able to find one for him. His mother's parental rights were going to be terminated in about three weeks, so we rushed to get our paperwork to the county, obtain new fingerprint cards, sign new documents, get new home inspections; answer more questions about our lives, and so forth. It was difficult, but we managed to make it happen.

The process that would end in a few weeks dragged out for a few months. Our last phone conversation with his social worker indicated that the judge presiding over the case had decided to give biological mom one more chance. Mom was "doing better" and the county had been ordered to pay for domestic

violence classes for her new boyfriend. Pay for domestic violence classes for her new boyfriend? Hello! Don't get me wrong; I sincerely believe in crisis intervention. What I could not get my brain around was why so much emphasis was being put on mom's new boyfriend. What I wanted to understand was what were the provisions in the system that helped determine when children should or should not be reunified? Was there a formula? What made the county department of social services or the judge want to invest again in a mom who'd already lost rights for two other children and invest in mom's new abusive boyfriend (not the baby's father) versus our family who met the stated criteria for adoption? Was it based on "three's the charm?" What thought had been given to the fact that three siblings were probably going to be permanently separated, two who'd known each other and spent some time together? What was the criterion for terminating parental rights? When was enough, enough? When were parental rights terminated to assure that children were adopted and permanency occurred? Who created the guidelines about adoption, because no one was following The Adoption and Safe Families Act? What happened to placement within a 12-month period? I wrote letters to everyone I could find protesting this "last chance" and everyone kept spouting off this reunification garbage like it was holy wording. Here we were—a stable, well-educated, loving family with the means and DESIRE to care for this baby—but we were dismissed quickly so mom's new boyfriend, with a history of domestic violence, could be redirected. We began the process for a new Colorado county, but they were not even interested in the past paperwork. They wanted us to begin again.

Our Third Adoption Attempt—Nevada

What I learned from our Colorado experiences was that finding homes for children in need was not first and foremost, but reunification was key. After three years

of switching counties and listening to reunification rhetoric, we abandoned Colorado and began researching other states we believed were more concerned about finding solid homes for children of color. Eventually we ended up working with the state of Nevada when our daughter was eight. Getting our paperwork to Nevada was easier than working with three Colorado counties. Since we'd written so many letters and made so many phone calls in Colorado questioning the system, each county was all too happy to be rid of us. They sent our paperwork to Nevada quickly and eagerly.

Boy, time flies when you're having fun. We prepared to adopt a toddler with special needs. Instead of scare tactics, Nevada provided us with specialists and helped us make contact with all the people currently involved in our prospective adoptive son's life: his occupational therapist, his speech therapist, and his physician. We were flown to Nevada to meet for an extended period of time with him and his foster parents. We visited with them and were able to mutually interview each other. We shared our family experiences and they shared their family's experiences. Sure, there was processing time for our paperwork, but since we'd essentially completed the process twice, almost three times in Colorado, we had everything—fingerprint results, central registry results, home inspection certifications, foster parent certifications, course completion certificates, smoke detectors on every floor, household escape plans that would make any fire marshal proud, health verifications, new vaccinations, signed disciplinary agreements from Colorado to Nevada, autobiographical essays, family portraits from each of the three years we were tied up in Colorado's system and from prior years, two home studies, even some home decorating ideas.

Nevada's plan was a series of meetings, one of which would involve our prospective adoptive son's social worker bringing him to Colorado. We did our homework while back in Colorado and located programs through-

out the city to help meet his needs: speech therapists, occupational therapy programs, pre-schools for children with disabilities, and so forth. Long story short, we ended up pregnant in the middle of the process. Since I'd had major complications with the birth of our first child and I was over 35, my husband and I decided to postpone the adoption. This recommendation also came from Nevada. We all thought it best so I could get through the pregnancy and birth as easily and safely as possible.

Exploring Private Sector Adoptions

Prior to getting involved with Colorado's and Nevada's social services systems, we did some research in the private adoption arena. Private adoption seemed like the easiest way to ensure successful adoptions, but private adoption fees were off the hook! In 1995, the fees ranged from approximately \$7,500 to \$30,000. We first reviewed a nonprofit, non-secretarian agency that placed children throughout the world. Their agency's programs included international adoption, interstate adoption, kinship programs, traditional infant adoption, foster care programs, and an adoption program especially for Black children. The fees for this service were about \$3,500 - \$4,000, not including the application fees, home study fees, preparation courses, and legal document preparation. The traditional infant program would allow the birth parent to choose the prospective adoptive parents. Adoptive parents had to be between the ages of 25 and 45, be married for at least two years, and agree to maintain ongoing communication with the birth parent after placement. There was also a designated program that allowed birth parents to choose a family with whom to place their child. All of this agency's programs required home assessments, pre-adoption training, and post adoption counseling services.

Other private agencies offered open adoption programs. Some brought birth parents and adoptive parents together to create

a plan for the child with medical and living expenses for the birth mothers and infants due upon billing. I don't think most insurance companies will cover those types of expenses. Another private agency supported the concept of open adoption but believed the adoption process should be limited to the gestation period. All of the private agencies offered orientation and required participation in an extensive application process. Some offered post-placement services and ongoing counseling, but all required home studies, adoption classes, preparation of court papers for relinquishment, and adoption hearings. How could we afford to "buy" a child, take care of that child's mother, take care of our own child, then save for college, invest for retirement, put something away for a rainy day, pay our mortgage, pay private school tuition, pay bills, expose this child to life's experiences, and, well, live? So either way, these systems appeared to be whacked!

But wait! Back to this reunification stuff. Children in public social services systems go to foster care and then reunification plans are put into place. In order for parents and children to be reunified in most states, parents may often have to attend parenting classes; submit to random urine analysis; meet with counselors, case workers, or social workers at agencies far away from their homes during work or school hours; appear before judges and GALs; engage in job training programs; participate in community service activities; and attend rehabilitation programs—any one or all of these without adequate childcare or transportation. Either way, the children are losing out. There are also parents who just don't give a damn and don't follow through and are given repeated chances. So, we have children shuffled from foster home to foster home and our prisons are bursting at the seams because our system is a failure and to top it all off, children who really need to be placed in permanent homes are not being placed.

The Journey to Social Work

Up to this point, I was just an outsider looking in. I was not a social worker. This was my first experience with social service agencies. What did I really know at this point? All I knew at that time was we (African Americans) used to take care of our children, our children's children, our sister's children, our brother's children, our grandchildren, and now no one was taking care of our children, and no one was saying anything about it. And getting to our children in Colorado was difficult. Many of our children were being left with unfit parents, shuffled through the social services systems, and/or removed from solid homes.

What about all those children in state after state, county after county returned to unsafe homes? What about those children in state after state, county after county shuffled between home and different foster care placements with little hope of permanent and consistent care taking? What about children who are on the road to learning the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place? Social services are the worst offenders. What about children who are sexually abused at the hand of rotating-door boyfriends? What about children who learn survival skills that would shock military personnel? When is it clear that adoption promotes the best interests of a child? Is it ever clear? If our children need homes, let's find them homes, quickly.

After our failed adoption attempts, I began talking with a friend who was a social worker. She was passionate about what she did and worked long and unusual hours. She loved children and believed she was making a difference. She was also frustrated with the system and worked hard to find permanent homes for African American children. Returning to school seemed like the logical route for me to make a difference. So, I applied to the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work quickly after learning I was pregnant. I learned I was accepted on the date

my youngest daughter was scheduled to be born.

I did not want to open the letter the day it arrived. I retrieved it from the mailbox and left it on the counter until that evening. I had not gone into labor and a denial would have certainly sent me into hard labor. My husband opened the letter and read my acceptance to me. This had to be a sign. After all, what runs through my veins are the blood of Seales (my father's family), the strength of Waller women (my mother's side of the family), and the power of Christ.

I am learning every day more and more about what can be done. Most recently, I have been privileged to serve as a member of Lieutenant Governor of Colorado's Committee to Promote Adoption. I will do my best to make a difference. Going through the adoption evaluation process, obtaining a social work education (oriented towards macro practice), and working as a communication specialist for a private foundation are all points on my personal and professional journey that will enable me to make a difference in the lives of future adopted children and parents of color.



The Pierce family: Terry, Alexandria, Mercelle and Michael, with dogs Gizmo and Joy

THE BISHOP TUTTLE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK AND THE LIFE OF FANNIE JEFFREY: AN ORAL HISTORY

John A. Kayser, Ph.D., University of Denver

The Bishop Tuttle Memorial School of Social Work was operated by the Women's Auxiliary of the (then segregated) Episcopal Church of America as a social work and religious education program preparing African American women for leadership in social work, the church, and Black community. Mrs. Fannie Jeffrey was a member of its last graduating class, and subsequently was involved in the closing of the School. This article recounts the intersecting stories of the history of the Bishop Tuttle School and the life story of Mrs. Jeffrey, who fought against segregation and oppression in both the social work and religious organizations.

The contributions of the Bishop Tuttle Memorial School of Social Work to the training of African American social workers in the South during segregation and pre-Civil Rights era has received scant attention in the social work literature. The Tuttle School was a training program for African American women located in Raleigh, North Carolina, which operated from 1925 until 1941. In the course of doing research on the history of segregation and desegregation in social work education, I had the good fortune to meet and interview Mrs. Fannie Jeffrey regarding her recollections of attending the Bishop Tuttle School of Social Work and her own career as a leader in social work and the Episcopal Church. Mrs. Jeffrey, age 90 at the time the interview, reflected upon the training she received at Bishop Tuttle and her career spanning seven decades of dedicated leadership and service in social work and church work in the African American community.

The present article is organized according to the oral history research principle advocated by Charles T. Morrissey, a leading oral history scholar, of "paper trail first, memory trail second" (Kayser and Morrissey, 1998). That is, primary and secondary written historical materials are researched first as a means of aiding the recall of the person during the interview itself. In publishing this oral history account, I have chosen to follow this precept in order to provide an overall context

for Mrs. Jeffrey's individual's life story. Primary source material was obtained from the Archives of the Episcopal Church (AEC), the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), and the Social Welfare History Archives (SWHA). Secondary sources include historical research articles by Burnwell (1994, 1996) and Gary and Gary (1994).

Significant discrepancies frequently arise between the written record and recollected memories. Such is the case in the present project, particularly regarding the circumstances leading to the closure of the Bishop Tuttle School. These discrepancies are to be valued because they restore a sense of uncertainty to history. That is, we know that the School closed, but the written and oral accounts offer conflicting reasons as to why. Discrepancies also may reveal information that heretofore may have remained obscured or suppressed in the written record. Finally, discrepancies provide a stimulus for further historical research, both in searching for archival documents and in gathering additional oral history interviews with other informants.

The Written Record of the History of the Bishop Tuttle School

Bishop Tuttle School of Social Work was located on the campus of St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina and operated as national training center for young Negro women for Christian leadership in

social service and church work (Bishop Tuttle School Bulletin, undated). St. Augustine's College was founded shortly after the Civil War for the education of freed slaves (www.st-aug.edu/about/main.htm). Established in 1925, the Tuttle School offered a two-year social work and religious studies curriculum emphasizing theoretical courses and practical fieldwork in the community (Gary and Gary, 1984). Incoming students needed to have completed two years of college, or its equivalent, and Gary and Gary (1994) note that many students actually entered with bachelor degrees. The School's bulletin described its curriculum as having "junior" and "senior" years.

The school was founded by Bertha Richards. From 1915 to 1923, Miss Richards served as a teacher and librarian at St. Augustine's, and "promulgated the idea that social work and religious education were sister services. . . in the art of helping people who are destitute while concurrently attempting to improve the social environment" (Gary and Gary, 1994, p. 76). A large two-story building with a finished attic was built as both a school and residence for African American women. It had a maximum capacity of 15 to 17 students, plus an apartment for Miss Richards. In addition to social work courses on casework methods, child welfare, psychology, and community organization, students took courses in home management (i.e., budgeting, cooking), practical nursing, and religious studies. The School contained a large kitchen, and each student was expected to take a turn in preparing congregational meals and performing the household duties of the residence. In addition, courses in sociology and biology were taken at St. Augustine's College, and practical nursing training at St. Agnes Hospital, the surgical hospital for Negro patients.

Tuttle School operated a special inner-city community center in Raleigh, staffed by students and supervised by faculty, which was

one of its field training sites. Students were also expected to do field work in rural areas, where poverty was extensive and health and welfare services for Black people were almost nonexistent. The inclusion of nursing training was specifically included in the Tuttle School curriculum in order to provide its students with the skills to help poor rural families in meeting basic health care needs.

At the time, there were few trained Black social workers or instructors in social work, but Miss Richards, who did not have an undergraduate degree, recruited two or three African American social workers who had completed their graduate training in the New York School of Social Work to serve as faculty members (Richards, November 18, 1930). According to Gary and Gary (1994), a number of Tuttle School faculty had bachelor's and master's degrees. In addition, students attended special lectures by faculty members at the School of Public Welfare, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Beginning in 1930, the Public Welfare Institutes for Negroes, which previously had been rotated among North Carolina's Black colleges, became permanently housed at Bishop Tuttle School, because its location at Raleigh, the state capital, made it centrally located and easy to access state agencies (Burwell, 1994).

As early as November 1930, the Tuttle School sought accreditation from the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW), then the accrediting organization for graduate professional schools of social work (Bromley, October 29, 1930; November 18, 1930). The School sought assistance from Walter Pettit, Director of the New York School of Social Work, who had previously helped in recruiting Tuttle faculty from graduates of the New York School (Richards, November 18, 1930). Bertha Richards, as dean, and faculty instructor Louise Bromley, who was assisting in the accreditation application process, believed

The Bishop Tuttle School

A NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE TRAINING OF
YOUNG NEGRO WOMEN FOR CHRISTIAN
LEADERSHIP IN CHURCH AND
COMMUNITY

Social Work
Religious Education



ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

School bulletin
(Photo courtesy of the
Social Welfare History
Archives, University of
Minnesota)

that the Tuttle School was qualified and would be able to meet the AASSW accreditation standards (Bromely, October 29, 1930; Richards, November 18, 1930).

Preliminary inspection of the archival records provide some answers regarding what happened to the Tuttle School's effort to become an accredited school of social work; however, a full understanding of why the School ultimately closed is not yet available. What is known is the following:

- AEC records indicate that the Tuttle School's Advisory Board formally voted in 1936 to explore making the School a fully accredited school of social work, a process they envisioned would take approximately five years to complete. Several committees were formed to pursue the matter. However, problems with the School's finances, low salaries, difficulties in developing new field placement sites, and, most significantly, continued confusion over whether the purpose of the School was to train social workers or church workers eventually led to an abandonment of the social work curriculum altogether. In January 1938, the Advisory Board voted to adjust the curriculum of the School to train church workers rather than social workers. Less than two years later, however, the Tuttle School closed (personal communication, Jennifer Peters, AEC archivist, October 6, 2003).

- SWHA records indicate ongoing correspondence between the Tuttle School and AASSW regarding accreditation, but there is no record in the AASSW files indicating that the Bishop Tuttle School ever submitted a formal application for accreditation.

- As noted in the oral history interview below, however, Mrs. Jeffrey recalls that the Tuttle School did receive some type of formal decision or notification that denied its request for accreditation status. Her recollection is that rationale given at the time for the denial of

accreditation was that the Tuttle School did not have its own library, separate from the library at St. Augustine's.

Awareness of the existence of the Tuttle School seems to have faded quickly from the collective consciousness of the larger social work community in both North Carolina and at the national level. For example, in the 1940s, the North Carolina College of Negroes sought to develop a social work training program because of the need for African American social workers in North Carolina. However, their inquiry into obtaining AASSW accreditation contained no reference to the existence of an earlier social work training program at the Tuttle School (personal communication, David Klaassen, SWHA archivist, September 11, 2003). Furthermore, less than 15 years after the program closed, the recently formed Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), which succeeded AASSW as the accrediting body in social work education, fielded several inquiries from social services officials and health administrators in North Carolina asking for information about the Bishop Tuttle School and whether it had ever been accredited (Kerr, July 8, 1954; Sherry, August 20, 1954). Presumably, these inquiries were based upon the needs of African American employees to document their education and training in social work.

Mildred Sikkema, then consultant on educational standards for CSWE, replied to these inquiries as follows:

The Bishop Tuttle School of Social Work in Raleigh, North Carolina does not appear on any of the lists which have been kept in the files of the American Association of Schools of Social Work and transferred to the Council; therefore we assume it was never accredited. Universities do make their own decisions regarding acceptance of credits but it would

seem unlikely that professional graduate credit would be given to a person who had been through this program (Sikkema, July 16, 1954). In response to a second inquiry, Sikkema added the following additional information: Neither do our files show it as an unaccredited school. We do not have information as its sponsorship nor the length of time of its existence (Sikkema, August 23, 1954).

However, Bertha Richards' memory remained alive in the Episcopal Church. In 1981, the Church established the Bertha Richard Fund, to be used by the Executive for National Mission in Church and Society in the area of work with racial minorities (Episcopal News Service, 1981).



Fannie Jeffrey (Photo by John Kayser)

An Oral History Interview with Fannie Jeffrey

The following is an excerpt from the first of two oral history interviews with Mrs. Jeffrey, done in 2001 and 2002, which focus on her education at the Bishop Tuttle School and subsequent practice career in the United States in social work and church work. At a later time, I hope to publish a second oral history excerpt, focusing on her international work, particularly with the *Crossroads Africa* program, started by Rev. James Herman

Robinson, a Presbyterian minister from Harlem. This innovative college exchange program subsequently became the model for the Peace Corps.

Kayser: I did want to say, especially, thank you. It sounds like you have been interviewed a number of times. The fact that you are willing to do this on your family time and vacation is appreciated.

Jeffrey: Well, as I said, I am really very pleased to do this. I feel honored. I feel that it is one of the ways I can say thank you to both Bishop Tuttle School and to the Church and to lots of people—people who have really enriched my life. Whatever I am, I am because I got my inspiration or was put on the right track. Of course, beginning with my family. My mother and father were both deeply religious, but not in a sanctimonious way. So the Church has been apart of my life from the very beginning. Of course, when I was ready to go to Bishop Tuttle School, everything in my life had led to that, was done through the Church. Since that time, which would be back in 1939, I have combined the social work and religious education. I have felt strongly that the two *must* go together. To do and be committed to social work, you're committed to helping others, doing for others, making life better and that is what religion and your Church is. I felt that it was a very good combination.

I suppose that I should start with how I first learned about Bishop Tuttle's School and how I finally got there. I was living here in Denver and had an unsuccessful marriage. I had separated from my husband and was back home with a child. I did not know what I was going to do, because I had not been working while I was married. One day I was walking past the Holy Redeemer Church and the priest, Father Rahming, happened to look up and see me. He called me, and said, "Fannie, come in. Got a minute to talk?" I

said, "Of course," and went in. He expressed concern about the fact that my marriage had broken up [and he said], "What are you going to do now?"

I told him that I didn't know and I supposed that I would go back teaching again. Then he said to me, "Have you ever thought about social work?" I said, "No, I hadn't." He started talking with me and told me about the Bishop Tuttle School and that he was almost sure that I would find it a good thing to do to go there. And, number two, it would do what he felt was important—to take me out of Denver and separate my life from the life of my husband and so forth. It all sounded very logical to me and so that's how it began. He immediately contacted the Church office in New York to make the arrangements for me to be able to go to Tuttle School. He contacted the school and his contact in New York, because he was asking for a scholarship. The big thing for me was when he said to "go East." I said I didn't have any money and I didn't feel that I should impose upon my parents anymore. I had a child. Jimmy was turning four when this happened. Father Rahming told me that the scholarship would fully take care of me. The only other big expense that I would have had would be caring for my son.

Fortunately, Washington, D. C. came into the picture because it was my mother's home. My sister and I had gone there to high school because of my parents wanting us to have the experience of having the kind of role models and teachers that we were not getting in the schools here in Denver. There was a debate whether we would go to high school in Washington or go to Hampton. My father is a graduate of Hampton University. So, my mother won out. We went to family in Washington. My mother still had two sisters who were living and they were more than delighted and happy to take care of Jim while I was to have these two years at Tuttle School. I was able to get an immediate divorce. I

didn't want to leave here with any ties. When I left, I wanted everything to be cut clear, which it was. Jim and I went to Washington, D.C. I stayed there long enough for him to become a member of the family of my aunt and cousin there. Then off I went to Raleigh, North Carolina for the Bishop Tuttle School. The interesting shock to me was to learn for the first time that White people spoke "southern" (laughter). When I got on the train and heard all this southern talk, I couldn't believe it! That was the beginning of my time at Tuttle School.

I guess I should say something about how the Tuttle School came into existence. Bishop Tuttle School was started and founded by Bertha Richards, this very wealthy woman from New York, who, for reasons that I don't think I need to go into now, decided that she must give her life to helping others and doing something for other people.¹ First of all, she had wanted to go to China as a missionary but the Church felt that wasn't the thing for her. They told her to go South to see if there were needs there that she could meet. As a result of her experience going into the rural areas and seeing the deplorable conditions that the Blacks lived under, she felt that this was the place where she needed to go and how could she help. She saw the need to recruit and train women who could go into these communities to work with the families and help them to improve their lives. So it was on that basis and her commitment that she completely paid every penny of the cost of the building of the school. The only thing that was given to her was the land at St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina. She built this beautiful two-story building and an attic. It would accommodate 15 students. Everything was there in the school that there was need for a life there. It was of course to be a graduate school. She was seeking women who had been in college and who also wanted to share her ideals about the need for helping people. I don't know the

exact year when the school was opened, but it would have been in the early 1930s. When I went there in 1939, Tuttle School had been opened and operating then a good 10 years.

Another interesting fact about Tuttle School is its place in the Church. At that time, the Episcopal Church was really two churches. There was the Black Episcopal Church and the White Episcopal Church. There was no integration. At that time also, there were three Church schools for women—one in California in Berkeley, Wyndom House² in New York City, and Bishop Tuttle in Raleigh, North Carolina for Black women. I remember one student who came there, from the Caribbean Islands, a very charming older person. She was just devastated to find that she was coming to a segregated school.

When I started at Tuttle School, I can't remember now all of the courses, but we had the required social work courses and Vera Gang [who later became one of the first African American public high school principals in Colorado Springs, Colorado] was one of the teachers that I remember. Because we were on the campus of St. Augustine's College, we also had the advantage of being able to take some classes there at the College. I remember one in Community Relations where the questions of the labor union came up. I expressed great dislike of the unions and so forth and the teacher was absolutely flabbergasted. He said, "Fannie, how can you feel that way?" Well, all I knew about unions was that they did not admit Black people. I just automatically said, "I didn't approve of the unions." I was able to find out, then, that I had a distorted and not really a fair view.

We had lecturers who were brought in. Anytime there was anybody coming, anywhere near Raleigh or Durham, that Bertha Richards felt would be a good contact, or had something they could share with us, she brought them to the campus.³ We had lecturers who came from the College. It was an adequate curriculum and I think that the

basic training that we had would be comparable to that in a similar White school. Tuttle School at that time was recognized as one of the schools for Black Women who were interested in social work.

Kayser: When you came to the Bishop Tuttle School, sounds like you had already done some teaching?

Jeffrey: Oh, yes. I finished college in 1930, in the Great Depression. When I had finished college in 1930, there were no jobs anywhere. I had a degree in education and in secondary education. My parents could not see us wasting our time in Denver going to work in somebody's kitchen. So they had my sister and me go back to Greeley, Colorado, to work on our masters.

That year in which we went back to Greeley is another whole story. The separation and prejudice of that town were unbelievable, including the University of Northern Colorado. There were six Black students. When we'd walk down the street, people would stare at us because they hadn't seen Black women. On the campus, we could only go to classes, because, as Black students, we couldn't belong to anything, or be apart of anything. Except for the YWCA! They reached out to us and invited us to become members of the YWCA, to be active in their YWCA programs. Of course, I knew about the YWCA, because as a child in Denver, I was a member of the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the YWCA [which served Blacks].

I don't know if I should tell this story or not, because it really has nothing to do with my social work. Black students lived in sort of a little dilapidated house. When we returned to Greeley to work on our masters we felt, since we had been there four years, we were known, and we should get a house that would be closer to the school. We did, and this was the big mistake. One night, that house was surrounded and every window shot out. How

we weren't killed I don't know. That caused a big outcry here in Denver, when these six women in Colorado had their house surrounded and were shot at.

Kayser: Your house in Greeley was surrounded and shot at one time?

Jeffrey: Yes, at one time. They surrounded our house and the guns went off. They broke every window. When the guns went off, that was the signal to break all the windows. When we realized what had happened, we all fell to the floor from our beds and crawled out into a hallway where there were no windows or anything like that. Well, it was a terrible experience and one that had a great deal of effect on all of our lives. When the word got out—well³, when we called Denver to let them know what happened—the word got around. The men, with my father, gathered together down at Five Points [an inner city neighborhood, north of downtown Denver] with their guns and said that they were going to go up and “wipe out that G... D.... town” and were about to do that. They were getting themselves organized and said that there was going to be “complete retaliation.” The governor of Colorado, I don't remember who he was, at this point—it's written down at some place, rushed out to meet the men and asked the men to put down their guns, because this answer was not *the* answer. There was no point in going up to kill people. But he promised them that from then on, the dormitories in all Colorado colleges would be open to Blacks. Oh, and they promised us around-the-clock police coverage. But we knew that maybe police would guard our house a couple of weeks or so and that would be the end of that. So what did we do? We went back to the old shack that we had—nobody wanted it. We finished that year in the shack.

Well, that experience and the experience of the YWCA had a great deal to do with

what I did with my life after I went to Tuttle School. Now let me see, where am I?

Kayser: Well, you come to Tuttle School.

Jeffrey: Yes, I come to Tuttle School. That was a wonderful experience. Our life was very good there. Miss Richards was a wonderful woman. Had a great sense of humor. She could tell the funniest stories and she was also a biblical student and she taught Bible study. That was one of the important parts of our curriculum. We had this Bible study with Bertha Richards. She knew the Bible. She could name any book in the Bible and she could quote from it. She knew the Bible by heart. She was just remarkable.

Well, it so happened in 1939, when I was at Tuttle School, there was a woman, Elsie Smith, who was one of the four Field Secretaries that were employed by the National Office of the Women's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church. Elsie, of course, was Black and she was primarily to work with the Black women and Black auxiliaries in churches and communities. She came to Tuttle School as a lecturer or something. She didn't live there. She was there enough that we became very much acquainted. I don't like to say things that make me say that I impress people, but I mean, I did. She was about to get married and she and the National Office were concerned about how on earth they were going to fill her job. So, Elsie spoke to me and said “Fannie, would you be at all interested?” Instead of finishing my second year at Tuttle, I would be going to New York for in-depth training in organizations and work of the Church.⁴ They could almost guarantee me that I would have her job if I would go and study in religious education there in New York City. So I said “all right.” At the end of that first year, I went to New York and lived at Wyndom House. Of course, it was my role back then to break up a barrier as the first Black at Wyndom House.

Now, one of my very, very best friends is Helen Turnbull. She and I are like sisters. She came from Baltimore, and when she saw me there at Wyndom House, she noticed that I didn't have a uniform—a maid's uniform on—and she said, "Oh, this is nice, they are not making the maids wear uniforms." The first evening there, she went into chapel and I went into chapel. [Helen said]: "Oh, my, this place is really advanced, here they are letting their Blacks come into chapel with us." After chapel, we went into the dining room for dinner. When we sat down, Helen said, "The blow came and I realized that Fannie was there the same way that I was, and she was Black." She had only known Blacks in servant roles. So she had to make a decision. Was she going to put down everything that she believed in and thought about Black people or was she going to go along with an institution that accepted Blacks as equals? Helen said that all this went through her mind, whether or not to actually sit down and eat with me. She did. It turned out that she and I had the same classes at Teachers College and at the Seminary and we became, as I said, the closest of friends. Every place that I've ever been, Helen always tells that story about how I changed her life.

Jeffrey: [Speaking of how the Bishop Tuttle School came to be closed.] I always thought it was the National Association of Social Workers that required that you could not be a member unless you graduated from an accredited school and were certified.⁵ The organization that Mrs. Jeffrey speaks of here should not be confused with NASW, which did not come into existence until the early 1950s. She is referring to the accrediting body of social work education, the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW).

The essential thing is that you have to be a graduate of, a full time graduate of, a school

in social work that was recognized. They would not recognize Bishop Tuttle School. They said then, and I now realize that it was an excuse. Again, it was a time of absolute separation of Black and White. There was a Black world and a White world. They had to find something that would prevent Bishop Tuttle School from being recognized, which meant that if that School wasn't recognized, then no Black could become a member of the National Association. That was a gimmick. Now, it's funny, I always gave [the decision] credit. I said that [not having a library] was the only thing that kept us as being a recognized school, but it was because we were a Black school.

Kayser: Do you remember—you were really in a pivotal position when you went to work for the Episcopal Church, your responsibility was that Southern Region—how the information came about in needing to close the Bishop Tuttle School? You were really given that responsibility.

Jeffrey: That was the first big assignment that I had and did it because we felt, and the Church felt rightly, that we should not operate a school unless they met full standards.

Kayser: Was there any person in the national organization of social workers or that accrediting body? Do you remember having contact?

Jeffrey: That was all done through the National Office [of the Women's Auxiliary]. We had a National Office at 281 4th Avenue in New York City. The application of Bishop Tuttle School came through the National Auxiliary office. It was they who were told that the School had to have a library containing these 15,000 books. I don't know why in all these years I accepted that as a valid reason, when I should know because of many, many other things, that it was just that

Blacks were excluded from the social work world to the extent that they could. I don't know about graduates from the other two schools that I knew about which was at Atlanta and Howard. Maybe they were accepted, but I don't know. One of my first jobs was to close the Bishop Tuttle School out and to arrange the building and all of its furnishings and everything was officially given to the University, St. Augustine's College. My role was to do whatever needed to be done in exchange of records and so forth. Gather all the files and so forth and have them all shipped to New York City office. Officially, to close the doors on Tuttle School.

In the meantime, Miss Richards, as soon as the word came that Tuttle School would not be accepted in the social work association, she left Tuttle School to settle someplace in South Carolina. She had a home or something there. But it was interesting, for as long as Bertha Richards lived, and she lived a good eight or nine years after that, every year she would write a letter to every graduate of Tuttle School. Keeping in touch with us, encouraging us. Oh, if I only had those letters! No, I don't have those letters. We all knew Bertha Richards and she had a personal contact with everyone of us. She knew us personally; she knew everything possible to know about us.

When we closed the School, I asked Bertha for one thing that I could have that came from the School. So she gave me a beautiful cut glass mirror that was framed in bronze or brass that had been in her home. She brought it to Tuttle School, and she said, "Well, this is both from me, I'm giving this to you, and from the School." I kept that mirror, that was in 1940, up until...when was it, until 1980s or early 1990s. I don't know.

I was well established in Washington, the National Cathedral. My particular assignment at that time was to be responsible for the Chaplain's Office. The Chaplains were priests who came there and gave on regular

schedule, a day to do the social work aspect of the Cathedral. I was so surprised to see that there was an office and that the Cathedral was carrying on a service, a social work service. We had contact with all the agencies there. How on earth the people would find the Cathedral, but everyday there were people coming there needing jobs, with no money, stranded, every kind of personal problem that was possible. That's what the chaplains worked with. I was responsible for maintaining that office, compiling the records and so forth. That's when they taught me the computer so I could enter their daily records.

One of the priests said to me, "We sure need a mirror in here, I'd like to see myself when I took my robes off or put them on." So, I said I'd see what I could do and it dawned on me..."Gee, that mirror that came out of Tuttle School, which was a training school for social workers in the Church, would be a perfect link," so I gave it. And they were very thrilled to get this. I wrote the story of it and how Tuttle School had been the school that the Church maintained to train social workers to work side-by-side with the priests in communities. So that's the last, years-ago evidence of the School.

Kayser: You wrote about that story?

Jeffrey: I wrote it in the letter that I submitted [in donating the mirror].⁶ It's on record, I'm sure I have a copy of it. The important thing was to know that the mirror came from the School of Social Work that was maintained by the Church. The emphasis was on the social work rather than the fact that it was a Black school.

Kayser: You mentioned the separate worlds in social work of Black and White. What is your experience of the attitudes of social workers or social worker faculty had about those separate worlds?

Jeffrey: There was never a day in my life that I wasn't aware of the fact that part of my work and role as social worker was to help bring about, bring that wall down between Blacks and Whites in whatever way it was. That was the hardest lesson, the hardest task that I had in the South and working with groups there...just to get them to see that we needed to open up as much as we expected the Whites to open up. For instance, there was a provincial meeting in Columbia, the capital of South Carolina. It was an official meeting of the Church. Low and behold, at this Church where we were meeting, they put up a rope. All the Black people were to sit behind this rope. When they learned that, the Black women said "We're were not going to sit in any church behind a rope." I said, "I know how you feel, but that the only way to make anyone conscious of the fact that this sin is being perpetrated there in the Church is for us to be there. For somebody to look back there and see that their equals were behind a rope." So I got a few women to come. And sure enough that rope, when the White women came back to say something, they pushed against the rope and it would fall down here and there. Pretty soon there wasn't any rope.

The Diocese—the diocese is made up of all the provinces in that area—would call the Black Women representatives to meet with them, so you would sit down there. Then the rope fell. Then, there was the question of my making a report as the National Advisory Secretary to the Province. The President came to me and said, "You know that I feel that what you have done is been a tremendous thing for the Church." But, she said, "We could never have a Black woman stand up at the pulpit to talk." Can you believe it? That was in the 1940s that this happened! She said, "We got somebody to speak for you [a male church leader]." I had worked with him and he knew me very well, so I said, "Okay, if that's the way it is." She said, "I'm going to

make a report and my whole report is going to be about what you have done." I can't remember his name. He had a doctorate from Cornell. He got up and, believe it or not, he started off with a n***** joke. You could almost feel the waves that went over him. He finished and immediately, there was group, said, "Fannie." I wasn't Jeffrey then, I was Fanny Gross. The group said, "We want to hear from Fanny Gross, she has got to speak!" So they called me down and I spoke.

I've always felt that your answer to a problem is not getting rid of the problem, but getting in there with it. And whatever it is, you work through that. That was the thing that I tried always in working with the women in the South. Of course the conditions in the 1940s were terrible. Here I was a National Secretary, but I had to ride the Jim Crow. I rode Jim Crow down to Columbia, South Carolina, or wherever I went. I remember being in Miami and on my way down to Key West. I got on this bus and of course went to the back—Jim Crow. It was all I could do to sit still. I said [to myself], "Fannie, how could you sit here?" "Don't you have any pride?" Then I thought, "I've got a job to do, and if I have to sit in this place, so what!" I saw the need even more to do something about prejudice and discrimination against Blacks.

I worked as the Field Secretary for four years. I had to give it up because of what had happened in my personal life. When I finished Tuttle School and started working with the National Church, my mother came east to Washington D.C. to look after my son. So mother kept Jimmy. Then my mother died quite suddenly, which meant that I had to give up my traveling job immediately. I couldn't carry a job in which I was traveling all the time. That's when I went to work for the YWCA in New York City. I thought that it was the closest to the kind of thing that I was doing with the National Episcopal Church. So I went to work for the Harlem Branch of the YWCA

as the Director of Membership and Community Activities.

Then I got a call to come downtown to the Central YWCA in New York City as Director of Publications. Of course, this was the first Black coming to the New York City branch there. I was with the Y, I guess all together with the Harlem Branch and Central Branch, about 10-15 years.

All kinds of things happened in my life. That was when New York State passed the first legislation regulating daycare for children. They had this Department of Child Care in New York City that was responsible for the regulations and oversight of any agency, church, anything that did anything with children. They had tremendous opposition from the Federation of Protestant Churches in New York City. So many of the physical things, such as installation of proper bathroom facilities for children, they felt that they couldn't do. So they opposed the childcare legislation. At that time, every member of the childcare office was Jewish. That was another experience for me to be in a situation in which I saw for the first time the tremendous hatred and just everything against Jewish people. Well, because it was known that I had good relations with churches, I was asked if I would come on the staff with the primary purpose of working with the church daycare centers and church organizations in relation to daycare center programs. I did. I came on and I worked primarily with churches, but also with civic and community groups.

One of my places that I had to oversee was the YWCA in Harlem. And believe it or not, they violated every rule. [Laughter.] People just didn't realize that you couldn't have a 13 year-old kid in charge of a group of kindergarten children. They couldn't be down in the basement by the furnace. I was amazing how many the violations were and people thought it was all right. Fortunately, that has changed and people now have recognized the importance of daycare and we

have to have it now and there have to be certain standards. You have to have people who are trained in child psychology. So then, what did I do from that?

I stayed there four years with the child welfare program and then I went to the National Council of Churches to work with United Church Women. I went there as Director of Publications. In the meantime I had been doing some study at the New York School of Social Research and Publications. In that field, I studied a year. One of the best teachers that I had was Benjamin Fine, who was the head of the *New York Times* paper. So I went to work with the United Church Women as Director of Publications. And, again, the people who hired me always were aware of the fact that I had to be in a position where people would have to work with me, whether or not they would accept the fact that I was Black or not.

As Director of Publications there, I was co-editor of *The Church Woman*. It was the only publication of the national group, but they've changed their name. Now, it's *Episcopal Church Women*. But, they still do *The Church Woman* magazine. So I had relations with people throughout the country then. I attended conventions, meetings, and so forth. I remember out in California, there was a national meeting of something. Our whole staff was going and our Director said, "Well this will be a good opportunity for us to spread out, and on our way out, stop at various areas to meet." So we were all given an assignment and one of states that I was assigned to was Arizona. This was United Church of Women. Church Women United, they changed their name. The Arizona women, when they learned I was Black, said no, no, they wouldn't have me. So what to do? So our executive said that she would take Arizona and she assigned me to Missouri. I went to Missouri and met with the women there.

Now I'm going to bring this story to a close. Let me try to make a general statement.

Everything that I've done in my life has grown out of the basic needs. I say that I'm a Tuttle Woman. I've known that and I've always given Tuttle School credit. Every time I've talked about my life, I talk about the complete change in my life that started when I went to Tuttle School. I can talk about Tuttle School in very general terms. Some of the specifics of what our classes were, some I remember and some of them I don't. Then there is the fact that I was there only a year. The other students were there for the two-year course.

Kayser: You've really had some transformational experiences.

Jeffrey: Yes. Well, I have. When I look back to how each one has led to the other and yet they had been so completely different. My life has been in very definite sections and chunks. All stemming from, and I won't give Bishop Tuttle all the credit, because it was my family. My mother and father were both very dedicated people. They believed in the community and doing things, that unless you helped other people you had no right to live.

Kayser: You mentioned that your parents were concerned that you be exposed to something different than what you were getting in Denver. What were you getting in Denver?

Jeffrey: Well, we were enrolled in the public schools here. Of course, Denver had top schools but, of course, there were no Black teachers. Both of my parents having been graduates, my mother graduated from Minor Normal School, which was a Black school, had gone to a Black school throughout her life. The same schooling was for my father who graduated Hampton. Both met each other when they were working in Tuskegee. My father was in charge of the school business affairs and my mother was teaching at Tuskegee when they met. So they have always been a part of and were

committed in helping our people, Black people, particularly to move up and get out of the rut they were in. We believed, and I believe very firmly, in Booker T. Washington's philosophy. At various times, I had been very vocal in my criticism of W. E. B. DuBois, who finally began to see that you had to do more than teach "the upper tenth." The Booker T. Washington philosophy [was] "you let your bucket down where you are and pull up from there." My parents felt that they wanted us to see Black people who had succeeded.

At that time, Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. was the icon for Blacks. Students were a wide variety coming from other parts of the country because of that. The few Black Ph.D.s that we had were teachers at Dunbar High School. If you mentioned Dunbar, people knew you came from the best. So that is what my parents wanted us to have - an experience with accomplished Black people. When we went to Dunbar, we were going to go on like my mother did, on to Minor Normal School. After our first year there, we said, "Heavens no, we have to go to college." Eighty percent of my high school class went to college. You just didn't think of doing vocational work like that. So, where to go to college? We hated Washington, D.C. Washington was the most prejudiced city in the world. We wanted to come back home. So we finished high school there and they let us go to college in Greeley. At that time there were only two fields open. You were either a teacher or maybe a social worker. But, mostly, teachers. Whether you were male or female, you went to teachers' college. That was the limit of what I wanted to be. I was born, fortunately into a family who felt that you have got to continue to go up the ladder and as you go up you've got to take someone with you. So, that's me. [Laughter.]

Kayser: Your life has intersected with some other significant people. E. Franklin

Frazer certainly would be a key figure in social work education at the time. Howard Odum at North Carolina and Dean Lindsey at Howard. You really have had a chance to have contact with them.

Jeffrey: Well, I have. I have been very fortunate in that I've been able to be a part of the field of social work *and* the church. To me, they are inseparable.

Kayser: I just want to again say thank you for sharing this. You've done many ground-breaking things in your life. I think at the time a person's life, there is a sense of unfolding and you don't always appreciate the milestones that you have made.

Jeffrey: Of course, that's the way I feel. I was amazed at the thought that you wanted to talk with me. My life has just been an ordinary life. I've worked, I've tried to be decent. I've made lots of mistakes and I haven't put in the mistakes that I have made in my life. But, as I said to my niece, "I just can't feel that I've done anything." I look back at these 90 years and so what! What have I really done? I've worked and met people, and so forth. I don't feel that I'm anybody, which it may be true or not, I don't know.

Last night while I was thinking about this, "What can you say? What am I going to say tomorrow?" I talked less about Bishop Tuttle's School, but I didn't think you wanted a description of what a day is at Bishop Tuttle's School. It was a well-rounded program. I think that I mentioned the fact that we had to take these classes in basic anatomy at the hospital. To participate in some of the nurses' responsibilities for patients, well, you wonder, "What was that for?" Well it was to give us as much of a basic understanding of people and things that they had to go through bodily as well as socially. Graduates from Bishop Tuttle thought of themselves as going into the rural areas. We had to know a little bit about

anatomy, we had to know a little bit about common diseases and things. Things that people should or should not do. Some of us did go into more or less rural work. Most of the graduates ended up, though, in cities working with social service departments. Of course, I'm delighted that you discovered Bishop Tuttle School and see it as a part of the social work history as it relates to Black history.

Kayser: Yes, this is clear to me that this type of history is not part of the official history or memory of social work. We really have some real gaps there. I think of the point you also mentioned about things that were said at the time, like why Bishop Tuttle closed. The issue was not having a library. But in the context of there only being few other schools of social work for the training of Black social workers, it was really a very, very unfortunate thing to close the Tuttle School.

Conclusion

The boarding school experience at the Bishop Tuttle School for small groups of African American women provided, in the words of Bertha Richards, "the atmosphere of home and family life which I consider our peculiar strength. There is thorough training in Home Management—which means actual cooking and budgeting and living on 35 cents a day—and the girls are ready to put a trained and competent hand upon the home problems with which they will later deal" (Richards, November 18, 1930). Likewise, Gary and Gary (1994) offer the following summary of the Tuttle School:

The school designed a curriculum which was responsive to the social conditions of Black people; it offered a course on the Black experience; it had a unique course on club work which was a major approach to community development in the Black community; it

tended to place great emphasis on the role of religion and home management in social work; it was successful in providing scholarships for its students; it had an interracial faculty; it was able to recruit female students with college level training; and it was under the leadership of a woman (pp. 77-78).

To those summaries, I would add the following observations. The Bishop Tuttle School of Social Work has a number of unique features not found in other social work educational programs of its era. It combined an interdisciplinary educational instruction in social work, lay religious studies, home management, and practical nursing. As a women's boarding school, it provided a sense of purpose, solidarity, and leadership training for women facing the difficult task of meeting the needs of poor African American families during times of pervasive racism and all encompassing systematic disenfranchisement. As a faculty/student settlement house, its members were actively involved in urban and rural social work outreach, community building, and social reform. As an extension of the lay Women's Auxiliary of the then segregated Episcopal Church, it trained students to minister to the spiritual, social, and practical needs of both church members and the larger community of African Americans. Finally, it was one of the earliest schools of social work affiliated with a religious denomination.

From the vantage point of today, it seems clear that it was not recognized, valued, or supported for the unique institution it was, either by existing social work organizations of the time and (possibly) by the Episcopal Church itself. The central unanswered question remains to what extent racism in the social work profession and/or the Church contributed to its closing. The mystery of its demise awaits in-depth archival research and additional oral history investigations.

The impact of the program, however, can certainly be seen in the life of one of its final graduates. Fannie Jeffrey's life story is an exemplar of the power of the religious virtues of faith, hope, and charity when harnessed not simply for personal salvation in the hereafter, but for obtaining social justice and racial equality for African Americans in both religious and lay social service organizations. She was the first African American woman to integrate the previous all White programs or positions in the Episcopal Church, the YWCA, and United Council of Churches. Her life's work has been played on both a national and international stage. Her story, and the story of Bertha Richards, founder of the Bishop Tuttle School, deserve a place of greater recognition and honor in the history of the social work profession.

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Legend

AEC: Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas

RAC: Rockefeller Archives Center, White Plains, New York

SWHA: Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Endnotes

¹ In an earlier conversation, Mrs. Jeffrey noted that Bertha Richards had been engaged to be married, but her fiancé was killed in the sinking of the Titanic. Devastated by the loss and, because of her religious background, she felt that God was telling her life was not her own, and that His will was for her to meet the needs of others' lives.

² Mrs. Jeffrey's hand written correction on the original interview transcript spells the name of this institution as "Wyndom House." However, the spelling of this institution is listed as "Windham House" in records of the Archives of the Episcopal Church (Breck, July 1, 1982). I have chosen to follow the spelling given by Mrs. Jeffrey, in part because Mrs. Jeffrey's former name is misspelled in this same archive document, casting some doubt on whether the Archive's spelling is the correct one.

³ Workshops and courses were offered to Tuttle School students by staff members from the North Carolina State Department of Public Welfare, and by instructors from the University of North Carolina School of Public Welfare (Walker, S., March 7, 1927).

⁴ At the completion of her second year of training at Wyndom House, which included attending classes at Teachers College and the Union Seminary in New York, Mrs. Jeffrey's received a social work certificate from the Tuttle School in 1940.

⁵ Jeffrey, F. (September 14, 1988). Letter to Rev. Cannon Carole Crumley, Washington Cathedral.

⁶ St. Agnes Hospital Training Program.



Bertha Richards and members of the last graduating class. (Photo courtesy of Fannie Jeffrey, second row, far right.)

MOVIE REVIEW: THE HUMAN STAIN

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The Human Stain, a 2003 movie from Miramax Studios (based on the 2002 book by Philip Roth), has two main characters — Faunia Farley and Coleman Silk. The hidden background of each character is important in understanding their interaction in the movie.

Faunia, a privileged young white woman, ran away from home as a fourteen-year-old to rescue herself from her stepfather's sexual abuse and to heal the wounds opened by her mother's inability to protect and defend her. The course of her life is affected by her fragile ego and the lack of effective coping skills in a social environment that permits the exploitation of young females. As the movie opens, Faunia, now in her thirties, is still beautiful but has multiple psychological scars. She supports herself with income from several unskilled jobs on a farm, a post office, and the maintenance department at Athena College.

Years earlier, before the civil rights movement, when legalized racial segregation in America promoted discrimination, inequality and injustice on the basis of one's skin color, Coleman Silk, a bright African American young man, suppresses powerful internal conflicts and uses ingenuity to take advantage of his light-colored skin to live as a white man. His intelligence, multiple talents, and hard work make him a prominent academic who is perceived as the first Jewish Dean of Athena College. As the movie opens, he is now age 70, working in an academic environment that condemns politically incorrect statements and behavior. He finds excitement and comfort in a relationship with Faunia.

The affair portrayed in *The Human Stain* between these two very different individuals provides a creative and emotionally intense scenario in which the complexities, dramas,

and paradoxical events of the human experience in a racially segregated society are revealed.

Coleman Silk (played, at different ages first by Wentworth Miller and then by Anthony Hopkins), the first Jewish Dean at Athena College in Massachusetts, uses the word "spooks" in the course of a lecture when referring to two students who had never attended classes. The reference is labeled as a racist epithet by his colleagues and the two students who, unbeknown to him, are African American. Dr. Silk's subsequent forced resignation from his academic post is followed by a series of events that clearly demonstrate both the superficial skin color criteria used to categorize people and the internal, life-long psychologically painful consequences of discriminatory practices. As the events unfold in a creative and suspenseful sequence, with alternating present and past episodes, we are reminded of the traumatizing intrapsychic and intrafamilial conflicts that socially constructed realities can create.

In the pre-civil rights era, Coleman, a talented and ambitious black man, wants to realize his dreams on the basis of achievement and merit rather than allow his choices to be determined by oppressive and discriminatory legal and social practices. As a result, he makes decisions that come to haunt him for a lifetime. In the eyes of the college world he inhabits, he is seen as an accomplished white Jewish academic. However, he remains a captive of the secret of his hidden African American identity. In a social context that cannot accommodate interracial marriages, he must present himself as a white to marry the white woman with whom he falls in love. His conscious decision to adopt a white identity has a paradoxical outcome: gratification from

the benefits of success in the white world and internal turmoil from having severed all ties with his family of origin. At the end, the gratification turns into overpowering bitterness when his colleagues, including Herb Keble, Athena's first African American professor, whom he had hired, find him guilty of using a racial slur and he is "forced" to resign from his deanship.

A recent widower, old, and without an academic post, Coleman befriends Nathan Zuckerman (played by Gary Sinise), a younger, white male neighbor. He also begins a romantic relationship with Faunia Farley (Nicole Kidman), a troubled white woman who is less than half his age. Nathan becomes a confidant and a reserved companion. Faunia re-activates Coleman's sexual drive and helps contain his internal rage.

In the course of their tumultuous interludes, Coleman and Faunia make confessions to each other about their secrets that have a mutual cathartic and soothing effect. He learns of dramas in both her families-of-origin and her marriage to an abusive, controlling man (Ed Harris), and the subsequent death of her two children in a house fire. What she reveals shows a young woman's amazing capacity for resilience in the midst of great adversity. In her, he discovers the person to whom he can talk openly and to whom he can disclose his vulnerabilities. She first relates to him through sex, the way she has learned to relate to all men. In the course of their romantic encounter, he becomes her protector and, at the end of the movie, death companion. For his part, Coleman reveals to her his racial and ethnic identity, which he has kept hidden for so long.

The actors are seasoned and skilled. The performances of Hopkins and Kidman are powerful and captivating. They reveal how two individuals from profoundly different backgrounds can develop an emotional connection that helps them view their respective realities with a newly discovered

lens. The connection they experience is not stained by societal norms and is not dictated by superficial taboos. The relational scenario that they create becomes clear proof of the capacity within all of us to make personally meaningful and empowering connections with fellow human beings who come from diverse backgrounds.

Movies like *The Human Stain*, in which the toxic effects of discriminatory practices on individual and collective well-being are portrayed, help us appreciate the positive social changes that have taken place in the decades following the civil rights movement, and can motivate us to continue to advocate for justice, equality and equity in our increasingly diverse society. Such presentations are powerful reminders of how the development of human relationships and connections should not be contingent on a person's ethnicity, gender, age and socio-economic status.

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