

Reflections,

I am an incarcerated Mother. I have no way to contact Annie Houston through your magazine. I speak for many of my sisters behind bars with me who have heard her article. I am asking please print my words so that Annie and others will know the truth.

Dear Annie.

I am an incarcerated Afro-American mother of three. Last week my caseworker brought me your magazine article "Do The Right Thing." I have shared this with most of my sisters in my block and talked with them about it. Words cannot begin to say the tears of hope and pain that ran down our cheeks as I read your story outloud to those who cannot read. The pain of your description that for us is a day to day existence for we could all be Tyrae. The hope that there are people like you who don't just care but care enough to risk. Hope that people like you can be our connection to another world that treats us as human beings. You brought dignity to women who love each other and want to live. We are humbled by your courage and strength and you must know that you are our hero

Thank you

Name withheld

Prisoner #16774922

Dear Editor:

This is just a quick note to let you know that I thought the summer issue of *Reflections* was terrific. There is no journal that I know of in social work or other fields that seems as close to real

life practice as *Reflections*. The article and response to "Do the Right Thing" were I thought excellent-and raised many thoughtful questions and ethical issues/dilemmas to ponder. I also loved your editorial-the insurrection of subjugated knowledge-was very powerful in directing readers not simply to the content of the articles, but to the manner in which the stories are told. There seem to me to be many layers of embedded narratives implied in Annie Houston's article, such as the guards "looking the other way," which she also emulated-and (in a very interesting parallel) perhaps so did her field instructor, faculty liaison, University etc. Given so much looking away and secret keeping-it is amazing that there was still a stranger's need to tell the story in the form of a narrative. I wonder if Houston has any desire to respond to the comments and criticisms.

J. L. Kayser

(The author is an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver)

Dear Editor

I would like to reply to the published response on my article "Do the Right Thing," in the Summer 1996 edition of your journal. I am a 30 something Caucasian female from Italian American decent. I consider myself a progressive social worker and I am heterosexual. I establish my identity in this way to incorporate the stereotypes about what some readers thought I as the author was or wasn't. More than a few persons, upon personal face to face introduction with me later remarked

they were surprised at who I was. They had assumed I was older, probably Hispanic or African American and maybe lesbian. Such assumptions and stereotypes are learned behavior which I raise as an issue for colleagues to think about who and what we think our clients are as well as those who help them. The role of race, class, and gender is poignant in many aspects of my article.

First and foremost while I understand the critical debate seems to lie around my actions, it appears to reframe the real issue which is human rights and dignity for the disempowered. Instead of discussions about me, why are we not, as a profession, responding to the women who may be dying of aids in prison? The things I personally saw, felt, and experienced were impossible to forget and necessary to remember.

I personally continue to see the issue of my behavior as one of advocacy. It is no secret we have lost our roots as a profession in the battle between political/social reform and clinical therapy. I think Harry Specht (1994) had referenced this ideal superbly in *Unfaithful Angels: How Social Work Has Abandoned Its Mission*. (N.Y: The Free Press). However, I don't think it needs to be one or the other. Clinical social workers have direct client contact and a wealth of knowledge to actively participate in social reform. The real question is why we don't and why we have formed two dichotomous camps finger pointing at the other. It remains my opinion, if we are not actively working for change through social action and organizing, we're on the

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