

A Narrative Interview with Ann Hartman

Part One: Becoming a Social Worker

Ann Hartman has been a major figure in the field of social work as a practitioner, educator, author and leader in professional organizations. This narrative interview describes her process of becoming a social worker and the influences of family, friends, teachers, colleagues and significant experiences on her career.

by
Joshua Miller, Ph.D.

Joshua Miller, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair of the Social Policy Sequence, School for Social Work, Smith College.

INTRODUCTION

Ann Hartman, social worker and social work educator, has had a long and distinguished career that began nearly 50 years ago when she worked as a foster care worker at Summit County Child Welfare Board in Akron, Ohio. In this brief introduction I will be able to highlight only a few of her many accomplishments.

Ann received her B.A. from Wellesley College in 1947, her M.S.W. from Smith College in 1954, and her D.S.W. at Columbia University in 1972. After receiving her M.S.W. she held a variety of positions as a social worker in agencies that served families and children and in community mental health. She was the executive director of Southeast Nassau Guidance Center, Long Island, New York, for eight years and co-founded the Ann Arbor Center for the Family, where she worked for a decade.

Ann continues to have an active teaching career, which began as an Associate Professor at Fordham University School of Social Service in 1969. She was a professor at the University of Michigan for 12 years and served as Dean of Smith College School for Social Work from

1986 to 1994. She is still teaching at Smith College and has returned to her teaching roots at Fordham University as a Visiting Distinguished Professor.

Her contributions to the profession are far too numerous to describe in their entirety. She served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Social Work* from 1989 to 1994 and has held high-ranking positions in the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the American Orthopsychiatric Association. She is an approved supervisor for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), and was a charter member of the American Family Therapy Academy (AFT). She has received honorary degrees from Tulane University and Smith College, and awards from the University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University, NASW, and CSWE.

Ann has had a prolific writing career, publishing articles, essays, monographs, books, and research reports both as a sole author and in collaboration with others, most notably her life partner Joan Laird. She has published over 55 articles and book chapters and has written and edited seven books and

monographs. Ann has also contributed articles to the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* and the *World Book Encyclopedia*.

Ann maintains an impressive level of quality and demonstrates an immense range of scholarship throughout her voluminous portfolio of written work. She has written about casework treatment, families and family therapy, historical articles about major figures in social work, child and family welfare, and more recently essays and reflections about various aspects of public policy and professional issues. She and Joan Laird have been instrumental in importing post-modern theory into social work, much as they were pioneers in integrating family systems thinking with social work practice nearly 20 years ago. Ann has recently written about issues affecting gay and lesbian families. Although a rigorous scholar, Ann once wrote an advice column for *True Love Magazine*.

Ann Hartman has been a dedicated and committed social worker and social work educator throughout her career and certainly a leader and major figure in the profession. She has brought passion and professional rigor to her work. For a person who has accomplished so much, however, she is always approachable, accessible, informal, and modest.

I had the pleasure of beginning my full-time social work teaching career at Smith College while Ann was still the Dean and have valued her leadership, mentoring, and support.

I interviewed Ann on



Ann Hartman

three occasions at her home in early 1998. The sessions were tape recorded and transcribed. I edited the resulting texts with Ann's consultation. The interviews followed a three-part interview structure developed by Seidman (1991). The first interview, which follows, focusses on what led Ann to social work and how her personal life and values intersected with her professional life. The second and third interviews, which will be published in the next issue of *Reflections*, will focus on her experience of being a social worker and social work educator and the meaning that this has had for her.

I have added words and

phrases in brackets to convey context and meaning that might have been missing from literal transcripts of our conversation.

It has been a privilege to have interviewed such a wise and special person who has had such a remarkable career.

REFERENCES

- Seidman, I.E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social services*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Copyright of Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is the property of Cleveland State University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.