

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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Welcome to Volume 17, Issue No. 3, of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*. If you are a new reader, you are joining us for one of our special issues. Twice a year, we focus on a particular theme, in this case, "Akwaaba: Welcome to Challenge and Achievement in Ghana." Akwaaba is an often said expression on signs everywhere there; it means "welcome."

Special thanks to Brenda McGadney, former associate professor and chair of the Social Work Program at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan, for guest-editing this unique issue. Dr. McGadney's interest in and commitment to Ghana is a remarkable story, dating back to 1998. Then, an associate professor at Wayne State University, she had an IRB-approved study to research her interest in "kwashiorkor," a tragic medical condition of malnutrition affecting babies whose mothers give birth to another baby before they are weaned, and thus deprive the first-born of essential nutrients. Several days before Dr. McGadney was to leave for Ghana, her funding fell through. She decided to go ahead with her plans, even taking her family along. She fell in love with the people and found her passion for the challenges and achievements. Since then, Dr. McGadney has continued her research and advocacy endeavors, traveling to Ghana again in 2001-2002, 2005, and in 2010. Most recently, she has expanded her research to focus on war-displaced women.

Dr. McGadney learned about *Reflections* while visiting a colleague, Dr. Edith Lewis, University of Michigan School of Social Work faculty. Dr. Lewis had a copy of *Reflections* on her coffee table and the rest, as narratives go, is history. Dr. McGadney found the narrative process best suited her work. Her commitment to *Reflections* is remarkable. She co-guest-edited our special 2007 issue on Katrina, with poignant stories of resilience.

Continuing this theme, Dr. McGadney has called upon students and faculty colleagues in Ghana to tell their stories. Her "Introduction to the Special Issue" explains the title selection and overviews the extraordinary articles that follow.

Heartfelt thanks to Dr. McGadney and all her authors for sharing their compelling endeavors and truly, their life work. The risks they took, the realities they share, and their passion for compassion makes this special issue a must-read. Special note to faculty: a number of these narratives relate to student-faculty relationships and mutual learning. As peer-reviewed articles, I am including them in my social policy, advocacy, and child welfare course content. I hope you will find them of similar value.

Reflections produces two general issues each year, focusing on a collection of peer-reviewed multiple topics. And then *Reflections* produces two special issues annually, such as our "Heart of Justice: Social Work Innovation in Africa" (Winter 2011) and upcoming Winter 2012, "Heart of Justice: Social Work Innovation in Israel." Please be sure to look at the Call for Papers for a special issue on Mentoring (page 8), Kinship Care (page 38), and Field Education (page 117). Please remember to renew your subscription, and give *Reflections* as a gift to yourself, a colleague, or classmate. Subscription and submission information is on the back page.

It is with pride and enthusiasm that we announce a new director for the CSULB School of Social Work. We are honored that Dr. Christian Molidor has become our leader, effective this summer. Dr. Molidor has a distinguished record of scholarly endeavors and community-based advocacy, both domestically and internationally. His work has focused on teen dating violence, attachment and authority, inherited and acquired roles, loyalties, guilt and anger become more unique and complex. This

presentation will address the issues related to children's safety, well-being, and permanency when reconstituted families (often out of crisis); and offer suggestions to address role changes, boundaries, family support systems, family power structure, unknown futures, and rules regarding contact between children and parents.

When Dr. Molidor interviewed for the director position, several of us remembered him from his being a published *Reflections* author. (Please see Dr. Molidor's article, "A rose by any other name," in our volume 6, number 3, summer 2000 issue of *Reflections*, pages 11 – 20).

Please join the *Reflections* team in welcoming Dr. Molidor and extending warm and best wishes in his new leadership role.

**Letter from New CSULB School of
Social Work Director
Christian Molidor, PhD, California State
University, Long Beach**

Several years ago I began a working relationship with an extraordinary woman who had participated for many years in gang life. Hers was a life filled with family violence, alcoholism, racism, and poverty, which exploded into viciousness and cruelty towards others. Later, her life became one focused on helping others through her experiences. I asked her to speak in my high- risk youth course about this process of change - how she moved from one extreme to her current lifestyle. Listening to her, watching my students, I knew I had to find a larger venue to tell her story. Of all the social work journals I considered, *Reflections*, an excellent peer-reviewed journal, provided exactly the right forum for Rose's story. It also allowed me to speak about a topic for which I felt a passion in a manner that simply didn't fit other journals.

Reflections is a unique journal that allows powerful and intimate narratives to be shared. This journal communicates intense shared experiences that are embedded in the diverse settings and systems that make up the profession of social work. It is a forum for uncovering, evaluating, and forwarding the diverse pains and joys of our work and sharing the knowledge we derive from our experiences.

Reflections utilizes narrative inquiry as its core focus. These narratives explore our communities, our students, our theories, our politics, our biases, our ethics, and our growth. It is a journal that uncovers connections that unite all of us and disconnections that divide us. This journal showcases educators, community and clinical practitioners, students, and clients. I invite all readers to sit back and relish these incredible articles. And when you're finished, I invite and strongly encourage you write up and submit your own stories. Allow yourself to grow through these narratives and then teach others through your own experiences.

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