

REMARKS FOR THE RICHARD A. CLOWARD MEMORIAL

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I was first his student, young and googly eyed, with a crush on that handsome and brilliant professor. (Years later I learned how many other women who met him felt the same way!) But I only remember talking to him for the first time a few years later. I took the first adult education course open to the public on the poverty program that he gave in the late 60's at the New School. It was sold out and would be any time he lectured. As a new organizer working on the LES of Manhattan, I needed to put my work into a larger context and wanted the words of wisdom from this "guru" as many of us had fashioned him. Imagine my surprise meeting him in the elevator that first evening. After introducing myself before his lecture (not sure he remembered me), he engaged me in probing and provocative questions about my work and then asked naively, "Tell me Terry, why are so many people taking this course?" That sums it up in a nutshell—his personality, his caring, his modesty, and his desire to make everyone better critical thinkers and more effective "doers." He really believed in and lived out the principle of "praxis."

When the Association for Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA) honored him for that lifetime achievement, he expressed his appreciation by telling our gathering that there was nothing more gratifying to him than to be honored by his social work peers. What was even more important to him was the fact that those present were a new generation of professional social workers who were teaching, doing research, and participating in community, political, and professional social change activities. And then

came what he told me was his most coveted award, the career lifetime achievement presented by the National Association of Social Workers in 1999. I am proud to say that I had a hand in that, and also in his receiving an honorary doctorate from Hunter College.

He created the Barr Grosser Lecture series in the early 1990's to honor the life and works of two social work colleagues, and he asked me to join. That's when I became his colleague and close friend. We shared many good times and bad times together, but he continued, as he did more than 30 years ago, to be interested in my career, my writing and research, and my professional leadership. I will miss his insights and his ability to listen. I will miss his words of wisdom and his ability to stand corrected. He was as quiet a cheerleader as he was a vocal but caring critic.

In reading his obituary in the *New York Times*, I could not help but notice that the author called him "a social activist and sociologist," but omitted the fact that he was a social worker. He told me many times over the years that that fact was the reason he stayed his entire professional life as professor at Columbia University School of Social Work. It was only toward the end of his life that he received the recognition he deserved from the social work profession that he both identified and struggled with.

During the Passover seder ceremony, we repeat a phrase "Dayanu," meaning "it would have been sufficient" (for any one of the events that God did, let alone how many he did). When we think of how this social worker influenced at least three social movements we should say Dayanu:

1) The Anti-Poverty movement. With Lloyd Ohlin he wrote *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960) and then helped put it into practice by helping to establish Mobilization for Youth, which in turn became the model for the federal anti-poverty community action programs in the 1960s. Dayanu!

2) The Poor People's and Welfare Rights Movements. He and Frances Fox Piven wrote articles on welfare rights in the 1960s that provided a rationale for a new struggle by poor women for greater justice, and they participated in forming the National Welfare Rights Organization; then, they published *Regulating the Poor* (1971) in which they described and analyzed the history of struggles by poor men and women against poor relief and welfare systems. Dayanu!

3) The Expansion of the Franchise and the Electoral Mobilization of Poor People. Following Reagan's election in 1980, Cloward and Piven wrote *The New Class War* (1982) and *The Mean Season* (1987) to warn that the growing attack on the welfare state should be taken seriously because it was based on fundamental changes in power relations in American society. They proposed an action strategy for the profession, namely to register millions of clients to vote at reception desks in day care, family, planning, and other social agencies in the hope of building an electoral defense of the welfare state.

They formed an organization in 1983 called Human SERVE to promote this strategy, and wrote *Why American's Don't Vote* (1988) to provide the intellectual and historical rationale for the strategy. The Human SERVE project eventually led to the National Voter Registration Reform Act of 1993. Cloward and Piven were invited to stand behind President Clinton in the White House when he signed the Act, and the National Association of Secretaries of State gave Human SERVE a special award for its "contribution to democracy." Dayanu!

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