

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Jillian Jimenez, PhD.

The belief that social workers or any practitioners dedicated to helping others can be completely objective has been discarded with the rise of post modernism and a recognition of the importance of long suppressed perspectives of marginalized groups. The efforts of social work to borrow from the medical model in the form of evidence-based practice admirably attempts to standardize approaches to social work practice based on empirical evidence. However, even medical practitioners recognize that their practice is as much an art as a science, since empiricism is limited in its ability to map medical diagnosis and intervention. Intuition is now recognized as an integral part of medical practice, along with an up-to-date mastery of scientific research. So as we move toward evidence based practice, we should not ignore the art of social work and the essential subjectivity of all perspectives, including the perspective of the skilled practitioner.

In this issue of *Reflections*, Erlene Grise-Owens and Kathy Lay have invited social workers to share stories of how their subjective perspectives inform their work with clients and students. The personal perspectives of the authors in this issue have been informed by their membership in socially constructed, marginalized groups. The personal is political, as the feminists in the 1970s would say, and judiciously sharing our perspectives and our personal experiences can make a profound impact on our work with others. Our values inform our practice whether we want them to or not; acknowledging this can free us to look

outside of ourselves to understand the perspectives and struggles of others.

Sometimes the relationship between the personal experience and the professional commitment can be painful and difficult to manage, especially when our client issues intersect with problems in our own families. The most impressive aspect of these narratives is the way they reveal the false dichotomy between the objective and subjective selves, and the ways acknowledging who we are can be a powerful fulcrum to move others out of inertia and inaction.

Ben Shepard reviews the film *Milk* in this issue, an example of the power of coming out of a socially suppressed identity. The act of bringing the inside out can be transformative for ourselves and those we work with. *Reflections* would like to thank Erlene Grise-Owens and Kathy Lay for having this insight and bringing these moving narratives to our readers.



By Kathy Lay

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