

LETTER FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Rebecca A. Lopez, Ph.D.

It is with very great sadness that I have to inform our readership that we have suffered the loss of our esteemed Editor, Dr. Jillian Jimenez. She passed away on October 15, 2009 after a brief, but aggressive illness.

For those of our readers who did not know her well, I can tell you that she was a remarkable scholar, a quick wit, an incisive intellect, and a dedicated professor of social policy. Jillian earned a Ph.D. in both American History and in Social Policy from Brandeis University. Prior to her tenure at the Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach, she taught American history at Pitzer College in California. Her love of American history and social policy were interwoven in much of her research and publications, particularly in the areas of mental health and child welfare policies. She had just recently published her new book *Social Policy and Social Change: Toward the Creation of Social and Economic Justice*, in which she offered an historical analysis of social inequality in our country and the economic systems that contribute to the status quo. Jillian was a passionate advocate for social change, whether it was by instilling greater knowledge of historical precedents among her peers, or by training thousands of students in the skills of social policymaking and other strategies for social change.

Jillian lived a purposeful life up to just a few weeks before her death. This issue of *Reflections* was her last; and I know that she would have wanted her final contribution to mean something, to somehow keep us moving forward in reflection and growth. I believe it does.

Most of this issue's offerings express a theme of evolution—of movement from less to more, from ignorance to knowledge, from despair to hope. Julia Archer describes an evolution from established ways of undertaking cross-cultural research and social work in her narrative *Re-positioning Reciprocity: Reflections from a Caribbean Field Study*. It is a movement that employs a dual perspective to recognize and appreciate that all parties in an interaction contribute to growth if the researcher is sensitive to inherent power relations that likely exist between researcher and research subjects. In her exploration of African Caribbean women heads of household in Tobago, she seeks to advance a “new lens” that deconstructs established power differentials between the researcher and the subject—a deconstruction that can result in reciprocal riches for both parties.

Michael Dover's cross-cultural experiences in *Rapport, Empathy and Oppression: Cross-Cultural Vignettes* echo an evolutionary process that must occur if we are to be successful in bridging the gaps between the client's world and our own, perhaps dissimilar worlds. His experiences in New Orleans, New York and Philadelphia provide examples of sometimes painful lessons in confirming that cultural unfamiliarity can be minimized with open attitudes, understanding and empathy by the social worker. An awareness of power disparities between white professionals and non-white clients creates unique challenges in building desired rapport and relational empathy in a variety of client settings.

The other side of the cultural looking glass is contemplated by Wochan Shim as she attempts to reconcile the traditional critiques of her own cultural foundation, that of Confucianism, in her narrative entitled *Gender Balance with Confucian Philosophy: My Own Experience of Empowerment*. She takes us through her evolution as a South Korean who views Confucianism, at first, as oppressive in its treatment and expectations for women, and then moves to an “alternative reconstruction” that uncovers a benevolence and reciprocity in this belief system that can be viewed for its empowering elements. Shim makes her claim that the principles of reciprocity found in the *yin* and *yang* of Confucianism can be compelling tools for those who work with many victimized Asian clients. The evolution of her beliefs through the re-interpretation of her cultural viewpoints is powerful.

The hope for society’s evolution is expressed in our next narrative by Catherine Faver, whose focus is our country’s practices in capital punishment. In *Forgiveness and the Death Penalty: The Power of Stories*, she describes the social inequality and historic experiences in our country that continue to reverberate as a violent rippling effect that is shared by all of us—not just aggressor and victim. She guides her students and the reader through this difficult, emotion-laden policy area with a careful consideration of the alternatives to execution policies and institutionalized violence, alternatives that could include conflict resolution and restorative justice practices, as well as “letting go” of hatred through forgiveness.

In *Mentorship in Social Work: A Dialogue of Powerful Interplay*, Noell Rowan offers a unique perspective of the power of a mentoring relationship that evolved into personal bonds that nurtured growth and evolution of professional development in her grandmother’s career as a social worker in America’s south. The author was witness to the lasting friendship and mentoring experienced by her grandmother as an early student in the first school social work program in Georgia. The extension of the relationship between mentor and student evolved into

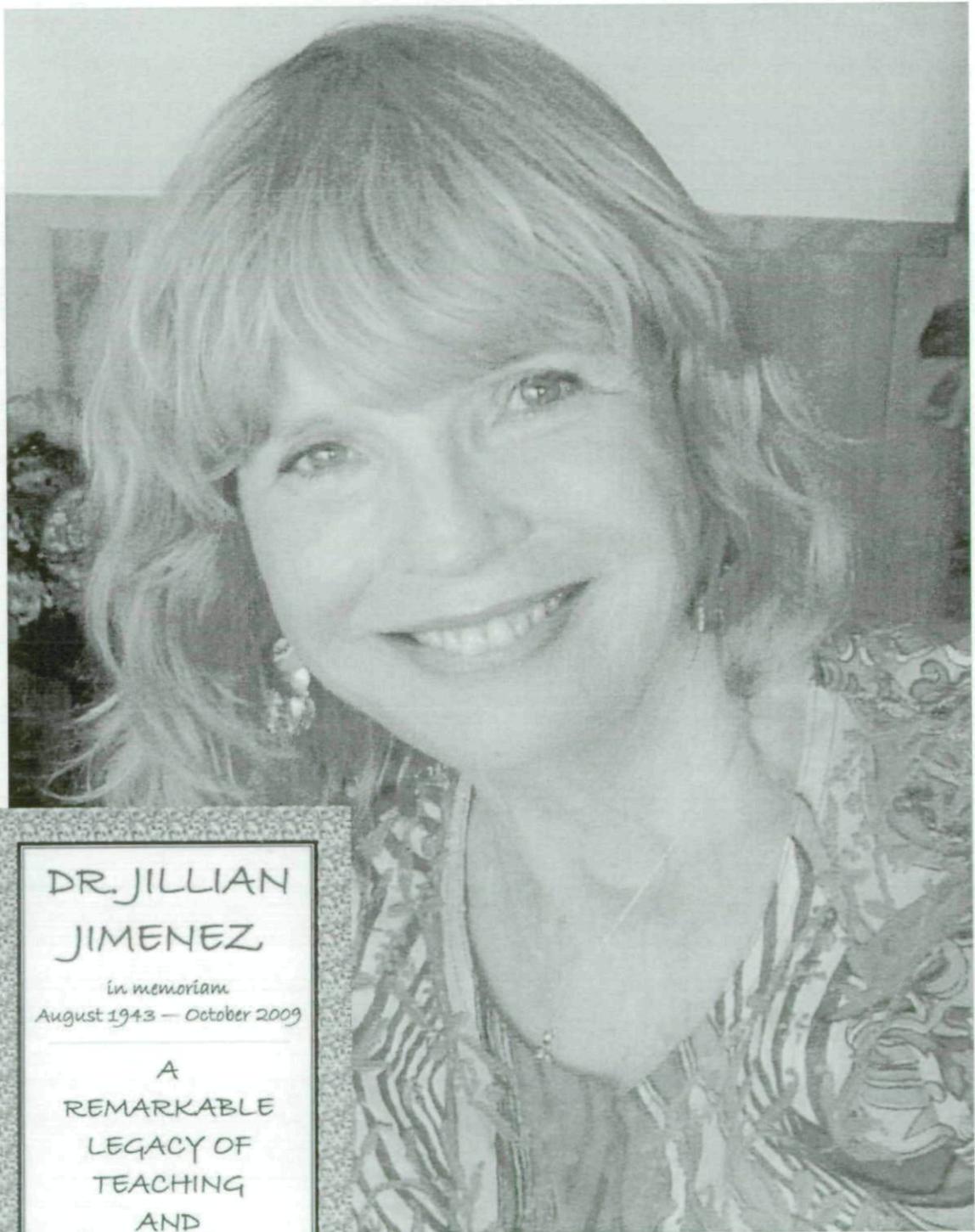
strong personal bonds over 40 years and provides an example of the power of connection among new and veteran practitioners.

Both hurricanes and tempestuous changes in his life and career form part of the basis for evolution of Harvey Heckes, as he shares *From a Series of Hurricanes, a Field Education Coordinator Evolves*. As a medical social worker with 30 years’ experience, the author describes his experiences as a new field coordinator encountering the many challenges to building a functioning field program in social work education. His evolution and success only comes of risk-taking and perseverance.

Our final narrative truly speaks to the evolution still very much lacking in our society with an *Overlooked* population. Teresa Mason eloquently takes us into the unique world of the professional whose advocacy of deaf clients provides painful evidence that we still have much to overcome in our treatment of both the deaf individual and those like Mason who passionately carry the message of the deaf population. She speaks of her fragile “straddling” of deaf and hearing worlds from a perspective that few have expressed. She also provides us with a valuable summary of the legislative and incremental advances we have made in this country in our attempts to surmount some of the many barriers to inclusion for all deaf persons. She is hopeful that we as a society can move to a more just treatment of the deaf population.

All of the contributors to this issue express hope and movement and renewal. Just as these articles convey evolution and growth, so too must we move forward in building on the unique legacy of Jillian Jimenez’ contributions in providing “reflections” that enrich us all.





DR. JILLIAN
JIMENEZ

in memoriam
August 1943 – October 2009

A
REMARKABLE
LEGACY OF
TEACHING
AND
SCHOLARSHIP

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