

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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This issue of *Reflections* begins with narratives about life endings and the long-lived life of Gisela Konopka, full of vitality and spirit. The end of life is ignored by most, but members of the helping professions, along with family members of persons moving close to their final moments, do not have either luxury or the limitation of turning away from those who are dying. One of the hard tasks of life—one that most will face first with their parents, is the sustaining of a fierce and committed love in the face of that terrible goodbye. The loneliness of the dying is mirrored by the courage summoned by those who walk with them to their end. When the dying person is someone we have cared through long periods of sadness and depletion, the long walk may be shadowed by impatience, guilt, and irritation, until the final piercing moment demands its full accounting of love and grief. Courage is celebrated in the narratives in this issue, in stories of service, sacrifice and compassion. One wishes for the stalwart companionship offered by these authors when our own endings appear.

Reminding us of life's power to compel and surprise, Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven's seminal 1968 article is reprinted here. In it the authors questioned the liberal consensus about the value of urban desegregation. The article serves as a bracing reminder of the courage it takes to think outside the dominant paradigm of one's profession. Their argument, revisionist when it appeared, has been proved correct. Efforts to achieve urban integration have not resulted in overturning the structures of inequality and oppression that continue to marginalize many African-Americans and others living in the urban core.

Cloward and Piven's courage is echoed in Antonio Ledesma's narrative, which describes the tentative and anguished steps toward understanding taken by Palestinian and Israeli adolescents in a peace camp in Colorado. Coming to the United States to engage in an alternative dialogue shattered the expectations of both sides of the conflict. It is painful to reflect on why the vision embraced by these ground-breaking dialogues has not been realized.

The move away from habits of thought represented in this youthful dialogue is also central to Curt Paulsen's narrative about his effort to move beyond the tired exchanges that characterize many professional meetings and public exchanges. Embracing postmodernist assumptions as a way of creating new ideas, relationships and opportunities for personal growth and fashioning, Paulsen saw a recrudescence of synergetic dialogue among colleagues long unused to real intellectual exchanges. Taking such a chance with one's long time colleagues demands a quiet, but no less committed brand of courage. Its rarity is a clear sign of its difficulty.

The narratives in this issue of *Reflections*, while reminding us of life's end, reaffirm that in the meantime, it is waiting to engage us if only we would seize it. Now, and at the end, courage will provide what we need.



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