

On the Road with the Mad as Hell Doctors' Health Care-a-Van

Bill Whitaker
wwhitak@boisestate.edu

On September 8th, as the healthcare debate raged in Congress, a group of five doctors from Oregon embarked on an historic road trip through the heartland of America, arriving on September 30th at the doors of Congress and the White House. Other doctors, nurses, social workers and concerned citizens joined our caravan for varying lengths of time.

Our mission was to promote single-payer health insurance as a fiscally conservative, affordable way to provide universal health care to the 47 million Americans who are currently uninsured; to improve coverage for the many millions more of us who currently have catastrophic insurance at best; and to help every insured American cope with declining benefits accompanied by increasingly high premiums, deductibles and co-pays.

Through our Health Care-A-Van we educated Americans about the advantages of single risk pool, single-payer health care and recorded the stories of countless individuals and families whose lives have been shattered by lack of access to affordable health care.

Our proposal is simple. The United States needs single payer health care, a system of payment that redirects all current health care monies, both public and private, into a single public fund that covers everyone.

A single payer system is built on a single risk pool with "everybody in and nobody out." We believe a single payer health care system is the only means to lasting, substantive health care reform for the United States.

"I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more!" This refrain was heard over and over again as the Mad as Hell Doctors' Health Care-A-Van traveled through state capitals, major cities and rural com-

Continued on Page 13

Putting Social Justice Back into Social Work*

Michael A. Dover
m.a.dover@csuohio.edu

I am pleased to have been invited to join the other members of this panel in speaking about putting social justice back into social work. Of course that implies there was a period when social justice was more central to social work, and then a period in which it was largely lost to social work, followed by a period in which we have at least been trying to bring social justice back into social work. I propose to touch upon three such periods and to share several main points.

The first period was the early to mid-20th century progressive tradition in social work, which was inspired by the settlement house movement here in the UK. Progressive social workers worked with individuals and families but also drew upon a vision of social justice to pioneer social group work, community organization, and social policy advocacy. Early on, Charles Booth argued that it was necessary to move beyond a purely religious orientation and focus on Aordinary human needs (Booth, 1902, p. 286). But no clear conceptualization of human needs arose. That was a problem for fully bringing social justice into social work.

And that is my first main point: It will not be possible to bring social justice back into social work without committing social work to a theoretical reorientation which makes the concept of human need central to social work practice, social work research and social welfare policy. And to follow up on Gurnam Singh's point yesterday: doing so would just be the first step towards social workers in our daily practice insisting that our services and benefits fully address the human needs of our service users instead of the specialized social control functions of many of our agencies.

Support for the centrality of needs concepts for social justice can be found from within both social work and philosophy. Within social

Continued on Page 12

"March to Fulfill the Dream"

April 4, 2010 — June 20, 2010
New Orleans, LA to Detroit MI

See www.economichumanrights.org for more information

US Social Forum

June 22, 2010 — June 26, 2010
Detroit MI

See www.ussf2010.org for more information

Contents

On the Road with the Mad as Hell Doctors'
Health Care-a-Van
Bill Whitaker
Page 1

Putting Social Justice Back into Social Work
Michael A. Dover
Page 1

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE
REPORT
Marilynn Moch
Page 2

October 2009 Membership Report
Natalie Tucker
Page 2

SWAA National Steering Committee
Page 3

SWAA Chapter Reports
Page 4

SWAA Faculty Network
Joan Dworkin
Page 5

Building The Unsettling Force: Conference
Creates Hope & Inspiration from Radical
Social Work
Erinne Goodell, Lisa Hawash, Monica
Beemer and Richard Walden
Page 6

WE ARE STANDING UP TO THE POW-
ERS OF THIS WORLD
Liz McAlister
Page 7

NASW and SWAA—Social and Political Action?
Where Are We Headed? What Can We Do?
Moya Atkinson
Page 8

Viva Gaza
Athena Viscusi
Page 9

Studies of TANF
Betty Reid Mandell
Page 10

Direct Action Raises Questions around
Afghanistan Remembrance Day: October 5,
2009
Moya Atkinson
Page 11

RUTH HARRIS WILSON 1915-2008
Marilynn Moch
Page 12

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

Marilynn Moch, Co-Chair
mochcibri@gmail.com

The SWAA National Steering Committee (NSC) met over the Halloween week-end in Rochester, NY, hosted by the local chapter. Beginning with new nominations for some vacated positions and re-nominations for others, the NSC for 2010-2011 was affirmed, allowing voting and decisions to be made. Following reports and follow-up action needed from the Faculty Network, Peace and Justice Committee, Newsletter, Website, Membership Committee, Treasury, Listserv, and our affiliate organization, the Poor Peoples' Economic Human Rights Committee (PPEHRC), the NSC was able to complete the SWAA By-Law revisions and updates, reprise the 2009 Louisville Conference, plan for SWAA participation in the US Social Forum in Denver in 2010 and begin exploring a possible Washington, DC Conference in 2011.

Perhaps the most important decision to report to our membership is to provide for easier member participation and activism by expanding our current geographical chapter structure by the addition of member-wide issue chapters, using areas of interest expressed by SWAA members on the Membership Form and member-initiated creation of and participation in interest-area listservs. Watch for outreach to participate early next year after our implementation task force and the Membership Committee, including the database folks, revise our information and figure out how best to help you get involved.

Many of the other subjects discussed can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter, including an updated NSC list and a Save The Date announcement for the US Social Forum. Anyone desiring a full copy of the minutes of the meeting, e-mail Marilynn Moch, SWAA Co-Chair, MochCIHRI@gmail.com.

October 2009 Membership Report

Natalie Tucker, SWAA Database Coordinator
nrtucker@umich.edu

Membership Summary from October 2008-2009 (As of October 24, 2009)

- 40 new members in 2009 (No new members between October 2008 and January 2009)
- 177 individuals have paid dues since Jan 1, 2009; 173 since March 13, 2009
- Of the 177 individuals who have paid dues since Jan 1, 2009 92 were faculty members
- Of the 177 individuals who have paid dues since Jan 1, 2009 38 were students or low income
- Of the 177 new members who have paid since Jan 1, 2009 74 currently subscribe to the journal

Membership Summary for 2009 (As of March 13, 2009)

In February 2009 the Membership Committee sent out its annual membership renewal letter and 2009 SWAA/PPEHRC Save the Date Flier to 733 individuals.

- 1 New Member joined in 2009
- 74 individuals have paid dues since Jan 1, 2009
- Of the 74 individuals who have paid dues since Jan 1, 2009 30 were faculty members
- Of the 74 individuals who have paid dues since Jan 1, 2009 10 were students or low income

Membership Summary for 2007 and 2008

- 181 New people joined in 2008
- 182 New people in 2007
- Of 181 new members 64 were 2008 Conference attendees
- 138 new people in 2007 were conference 2007 attendees
- Membership type student 2008- 37 students
- Membership type faculty 2008- 39 faculty
- Membership type regular 2008- 45 regular

Important Membership Documents from 2009

(Document by Kate Shimshock, Former SWAA Membership Chair)

- 2009 Thank You Letter to Donors
- 2009 Renewal Letter



**Social Welfare Action Alliance
(Formerly The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society)
National Steering Committee**

SWAA Mailing Address:
Columbus Circle Station, P.O. Box 20563
New York, NY 10023
info@socialwelfareactionalliance.org

Melissa Affronti, Membership
Bill Boyd, Website, Newsletter
Michel Coconis, listserv moderator, SWAA Rep to PPEHRC, SWAA Co-Chair*
Nick Coulter, SWAA Alternate Rep to PPEHRC
Herman Curiel, Co-Treasurer*
Joan Dworkin, Co-Chair Faculty Network
Joanne Hessmiller, Co-Chair Faculty Network
Barbara Kaspar, SWAA Alternate Rep to PPEHRC
Gretchen Lash, Co-Treasurer*
Marilynn Moch, SWAA Co-Chair*
Fred Newdom, SWAA Chair Emeritus
Manoj Pardasani, SWAA Co-Chair*
Melissa Sydor-Kauffman, Chapter Development**
Natalie Tucker, Database**
Laura Walther, Bertha Book List, Newsletter assist

maffro717@hotmail.com
bikerbillboyd@hotmail.com
michel4justice@yahoo.com
nj.coulter@gmail.com
hcuriel@ou.edu
dworkin@saclink.csus.edu
hessmiller@marywood.edu
berthabk@aol.com
geide@uh.edu
MochCIHRI@aol.com
fnewdom@nycap.rr.com
m_pardasani@hotmail.com
melsk@me.com
nrtucker@umich.edu
laura_walther@yahoo.com

CHAPTERS

Bill Boyd, Portland (OR)
Barbara Kaspar, Rochester Co-Chair*
Melissa Sydor-Kauffman, Rochester Co-Chair*

bikerbillboyd@hotmail.com
berthabk@aol.com
melsk@me.com

AFFILIATE REPS

Flower Noble, Journal of Progressive Human Services
Cheri Honkala, PPEHRC

flownoble@hotmail.com
cherippehrc@hotmail.com

*Co-Chairs share one vote on the NSC.

**sub-committees of the Membership Committee.



Rochester Chapter Report

Barbara Kaspar, Rochester Co-Chair

berthabk@aol.com

Melissa Sydor-Kauffman, Rochester Co-Chair

melsk@me.com

In April 2009 we brought Ethel Long Scott, the Executive Director of the Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP). Long-Scott is known nationally and internationally for devoting her life to the education and leadership of people at the losing end of society, especially women of color. She addressed an academic audience of over 200 people at the State University of New York at Brockport. She then spoke to a community audience of 120 people in the city of Rochester. The focus of her talk was "fighting poverty in the age of Obama." We also were able to arrange for her to do radio interviews on our local PBS affiliate as well as a community-owned radio station that focuses on the local African American community. See <http://weap.org/events.htm>.

Four local SWAA members attend the joint SWAA/PPEHRC joint conference. Melissa Sydor and Melissa Affronti did a workshop on integrating Truth Commissions in social work education. The "Two Melissas" also presented a workshop with Rochester SWAA's Barbara Kasper and Nick Coulter that focused on how to build local SWAA chapters.

We are continuing to organize Reality Tours in the City of Rochester and have been able to fund two paid part-time organizers: Hubert Wilkerson, a formerly homeless SWAA member and human right activist, and Emily Good, a local SDS activist. We recently provided an open community Reality Tour but also held a Tour for the staff of a local human service agency staff and another Tour as part of local AmeriCorps training.

The Rochester Chapter has again hosted the SWAA National Steering Committee for the second year in a row. There was a great turnout and many local members graciously stepped up to feed, house and connect with our national members. Our upcoming work includes further developing our web site (swaarochester.org) and documenting human rights violations, especially those related to health care. We are looking forward to a potluck in December that will help us to network with our local SDS chapter and A.R.M. (Rochester Antiracism Movement).

Portland Chapter Report

Bill Boyd,

bikerbillboyd@hotmail.com

The Portland Chapter has evolved into two separate but related efforts during this academic year.

The 'student' chapter has been active on campus aggressively responding to several racist incidents within Portland State's School of Social Work. They have challenged the students, faculty and administration to develop and implement anti-oppressive statements and practices for the classroom setting. Several instructors have implemented these practices to call out oppression when it occurs and allow students to constructively process the incident. Additionally, the 'student' chapter has been reaching out to other campus organizations to collaboratively hold various film and/or cultural events and related discussion. Finally, the students have sponsored a few events with Empower Oregon, an SEIU affiliate working to both pass two upcoming tax ballot measures and improve services within the mental health and treatment fields (www.empoweroregon.org).

The 'community' group has been working to build a stronger organization of SWAA members outside of the university community. They have been holding regular meetings since the summer, and have also been involved with the Empower Oregon campaign. Additionally, they have been working with local PPEHRC affiliate Sisters of the Road (www.sistersoftheroad.org) to endorse and support the January 20, 2010 direct action in San Francisco organized by the Western Regional Advocacy Project (www.wraphome.org). Specifically, they are working to hold a local solidarity event for this event since many people are not able to travel to San Francisco. Finally, they are planning to organize a spring event to help promote local connections to the US Social Forum being held this June in Detroit.

How To Organize a SWAA Chapter

Any group of 10 current SWAA members can create a Chapter. "How to Organize a SWAA Chapter" organizing packets are available from the SWAA website at www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org or by contacting Melissa Sydor at melsk@me.com or 585-262-4366. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of SWAA organizers from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much more! Please allow four weeks for delivery.



SWAA Faculty Network

Joan Dworkin
 dworkinj@saclink.csus.edu

The Faculty Network met on Saturday July 18, 2009 at Spaulding University, Louisville, Kentucky during the jointly sponsored SWAA - PPEHRC conference, *Building the Unsettling Force: A National Conference to End Poverty*. Several universities and organizations were represented including: University of New England, Marywood, Sacramento State, SUNY Brockport, Long Beach State, Indiana State, Castleton College, University of Washington, Portland State, College of St. Rose, Wright State, and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

The discussion topic was teaching and learning about poverty. There was a lively and productive exchange about issues and teaching methods related to poverty. Additionally, we discussed economics for social workers, the impact of corporate identity laws on our economy, and the need for experiential teaching techniques to heighten student awareness about poverty. A number of participants mentioned resources that they have found useful in their teaching.

Regarding experiential learning, several faculty indicated that they use specific assignments, including: living on a poverty level food budget; spending twenty hours with members of the homeless community in their city; visiting a soup kitchen; living without adequate hygiene facilities; experiencing public disdain; poverty tours; and bringing members of poor people's groups into the classroom to discuss their work. Right after the meeting a faculty network member posted another example on the SWAA list serve describing how students from one university's Injustice and Oppression class spent a week in an abandoned Philadelphia building participating in social action with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. Back in class, the students presented an episode of the British program *People and Power*, highlighting the work of Cheri Honkala (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4ownH4dg3s>).

The SWAA chapter in Rochester is conducting research on the impact of their poverty tours.

SWAA members may want to check out resources used by some of the faculty network such as the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, the Foundation for Critical Thinking, Rethinking Education, Working Class Studies Association and the following websites: <http://www.classmatters.org/>; <http://www.classism.org/resources.html>.

The group discussed several ideas for activities that would generate and distribute resources for teaching and learning. Faculty network members could contribute regularly to the SWAA newsletter and to the *Journal of Progressive Human Services*. Each of these publications could support a faculty column or section. We could make more use of the SWAA Faculty Network list serve (SWAAfacultynetwork@yahoogroups.com) and the SWAA website to post teaching materials such as syllabi, fact sheets and analysis papers. A more ambitious undertaking requiring further exploration would be to develop a progressive/radical think tank starting with a brainstorming retreat.

Ideas and responses to this article can be e-mailed to jdworkin@csus.edu, or hessmiller@maryu.marywood.edu.

Journal of Progressive Human Services

Editorial Collective, *The Journal of Progressive Human Services*
 c/o flower noble@hotmail.com

Dear SWAA members/*Journal of Progressive Human Services* readers:

Our next issue, which will be mailed in December of 2009, explores the topic: "What is radical social work in contemporary times?" We have three different voices answering this question; two MSW students, Allison Thompson and Denise Dreikosen, and one well published author and sociology academic, David Wagner. Thompson and Dreikosen entered an essay contest and both won *Journal of Progressive Human Service* funding to attend the joint conference of the Social Welfare Action Alliance and Poor Peoples' Economic Human Rights Campaign in Louisville, Kentucky in July 2009. JPHS is committed to publishing radical perspectives from people of various backgrounds, and will continue to do this in our next issue. We would like to invite further submissions from our SWAA allies for upcoming issues.

"Persistent Tensions: Social Justice and Social Virtues in Social Welfare and Social Work" is our next soapbox topic and we welcome submissions from academics, social service users, practitioners, students and the general public who have an interest in the topic. Submissions for this topic must be sent to soapbox editor, Flower Noble by 12/31/2009 (flower noble@hotmail.com). Please resend if you do not get a confirmation that your submission was received.

The following topic, which will be published in issue 21(2), due June 15, 2010, is "Power and Control in Women's Institutions". We look forward to hearing your perspectives!

"Social Work can defend its standards only if it realizes the organized nature of the opposition to it, why these interests are opposed, and where its own allies are to be found."

*Bertha Capen Reynolds
 Social Work and Social Living,
 NASW, 1975, p. 166.*

Building The Unsettling Force: Conference Creates Hope & Inspiration from Radical Social Work

Erinne Goodell, Lisa Hawash, Monica Beemer and Richard Walden,
Sisters Of The Road
www.sistersoftheroad.org

Sisters Of The Road is a radical non-profit located in Portland, Oregon that provides direct services (hot, nutritious meals in exchange for \$1.25 or 15 minutes of barter work) and does community organizing on the root causes of homelessness and poverty. On July 16-19, three Sisters' staff members traveled to Louisville, Kentucky to take part in Building the Unsettling Force: A National Conference to End Poverty, the 2009 Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC)/Social Welfare Action Alliance (SWAA) Joint Conference. Lisa Hawash, Monica Beemer and Richard Walden had the motivating experience of joining hundreds of people dedicated to eradicating poverty in the United States at the conference.

It was a unique and exciting event given that more than half the people participating had direct personal experience with, or were currently experiencing, extreme poverty and/or homelessness in our "country of plenty." Other attendees were primarily social workers and professors of social work from various universities throughout the country, listening, learning from, being present and sharing with one another. The conference incorporated speakers, artistic performers and a march across Louisville. Performers had profound things to say in the most creative ways. They told the story of their mothers, their experiences and their communities - enlightening everyone along the way.

PPEHRC did a great job and a great deal to ensure the conference was *TRULY* about ending poverty. A nonprofit organization from Louisville, Women In Transition, also provided key local support. These groups did an amazing job of ensuring that people with the experience of poverty and homelessness were able to attend the event. This included paying for many, many people to travel to the conference, providing hospitality, picking everyone up at the airport and ensuring attendees had hot meals and a comfortable sleeping space while they were in Louisville.

"I'm excited about what this started," says Monica. "The social work profession and social workers have a responsibility to be a big part of the movement to end poverty at its root causes. And we have a lot of power to do so both in how we do our work, how we run our organizations, and on insisting that everyone's basic human rights for good food, shelter, good jobs and supportive services are met. We must be a powerful part of the systemic change that must take place to regain human rights for all."

Lisa says, "I felt that discussions were thought provoking and encouraging. I came away with a more solid belief that the profession of social work needs to shift gears and go to the root of the problems that people face in this country. It is imperative that social workers join with organizations such as PPEHRC and SWAA in the movement for systemic change. Social workers must be a responsible force in changing the way that policy is created and set, the way that organizations are run and the way schools of social work are teaching."

"I think the most striking thing for me about the conference was the gut-level realization of how interconnected all of our various struggles are," says Richard. "Because [Sisters is] a small, local organization (as were most of the other groups at the conference), I think it's easy to get a bit of tunnel vision. The conference really brought it home for me that it's not just Sit/Lie [a law disproportionately targeting the homeless] in Portland, or foreclosures in Detroit, or immigrant rights in California, but really a systematic "war on the poor" that's happening across the country and the world. Our responses need to start being systemic, rather than piecemeal, as well."

More organizations need to join in this movement! All Social Workers reading this should become active members of SWAA. All radical organizations should become members of PPEHRC and join in the struggle to end poverty at its roots. All people need to take a stand and work for social justice, human rights and civil rights at the personal level, the local level and the global level. When we do, the country will definitely change as we build the unsettling force together. For more information on Sisters Of The Road go to sistersoftheroad.org or come by our Cafe in Portland, Oregon for a great meal and community!

NOTE: the original version of this article appeared in Sister's Voice, the newsletter of Sisters of the Road.



Richard, Bill and Monica at the "We Are Human: A March for Economic Human Rights" in Louisville.

WE ARE STANDING UP TO THE POWERS OF THIS WORLD

Liz McAlister

Phil Berrigan would be 86 today. He disliked celebrations of his birthday. To give him a birthday gift meant using his birthday as the excuse to get something the community might need. But he'd so welcome the gift of this witness against weapons and war and the instruments of mass murder that you enact today. That kind of gift - he loved.

The war we resist today began in 2001; declared as a reaction to 9/11, it was fully prepared for prior to 9/11. In less than a year, Bush was agitating for war in Iraq - searching there for weapons of mass destruction. Three nuns found them in Colorado. Ardeth Platte, Carol Gilbert and Jackie Hudson enacted a Citizens' Weapons Inspection - cutting the fence at the N-8 Missile Silo to expose the presence of a first strike nuclear weapon on high alert.

Their conviction - in the earliest days of the Second Iraq war - was a flagrant miscarriage of justice. The nuns did no sabotage; they did no felony destruction. There was no evidence for either. The judge and prosecutor coddled, coerced and lied to the jury that they might convict with no understanding of what they were convicting the nuns of doing.

For me it was the fall of the other shoe of my beloved Phil Berrigan's dying. We have loved so deeply, worked so hard, conspired, prayed and been through so much together. And we were separated by years of prison. But perhaps their trial and sentencing are a mirror of our times, a mirror into which we must look long and close to better understand the nature of this empire and what we stand for and what we stand against.

What I find myself reflecting on most is the long view - a tough perspective for North Americans who have yet to learn that the quick fix is neither. So I look at the struggle of South Africans against apartheid. It was May 1986. I was sitting on my bed in the Federal Prison in Alderson, West Virginia; the radio announced that the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa was being carried by 9 year olds. It seemed so impossible, so hopeless. Yet, in less than four years, on Feb. 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela was released after 27 years in prison; in four more years (on May 1994) he was inaugurated the first black president of South Africa.

And I look at the struggle of the Palestinians whose ties to their land go back centuries and whose children can only see giving their lives in that struggle. And I look at the Colombians and the peasants of Central America who have to renew their strength every day and every generation. And I look at the history of our own country and the struggle of working people and people of color and women. None of these struggles is won; like a ball game, each must be borne daily. Clearly, we don't get everything we struggle for but we have to fight for everything we get. One of the tragedies in this country is the sense that freedom is a possession. We can own it; it can't be taken from us! It has made us the most pathetic and enslaved people of the world.

In his last major talk, Phil pleaded with thousands assembled here in [Washington] DC: Don't get weary! So I want to echo Phil today: Don't get weary in the face of a world that has embraced endless war and bankrupting military spending - ever newer weapons of mass destruction, \$12,000 every second of every day, a world where lies pass for truth, sound bites for wisdom, arrogance for understanding. And don't get weary as citizens of this

preeminent rogue state - rife with deceit and treachery where leader follows leader from bad to worse, as though by a malign law of nature. One ruler, evil or stupid or violent, breeds another more evil or stupid or violent. This may explain our periodic nostalgia for the likes of L.B.J.

Social critics, politicians, religionists multiply moral and political confusion. Wearily, they advocate verbal drugs, promises of relief, formulas of salvation, invocations to the god of the moment, pointing fingers at enemies - immigrants, the poor in our midst, the axes of evil. Religious, political and military "experts" push their wares: violence, domination, prospering of a few, misery for multitudes.

All of the above are forms of practical idolatry, though they commonly go under more acceptable names like patriotism. All are evidence of the spirit of death at large in our world, hidden persuaders, beckoners of the mighty, urging them to further unconscionable folly. In our day, the same powers legitimate the "law of the land," act as guardian spirits of "justice systems" and world banks and prisons and torture chambers and death rows. They normalize the excesses of the Pentagon, the military budget, the necessity of military intervention. They grease the wheels of the domination system.

We have to be about something utterly different. We have to give the diagnosis of skilled surgeons of the spirit. We have to learn to touch all the places where spirit joins flesh and name them aright. The disease is sin and high crime. The times are circular and closed. The society is ill; its illness is genetic. This analysis, woeful as it is, is a unique gift of people of conscience.

The hope we have to offer is a literal hope against hope, promulgated in the teeth of the worst times. With a sense of lively contempt, it is up to us to shuck off the victim role; cease to be mute, passive, resigned, otherworldly - roles urged (no - imposed) by the culture.

Our claims may, at times, seem morbid, curmudgeonly. But we are living a hope that is concrete, of this world, and offered against the despair of present circumstances. I think we can grab it only if we grab the despair and if in that despair we are driven deeper - into something, somewhere, someone. And, from that geography we are able to hear and realize the promise of justice; the promise of a newness wrought precisely in extremis, in exile, in moments when, it seems, there is little we can do but cling there.

And you know what - it is happening; It is happening here today, among us. It is happening all over our world. Things are way more dynamic and alive than those in power calculate. Those who believe they are in control are deceived. The good news is that we have not collapsed or imploded with despair at this war! Many of us understand that a deeper resistance is summoned of us. We are trying, praying, working - to be strategic, to be faithful, to be human. And we know that we must keep at it, in all those areas and more.

The powers of death and destruction reign... or so it seems. But they are undone. So, dear friends, let us not be awed by the mayhem with which the powers of this world seek to bamboozle us. Let us embrace intransigent resistance; let us imagine that a new world is possible. And then let us live as if that new world were indeed among us and so live it into being. Let us then ABOLISH ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ALL WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION and ABOLISH ALL WAR FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

Excerpts from a speech given October 5, 2009 at National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance rally (<http://www.iraqpledge.org/nogoodwar.html>). Submitted to BCR Reports by Moya Atkinson (moyaatk@yahoo.com).

NASW and SWAA— Social and Political Action? Where Are We Headed? What Can We Do?

Moya Atkinson
moyaatk@yahoo.com

As the former executive director of the NASW Maryland Chapter for 9 ½ years, and more recently, as an activist member in semi-retirement, I've had an interesting, if frustrating journey, ultimately failing in my efforts as an activist within either organization.

I thought it would be useful to consider the roles and expectations of the two organizations, to understand better why.

NASW's Code of Ethics states:

6.04 Social and Political Action

(a) *Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.*

(b) *Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.*

(c) *Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.*

(d) *Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.*

More recently, NASW has also published two “toolkits”: the *Peace Policy Toolkit* and *Immigration Policy Toolkit*, which I imagine very few members are aware of.

NASW's **Social Work Speaks**, crafted, reviewed and updated by Delegate Assembly members and staff, contains its policies, which govern its actions and its advocacy. The degree of staff direction and input is not known, and it is impossible to learn who the authors of the policies are. Thus, I have not been able to find out who was responsible for removing “single payer” as the NASW's preferred health care payment system in the most recent policy statement, nor have I been given the names of the authors.

In spite of all these resources, I've personally found that it is very difficult for individual members to actively “get involved in the discussion” or to influence NASW's formulation of immediate actions and positions, as urged by NASW President James Kelly. The lack of national conferences and the most recent “virtual” Delegate Assembly in 2008, has further distanced members from each other and from the Board.

Fortunately for social workers, we have the Social Welfare Action Alliance, which provides an outlet for progressive social workers. Below is its mission statement, not dissimilar in parts from NASW's.

Social Welfare Action Alliance: What We Stand For

- *To promote the study and practice of the progressive tradition in social welfare policy by critiquing the nature of social services, social work and social change.*
- *To foster communication, support and collaboration among human service workers, activists, scholars and the people who receive the services, thereby reducing the gap between theory and practice to build a base for unified action.*
- *To develop collaborative agendas for alternative social policies aimed at both incremental and fundamental social change.*
- *To understand the requirements and methods of humanistic direct practice that supports individual, community and broad social changes.*
- *To promote the participation of social service workers, educators and students in the struggles of low income and other oppressed peoples.*
- *To further coalitions with all social movements whose objectives are integral to the achievement of a just, caring and humanistic society through community-based activism.*
- *To combat discrimination in all its forms.*
- *To promote the tradition, mission and methods of progressive social work by facilitating the presentation, publication and distribution of progressive literature as well as stimulating research and contributions to progressive publications.*
- *To educate people about the life and work of Bertha Capen Reynolds.*

Why then, do both organizations have problems with **organizing activism**? In NASW's case I believe it's because it is dependent on its **corporate** sponsors as well as on its members (NASW Foundation Annual Report 2002-2003 -LETTER FROM THE NASW FOUNDATION'S PRESIDENT AND CHAIRPERSON, Elizabeth J. Clark, Ph.D., ACSW, MPH, Executive Director, and Sandra J. McCormick, ACSW, MHA. “To achieve our goals, NASWF is exploring opportunities for corporate sponsorship, grants from a variety of sources, and continues to rely on the generous support of NASW members, their friends, families, and employers, and the entire social work community.”). Chapters and many members are also dependent on the good will of corporate sponsors.

And what prevents SWAA from doing more? Let's look at Psychologists for Social Responsibility. I asked SWAA member Anne Anderson to give us insight – as the Co-Coordinator (part-time) of PsySR for over 20 years (recently retired from this position). The description below is from her notes:

“PsySR was founded because it was clear that the concerns of the founders would not be addressed by their professional organizations, such as the American Psychological Association. Too many stakeholders with too many conflicting interests in the major professional organizations. Its original mission was the single focus on preventing nuclear war, and was established as a sister organization to Physicians for Social Responsibility, which PsySR used as a model.

“PsySR's functioning became much more complicated once the mission was expanded; it became much harder to identify and prioritize the issues to focus on and the actions to take. One thing that helped was to identify a wider range of activities that could be done by members in support of a principle or recommendation agreed to by the Board of Directors. Even so, it was still difficult. It could have used

Continued on Page 10

Viva Gaza

Athena Viscusi
athenaace@aol.com

I was privileged to go to Gaza as part of a delegation of 66 American, Canadians and Australians led by Code Pink from May 29, 2009 to June 5, 2009. Our very entrance into Gaza, through the Rafah crossing from Egypt, was a testament to the resourcefulness and determination of Code Pink, who have mastered the art of siege-busting since they brought a first delegation in March for International Women's Day.

We went to witness the devastation of the Israeli attacks in December and January, and the continued hardships of the blockade. We brought aid and support to the children of Gaza, and built three pink playgrounds, but we left with so much more. As a person, I was inspired by the resiliency and hopefulness of the Gazan people. And, as a social worker, my practice was enriched by my meetings with colleagues there.

Gaza is a coastal strip of 140 square miles with a population of 1.5 million, roughly the size and density of Philadelphia. In 21 days of attacks beginning December 27, 2008, the Israeli army killed at least 1,300 people and wounded many more, at least one third of them children. According to UN estimates, they destroyed 3,500 homes, 37 schools, 20 mosques, government buildings, UN warehouses, the wing of a hospital, the science lab of a university, and the zoo.

Just like residents of US inner cities, every single Gazan has been affected by violence, either as a victim, a witness, or a bereaved person. The difference is that they cannot leave; the borders have been effectively sealed since the Hamas victory in 2006. Gazans are physically trapped on their land and subject to random attacks from the land, the air, and the sea. Israel shoots at anyone coming within 300 meters of the border (even farmers) or sailing within three miles off the coast (even fishers). They cannot receive help from outside because the blockade imposed in 2006 allows only for food and medicine to enter.

All of the healers are themselves wounded in some way. I met with colleagues at the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme who had shut down their clinic for two weeks after the bombings so that they could allow for the staff to heal before attending to the healing needs of the community. I was impressed by this thoughtfulness and self-compassion, so different from the places where I have worked in the US, focused on measurable outcomes and billable services.

In Gaza, there is a massive effort underway to educate teachers, health care workers and social service providers about trauma and its symptoms, and to provide accessible counseling. Meanwhile in my city, the capital of the richest country in the world, public mental health clinics have been closed while there has been no reduction in trauma caused by street crime, domestic violence, and child abuse.

Palestinian mental health professionals see themselves as performing an act of resistance by trying to prevent the besieged population from developing symptoms. One psychologist shared his view that if Israelis had received appropriate counseling after the Holocaust, they would not have displaced their trauma onto the Palestinians, causing their present suffering.

In both Gaza and my town of Washington, DC, violence has undermined the family structure. Parents feel helpless to protect their children, who

look towards other figures of authority. In Gaza, it is fundamentalist leaders and fighters; in DC, it is gang leaders and drug dealers.

The lack of jobs affects youth everywhere, yet in Gaza youth maintain hope. Despite an unemployment rate of over 40%, I met many youth pursuing university and graduate degrees. Business administration is a popular topic of study in this land with few businesses and no foreign trade. In contrast, DC has an unemployment rate nearing 10 % and a high school dropout rate exceeding 50 %.

Certainly, Gazan children are not attracted to schools for their amenities. Since the bombings, destroyed schools moved into intact ones. This doubles or triples the attendance, and the schools adopt early morning to midday or midday to late evening schedules. Daily blackouts interrupt all activities and prevent studying at night. New books or supplies are not permitted to enter Gaza.

I have been struggling to distill a magic formula for resiliency from my meetings with professionals and interactions with the people of Gaza. How do they maintain hope and high spirits amidst such devastation and injustice? Is it because they are taught from a young age how to understand their experience?

In one after school program in Gaza, children were singing: "If the Israelis kill us we will go to Heaven. As Palestinians, we have patience and can teach the children of the world the meaning of manhood." We could teach our children our own song: "If capitalism and globalization choke our city and deprive us of jobs, we will still go to Heaven. As oppressed Americans who have invented Jazz and Hip Hop, we are the envy of the world." Would our children then go to school?

The religious fundamentalists in Gaza gained appeal when international law failed the Palestinian people. The Abolitionist and Civil Rights movements in the US also appealed to faith for the resolve to combat unjust laws. They have the same discussions on the merits of armed struggle, negotiations, or civil disobedience in Gaza as we have had here.

There has been growing outrage at the situation in Gaza since the latest attacks. The United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Committee of the Red Cross have all issued damning reports of Israeli actions against Gaza. The Free Gaza Movement has sponsored shipments of aid such as the boat captured by the Israeli Navy with Nobelist Mairead McGuire and Former Representative. Cynthia McKinney on board. In addition, the Viva Palestina Movement has brought aid convoys over land through Egypt.

During our trip, Norman Finklestein, (a son of Holocaust survivors who has frequently been accused of anti-Semitism because of his critiques of Israel) devised the idea of a massive peaceful march on the borders from inside Gaza. It is now in the planning stages and is scheduled for January 1, 2010.

The following websites are good resources to learn more about the Palestinian struggle:

codepinkalert.org
freegaza.org
vivapalestina-us.org
endtheoccupation.org
palsolidarity.org
end-gaza-siege.ps
kibush.co.il
normanfinklestein.com

Studies of TANF

Betty Reid Mandell
mmandell@curry.edu

The following information was prepared for the Care Caucus Group and the Greater Boston Legal Services, two organizations doing advocacy work on welfare.

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities reported that as states have imposed tighter restrictions on welfare, only 40 percent of poor families who qualify for public assistance receive it, compared with 80 percent in the recessions of 1981-82 and 1990-91 (Parrot, 2008). And the amount of welfare grants has always been below the subsistence level, in some states far below. Even before the economic meltdown, a large number of single mothers were trying to make ends meet with neither earnings nor cash assistance.

In an average month in 2005 - the last year for which comprehensive data are available - 690,000 single mothers and 1.3 million children lived in families that received neither earnings nor government cash income support (from TANF, SSI, unemployment insurance, or Social Security) and consequently had monthly income below half of the poverty line. This represented a sharp increase from 1996, when 303,000 single mothers fell into this category (Parrott, 2008).

Just before welfare reform, AFDC pulled 64 percent of children out of deep poverty (defined as under 50 percent of the poverty level). In 2005, TANF lifted far fewer, just 23 percent, a drop of more than 40 percent (Levinson & Schott, 2008).

Overall, between 2000 and 2004, 774,000 more children fell into poverty (Parrott & Sherman, 2008). In addition, under TANF only about 4 out of 10 people who are eligible receive assistance (Levinson & Schott, 2008).

A 2008 study by the New York Times found that “despite soaring unemployment and the worst economic crisis in decades, 18 states cut

their welfare rolls last year, and nationally the number of people receiving cash assistance remained at or near the lowest in more than 40 years” (DeParle, 2008). States have pushed people off the rolls for various reasons, often for failure to attend work programs. A research and advocacy group in Texas said, “We’re really just pushing families off the program” (DeParle, 2008). Rising unemployment has been particularly hard on women without a high school degree. “Joblessness among women ages 20 to 24 without a high school degree rose to 23.9 percent last year, from 17.9 percent the year before” (DeParle, 2008)

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act is due to be reauthorized by Congress in 2010. The workfare program’s contingency fund for extending the poor emergency help during recessions seems certain to run out of money next year. A New York Times editorial urged Congress to deal with that. It goes on to say, “And there already are sensible calls to repair workfare as we know it, by allowing more cash assistance and easing mandates for work, at least until there’s work again” (New York Times, 2008).

References

- Parrot, S. (November 24, 2008). Recession could cause large increases in poverty and push millions into deep poverty. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Retrieved from Internet: Levinson, Z. & Schott, L. (November 24, 2008). TANF benefits are low and have not kept pace with inflation (but most states have increased benefits above a freeze level in recent years). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. www.cbpp.org/11-24-08pov.htm.
- Retrieved from Internet: Parrott, S. & Sherman, A. (August 17, 2006). TANF at 10: Program results are more mixed than often understood. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. www.cbpp.org/8-17-06tanf.htm.
- DeParle, J. (February 2, 2008). Welfare aid not growing as economy drops off. New York Times.
- Editorial (December 25, 2008). Welfare as We Knew It. New York Times.

Continued from Page 8

six full-time staff people at any time. Anne managed with part-time help, volunteers and interns.

“Funding for PsySR has always been based on member fees, individual donations, and occasional grants from foundations for specific projects. It has always been a very low budget. We always hired the services of an accounting firm to do the IRS reporting and provide some expert review of PsySR’s practices to ensure conformity with non-profit status requirements.”

I believe that if we as social workers are to have any impact on the social and political direction of this country, we need to organize (to use Manny Gale’s oft-stated pronouncement).

We need to understand what SWAA is now, and what it could be. One way is to check out PsySR’s web-site - www.psyr.org. You will be mightily impressed!

Then let’s ask ourselves if we want to fundamentally change what SWAA is, and what we’ll need if we want to be more effective as activists.

Obviously, we can’t do that without staff; we can’t get staff without money; we can’t raise money without member support; we really can’t do this without existing and new leadership. In order for this not to become a vicious cycle, I hope that a few members – or non-members will get together and seriously consider PsySR as an example, and see if we can create a similar organization within or outside SWAA.

Finally, please understand that I greatly admire what members of the two organizations have done to date! It’s formidable! But to be progressive social work activists within our profession, I believe we can do more.

Direct Action Raises Questions around Afghanistan Remembrance Day October 5, 2009

Moya Atkinson
moyaatk@yahoo.com

Yesterday morning's headlines in the Washington Post screamed at me – "Not 'Just Another Casualty' – Retired Colonel Wants Military to Answer for Son's July 2008 Death"; and "Deadly Attack By Taliban Tests New Strategy – 8 U.S. Troops Killed in Siege of Outpost". The articles couldn't have been timelier for yesterday's actions at the White House by members of the National Committee for Nonviolent Resistance and other groups. We gathered on this, the 8th Anniversary of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, to ask our president to bring an end to the wars, to end the drone attacks in Pakistan, and to urge the closing of various sites in which torture, indefinite detention and rendition are being promulgated.

Among the speakers was Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in Iraq in 2004, and who demanded an investigation into her son's death, and spearheaded efforts to end the occupation of Iraq. It is ironic that five years later, retired Colonel David P. Brostrom is demanding an investigation into his son Jonathan's death in Afghanistan in July, 2008. Will he become a driving force in ending our occupation in Afghanistan as a result of the tragic death of his son?

I ask myself what has motivated our president to wage war against a loosely knit country of tribes and warlords known for their skill in demolishing invaders. He must know that 400 Coalition military have died in 2009 alone, of whom 244 have died since July 1st; and that 1,445 have died in the years since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, 869 of whom were from the United States. He must know that military operations in Afghanistan have cost U.S. taxpayers over \$200.5 billion, \$60.2 billion of which was spent in FY 2009 alone; and that monthly costs in Afghanistan during FY 2009 averaged \$5 billion per month, up from \$3.5 billion per month in FY 2008, all money borrowed from the Chinese.

Has it occurred to our president that the \$1 trillion already spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could have paid for universal health care for every single person for many years? Or that it could have built needed infrastructure and affordable housing; it could have educated our youth and trained and retrained our workforce, given abundantly to those in need, spent money on art and music and recreation, restored what we had destroyed and worked to save our planet instead of despoiling it?

What would it have cost our president to have accepted and read our letter asking him to end the war in Afghanistan, and offering our support? What stopped him from greeting us and expressing his admiration for our courage and hope for a better world without wars? Why didn't he arrange to meet with our leaders about alternatives to war? After all, we were not all "Green Party types, with some self-proclaimed socialists thrown in", to quote Dana Milbank (today's "Washington Post"). Some of us are highly regarded activists who have dedicated our lives to the most worthy goal of bringing about peace, including Elizabeth McAlister, wife of Phil Berrigan, and their

daughter Frida; Cindy Sheehan, Retired Colonel Ann Wright, Code Pink Co-founders Medea Benjamin, Gael Murphy and others. Will our president heed Mr. Milbank's words of caution: "What the president should worry about is whether these activists are indicators of bigger things to come if he sides with his generals and decides to bulk up the U.S. force in Afghanistan?"

On my way home from the Metro station, my cab driver and I were discussing yesterday morning's activities. He told me that he had left Afghanistan twenty-seven years ago, when the Russians were occupying Kabul. Since I only had a ten dollar bill, I asked him to drop me off when the meter was at \$10.00. He refused to do that, and drove me "the extra mile." As he let me off, he thanked me for what we had done, saying "Blessed are the peacemakers." His words and our actions make me more hopeful that eventually our message will resonate around the country – preferably before too many more military and civilian fatalities. And instead of a few hundred, there will be thousands and millions demanding an end to the war. Those of us who organized and participated in yesterday's actions will continue to be the harbingers of "the bigger things to come!"

Moya Atkinson, member of N. Virginians for Peace and Justice and the Women's International League for Peace and freedom

NOTE: October 7, 2009 marked the eighth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. The National Priorities Project (NPP) analyses finds that, to date, the FY 2010 U.S. military spending for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is projected to be \$130 billion. In the past, funding was split between the two U.S. wars at a 70/30 ratio, with the majority of U.S. dollars going to operations in Iraq. In FY 2010, this ratio is projected to shift, with Afghanistan war spending accounting for over 50 percent of total costs.

"The real choice before us as social workers is whether we are to be passive or active... We must first of all know that we have allies.... In using the organizations we have we shall find others in the community also fighting in organized ways for the same issues in human welfare."

*Bertha Capen Reynolds
Social Work and Social Living,
p. 175-6*

RUTH HARRIS WILSON**1915-2008**

Human rights activist, life-long militant of the left, and a founding member of SWAA (the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society), Ruth H. Wilson died August 11, 2008 in New York City.

After graduating from the University of Kansas, Ruth's first job was in a public welfare family agency. From the inception of her professional life, Ruth was convinced that her mission as a social worker was "not to put band aids on the wounds of our corporate system" but to be an activist dedicated to the struggle for social change. In the next 10 years or so Ruth moved around the country and worked in Washington State, Chicago and Ohio. She found employment in one of the agencies created under FDR's new deal program, the Works Program Administration, which she enjoyed very much because it enabled her to do social work and be an activist at the same time. In Chicago Ruth did graduate work and obtained an MSW. In Ohio, she became a member of the Communist Party but left the state, fearing political persecution.

Ruth arrived in NYC in the early 50's, securing a position at Bellevue Hospital through her Party contacts. She worked at Bellevue and at Sydenham Hospital in Harlem for most of her social work career.

Ruth married Ted Wilson in 1958 when she was 43 and he was 50. They were devoted to each other, with Ted a hardworking helpmate for Ruth on her many projects and Ruth caring for Ted at home during many years of illness until his death in 1999.

Ruth was involved in countless organizations during the 60's dealing with the civil rights movement. In some cases she worked as a Party cadre, but in most instances she did political work following her own convictions.

The first international solidarity work she became involved in was with the people of Vietnam. She worked hard helping to organize countless peace marches and rallies.

When the military coup took place in Chile in September 11, 1973, Ruth, along with Sol Golerick, Phyllis Grunauer, Ted and other progressive social workers, established the Committee for Chilean Inquiry. The original purpose of the group was to assist fellow social workers suffering persecution from the new regime in Chile. They became the longest active committee in solidarity with Chile, and effectively functioned until democracy was restored in 1990. In 2001, the Chilean government, several of whose legislators and senators were former social workers aided by the Committee, presented Ruth, Sol, and Phyllis (all SWAA members) with an award "In acknowledgement of and with much gratitude for your contribution in helping to restore democracy in Chile."

In 1992 the committee acknowledged its already expanded solidarity work and became the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry. Through the years, the Committee came to the aid of social workers under persecution throughout the world, including the Philippines, South Africa, Guatemala, Palestine, and activists in the United States' Sanctuary, civil rights, and peace movements.

Sol, Phyllis, Ted and a few others died during the 90's. Ruth continued her work, initiating and supporting countless campaigns around peace in the Middle East, the environment, electoral reform, and justice for Lynne Steward, among many others, until her death in August 2008.

Information compiled by Jose Matta, NYC, and Marilyn Moch, Seattle, WA

Continued from Page 1

work, David Gil has argued that conceptions of social justice must contain a theorization of human need (Gil, 2004), and social welfare policy must be evaluated on the basis of its role in ensuring human needs are met (Gil, 1992). Jeffrey Olson has proposed in the *Journal of Progressive Human Services* that social work should adopt a needbased conceptualization as the basis for restoring social work's commitment to social justice (Olson, 2007). Human needs concepts could inform a unifying paradigm for social work practice and would help fulfill social work's commitments to human rights and social justice (Dover & Joseph, 2008).

However, during the second period, from approximately 1950 to 1991, it became apparent there was a third, more explicitly political reason, why human needs concepts were resisted. During a period of anti-communist hysteria, the US federal government destroyed the plates of the book *Common Human Needs* by Charlotte Towle (Posner, 1995; Towle, 1965[1945]).

This leads to my second main point: irrational levels of anti-communist intellectual prejudice help explain why the concept of human need has not become more central for social work. Within US political discourse, talk of human needs raised and to some extent still raises the specter of the Communist manifesto's slogan, "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!"

Beginning with the early 1990s, a third period began, one in which veterans of the 60s and 70s social movements began in earnest to try to bring social justice back into social work. However, this process was hindered in part because of the reluctance of US social work in particular to incorporate human needs theory. A form of ecological systems theory was still dominant. Although ecosystems theory ably maps the social environment, it under-theorizes what happens at the intersection of the individual and the social environment.

Arguably, it is at that intersection where human needs are either met or where barriers rooted primarily in oppression, dehumanization and exploitation prevent people and communities from meeting their human needs in their culturally chosen manner (Dover, 2008).

From within social work, a strong tendency still views any discussion of needs as disempowering, and that instead we should focus entirely on strengths. Yet the concept of human capabilities found in the strengths perspective is completely consistent with the use of the capabilities concept in human needs theory (Alkire, 2005; Gough, 2003, 2004; Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1985). Furthermore, human need as a concept was incorporated by leading proponents of empowerment based practice (Cox & Joseph, 1998; Gutiérrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998).

In US social work, the N.A.S.W. Code of Ethics states clearly in its preamble, "The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people." The British Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics stresses in its section on social justice: "The fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet basic human needs." However, in order to achieve such lofty objectives, social work needs to reinvigorate its theoretical foundation by more fully incorporating concepts of human need.

For example, one pioneer of cross-cultural and antiracist counseling,

Continued on Page 14

Continued from Page 1

munities in fifteen states. Enthusiastic crowds greeted us at rallies and town halls in 30 cities large and small. More than 6,000 persons attended the 46 rallies and town halls we held in churches and union halls, in universities, public parks and arts centers.

Our journey took us from Sequim, Washington to Portland to Seattle and on to Spokane, Bozeman, Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Salt Lake City, Fort Collins, Denver, Des Moines, Mankato, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Madison, Gary, Bloomington, Nashville, Louisville, Xenia, Yellow Springs, Detroit, Chicago, Toledo, Pt. Clinton, Cleveland and Pittsburgh before arriving at a rally at Lafayette Park across from the White House on September 30th.

We began our rallies and town meetings by distinguishing between anger and rage. Anger is a normal human feeling, a healthy feeling which can be channeled productively to generate change and work for social justice. Anger is what the Mad As Hell Doctors expressed and attempted to harness with the tour. Rage is the type of feeling fostered by those funding tea party attempts to disrupt public discourse and to prevent others from exercising their freedom of speech.

We explained that we support the full expression of all points of view whether or not they agree with us. Each of our events included a series of "mad as hell minutes" in which any person could say anything uninterrupted for 60 seconds. Perhaps as a consequence we encountered no organized disruption. There was only one organized opposing demonstration.

In the mad as hell minutes we heard heartbreaking story after story of the crushing impacts of the lack of health insurance on human lives. In one case a man was fired from his job in a small firm when his wife was diagnosed with MS - if he had been permitted to continue employment, health insurance would have been too costly for anyone who worked there. We heard repeatedly about bankruptcies resulting from medical expenses. We heard about couples being advised to divorce so one member could be insured or to avoid total loss of family assets through medical bills.

A woman, a doctor from Spokane, spoke for many: "I'm mad because medicine should be a human enterprise, not a commercial enterprise, because we don't have access to health care for all, because there are unneeded disparities in health outcomes between poor and rich, between blacks and whites." A veteran put it this way: "I'm mad as hell because I have excellent socialized medicine from the Veteran's Administration but not everyone has access like I do."

Some of the most moving stories will be included in a full-length documentary of our campaign.

We asked President Obama to do two things: 1) meet with us so we could share with him what we have learned in our travels, and 2) appoint a White Ribbon Commission consisting of public health experts and health care professionals - but no health insurance or pharmaceutical corporation representatives - to compare health care systems

throughout the world and to develop a uniquely American system that will provide access to health care for every American. We posted our requests on our website and asked supporters to contact President Obama in support of our requests.

Several days into the trip we received a phone call from a White House staffer. "When," he asked, "are you going to take that request off your website? We are receiving so many emails that our mailbox is being flooded." Our reply was straight forward. "We'll remove the request when President Obama agrees to meet with us." The White House responded by blocking emails from our site. We asked our supporters to cut and paste the request into their own email addresses. Emails continued to flood the White House.

President Obama has not yet met with the Mad As Hell Doctors. From our perspective he has missed the opportunity to make history by bringing us healthcare reform we can believe in.

This is disappointing but not surprising. The systematic exclusion of full and fair consideration of single risk pool, single payer options in congressional deliberations on health insurance reform demonstrates the near strangle-hold of corporate interests on Congress. Billions of dollars in profits are at stake. It is no surprise that health insurance and pharmaceutical special interests are employing six full-time health insurance lobbyists for every member of Congress and are spending more than 1.4 million dollars daily to prevent even the most modest reform of the system. If we follow the money trail, it is increasingly clear that we do have the best Congress that money can buy.

As organizers we know that breaking the hold of corporate greed on Congress is a daunting task. But it is essential for progressive change. It will require mobilization of the growing outrage we encountered throughout the nation.

Might a "White Ribbon Campaign" help spark the continuation of the civil rights movement? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it this way some 40 years ago: "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane." His words continue to resound today.

In communities throughout the nation concerned and angry citizens are placing flowers and lighting candles at city halls and in front of health insurance company offices - mourning the 45,000 persons who die needlessly in the United States each year from lack of health insurance. They are tying white ribbons to symbolize the hope for enactment of single payer health care legislation that will prevent these unnecessary deaths. And increasingly, protestors are putting their bodies on the line, being arrested for civil disobedience. Perhaps an aroused citizenry can even reclaim the democratic structure of the United States.

Full information about Mad as Hell Doctors is found on www.madashelldoctors.com A short video about the MAHD Health Care-a-Van is found on www.madashelldoctorsvideo.com For comprehensive information about single-payer health programs see Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) www.PNHP.org.

Continued from Page 12

Clemmont Vontress, who authored an influential 1976 article on racial differences as impediments to rapport, has recently concluded that increased recognition of cultural common denominators is essential to efforts to advance cross-cultural counseling (Dover, 2009; Vontress, 1976, 2001).

This leads to the last point I would like to make. Just as we need to identify human similarity, universal needs, and cross-cultural common denominators, so we need to find political common ground. Human needs are not the property of any one political perspective. We won't be able to bring social justice back into social work merely by somehow seizing political control of social work schools and organizations. Yes, we need radical social workers. We need SWAN and we need SWAA. But I'm not sure that what we need is radical social work, despite what David Wagner has called the *Quest for a Radical Profession* (Wagner, 1990).

Instead, if we want to transform social work into a profession truly committed to social justice, we need to devise a conceptualization of social work practice which is inherently oriented towards social justice because it is fundamentally focused on human needs. The primary barrier to bringing social justice back into social work the failure of progressive social workers to give real teeth to our conceptualization of social justice. And this can't be done without reference to the centrality of human needs.

One hundred years ago, social work needed to move beyond religion. Today as a profession we must move beyond ideology. We need to design practice models rooted in a fundamental commitment to the human needs of our clients and communities. As one SWAN member said yesterday, we need to ensure that values are back on the agenda. We should become committed to the needs of people, not the needs of capital, but not because of a predilection for a particular political ideology. We should do so because of a fundamental theoretical and value commitment to human needs, a commitment which is essential to bringing social justice back into social work.

Alkire, S. (2005). Needs and capabilities. In S. Reader (Ed.), *The philosophy of need* (pp. 229-251). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Booth, C. (1902). *Life and labour of the people in London* (Vol. 7). London: Macmillan.

Cox, E. O., & Joseph, B. H. R. (1998). Social service delivery and empowerment: The administrator's role. In L. M. Gutiérrez, R. J. Parsons & E. O. Cox (Eds.), *Empowerment in social work practice: a sourcebook* (pp. 167-186). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Dover, M. A. (2008). Oppression, Dehumanization and Exploitation: Connecting Theory to Experience. In D. Van Soest & B. Garcia (Eds.), *Diversity Education for Social Justice: Mastering Teaching Skills* (Second ed., pp. 296-310). Washington, DC: Council on Social Work Education.

Dover, M. A. (2009). Rapport, Empathy and Oppression: Cross-Cultural Vignettes. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 15(4), forthcoming.

Dover, M. A., & Joseph, B. H. R. (2008). Human needs: Overview. In T. Mizrahi & L. Davis (Eds.), *The encyclopedia of social work* (20th ed., pp. 398-406). New York: Oxford University Press and National Association of Social Workers.

Gil, D. G. (1992). *Unravelling social policy: theory, analysis, and political action towards social equality* (5th ., rev. and enl ed.). Rochester, VT Schenkman Books.

Gil, D. G. (2004). Perspectives on Social Justice. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 10(Fall), 32-39.

Gough, I. (2003). *Lists and Thresholds: Comparing the Doyal-Gough Theory of Human Need with Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach*. Bath, England: Well-Being in Developing Countries ESRC Research Group, University of Bath.

Gough, I. (2004). Human Well-Being and Social Structures: Relating the Universal and the Local. *Global Social Policy*, 4(3), 289-311.

Gutiérrez, L. M., Parsons, R. J., & Cox, E. O. (1998). A model for empowerment practice. In L. M. Gutiérrez, R. J. Parsons & E. O. Cox (Eds.), *Empowerment in social work practice: A sourcebook* (pp. 3-23). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Olson, J. J. (2007). Social Work's Professional and Social Justice Projects: Discourses in Conflict. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 18(1), 45-69.

Posner, W. B. (1995). Common human needs: A story from the prehistory of government by special interest. *Social Service Review*, 69(2), 188-225.

Sen, A. K. (1985). *Commodities and capabilities*. New York: Elsevier.

Towle, C. (1965[1945]). *Common human needs* (Rev. ed.). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.

Vontress, C. E. (1976). Racial differences: Impediments to rapport. In J. A. Goodman (Ed.), *Dynamics of racism in social work practice* (pp. 80-89). Washington: National Association of Social Workers.

Vontress, C. E. (2001). Cross-cultural counseling in the 21st century. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 23(2), 83-97.

Wagner, D. (1990). *The quest for a radical profession: Social service careers and political ideology*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

**Excerpts from a Plenary Panel Presentation on September 11, 2009 at the National Social Work Action Network, University of Bath, Bath, England, United Kingdom. For a full version of this talk, Mike may be contacted at m.a.dover@csnobio.edu.*



Join the only organization of
social workers and human service workers
dedicated to activism for social and economic justice.



Who We Are

The Social Welfare Action Alliance (SWAA) is a national organization of progressive social workers and other human service workers. Founded in 1985, the Alliance is based on principles that reflect a concern for social and economic justice, peace and coalition building with progressive social movements. These principles articulate a need by social service workers for a practice and theory that responds to progressive concerns.

SWAA chapters determine their own agendas, provide forums for discussions and debates around local, national and international issues. Local chapters are represented on the national steering committee to help shape the organization's direction. In addition, the Alliance holds annual national gatherings that focus on critical issues, tools and ideas for action to promote social change.

"The real choice before us as social workers is whether we are to be passive or active."

- Bertha Capen Reynolds

Join the local chapter of the Social Welfare Action Alliance

Any group of 10 current SWAA members can create a Chapter. "How to Organize a SWAA Chapter" organizing packets are available from the SWAA website at www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org or by contacting Melissa Sydor at melmas1@yahoo.com or 585-262-4366. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of SWAA organizers from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much more! Please allow four weeks for delivery.

www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org



**Social Welfare
Action Alliance**

A National Organization of
Progressive Workers in Social Welfare

Formerly Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

Join the SOCIAL WELFARE ACTION ALLIANCE!

I would like to join the Social Welfare Action Alliance

Name(please print or type)

I would like to renew my membership

Enclosed is my check:

Address

\$10 Student, unemployed,
low-income member

City, State, ZIP

\$35 Member

\$100 Sustaining Member

\$150 Institutional Member

Institutional/Organizational Affiliation (Optional)

\$250 Lifetime Member

I would like to join the Faculty Network

Telephone (Home) (Work)

I would also like a subscription to the *Journal of Progressive Human Services*:

Email

Individual Subscription:

\$25 for SWAA Members

Please make your check payable to The Social Welfare Action Alliance and return to:

Please send me more information about SWAA

Social Welfare Action Alliance

Tell me more about the "bertha_swaa" email discussion list

Columbus Circle Station

P.O. Box 20563

New York, NY 10023

Social Welfare Action Alliance
Columbus Circle Station
P.O. Box 20563
New York, NY 10023
www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org