

# NASW BLACK CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

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## NASW Black Caucus Update

### Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

By Marianne Wood, Cochair NASW Black Caucus

The existence and work of NASW's Black Caucus is spreading! In response to our previous newsletter, we heard from our members in 33 chapters across the United States. This response is very exciting. The African American social workers that belong to NASW are a committed, energetic group. Responses are being sent to each member who expressed an interest in the work of the caucus. ♦

### Mentoring Programs

The beginning of 2000 has seen the launching of two exciting mentoring programs with the assistance from members of the Black Caucus. The two chapters are Maryland and Metro/Washington. Mentors and mentees have been recruited and matched. The mentoring programs are for all chapter members, but the caucus would like to specifically encourage African American social workers to become mentors for African Americans who are interested in becoming mentees. If you would like to assist your local chapter in establishing a mentoring program, please contact Marianne Wood at [mwood@ssw.umaryland.edu](mailto:mwood@ssw.umaryland.edu) to receive a mentoring packet. ♦



*He who is waiting for something to turn up might start with his own sleeves.*

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## The President's Corner

By Ruth Mayden, President NASW



One of the challenges of being president of NASW is responding quickly and effectively to the concerns that members express. As social workers, we usually have the best interests of our clients at heart. But, we are concerned also about ourselves, our ability to be heard when those we want to convince don't want to hear or when we seem to be saying the same thing over and over, but to no avail.

I believe that our professional organization, NASW, hears. I believe that our professional organization, NASW, wants to know what each of its constituent groups thinks is the proper course of action and set of priorities for NASW.

I also know that it is very difficult to bring so many interests and perspectives together in ways that are acceptable to all the members. What makes NASW work is the commitment of its members to social work, to the clients and communities we serve, and to the belief that whatever our differences, we can be heard in our professional organization.

We have several equity committees, the National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity (NCORED), chaired by Sandra Starks; the National Committee on Women's Issues (NCOWI), chaired by Jeane Anastas, and the National Committee on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues (NCLGBI), chaired by Margaret McKeon. Each committee has a special focus and charge. As president, I appoint the chairperson and members.

We also have groups of members who had organized to help NASW respond in more tangible ways to issues that affect them directly and every member in both direct and indirect ways.

The Black Caucus is one of four such groups (the Latino Caucus, the Asian-Pacific Islander Caucus, and

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## Black Social Workers Honored As Social Work Pioneers

By Mark Battle



Many of you have heard about the National Social Work Pioneers Program. It is a five-year-old project that protects the history of the profession. It also is dedicated to identifying and honoring the individuals who made significant and consistent contributions to the development of the profession.

Did you know that 40 black social workers have been identified and certified as Pioneers of the Profession? What this really means is that during its first 100 years, the profession recognizes and honors the contribution of this band of hardworking, creative, and visionary practitioners.

These are the people who persisted and helped to build the values, methods, and foundation of the profession; although many often are not celebrated in the academic literature. These are the people who helped in the development of NASW, CSWE, NCSW, NUL, ICSW, Atlanta School of Social Work, Howard University School of Social Work, the Civil Rights Revolution, the New Deal, Camelot, and the Great Society. These are the people whose gifts included helping to reconceptualize the United States as a positively diverse society. They are your role models.

Their names can be found displayed on the walls of the "Pioneer Room" in Washington, DC, at the NASW headquarters. Their profiles also are on file there for easy reference as part of the profession's history. You are invited to visit the Pioneer Room the next time you are in Washington. Here is a sample of the honorees to date: Janie Barrett, Sara Collins Ferqudey, Lester Granger, James Dumpson, George Haynes, Millie Charles, Inabel Lindsay, Dorothy Pearson, Ruby Pernel, Geneva Johnson, Lorenzo Traylor, Bernie Harper, Whitney Young, Ron Dellums, Eva Stewart, Ethel Williams Harriett Trader, Vivian Smith, Beryl Rice, Rosemary Funderburke, Maurice Russell, Jesse Harris.

You are invited to nominate individuals who have served the profession exceptionally. Please contact Billie Joy Langston at NASW, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC., 20002-4241. ♦

## President's Corner

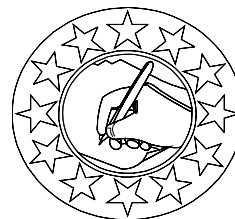
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the American Indian Caucus are the other three). The groups volunteer their time and pay their own expenses to plan and implement programs that benefit all of us. I had the opportunity to meet with the Black Caucus in December. The energy and creativity of the members was contagious. They benefit from the foundation laid by people who have been NASW members for decades. The caucus's role is to celebrate the contributions of African-descended NASW members and ensure the participation of and appreciation for members into the future. They work unselfishly to those ends.

The Black Caucus really makes a difference for its constituents as well as for all of NASW's members. I am proud to be part of the caucus and look forward to continuing our work together on behalf of our profession. ♦

## Problem Solving through Political Action

By Jim Evans



Many of the frustrations experienced by African Americans are the direct result of laws enacted by the Congress or state and local legislative bodies and signed into law by presidents, governors, and mayors. The separate but equal doctrine promulgated by the U.S. Supreme Court and used by local, state, and federal authorities to deny African Americans access to a whole range of public and private resources is one of the better known legal documents from the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result of the separate but equal Supreme Court decision, legislative decisions denying African Americans equal protection under the law were made by every legislative body in the United States and enforced by both law officers and private citizens for more than 100 years. The effects of this policy can be seen today in job discrimination, impoverished neighborhoods, run down and inadequate educational facilities, and the multitiered social welfare systems in which many African American social workers find themselves trapped and struggling to help ourselves while attempting to help clients who are almost permanently entrapped in the poverty pockets of our society.

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## Problem Solving through Political Action

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This article probably isn't for you if you are extremely pleased with your employment situation. However, if you have a modicum of dissatisfaction about working conditions, income, available resources, and personal recognition, this article might offer you a suggestion or two on how you can help change things for yourself and for others. If you have issues related to the delivery of services to the clientele you serve or want to serve, if you have issues related to funding for social work services, if you have issues related to the legal regulation and protection of social work practitioners, or if you have issues related to discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sexual orientation or gender, then maybe you should seriously consider getting yourself appointed to your chapter's PACE committee or the national NASW PACE.

Recognizing that elected government officials control the destiny of the citizens of this country, the national leadership of NASW in the early 1970s made an organizational decision to attempt to influence the political processes on both the national and local levels. In 1976, NASW established a wholly owned subsidiary, the NASW PACE Committee, and charged it with the responsibility of electing pro social work human services legislators. Each NASW chapter was encouraged to set up a local PACE Committee patterned after the national committee.

PACE will not solve all of your issues, but it can be a strong beginning. Politicians respond to requests from their constituents. They are particularly responsive to those who vote and to those who contribute to their elections campaign funds. As a member of your chapter's PACE Committee, you will be in a position to influence a financial contribution to the campaigns of local and national candidates who you believe will endorse and vote favorably on the issues that concern you. You can have the opportunity to present a PACE check to your favorite candidate(s). You can get to know your legislators and elected officials through PACE-planned forums and meetings. When you want one of your elected officials to do something, you would be in an excellent position to get a meeting and be able to present your and your colleagues' ideas and get the legislator's support. You could find your legislator calling you at times to get your opinion on pending legislation.



Most legislation is developed from an idea presented by a legislator's constituency. The legislator and his or her staff listen to the constituent and may ask questions. The staff may do some research and then write the bill in consultation with the constituent group. The legislator introduces the bill. What happens from there depends on the amount of voter pressure that is brought to bear on that legislator and on other legislators in that body. At this point it is important for the chapter staff and leadership to be able to mobilize public pressure on legislators. This can be in the form of telephone calls, letters, petitions, ads, and demonstrations. Remember the numbers game. "My organization represents xxxxxx social workers and their families living in your election district." Legislators usually will give you what you demand. Sometimes constituents may be compelled to compromise and settle for a little less. Just make sure that you aren't settling for too little. It is harder to get a law amended than it is to get the provision included in the initial legislation. Let your legislators know that you will be back at the next legislative session and for the next election campaign.

The lobbying effort is not a part of the PACE function. Federal and local election laws prohibit lobbying by political action committees. Direct responsibility for the lobbying effort should rest with your chapter's legislative committee or the board of directors. However, without a well-functioning PACE committee, your chances of influencing legislators will be much less.

If you want to change things for yourself, for your colleagues, and for your constituents, become involved in your chapter's political action and legislative efforts. It will pay off for you! ♦

# **Social Work 2000**

## **Information inside...**

National Association of Social Workers  
750 First Street, NE, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20002-4241  
USA

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

# ***REMINDER!***



***Please plan to attend Social Work 2000.  
Many exciting and relevant events are  
planned.***

***NASW Conference***

***Baltimore, MD***

***November 1 – 4, 2000***

***Annual Meeting***

***Thursday, November 2, 2000***

***12:00 noon – 2:00 p.m.***

# STAND UP AND BE COUNTED!

By Diane McMillan, MSW, ACSW

In this election year the presidency, congressional, and scores of state and local offices are up for grabs. And yes, these political races are certainly about what to do with the budget surplus, who has the best plan to manage the health care crisis, and how best to reform the campaign process.

This election year is also indirectly about the “haves” and the “have nots,” and specifically, groups of people that have a higher percentage of individuals who are economically disadvantaged and underrepresented in counted numbers. Here’s why: Individuals who are elected to the executive and legislative national, state, and local offices will also be the stewards of the results of the 2000 census.

As President Clinton pointed out in his State of the Union address, this country will have a majority ethnic minority population in just 50 years. The coloring of the United States will have a profound effect on economic, social, and political issues as nothing ever has. But much of the ground work will be determined 50 years hence by those who will manage Census 2000, the first census that will begin in earnest to track these unprecedented changes in population.

The person in the White House, and the majority party in Congress (particularly the House of Representatives) and at the state legislative level, will determine how political boundaries are drawn and how multibillions of dollars for education, commerce, and infrastructure needs are allocated—and to whom they are allocated. When we put candidates’ feet to the fire this year, we need to find out if they support an enumeration method that allows for statistical sampling, the preferred method by many civil and human rights leaders, that will reduce the likelihood of a census undercount of people of color and languages minorities as happened in 1990.

So far, the Republican candidate George W. Bush has avoided the issue. The Democratic candidate Al Gore has gone on record supporting sampling.

If we end up with leaders who are insensitive to this very important issue, 50 years from now we would see the gap between the haves and the have nots widen and increase the number of ethnic minority individuals identified as economically disadvantaged. There is no measuring device great enough to track this lost opportunity! ♦

