

# (Re)covering Black Social Work History

Confronting the Historical Roots of Whiteness, Racism,  
and Colonialism in the Profession of Social Work

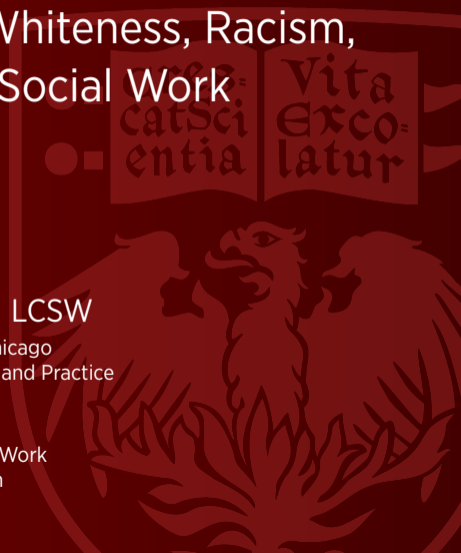
*Supplemental Slides*

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**JEDI Orientation**

Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work  
University of Wisconsin Madison  
August 28, 2021



# Topics Discussed Outline



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Advancing a More Just and Humane Society

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Covering
- 3 Recovering
- 4 Re-covering
- 5 Recover
- 6 Supplement

# Introduction

# Before We Start

## Front Matter



### A few comments

1. This presentation is a review of Black social work history
2. Discussion of how I have incorporated it into my anti-racism work
3. I use a critical historical view of social work's history
4. Statements and points I highlight are towards the profession in general
5. Not all authors of texts hold same views
6. Opinions expressed here may not reflect the view of the University of Wisconsin
7. On 08.29.2022 I added supplemental slides based on Q & A

▶▶ Supplemental Slides

# About Me

## Front Matter



## Justin S. Harty, MSW, LCSW

- Pronouns: He, him, his
- Family: Three young daughters
- Affiliation: SSA doctoral candidate
- Background: Harper, UIUC, and UIC
- Academics: Philosophy, Sociology, and Social Work
- Practice: Child welfare caseworker
- Research: Child welfare and fatherhood
- Dissertation: Fatherhood in foster care
- Projects: CalYOUTH and Dads Matter
- Historical: Contributions of Black social workers

# My Research Guide

## Front Matter



## Black Contributions to Mutual Aid, Social Welfare, and Social Work History

- Started guide in my doctoral history of social work class
- Revised as I read through texts and did further searches
- Resources freely available through library, interlibrary loan, HathiTrust, and Internet Archive
- Older books purchased cheap from used book stores
- Shared on [Prof2Prof](#) and [Twitter](#) (@JustinSHarty)



# (Re)covering Frame

## Front Matter



### (Re)covering the “other” social work history

- (Re)covering: Covering up of non-White social work history and past atrocities
- (Re)covering: Recovering the histories and contributions of social workers of color
- (Re)covering: Re-covering up of the history of whiteness, racism, and colonialism
- (Re)covering: Continuing efforts to recover social work’s ignored past

Covering



# Black Social Welfare & Social Work History

## Omissions



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## This history is devalued and omitted by dominant Eurocentric social work

### Skipping over Black Social Work History

It is indeed peculiar to find that although most histories of social work go back to the English Poor Law, *they skip over the helping tradition of blacks during slavery, the Underground Railroad movement, the abolitionist movement, and even the Freedmen's Bureau*, which was the first massive governmental effort at caregiving. (J. M. Martin and Martin, 1985, p. 7)

### The Need to Document Black Social Work History

This textbook [Ross, 1978] was devised and *developed as a corrective for omissions and deficiencies in the existing literature on social welfare*, and especially by the *absence of any extensive body of materials illustrative of the black heritage and experience in this area of knowledge* (J. M. Martin and Martin, 1985, p. 7)

# The Limits of Social Work Care and Help Omissions



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## Is social work a caring and helping profession to all?

- Historical evidence suggests not for Black people
- Racism in social work has historically affected our...
  - Practice
  - Employment
  - Education
  - Research

newcommunity 15(3): 391-403

April 1989

### An uncaring profession? An examination of racism in social work

Lena Dominelli

**Abstract** Social work purports to be a caring profession aimed at meeting the needs of its clients. But this is not the case for black people.<sup>1</sup> Whether they enter the social work arena as clients, employees, or students, black people experience negative treatment. They are under-represented in penal institutions. The subtle dynamics of personal, institutional and cultural racism permeate the routine minutiae of social work policy and practice and these, combined with the strategies white social workers utilise to avoid the tricky task of confronting racism in their work, mean that black people's needs receive short shrift. White social workers respond to black people's needs in this contradictory manner because their belief that black communities 'look after their own' enables them to exclude black people from having access to welfare services whilst their preoccupation with black people's deviancy facilitates their admitting black people to establishments where such pathological behaviour can be controlled. This article examines the interplay between racism and social work and concludes that white social work educators, white social workers and their managers must engage in change at the personal, institutional and cultural levels if racist social work policy and practice are to be eradicated and black people's needs met.

Social work purports to be the profession that cares for the welfare of its clients and aspires to meet their material and emotional needs (Compton and Galaway 1975). To what extent can black people, i.e., people of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origins, expect this axiom to apply to them and their needs when they approach the personal social services or come into contact with the criminal justice system? This paper considers this question in terms of the services white social workers working in predominantly white institutions provide for black clients, the position of black social workers as employees, and training provisions for black students. Unfortunately, the answer to this question is that white practitioners, educators and their departments have served the interests of black populations badly (ADSS/CRE 1978; Taylor 1981; Rooney 1980; Small 1984; Sewell 1985; Devine 1983; Tipler 1986; Dominelli 1988; Williams 1987). Moreover, this situation has persisted despite various attempts which have been made to counter it since the mid 1970s (Rooney 1987). Why has social work been unable to respond

Lena Dominelli is Lecturer in Applied Social Studies at the University of Warwick. She has worked in community work, social services and probation settings and has had several books published in the area of social work.

Dominelli, 1989.

# Racist Social Work Practices

## An Incomplete Social Work History



## Authors cite effects of racism on service delivery in Black social work history

- Denying or restricting access to services for Black clients
- Forcing Black communities to address their own needs
- Providing low quality services in Black communities
- Offering services too expensive for Blacks to afford
- Thinking Black clients have the same needs as Whites
- Ignoring that racism affects interactions with Black clients

IMPLICATIONS OF RACISM FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

BY SEYMOUR MIRELOWITZ\*

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines school and practice issues in social work in relationship to the concepts of ethnicity, minority groups, racism, and institutional racism. Operational definitions to establish conceptual clarity are also developed. The statistical aspects of progression vis-a-vis cultural diversity in social work institutions, enrollment in schools of social work, and representation on the faculty of schools of social work are studied. Social policy and the implementation of change in social work practice and education are then dealt with in relation to the current reality of the profession and the society in which it functions.

\*Seymour Mirelowitz is an assistant professor at the Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle.

### Introduction:

The purposes of this paper are:

1. To demonstrate the melting pot theory as a myth or fantasy according to the Anglo-Conformity or assimilationist concept pervasive for many years in all institutions in the American society including social work.
2. To re-examine the concept of ethnicity as cultural pluralism and to examine issues in social work relating to it.

The avowed concept of the melting pot is conceived as a vessel or crucible wherein all "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." <sup>1</sup> The melting pot theory is contradicted by Anglo-Conformity concept, which postulates that immigrants

Dominelli, 1989; Mirelowitz, 1979; Reid-Merritt, 2010; Solomon, 1976.

# Racism in Social Work Employment

## An Incomplete Social Work History



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## Black social work research shows how racism has historically affected the profession's ability to...

- Recruit and employ Black social workers
- Adequately training Black social workers
- Shield Black social workers from hostile work environments
- Provide Black social workers with peer supports
- Leverage their strengths as Black social workers

### The employment of black social workers: from 'ethnic sensitivity' to anti-racism?

PAUL STUBBS

#### Abstract

*This article focuses on one underdeveloped area in the study of race and social work, namely the employment of black social workers within social services departments. This includes a statement of theoretical issues, an examination of what challenges the 'ethnic sensitivity' model, and a consideration of the ways in which black social workers may contribute towards anti-racist practices within social services departments. The article is based, in part, on original research carried out in the social services departments of two inner London boroughs.*

Although the study of social work intervention in the black community has been something of a growth area, the literature has, on the whole, been guilty of two critical omissions. Firstly, it has failed to utilise the concept of racism as a central theoretical category, and secondly, it has failed to address pertinent issues in the functioning of social services departments.\* This article, organised around a discussion of the implementation of policies for the employment of black social workers, seeks to address these omissions by posing a number of questions about the reproduction of racism in social services departments.

The main question concerns how far black social workers aid the smooth reproduction of racism, or whether they can be a key element in the development of anti-racist strategies and practices. The suggestion is that this is a theoretically and empirically open question. The article seeks to address these issues on the basis of research carried out between October 1983 and April 1984 in connection with a PhD research project, in the social services departments of two inner London boroughs which I shall term 'Ayeborough' and 'Beeborough'. The text includes quotes gathered from taped interviews

\* See Chatham et al (eds.) 1981 and Chatham (ed) 1982 as the two most influential readers; for more critical analyses, see McCulloch and Krensch 1974, Hasband 1980a and 1980b, and ABRWAP 1981.

# Racism in Social Work Education

## An Incomplete Social Work History



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## Authors show how racism within social work education has historically contributed to...

- Segregation in campus housing, eating, and study
- Social work coursework and teachings distanced from the Black community
- Social work courses on Blacks issues perceived as discriminatory against White students
- Few scholarships or funding support for Black social work students
- Difficulties in Black professors obtaining tenure in schools of social work

*JOHN LONGRES is assistant professor of social work and sociology at Portland State University. This paper was originally presented at the 28th Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Seattle, Washington, January 1972.*

### The Impact of Racism on Social Work Education

by JOHN LONGRES

IN THE RHETORIC of today's social philosophy, racism is an ugly word. We are aware that racism reflects itself in prejudice, discrimination, separation and even genocide, and we feel that these are against the values which we would like to perpetuate as a nation. We condemn racism, yet many of us do not fully understand what it is and how it operates within our society and especially within our own social work educational settings.

Popularly racism is associated with racist individuals: individuals whose attitudes and behaviors indicate hostility toward groups which differ in color from theirs.

The notion of a psychologically abnormal racist individual was given empirical support through the famous studies of *The Authoritarian Personality*.<sup>1</sup> Using clinical

1. T. W. Adorno, et. al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).

WINTER 1972

and survey methods, this study suggested that prejudiced individuals demonstrated weak, insecure egos and were positively oriented toward authoritarianism. In spite of the fact that this study has been severely criticized, many have accepted its findings as definitive. Only recently has the adequacy of the formulations evident in *The Authoritarian Personality* been severely questioned.

No pragmatic value is found in equating racism with individual problems for then only two possibilities for dealing with the problems of our society would be open: clinical treatment and education. With regard to clinical treatment, so far as I know, social agencies are not filling up with individual racists seeking cures. With regard to education, there is little to suggest that education has made major inroads in this area. Despite popular beliefs, there is no ev-

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Longres, 1972; Schiele, 2007; Solomon, 1976.

# Racism in Social Work Research

## An Incomplete Social Work History



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## The ways in racism historically permeated social work research is evident in...

- The belief that Blacks are nonrational and nonscientific
- The idea that Blacks cannot be detached and objective
- The view that Blacks are incapable of conducting research

## Historical research reflects difficulties Black social work researchers faced...

- Limited research opportunities and funding
- Barriers to participating in research, review, editorial boards
- Few opportunity to publish their work in journals and books

### Constant Struggle: E. Franklin Frazier and Black Social Work in the 1920s

**Thery Pham  
Susan Chandler**

*During the 1920s, E. Franklin Frazier, the eminent black sociologist and director of the Atlanta School of Social Work With other black social workers, Frazier made important contributions to social work and to the struggle against racism. His legacy is missing in most histories of social welfare and is relevant in the cross-gendering social work in the 1980s.*

**E** Franklin Frazier, the eminent black sociologist and the first black president of the American Sociological Association, wrote the above statement in an article, "The Pathology of Race Prejudice," published in *Panos* in 1927. At that time, Frazier lived and worked in Atlanta where he was director of the Atlanta School of Social Work. Within a week, the Atlanta Committee carried a lead editorial about the article that castigating the southern press in the 1920s did not appreciate "so privileged a student and noted a sociologist" referring to white racism as "a simple people with a 'color' consciousness." The editorial concluded that the young director of the first black school of social work was "evidently more lenient by reason of his own well-complex than any southerner obsessed by his anti- negro prejudice."

As a result of this publicity, Frazier and his family received threats on their lives and were forced to leave Atlanta. "Things got so hot down there," recalled Mable Frazier, "that he finally decided we had to leave. He put a lot in his belt and said, 'Home, I'm getting on this train. Now I don't want you to go with me because if I get to 'em, I'll make what the importance of you being there.' And I said, 'When you come, I'm leaving with you.' And I did."

An *Atlantic* noted, the 1927 article had become a legend in black history, and Frazier emerged as a "courageous hero" work that contemporary historians have largely ignored. Aside from a useful analysis written by them, leading social work texts generally are silent on the contributions of black professionals in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup> There are few references in standard histories of social welfare to the efforts of black leaders, intellectuals, and social workers to secure minimal social services for black communities and training for black social workers.<sup>2</sup> Chambers focuses on Southern Pines, New Orleans, and Bruno Lasker to promote "good neighborhood" and awareness of social problems in the profession, but leaves aside the story of black self-help organizations and social workers who fought racism consistently.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Eisenreich's and Katz's significant studies of the history of social work and social policies include progressive chapters about the dynamics of racism in the United States during the 1920s, but nothing about the activism or contributions of black social workers.<sup>4</sup>

**History and Context**

E. Franklin Frazier's knowledge and activism was a product of the economic social turmoil during and after World War I. By 1913, nearly 400,000 black Americans had been drafted into the segregated armed forces and had earned a new life, both bitter and hopeful. Northern black neighborhoods, swollen into ghettos by the requisition of some 400,000 black soldiers in response to the war-time demand for labor, were hardly the "ghettos" of contemporary history. In the aftermath of the war, the improved living conditions in the North as compared with the South were not enough to counteract the bitter experience of being segregated by ghettos with substandard housing, educational rears, and discrimination in employment and other aspects of everyday life.

Bell, 2014; Schiele, 2007, 2013.

# Addressing Racism in Social Work

## An Incomplete Social Work History



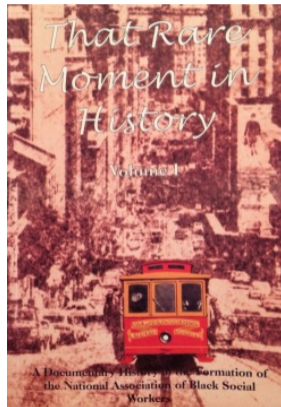
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## Historical texts highlight attempts to address racism in social work such as...

- 1967 National Association of Black Social Workers
  - 1968 walkout at National Conference on Social Welfare
  - Ignites Black social worker's challenge to address racism in the profession
- 1970 CSWE Black Task Force
  - Tasked with developing Black curricular content and increasing Black enrollment
  - 1973 report recommends that CSWE address pervasive and persistent racism



Bell, 2014; Brown et al., 2011; Reid-Merritt, 2010; Schiele, 2007; Trolander, 1997.

Recovering



# Black Social Work: Separate but Equal?

## Black Social Work History



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- Early mainstream social work movements such as Settlement Houses and Charity Organization Societies were not focused on improving the conditions of Black people
- Left out of White social work, Black social workers had to form separate and parallel systems of social services to ensure the welfare of Black people and communities
- Black-focused social welfare organizations such as Black churches, women's clubs, mutual aid societies, fraternal organizations, and other voluntary associations assisted in these efforts
- In education and research, Black social workers formed study and research groups, historically Black colleges and universities created social work programs targeting Black students, and Black scholars started Black-focused academic journals

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Carlton-LaNey and Hodges, 2004; Carten, 2021; DeLoach McCutcheon, 2019; Hounmenou, 2012; Howard, 2017; Luker, 1984.

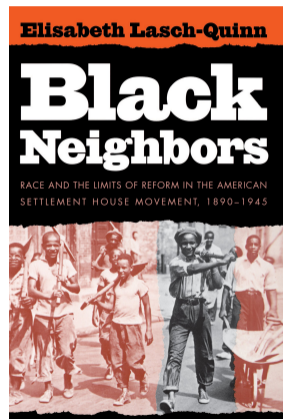
# Black Settlement Houses

## Parallel Systems of Social Services



### Black Settlement Houses were created in the absence of support for White Settlement Houses

- Frederick Douglass Center
- Trinity Mission Settlement
- Phillis Wheatley House
- South Side Settlement House
- Urban League settlement houses
- Black Caucus of Settlement Workers



Bell, 2014; Jackson, 1978; Lasch-Quinn, 1993.

# Black Charity Organizations

## Parallel Systems of Social Services



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## Blacks formed their own charity organizations since most White COS discriminated against Blacks

- Black churches
- Homes for the elderly
- National Association of Colored Women's Clubs
- National League for the Protection of Colored Women
- National Urban League
- Negro Welfare Association

### THE NEGRO AND THE CHARITY ORGANIZATION SOCIETY IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

ALVIN B. KOGUT  
*Adapted University*

The policies, practices, and attitudes of an important social welfare organization, the Charity Organization Society, are explored in relation to the Negro at one particular point in time, the Progressive Era. Connections between the stance of the organization, its social philosophy, and the social context are drawn. A summary of references to Negroes in the reports, publications, and journals of the societies in a number of cities indicates the range of problems brought to the COS and the nature of the responses and observations.

It is generally acknowledged that, up to the present time, minorities in general, and especially the Negro, have to a large extent been bypassed in the writing of American history. Social welfare history has, with some exceptions, tended to reflect the mainstream in this regard. A more balanced interpretation and perspective would conceivably yield a greater understanding of current problems and, at least theoretically, enhance the ability to formulate appropriate policy.

This paper is a preliminary exploration of the policies, practices, and attitudes of one important social welfare institution, the Charity Organization Society, in relation to the black minority at one particular point in time, the Progressive Era. The reports, papers, and publications of the charity organization societies in a number of cities and the major journals of philanthropy have been used as primary sources.

**RACISM IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA**  
It is one of the ironies of American history that what is ordinarily characterized as a period of democratic upsurge or reform has in fact meant something else for the Negro. As Woodward

has pointed out in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, there was a significant time lag between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the imposition of rigid segregationist laws and practices in the South. He noted that as the South "veered toward proscription and extremism, northern opinion shifted to the right, keeping pace with the South, conceding point after point, so that at no time were the sections very far apart on race policy" (29:70).

De facto segregation was not new to the North. While the institutions of slavery necessitated a certain closeness and intermingling of the races in daily affairs, urban life made no such requirement. Separatist and discriminatory practices, which ultimately became the rule, were widespread in the North even before the Civil War. By the turn of the century, segregation and discrimination tended to become more and more embedded in the military, in employment, and in many other social institutions. The migrant faced Jim Crow, northern style: the denial of suitable jobs, housing, and education; occasional riots and violence; and general exclusion from any meaningful participation in community life. According to historian John

Jackson, 1978; Weisenfeld, 1997.

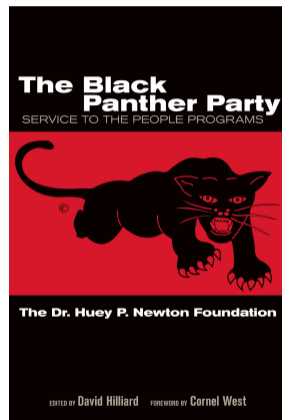
# Black Welfare Organizations

## Parallel Systems of Social Services



## Black organizations focused on the welfare and needs of the Black community

- Universal Negro Improvement Association
- African Communities League
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Black YWCA and YMCA
- The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense
- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee



Harvey, 1994; Hilliard and Foundation., 2008; Moore, 1994.

# Black Social Work Education

## Black Social Work



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### HBCU Schools of Social Work (PhD)

- Fisk University
- Lincoln University in Pennsylvania
- Clark Atlanta University\*
- Howard University\*
- Norfolk State University\*
- Morgan State University\*
- Jackson State University\*
- North Carolina A&T State University\*

### FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE

A Documentary History of Clark Atlanta University  
Whitney M. Young Jr. School of Social Work (1920–2020)

ALMA J. CARTEN

*with a foreword by E. Aracelis Francis*



OXFORD

Aubrey et al., 2016; Carten, 2021.

# Black Social Work Research

## Black Social Work



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## Black-Focused Journals and Press

- The Crisis (1910, W. E. B. Du Bois, NAACP)
- Journal of Negro History (1916, Carter G. Woodson)
- Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life (1923, NUL)
- The Negro Family in the United States (1939, E. Franklin Frazier)
- Phylon (1940, W. E. B. Du Bois)
- The Black Caucus Journal (1968, NABSW)

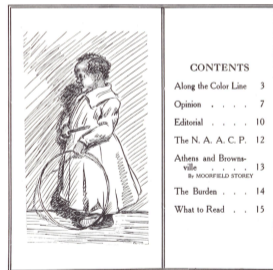
# THE CRISIS

RECORD OF THE DARKER RACES

Volume One

NOVEMBER, 1910

Number One

 Edited by W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS, with the co-operation of Oswald Garrison Villard,  
 J. Max Barber, Charles Edward Russell, Kelly Miller, W. S. Brathwaite and M. D. Maclean.

 PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE  
 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
 AT TWENTY VESEY STREET NEW YORK CITY  
 ONE DOLLAR A YEAR TEN CENTS A COPY

Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Lasch-Quinn, 1993; Schiele, 2013.

# Black Spirituality

## Black Traditions in Social Work

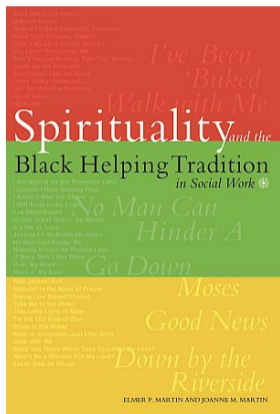


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**Spirituality among African-descended people have been incorporated into our profession by Black social workers as a method of...**

- Providing spiritual and social connection
- Maintaining ethics, morality, and integrity
- Giving value and meaning to the Black race
- Recognizing race as a sacred concept worth fighting for
- Emphasizing collective survival, advancement, prosperity
- Facilitating human and societal transformation



Howard, 2017; E. P. Martin and Martin, 2002; Schiele, 1997.

# Black Self-help & Mutual Aid

## Black Traditions in Social Work



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Self-help and mutual aid are values and principles that have been fundamental to Black social work efforts towards...

- Ensuring social welfare services were developed to meet the needs of the Black community
- Establishing Black social work programs in Black colleges and universities
- Advocating for policy changes to benefit Black people and communities



Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Johnson, 1991; J. M. Martin and Martin, 1985.



# Black Empowerment

## Black Traditions in Social Work



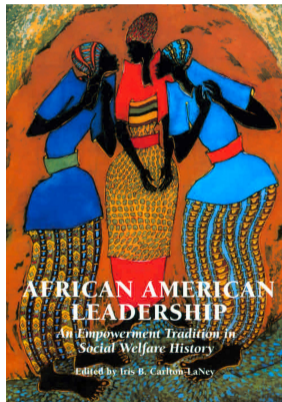
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### Black empowerment tradition in history of social work

- Personal: Church and spirituality
- Black: Self-worth and racial pride
- Economic: Education, training, and employment
- Political: Voting and political participation
- Neighborhood: Collective problem solving
- Community: Resistance and agency
- Client: Leveraging strengths and supports



Armfield, 2014; Carlton-LaNey, 2001; DeLoach McCutcheon, 2019; Gilbert, 1974; M. J. Graham, 2004; Howard, 2017; Solomon, 1976.

# Black Philanthropy

## Black Traditions in Social Work



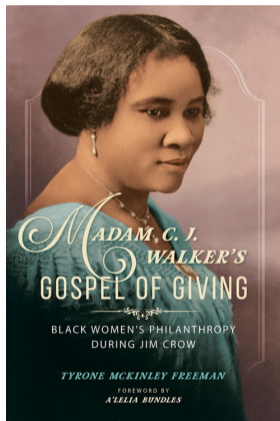
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## Black philanthropy in social welfare/social work is rooted in the tradition self-help and mutual aid and...

- Raised by Black women and Black churches
- Often provided by poor Blacks for poor Blacks
- Leveraged to mitigate effects of racism and oppression
- A “mechanism for survival, mutual assistance, and self-help, for social protest, for the struggle for justice, for the enhancement of the educational and economic status of blacks, and for the establishment of institutions” (Fairfax, 1995,p. 10)



Carlton-LaNey et al., 2001; Carson, 1993; Fairfax, 1995; Freeman, 2020; Leak and Reid, 2010.

# Related Black Movements

## Black Thought in Social Work



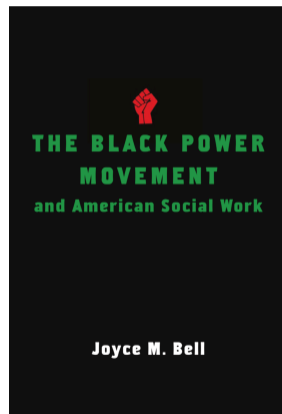
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## Black social movements → Black social work efforts Nationalist and Integrationist ideologies converge

- Niagara Movement
- Black Freedom Movement
- Civil Rights Movement
- Afrocentric movement
- Black Power Movement
- Black Feminist Movement
- Black Social Work Movement
- Black Medical Movement



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Armfield, 2014; Bell, 2014; Moore, 1994.

# Black Preservation

## Black Thought in Social Work



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## Efforts by Black social workers and organizations reflect the need to preserve...

- Black identity/culture
- Family
- Children
- Communities
- Natural and human resources
- Historical sites

### The Strength of Black Families: The Elusive Ties of Perspective and Praxis in Social Work Education

Tanya Smith Brice &amp; Denise McLane-Davison

*"These are times when our most precious commodity is language, and language has a great deal to do with elimination and legitimacy."*  
- Chicago Catalysts: Declare War on White Racism, 1968

*"We must go a step further. If it is clear that the practice of social work by blacks for blacks must operate from a new theory, then this theory of liberation must be fully and unquestionably developed to its fullest by those blacks. This new social theory must not be arrived at by outside sources who would distort the true meaning of liberation."*  
- LeVern McCummings, Chairman Philadelphia Alliance of Black Social Workers, 1969

The strengths perspective, although briefly commented on by E. Franklin Frazier's (1939) early research describing the Negro family, becomes intrinsically tied to the cultural scholarship produced thereafter which pointed to the impact of structural oppression on the Black family. The political era of the Civil Rights, Women's Rights, and The Black Power Movement demanded the inclusion of rigorous research that centered racial and gender identity as significant narratives for inclusion in curriculum (Collins, 1998; Solomon 1976, Chunn, 1975). The emergence of Black Studies and Women's Studies, along with student-led and national organizations incorporating the same identity politics, also became familiar parts of the intellectual land-

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Brice and McLane-Davison, 2020; Cromwell, 1977; Reid-Merritt, 2010; Schiele, 2013.

# Black Self-determination

## Black Thought in Social Work



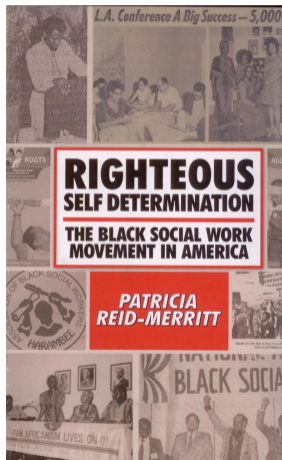
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**Black social workers challenged a profession threatening their right to self-determination, including...**

- Child welfare agencies
- Professional social work organizations
- Social work faculty and administrators
- Eurocentric social work curriculum and training
- Eurocentric theories, models, and interventions
- Social welfare policy makers



Bell, 2014; M. J. Graham, 1999a; Leak and Reid, 2010; Reid-Merritt, 2010.

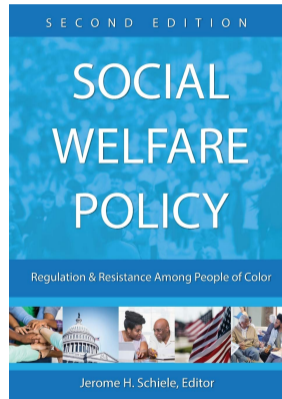
# Black Resistance

## Black Thought in Social Work



### Resistance has been used by Black social workers within our profession to...

- Enable Blacks to assert self-determination in the pursuit of social change
- Rupture racist and oppressive thought that maintains conventional social work knowledge
- Oppose and overturn social work theories, models, frameworks, and practices that are hostile towards Blacks
- Not passively accept social welfare policies that discriminate, marginalize, and socially isolate Blacks



M. J. Graham, 2004; Schiele, 2019.

# Black Liberation

## Black Thought in Social Work



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## Black social workers have long advocated for our professions' commitment towards social action to include working for Black liberation

### National Association of Black Social Workers (1969)

If it is clear that the practice of social work by blacks for blacks must operate from a new theory, then this *theory of liberation* must be fully and unquestionably developed to its fullest by those blacks. [...] Again, it would be chaotic for blacks to begin to talk of a new set of values and to then allow whites to define those values for us. (Reid-Merritt, 2010, p. 43)

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN BLACK LIBERATION

**T**HE CHARGE, in essence, is that social work is an oppressive profession.<sup>1</sup> Criticism of social work for failure to deliver on its claim of solutions to social problems is a persistent reality. Among the critics are the poor, the black, the alienated, the oppressed and members of the profession who perceive social workers as advocates of the status quo, perpetrators of welfare colonialism and as managers of social services and programs designed to serve the pacification and control functions of the larger social welfare system.

This indictment generates the questions: Does social work as a profession provide adequate concepts for understanding the problems and social realities of oppressed communities? Are social services and programs in oppressed communities designed to meet their survival needs and liberation goals? If not, in what direction ought the profession move if it is to become a liberating force in oppressed communities?

This essay, in response to these questions, offers a model for social work practice in the black community which proceeds from an expanded definition of the goals of the profession. Neo-colonialism, survival and liberation are the principal conceptual components. Neo-colonialism is used for analysis and understanding of social, economic and political realities of the oppressed community. Survival provides a way of perceiving needs and a framework for the design and provision of social services. Liberation is viewed as a phase in a larger movement for social and economic justice which requires a

diverse range of strategies and practitioner roles directed toward the ultimate goal of "being."

The "black community" refers to all black Americans. Notions of stratification are inconsistent with the basic communal value implicit in the thrust of this paper. Further, the political and economic structures of America are such that as a group black Americans are relatively powerless.<sup>2</sup>

The ideas expressed here are the result of a social process that probably began with the 1960s. That decade amplified the magnitude of social, political and economic disparity and injustice in America, giving rise simultaneously to a mass movement that articulated new ideologies and strategies as various change-oriented groups attempted to find viable solutions. In addition, recent practical experience in the black community and continuous efforts to share with social work students the knowledge, values and skills required for effective action in the black community, have also been factors.

**T**HE NOTIONS advanced here are based on several basic assumptions.

1—Neo-colonialism is an appropriate conceptual framework for analyzing the political, economic and social situation of oppressed people in general and the black community in America in particular.

2—The profession of social work is an integral part of the social welfare system in

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THE BLACK SCHOLAR DECEMBER 1974

# Black Abolition

## Black Thought in Social Work



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## Early Black social workers and the like worked towards the abolition of...

- Slavery (in all its forms)
- Legal racism
- Racial oppression
- Racial segregation

“Gentle Student Bend Thine Ear To My Speech”  
An Essay About Sojourner  
Truth, Abolitionist and Feminist

LAURA B. SOMERVILLE

 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Charlotte Field-Based MSW Program

*Sojourner Truth provides a powerful model of advocacy for the social work profession. This paper offers an analysis of this important historical figure that centers around the implications of being a doubly oppressed minority. An analysis of the nineteenth century chattel slavery system sets the stage for understanding the social environment. A brief biography of her life and evolution from enslaved chattel to feminist activist will highlight her social, spiritual, and personal development. Her philosophy, which is compatible with the modern feminist movement, is outlined by an analysis of her speeches.*

Sojourner Truth is listed in most every reference book highlighting notable African-Americans. Historians agree that she played an important role in nineteenth century American history; however, the majority of data available do not analyze the implications and motivations of her work. This lack of scholarly research combined with the illiteracy of the subject presents a special challenge in writing this intellectual biography. Due to the virtual absence of personal papers, the writer must depend upon the accuracy of dictated narratives to which writers have added their own interpretations. The most valuable insight into this important historical figure's life comes from transcripts of her speeches. “Gentle student bend thine ear to my speech”, the title of this essay, are Sojourner Truth's words also chosen to title the 1853 version of her narrative.

Sojourner Truth demands the attention of social work researchers and historians because of her monumental accomplishments and her status as an enslaved African-American woman. Social work exists to serve oppressed groups and So-

Bent-Goodley, Snell, et al., 2017; Johnson, 1991; Somerville, 1994; Yearwood, 1980.



# Afrocentricity

## Black Thought in Social Work



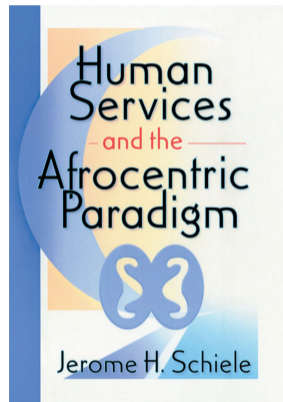
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### Studies found conflicts between Afrocentricity and Eurocentrically oriented social work theories, paradigms, and models that...

- Drive practice, teaching, and research on Black people
- Are not reflective of the realities of Black Americans
- Ignore sociocultural uniqueness of people of African ancestry
- Are adapted to address Black issues in Black neighborhoods
- Fail to address distinctive liberation needs of Black people
- Perpetuate racism in human services and related fields
- Enforce adoption of Eurocentric cultural values and practices



Bent-Goodley, Fairfax, et al., 2017; M. J. Graham, 1999a, 1999b; Schiele, 1996, 1997, 2013.

# Some Researchers of Black Social Work

## Black Social Work Research



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- Iris Carlton-LaNey
- Jerome H. Schiele
- Tricia B. Bent-Goodley
- Denise McLane-Davison
- Wilma Peebles-Wilkins
- Robenia B. Gary
- Lawrence E. Gary
- Mekada Graham
- Garland L. Jagers
- Audrey E. Johnson
- Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn
- Joyce M. Bell
- Elmer P. Martin
- Joanne M. Martin

# Some Black Social Work Leaders

## Black Social Work Research



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- Eugene Kinckle Jones
- George Edmund Haynes
- E. Franklin Frazier
- Carter G. Woodson
- Lucy Diggs Slowe
- Inabel Burns Lindsay
- Sarah Collins Fernandis
- Forrester Blanchard Washington
- Birdye Henrietta Haynes
- Whitney M. Young
- Willie Gertrude Brown
- Phillis Wheatley
- William Boyd Allison Davis
- William Still
- Ada S. McKinley
- Maggie Lena Walker

---

For historical contributions of Black Social workers, see Presentation titled *Dr. Iris Carlton-LaNey Presents on the Contributions of Black Icons* (CSWE – February 19, 2021) on [YouTube](#)

Re-covering

# Barriers to Social Work History

## Dangers and Risks



**Historical social work research currently faces two key barriers:**

1. Larger efforts to hide America's racist history
2. Social work's desertion of historical research

# Barriers to Social Work History

Hiding America's racist history



**A number of recent efforts have been made to hide U.S. racism and colonialism**

- Bans on the use of critical race theory
- Forbidding the teaching of historical racial inequality and racism
- Avoidance of dialogue around anti-racism and decolonization
- Rise of “alternative facts”

 @SAFEmansion (CF Edley III)

Can you imagine being so ashamed of your history that you would make it illegal to teach it to your children?

# History in Social Work

## Desertion of Social Work Research



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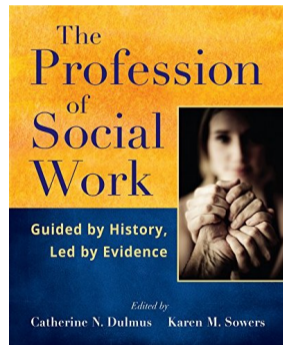
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### History of social work is central to the profession

- CSWE associates w/ professional social work identity
- Critical to the self-understanding of our profession

### However, it's largely been deserted by the profession

- History as a research method has faded in social work
- Historical social work dissertations have declined
- Historians of social work/welfare in schools are few
- Role of historical research for practitioners has been lost



Danto, 2008; Fisher and Dybicz, 1999; J. R. Graham and Al-Krenawi, 2010; Lasch-Quinn, 1993.

# Historical Social Work Knowledge

## Desertion of Social Work Research



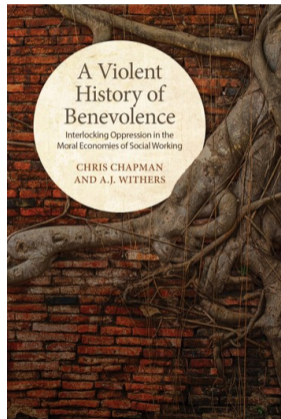
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### Historical social work research has illuminated:

- Historical contributions of BIPOC social workers
- Roles of BIPOC traditions and ideas in social work
- Historic social work issues, responses, and solutions
- How historical social problems have been contextualized
- Roles of philosophy, theory, and research in social work
- Social works' history of building a profession (good/bad)



Danto, 2008; Fisher and Dybiczyk, 1999; J. R. Graham and Al-Krenawi, 2010; Schiele, 2019.



# Role of Historians in Social Work

## Desertion of Social Work Research



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### The role of social work historians with social work backgrounds is important to:

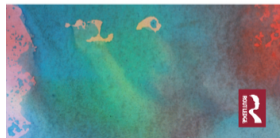
- Define a profession of social work/field of social welfare
- Build historical record from social work perspectives
- Add historical lens to contemporary social work debates
- Teach historical methods responsive to social work
- Expand our profession's knowledge base & research skills
- Examine/reflect on our past to move profession forward



### A NEW HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK

VALUES AND PRACTICE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR  
SOCIAL JUSTICE

John H. Pierson



Bell, 2014; Danto, 2008; Fisher and Dybicz, 1999; J. R. Graham and Al-Krenawi, 2010.

Recover

# JEDI and Social Work History

## Moving Forward



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## We need to acknowledge that the null social work history lacks JEDI

1. The history of social work is deeply entangled with the structures of White supremacy and coloniality
2. The control of social work history are features of the colonial matrix of power and White supremacy
3. Researchers have failed to fully examine the context of history, racism, and colonialism in the community, culture, neighborhood, and people we study.
4. Social worker history reflects our professions' reluctance to confront the issues of racism and colonialism and have rarely taken action that matches the profession's sweeping rhetorical statements.
5. Social work efforts towards anti-racism and decolonization will continue to fail if we do not acknowledge its history of racism, colonialism, and White supremacy

---

Almeida et al., 2019; Andrews et al., 2019; Reisch, 2019; Thibeault and Spencer, 2019.

# My Historical Grand Challenge: Rationale

## Historical Social Work Research



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## My Proposed Grand Challenge for Social Work: Recover History

- The Issue
  - Social work has forgotten the significance of studying history as a research method, has allowed historical social work dissertations to vanish, and has devalued the importance of having historical social welfare and social work scholars on faculty. Furthermore, social work history has largely failed to recognize, incorporate, and teach the contributions of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) to social welfare and social work history.
- Societal Goal
  - Social work's ability to achieve racial justice, social justice, eliminate racism, and dismantle inequality will be greatly strengthened by examining the historical roots of the profession and recovering the historical contributions of BIPOC communities omitted in dominant social welfare and social work history.

# My Historical Grand Challenge: Objectives

## Historical Social Work Research



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## My Proposed Grand Challenge for Social Work: Recover History

- A Decade of Work
  - Over the next ten years, schools of social work can engage in a variety of inclusive activities that will advance this Grand Challenge:
    1. Reclaim history as a research method in social work, encourage students to pursue historical social work dissertations, and employ social work historians as faculty
    2. Incorporate BIPOC social welfare and social work history into theory, evidence, practice, curriculum, and doctoral comprehensive exams
    3. Interview and document the history of contemporary BIPOC social work scholars, communities, and organizations so they are not lost in history
    4. Obtain library books on BIPOC social work history, purchase access to journals on BIPOC issues, and cultivate BIPOC social work archives
    5. Celebrate the historical contributions of BIPOC social workers year-round

# Additional Resources

## Back Matter



## Here are some amazing presentations on Black social workers

- Drs. Iris Carlton-LaNey & Tanya Smith Brice
  - Dr. Iris Carlton-LaNey Presents on the **Contributions of Black Icons** (with Tanya Smith Brice, CSWE). [Available on YouTube](#)
- Drs. Jerome H. Schiele, Joshua Kirven, Sean Joe, & Martell L. Teasley
  - **Intergenerational Contributions of Black Male Social Work Educators to Combating Racism** (in Social Work, White Supremacy, and Racial Justice, University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work). [Available on YouTube](#)
- Dr. Denise McLane-Davison & Mr. Garland Jaggars
  - **Black Power, Black Liberation & Social Work: Back to the Beginning of the National Association of Black Social Workers** (Shimon Cohen's Doin' The Work Podcast). [Podcast available on many platforms](#)

# Acknowledgments

## Back Matter



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## I want to thank the following people in helping me understand the importance of Black social welfare and social work history

- Researchers of Black social welfare and social work history
  - Drs. Jerome H. Schiele & Denise McLane-Davison (Morgan State University)
- Advisors on using a critical lens towards the profession of social work
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  - Drs. Stephen Monroe Tomczak, Jessica Toft, Mimi Abramovitz, & Alice Gates
  - Linnea Anderson (Archivist)
  - [@SWHG1956](https://twitter.com/SWHG1956), <https://www.southernct.edu/swhg>
- CSWE Minority Fellowship Program
  - Dr. Duy Nguyen, MFP team, fellows, & alumni

# Thank You!

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- Yearwood, L. S. (Ed.). (1980). *Black organizations: Issues on survival techniques*. University Press of America.

Supplement



# Texts Distributed Prior to Presentation

## Post-Presentation Supplemental Slides



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## Texts I suggested in preparation for this presentation:

- Almeida, R. V., Werkmeister Rozas, L. M., Cross-Denny, B., Lee, K. K., & Yamada, A. M. (2019). Coloniality and intersectionality in social work education and practice. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 30*(2), 148–164. [DOI](#)
- Dominelli, L. (1989). An uncaring profession? An examination of racism in social work. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 15*(3), 391–403. [DOI](#)
- Gregory, J. R. (2021). Social work as a product and project of whiteness, 1607-1900. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 32*(1), 17–36. [DOI](#)
- Haley, J. M. (2020). Intersectional and relational frameworks: Confronting anti-Blackness, settler colonialism, and neoliberalism in social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 31*(3), 210–225. [DOI](#)
- Longres, J. (1972). The impact of racism on social work education. *Journal of Education for Social Work, 8*(1), 31–41. [DOI](#)
- Mclaughlin, K. (2005). From ridicule to institutionalization: Anti-oppression, the state and social work. *Critical Social Policy, 25*(3), 283–305. [DOI](#)

# Texts Requested During Q & A

## Post-Presentation Supplemental Slides



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## Q&A 1: Leveraging social work history in...

### 1. Social work education

- Chambers, C. (1973). The discipline of history in a social welfare curriculum. *Journal of Education for Social Work*, 9(1), 11–22. [DOI](#)
- Fauri, D. P. (1988). Applying historical themes of the profession in the foundation curriculum. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 2(1), 17–31. [DOI](#)
- Reisch, M. (1988). The uses of history in teaching social work. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 2(1), 3–16. [DOI](#)

### 2. Social work practice

- Dulmus, C. N., & Sowers, K. M. (2012). *The profession of social work: guided by history, led by evidence*. John Wiley & Sons. [Library](#)
  - Chapter 3: Social work practice in the new millennium (pp. 51–89)
- Finn, J. L. (2020). *Just practice: A social justice approach to social work*. Oxford Press. [Library](#)
  - Chapter 3: Looking back (pp. 63–103)
- Popple, P. R. (2018). *Social work practice and social welfare policy in the United States: A history*. Oxford Press. [Library](#)
  - Chapter 11: Social work practice, 1945–1974 (pp. 292–321)

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## Q&A 2: Self-help and mutual aid during slavery

- Martin, J. M., & Martin, E. P. (1985). *The helping tradition in the Black family and community*. NASW Press. [Library](#) [Online](#)
  - Chapter 1: The helping tradition in traditional Africa and in slavery (pp. 11–31)
  - Chapter 2: The helping tradition among free Blacks (pp. 33–47)
- Hayes, F. W. (Ed.). (2000). *A turbulent voyage: Readings in African American studies* (3rd Ed). Rowman & Littlefield. [Library](#) [Publisher](#)
  - §IV: African philosophy – Foundations for Black psychology (By Wade W. Nobles; pp. 280–292)
- Genovese, E. D. (1981). *From rebellion to revolution: Afro-American slave revolts in the making of the modern world*. Vintage Books. [Library](#) [Online](#)
- Gutman, H. G. (1977). *The Black family in slavery and freedom, 1750–1925*. Vintage Books. [Library](#) [Online](#)
- Harris, R. L. (1979). Early Black Benevolent Societies, 1780–1830. *The Massachusetts Review*, 20(3), 603–625. [DOI](#)

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## Q&A 2: Self-help and mutual aid during slavery (seminal texts)

