
1 Dreaming Justice and the Beloved Community in the Twenty-First Century

You are the social workers of the new millennium, living and practicing in the early moments of the twenty-first century. Only one in fifty generations have experienced the turning of a millennium, a time when hopes are high that everything can be made new. It is in this spirit of hope that this revision of the empowerment approach to social work practice is offered. Read revision as “re-vision” to see again, as for the first time. Building the “beloved community” is both the process and the hoped for outcome of individual and political empowerment. It is where we are going and how we will get there. It is the essence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream: a caring community where race and class is transcended and social and economic justice is the rule and not the exception. It is also the dream of this empowerment approach to social work practice. The approach deepens and expands in this second edition to include further elaboration of how-to (empowerment-oriented skills with systems of all sizes) and why (a contemporary look at poverty, oppression, and dehumanization), enriched by stronger clinical, community, research, multicultural, and global perspectives on empowerment practice and the celebration of differences.

Bell hooks, world-renowned postmodern black feminist writer, clarifies that the conditions of King’s dream must include affirming, not forgetting, our differences.

Many still long

to live in a society where beloved community can be formed—where loving ties of care and knowing bind us together in our differences. We cannot surrender that longing. . . . We need such bonding not because we cling to utopian fantasies but because we have struggled all our lives to create this community. . . . The small circles of love we have managed to form in our individual lives represent a concrete realistic reminder that beloved community is not a dream, that it already exists for those of us who have done the work of educating ourselves for critical consciousness. (1995:263–264)

Hooks emphasizes that to build this community we must “de-colonize” our minds through a process of unlearning ingrained and often unconscious attitudes of superiority or the internalization of the dehumanizing views of powerful others. This consciousness-raising process would transform our minds and our habits of being.

Honkala, Bricker-Jenkins, and Baptist (1999), leaders of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and its network of allies, the Temple University Underground Railroad (URR; chapter 13), speak of what divides people who have an activist’s commitment to social and economic justice. “We believe that the dynamics of racism, sexism, and even heterosexism eroded organizing efforts in these and other struggles of poor women, but the riptide that carried them away had to do with class. . . . The barrier was class” (1999:2).

We have been carefully taught not to recognize class privilege and condescension, white privilege or male privilege. It becomes, therefore, “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances . . . passports, visas . . . and blank checks” (McIntosh 1998:95). McIntosh elaborates on these privileges, adding that religion and geographical location (and, I would add, heterosexual orientation) are also privileging factors that are intricately intertwined. We cannot build the beloved community without relinquishing these privileges through self-awareness and a critical education process (hooks 1995; McIntosh 1998; Swenson 1998). Moreover, in social work practice we must go farther than personal or professional self-awareness to developing practice approaches and conceptualizations that will help bring about the beloved community with and on behalf of our clients.

Carol Swenson, a leading social work educator and practitioner, notes the ultimate importance of community practice as context for the clinical

social worker (1994, 1998). She sees the role of clinical community practitioner as essential to the core of the social work mission. The hallmark of the beloved community is social justice. The clear and ultimate mission of the social work profession is to promote and enhance social and economic justice (Swenson 1998).

The beloved communities that I have built in my personal and professional worlds are the sustaining force in my life. They span all arbitrary divides. They include people once called clients, now called cobuilders of the beloved community. Caring, power, and hope are essential to individuals (social workers and clients) in building this community. Small groups are the building blocks of community. They are, or can be, the circles of love and action hooks describes. Positive attachment, an outgrowth of experiencing caring, is a pre- or co-condition of empowerment and community building. Groups can also challenge us to individual growth and social change. Knowledge about groups and the skills of working with groups toward the ends of building the beloved community will be strengthened in this revision of the approach (chapters 11 and 12).

One way to revision life on the planet, the lives of the people we serve, and social work practice for a new century is to incorporate the words of poets, and other artists, and insights from a variety of disciplines into our understanding. Creative artists are often visionaries simplifying the complex into what can be known. This book will continue to include the words of poets and plain people along with traditional social work research and sources of data that illuminate empowerment practice. In chapter 2 I more clearly establish the links between life model, narrative, and constructivist approaches to practice, Paulo Freire's critical education, and the empowerment approach (Germain and Gitterman 1996; Dean 1993; Carpenter 1996; Freire 1998).

When our clients tell their stories "from the heart," they are revealing their unique selves and the struggles of their communities. This revision of empowerment practice will continue to emphasize the importance of the story in the process of personal and political/community transformation. But telling the story is not enough. Action does not automatically follow. We need theory and conceptualizations that unite action to authenticity to bring personal, communal, and societal change forth from the labor pains and catharsis of the true story. The role of clinician-activist is valued to help clients tell their stories and act (Walz and Groze 1991; Swenson 1998). The story told is about the business of everyday life, present and past, in the

context of experiencing poverty, discrimination, and other forms of human oppression. Assisting clients to challenge obstacles and actualize potentialities, to affirm life, build community, and work to change structural arrangements and toxic environments is the aim of the empowerment approach. In this approach we are challenged to talk the talk and walk the walk of transformation together.

We can make concepts and ways to approach life and social work practice new as we define and name them for ourselves with greater clarity, in contemporary terms and meanings. Walt Whitman, known for breaking new ground in poetry, viewed language as power to break through time, space, and matter to “vivify” (a neologism meaning to bring to life) the persons, places, and things of his world, making them available to his readers. This book seeks to vivify the world of social work practice with people who are poor and experience stigma and external and internalized oppression.

The words we use about practice and the people we practice with make a difference (Lee 1980; Rappaport, Smith, and Hess 1988). An approach that helps people to empower themselves and, ultimately, their communities, one that is both personally/clinically and politically/community oriented utilizes words to guide the worker in the direction of certain kinds of activities. The word *empowerment* itself and the empowerment approach developed here conveys a language of helping “that is steeped in symbols that communicate the powerful force for change contained within ourselves, our significant others and our communities” (Rappaport, Smith, and Hess 1988:16). The words *caring*, *power*, *hope*, and *community* further define this approach and convey both meaning and energy for a different kind of practice. However, we note Whitman’s caution:

What do you think words are? Do you think words are positive and original things in themselves?—No. . . . Words are a result—they are the progeny of what has been or is in vogue. . . . A perfect writer would make words sing, dance . . . or do anything Likely there are other words wanted. When the time comes for them to represent anything the words will surely follow. (Pearce 1966)

Spoto (1999) notes that all words are metaphors, “sounds, lines on a page, ‘meanings’ and referents—everything is metaphor, which is the closest we can get to the reality.” Empowerment, then, is a metaphoric concept that conveys the hope of the fullness of life for all people. The words “raising

critical consciousness, praxis and critical education” (Freire 1973a, 1990, 1998) are processes that lead to empowerment within this empowerment approach. As they are not everyday usage in social work they will need further explication and illustration. This edition will include elaboration of Freire’s ideas and their translation into practice skill in chapters 2, 3, 9, 11, and 12. Other words to describe the approach will always be wanted and will evolve as does the profession in relation to human needs and as you find words to describe your contemporary practice.

Empowerment practice is an idea whose time has come. There are, for example, almost six hundred articles written internationally on the subject of empowerment in social work practice (Miley, January 21, 1999, personal communication). Miley and DuBois (1998) have developed a comprehensive annotated bibliography of 131 recent articles or books on empowerment. Many agree that the concept of empowerment remains vital to the contemporary scene.

The empowerment of minority groups and individuals living on the margins of society is an incremental process, not an absolute outcome. Moreover, the empowerment of minority groups can frequently be reduced to token representation of individuals who are acceptable to the dominant group. Despite later twentieth-century progress in civil and human rights, and the dismantling of “entitlements” in some contemporary social welfare systems, the dawning of the millennium has not ushered in a post-empowerment era for the majority of people who are poor, of color, or of difference (Breton 1998). Instead, this era is marked by continued poverty, discrimination, and violence. On average, 60 percent of all American adults will experience at least one year of poverty during their lifetimes and more than one out of every five American children lives in poverty (Rank and Hirschl 1999; Sherman 1997). The socioeconomic and political climate in the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century produced particularly disdainful and tragic hate crimes against members of minority groups. The brutal murders of Matthew Shepard, a gay youth who was tortured and left to die in Wyoming in 1997, a young gay army private in 1999, the dragging to his death of James Byrd Jr., an African American man, in Jasper, Texas in 1998, the torching of the Macedonia Baptist Church in Bloomville, South Carolina in 1995 by the KKK, the killing of a Filipino postal worker and the shooting of children in a Jewish day care center by Buford Furman in the summer of 1999, and a number of other church and synagogue burnings by neo-Nazi groups and senseless shootings of high school peers by youthful

members of militia style groups in 1999 are cases in point. Minority groups continue to be scapegoats for those who hate. While legal victories in these heinous cases may bode well for a brighter future, their very existence signifies the need for empowerment-oriented social welfare and social work practice.

The successes of empowered individuals and communities, such as Emelda West a seventy-three-year-old African American grandmother who led a successful fight to stop a giant Tokyo-based chemical plant from erecting a life-threatening power plant in her nearly polluted rural Louisiana community, speak to the transforming effects of individual and community empowerment (*Life*, January 1999). Similarly, the Poor People's Summit, led by indigenous groups and social work activist and educator Mary Bricker-Jenkins and the other examples of community empowerment described in chapter 13 of this book provide clear examples of social workers' abilities in helping people to empower themselves and others like them. The role of the social worker is to aid people in empowering themselves where this is possible. As African American poet laureate Maya Angelou clarifies: "I don't ask . . . anyone to win my freedom/or fight my battles better than I can." Yet she adds that she longs for and believes in "every man's responsibility to man" (Angelou 1981:46).

Whether in vogue or not, a product of history or a new formulation (or both), the words we use about practice, such as *empowerment*, have the power of guiding thought and defining the territory (Rappaport, Smith, and Hess 1988; Lee 1980). The territory defined by the empowerment approach is personal/political—intensely personal and unavoidably political. Strong clinical knowledge and skills are needed to practice with the most vulnerable, stigmatized, and economically disadvantaged groups and communities. Armando Morales's concept of the "generalist-specialist" who can competently deliver high quality clinical services yet facilitate social action and social change is still the ideal social worker of the empowerment approach (1977:391). The role descriptions of the clinical activist, the clinical community practitioner, and the clinical social justice practitioner also capture the social worker's role in the empowerment approach (Walz and Groze 1991; Swenson 1998).

This book is relevant to generalist, advanced generalist, and integrated practice curricula as well as to specialized advanced year methods preparation. The concept of clinical community practice is relevant as the practitioner seeks to attend to private and public troubles with simultaneous con-

cern and interventions. The case of Shandra Loyal, which was a centerpiece study of empowerment-oriented practice, is continued in this edition. The update on events in her life underscores the need for empowerment-oriented social work interventions with clinical knowledge and skills. The charge of the worker is to deliver quality clinical services while attending to the needs for development and change in the communities and societies where clients live. What is conceptualized here is knowledge and skill to address the troubles and strengths in the lives of everyday poor and working people and other vulnerable groups and communities and the policies and structures that keep poverty and discrimination firmly in place.

One of the inventors of modernist poetry, Ezra Pound, writing in the early years of the twentieth century, plumbed the depths of ancient knowledge in many nations, making it available to everyday people. In canto 53 he sings about the eighteenth-century Chinese emperor Tching Tang, who faced years of drought and a suffering people. "Tching prayed on the mountain / and wrote MAKE IT NEW on his bathtub, / Day by day make it new, / cut the underbrush, / pile the logs, / keep it growing . . . (adding) Consider their sweats, the people's, / If you wd / sit calm on the throne" (1957:147).

How we long to make all things new. We long to make social work practice vital and growing in the service of social transformation. We long for the beloved community in our global neighborhood. In this era of global economy and global interdependence, social work practice approaches must be relevant wherever injustice is in force. The empowerment approach has been developed from the realities of social work practice in many nations. This edition will expand on the international relevance of the approach and include a chapter (14) on international practice. The greater the unmet need, the more we hope for a miracle, a cure-all. Empowerment practice, as direct practice, is of necessity an incremental process. The energy of all social workers with people called clients or community members is needed to usher in the reign of justice bit by bit and day by day.

As a founding mother of empowerment practice in social work, Bertha C. Reynolds, noted, we are all neighbors with common concerns. Social workers are neighbors who have specialized expertise that can help in the process of transforming people and systems (Reynolds 1964 and chapter 4). The words of poet Wallace Stevens (1967) provide a reality check on our dreams: "I cannot bring a world quite round / although I patch it as I can." Whether we carefully weave patches that can hold or design new cloth, the alternative to community responsibility and action is to tacitly accept the

ravages of poverty and turn ourselves to a kind of “value neutral,” anti-septically safe social work practice that “fits” with the requirements of powerful funding sources operating ultimately on the profit motive. Empowerment practice is driven by social work values and ethics, the rich though complex heritage and mandates of the profession, and the needs of the poor and others living, in the vivid words of the celebrated poet Langston Hughes (Ramperasad 1994), in a festering or explosive “dream deferred.” Social work empowerment practice can bring new life to the dream and to its realization.

The Voices of Children: A Metaphor from My Practice

It was in late spring of 1997. A seventy-four-year-old widow, Mrs. Pam Ciano, Italian-American great-grandmother, contacted me. She was “at her wits end” caring for her thirteen-year-old great-granddaughter Nicole. Several months ago she assumed care of Niki when her daughter, Rita, went to family court and relinquished custody, telling the judge to take Niki before she killed her. Niki, who looked more like sixteen, could not be kept in at night, she was stealing and, some said, prostituting. The straw that broke Rita’s back was Niki’s involvement of her younger brothers, Tony, age eight, and Joe, age six, in her activities. Joe had special needs and demanded all of Rita’s attention. They were all sneaking out at night now.

The three were vulnerable children born to a cocaine- and alcohol-addicted mother, Kim, Rita’s daughter, who had been in and out of their lives repeatedly over the years. When Niki was six she lived with Kim and Kim’s boyfriend, both heavily addicted. Niki was taught to steal sweets from the supermarket to satisfy Kim’s cravings. The children were homeless with Kim when Joe was born. Rita was awarded custody and Kim was incarcerated on multiple charges. They were again homeless with Rita a few years later when her own alcohol use and substandard housing precipitated flight to a shelter. Finally all was stabilized, and they have been in good housing for four years. Rita is fearful of losing her housing as she gets cut off of Aid to Dependent Children next month when her “time is up.” She doesn’t know how she will work full-time and care for Tony and Joe with their special needs. Kim was now in prison for the tenth time on drug-related charges. Niki’s father, whom she met at age eleven, was also in jail on drug charges. Niki and Joe were born addicted and hyperactive, and Joe was later diag-

nosed and treated for ADHD. Niki is now scheduled for a special education class. Rita says this is several years too late.

Mrs. Ciano could not hold on any longer. Her rescue attempt had failed in her eyes. Niki had run away and was now living on the streets. Mrs. Ciano wanted help to let go, but, she said, it “went against every grain of her being.” She was the strong one and had always held her family together. She didn’t know what went wrong with Rita or Kim or Niki. The rest of the family is doing so well, living in the suburbs, keeping good jobs, but they want nothing to do with “Rita’s family.” Besides, everyone works three jobs. Mrs. Ciano lives in her own home with her older and also widowed sister, Zia Rosa, age seventy-seven. Her four children all want her to come and live with them in the suburbs, but she and Rosa want to keep their own home and stay as long as possible in the community where they grew up and raised their children. Pam also wants to stay near Rita to help out. Mrs. Ciano said, “I want to help but I’m sick myself, and can’t take care of nobody anymore. I get only \$428 a month from social security and Niki is robbing from me. The family court told the child welfare to help, but they didn’t even answer my calls. Could you please help me? Could you help Niki?” she asked. “Yes, we will work on this together,” I answered.

But, even with all of my experience I was overwhelmed. So much pain and so few resources, so much trouble and so many strengths. There are no fast or easy answers here. As in many inner-city neighborhoods, including this one and the one I grew up in, the last stronghold of the family is the grandmother. The Cianos live in a once strong, now shrinking Italian-American working- and lower-middle-class enclave in Hartford, Connecticut. It is on the border of a poor and working-class Hispanic community now riddled with street gangs and drug trade. But, sometimes, even matriarchs have to let the awesome responsibility go.

The Ciano “case” would involve intensive work with everyone named above and intervention with many formal and informal systems. This service, offered free through Mrs. Ciano’s church, would be time consuming and difficult. Imagine how many managed care social workers it would take to follow up, if the family met insurance guidelines (which they did not) and if they would regularly attend office visits (which was unlikely). This is work best done in the community with home visits and case collaborations that include the entire “nuclear” and extended family, close friends (*amici*), the church, the schools, and the child welfare system. Moreover, it illuminates community problems and not only one family’s troubles. There are many

young teens on the streets like Niki, many grandmothers in this great-grandmother's shoes, and no fast solutions. Empowering clinical and community intervention can't be accomplished in forty-five-minute hours once a week. Yet these are typical contemporary cases that social workers respond to regularly. They are not easy. There is usually drug/alcohol involvement somewhere in the story. They do not often have storybook endings. This family's story as told by each member is one of struggling for health (mental and physical), attachment, stability, and resources—for life itself. When life is sustained there is "success." Sometimes the work goes beyond survival to personal and community empowerment—and thereby we are all strengthened.

The process continues. It is summer. We are in the car driving to the women's prison. Niki's strongest wish was to visit with her mother. She hadn't seen her in over a year. The privilege of the visit has been earned through her compliance with the plans we arrived at with her great-grandmother. Rita has sent Tony and Joe along too and they are bouncing around in the back seat. Niki is happy to see them. She has also brought Jes, her best friend whose mom has been helping Mrs. Ciano with Niki's care. Trips to the countryside are a treat, even if the destination is a prison, especially if it is where your mother lives. The children are laughing and the siblings are swapping funny stories about when they lived together. But there are stories Niki will not tell today. This child has been forcibly held down and raped in the interim, though her story is one of consensual sex with an adult man. She cannot control her impulses to court danger and men in the evenings. She knows she will not be remaining with Mrs. Ciano and that she has to go to court next month—both family court and criminal court (on a felony). I know her alternatives are not good. I have concluded that resources for children like Niki, who are poor and suffer from complex neurological, behavioral, and attachment disorders and have run out of family energy and alternatives are almost nonexistent. Placement possibilities hold little promise that therapeutic containment and attachment with a caring adult will be available.

Yet today she is happy. I do not mind that the radio is blaring on the rock station. Then a beautiful thing happens. The children begin to sing sweetly in unison: "I know a place that offers shelter / a city of justice / a city of love, a city of peace for every one of us. . . . Children are drowning in their tears. . . . We need a place where we can go . . . City of justice, city of love." I wipe away sudden silent tears and turn down the radio. I

ask them to tell me about “Gotham City” by R. Kelly (1997), the theme song of the *Batman* movie. They sing it again. We sing it together several times. Even Joe understands the meaning. Niki says she’s going to move there, and Joe asks if he can go too. I ask where they think it is. Tony thinks it is in New York. But Niki says, “It ain’t nowhere, I guess.” Joe says, “Uh, uh, she’s wrong. It’s where the jail and Mommy is.” They all laugh. I say, gently, we gotta try to make that city happen for them right where they live. “Word” (meaning yes), Niki says, and they are onto the next song. I think of the beloved community.

Contemporary Trends

The practice described above illuminates many private troubles and public issues that remain in full force in the twenty-first century. I will examine the “public” or policy side of the equation here and discuss the “private” or direct practice side, including the empowerment-oriented strategies and skills used in the Ciano case, in chapters 3, 5, 7, and 8. Empowerment practice must ultimately address both interrelated sides. As William Schwartz, writing in the spirit of C. Wright Mills, notes, “A private trouble is simply a specific example of a public issue, and . . . a public issue is made up of many private troubles” (1969, cited in Berman-Rossi 1994). He suggests that the job of the social worker is to mediate between clients and systems in both public and private spheres. There are many public issues in the Ciano case: child and family poverty and poor services, the struggles of women who are being cut off AFDC cash benefits, family, neighborhood, and community breakdown, the lure of the streets and the drug culture for inner-city youth who want to cash in quickly on the media-induced dream of wealth and the easy life, the plight of the “street child,” the challenges of grandparents in inner-city communities, the marginal economic status of elders living solely on Social Security benefits, homelessness, the resilience of children, and the possibility of neighborhood-based and community-oriented social services, and, finally, the dream of the beloved community. I will elaborate on the trend of increasing child and family poverty here, as it illuminates the need for an approach to social work and social welfare that empowers people to work for social and economic justice.

Child and Family Poverty

Nearly one-fourth (24.6 percent) of American children under age six live in poverty. This figure has gone up 3 percent since 1983. Sixteen states exceed the national norm, with the highest rates (40 percent or above), in Louisiana, West Virginia, and the nation's capital (44 percent). Connecticut, California, Texas, and New York have risen steeply since 1983 (*News-Press*, July 10, 1998:5; NCCP 1998). In 1996 more than one in every five children, 14.5 million children, lived in poverty in the United States. Nearly half of poor children live below one-half of the poverty threshold of \$16,400 for a family of four (43 percent as compared to 28 percent in 1978). Poverty measures currently in use, however, were developed in the 1960s, and they are, for many reasons, inadequate to reflect the complexities of today's poverty. Recommendations for a revised poverty measure were proposed in 1995 by the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences. However, the revised NRC measures that would show a greater depth of poverty among children, including those from two-parent working poor families, have not yet been adopted (Betson and Michael 1997).

Poor children are getting poorer (Sherman 1997:7). This trend is even more dramatic when we look at African American and Hispanic children. Poor children do not reflect a random cross-section of all children because poverty is unequally shared (Corcoran and Chaudry 1997). In 1992 the poverty rates for African American children (46 percent) and Latino children (40 percent) were 2.5 to 3 times the rate for white children (16 percent) (Corcoran and Chaudry 1997). In 1990 the poverty rate for African American children under three was 52 percent, 42 percent for Hispanic children, 21 percent for other ethnic minority children, and 15 percent for white children under three (NCCP 1997). Children born poor run the risk of long-term poverty. Over one-third of African American children experience long spells of poverty that last seven to ten years during childhood (NCCP 1997). Although white children constituted 60 percent of all children who were poor in 1992, almost 90 percent of the long-term poor children were African American (Corcoran and Chaudry 1997).

Education, race, and age as well as single-parent family structures are predictors of poverty among children. The inequality of earnings among workers has increased over the past thirty years, resulting in higher poverty rates, particularly among younger people with relatively low levels of education (Lewit, Terman, and Behrman 1997). However, race relates to in-

equality of earnings. For example, 1989 data shows that African American and Latino men were more likely to be earnings poor than white men with the same completed schooling. This includes male college graduates who were poor. Race-based differences in earnings and race-based housing segregation must be addressed if effective antipoverty policies are to be developed (Corcoran and Chaudry 1997). Gender-based differences in earnings are also important to note and to address. Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts (ranging from sixty-three cents to eighty-seven cents on the dollar, which reflects regional and other differences) and mother-only families run a high risk of poverty (Corcoran and Chaudry 1997; IWPR 1998).

Poor children have higher incidents of infant death, low birth weights, and inadequate prenatal care. They have a greater chance of repeating a grade or being expelled from school. They are one-third less likely to attend college and one-half as likely to graduate from college. They have less access to all material resources and less access to community resources such as good schools, safe neighborhoods, and adequate governmental services than do children raised in families with adequate incomes. Clearly, life chances and options are diminished by poverty (Sherman 1997:3; Corcoran and Chaudry 1997:41).

An International Perspective on Child Poverty

The United States is doing poorly in child poverty rates compared to eighteen other industrialized nations, according to the Luxembourg Income Study conducted in Europe, Scandinavia, Canada, Australia, and Israel over the past decade by Rainwater and Smeeding (1996). Of the nations studied, the United States ranks seventeenth. Child poverty rates mirror real income deficit and low and falling social expenditure rates for children. In contrast, high-income children are better off than their counterparts in every nation studied and the gap between U.S. rich and poor children is the greatest. The United States has the greatest income disparity of any modern democratic nation. The median wage of working men has fallen steadily over the last twenty years, resulting in proportionately more children living in poverty in the United States than in any other industrialized nation (Schorr 1997:xvi, xvii).

Internationally, poverty is also clearly related to families headed by single mothers. As noted above, in the United States women still do not earn equal pay for equal work (IWPR-Institute for Women's Policy Research, October 1998). In this global economy similar socioeconomic forces influence all the countries studied. Divorce, out-of-wedlock births, and single-parent families in which the mother must work are on the rise in all of the countries studied. What distinguishes the United States from the other nations studied is the more generous transfer and tax policies of the other nations (Plotnick 1997). The effects on children of recent demographic trends are social policy concerns in all the countries (Rainwater and Smeeding 1996). However, in the United States there is a policy retreat instead of an attack on the problems such social forces produce. This retreat, often framed in the guise of reform, will be discussed in chapter 4 along with other contemporary trends that establish the mandate of the empowerment approach.

Global Perspectives on Social Work and Social Problems

There are remarkable similarities in socioeconomic themes in highly industrialized nations and there is the potential of learning from each other (Rainwater and Smeeding 1996). Similarly, there is much to be learned from developing countries that face comparable problems with fewer resources (Midgley 1997). Dealing with social underdevelopment in practice and policy areas like homelessness and the plight of street children in economically advantaged as well as economically disadvantaged countries are cases in point (Lee, Odie-Ali, and Botsko 2000; Lee and Odie-Ali 2000). The U.S. Council on Social Work Education recognizes global interdependence and expects curricula to include international content. It is important to promote a bidirectional flow of knowledge from South to North as well as in the usual reverse direction. To that end, chapter 12 will center around social work practice outside the United States in both fully industrialized and less industrialized countries, with practice in Guyana, South America, including the author's collaborative relationship with Guyanese social work educators and practitioners on issues of the empowerment of women and children and homelessness, as a central focus.

In the practice metaphor of the Ciano family both homelessness and children living on the streets were noted. Empowerment-oriented social work with homeless men, women, and children was a focus of the practice

material in the first edition of this book. While the focus will be expanded to include other disenfranchised groups, with a greater emphasis on children, the original materials continue to be relevant to today's practice and will remain in this edition. Homelessness, including the growing presence of street children, is a global phenomenon. A 1987 United Nations study estimated that one billion people live under conditions of inadequate shelter or are literally homeless (Glasser 1994). Heads of nations and official delegates at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul, Turkey in 1996 endorsed the universal goals of ensuring adequate shelter for all and making human settlements safer, healthier, and more liveable, equitable, sustainable, and productive in an urbanizing world. The strategies for achieving this included forging new partnerships for action at the international level and preserving human diversity and the richness of cultures (UNDP n.d.; Lee and Odie-Ali 2000). There continues to be high rates of homelessness in industrialized countries where homelessness need not exist at all (Blau 1992; Glasser 1994; Alston 1999; Lee 1999a; Lee, Odie-Ali, and Botsko 2000; Lee and Odie-Ali 2000). However, the majority of homeless people live in developing countries affected by high rates of population growth, urbanization, and underemployment. Rural-urban migration, chronic alcoholism and the increasing availability of street drugs, other substance abuse and mental disorders, the lack of affordable housing and the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill are factors commonly associated with homelessness worldwide (Glasser 1994; and Lee, Odie-Ali, and Botsko 2000). Midgley (1991) sees homelessness as a way of life for billions of the world's people.

The Habitat Agenda (UNDP n.d.) places street children as a priority on their agenda action. A 1980s UNICEF Report estimates that there were over thirty million children living on the street in urban centers worldwide, although they are particularly difficult to count. Family breakdown, the gap between rich and poor, and inner-city community disintegration are global problems precipitating homelessness (Agnelli 1986; chapter 14 in this volume). Inner-city violence and victimization and neighborhoods as war zones are also global problems affecting children (Nisivoccia and Lynn 1999). At thirteen, Niki was fast on her way to becoming a victimized street child, although earlier victimizations while homeless with her addicted mother may have laid the foundation for her current proclivity for street life. Niki faced homelessness twice before this in her young life. The fastest

growing population of homeless people in the United States and elsewhere is women and children (Boxhill 1990; Nunez 1994; Lee 1999a).

Continuing on Dreams

The Dreams of Children

Niki, Jess, Tony, and Joe dreamed of a city of justice and love. In the stories presented below Sara dreams of helping homeless children and Sudeka dreams of going to a place where she could “be someone.” She longed to be a poet.

Sara is a nine-year-old African American girl who lived in a shelter for homeless women and children with her mother and seven-year-old sister. For Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday the children at Sara’s school were asked to complete Dr. King’s famous words, “I have a dream.” Sara brought this “home”:

I have a dream. my dream is to be a foster moht Becuse I wold like to help homelest Kids. So they wold no be eating from the dumpstes and wold not be dricking drty water.becuz thay will be sick and hunge. and I don’t like ttat. And one day I had 9 foster kids and thay was happy and I was to. AND THAT WAS MY DREAM!

The teacher corrected the spelling and returned it to the child. That night her mother abandoned her at the shelter. She would have a foster mother again.

Poverty is misery. Sudeka, a fifteen-year-old girl living in a poor community asks (excerpted):

. . . *What we see?*
Misery
Falling like rain.
 (Thomas 1978)

Since the first printing of this book in 1994 little has changed for the Sudekas and Saras and Niki’s and Joe’s America except that the ranks of poor children are fuller, as noted earlier in this chapter. But something has

changed for this social worker and social work teacher, who has known too many children of poverty in her three and a half decades of social work practice. It is the congealing of an approach to social work practice that stands side by side with people who are poor, who are of color, who are women, or who are different to confront the obstacles imposed by class and race and difference. It is an approach that joins with people to help them find the strengths they need internally, interpersonally, and politically to live rather than merely survive and to have an impact on oppressive systems on behalf of themselves and others. Sudeka's story (Thomas 1978) is presented along with the story of Niki and her family to introduce the clinical and political dimensions of this "empowerment approach" to social work practice.

Sudeka is a bright fifteen-year-old African American girl from a working poor family. Her mother, a proud woman, cleans bathrooms in hotels. Her brother, Les, a veteran, is an addict. She has a twenty-three-year-old boyfriend, Jamal, a Jamaican. Sudeka's sister, Deena, returns to leave her four-year-old child, Bunky, and seek work elsewhere. Sudeka's one bright hope is school. She is asked to leave school to work with her mother to help support the family and save for an operation for Bunky. She doesn't want to leave school but sees it as her obligation.

The journalist deftly weaves entries from Sudeka's journal into her story. Jamal gave Sudeka books and introduced her to Bob Marley's music. She began to build herself a black history library and struggled to discover her heritage. She loved reading, poetry, and writing in her diary. The time came for her to leave her beloved school. On January 3 she writes: "I won't, won't, won't do it. Sudeka don't cry now. I'm in the black hurt now." She then vows to write correct English and "to write smart things here, like dreams and aspirations." She tells of her wish to go to Jamaica and the conflict she feels between family need and joining her mother in cleaning hotel toilets: "Man, my dreams get dead. . . . Mama all smell of bleach. Next its me all smell of bleach." Then the resignation: "Tomorrow I am going to work. . . . Cross yourself, kneel down deep. Bad luck is me." On January 21 she reflects:

Frederick Douglass say don't live in meekness and humility. What this mean? . . . Let your discontent grow upon you. Let it open your eyes. . . . The master is the white man. The white man got the power. Frederick Douglass say loosen your bonds by thinking and then slip

away. . . . He live in those times when slaves was around. Jamal say just like today. If kindness was the rule how do they forget us? No man should be judged by his skin. No man should sit and stare at his hongry childrens. No boys should rob and hit their mamas. Girls shouldn't get crying. . . . America she sit like a queen little fingers folded in her lap but the revolution, it come and no time for peace. I warn the American people by all that is just and honorable, to beware! (Thomas 1978:27)

Sudeka then decided to leave home to find Trenchtown (Jamaica), which symbolized hope and liberation. She left a goodbye letter saying she had to leave "to be someone." Three days later she called her mother from the airport. She didn't have the airfare. Her hope dwindles and she is despondent. "Write make your fingers write no head just dead empty where i be . . . don't wait in vain for me." And Wednesday, February 8, "I can't lift my head to write so that's why I'm leaving you. I used to think."

Thomas writes: "On Friday February 10, in New Jersey, Sudeka Linda Harrison took 15 Valiums and slashed her wrists with a broken bottle. She was found dead in a hall closet" (1978:1). This tragic story exemplifies all the levels of human suffering social workers must address. On one level it is the story of racism and abject poverty and its ultimate toll on human life. On another level it is a story of inadequate resource systems that make no provision for poor children and families. It is a story of a young woman's justified and silent rage and of the strengths and struggles of family life in poverty. The policy, program, services, and basic socioeconomic changes needed to change the facts of this story are still dramatically absent. It is a story of an adolescent girl's crisis and exceptional life transitions, including her struggle to affirm her identity. But her dream is out of reach. With the reality of demeaning work and the loss of school and of her hope of going to "a better place" where dreams can be actualized, her self-esteem falls so low that suicide is clinically predictable (Mack and Hickler 1981). Drugs combine with this loss and extraordinary fall in self-esteem to herald tragedy.

To help Sudeka and her family the social worker needs to stand by them on all fronts. She must work with this family and others like them for the program and policy changes that can deliver adequate resources for all families. Equally important, she must be clinically astute to issues of depression, adolescent development, drug use, and ethnically sensitive practice; otherwise Sudeka is lost, although some larger battles may eventually be won.

My social work practice and teaching became a search for how to hold on to the individual and still wage the battle for socioeconomic justice, to be both clinical and political, for to lose one or the other is too great a cost. Sudeka and her family waited in vain for the love of a compassionate America. Something else was needed: their personal and political empowerment. This book is about helping all Saras and Sudekas and Nikis and Tonys and their families attain that empowerment. The dream of this writer is to provide a social work translation of political consciousness into a fine-tuned (“clinical”) understanding of people in the everyday struggles of life and to show how individuals struggling together can make changes for themselves and others.

A Contrast: Empowered Women Naming Themselves

As a contrast to Sara and Sudeka, who experienced no empowerment intervention, an excerpt from a middle-phase meeting of an empowerment group composed of five African American women, ages twenty-one to thirty-four, who were “graduates” of a shelter for homeless women and children is presented.

“We’ve been meeting for a long time,” said Tracey, the president of the group, “we’ve got to have a name.” “Who are we?” asked Vesalie. “We are successful women,” said Tracey. “Yeah,” said Latoya, “the Successful Women’s Group.” “No,” said Vesalie, “we can’t call ourselves that.” “Why?” asked Shandra. Vesalie strongly replied, “It implies too much power, that we are powerful.” The worker asked if they felt powerful. Vesalie said, “Yes, we are more powerful now—we got good jobs, we’re good mothers, we help others who are homeless, we are meeting our goals, but we haven’t gotten there yet.” The worker asked, “When you get there, then you have power?” Tracey replied, “But that’s just it—we need that power to get there, and we’re on our way. Let’s convey that we *are* powerful women, we *are* successful women; let’s take that name and make it ours. We deserve to walk with that name!” The others strongly agreed. Vesalie thoughtfully accepted this and the name *Successful Women* was enthusiastically adopted.

Names mean a great deal. The worker's questions here are critical consciousness-raising questions, a skill to be discussed later in the book. This naming effort illuminates important processes and questions and goes to the central question in this work: What is empowerment? Power attainment, or empowerment, is both process and outcome. Developing power can be frightening, but it is not presumptuous, nor is it contradictory to caring and mutual support. Empowering practice necessitates a focus on love and power and hope.

The journey from being "homeless women" to being "successful women" is a 360-degree turn. It evolves from a process of conscientization (consciousness-raising, chapter 2) and critical thinking in which the personal and political levels of being members of an oppressed group are examined and challenged. Empowerment comes about as systems as well as people are changed by people's actions. The Successful Women's Group and its members will be discussed in chapters 11 and 12. Updates on the lives of Tracey and Shandra will be provided in chapters 8 and 9.

One Last Dream

It was 1960, the year of my high school graduation. We lived in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, New York, in a small wood frame house heated by a coal stove in the kitchen. We were the remaining white family in the heart of a strong, black working-class and poor community others called a ghetto. The church was the heart of this community. It was attuned to the civil rights movement and taught a gospel of God's love and "social gospel," including nonviolent resistance. Our two young pastors, David P. Ver Nooy and Melvin G. Williams, a host of church elders, a church youth group leader, Grace Thorpe Brathwaite, my peers, and a few exceptional high school teachers like Theresa L. Held and Rose Langleben challenged me to think critically. They were my role models, along with my family.

I grew up in a close extended family, many of whom lived on our street until 1951, when, with many tears, the last and favorite aunt, Edie, left for Long Island. My grandmother, Ella, was a matriarch in our family, in the church, and in our neighborhood. At eighty-two she was as beloved and

loving as she had been for the fifty-odd years she ministered and acted as midwife on St. Mark's Avenue. Nana often said, "If our house could talk, what stories it would tell! The births, the deaths, the tears, and laughter." Young and old, neighbors and extended family still came to her, and we in turn received from them. When family came we gathered in a circle and everyone (including children) had a turn to contribute to the conversation. There was often laughter and singing. The family circle was the first group I knew. Our "nuclear" family—my mother and I, my two uncles, and my grandmother—"got by," like everyone else on the block. My mother, Anne, a beautiful, artistic, and intellectually gifted woman, was the only one of our family who completed high school, and at a college preparatory level. Mother worked intermittently as an executive secretary. She was hospitalized in a psychiatric facility for several months when I was four. A lifelong struggle with schizophrenia without the intervention of the mental health system followed. Periods of health and illness occurred sporadically. This struggle began two years after my father survived World War II and failed to return to her. My Uncle Jack, a decorated World War II hero and a post office supervisor, was now a late-stage alcoholic estranged from his wife and daughter. And my quiet, gentle Uncle Warren was on service-connected psychiatric and physical disability from World War II. We survived on his small pension. We could not afford even a city college. Some members of the extended family argued that I should work full-time. My mother and grandmother disagreed and dreamed for me. My friends dreamed too. Pastor Mel Williams challenged members of our youth group to "do something with our lives."

Bobby asked, "So what are you all going to do? I'm going into the army, I'm going to get my college education while Uncle Sam pays the bills. I'm not living in those roach trap projects forever." "Me either," said Willy, "but I'll probably be dead before I become a doctor." "Willy, I'm sick of you saying that," Barbara Jean (Bubba) said. "It's all you ever say: 'Physician, heal thyself!'" "We all broke into laughter as Willy acted out a faith healing in which Bubba's mouth was healed. "Seriously now," said Bobby, "what you gonna do, Judy?" I said I'd try to go to college. Bubba said, "I'm going to work now and go to college at night, but I'll be a writer some day and write about all of us." "Not about me," said Kiki, "there's nothing to say." Bobby said, "But ain't

you going into the Coast Guard, Kiki?" "Sure," said Kiki, "but that's not much." Mary chided Kiki, "You have to believe in yourself. I'm going to be an artist." Mark said, "I'm going away to college and I'll be a football hero." He threw a fake pass to Kevin. Kevin laughed, "They'll never expect a Chinese boy to do that!" "Right," said Mark. "What are you going to do, Kev?" Kev shrugged, "I really don't know." "And don't care either," laughed Willy. "You just want to get next to Linda." Everyone laughed and everyone dreamed.

On a cold winter's afternoon a few months later I asked my grandmother, who was trying to nap under some blankets and overcoats,

"Nana, what do you dream about?" "I dream," she said, "that you will become something, maybe a nurse, a missionary nurse. And that you will walk always with your hand in God's hand." I responded, "But for yourself, Nana. What do you want for yourself? Maybe I can get it for you now." "Oh," she replied, "that in heaven I will have a pretty little house, like an English cottage, all surrounded with flowers . . . a house with good heat!" "But now, Nana," I pressed. "Now," she laughed, "I want you to get me your coat and let me nap!"

I dreamed that I could get Nana that house where she wouldn't need to huddle under coats to keep warm and that no one would have to wait for heaven to get the simple things they need to live. I dreamed my friends' dreams would all come true. As for Nana's dreams for me, two out of three ain't bad! God didn't let go; I worked nights and summers at PAL youth programs and went to college. I studied after midnight and slept through morning classes, but I did not become a nurse!

The close-knit group of friends is still there for each other. Pastor Mel Williams is now, tragically, a victim of Alzheimer's disease. And yet, from his congregate living facility for Alzheimer's patients, he is able to reach out his arms in love to his family and friends and fellow sufferers whose names no longer make a difference. The essence of Mel—his love—is still there, almost miraculously. The courage of Mel and his devoted wife, Virginia, is a lesson in the power of love. The flock reaches out to visit with and offer support to them across the miles.

Some of us dreamed bigger than others and some of us got further than we ever dared to dream. Of the eight young people (seven of color) who dreamed that day, five attained master's degrees, three got their doc-

torates, and one obtained an M.D. There are five educators, including a high school principal, three university professors, and the dean of a medical school, an American Studies historian, a social worker, an engineer, and a colonel in the army. There were other members of the group and countless accomplishments, though not without struggle. Many are parents. Three of us are gay, though I did not know that about myself until many years later. The two young men knew then and couldn't say it, even to each other. One member of the group stayed in the community and struggles with unemployment and alcoholism. One, a leader among us, left and then returned. He died from complications of AIDS in 1992. It was a profound loss. He loved others but he never learned to love himself. His world did not accept gay men. Did God still care? he agonized. Racism, sexism, poverty, classism, heterosexism, and combinations of these evils: Which is the worst to live or die with? Across the United States this empowered group grasps hands, united against the oppression any one of us experiences. Out of such love books are written and lives are empowered.

A Firm Foundation

Life and practice have taught me that *both* personal and political levels of change must be addressed in an approach to social work practice with oppressed groups. To quote Carla, a young woman describing abuses in a New York City shelter, "These are the fruits of oppression." I agreed they are (Lee 1987). Practice with people who are pushed to the edge of this society necessitates a validation of that experience and a dual focus on people's potentials and political/structural change. It requires reaching across boundaries. As bell hooks writes,

Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc., that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathyùties that would promote recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition. (1990:26)

We need a side-by-side stance. We *are* all in this together.

The Book

This book advances an empowerment approach to direct social work practice. It makes connections between inadequate social policies and programs, personal vulnerabilities, and the need for a fair start in obtaining vital internal and external resources. Its aim is to help the social worker develop knowledge to help people to empower themselves in the personal, interpersonal, and political levels of life. It focuses specifically on practice with oppressed groups based on an understanding of past and contemporary history and social policy issues. Utilizing empowerment theory as a unifying framework, it develops an empowerment approach that is integrative, holistic, and pertinent to the needs of stigmatized and vulnerable populations while being applicable to other client groups.

This approach adapts an ecological perspective to empowerment practice (Germain 1979, 1991; Germain and Gitterman 1980). This perspective helps us see the interdependence and connection of all living and nonliving systems. Within the ecological perspective the professional task is seen as “maintaining a dual simultaneous concern for people and environments” and “releasing the potentialities of people and environments” (Germain 1979). Potentialities are the “power bases” that exist in all of us and that develop when there is a “goodness of fit” between people and environments. By definition, poor people and other oppressed groups seldom have this “fit,” because discriminatory social and economic forces create a noxious environment that stifles human potential. To change this unfavorable equation, people must join together to examine the forces of oppression; they must name, face, and challenge them as they have been internalized and encountered in the external power structures that exist at close range, mid range, and wide range in our society. The greatest human power to tap is the power of collectivity: “Two [people] can resist an attack that would defeat one [person] alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Collectivity and the three strands of personal, interpersonal, and political empowerment make a strong rope. Weaving the rope is the work of empowerment practice. The revisions and additions to this book, including new chapters on skill (3), community practice (13), and international social work practice (14), all add texture and strength to the rope of empowerment, a lifeline for vulnerable and oppressed populations.

Communications Technology: A Source of Power

Access to knowledge is power. The information revolution marked by the greater availability of computer technology to all sectors of society offers a new tool to social workers and their clients. Social workers and the people they help can develop computer literacy in order to keep up with knowledge that is beneficial to groups struggling for equity and to advance in the job market. Courses in computer skills are available in many universities, community colleges, and continuing education programs. Most communities also offer such programs in adult education programs, through the local public library, and in community centers where costs are minimal. As social workers become knowledgeable we can help our clients to gain access to technology to enrich their lives and self-empowerment efforts. Concerned parents groups can advocate for appropriate computer education, software and internet access in schools and community centers, even when owning a personal computer is not possible. We can help residents of poor communities learn to utilize public libraries as places to gain access to the knowledge they need through computers as well as books. Through the use of interactive software and internet access to the world wide web, social workers and clients are able to obtain state of the art knowledge quickly and easily.

Whether it is for basic adult literacy training or conflict resolution skills for children or specialized knowledge on community organizing, environmental problems, child development, mental or physical illness, or the history of oppressed groups, the world opens through the use of computer technology. Corrections programs for adults and youth, for example, have begun to employ distance education and interactive software to help those who gave up on education gain a fresh start. In addition to the usual cultural, educational, and recreational activities of settlement house type community centers, computer technology is used to engage youth and adults in a quest for knowledge. For example, a newly developed community center in a low-income African American, Latino, and white ethnic area in Southwest Florida planned a computer room as a central area in its new facility. Major area businesses donated up-to-date computer terminals and software; programs and technical assistance were obtained from the local university, other area schools, and volunteers. Computer literacy was taught in summer day camp and educational and culturally appropriate games engaged children who have great difficulty in traditional learning modes. They then felt comfortable in using interactive software in their tutorial programs during the school

year. A transitional living facility for homeless women and children utilized a similar strategy in engaging the women in a self-tutoring program to learn basic computer skills. The mothers and children also learned through playing computer games together. The women said that they felt prepared when they then enrolled in a training program mandated by a state work readiness program. Social workers can help make computer technology available to members of disenfranchised groups.

Contemporary social workers will want to use the internet to research topics such as poverty, women, children, cultural knowledge, and legislative issues among others. For example, three websites were used in researching data for this chapter: [www.iwpr.org/Release 98.htm](http://www.iwpr.org/Release%2098.htm) (from Hartmann's Institute for Women's Policy Research), www.childrensdefense.org (Children's Defense Fund), and www.undp.org/un/habitat/agenda (from the United Nations' data base). Some schools of social work and leading social work educators have developed websites. For example, Richard Estes at the University of Pennsylvania has developed PRAXIS, a website where students can learn how to access and obtain information on international social work issues. For beginners he gives basic instructions as to how to use a search engine and browser to navigate a web site (Estes 1999). The Kensington Welfare Rights Union has established an award-winning website (www.libertynet.org). Social workers can enrich their practice and research through utilizing the world wide web for information in all areas of practice. A special section of the references for this book will guide the reader to many helpful sites.

Multifocal Vision

Empowerment practice is aimed at joining with people called clients to help them gain access to power in themselves, in and with each other, and in the social, economic, and political environment. Multiple perspectives are used to develop an empowerment practice framework. Multifocalvision consists of a *historic perspective*: learning a group's history of oppression, including related social policy (chapter 4), an *ecological* view, including a stress-coping paradigm and other concepts related to coping—ego psychological and cognitive behavioral concepts (chapter 5), a *critical* perspective, an *ethclass* and a *feminist* perspective, a *multicultural* perspective (chapter 6), and a *global* perspective (chapter 14). The additional *multicultural and*

global foci are new to this edition. The concept of multifocal lenses leaves the possibility of adding other foci as theory and practice evolves. If the reader can imagine a pair of glasses with multiple lenses ground in (not bifocal or trifocal, but multifocal lenses), that is the view of the world and of practice that illuminates this approach. Since there is a good deal of overlap in these perspectives, it will not take long to get used to these new lenses. The broad-based ecological view is an overarching concept explaining person/environment transactions. The different emphases provided by adding the other six lenses help us to see closely and at several distances and sharpen the views we need to practice this approach. We may also need to add other foci as theory and practice evolves. Ultimately, these are political lenses.

A Conceptual Framework

In addition to the multifocal theoretical perspective, this empowerment approach is based on values, principles, and skills that will be integrated into an overall conceptual framework introduced in chapter 2 and utilized throughout this book. Helping processes—including consciousness-raising and dialogue as method between individuals, in small groups, and in the wider community—will be highlighted in chapters 7 through 14. A broad knowledge and skill base will be elaborated with full illustrations from practice.

The group/collectivity—in particular, the “empowerment group” discussed in chapter 11—is seen as the heart of empowerment practice. The uniqueness of this book will be the synthesis and integration of an empowerment approach to practice with poor and oppressed people on the personal, collective, and political levels of being and of social work practice.

Keeping Hope Alive

Lisbeth Schorr, renowned social analyst, has written a well-researched and very hopeful book entitled *Common Purpose* in which she describes several excellent demonstration programs that work to turn the poverty of individuals and communities into economic, personal, and communal empowerment. She notes, quoting the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, “Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill / Is daily spun; but there exists no loom / To

weave it into fabric" (1998:xxvii). Empowered social workers, clients, and community members are the weavers. Schorr weaves the elements of successful programs together to produce guidelines for what works. Her main argument is that we already know what works. There are numerous examples of innovative and effective programs throughout the United States (Biegel and Blum 1999; Nunez 1994; Devaney, Ellwood, and Love 1997; Schorr 1998). Argeriou and McCarty took a similar approach in presenting nine community demonstration grants that worked in treating alcoholism and drug abuse among homeless men and women (1990). Effective programs to end homelessness are well documented (Lee 1999a; Nunez 1994). The literature of the helping professions is full of such success stories. The evidence is compelling, but the problem is the commitment of public and private resources to take these programs to scale. For such resources to be released it will take the joining together of all concerned citizens with the common purposes of establishing policies and programs that work and restoring trust in our ability to defeat poverty and related ills, particularly those inflicted on children. By joining together in one voice, one that goes beyond traditional political divisions, we can turn the most challenged neighborhoods into communities of hope. This is the work of empowered people supported by the beloved community. Empowered social workers and those they work with (usually called clients) can lead in responding to this call to action. Schorr says:

Together we can be sustained by the conviction that we have the resources-material, intellectual and spiritual-to assure that every American family can expect its children to grow up with hope in their hearts and a realistic expectation that they will participate in the American Dream. (1998:385)

I believe that this dream is a universal dream for those of every land who dare to dream. Though material resources are not equal, and such equality is central to the dream of a beloved global community, empowered people in many nations will realize the dream of a better life for children. Empowerment-oriented social workers are uniquely suited to help people every where make such dreams reality. We continue now in our weaving of the empowerment approach to social work practice.

These lines, adapted from the last stanza of a poem I wrote for colleagues attending the Tenth Annual Symposium of the Association for the Advance-

ment of Social Work with Groups (Baltimore, Maryland, 1988), succinctly contain the message of this book:

*Brother, sister
social workers,
take our hands,
say the people
called clients.
Understand this:
You provide
one shoulder more,
one special guide
with different tasks.
We need your skill,
your strength,
your will,
but you need us to
get there still.
You cannot lead,
you cannot steer,
but come aboard,
and we'll get there!
Brothers, sisters,
take my hand,
it is against that
night we stand.*

—From “A Plea For Unity”