

Effective Leadership in Social Service Organizations: Combining Management and “Helping” Perspectives

Editor’s Note: (to be approx. 100-150 words, describing that this paper was adapted from a speech at the Women and Leadership Lecture Series, NASW-NYC’s invitation to publish this in Currents, and an outline of the major content headings.)

Reflecting on Thirty-Six Years of Practice: Insights and Observations

I was in the 8th grade when I decide to become a social worker. I went from first grade, straight through to my MSW without taking a semester off. It’s hard to believe it's been more than 40 years since I completed my undergraduate pre-social work at NYU. The adage about time flying when you’re having fun also applies to years and decades when you’re following your

passion. I can honestly say I have just as much, if not more, love and enthusiasm for the profession as I had straight out of high school. I have supervised, taught, trained and coached thousands of individuals and gained detailed knowledge of hundreds of organizations in my 36 plus years of practice, including tenure at three major mental health social service organizations and 30 years of private practice.

As I reflect upon my professional and leadership journey, I find myself examining major life choices and assessing the consequences of these decisions. Unlike earlier periods of adulthood, this stage allows me to reflect upon the emotional experiences of the field. We're all familiar with the moments of anxiety, feelings of ambivalence, anger and vulnerability. In the past, I often compartmentalized unpleasant feelings and was not able to examine and gain insight into their origins, or their

impact. This self-observation is a benefit that could not have occurred prior to this midlife stage. In this article, I will share some of my insights and observations about us, social work leaders, potential leaders and our profession as a whole. Additionally, I will address and raise sensitivity to a few issues I have found to be unexplored in the past.

I'm sure many of you will agree that our profession is facing a crisis, and a crisis is a terrible thing to waste. I will also share some thoughts on joint solutions that I believe can address this situation. Whether you're a seasoned leader, a mid-career leader or emerging leader, I would like you to reflect upon your own journey. This process can open the dialogue for solutions to some of the issues that our profession is facing.

Splitting Within the Profession

The first issue is the splitting in every aspect of the profession. This splitting occurs between us as social workers, between the administrative and clinical services within our organizations and within the entire profession. It lessens our ability to create and sustain leadership within our field.

Social workers often hold deep-seated suspicions of CFOs, budget personnel and internal auditors for having little or no concern for, or value of, those we serve and the work we do. I have personally heard these sentiments from social workers – from the junior to senior executive levels – through out my career. Sometimes it was implied and other times explicitly stated. I, myself, must confess I've been guilty of these thoughts on a few occasions over the years. The resulting tension increases the splitting between the clinical and administrative areas within our organizations, preventing them from running

as effectively as they could. The clinical staff often feel that the administrative department is overly focused on revenue, when the interest should be on the clients.

And the opposite for the administrative staff is also true: they often feel clinicians don't understand what it takes to keep the doors open, or they don't care about the fiscal health of our organizations. This splitting is due to the failure of each side to accept that both areas are not only necessary, but interdependent. It's about an inability or an unwillingness to hold a big picture perspective, and view the organization as a whole. We often get too locked into our roles and have not learned how to appreciate how our roles function with other positions and departments. Also, it's often easier for us as social workers to have disdain for those accountable for managing a budget than to assume some responsibility for making the hard decisions that are

necessary.

During my early years as a Program Director, I dreaded budget time. Dealing with financial issues diminished my view of myself as a generous caregiver. It was much easier to see the budget folks as the enemy, constantly making our jobs difficult. Budget meetings were filled with tension, circular questions, antagonistic tones and an argumentative stance. Hearing language foreign to me was intimidating and it caused me to shut down. Although I was always thankful for surviving another round of budget conversations, I was eager for it to be over and content to be done with the until the next year. And I'm certain administrators were just as pleased to be done with social workers for at least another year too. Both sides left these meetings frustrated and irritated. We social work leaders must recognize that humanity does not only belong to clinicians. Budget cuts

and regulatory compliance are necessary for the existence of any organization. We have budgets to adhere to, so we must also assume accountability for them. The hostility and lack of understanding between these two areas, with each side focusing on blame instead of solutions, interfere with the transfer of pertinent information. Clear communication of information is required or the result is less than adequate services for our client and communities.

We need a better understanding of what finance departments do and help them to understand our work and our value as well.

Just how do we go about doing that? Here are some questions for us to ponder: Where do our budget departments go to understand the experience of program delivery? While we might all agree administrative departments don't need to know how to conduct an interview or diagnose a patient, would it be helpful if they knew what the

experience was like? Or what issues give social workers trouble? They won't discover any of these things if we social workers shut down and view them as the enemy. Can we invite them to join the experience of cutting a program? Can administrative staff be involved in the feelings brought up by these cuts? What prevents us from sharing our humanity...after all, they too are parents, spouses, daughters, sons and friends? Can the administrative staff learn the language of social workers? Can we help them to understand the effects of their language on us? Who gets to think about the money issues when there is not enough to go around and which programs will get less or be eliminated? How do the budgets get constructed? As social workers, do we and can we partner with fiscal departments on budget construction?

No organization can do everything it wants to do. It's a work in progress and there will

always be issues, pressure and hard decisions. If there is an open dialogue, these tensions can be diffused and we can move forward. When both sides are not communicating authentically, the rift widens instead of coming together. What role can we social workers play to encourage an authentic dialogue?

Changing Profile of Leadership in the Human Services

CEOs and Executive Directors Who Are Not Social Workers

Another major factor contributing to the crisis in our profession is the fact that 50% of New York City social service leaders will be retiring within a few years. Because of this considerable shift in workforce, business and legal professionals are sought out to fill leadership roles in social service organizations. Social workers are specifically and uniquely trained with the clinical skill set to execute the missions of

our organizations, however, the clinical skill set of social workers is no longer sufficient for organizational management.

There was a time, before managed care, accountability and OMIG, when a multi-dimensional business background was not necessary to effectively run our organizations. Today however, the current prototype for executive management requires leadership to have finance, business and legal proficiencies. In these turbulent economic times and ever-changing socio-political environment, both social work and business skills are necessary in the management of successful social service organizations. It has been said, “Budgeting and working with restricted grants and government contracts as a non-profit leader is like having 10 part-time jobs, with each employer designating which of your expenses your salary can be used to pay for.”

Gender Inequities and Stereotypes Affect Models of Leadership

Social service organizations have claimed that the reason leadership talent is sought outside of the profession is because it cannot be found within the sector. What is really being said is that qualified and desirable candidates can only be found if we increase the pool by seeking candidates from outside of the profession. In other words, they're drawn towards white men with traditional skill sets from the business and legal worlds.

According to the most recent Gallup pole data from 2006, 34% of men and 40% of women preferred a male boss, and 10% of men and 26% of women preferred a female boss; the remaining respondents of both genders held no preference. In other words, women and men have deeply instilled gender stereotypes. Leaders are thought to

be competitive, dominant, confident and to have a take-charge approach, and these are qualities more likely to be attributed to men than women. Gender roles typically assigned to women are incompatible with the current mental model of leadership which delegate men as the authorities of money, while women take care of souls. Women are assumed to be nice, accommodating and nurturing. It has been said of a woman in leadership, “You know you’re not a man, but you’re not a woman. You’re in the third category, you’re a woman boss.” This presents a specific set of challenges for female leadership.

Women make up 80% of the social work profession and only 20% are men. Yet, 80% of social work leaders are men – primarily white men. Salary inequities further the divide. Crain’s Magazine reported that in New York City not-for-profits where men earned \$100,000, women earned

significantly less at \$84,000. And for those with budgets of more than \$5 million, the top-paid men earned an average \$621,000, compared to \$401,000 for the top earning women.

Cultural overlays are at the core of these beliefs, and structures have been created that continue to sustain the dominant way of being. None of us are all-good or all-knowing, and we should learn to access other parts of ourselves to decide what we need to own and what we need to separate.

We must learn to see the big picture; it's not "either/or," but "both/and."

Preparing Social Workers to Lead Human Service Organizations

Most social workers, myself included, were promoted into leadership roles because of our exceptional clinical skill set. Therefore, most of us need help with the financial, legal and regulatory issues because we were not

taught or exposed to these fields in our training, or in the typical social work roles.

The clinical background is being increasingly undervalued and those who possess it are being bypassed for leadership roles within our organizations. As I mentioned earlier, what is truly needed is a blended skill set of both clinical and business expertise. This combination of wisdom gained by experience and practice, augmented with business and financial education, is essential to address the complex issues challenging present day social service organizations. These are the circumstances our leadership encounters every day.

In order for us to ensure that our organizations continue to be lead by social workers, we must adapt. We, as social workers, have not done our parts to change the course that has already begun. I was not informed, early in my career, about the need

for specific hard skills in order to function as an effective leader. All I wanted was to be a clinician and I was quite comfortable not knowing or acquiring these skills. So I continued to expand my knowledge and learn my craft with continuing education in family, group and couple therapies, and then in short and long-term therapies, and clinical supervision. This is what my supervisors and mentors advised, and this is why there has always been a split between clinicians and administrators.

Today's emerging leaders must remember our organizations' two goals. The first, obviously, is to serve our clients and the second is to stay in business. Therefore, the constellation of skills we social workers should develop must be expanded. As our world is constantly and drastically changing, our learning needs are also changing.

It is wise to cultivate an appreciation for the needs of the organization as a whole, and to have a curiosity about all roles within the organization. All positions have components one might find undesirable, or tasks which one is ill-equipped to perform, but you can still inform yourself to some degree. Combine your advanced child therapy and family therapy skills with tangible business skills: budgeting, finance, spreadsheets, business law, strategic planning, business ethics, auditing, corporate compliance and grant writing. In addition, subscribe to *Business Week*, *Harvard Law Review* and read the business section of the *New York Times*. Become proficient in both clinical and business matters to broaden your knowledge.

Dual degree programs are now being offered at several schools of social work. At NYU, students can earn an MSW/MPA at the Silver School of Social Work and The

Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service; the Columbia Schools of Social Work and Business grant an MSW/MBA. This newer model is exactly what is needed to fill the existing skill gap.

More schools of social work, professional associations and service organizations must promote the need for multi-dimensional leadership, and encourage social workers to expand their knowledge to include hard skills.

Female Executives: Challenges and Opportunities

Yet another split in our profession is created by the competition among women for positions of leadership. We, as women and as leaders in a male-dominated environment, may be hesitant in advocating for gender or racial equality out of the fear it may compromise our own personal success. This heightens the competition between us as women because we are all vying for the

same few spots. It causes a negative impact on our connection to other women in the lower levels of our organizations and lessens our potential for developing a support base.

When there are fewer women at the top, the message sent to younger women is that only a minor percentage of opportunity is available to them in the organization. All of this ultimately leads to fewer women and people of color in the pipeline for leadership. Another opportunity is missed to add diversity to our leadership, not instead of, but in addition to white men.

Heightened Visibility and Increased Vulnerability

That senior leadership roles held by women is still considered a novelty also leads to heightened visibility and vulnerability.

Although all leaders are subject to criticism and attacks, the vulnerability is exacerbated for women. Since women are underrepresented in leadership, they become

much more visible and receive more scrutiny. This intense inspection can add pressure to assimilate into the majority culture – a culture traditionally dominated by male values. Internalizing criticism not only enhances our vulnerability, but discourages women from bringing their best selves to the role. Self-doubt can sometimes compel women into becoming more accommodating, which causes them to stay with the status quo rather than following their instincts and offering a different perspective. The result is that we deny our organizations the benefits of changes that are so desperately needed.

The first step is seizing the opportunity to learn about ourselves by the increased vulnerability from increased visibility. The challenges proposed by these realities can drain our energy as female executives and cause us to be distant from other women who can empathize and be a source of

support. In order to effectively do our work, we must constantly examine ourselves, and then have the difficult and authentic conversations across gender and racial lines with our colleagues. Our conversations with each other expand our repertoires of responses, and we can witness and make note of how others are responding due to their physical and cultural packaging. As a result of this work, larger numbers of women and people of color will be able to assume positions of leadership and organizations will finally benefit from these diverse backgrounds and new styles of leadership.

Although I'm not a huge fan of Donald Trump, he captured my attention when he said the women on "The Apprentice" were excelling when they worked together without the men, but when men were added, they lost their voices and became more passive. I too have made this observation

throughout my professional journey. This is evident in meetings, courses I teach and groups I supervise; no matter how small the number of men, the dynamics change.

Adding to the gender dynamics at work between women and men is the fact that in some contexts, women require more external validation than men. Given the issues raised so far, it is not surprising to learn in order for women to be accepted in some leadership roles, they often need external endorsements. In some highly-competitive, masculinized environments, simply having ample leadership training or role related expertise does not guarantee a woman's success unless accompanied by a legitimization by an established leadership source. Sadly, even today, gender stereotypes often hinder the ability to see female executives' competence, so it is helpful and sometimes even necessary for a

highly-regarded male to vouch for their credibility.

Being Respected vs. Being Liked

Another important aspect of women's roles as social work leaders is what we need to do to be at our best. I have observed that many women have an overwhelming desire to be liked. On the path to becoming strong leaders, some will do anything and everything to be liked while striving for respect. This focus should be shifted towards optimum performance, which ultimately earns respect. A decisive, accountable and service oriented leader will earn more respect and approval than all attempts to be liked. Possessing emotional resolve and being authentic gains the confidence of one's peers and shows readiness to lead. Therefore priority should be on being respected, before being liked.

People will not only respect, but like you more if you're honest, consistent and

proficient. A deeply etched need to be liked is serious handicap to one's leadership skill.

An effective leader must have the ability to confront situations with varying degrees of conflict and negativity. These issues cannot get addressed and solutions won't be found when niceness takes precedence over realism and honesty. In coaching female executives, I have often spent a significant amount of time dealing with this issue.

Although it's a critical challenge, it can be improved, even if it does not completely disappear. One can learn to feel the fear and do it anyway. I assist female executives by helping them find the right tone, verbiage and guide them in using language that is strong, but still tolerable to them. We then rehearse, they practice being clear in their communication. It gives them an opportunity to think things through and prepare for all possible reactions. This preparation helps to reduce some of the stress of these difficult conversations. If this

is also a personal challenge of yours, you might want to find a coach to give you a psychological boost.

Coaching for Female Executives: A Case Scenario

Women have the potential to offer a leadership which is a balance of being demanding, fair, tough and yet empathetic.

To survive however, many female executives have adopted male personality traits. One female executive came to me for executive coaching after being sent to a professional boot camp titled: *Guerrilla War Strategies for Women in Leadership*. Her supervisors thought that she was not assertive enough and needed to learn these basics to perform. Part of what she was taught was to lower and project her voice.

The boot camp emphasized being tough. She did have an actual gain from the experience, it compelled her to reach out for appropriate help.

In my work with her, we focused on her authority and tasks, and identified obstacles to achieving her goals. Her weekly team meetings had a traditional masculine culture: extremely competitive, lots of posturing for power, and filled with sports lingo. We discussed how being the only woman in a group of men had caused her to lose her voice. She became what she described as “fuzzed over” and lobotomized. Other ways of describing this phenomenon I have heard are: becoming deskilled or non-rational, and experiencing a loss of problem-solving facilities. Although she always prepared, and sometimes even over-prepared, she said very little at the actual meetings, which led others to speak for her. Her contributions were unknown and her role was minimized. And, of course, her authority was usurped.

Our work together helped her to realize that deepening her voice and mimicking others

would not gain the respect she needed or help her to utilize her authority. Instead, we worked on helping her to be more decisive, accountable, and authentic, which, of course included using her natural voice. She began having one-on-one pre-meetings before the meetings. She started to recognize her male counterparts' humanity; they were spouses, fathers and grandfathers. Most of all, she began to communicate information about her work, to describe her ideas on joint projects, and even to share a few personal details about herself.

In the end, she gained her team members' respect and got to know them as individuals. The person with whom she experienced the most challenges became an ally after they discovered that they both shared a love for cats. I'm a huge proponent of pre-meetings, as many of these personal connections would not have happened at a regular meeting.

Cultural competency includes working successfully with people we might find to be obnoxious, as some of these individuals may hold very senior positions. She learned that she did not have to like everyone, but she needed to establish successful working relationships despite how she felt. Today, she is an effective and extremely successful leader.

Developing a More Measured Response to Criticism

The most important thing I learned and truly internalized while at the William Alanson White Institute, was that an individual in a group or organization is no longer just an individual. In other words, it's not about me, and this can make dealing with criticism much easier. We as women, who regularly experience criticism, need to develop a more measured response. Alternative explanations for criticism of our actions

should be thoroughly examined from an organizational lens, while keeping our integrity and self-esteem intact.

We also need to take a closer look at emotions and the part they play in how work gets done. It says a lot about how we take things in and make sense of them – the good, the bad and the ugly. It is important to recognize emotions and distinguish which ones lead to productive mentoring and collaboration, and which ones play a part in stereotyping and scapegoating. Learning how to managing emotions through honest conversation leads to good work and effective management.

The Role of Racial Diversity in Leading Social Service Organizations

People of color constitute more than half of the clients being served by our organizations, yet our industry has very few CEOs of color. Who better to articulate the

depth, intensity and perspective of diverse groups than a leader from that group who has lived the experience? This is not to say other leaders cannot provide credible leadership. Rather, it is to suggest that knowledge based on lived experience in a given culture creates the potential for bringing a unique perspective to leadership. These leaders' presence adds credibility to the organization and has extreme value to the community, the staff and clients from their group.

Both female and male leaders of color face additional challenges in leadership roles. However, men of color tend to fare a bit better than the women. While men of color may suffer from racial stereotyping, where people might report being afraid of them for example, they still receive the benefit of male privilege. *Catalyst*, the leading research and advisory organization working to advance women in business, conducts

research on all aspects of women's career advancement, and helps organizations to advance women and build inclusive work environments. According to *Catalyst's* findings, while white women frequently reference the "glass ceiling" as obstructing their advancement, women of color characterize their barriers as the "concrete ceiling" – one that is more dense, and less easily or frequently shattered.

Even the category, women of color does not represent a homogeneous group; it includes all women of the African Diaspora, Latinas, Asian and multiracial women. *Catalyst's* study found the darker the hue of the woman, the thicker the concrete ceiling.

The underpinnings of these barriers include stereotypes, visibility and scrutiny. These women's authority and credibility were constantly questioned and they described a lack of "fit" with the group. This double-

outsider status resulted in the exclusion from informal networks.

Catalyst likens the professional journey of women of color to a labyrinth. Webster's Dictionary defines a labyrinth as "an intricate, confusing combination of paths in which it is difficult to find one's way; a complicated or tortuous arrangement." Women of color report encountering very persistent and intractable negative race-based stereotypes. With their credibility and authority constantly in dispute, they have to prove themselves again and again. In her 1972 presidential campaign, Shirley Chisom, the first black female candidate for president, a very dark skinned woman referred to it as the twin jeopardy of race and sex which operates against women of color and unfortunately these stereotypes remain obstacles today.

Workplace diversity is important, but so is organizational culture. In fact, I would say that it is equally as important, and often organizational culture is not hospitable to women and people of color in leadership roles. This is why so many women and people of color are overlooked for promotions, opt out of leadership paths, or simply leave after a few years. Many who leave publicly claim it was for a better opportunity, but privately they admit to not feeling valued for who they were and what they brought to the table. If your organization does not value you, leave; there are far too many choices today to endure being undervalued or underpaid. We all know when people feel valued, welcomed and appreciated, they do a better job, plus, the outcome and productivity improves. It is no secret, people want to connect and make a difference.

Moving Forward: Today's Needs in Leadership

Change to More Collaborative and Relationship-Oriented Models of Leadership

In reviewing various organizational literature, the writers agree that in this increasingly-complex environment where organizations are struggling to survive, there is a need for leadership that is transformative, collaborative and relationship-oriented. These factors surface repeatedly in research studies that examine what enables women to lead effectively.

The ability and willingness to care for others, empathize, listen and search for collaborative solutions are also recurring themes. It is clear our organizations need to become more adaptive and responsive to the changing environment by becoming flatter, more flexible and more reliant on teams.

The consensus is that organizations need leaders who offer a new vision. This is good news for our organizations and good news for female leaders. So, despite the obvious need and research confirming the unique contributions women can make to our organizations, why is it so difficult for women to lead? One factor is our mental model for leadership. A charismatic, heroic male model is deeply embedded in our work culture. There is still very little acceptance for a model of leadership utilizing all the talents in an organization and valuing all perspectives. Social workers understand that change, whether individual, family or organizational, involves letting go of familiar ways of doing things. And we all resist change.

Develop an Understanding of Organizational Life

The concept of organizational life was introduced to me many years ago by Elma

Delham, a social worker with over 60 years of experience. I was later exposed to more aspects of organizational life at the William Alanson White Institute, such as organizational dynamics, roles, authority, posturing for power. Prior to Elma's mentorship and my education at the White Institute, I had no awareness of organizational life despite my extensive clinical training and practical experience.

Because of this unawareness and my lack of knowledge about organizational theory, I spent years taking organizational issues personally. It is necessary for social work leaders to understand organizational life in order to build strong partnerships and meet the needs of the organization as a whole.

Part of adequately assessing an organization and improving effectiveness requires thinking about power, splitting, boundaries, authority, roles and tasks. If you are challenged by these concepts, a work shop on leadership and or coaching can help.

Forge Authentic Relationships

It will take all of us, and in our combined efforts to establish more authentic relationships, we can collectively make our organizations and our profession a place where all people can contribute to their full potential. It's about fully utilizing the talents of women and men, people of color and white people, LGBTQ and straight, old and young, physically challenged and able bodied. We need to draw and benefit from all of the talent available to us. Splitting in the form of homophobia, sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, racism, and all of the "isms", invalidates the uniqueness, and nullifies the experience and vision available in a truly diverse executive suite. Our organizations are left with a less-than-ideal vision for providing leadership and services because of this splitting.

Equipping ourselves with two vital pieces of

knowledge will enable us to have truly authentic relationships. The first is a genuine understanding of the role oppression plays in people's lives. The second is a sincere appreciation of privilege: what privilege is, who it impacts and how it permeates our culture in ways that are often difficult to recognize and even harder to understand. Therefore, to learn and fully understand these issues, we must accept that we don't know what we don't know. To get that understanding, we must first be willing to learn about issues that may not be a part of our personal experience. Seek out workshops/seminars that will help you to learn what these issues are and gain experience in speaking authentically about the impact of difference on you and your organization.

Additionally, if you "see something, say something"; it will be heard more objectively if the issue is not your own.

When I, a straight woman of color, discuss

LGBTQ issues or bilingual representation, it has greater impact.

Engage in Leadership Development and Lead From Where You Are

In order to have cross-racial and cross-cultural dialogue, training is key. A more diverse executive suite means more role models and opportunities to help others achieve their professional goals. But most importantly, it means an opportunity to bring new aspects of leadership into our profession and impact our ability to grow leaders from within our organizations and within the profession. I don't agree with the saying: "change starts at the top." While change supported from the top is more likely to be lasting, I believe change can and must begin where it is needed. In other words, change your part of the world.

We must remember, while we have opened some doors for women and people of color

to attain senior level executive positions, those doors opened into a predominantly white male leadership world. These younger women and people of color need our help to succeed and in admitting others in larger numbers. As seasoned leaders, it is our job to prepare and support them.

Commit to Professional Support and Mentoring

While I have not done a formal research study, I am struck by an observation I recently heard: to be happy in an organization, one needs friends and at least one mentor or rabbi. This can be doubly so for people of color who, like women in leadership, may find their workplace cultures to be unreceptive or at the very least, uncomfortable. In subtle ways, women and people of color can feel devalued. As leaders, we should not be surprised when they seek out more supportive environments. The lesson is

simple; prohibition is not the only way to exclude. There are many inconspicuous, yet effective methods that can exclude people; some examples include excluding someone from work that matters, treating someone as though she or he is invisible – even when they are present, and marginalizing a person’s contribution. As I reflect back on my career, I could have never survived without the support of my “personal board of director” e.g. my CEOs, mentors and coaches. It is challenging to be an “only” or one of a few. When we are, we need a place to get constructive feedback and emotional support. I’ve called it my “You Go Girl” group, and I could not have survived without it. An email, a few encouraging words on a voicemail, or a lunch or dinner, depending on the need. They all go a long way.

I’ve trained thousands of MSW interns over my career. Recently during an orientation, for the first time, I expanded the list of

requirements for success as a social worker to include hard skills. Younger leaders also have a responsibility, an obligation, to provide support and leadership to the generation behind them.

If you're a woman, a trailblazer who has climbed her way to top, be sure you leave signs for others behind you to follow and support them in their travels. Just because you had to agonizingly fight your way to the top, does not mean others in your organization should have to also; allow them to chart new paths instead of experiencing the same unnecessary obstacles. I have often said to myself: 'I do this so no other woman or person of color should have to do it again.' Without a doubt there is always a woman behind you – someone who is facing similar road blocks in her path , and the same challenges you have already conquered. Encourage these women to form a “personal board of directors” and

volunteer yourself as a member. You may even want to become the chair of such a “personal board” for a special someone – perhaps your replacement. Since your performance has been exceptional, you may need to groom two or three people to replace you.

There is lots of work to be done and it starts with us, as women, increasing our support for each other. For the younger women, you must continue to span the generations as older leaders are retiring with a wealth of wisdom. Based on what I witness daily, I believe a larger number of women and people of color in leadership roles within our profession is not only possible, but can be expected.

With more than three decades of every aspect of social work experience behind me, I look at those who have gone before me, as well as those that follow, for motivation and

assurance. Seasoned social workers are an untapped resource. Our achievements could be used to support, develop and promote more social workers – especially younger women and people of color into leadership roles within our profession. They are the future!

“If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.” **Margaret Mead**

Appendix A: Three Suggestions of How You Can Improve Our Profession

1. Read *Closing the Leadership Gap* by Marie Wilson, the founder of “Take Our Daughters to Work Day,” published in 2010. It is about using all of the talents of women and men.

2. Take the Undoing Racism Workshop that is offered by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. It changed my life and my practice.
3. Develop a close and authentic cross-cultural relationship. It will help you to expand your life and your practice.

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