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Commentary

Let's Get Free: Social Work and the Movement for Black Lives

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Throughout its history, social work has shaped and been shaped by social movements. What might #BlackLivesMatter mean for 21st century social work and what might social work mean for the Movement? This paper describes the Movement and applies insights from Young's 1965 essay "Civil Rights and a Militant Profession" to identify a set of questions for social workers to explore. These include questions about making alliances and contributing competencies, overcoming apathy, misconceptions and exploitation, and fulfilling the obligations of clinical practice for social justice.

> In 1968, our ancestor Whitney Young Jr., social worker and Civil Rights leader, wrote that, The winds of change in this country and around the world are reaching tornado proportions. The poor, the disinherited, the disadvantaged, the nameless, the faceless are saying in no unmistakable language that they are completely aware of the gap between their status in life and the status of the large majority of people . . . They recognize that there is nothing innate or congenital about them as human beings that makes inevitable the tragic day-to-day mid-night they experience . . . this large group of disinherited around the world and in our own country, are not only insisting on change, they are determined to participate in that change process, and in fact, to have a role in the shaping of their own destiny.

These words as meaningful for the moment in which we are living as they were in 1968. A moment where the fantasy of a "post-racial" America has collided violently with the reality of a "post-Ferguson" America. A moment

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when, in the hearts and minds of many, places like Ferguson, Cleveland, and Baltimore approach the emotional and historical significance of a Birmingham, Montgomery, or Selma. A moment when police practices too long ignored are being actively tried in the court of public opinion and hotly debated in the halls of power and homes of citizens. A moment where the people have once again risen up across the country to puncture indifference, interrupt the regularly scheduled programming, and disrupt business as usual.

Today, social work finds itself once again confronted with the opportunities, the potential obstacles, and the obligations presented by a social movement. What will future generations say about how our profession responded to this moment? What might the "Movement for Black Lives" mean for social work, and what might social work mean for the Movement? As a student of the Movement I've pondered these questions and others and have learned a great deal. I hope that sharing some of what I've learned will prove useful to you as well. I want to first share with you my understanding of what the Movement is and the difference it is making. I then want to draw on some observations made by Whitney Young, Jr. 50 years ago to frame a few questions as we consider how social work might respond to the Movement as it enters its next phase.

So what is the Movement for Black Lives? I would define it as the latest stage of a multigenerational marathon for freedom. This marathon has endured since Europeans first started kidnapping Africans for uncompensated labor. This stage emerged among the agony and outrage at the failure to convict George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin and accelerated as Ferguson residents faced off against paramilitary police forces after the killing of Mike Brown. It is a Movement that radiates from a center full of those directly impacted by state-enacted and enabled violence, out to organizations and individuals at the grassroots who have rallied to aid them. It radiates further to embrace those whom within their spheres of influence in politics, culture, academia, and business have been moved to fight for Black lives. And beyond this, the Movement is embodied in everyday men, women and children who are demonstrating in their own ways that Black Lives Matter. It is a Movement characterized by being (a) focused and multi-faceted; (b) (social) media-savvy; (c) leader-full not leaderless; (d) unapologetically Black; (e) intersectional; (f) multiracial; and increasingly (g) international.

FOCUSED AND MULTI-FACETED

One of the things that we sometimes hear, particularly from those expressing irritation with having their lives interrupted by protests is, "What Do They Want?" If we listen, demonstrators have been telling us for some time. Since the outset, protest has been recognized as no more than one method in

achieving a clear and concrete political agenda. This agenda includes criminal justice reforms like national standards on police use of force and addressing bias and profiling, training in these standards, tying Federal funding to meeting them, and increased Department of Justice investigation and civil rights enforcement. The agenda also includes increasing accountability through meaningful civilian oversight and public scrutiny informed by better data collection, analysis, reporting and accessibility. Activists are taking on the urgent need for police demilitarization dramatized by the images of people in Ferguson facing down tear-gas, armored vehicles and automatic weapons (Lopez, 2015). Beyond policing, the Movement is confronting the systemic violence of mass-criminalization, mass-incarceration, and mass-detention and deportation (Garza, 2014).

The Movement also recognizes that violence enacted or enabled by the state is not just a criminal justice issue. Its agenda addresses the violence of segregating people into impoverished communities, the violence of subjecting them to stagnant wages, unemployment and underemployment, the violence of poorly funded education, health and social service systems, the violence of exposing human beings to environments not fit for habitation and the violence of then displacing those same communities for profit through gentrification (Declaration Project, 2015). In fact, activists understand that these issues are all related, that there is no public safety or criminal justice without social justice. They are demanding a shift in priorities by government at all levels from spending on policing and prisons to spending on people (Griggs et al., 2015). They have embraced the struggle for a living wage and equal pay for equal work. The Black Youth Project 100, based in Chicago, has joined forces with the Fight for $15 Campaign and the organization Atlanta Women for Equality recently organized a Black Women's Equal Pay Day to draw attention to the fact that Black women earn 64 cents to every dollar earned by a White man (Griggs et al., 2015; Kaufman, 2015). Another example is the medical student-led White Coats for Black Lives that works to mobilize medical professionals to promote racial equity (Workneh, 2014). This group has recently endorsed the #TenOne action by Students for a National Health Program promoting Medicare for all.

It's important to note that the Movement is not just making demands but also organizing to meet needs. Efforts like Ferguson Response Network's Books and Breakfast Program that combines promoting nutrition with encouraging political education. Books and Breakfast, which has spread across the country, provides a nutritious breakfast for kids of color, books featuring characters that look like them, and book clubs for adults to raise consciousness and strategize for change (Ferguson Response Network, n.d.). Their first book club focused on Michelle Alexander's "The New Jim Crow" (Alexander, 2012). Hands Up United, another Ferguson-based organization, has initiated a Youth Tech Impact program that trains youth of color in computer coding and website development to serve local businesses (Hands Up United, 2015a). Black

Lives Matter-Charleston is promoting civic engagement through establishing liberation schools under the banner #BlackMindsMatter-Afrocentric Political Education and is working to register 5,000 new voters through their #YourTimeisUp-Political Mobilization campaign (Goodman, 2015).

(SOCIAL) MEDIA-SAVVY

The Movement has also demonstrated what a 21st century civil rights struggle can look like through masterful use of social media. Noteworthy examples include social media activists like Johnetta Elzie and DeRay McKesson who were profiled in the *New York Times Magazine* this year (Kang, 2015). They have been Movement fixtures since hours after the Ferguson Uprising began focused on providing a peoples narrative to counter profit-driven media's version of events. This has included nearly constant travel and on-the-ground tracking of police violence and resistance to it. They publish the award-winning, "This is the Movement" newsletter and manage the "We the Protestors" website, both of which serve as hubs for Movement news, information, and resource sharing. Johnetta Elzie is currently focused on two projects, Mapping Police Violence, which collects data on police killings, and Check the Police, a growing database of police union contracts and other law enforcement-related documents. DeRay McKesson boasts nearly 200,000 Twitter followers, bearing passionate witness to the Movement 140 characters at a time. He has also leveraged his social media popularity to become a regular guest on mainstream media shows, jousting with poorly informed pundits and exposing media bias. Although social media is making a difference, activists wisely recognize that change takes more than a cleverly worded hashtag or getting a lot of "Likes" on a Facebook post. As some have said, social media is "an avenue, not a destination." They understand that there is no substitute for real people coming together in the real world (Griggs et al., 2015).

LEADER-*FULL*

In spite of the clearly organized and purposeful work I've already described, the Movement has been dogged by the characterization that it is leaderless. Sometimes this is offered as a compliment, sometimes as criticism. In both cases, this is inaccurate. The Movement has moved on from traditional models of civil rights organizing centered on charismatic individuals who are usually straight, cis-gender male, and Christian. Many are animated by the spirit and methods of Civil Rights matriarch Ella Baker and her protégés' the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC; F. C. Harris, 2015; Ransby, 2015). The Movement is focused is on building leaders who bring out the leadership ability in others. Organizations like the Million Hoodies

Movement for Justice make leadership development, based in participatory democracy, central to their missions. As some activists have put it, the focus is on "low ego, high impact" leadership. They say that the Movement is not leaderless but leader-full.

Full of leaders like Patrice Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi whose Twitter hashtag "BlackLivesMatter" not only captured the mood of a movement but has grown over the past 2 years into an international network of 26 chapters and dozens of grass roots organizations. Patrice Cullors works for the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and founded Dignity and Power Now, a group that advocates for incarcerated people and their families in Los Angeles. Alicia Garza is the special projects director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. And, Opal Tometi serves as the executive director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (Griggs et al., 2015).

Full of leaders like Brittany Packnett, a colleague of Ferguson activists Johnetta Elzie and DeRay McKesson and an administrator for Teach for America. She was appointed to both President Obama's commission on 21st century policing and Missouri Governor Jay Nixon's Ferguson Commission (Griggs et al., 2015).

Full of leaders like Ashely Yates, who quit her job in merchandizing to focus on organizing in Ferguson. She became a co-founder of Millennial Activists United, a grassroots organization dedicated to mobilizing youth of color. Yates helped organize "Ferguson October: Weekend of Resistance" and was one of a group of activists who met with President Obama at the White House in December. Yates is also helping lead the #SayHerName, campaign that is pushing for a gender inclusive approach to police violence (Griggs et al., 2015).

Full of leaders like Charlene Carruthors, a social worker and Chicago native who is the national director of Black Youth Project 100. Black Youth Project 100 published the "Agenda to Keep Us Safe,", a blue print for criminal justice reform focused on youth. Carruthors has also been active in the #SayHerName campaign and started #BlackWorkMatters too, aligned with the Fight for $15 minimum wage movement (Griggs et al., 2015).

UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK

One of the slogans of Black Youth Project 100 is "unapologetically Black." This leader-full Movement is full of folks who have rejected the politics of respectability that shifts responsibility for White supremacy onto Black "behavior." People are saying in no uncertain terms that Black dignity and freedom do not depend on proving that we are the equals of White people, achieving White acceptance or approval, or maintaining White comfort. The Movement is animated by a politics of love; Black people loving themselves and each other unconditionally. As DeRay McKesson often puts it, "I love my Blackness. And yours" (Griggs et al., 2015).

INTERSECTIONAL

This unapologetically Black Movement is also expanding the boundaries of the freedom struggle through intersectional analysis and organizing. Commonly attributed to critical race theorist and legal scholar Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, intersectionality recognizes that White supremacy impacts people at the points where race meets multiple identities. Alicia Garza, one of the co-founders of #BlackLivesMatter, recently commented that "Intersectional politics (and practice) is not just theoretical – it is the lifeline upon which we depend for our collective liberation" (Garza, 2015). In her seminal essay "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement" Garza emphasized that:

> Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within some Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement. (2014, para. 10)

The insistence that we #SayHerName, that we are as familiar with the lives and deaths of Black cis and trans women and girls as we are with Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, or Eric Garner is one of example how the Movement is practicing intersectionality. Women and girls like Mya Hall, a transgender woman killed by National Security Agency police after taking a wrong turn and crashing into a security gate and police cruiser, Natasha McKenna, who died after she was TASERed four times even though she was in handcuffs, shackles and a mask, or Aiyana Stanley-Jones, a 7-year-old shot to death in her sleep during a police raid (Crenshaw & Ritchie, 2015).

MULTI-RACIAL

As unapologetically Black as it is, the Movement is also thoroughly multi-racial. It has mobilized people across the color-line to resist White supremacy not only under Black leadership, but also in the context of their own communities. One example is the organization *Showing Up for Racial Justice*. *Showing Up for Racial Justice*, a national network that organizes White people, has initiated a door knocking campaign in predominantly White neighborhoods. Participants are engaging residents in dialogue about racism and encouraging them to put BlackLivesMatter signs in their yards and

windows (Hamlin, 2015). Groups like *Asians4BlackLives* have called for a "Model Minority Mutiny", joining in multi-racial direct actions with #BlackLivesMatter and campaigning within Asian American communities about anti-Black racism and why the Movement matters to their own liberation (Wong, 2015). During the Martin Luther King holiday weekend this year, a multiracial team of non-Black demonstrators attempted to shut down interstate 93 outside of Boston in solidarity with Ferguson activists. Twenty-niine people were arrested that morning (I-93 Demonstrators, 2015). Alhough some may disagree with the method, the message was powerful: People of all colors should be willing to put themselves on the line to demonstrate that Black lives matter.

INTERNATIONAL

The Movement has not only inspired participation across the color-line, but across countries as well. People in the streets from Japan to Germany, from Australia to India last summer brought home the message that the "World is Watching" (McKay, 2014). Palestinians in Gaza tweeted messages of solidarity and advice for how to deal with tear gas to Ferguson protestors (Baker, 2014). Participants at the United Nations Climate Summit staged a "die-in" and chanted "I can't breathe" (Klein, 2014). And #BlackLivesMatter chapters have sprouted up in both Canada and Ghana (Khan, 2015).

The Movement is returning the favor through fighting for Black lives across borders and making common cause with other communities facing state violence. A Ferguson Solidarity Tour visited communities throughout the United Kingdom to raise awareness about policing abuses (Hing, January 2015). A delegation of Movement leaders visited the occupied territories in Palestine during January (Khan, 2015) and more recently 1,000 Black intellectuals and activists signed a letter of support for Palestinian liberation in solidarity with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (Naasel, 2015). The Florida-based organization Dream Defenders also hosted members of Ethiopian Israeli communities to discuss common experiences of racially biased policing (Dream Defenders, 2015) and met with students in Mexico regarding the impact of the War on Drugs and securing justice for lives lost to it (Hands Up United, 2015b). And as the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal retroactively removed citizenship from an estimated 250,000 Haitian immigrants, rendering them stateless, the Movement mobilized in the Haitian's defense. The Black Immigration Network organized a Week of Action in late July of 2015 to raise awareness about this policy and the possibility for forced, mass-deportation it represented (Khan, 2015).

WHAT DIFFERENCE IS THE MOVEMENT MAKING?

As we enter the second year since Ferguson caught the world's attention, many of us are taking stock of what has been accomplished. While much remains to

be done, I observe the Movement making a difference in at least three areas: (a) discourse and culture, (b) public opinion, and (c) politics and policy.

DISCOURSE AND CULTURE

Activists have used every means at their disposal to hold public attention, sounding a constant alarm about the systemic nature of anti-Black violence, while ensuring that each life lost is not reduced to a mere statistic. They keep calling on America to say his name, say her name. Relentless attention, tireless documentation, and demonstrations have made the racial politics of public safety a near inescapable subject of debate. "Black Lives Matter" has traveled from Twitter to the mainstream of public discourse about race and racism in America. And for people of all colors, willingness to utter this phrase without qualification has become a measure of commitment to racial justice.

The final words of far too many have entered the global lexicon of protest chants. "I Can't Breathe" will never sound quite the same way again. The iconography of indignation has been everywhere: images of the St. Louis Rams (Yaniv & Molinet, 2014 and the cast of the film "Selma" with their hands up (King, 2014), graffiti inspired by "The Hunger Games" in St. Louis "IF WE BURN, YOU BURN WITH US" (Bates, 2014), a young woman burning sage grass near a police line in Baltimore (Dastigar, 2015), bare-chested Black women shutting down the Financial District in San Francisco (Rivas, 2015), and "BLACKLIVESMATTER" scrawled in red paint across monuments to the Confederacy throughout the South (Holley, 2015a).

The Movement has also inspired artistic expression in every medium. The iconic image of Bree Newsome taking down the Confederate flag has been transformed into everything from Wonder Woman to an angel of God (Moreno, 2015). Prince's beautiful ballad "Baltimore" (Holley, 2015b), Kendrick Lamar's anthem "We Gonna Be Alright" (A. Harris, 2015), J. Cole's anguished "Be Free" (Grossman, 2014), and Janelle Monáe's recent "Hell You Talmbout" (Weatherby, 2015) have reminded us what movement music can sound like. Even the Russian rock group Pussy Riot was moved to honor Eric Garner in song (Harding, 2015). And protest has even showed up in the plots of television shows like "Law and Order SVU" (Grant, 2013) and "Scandal"(VanDerWerff, 2015).

PUBLIC OPINION

Perhaps the impact of the Movement on discourse and culture has contributed to shifts in public opinion as well. As recently reported in the *Washington Post*, 60% of those polled say the nation needs to continue making changes to give Blacks and Whites equal rights (Clement, 2015). In a society that not too long ago was debating whether it was "post-racial", this is a significant development. Not only are a majority acknowledging that anti-Black racism

remains a problem, but saying the Nation needs to do something about it. Doing something about anti-Black racism is an issue of politics and policy.

POLITICS AND POLICY

This Movement has proven impossible for the political classes to ignore. As mentioned earlier, some activists went straight from the streets to the Oval Office, meeting with President Obama personally and earning appointments to his Commission on 21st century policing (Griggs et al., 2015). It would be fair to say that the President has spoken more forcefully about racial justice since the Ferguson Uprising than during his entire Presidency. He recently told National Public Radio that he feels "a great urgency" to address racial justice issues during his remaining days in office (Neuman, 2015). In December 2014, Hillary Clinton became one of the highest profile politicians to invoke the phrase "Black Lives Matter" during an awards speech in New York (Colvin, 2014). And one of her major policy addresses after announcing her candidacy for President focused on issues of race and the criminal justice system (Bouie, 2015).

Some observers believe that when the Movement for Black Lives took over the stage at the Netroots Nation conference in July and challenged candidates Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley to specify a policy agenda for racial justice, it marked a pivotal moment not only in Movement history but also Presidential politics (Lind & Matthews, 2015). The incident re-ignited a long-standing debate about the relationship between racial justice and economic justice on the national stage (Reed, 2015). It has also stimulated vital, if painful conversations on the Left about racism among White liberals and progressives (Friedersdorf, 2015). That the Sanders campaign recently invited Black Lives Matter to open a gathering in Los Angeles (Zhang & Har, 2015) and has released a specific racial justice agenda are encouraging signs (Fang, 2015). Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has commented that Black Lives Matter is "not just a slogan . . . This should be a guiding principle" (CBSDC/Associated Press, 2015) and recently met personally with activists in New Hampshire after they were denied entry to a campaign event by the Secret Service (Smith, 2015). Whether rhetoric will translate into reality remains to be seen. However, the Movement has demonstrated that there is potential for the 2016 election to become a national referendum on racial justice and equity.

In the meantime, we can take heart from progress made at the state level. According to an analysis by the Associated Press, 24 states have passed about 40 new measures related to policing accountability through body-worn cameras, independent investigations of use of force cases and police demilitarization (Lieb, 2015). In New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo recently announced that police use of force cases will be investigated through the Attorney General's office (Remnick, 2015) Whereas in California, Governor Jerry Brown just signed bills abolishing the use of grand juries in police-use-of-force cases

and protecting the right of citizens to film the police (Siders, 2015) And of course we cannot forget the scenes of jubilation that greeted the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of state government in South Carolina (McCrummen & Izadi, 2015). This Movement is making a difference!

As we enter the second year of the post-Ferguson era, what role will social work play in the difference the Movement is making? 50 years ago, in an essay entitled "Civil Rights and a Militant Profession" Whitney Young Jr. addressed social workers facing a similar moment of decision (1965). 1965 was a year the nation and the profession witnessed the assassination of Malcolm X, Bloody Sunday, the Selma to Montgomery March, the Voting Rights Act and the Watts rebellion. As one who stood astride both social work and the Civil Rights Movement, Whitney Young Jr. occupied a privileged position to comment on how the profession should respond. A former dean of Atlanta University's School of Social Work, Young served as Executive Director of the National Urban League from 1960 to 1971 (National Association of Social Workers, n.d.). This role also made him one of the "Big Six" Civil Rights leaders including James Farmer, of the Congress of Racial Equality; Martin Luther King, Jr., of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; John Lewis and later Stokely Carmichael, of the SNCC; A. Philip Randolph, of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and Roy Wilkins, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Young's first observation was that with the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, social work had gained a powerful set of allies in achieving objectives long held by the profession. He noted that the Movement was having a potent effect on public opinion that could translate into not only civil rights legislation but political will to tackle endemic social inequities, particularly poverty (1965). The Movement for Black Lives presents social work with a similar opportunity. How might we build alliances with grassroots activists and organizations and strengthen those we already have to achieve common goals for criminal justice, social justice and social welfare? What might a social work policy agenda and social work activism for Black Lives look like?

Young also emphasized that as the Movement shifted from defeating Jim Crow to addressing the social welfare impact of centuries of White supremacy, social workers could offer critical leadership and clinical competencies (1965). We know that the Movement for Black Lives is not just about making demands, but mobilizing to meet needs. What are the competencies that social workers could offer to help these efforts succeed? What competencies might require additional attention in the education and training of social workers to prepare them to contribute to the Movement?

A few weeks ago, our colleagues in the legal profession dedicated an entire conference to discuss similar questions. The Conference was called #Law4BlackLives. In July of 2015, our colleagues in the legal profession sponsored by the Center for Constitutional Rights, participants explored supporting the Movement through contributing legal skills related to defending

the civil rights of protesters, drafting transformative local and federal policy and advancing innovative international human rights advocacy strategies (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2015).

Although the Civil Rights Movement offered opportunities, Young warned that both social work and the Movement faced three powerful enemies in their pursuit of common goals. These enemies included apathy, misconceptions, and exploitation (1965).

In terms of apathy, Young commented that the people who had not yet been moved by the Movement, when combined with their lack of "familiarity" with the problems needing to be solved and "selfishness" to do anything about them, represented one of the biggest obstacles. Although we can see that the Movement for Black Lives is making a difference, there are still many who remain unmoved. The same *Washington Post* poll that found 60% of respondents saying America needed to do more to promote equality between Blacks and Whites also found 37% who believed enough has already been done (Clement, 2015). How might social workers help the Movement to transform apathy into empathy and empathy into action to achieve shared goals?

In addition to apathy, Young remarked that long standing myths about why Black people live under inhuman conditions in the wealthiest nation on earth were an enemy of change. He particularly emphasized the tendency to view the term *Negro* as synonymous with *crime* and the need to remind America that "no race has a monopoly on morality." Some of commentary about the Movement for Black Lives and the conditions it is trying to change has reminded us these myths remain potent in spite of the evidence. The ease with which the term *thug* was applied to protestors by Blacks and Whites alike during the Baltimore Uprising provided one such shameful reminder.

Social workers know that the condition of too many Black Americans cannot be explained as simply defects of character or culture. Analysis by the Brookings Institute has recently showed that even when Blacks follow what some refer to as the "sequence of success" (graduating from high school, full-time employment or having a partner who has it, and having children while married and after 21) their social mobility is less than Whites (Gold, Rodrigue, & Reeves, 2015). A wealth of corrective scholarship, journalism, and personal testimony has emerged over the past year to inform the public about the realities behind uprisings in under-resourced and over-policed parts of America. This itself a laudable legacy of the Movement. How might social workers collaborate with Movement activists to engage in myth-busting about the realities of White supremacy in the 21st century and its impact on Black lives?

In addition to apathy and misconceptions, Young challenged the profession to recognize that just as some are burdened by injustice, others benefit from it through exploitation (1965). This was crucial because a major obstacle to the success of the Civil Rights Movement was opposition from those with a vested, and often financial interest in maintaining the status quo. The racial-profiling-for profit scheme that the Department of Justice investigation

exposed in Ferguson provided a dramatic example of oppression motivated by money. From civil forfeiture to money bail, a much needed debate about what goes wrong when criminal justice is used for fundraising is another difference the Movement has made. How might social workers collaborate with Movement activists in analyzing and exposing the interests with a stake in perpetuating structural racism, understanding their tactics, and effectively countering them?

Beyond encouraging the profession to seize the opportunities presented by the Civil Rights Movement and effectively overcome obstacles to success, Young emphasized that there were obligations social workers must fulfill. He particularly addressed clinical social workers, whose everyday duties might provide a rationale for avoiding activism. Young challenged clinical social workers to meet the obligation of being "catalysts" of social change and not just providers of social services. He wrote,

> I hope that every social worker in America will spread the doctrine of social protest to every person in poverty . . . The social worker must plant the seed of change and indignation in every citizen suffering from want. The social worker who is not a catalyst is a failure and the social worker who does not urge reform will not be a catalytic agent. (Young, 1965, p. 48)

How might social workers bring the Movement for Black Lives into our everyday practice with people in need? How might this even transform the way we do our work? What might spreading "the doctrine of social protest" and planting "the seed of change and indignation" look like? And where those seeds are already sown, how might we nurture, encourage, and safeguard their growth?

Related to urging clinical social workers to "be a catalytic agent," Young suggested that making such efforts would remind America what social work is really about. Social workers working for social change are fulfilling what Young considered a "sacred" obligation of the helping relationship. He wrote, "Just as the doctor must inspire the sick . . . with the will to live, just as an attorney must imbue a defendant with the hope of freedom, so must the social worker implant in the minds of the poor the gospel of liberty from alienation and of freedom from want (Young, 1965, pp. 48–49)." Perhaps the profession's response to the Movement for Black Lives is an opportunity for social work to remind America who we are, that social justice is central to our mission.

Of course, it's important to note that there have been social workers on the front-lines of the Movement since the beginning. Social workers from Ferguson to New York, Baltimore to Charleston have been seizing the opportunities, overcoming the obstacles and fulfilling the obligations of the moment. It's worth considering how we ensure that the profession is able to learn from them and those who will hopefully join them. How do we capture the practical knowledge being gained by our colleagues in the struggle, share and apply it widely, and catalogue it for posterity?

In closing I'd like offer the words of a contemporary and colleague of Whitney Young Jr., Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I believe they capture the promise of the Movement for America and perhaps for social work itself:

> Today's dissenters tell the complacent majority that the time has come when further evasion of social responsibility in a turbulent world will court disaster and death. America has not yet changed because so many think it need not change, but this is the illusion of the damned. America must change because . . . black citizens will no longer live supinely in a wretched past. They have left the valley of despair; they have found strength in struggle; and whether they live or die, they will never crawl or retreat again. Joined by white allies, they will shake the prison walls until they fall. (King, 2003)

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