



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WELFARE NORTH AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2020—PART 1

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hello Everyone,

We hope that this newsletter finds you safe and healthy as we experience the global pandemic of the novel coronavirus. These past months are the 2020 version of lessons learned the hard way. Not having institutional memory from individuals who lived through the 1918 Spanish flu, we look to science for direction and advice. Much of today's business, organizations, and relationships are surviving by virtue of technology that was not available in 1918.

The SWESD Conference scheduled for June 26th through July 1st, 2020 has been postponed until November 5th- 8th, in Rimini Italy. We will continue to look forward to the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development and anticipate exciting information and opportunities to meet colleagues and friends. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Conference scheduled for Calgary Canada, July 2020 will be held remotely thanks to technology.

Our ICSW-US Board members have been working steadily to develop our Conference Presentation "Ensuring Human Dignity and Rights of Wrongfully

Incarcerated African American Males in the US". Several of our members are preparing and examining this timely topic from various perspectives. Our plans will include making our presentation at a venue here in the US as well. We are pleased that our abstract was approved by the International Scientific Committee related to the Conference theme "Promoting Human Relationships: Bridging the Future" for inclusion at the Rimini Conference. Our topic has turned even more vital as the Covid-19 pandemic has hit hard on jail and prison populations. The ramifications of wrongful incarceration take on an even more critical impact for the incarcerated innocent and their families.

As the Covid-19 has now surpassed 100 thousand deaths here in the United States, the impact has given all of us pause as we consider how "normal life" will never be the same as it was 6 short months ago and may never be the same again. Each of our ICSW-US board members will share in this issue, some of our reflections of living with the Covid-19 virus and our thoughts about the future.

As always, we thank our loyal supporters, benefactors, and partners. Without your

financial and in-kind contributions, we would not be able to work effectively to meet our goals, work that is so vital.

Patricia Martin-O'Meally, MSW, LICSW, CPM

Chairperson, International Council on Social Welfare – US Committee

**Don't Miss Dr. Zeleney's
article in**

Summer 2020 -Part 2

**Have a Safe
and Happy
Summer!**

Joyce A Higashi, President,
North American and Caribbean
Region

Saffrey Brown, VP, North
American Caribbean Region

Patricia Martin-O'Meally,
MSW, LICSW, CPM, Chair

Dr. Cudore Snell, Treasurer

Helen Whetzel, Secretary

Robert Arnold

Dr. Bernice Harper

Dr. M.C. Hokenstad

LTC Michele Matthews

Our Mission

In keeping with the mission set forth by the International Council of Social Welfare, the U.S. Council is committed to the advancement of social development, social welfare and social justice. Our priorities include subjects such as food insecurity and improving the nutrition of children and the elderly, reducing poverty, improving education and promoting affordable house. The U.S. Council is also involved in issues relating to economic development, both in the U.S. and around the world, social justice and encouraging community participation.

THE CORONAVIRUS: IT'S COMPONENT
PARTS AND IMPACT
BY: BERNICE CATHERINE HARPER, MSW,
MSc. PH, LLD

INTRODUCTION

This presentation will involve the following three areas: (1) Brief personal historical perspectives related to pandemics (2) My personal involvement with Pandemics and (3) The Coronavirus, Covid-19, and spirituality.

BRIEF PERSONAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Everything on God's given earth has a beginning, a middle and an ending. The past, present and the future are connected. In 1918, my family consisted of 4 siblings and parents. They lived in Covington, Virginia, a small town in the foothills of the beautiful Alleghany mountains. The family size eventually included 12 children. The ones born closest to the Flu of 1918 all lived to be in their nineties and the second oldest, born in 1913, lived to be 104, dying in 2017. They never talked about the Flu of 1918. I marveled at the fact that the family came through the pandemic of 1918 as we experience the novel Coronavirus, and Covid-19.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH PANDEMICS

At the age of 8, I stated that I wanted to be a Missionary to Africa. My siblings wanted to know where is Africa. I said, "I do not know but that is where I want to go". I did not get to Africa until 1996 as part of a Western Hospice Tour. I gave a seminar on "Coping with Death and Dying", visited hospices in South Africa and Zimbabwe including a home visit and visits to other health care facilities. At that time HIV/AIDS was an epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa and by 2001 it had become pandemic with some 8,500 individuals dying daily. They cried out, "Africa is becoming a graveyard." A group of hospices in the United States of America decided we had to do something. There was "No time for crying and wringing our hands." I became the President of

the Foundation for Hospices in Sub-Saharan Africa. Millions of dollars were raised to help the hospices care for the dying and the members of the families. The Organization is still operative, with some 85 hospices in 31 cities partnering with some 10 countries in Africa as well as other countries. It is now called Global Partners in Care.

When I arrived in Africa, I learned that the hospices in Africa were utilizing my book, *Death: The Coping Mechanism of the Health Professional*, which now consists of a trilogy. The National Association of Social Workers has also established the Dr. Bernice Catherine Harper Scholarship Fund for training social workers in palliative medicine. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization also contributed to that fund.

THE CORONAVIRUS, COVID-19 AND SPIRITUALLY

In my professional practice I have always stopped and studied words and their alphabetical make up. Thus, the Coronavirus and Covid-19 are no exceptions.

Coronavirus:

C is for Creation
O is for Ordering
R is for Restoration
O is for Of
N is for Nature
A is for Attention
V is for Villages and Victims
I is for In
R is for Restoring or Ruling
U is for Us
S is for Servants

In other words, the **C**reator is **O**rdering the **R**estoration **O**f Nature's **A**ttention to the **V**illages and **V**ictims **I**n **R**uling **U**s as **S**ervants in the Modern Garden of Eden. Thus, the world has become a global neighborhood.

COVID-19

C is for the Coronavirus

O is for Ordering

V is for Victims

I is for Illness

D is for Death

19 is for 1 year, 19 months or 19 years

Covid-19 represents the illness from which one can die. There is only one “D” in these alphabets. I believe the earth is undergoing one of its mammoth changes. I believe the Creator is extremely unhappy and disappointed with Mankind, Womankind, Childrenkind and all other “Kinds” related to our behavior, love, caring and utilization of resources. “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” Humanity seemed to have forgotten that the world and its contents belong to God. Thus, for me, the Coronavirus has a Biblical connection and is a plague. The Coronavirus has a purpose, and like everything else, a beginning, a middle and an ending, which no one knows when, but I have lived long enough to know that “this too shall pass.”

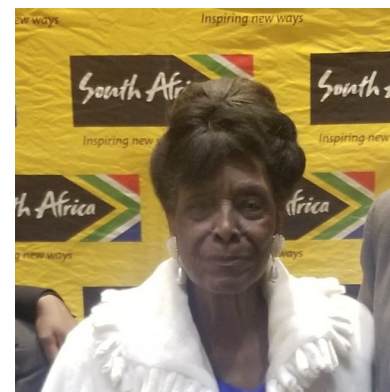
The human toll is too great to contemplate. The economic toll is beyond anything the world has ever known and yet we have an abundance of resources for recovery if it is God’s will. Jesus Christ was ready to come back to earth to receive His Own. God told him he should give the earth and its people another chance to “get it together, slow down and learn to worship the one, true and only living God.”

Our guidelines are the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and to Love Thy Neighbor as Thy Self. You cannot love thy neighbor if you do not know your neighbor’s name.

CONCLUSION

The World we all knew before the Coronavirus will never be the same. The past, as we knew it, is gone and only serves to shape our future. We face a New World.

I see a New Revolution to be known as the Human Caring Revolution. The Industrial Revolution did its job. The Technology Revolution is doing its job, “overtime in a big way.” The next Revolution can only be the New Revolution with attributes of love, caring, deep compassion, health care and wealth for all. The word poor will vanish from our minds as we learn to live in the New World Order. We all will be “soldiers of caring.” Our civilization will be referenced as, before 2020 or after 2020. The Bible will still be our guide and represent our past, present, and future. We are living in the present and moving toward a brand-new future which will require National and International leadership, cooperation and sharing of all of God’s given resources. I have the faith that humankind can achieve this goal because we are made in the image and likeness of God. Thus, the Divine Plan is in order.



Dr. Bernice Harper, South African
Embassy Reception, October 2018

Turning Inward: Gift of the Virus

Joyce A. Higashi, President North American Region, ICSW and Saffrey Brown, VP North American Region, ICSW

Along with a group of some 30 Americans who came together through their common interests in multicultural themes, personal identity, and spirituality, I took a trip on a barge up the Volga River years ago, hosted by a group of Russian professionals who explored these topics in Russian as our boat rocked gently, pausing only at the locks or alongside small towns where enterprising peasant women were anxiously marketing embroidered tablecloths, woolen scarves, and knitted clothing. The rupee had collapsed just days ago and the air was increasingly cold and heavy with desperation and despair. It was late in the afternoon as shadows elongated along the fleeting meadowland that an old Russian woman rose in disgust to hear an American reassuring an anxious Russian about the future of his cause. "You Americans are children", she screeched, and "you too will meet your Waterloo".

And so we have. It came on quietly as I was recovering from heart surgery in January, 2020, and the requisite remodeling of my condo, located conveniently next to the anticipated migration of Amazon employees, affording me the opportunity to move on to my next, and last, assignment in Hawaii. Our President hailed the economy as the best ever and belittled the suggestion that a mere virus could interfere with our personal plans for ourselves in our powerful country. Beginning in Seattle, it surfaced with a vengeance in Manhattan and we tuned in to listen to Governor Cuomo of New York State who provided a much-needed empathy and understanding of the realities being experienced there. We saw older people waiting in line at a Queens Hospital, only to later watch in horror as a refrigerated truck was being loaded with dead bodies. We watched in utter despair to see the lack of leadership by our President as State Governors bid against each other for essential PE supplies and ventilators. We watched our President spar with scientists and fire experienced administrators who would not promote his unproven personal preferences. We saw businesses close and employees laid off or assigned to work electronically from home. We saw Congress passing legislation to support businesses and laid off workers. We saw schools close and children, supported by their parents, attempting to learn at home without playmates. We saw our President refuse to wear a mask and persist in ef-

forts to open the economy, even as the shelter at home program was well underway. We saw our TV commentators, such as Rachel Maddow, calling for support of unidentified hot spots, such as nursing homes, prisons, and meat packing plants. We heard from doctors, lawyers, scientists, and nurses, frontline workers, and restaurant owners, musicians, policemen and protesters, truck drivers, professors and writers, reporters from around the world or someone standing on a street corner- a wonderful potpourri of people who all wanted to share their views!

We saw it all. Yet we were not prepared for what lay ahead until we saw this too. It was the police arrest of an African American man who had passed a counterfeit \$20 bill to purchase something from a local store. Was this a desperate act by someone who needed to take care of his family? We don't know, but we did see the four officers arrest the unarmed suspect, place him in handcuffs and then proceed to kneel on his neck and legs while he lay helpless and crying out for help until he died. A young female filmed the whole incident with her cell phone. That was when the protests began, thousands of people marching in major cities throughout the US, the older people mostly staying home to protect themselves against the virus, but they were watching the tv and they were horrified. Hatred and cruelty was what they saw and would remember till their passing.

The protesters refused to disband until justice had been served, meaning that the offending policemen have been charged and jailed. Most protests last 24 hours and then people get back to work. Since there is no work for many people, the protests could continue to seek justice which has resulted in more relationships between people of all races and the police. This continuing interaction and pressure has resulted in charges against the four men with plans for policy changes and community involvement in policing activities. Meanwhile it remains to be seen how the protesters and police will fare with regard to their exposure to the virus.

A successful US Space launch took place shortly thereafter, but no one seemed to be talking about it. The Protest against racial injustice had captured the hearts of the people as the depths of daily suffering had surfaced for all to



Joyce A. Higashi

see - the legacy of slavery, emboldened and embodied in the redlining of neighborhoods, police brutality surfacing in past cases of Breonna, Elijah, Garner and more. *For the first time*, people of color were discussing their personal experiences with police brutality and it was *powerful that everyone had a story*, even those who were well educated and successful. There were also those who expressed their rage by destroying the Jim Crow monuments of Richmond which were built and designed to intimidate black citizens AFTER the war had been lost, along with the genteel Christian platitudes uttered in Church graveyards defiantly flying the confederate flag. I watched the last confederate flag of Mississippi being lowered as an older black official tried to express his gratitude for this moment while holding back years of grief exposed in a trembling voice.

It was then that I recalled that I lived just a half block from Lee Highway, *not* Lincoln Highway. And I wondered how unconscious have I been of my environment over the years.... Things that I found to be odd or unfitting were consciously created by those who were attempting to continue the racist Confederate values. Thus, the systemic nature of racism needs to be dismantled in our environment and it is happening as it is recognized, i.e. recently the renaming of the Robert E Lee School to the John Lewis Russell School. It seems that that the systemic roots of racism are being exposed by the rising consciousness stimulated by the Protest. We owe a debt of gratitude to the people who took to the streets to Protest the injustices of our time. Their work is not over as they take on an insidious challenge to be found in the militias sent by the President to restore order to Portland, an assignment challenged by the governing officials and people of Portland, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

What the protesters did not initially anticipate was the infiltration of the legitimate protests by hoodlums from hate groups who caused significant property damage that tended to pit the police against the protesters. Fortunately, this dynamic was discovered and police and protesters were able to have some significant bonding experiences. (For years, hate groups have been identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center at www.splcenter.org/hatemap).

We currently have 107,000 deaths and 1.8 million cases of covid-19 as of today, *June 3rd*. We need to pay attention and be disciplined to be able to survive the virus by developing adequate testing and a vaccine. Many thanks to Bill Gates who is spearheading this effort and even warned us against this happening in 2015! It appears that the Trump administration is now attempting to find evidence of ulterior

motives by the Obama administration. Really?? *Anything to try to distract the voters* who, by the way, are supporting the movement to have **mail in voting**, which undermines the attempts by subversives to harass people at the poles.

So, we are experiencing our Waterloo and will be forever changed. A Waterloo does that you know. It destroys the old ways and opens the way for new possibilities, such as:

- a. A plan for addressing healthcare inadequacies could be initiated for all citizens. Pre-existing conditions must not be used to exclude persons from treatment.
- b. A minimum income program is indicated if poverty is to be overcome and people are empowered to make decisions.
- c. There are already advocates for broadband as many children do not have access to computers and/or the internet.
- d. The Protest is evidence of growing broad-based commitment to community and also to racial equality. A review of Prison Reforms and Policing Culture needs to include Congressional action, citizen representation and community participation.
- e. Hate Groups must not be tolerated and members should be subjected to imprisonment and loss of property.
- f. Gun Registration is permitted for the use of hunting and self-defense only. Weapons used for military purposes are totally forbidden.
- g. The reduction in pollution during the Virus has delighted everyone with experiences of natural beauty. Renewal of American participation in the preservation of the environment must be restored, including healthy waters and streams.
- h. College tuition needs to be affordable at our state schools.
- i. School food programs need to be updated & children need to participate in experiences that foster acceptance and appreciation for one another's cultures, racial heritage, and values. The US history classes should include opportunities for learning about racism and developing tolerance and friendships.
- j. Everyone must have a part in rebuilding the future. Perhaps it is time to reconsider a Citizen Peace Corps and renew our investment in ourselves, our families, our communities, and our country. *And until the Vaccine is available, do wear a mask and protect your neighbor.*



Lt. Colonel
Michele Matthews,
National Social
Services Director,
The Salvation Army



Salvation Army Volunteer assisting someone seeking help.
Laramie, Illinois

The Salvation Army USA Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic

As true throughout the world, the COVID-19 pandemic immediately transitioned how The Salvation Army provided services and help to those in need.

In the United States, one in six people live in poverty, and more than 550,000 are counted as experiencing homeless. These populations severely lack access to proper care, hygiene, updated information, and medical resources, which makes them more susceptible to the virus. This is where The Salvation Army comes in. This is who we serve.

The Salvation Army has been working with local, state, and federal government and health authorities, and with numerous other nonprofits, foundations and friends as we've been serving in this crisis. We have developed new hygiene and cleaning protocols to help keep safe our residents and others who depend on The Salvation Army's programs and services to survive.

Our local centers of operation have worked in close partnership with area government and health experts to prepare and respond to meet specific community needs of 23 million individuals we serve each year and the more than 63,000 employees of our organization.

Our Phase I relief efforts have included sheltering and feeding the most vulnerable. New pro-

grams began almost overnight when a need was identified, such as providing home delivery of meals to those in quarantine, providing care for children of first responders and medical personnel, opening new shelters to house the elderly living on the street, and providing food boxes to the hungry via a drive through pick-up process.

Our latest statistics nationwide show that we have served more than 10 million prepared meals, 2.2 million food boxes, and provided almost 1.2 million nights of shelter during this crisis. In other words, we are sheltering more than 13,000 individuals each night and have provided almost 55 million meals for hungry Americans.

While we anticipate that these basic services will continue during the summer months, we are also planning for Phases II and III of our recovery plan. Phase III will include job skills training and workforce development activities while Phase II is focused on eviction prevention.

Across America, The Salvation Army works in local communities to prevent eviction, reduce homelessness, and provide shelter for people experiencing homelessness. Today, in the COVID-19 environment, it is becoming more apparent that safe, stable, and decent housing is vital to ensuring health. With the rise in unemployment, the number of households at risk of eviction increases. Furthermore, many states issued moratoriums to

protect renters while shelter-in-place orders are in effect. As these orders are being lifted we expect more urgent requests for rent and utilities assistance.

Some states have placed moratoriums on evictions; however, once these moratoriums expire, The Salvation Army anticipates high rates of evictions and home foreclosures, as does the Eviction Lab project at Princeton University. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the unemployment rate will average 10.1 percent in 2021 and still be at 9.5 percent in 2021's final months. The need for financial assistance will greatly continue now and beyond this next year. Currently, the majority of poor renting families in America spend over half of their income on housing costs. COVID-19 has put us in a unique position where we are seeing new families that have never felt the need to rely on assistance from The Salvation Army. This extended period of reduction in household income, and increases in utility and food expenses, have impacted not only the poor but also middle-class families who have exhausted all saving options and need emergency financial assistance. In Colorado, The Salvation Army operates a call center for those in need. With the COVID-crisis, assistance with rent became the most requested service (60-70% of the calls). Additionally, the number of calls increased dramatically from an average of 1,000 calls/month to 4,719 answered calls in April. At the end of April, the Army paused adding additional households to the waiting list because there were already 844 households on the list for rent assistance.

This crisis is nowhere close to being done. The virus continues to spread, impacting businesses, education and everyday life. During the great recession, The Salvation Army assisted an additional 10 million individuals. We expect a much larger increase in requests

for service as we continue to respond to this pandemic. Additionally, even when the economy improves and unemployment decreases, we know that the poor are the last to benefit from these improvements, as they serve as a lagging indicator of an up economy while also serving as a leading indicator of a down economy.

The work is not yet done. As we've been doing for the past 155 years, The Salvation Army continues to follow the lead of founder William Booth:

While women weep, as they do now,
I'll fight
While little children go hungry, as they do now,
I'll fight
While men go to prison, in and out, in and out,
as they do now,
I'll fight
While there is a drunkard left,
While there is a poor lost girl upon the streets,
While there remains one dark soul without the
light of God,
I'll fight-I'll fight to the very end!



Above: Commissioners Hodder filling food distribution packages in Santa Barbara, California

Right: Santa Barbara, California Salvation Army Employee



Margaret Atwood, the famous writer, stated that she never envisioned living through anything like the COVID-19 pandemic. Neither did I. This pandemic feels too close to home. I was born into apartheid South Africa, which could have been described as a racial pandemic, where Black and brown people died at alarming rates from government-sanctioned atrocities such as murder and deprivation of basic resources. Discrimination in housing, education, health, and social welfare resources diminished the quality of life and hastened deaths. The COVID-19 pandemic is reminiscent and close to my heart, as our family was a casualty in the oppressive regime of South Africa. My father was a political prisoner and, as a result of torture and solitary confinement, suffered psychological death and was thankfully saved from actual death at the hands of the government. There were many others, men, women, and children who died because of their social justice standpoints.

Then there was another pandemic I lived through in the 1980s when AIDS ravaged lives and young adults who had much promise and potential. AIDS was initially perceived as a white gay man's disease, and it was politicized as such. Still, overtime, both the AIDS pandemic and apartheid subsided and receded. However, COVID-19 is here with us, targeting anyone regardless of political affiliation, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or other demographic identifiers. We are all vulnerable, and this is very scary. As of this writing, we are reaching close to 100,000 deaths in the United States as a result of COVID-19.

For me, everything came to a sudden standstill when my university closed its operations right before our Spring break. There was little time to retrieve needed teaching materials or other documents, which I would later discover I needed to complete certain assignments. Our visit to Cape Town, as part of our international service-learning course, which I lead, was cancelled and left our students deeply disappointed. For many of them, it would have been their

first opportunity to travel outside of the United States. We had to transition very quickly to on-line teaching and modify our educational offerings to meet specific academic requirements.

My life has been consumed and taken up by perhaps too many daily zoom meetings. I found myself busier than usual despite being under lockdown in the District of Columbia, one of the hardest hit areas in the United States. Our graduations also went virtual. There was some grandeur lost in the transition online, but it also afforded the opportunity for family and friends who would not otherwise have been able to attend the ceremonies to participate and share in this milestone. I recall a graduate mentioning that his ailing grandmother in Nigeria was able to view the graduation and join in the celebration.

Our lives have been affected in so many ways by this coronavirus pandemic. We have been struggling to find ways to tolerate stay at home orders and to learn new routines within our physical isolation. And above all, our stress and anxieties have been peaked by the fear of contracting coronavirus, as the number of confirmed cases have climbed each day. Our sorrows run especially deep as we experience the reality of death or the struggle for survival for friends or family members as a result of this disease. We see many around us who have lost jobs. Jobs that have sustained them and their families disappeared literally overnight as the American economy was forced to shutdown in order to curtail the spread of the virus. I am both saddened and enraged by how hard some communities and individuals have been hit by the pandemic and the efforts taken to slow the spread of the virus. I am thinking of the unrealistic expectations and universal messaging going out to people living under conditions where physical distancing is impossible. I am thinking of our brothers and sisters living in overcrowded, informal settlements in Cape Town with limited access to water and sanitation, where citizens are proclaiming that it is not COVID-19 that will cause their deaths, but poverty. These peo-

ple are without jobs and living in food deserts. They are Black and brown families, for the most part.

And yet, on the other hand, through this experience, we have come to realize a deep sense of gratitude for those who are continuing the frontline battle against this virus. Those social workers, doctors, nurses, all hospital workers, are putting their lives on the line to save others. And for all those who continue to leave their homes each day, endangering their own health, to keep us fed and sustained with life essential things, we are sincerely appreciate. Grocery store clerks, delivery drivers, postal workers, truck drivers, mail persons, food service and supply warehouse workers, all doing their part to help us endure and survive within our new isolated realities, I am deeply grateful for the sacrifices they are making, and I do not take them for granted.

During all of this, we have witnessed a tremendous rise in charitable acts and volunteerism within our communities. This has included making protective masks for others, preparing food for hospital and nursing home workers, providing free daycare to essential workers, providing assistance for distance learning for school-aged children, checking in on and lending a hand to elderly neighbors, and raising funds for people hit the hardest by COVID-19. In our neighborhood, a neighbor left a care package of healthy and fun treats at my front door. Another neighbor regularly offers to get something for me from the grocery store, being respectful and mindful that, as a senior I fit into one of the high-risk groups. I am pleased to see the concept of mutual aid playing out in my neighborhood and elsewhere.

I am strengthened and encouraged by Dr. Betsy Clark's writing about hope. This is prophetic because Betsey, who was the CEO of NASW, passed away just a few days ago. I am highlighting the seminal ideas which stand out to me from her book: *Hope not Hype*.

"Hope is actually a choice you make. Always choose hope over hopelessness because hopelessness leads to helplessness."

She exhorts us to "Find a few things that make you happy or bring you joy each day. Keep self-care in your plan." During this pandemic, I have enjoyed walks to a nearby monastery garden, where a delightful surprise

awaited those of us smelling the roses when a beautiful soprano sang meditative songs. The soprano volunteers to do such on Tuesdays and Fridays from 1:30-2 pm, as the pandemic continues. I saw a green breasted hummingbird and a fiery red cardinal during a first visit. I also joined a zoom tai chi qigong class as part of my self-care regimen. I am enjoying the body movements and strengthening my physical and emotional balance.

I leave you with this final prophetic message from the dearly departed Betsy:

"You can become a hope advocate for others. Your supply of hope is limitless. You can give some away and your own supply will be replenished by helping others."



Cudore L. Snell, DSW, LICSW

Staying In and Staying Alive: Making Everyday Count Covid-19 Style!

I have recently stepped down from 24 years of teaching at the Howard University School of Social Work and with more than 14 years of teaching and training at the Federal St. Elizabeths' Hospital/Department of Mental Health in Washington, D.C. you might imagine that I have a lot of books, papers, and teaching materials that needed to be sifted through and organized (into the trash/recycle/donations). So, for the past two months, I have deposited over 9 large black trash bags of my years of work! Unfortunately, I am not nearly finished. If it takes 18 months for a vaccine, I might be finished by that time. Did I mention that I also have file drawers and shoe boxes of photos that will suffice as my next project once I finish sorting training material. So, I am probably good through 2022!

It is amazing how all of my meeting obligations have swiftly moved from getting dressed, getting in the car or taking the subway to meet at various places around town with colleagues, to getting on the phone to meet with these same folks remotely. Some of the meetings were already moving to remote access to accommodate folks living across the country or due to snow or rainstorms. Even church services and board meetings are being done remotely. I am growing fond of using Zoom, "gotomeeting" "webex" and other platforms where participants see each other. Some of us do not want to be seen and that is okay too. My "Fabulous Friends" from college are meeting using the telephone platform "Conference Call". It will not be long before we move to a platform where we can see each other. All this sitting and taking will require that I find a softer pillow for my office chair. It is really getting a workout with all this sitting through meetings.

I am not on social media yet, but I am thinking about it. However, I do not want to get away from my goal of seeing the hardwood floor in this office. "Miles to go before I sleep."

Will the Virus Kill Me? A Day In the Life:

I face the fact, that as an African American, in my 70's and have a pre-existing condition or two which means I am in lock down. My area, near the nation's capital is considered a "Hot Spot" and most businesses including Churches here are in phase One. Not what you would have in mind for your retirement years. I am happy with de-cluttering and getting this done is a heavy load being lifted from my shoulders. I work at it for several days and then stop to take care of other mundane household chores. There is the diversion of going shopping at the grocery store/supermarket. The big event of the month is the trip to Costco's where I still have not found toilet paper. I did finally get Clorox last week!

My daily routine: (Everyone must establish a daily routine.) I Clorox all doorknobs, light switches, drawer handles, flat surfaces, and wash in hot soapy water, all reading and sunglasses, masks, scarves caps and other outside accessories.

Right now, I am not bored, and I am super busy with projects for the fall, for ICSW-US, church, alumni associations, NASW, and keeping up with friends and family. Too much to do, really! I have made it a part of my routine to get out and walk almost every day. There is a track at the rec center in the area and my walking buddies Rachel and Aileen are determined to keep up our fitness walking while we are unable to attend exercise classes. We walk one behind the other (6 feet apart). If we find too many folks without masks, we leave the track and walk the neighborhood. Whoever feels like leading takes the front and plots our route. I do enjoy seeing the neighborhood gardens and their dedicated work at landscaping, which I no longer do but enjoy the toil of others. My neighborhood is called Hillcrest Heights for a reason. 30 years ago, I used to walk these hills for exercise with my 70-year-old neighbor in tow. Boy could

she complain, but we would laugh at her protestations, and yet, she would keep walking. To my surprise, now in my 70's I have walked every hill in the neighborhood! I was shocked, but incredibly pleased when I attacked a long hill and made it to the top without too much huffing and puffing and without stopping. I am from Pittsburgh, PA., known for its many steep hills, so I am no stranger to hill climbing! I just did not think I still had it in me. After the first steep hill, I wanted to plant a flag (as in Mt. Everest). I enjoy walking with friends or by myself.

Walking teaches me a lot about myself, about people who wear masks and those who do not. I wonder about people and self-destructive behavior. Why in our hot spot, don't people wear masks?

Many New Challenges:

On top of the issues related to Covid-19, we are reeling from the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The viewing of police officers squeezing the life out of him on camera in broad daylight has swept over this nation, and around the world, with mighty demonstrations, attended by millions of protesters. People of all races, creeds, colors and social standing are expressing their support for Black Lives Matter (BLM), "hands up, don't shoot" and "I can't breathe", representing the many, many black lives snuffed out at the hand of their local police. Incredibly, other blacks, along with Mr. Floyd, are Breona Taylor, a first responder in Louisville, Kentucky shot to death by white police officers in her own bed, Ahmed Arbery shot and killed by a white retired police officer, his son and a third man while he was out for a jog and Christian Cooper, a black birdwatcher in NYC's Central Park falsely accused of assault by a white woman, Amy Cooper, who resented his pointing out that she needed to leash her dog as required by law. Having these racist incidents all occurring within weeks of each other was more than the country and the world community could stand. These were innocent individuals who in three of the cases lost their lives needlessly.

The demonstrations, it is hoped will result in ways of making change in policing policies and institutional racism that will improve all our lives, black, brown, indigenous people and white. Even though the po-

lice officers who participated in the killing of Mr. Floyd have been fired and indicted, there is still a long way to go for Justice and citizens are continuing to march and stand up against racism and discrimination in policing and civil society's institutions. We are presented with an opportunity to come together and find answers to our 401-year-old problem, the remnants of slavery. The U.S.'s "peculiar institution". Not often talked about, justice and equality, lifts a burden from the backs of white America too! You could not make this up. No one would believe that our lives could so drastically change in a matter of a few short months.

ONE LAST THING: As we enter the months coming into a presidential election and contenders look for their agenda to catch on with the public: **IT'S THE PEOPLE STUPID. LIVES MATTER!** No amount of money, rise in the stock market, business success, property or possession could ever supersede the value of lost souls (over 180 thousand and counting) who among them, one may have held the answer to cancer, or heart disease, or provided spiritual inspiration or answers to any number of our environmental or social ills. *They may be lost but like George Floyd, they will never be forgotten.*



Patricia Martin-O'Meally at United Nations

COVID-19 Reflections

Helen Whetzel, Secretary ICSW/US Committee

The Coronavirus has had a huge impact across the nation. With the closing of many businesses, churches, schools, restaurants, stores, sporting events and even the Government. to name a few, we were in isolation. We were told to stay in our homes and only go out when necessary. Face masks were to be worn if we left the house.

Graduations, proms and weddings were put on hold or moved to later dates. There were no family gatherings at Easter, Mother's Day and family birthdays. People were working from home. Teachers were connecting with their students via the internet, virtual meetings were being

held. It was a whole new world. In March one of my best friends passed away. I was unable to attend the graveside funeral as they only allowed five people at the cemetery. Her daughter wrote me later that she was so sad that she couldn't give her mother a proper burial.

On the positive side, we were getting things organized in our homes. We were calling friends we hadn't heard from in a long time and renewing old friendships. We were taking time to read and just relax.

At this time we don't know when they will find a cure for

this virus. Hopefully it will be soon. Some places are beginning to open but for the most part we should be very careful. Stay safe.



Helen Whetzel, South African Embassy Reception, October 2018

Link to NACSW Convention

<https://www.nacsw.org/annual-convention/>

Link to ICSW Global Newsletter

<https://www.icsw.org/index.php/publications/icsw-global-newsletter>

Link to IFSW Webinar

<https://www.ifsw.org/global-trends-in-mental-health-first-ever-commonwealth-social-work-webinar-series-27-29-july-2020/>

Link to IASSW & ICSW Joint World Conference

<http://www.swesd2020.org/>

Link to ICSW NEA Webinar on COVID-19

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScilafaAH79fq6WgK4B6PoVdLW8xMELZeYVYrFnsg3l2y2U0w/viewform>

IMPORTANT DATES

- July 27-29, 2020 First Ever Commonwealth Social Work Webinar Series 'Global Trends in Mental Health' Hosted by International Federation of Social Work
- July 29, 2020 ICSW North East Asia Regional Webinar on COVID-19: Welfare Challenges and Response
- November 5-8, 2020 Rimini, Italy—IASSW and ICSW Joint World Conference
- November 5-8, 2020 Washington, DC NACSW 'Unity in the Face of Adversity: Building a World of Love and Justice'