

## The Whitewashing of Social Work History: How Dismantling Racism in Social Work Education Begins With an Equitable History of the Profession

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**Abstract:** *Severe racial inequity has characterized the incorporation of ethnic minorities' contributions to U.S. history and advancements (Sandoval et al., 2016). These disparities are inextricably connected to White Supremacist ideologies and practices, and are perpetuated in higher education through textbooks, pedagogy, and research. Social work, like many disciplines, teaches about its early roots with a whitewashed historical lens. Indeed, review of the social work literature reveals the scarcity of attributions to Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). Without a more racially diverse perspective on social work's history, social work scholars promote and sustain White Supremacy. The implications of this are crucial since social work education is predominantly populated by privileged White students who adopt this mentality, unaware of Black, Brown, Latino, Asian, Native or Other ethnic "Jane Addams" who have massively promoted the social welfare of communities for decades without historical recognition or the privileged positions of Addams and Richmond. Historical distortions also potentially discourage BIPOC social work students' self-efficacy and future efforts to contribute and excel in the discipline. To properly address this issue, social work history must be refaced with a more equitable and just lens. This review seeks to address the gap in the literature pertaining to the need for a greater integration and infusion of racially diverse social work historical contributions in several ways. Recommendations will be made for future research in this area to dismantle racist perspectives in social work history, and strategies will be offered to help social work educators and researchers address this critical issue.*

**Keywords:** *Dismantling racism, social work history, BIPOC contributions*

Symbols of White Supremacy are not just limited to the confederate flag and iconic statues of soldiers vehemently supporting the degradation of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). If removing these overt symbols were that simple, the problem would be uncomplicated to mend. What is more insidious is a mindset that is perpetuated with countless and ubiquitous narratives that Whites are supreme. Numerous academic and vocational institutions attribute their innovation and earliest beginnings to White people. Earliest framers of institutions are almost always of European descent, creating a subconscious and conscious paradigm that Whites are innovators, originators, and generators of everything needful and new. In contrast, BIPOC are receivers. This phenomenon is one of the worst catalysts of the false narrative suggesting that Whites are supreme. Social work is no stranger to this White Supremacist narrative. Ironically, a discipline that prides itself on social justice and racial equity is historically framed by the same whitewashed narrative. As in other disciplines, social work's traditional texts, the earliest founders of social work are predominantly White, while many of the recipients of

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their sacrifices are poor and/or BIPOC even though this was not always the case. Countering the ideology of White Supremacy requires an injunction on perpetuating this belief and reworking an understanding of the diverse characters that shaped the social welfare field. This matter is urgent and significant if the social work discipline is to make sincere attempts to stop, resist and repair the damage done by White Supremacy's dominance.

### **Institutionalized Racism in Documenting History**

An inaccurate view of the past always distorts efforts to make a more just future. Academic social work, like other academic disciplines, depends on history for training and equipping students. It also readily uses history to inform theories, philosophies and ideologies that shape the discipline and next generations of social workers. This historical information disseminated is vitally important. Many disciplines like medicine (Newsome, 1979), music (Mahon, 2015), Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM; Mack et al., 2011), and mathematics (Shetterly, 2016) have, just within the last few decades, began to excavate the voices of many marginalized ethnic groups, revealing their unique role in contributing to their disciplines historically. History holds great significance in the fight against White Supremacy. History is like a silent but powerful weapon that is reinforced by being retold repeatedly to a newer generation of leaders. As it relates to social work history, students are retold the same whitewashed narrative about the discipline's inception. The dynamics of social work are important to remember considering that it is typically populated by White individuals often assisting and serving people of color. According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2019 annual report, 61.1% of full-time faculty and 58.3% of part-time faculty identify as White (CSWE, 2019). The 2019 CSWE annual report also demonstrates that the predominant group of social work students at all levels identify as White (CSWE, 2019). While 48.7% of baccalaureate identify as White, 50.2% of master's level students, 36% of practice doctorate and 46% of research doctorate students identify as White (CSWE, 2019).

New students seeking to be scholars, practitioners, or researchers in social work populate cohorts who are learning a specific history that reinforces the stereotype and serves as the seed bed of White Supremacy: that BIPOC individuals are the weak and inferior *receivers* while Whites are the innovators and *distributors* of all things good. This is not a suggestion to fail to tell history without the statistical accuracy that supports the notion that the majority of the people in helping professions such as social work are White (CSWE, 2019, 2020, Lin et al., 2018). However, failing to tell the stories of social work leaders who were persons of color creates an inaccurate view of history and reinforces White Supremacist ideologies. These BIPOC historical leaders largely remain unnamed and have been barred access to professional recognition for their contributions to social welfare.

Another prominent example of White Supremacy in the biased and inaccurate documentation of history occurs when White people bring a new concept from a culture different than their own. Frequently, the focus is not the innovation; rather, the focus becomes the glorification of the White person that shared the concept. Often omitted is a

focus on the theory or understanding or new understanding as greater attention is placed on *the* innovator, again reinforcing White Supremacist ideology. Connecting this process to social work education, we recognize it affects the minds of White social work students who will most likely serve people of other ethnic backgrounds. They will take with them the inaccurate belief of their culture disseminating everything and helping remedy other cultures supposed “primitiveness.” When thinking philosophically, it can create a subconscious paradigm of White dominance. If this dynamic of teaching and translating incomplete history does not end, it will continue to reinforce White Supremacy in social work education and practice.

Social work must be accountable to telling the complete story of institutional racism and how it has placed people of color into downcast roles since the inception of the discipline. Failing to tell the full narratives around how people of color have helped themselves and led as helping professionals within their own communities is a disservice to a complete and honest understanding of this unique discipline. Furthermore, at work is a pervasive historical pattern where Whites were often the “wounders” and then a profession, like social work, was praised for founding a response that represented the “healers.” For social work to truly dismantle the complexities and paradoxes of White Supremacy and racism from its checkered past, a critical lens is necessary.

### **Social Work – A Tradition Intertwined with Racism**

Racism in social work is an unfortunate blemish on the history of the profession. Social works’ inception dates to the mid to late 1800s (Austin, 1983). The origins of social work are of course debatable as the deeds of the profession historically outdate its officiation process vocationally (Ehrenreich, 1985). Complicating the discussion is how to characterize or conceptualize what was or was not social work in times past (Reisch, 2019). This paper assesses the topic, utilizing what was popularly deemed as social work to help better understand the challenges in magnifying the role people of color had in creating the profession. It is traditionally upheld that social work began from frameworks and principles that span from Europe, the United States, and the Middle East (Dulmus, 2012). These regions are credited with the earliest conception of social work due to the fact the some of the earliest recorded charitable community-based initiatives were tied to these regions. Earliest records of the first orphanages, hospitals, and nursing homes are attributed to these regions guided by strong religious principles (Vanderwoerd, 2011). Interestingly, it is difficult to date whether these principles or practices existed in other regions of the world, such as Asia, Central America, South America, or Africa. Importantly, communal societies have long held the family or village responsible for the care of vulnerable persons. Additionally, many Indigenous peoples groups did not record their history in the same manner as Europeans and some of their close geographical neighbors. That is, oral traditions were the manner in which history was disseminated from generation to generation. It is also clear that scholars from Indigenous people groups were many times denied the privilege of being recorded into history as European explorers downgraded the humanity of non-White groups, asserting non-White groups were inferior to European people.

Given that the United States and Europe are typically credited with officiating and establishing social work in the mid- to late 1800s, it is helpful to consider the social and political climate towards people of color in these two regions. Despite the oppressions of slavery, Black leaders were creating and developing social welfare systems (Carlton-LaNey, 1999; O'Connell, 2013; Hounmenou, 2012). However, the "racial sciences" that were disseminated by British and French scientists in the 1800s were used to proliferate the false notions that the "negroid" and other persons of color were inherently genetically inferior to Whites (Miles, 1997/2014), uphold racial slavery, place Western Europeans at the top of a human hierarchy, and exclude BIPOC leaders from participation in the official development of social welfare reforms (O'Connell, 2013). These racist theories intersected with emerging social welfare policies at the time and established a racialization of poverty (O'Connell, 2010, 2013). Black churches and charities were faced with countering slavery and other racist policies, and they struggled with "the political risk of forming their own social welfare measures or accepting white philanthropy while attempting to combat racial hatred" (O'Connell, 2013, p. 17).

In the United States, the genocide of Indigenous people groups is one of the earliest works of White Supremacy. Armed with the false notion of *manifest destiny*, settlers created a framework for the nation built on the blood of native Indigenous populations. The nation was established and conceived upon a central tenet that those who were ethnically different from Whites were inferior. Indigenous scholars have explained that European explorers who colonized North America were unable or unwilling to even conceive of the community-oriented leadership that was used effectively by Indigenous peoples (Weaver, 2020). Thus, the contribution native peoples could have had on social work or social welfare initiatives would have been omitted, ignored, or downplayed. Native peoples were seen as subservient to Europeans and their contributions to a new social system that was established by early settlers would have been unsurprisingly edited from history books and other documentation.

### **The Crowned White Founders of Social Work**

From the murder of native peoples and the stealing of their land, to legalized slavery and the Jim Crow era, BIPOC were subjected to institutional racism for centuries while the White founders of the social work discipline were emerging. Jane Addams was born in 1860 and died in 1935 (Alonso, 2004). Addams worked in an age when social work was not yet labeled a "profession." She was coined as many things including sociologist, philanthropist, labor reformist, advocate for juvenile justice, women's suffrage proponent, and settlement activist (Harris, 2011). Another founding pioneer of the social work discipline was a contemporary of Addams, Mary Ellen Richmond, whose life spanned from 1861-1928 (Murdach, 2011). Richmond's parents were well off and her father amassed the family's wealth as a jeweler and through real estate. Richmond was seen as an activist, community organizer and social reformer (Agnew, 2004). John Augustus was a White male figure who is also noted for helping shape early social work at the same time as Addams and Richmond. He is recorded as a philanthropist and activist in the criminal justice system (Lindner, 2006). His "case records" and management notes have been archived from the 1800s. In sum, the social work discipline acknowledges these early figures as central to

understanding the blueprint for how social work came together historically before the term “social worker” or “social welfare” were common terms.

It is also important to highlight the societal response these individuals received for work connected to social welfare. Addams is noted for having a long list of accolades that credit her with many accomplishments in her service. For instance, Yale University awarded Addams the first honorary degree ever given to a woman. She was also the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize (Alonso, 2004). She is recognized in textbooks as one of the earliest formers of the juvenile justice system and assisting in earliest conceptualizations of the child welfare system. And of course, she has been crowned by the social work profession as the mother of social work (Joslin, 2004).

With a critical lens and a both/and approach to this historical analysis, the whitewashing of social work’s history is revealed even around the most sacred historical figures of social work history. These identified founders and framers may be seen as facing some measure of challenge in their efforts to support the most marginalized peoples of society and holding what we now coin as “White privilege” as they did so. By current understandings, Addams was born into “White privilege” and was highly praised in life and death for her sacrifices as her many awards suggest. While Addams, Richmond, and Augustus were heralded as founders or framers of social work, the discipline is negligent in failing to mention people like Eugene Kinckle Jones who was an advocate and known for his contributions towards the professionalization of social work (Armfield, 2011; Carlton-LaNey & Alexander, 2001). Also largely omitted is W.E.B. Dubois, who was known for his scholarly research of social phenomena, social justice advocacy, and was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP; Du Bois, 1896/2006; Green & Wortham, 2015; Morris, 2015). One explanation may be that social work, from its inception, has tended toward centering and praising a certain “kind” of work. Although the CSWE introduced cultural diversity as an area of focus for both social practice and education in 1978 (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992), the study of Whiteness over the last 20 years and new understandings of White Supremacy help uncover and reveal that history books document events, persons, and explanations of value that maintain White culture (Jeyasingham, 2012). In contrast, those events, people, and principles upheld and applauded by BIPOC have seldom made it into history books, including those that tell the history of social work.

Bias is further seen in comparing social work’s identified founders to other reformers like Frederick Douglas. Douglas was noted for his social activism, education, and significant research as it related to social welfare issues. His work was crucial in its advocacy for human rights, women’s rights, peace activism and other social justice issues (Simba, n.d.). Yet social work’s history does not acknowledge how Douglas’s work on these highly relevant issues contributed to the discipline’s focus on social justice. One reason may be that Addams and Richmond, as White women, were recognized in their time with greater respect for their contributions due to the “great White hope” phenomenon. This phenomenon glorifies the White hero who “selflessly” comes to aid the ethnically different marginalized community (Pimpare, 2010). Such efforts are seen as sacrificial as many White women like Addams or Richmond spent their time fulfilling duties and responsibilities as wives, mothers, and did not work outside of the home during this time

period (Brownlee, 1979). By serving the “disenfranchised” and challenging the status quo mentalities, Addams and Richmond appeared to be “selflessly” deviating from their privilege. This deviation from the norm allotted them great attention. Therefore, their “sacrifices” were worthy of Nobel peace prizes, honorary degrees, and recognition from those in power.

To recognize and challenge this whitewashing of social work’s history, the discipline must consider whether these criteria continue to be valid in determining who is deemed a founding member of social work and who is not. As discussed above, history supports that Addams and Richmond were not alone in their quest for social welfare for the oppressed. Many BIPOC sacrificed more than upsetting the status quo so that future generations would experience social justices that they were denied during their lifetimes. Few BIPOC were awarded prizes; nor can their families celebrate their names in history books. Yet their hidden and downplayed efforts set waves into a network of social efforts that is now called social work. While Jane Addams and her Hull House contemporaries were creating what many coin as the earliest roots of social work in Boston, in the same city, BIPOC were not seen as complete human beings by the law. Still, BIPOC served as Addams and Richmond’s hidden contemporaries. These early BIPOC social work pioneers were unable to vote and legally challenge the social systems for which Addams is noted as reforming. They would not have been allowed at meetings to discuss child welfare policies. And forcing their way into such venues may have led to their arrest or death. A host of Black activists such as Edgar Daniel Nixon and A. Philip Randolph, both presently recognized for their avid social action, did jail time and suffered many hardships for contending for justice in the same period that Addams was gaining attention for her noteworthy activism (Baldwin & Woodson, 1992; Kersten, 2007). More frightening examples are husband and wife, Harry and Harriette Moore, both fired from their jobs and later assassinated for their social activism (Green & Kennedy, 1999). Fighting and challenging gender dynamics, seeking to reform institutions like the court system was valiant; however, the identified founders of social work experienced an earlier form of White privilege. Acting similarly to support such insurrection may have led BIPOC individuals to much greater loss, such as incarceration, physical abuse, or death due to racial enmity, discord and legalized segregation and brutality. In short, the consequences of challenging the system were much more staggering and significant for BIPOC individuals in this time.

### **BIPOC Social Work Forerunners**

While Addams and Richmond were awarded for their sacrifices to these communities, many people of color faced harsh social sanctions. Well into the 1960s and beyond, individuals like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were placed on FBI watch lists and profiled by local and national governments as communists. Dr. King received hate mail and death threats for his social welfare efforts. He fought for an enduring process of liberation for oppressed peoples and gave his life for it. As social welfare remedies its past, it should consider this. Dr. King was not alone, he is joined by many others. During the Civil Rights Movement, many Black leaders who were advocates and employed interventions for change in these communities were targeted, harassed, assaulted, and murdered. Ultimately,

their actions proved to be very costly while individuals such as Addams and Richmond received acknowledgment and praise.

### **Two Historical BIPOC Leaders of Social Welfare**

Two examples of BIPOC early social welfare leaders are W.E.B. Dubois and Eugene Kinkle Jones. Dubois was born in 1868 and died in 1963 (Lewis, 1993). He was born during the same time period as Richmond and Addams. Dubois was the first African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard University (Morris, 2015). Interestingly, his work parallels that of the two founding women of social work. His work mirrored “macro” focused social work. Similar to Richmond, he led several studies. In fact, his research and work were so prolific that some scholars coin him a sociologist (Green & Wortham, 2015).

One scholar suggests that Dubois is the rightful, forgotten heir to the title of “Father of Social Work” (Morris, 2015). Dubois fervently wrote to advocate for the advancement of people of color. He poignantly spoke and organized civil action petitioning for structural change in institutions. Despite these ideas and actions that were well-aligned with social work, Dubois is almost never mentioned as a founder of social work. Dubois, like Richmond and Addams, did not have an opportunity to study social work, since the discipline was not officiated as an academic or vocational category when they were college-aged. Yet his labor to study for the purpose of social activism and reform seems synonymous with the same efforts as Richmond and Addams. Moreover, the level of opposition Dubois worked under was much harsher than that of Richmond and Addams. Dubois fought for social justice amid Jim Crow, legal lynching practices (Morris, 2015), and legally supported institutional racism. Due to widely held racist views and structures, the assumption is made that Dubois most likely would have not received a Nobel Peace Prize due to the color of his skin. His work never would have made it to the Pulitzer list because of his ethnicity.

A second example of BIPOC social work pioneers is Eugene Kinkle Jones. Jones was born in 1885 and died in 1954. Jones was a leader in the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, now renamed the National Urban League (NUL; Fenderson, 2010), an organization that has historically advocated against racial discrimination. The NUL fervently sought to eliminate institutional racial segregation and improve living conditions for the Black community. Jones is well known for his focus on advocating for better health, housing, and economic conditions. He worked for the incorporation of Blacks into labor unions, organized civil rights activism against businesses that were legally able to deny jobs to Blacks, and advocated for school reform to incorporate more opportunities for people of color. Jones, though likely not widely known by many social workers, was elected amongst the leadership of the National Conference of Social Work in 1925. He was the first Black person on the executive board of the National Conference (Armfield, 2011; Armfield & Carlton-LaNey, 2001). This was a major milestone for social work, though still not widely taught nor known in many social work programs. In sum, few BIPOC were documented or recognized, much less honored, for their contributions to social work. Rather, BIPOCs’ contributions to the progression of society in many professions were

erased or ignored, and the narrative for how they edified society was scarcely acknowledged in comparison to their White counterparts.

### **Modern Day BIPOC Scholars**

Currently, some social work scholars are seeking to uncover the work of people of color's contributions to social work, including those historical figures less known than Dubois and Jones. One scholar, Dr. Crystal Coles, uses a method called prosopography to examine older documents from the southern region of the United States (Coles et al., 2018). Coles highlights this unique role of research inquiry to explore marginalized peoples' influences on social work. Coles studies primarily the impact African American women have had on social work in specified regions of the South. Coles recommends the use of prosopography as it involves a detailed historical investigation into the lives and works of people (Hohl, 2010) whom are no longer available to interview (Coles et al., 2018). Hohl (2010) used similar methods to examine the revolutionary lives of 121 Black women who led in many social welfare-involved vocational roles, though they were legally barred from doing so because of the color of their skin. Hohl posthumously renamed their social roles and vocational titles that many were denied legal rights to claim because of their ethnicity and/or gender identity. These women, each of them born in the 1800s like Richmond and Addams, were deemed to have embodied roles such as: "community educators," "civil rights advocate," "abolitionist," "community leader," or "philanthropist" (Hohl, 2010). When looking deeper into the lives of these individuals and the types of activities in which they engaged, many of them could be known as a social worker or social welfare advocate.

One notable challenge with finding and naming standalone social workers among BIPOC is that many BIPOC communities valued and practiced co-sharing of roles. Focusing on an individual's influence is more of a White culture characteristic (Okun & Jones, 2000), which has been accomplished in raising up the work of Addams and Richmond. Another example of BIPOC's more collective approach is found in Coles and colleagues' work. They reference the work of a 100-year collaboration of women of color to create and sustain a health system in Virginia. These women, amidst the majority culture's societal opposition and legal barriers were able to create a social welfare structure within the health sector that endured for a century. Many of these women's prolific efforts are found in Coles et al. (2018) work. A few noteworthy women are:

- Lucy Goode Brooks (1818–1900) remarkably noted for having been a former slave; helped found the Friends Asylum for Colored Children.
- Grace Evelyn Arents (1848–1926) created a public housing association for workers.
- Mrs. Thomas Nowlan was the residing president of a what would now be considered a retirement home and oversaw the Spring Street house, a facility known for assisting unwed mothers and women leaving prostitution.

Coles and colleagues' work have initiated the process of uncovering and documenting the lesser known and uncelebrated BIPOC individuals who embodied social work alongside those who have been identified in mainstream literature.

Another example of a modern day BIPOC is Hilary Weaver (Lakota) whose work on Indigenous peoples uncovers many untold stories of advocacy and social welfare efforts. In one piece of her work, Weaver described the four-decade story of two Indigenous women, the Conley sisters, whose social activism was projected in individualistic terms, through their work to protect a Wyandotte burial ground in Kansas City was a vibrant and successful collective struggle. In this same chapter, Weaver described Laura Cornelius Kellogg, an Oneida woman and activist who founded the Society of American Indians and who fought for economic self-determination, education, and land recovery at great personal cost. The retelling of these stories of Indigenous advocacy and leadership further demonstrates how White filtering of history has omitted many BIPOC contributions to social work.

### **Integrating and Honoring BIPOC Contributions in Social Work**

In addition to individual scholars, some social work professional organizations have established initiatives to excavate the early role of BIPOC in social work history. The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) has sought to highlight the marginalization of people of color's influence in early social work. The NABSW created the Academy for African-Centered Social Work. The Academy emphasizes that the work of people of African ancestry has not only been barred from access to social work history, it is also presently excluded from mainstream social work pedagogy and curriculum, seriously minimizing the contributions they could make to inform and strengthen current policy and practices (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017). The NABSW has challenged the discipline to diversify social work curricula, asserting that failing to intentionally diversify educational materials leaves students to assume the main contributions to the discipline are White (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017), overtly and covertly reinforcing White Supremacy.

Looking at Afro-Centered social welfare uncovers that much of what is deemed as White ingenuity for social welfare practice has been routine practice for BIPOC. For example, strengths-based theories (Saint-Jacques et al., 2009), treatment courts, and trauma-informed practices (Maxwell, 2014) have been presented as new concepts. Yet these concepts are foundational and historical to BIPOC communal practices. Often, the Eurocentric pattern is to rename Indigenous practices and reclaim them as their own.

The strengths perspective is a known framework often referred to and utilized in the discipline of social work. Although many scholars have contributed to the knowledge and understanding of the strengths perspective, Dennis Saleebey is often noted as the scholar associated with the development and advancement of the strengths perspective. According to Saleebey (1996), the strengths perspective seeks to develop the natural abilities of clients and posits that clients already possess various competencies and resources to improve their situation (Saleebey, 2006). Outside of work focused on Black scholars and social work pioneers, one may never learn about how those, such as W.E. B. DuBois, contributed to the knowledge and foundation of what is now the strengths perspective. DuBois' work regarding double consciousness speaks to the "strength" of Blacks to adapt and survive in hostile environments (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017). Progressive era Black social workers, such as Birdye Henrietta Haynes, Elizabeth Ross Haynes, and many others, are

acknowledged by scholars, including Iris Carlton-LaNey (1994, 1997, 2001; Carlton-LaNey & Burwell, 1996/2014; Carlton-LaNey & Hodges, 2004) for their work utilizing strength-based models (Brice & McLane-Davison, 2020). In the book, *A Strengths Perspective for Social Work Practice*, Weick et al. (1989) mentioned scholars such as Hepworth and Larsen (1986), Shulman (1979), and Germain and Gitterman (1980) and their work on the dangers of focusing on pathology while ignoring strengths. However, there was no mention of the prior work of scholars such as Billingsley (1978), Hill (1972), Nobles (1974), and Solomon (1976), who focused on disrupting the pathologizing of Black families (Brice & McLane-Davison, 2020). Due to the marginalization of communities of color, much of the work of BIPOC pioneers and scholars today focuses on empowerment, pride, self-help, and communal health, and healing practices. Barbara Solomon (1976) notes the need for social work practitioners to utilize an empowerment approach when working with Black families (Brice & McLane-Davison, 2020). Slight language differences should not negate the strengths-based work that was foundational and continues to occur.

Calls to decolonize trauma theory as currently conceptualized, and related interventions, include critiques that trauma studies have remained stuck within Euro-American conceptual and historical frameworks (Visser, 2015). These critiques also question whether trauma frameworks consider the histories of violence in the colonized world (Rothberg, 2008; Visser, 2015). Further, these critiques are somewhat rooted in the narrow conceptualization and pathology of trauma to diagnosing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; Visser, 2015). Evidenced-based interventions are either trauma-focused with the aim of directly addressing memories, thoughts, or feelings, or non-trauma focused interventions aimed at reducing PTSD symptoms (Watkins et al., 2018). Recommended evidence-based interventions include Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, eye movement desensitization reprocessing therapy, and narrative therapy (Watkins et al., 2018). The focus and attention given to the conceptualization of trauma and trauma-informed practices in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries do not acknowledge Indigenous healing movements focused on restoring family and broader social relations (Maxwell, 2014). Identifying the pathology of diagnosing trauma in people of color and the lack of acknowledgment of the historical violence and oppression experienced (Visser, 2015), the work of Indigenous scholars, including Eduardo Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, contribute to the understanding and conceptualization of historical trauma (Maxwell, 2014). Much of the trauma work and interventions were rooted in either neuroscience or focused on psychosocial components (Balaev, 2014; Cohen, 1989; Johnson, 2001). More recently, scholars and initiatives have encouraged a marriage between neuroscience and social work theory, including psychosocial factors (Johnson, 2001; Matto & Strolin-Goltzman, 2010). This recent push comes long after perspectives and practices employed by Black and Indigenous people. Throughout history, African communities have identified factors such as the transgressions of society related to relationships and social roles and the harmful intentions of another person as some factors that influence illness (Monteiro & Wall, 2011; Sow, 1980). Traditional African worldviews include communalistic social structures, encourage harmony with the environment and nature, and identify that healing must include the mind and body (Monteiro & Wall, 2011).

Many common concepts, such as the strengths perspective, are currently coined as typical social welfare practices that, when taught, never mention BIPOC social work pioneers. These concepts were often employed in their practice before any formalization of noted White social pioneers and scholars. For example, the African worldview and healing practices are holistic and focus on community and interconnectedness (Eagle, 1998). This holistic view encompasses the interrelatedness of physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual functioning (Eagle, 1998), which mirrors what is now conceptualized as the biopsychosocial-spiritual approach. George Edmund Haynes, the co-founder of the National Urban League, committed his early career to not only developing competent social work practice but also focused on the importance of cultural awareness (Eagle, 1998). Haynes discussed that social work practice should not be rooted in theory and knowledge development alone (Eagle, 1998). This conceptualization of what may now be considered culturally competent practice occurred before and concurrent with the development of the profession (Bent-Goodley, 2006; Eagle, 1998; Ross, 1978). Pioneers such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Lugenia Burns Hope created what may be conceptualized as modern-day social service programs and organizations. Wells-Barnett established the Negro Fellowship League and Reading Room, a settlement house that provided services including job placement and training, voting access, parenting, reentry initiatives, and healthcare (Bent-Goodley, 2001; Bent-Goodley et al., 2017). Hope focused the work at the Atlanta Neighborhood Union on supporting health care and access, addressing environmental hazards and social injustice, and conducting clubs for children (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017).

If social work is to reinvigorate its commitment to ethnic and racial justice, it must acknowledge and name BIPOC's leadership and contributions to social work ideologies and practices. To fully understand and support the historical and present-day sources of social work, prominent concepts and terms should be vetted as to their connections with multiple and diverse ethnic communities that may embody such theories or practices before claiming them as innovative to the discipline. Because our culture is infiltrated with White Supremacist mindsets, social work scholars and practitioners must interrogate innovative educational material that has been attributed to a White individual, seeking to understand where the concept may have existed previously among non-majority groups. With knowledge of oppression and institutional racism as a backdrop, social work needs to push to explore research from various people groups rather than the dominant one that is easiest and most accessible.

Incorporating BIPOC significant contributions to social work history also helps reduce issues of indigenization. Indigenization is a modern form of colonization where traditional White models of social work are transposed to communities of color (Megahead, 2015). Refacing history with consistent and inclusive ethnic diversity is a segue to better cultural accuracy in implementing social remedies and services for communities of color, helping address this crucial issue in present day practitioner work.

### **Excavating BIPOC Roles and Influences**

Excavating the histories and stories, and identifying the roles that people of color played in social work's development and ongoing growth, will require various strategies for historical digging. It requires looking deeply into the roles many people of color played to rout social ills on micro and macro levels. Considering how communal many BIPOCs are (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017; Carlton-LaNey, 2015; Kleibl, 2020; Weaver, 2020), researchers must find the language and labels commonplace within ethnic cultures that mirrors "social worker." Many people of color do not often think of the same systems and structures as professional social work (Bent-Goodley, Fairfax & Carlton-LaNey, 2017; Schiele, 2017). Furthermore, the discipline prizes itself with the concept of being an outsider who enters another community to bring resolution, rejecting a more commonly held practice of people of color who only engage healing for its social ills amongst its own members (Duran et al., 1998). Therefore, these BIPOCs efforts again may very likely not be advertised among BIPOC communities because such work is not prized, rewarded, or highlighted; it is the norm (Carlton-LaNey, 2015; Carlton-LaNey et al., 2001).

Another important aspect to explore is the fact that many Black social welfare pioneers were conscious of White efforts to maintain supremacy and cutdown their progress. Attempts to circumvent the progress of Blacks can be seen in the Jim Crow era and other policies that were enacted to place fines on those who attempted to help Black people leave the south for work (McCoy, 2020); several massacres such as the Tulsa Massacre of 1921, where the Black business district was completely destroyed (McCoy, 2020; Messer et al., 2013); the Federal Housing Administration's intentional shut out of households of color from the opportunity to buy homes through their practice of redlining (Asante-Muhammad et al., 2017); and the dismantling of the Black Panther party which was established to protect Blacks from White brutality and promoted Black power and control over their own communities (Clemons & Jones, 1999). BIPOC were aware of this intentional work done to hinder the developments of their communities, businesses, schools, etcetera. With this history of longstanding oppression, many BIPOC communities have been accustomed to maintaining privacy as it relates to collective efforts to remedy how gross injustices have infected people. This would then be unsurprising that many social action efforts to advance the Black community would be internal and often covert (Silver & Moeser, 2014). For example, people in the Black community have legitimate reasons and fears that their efforts will be sabotaged, establishing another reason why many people of color's achievements may not have been recorded in the same manner as in the White culture. One example of this was the collective efforts Blacks made at escaping slavery. What has been simplistically coined as the Underground Railroad was an ingenuous social effort and network to free slaves and re-unite them with families whenever possible. Presently, scholars are still uncovering evidence of this remarkable social movement for liberation (Bishop, 2018; Broyld, 2019; Foner, 2015; Haro & Coles, 2019; Kantrowitz, 2015). In sum, uncovering BIPOC's contributions to social welfare must take into account the necessity of secrecy at times.

Efforts to reveal the BIPOC social work forerunners must be constructed on more creative and inclusive methods than have traditionally been accepted in the mainstream

literature. Two examples include prosopography and oral tradition. Both serve as viable research method to find key and influential individuals in the past. Other disciplines have prepared encyclopedias of people groups, highlighting marginalized people groups that often fail to make mainstream textbooks (Low & Clift, 1980; Mjagkij, 2001; Rasmussen, R. K., 2001). Second, oral tradition is another form of historical research that can honor BIPOC and their traditions of communication. These archives not only highlight individuals that are key in social welfare's early origins but also do so by respecting and esteeming BIPOC's traditional ways of telling their stories.

Another approach to holding up the contributions of BIPOC to social work lies in the education of social workers. In a discipline coined and founded upon White Supremacy and sustained by institutional racism and policies that have been reinforced for centuries, a thorough evaluation of the past uncovers a great need to revise the way the past is taught. Currently, social work is not taught with an understanding of the subtle promotion of White Supremacy interwoven in its history. From our observations, it seems that few social work education programs have exposed the concept of the "great White hope" yet this needs to be exposed and dismantled. Not only does there need to be a revision of the title upon whom the discipline bestows the honor as founders, there also needs to be a greater understanding of ensuring that what is defined as social work is not defined only from a Eurocentric lens, as this continues to perpetuate White Supremacy historically.

To begin to dismantle White Supremacy also requires dethroning the White idols of social work. Founders in history tend to be glorified, especially White ones. If social work is not careful and fails to use a critical lens, it can glorify these early contributors of the social work movement and foundation. We must soberly assess where Addams and Richmond stood on various injustices based upon what they did *and* failed to do in their works. Questions must be asked as to why these early founders failed to incorporate the voices of BIPOC in their scholarly work and why they never fought harder for racial injustices in their documented work. We should question why Ida B. Wells had to persuade Addams to take a stand on racial injustices (McDermott, 2018). Critical analysis of Addams and Richmond indicates not only a reluctance to speak out on racism, but also explicit actions that wholly aligned with racist ideologies, and oppressed and harmed BIPOC communities. For example, both Addams and Richmond supported the eugenics movement and its scientific racism, which grew during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and promoted the propagation of "wellborn" people and the prevention of having children among those who were determined to be defective mentally, morally, or physically (Kennedy, 2008). Addams served as the honorary vice president of the American Social Hygiene Association, which called for preventing "reproduction of defectives" (Kennedy, 2008). Beyond a pro-eugenics stance, Richmond's writing in *Social Diagnosis* has noticeable undertones of racism in the dozens of assessment questions. For example, in her chapter on The Unmarried Mother, Richmond instructs social workers to ask about the mother's community: "What is the character of the city quarter or town in which the girl or woman grew up – in size, race, religion, general moral standards, faithfulness to church, predominating occupation, if any, recreations and social life?" (Richmond, 1917, p. 414). Finally, historical analysis of social work's White forerunners must also reconcile that Black social workers of the Progressive Era were sidelined from the work of White social

workers (McCutcheon, 2019). Scholars have begun to document the stories of how Black social work leaders could not depend on or wait on White social work leaders and, therefore, developed parallel educational and service systems themselves (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017; Carlton-Laney, 1999; Carlton-Laney & Alexander, 2001; Hounmenou, 2012; McCutcheon, 2019; Rasheem & Brunson, 2018).

We suggest dethroning of social work's historical icons and seeing them for what they were – individuals who sought to make change in one area of injustice while perpetuating injustice in another area. Perhaps social work must sit with a more sobering reality of individuals considered “founders” or pioneers of the social welfare discipline. Maybe the answer is not to make them an “angel” or a “demon” but live in the tension and sobriety of who these individuals really were and what they believed. It requires telling their stories in the history books in light of such frictions. Yet it also calls for a radical review of who should be embraced as a founder of a discipline that is committed to equity “and the “inherent dignity and worth of all persons,” a principle embedded in the *NASW Code of Ethics* (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021, para. 1).

Considering that many of these icons failed to prize equality amongst races and ethnicities could help us to understand why progression for racial equity has been so slow. One cannot be a true advocate for social justice while holding another group as inferior. Perhaps it would be fitting to critically analyze the legacies of White pioneers and assess what work social work founders did to be anti-racist. Historically, more attention is given to social work figures who favored particular social groups, yet still upheld racist perspectives with regards to other marginalized groups. Perhaps identifying pioneers and scholars who clearly demonstrate anti-racist views, practices, and research, even in the 1800s and earlier, would make for a more fitting perception of who truly deserves the designation of early founder for a unique discipline like social work. Further research must also embrace the tension of the wounder becoming the healer and what it does for BIPOC to see White people reap the benefits of the oppression of others while being rewarded Nobel peace prizes for helping to fix it.

### **Understanding and Dismantling White Supremacy**

Okun and Jones' (2000) work on White Supremacy is instructive for the current analysis. They explain that White Supremacy exists in an effort to hold what is White as superior, and that White Supremacy is supported by overt and covert ideologies. Three of the characteristics that Okun and Jones describe are important to this discussion. First, White Supremacy focuses on the written word. In the White culture if it is not written down, it did not happen (Okun & Jones, 2000). This is a mantra that is learned in most helping professions, including among social workers. Addams and Richmond and their contemporaries came from a majority culture where they understood this value of the written word and richly documented their research, observations, conversations, and findings. In contrast, many BIPOC come from traditional settings where such an effort is a luxury in comparison to focusing one's energies on survival, especially in Addams and Richmond's time period. In shining a light on the value of the written word as a characteristic of White Supremacy, it is clear that dismantling racism requires social work

to assess how BIPOC pass down information and conduct historical assessments that support the discovery of various peoples' contributions to the advancement of the social welfare movement.

The second highly relevant aspect of White Supremacy that contributes to the marginalization of BIPOC is the belief that there is only "one right way" (Okun & Jones, 2000) of doing things. With this characteristic in mind, it is necessary to consider whether the identified social work founders incorporated the opinions of marginalized peoples in their work. Failure to do so only perpetuates oppression and White dominance beliefs as it embodies the "one right way" of doing things. Moreover, "one right way" is at the forefront of Whites bringing their "solutions" to ethnic people groups. Though the "founders" may have done remarkable things, their efforts reduced injustice on one hand, while adding to or sustaining injustices on the other hand by keeping marginalized people from actively engaging in the solution processes.

Third, individualism is highlighted as another relevant characteristic of White Supremacy. To single out Richmond and Addams is to add to the White Supremacist notion that highly prizes "individualism" (Okun & Jones, 2000). In this context individualism focuses on the advancement of one person, rather than the collective whole. This contributes to an atmosphere where cooperation is rarely valued. Interestingly, if efforts for advancement are referenced by BIPOC, it is usually praised in context of a movement (e.g., Civil Rights Movement). Whereas White culture highly prizes individualism, monuments for racial advancements are designated to icons like Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. Likewise, Whites focus on Martin Luther King Jr. as the individual leader, while it is commonplace in the Black community to think of him as synonymous with his collaborators. To counter this White Supremacist value of individualism, a reframing is required to understand and honor founders and forerunners of the discipline. To embrace more than just White ways of perceiving, founders call for a radical change and reframe of thought and communication about how social work was formed.

### **Integrating BIPOC Contributions in Social Work**

Following are recommendations that serve as a framework to begin incorporating BIPOC contributions into social work. Social work needs to be close to the historical findings found in ethnic studies. Much of the contributions of BIPOC are hidden, and now more attention is being given to this reality. Scholars and academics of color are continuously resurfacing more people of color who helped advance the nation. As these other disciplines excavate the work of numerous BIPOC contributors, social work must be committed and fluid in its attempts to present anti-racist views of history. As new knowledge is excavated about long forgotten or omitted BIPOC contributors to social work, the discipline's history must be revised and taught, revealing that what is known is known with racist blind spots. This reality should be freely acknowledged and shared each time the narrative of how the discipline was founded is told by professors to new generations of social workers. It must be named that key players, particularly BIPOC key players, are missing in current understandings of social work history. Further, social work educators must communicate that we will never fully know the discipline's earliest

foundations and frameworks because of racism, but we should keep making attempts at a more equitable understanding of it.

Social work's history and founders must be examined with a critical lens. To dismantle racism and authentically work toward social justice, Addams' and Richmond's influences need to be revised from this critical lens. Their work should be referenced yet understood for what it lacks: a deficit in understanding how outside White entities affect frail communities, the lack of collaboration in efforts to "fix" problems without using the voices of the communities to address the issues that are being faced. Future research and scholarship should assess whether earlier recognized contributors approached marginalized groups with an understanding of those respective groups, honoring those groups' inherent strengths, and clearly understanding how those groups were able to sustain throughout the adversity of harsh conditions.

Textbooks matter. A failure to accurately depict the past will lead to continually slanting the way the future is framed. Without critical analysis, this slant will only continue to perpetuate White Supremacist mindsets. It is time to deconstruct the icons of social work and develop a more equitable understanding of the ethnically diverse efforts that advanced social welfare. Required is vigorous work from social work educators and researchers to stop reusing the same publications about the past and make intentional attempts to present the history of social work equitably.

Needed is a novel approach to convening conversations on social work and social welfare to include new voices. To dismantle White Supremacy and racism, ideologies on whose voices count must be reconsidered. Along these lines, Dr. Patricia Hill Collins challenged the issue of whom gets named as a scholar (Collins, 1989). This same mindset holds fast to the social welfare dialogue. If we keep using the tools of the primarily White culture to inform the history of social work, we will continue to think in White Supremacist terms in how we view the etiology of problems. Therefore, we must reconsider who is an "expert" to ensure a more equitable view of the past. What is required is a robust rewriting of history that affirms the internal strength upon which many poor and marginalized communities have always thrived.

Social work as a discipline cannot turn a blind eye to the whitewashing of its history. It cannot herald a commitment to equity and fail to address the obvious discrimination in its archives (NASW, 2021). Perhaps what activates and energizes the spirit of social work, serving populations that are undeserved and vulnerable, is not that mainstream individuals sacrifice their dreams to serve the poor. Rather, a more just narrative can be written that affirms and praises that the poor have always served themselves. The marginalized have always been strong. They have always advocated for restorative and not punitive strategies. They have always had their own form of "treatment courts" and homelessness programs. It is time to re-write history in light of these understandings. Social work cannot move forward unless we tear down the icons of the past that have been glorified and resurrect a new view of the discipline's earliest beginnings with one that is realistic in acknowledging and honoring the contributions from the very people social workers seek to serve.

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