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## Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal Volume 19, Fall 2005

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### Preface

Advancing Social Justice: Women's Work  
*Sharon Shockley Lee, Ed.D. and Kelly McKerrow, PhD*

### Guest Editors

Over the last few years, we have observed a renewed interest in social justice. Some of it is mere fascination with the latest issue du jour. Some of it gives academics an opportunity to write, to intellectualize, or to study in the abstract. Some of it makes a substantial difference in our lives and the lives of others. All of it heralds an opportunity to turn our collective attention to important, democratic work facilitated mostly by women.

The notion of social justice is hard to capture. It is demanding, fraught with controversy, and highly contextualized. Most people believe it is important but far fewer take the time or energy to actively pursue it. Thinking about social justice from a theoretical or historical perspective is a necessary but insufficient condition for actually achieving social justice. Social justice is defined not only by what it is but also by what it is not, namely injustice. By seeking justice, we anticipate the ideal. By questioning injustice we approach it. Integrating both, we achieve it.

It is one thing to agree that discrimination is wrong. That is the easy part. It is another to make a conscious choice to confront the discrimination that emerges from everyday interactions in organizations and communities. That brings out another element of social justice – the necessity for courage. And so it seems that social justice requires interactions among a well-developed theoretical/historical viewpoint, a penchant for activism, the choice to meld the two and the courage to do it.

Individual leaders for social justice seek to change political, economic and social structures that privilege some and disadvantage others. They challenge unequal power relationships based on gender, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, language, and other systems of oppression.

As women achieve positions of influence and participate in policy decisions, they have opportunities to open up access to knowledge and resources to those with less power. Women from all levels of the social hierarchy, not just those with official status positions, have a role in social justice leadership. As social justice leaders, women work to alter the undemocratic culture and structure of institutions and society, improving the lives of those who have been marginalized or oppressed.

Theory and practice, advocacy and action to counter injustice have emerged from civil rights, feminist, postmodern, critical, multicultural, queer, postcolonial, and other movements. Grounded in these movements, social justice leaders strive for critique rather than conformity, compassion rather than competition, democracy rather than bureaucracy, polyphony rather than silencing, inclusion rather than exclusion, liberation rather than domination, action for change rather than inaction that preserves inequity.

With that view of social justice we selected articles for this special edition of Advancing Women in Leadership. These articles are only a few of the many that wait to be told about social injustices, the individuals who are its victims, and those who refuse to be held captive to its hegemony. More importantly, they reflect only a few of those that reveal hopeful stories of justice, hard choices, and profound acts of courage.

In the encouragement of advancing women in leadership for social justice, we present the following manuscripts. They are:

*Standing on the Promises: The Experiences of Black Women Administrators in Historically Black Institutions*  
by Gaetane Jean-Marie, Ph.D.

*Inscription on the Past from Present Inquiries Historiography of Nineteenth Century Chinese Immigrant Public Women*  
by Carol Huang, Ph.D.

*A Pedagogy of Awareness: Death Education of an Introduction to Social Consciousness*  
by Linda L. White, Ph.D.

*Nora Barlow- A Modern Cambridge Victorian and 'The Many Lives of Modern Woman'*  
by Louis M. Smith

*"They Hired a Woman and a Catholic!": Dismissal and the Superintendency, Lessons Learned*  
by Diana M. Bourisaw, Ph.D.

*Envisioning New Forms of Praxis: Reflective Practice and Social Justice Education in a Higher Education Graduate Programs*  
by Kimberly A. Kline, Ph.D. and Megan Moore Gardner, Ph.D.

*Re-Constructing the Leadership Model of Social Justice for African-American Women in Education*  
By Mary L. Grimes, Ph.D.

*Black Women Teacher Educators, Race Uplift, and the Academic Other-Mother Identity*  
By Djanna A. Hill-Brisbane

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