

Book Review of *Women in Social Work Who Have Changed the World*

By Rasby Marlene Powell, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Lieberman, A. (2010). *Women in Social Work Who Have Changed the World*. Chicago, Illinois: Lyceum Books, Inc.

Dr. Lieberman is a Chancellor's Club Teaching Professor of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas. She has published multiple books focusing mainly on effective social work practices. Her work emphasizes understanding diversity and building upon women's strengths. Dr. Lieberman has also collaborated on several federally funded family and children projects.

This book profiles 15 women social workers who have succeeded in contributing to profound changes in their communities and countries around the world. Although the author does not specify a particular audience, I believe this book is as suitable for a general audience as it is for an academic audience. Whether a person is simply interested in social justice or is trying to learn what practices are successful in diverse environments, this book is a good choice.

The book is organized into three parts. The first part focuses on five social workers who have gained positions that enabled them to create and change national and local policies. The second part features women who have created social change from the bottom up through community organizing. Part III presents the biographies of three women who have used their social work knowledge to bring great change to repressive and developing countries.

Although these women's social class, religious, and cultural backgrounds are diverse, their desire for social justice and the core values learned in their social work education connect them. All of the women claimed that their social work educations provided them with the knowledge of structure and application that prepared them to accomplish their goals. Each of the featured women overcame structural or personal obstacles to achieve their accomplishments. Some came from impoverished backgrounds; others worked in countries where women have few rights. All of them give credit for their stamina and courage to mentors. Many cited their mothers as mentors. Additionally, many credited inspiring teachers.

This book has multiple strengths. The writing style is clear, concise, and accessible to the general reader as well as the social work scholar. Although the biographies are short, they provide poignant and detailed accounts of various obstacles faced and successes earned by each woman. This allows readers to see "social work in action." In addition, the biographies clearly show that the women did not have a set "plan of action" for their work but remained open and flexible so they could afford themselves of opportunities. The results of their willingness to change courses when needed can inspire all of us who seek to

improve our communities. While I really enjoyed this book, I believe it would have been improved by the addition of a final chapter to tie the book together. As it is, the book just stops with the last biography. It would help students and general readers, alike, to summarize how what they have learned could benefit them in their own lives or careers.

Overall, I would recommend this book and believe it can serve multiple purposes. I believe it would be a good addition to any social work practice course. In addition, this book would make an inspiring addition to gender studies courses. And finally, I believe that this book could be used successfully in political science courses to illustrate how the core values of social work can help craft good social policy.