



NABSW ASSOCIATION OF BLACK SOCIAL WORKER  
PRESIDENTS ANNUAL REPORT  
March 26, 2016  
Hyatt Regency New Orleans Hotel – New Orleans, Louisiana  
ANNUAL MEETING  
J Toni Oliver, National President

It brings me much joy to highlight accomplishments achieved during 2015. There were a number of goals and there have been accomplishments that exceeded our expectations. We began 2015 with these goals:

- To re-establish the African Centered Social Work Academy
- To strengthen legislative action initiatives
- To become financially solvent
- Make improvements to National Office and upgrade IT equipment and network
- To establish a sound social media presence
- To make maximum use of our website to 1) communicate what we believe and what we stand for, 2) for networking between members and 3) for education and training opportunities
- To develop functional working relationships with our affinity organizations for collaboration on projects

Of these goals, re-establishing the African Centered Social Work Academy has been the most challenging yet continue in thought and discussion on how to reinvigorate this essential program. With each of the other goals, significant progress has been made.

- To strengthen legislative action initiatives

Through the National Relations Committee, NABSW has established and maintained a presence on the Hill in ways that have been significant and continuous. In March, 2015, Social Work Month, National Relations Committee members were represented by the Co-chairs, Dr. Denise Davison and Kenneth Green and members, Dr. L Zakiya Newland, Renata Hedrington Jones. Patrick Crawford joined me to participate in Social Work Day on the Hill sponsored by CRISP the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy, and met with legislative staff to present an NABSW slate of legislative initiatives. The National Relations Committee continues to identify legislative initiatives.

Throughout 2015, NABSW received numerous invitations to participate in meetings and listening sessions with several federal departments that have included the Department of Labor, the Department on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Civil Rights for the White House Office on Public Engagement, Equal Opportunity Program and the White House Council on Women and Girls, Our Parliamentarian, Lois Hayman-El participated in a listening session with the Administration on Aging/Administration for Community Living at HHS and provided input on the Adult

Protective Services programs Draft Voluntary Consensus Guidelines. Our Vice President, Roxanne Ellis Denby has participated in meeting with FEMA and forums on health and mental health issues.

Dr. Denise Davison represented NABSW in response to numerous invitations that include the following:

November 4, 2015

President Barack Obama and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell -open enrollment period for the Health Insurance Marketplaces under the Affordable Care Act

October 13, 2015

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Federal Coordination and Compliance Section,

November 9, 2015

Women's Week of Action Call with Valerie Jarrett and Secretary Burwell,

September 17, 2015

African American Leadership Briefing

September 21, 2015,

Human Trafficking: A Summit to Engage Healthcare Organizations

July 15, 2015

Juvenile Justice and Prison Reform Cecilia Muñoz, Assistant to the President and Director of the Domestic Policy Council, Neil Eggleston, Assistant to the President and White House Counsel, and Roy Austin, Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Justice, and Opportunity.

April 25, 2015

African American Policy Forum, BALTIMORE TOWN HALL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

April 23, 2015

30 Years of Advancing Health Equity | The Heckler Report: A Force for Ending Health Disparities in America.

- To become financially solvent

The first month of 2015 ended with completion of a loan modification on our property in Washington, DC which resulted in a 3% decrease in our interest rate and an approximate savings of \$15,000 on the life of the loan.

Financial management procedures were improved in 2015 and together with a focus on cost cutting, the 900 for the year ending 12/31/14 showed a net income which reversed a two year pattern in which we operated with deficit spending.

Marketing of our web based Career Center has generated an increase in income from that source and has become a more useful and effective tool for our membership.

In the last quarter of 2015, Fund Development committee launched an aggressive campaign with a three year goal to raise \$250,000.

Our end of year financial statements indicated we ended the year with a \$25,000 net income, reversing a two year trend of deficit spending.

- Make improvements to National Office and upgrade IT equipment and network

At the end of 2015, our network and phone system was migrated from Verizon to Comcast, which appears to have resolved years of a dysfunctional communication and network system. In addition, we have engaged an IT consultant who has been able to support our needs remotely and improved the functionality of our equipment.

- To make maximum use of our website to 1) communicate what we believe and what we stand for, 2) for networking between members and 3) for education and training opportunities

More effective and efficient use was made of our membership management website in 2015. This improved the accuracy and management of membership data and reporting. Chapters and members' ability to use the website for dues purposes was established in October for membership renewals so that now, chapters are empowered to manage their own memberships for new and existing chapters; members can access their records and the member only sites 24/7 and all updates are immediate and accessible for real time reporting.

The Communication and Information Committee completed three newsletters distributed electronically and established a presence on Facebook that quickly grew to over 500 followers, along with a new Twitter account.

- To develop functional working relationships with our affinity organizations for collaboration on projects

Gloria Scott and Roxanne Ellis Denby have been consistent representatives with the All Healers Mental Health Alliance through which NABSW has been involved in discussions on the impact of and responses to the killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Tamir Rice in Ohio, and Freddie Gray in Baltimore and Sandra Bland in Texas. Most recently they have been focused on issues related to the Flint water crisis. Gloria Scott also represented NABSW on a number of occasions including the African Heritage Studies Association's Summit on Black Professional organizations and was certified in the Association of Black Psychologists' Emotional Emancipation Training. She has put that certification to use through facilitation of a group in Harlem.

Our Vice President has been involved with status update meetings with FEMA that began after a press conference conducted by the Institute of the Black World, 21<sup>st</sup> Century in response to the Katrina catastrophe.

## **AN ENDING WITH A BEGINNING**

**If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.** (African Proverb)

There were two major advocacy initiatives that will have a long and lasting impact on the quality of life for Black people. These initiatives are a model of the Spirit of Harambee and the Principles of Kwanzaa from which the National Association of Black Social Workers operates.

Umoja ~ Unity

Kujichaguulia ~ Self Determination

Ujima ~ Collective Work and Responsibility

Ujama ~ Cooperative Economics

Nia ~ Purpose

Kuumba ~ Creativity

Imani ~ Faith

The Michigan State ABSW Chapter, with the advisement of the Flint chapter, specifically and the involvement of NABSW's Disaster Preparation and Trauma Response Committee and the All Healers Mental Health Alliance, have come together to advocate for and to be watchdogs over the civil and human rights of our brothers and sisters whose lives and whose overall quality of life have been irreparably damaged, but the intentional, criminal and inhumane poisoning of their water system. The Michigan State Chapter includes the chapters of Flint, Detroit, Huron Valley, Lansing and Michigan State University. Together they will be our eyes and ears; informing us of actions we must take in our own communities to support their efforts and to accurately communicate events and needs.

At the very end of 2015, the Houston ABSW Chapter was informed of a kinship parent who has the cards stacked against her in a three year quest to get her nephews out of the Texas Family and Protective Services system. The Executive Committee was informed and the Family Preservation Committee quickly pulled together an alliance of Black organizations and professionals to call into question the agency behavior and the court decisions that repeatedly violated the civil and human rights of the children and the kinship parent. With a spotlight on this situation and a calls to question the rationale and culpability, one child was abruptly move from foster care to be placed with the kinship relative with absolutely no services and the case was closed. The foster parents for the other child have filed an appeal to keep this child from being placed with the approved kinship relative as the Houston chapter enlists the support of a larger group of advocates that represent the fields of law, social service, media and mental health. I have written a letter to the Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights to not only identify the overt harassment, intimidation and violation of civil rights in this case, but the findings from a multiyear legal investigation into the practices of the TX DFPS. This investigation found a standard practice of rampant and gross abuse and neglect of children in the care of TX DFPS.

On the national level we will continue to advocate for Black children to received restorative services in their own homes and the homes of their relatives instead of being disproportionately removed from their homes and placed into foster care. We will continue to be a loud voice for Black children who experience foster care drift as captives instead of being released from foster care.

We will continue to aggressively advocate for the rights of kinship families to have their children placed with them rather than languishing in foster care.

We ask that the NABSW family join us in these efforts and we will keep the body informed of this and other NABSW advocacy efforts through our newsletters, our committee reports and on our website. Working together we will go far.

**Working together, the ants ate the elephant.** (African Proverb)

## **MOVING FORWARD**

In 2015 we have been able to accomplish many of the goals set in 2014 and with that, new and existing challenges and opportunities have presented themselves. Perhaps the four most significant achievements in 2015 and one, ending the two year trend of deficit spending with a net income at the end of 2015. The second is reversing the decline of active members and chapters, ending the first quarter of 2016 with an increase both. The third, establishing a professional and responsive presence on Facebook. Fourth, it appears that our conference marketing and outreach enable us to exceed our pre-registration goal. If this has happened before, was quite some time ago.

Challenges and Opportunities presented to us in 2016 include:

- Establishing a process to document and archive our history.
- Developing the committee structure for planning our 50<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration in 2018.
- Enabling committees to make better use of the website to communicate to the membership.
- Addressing a host of maintenance issues with the property in Washington, DC including heating and air conditioning maintenance, physical and electronic storage of archives and business files; addressing possible foundation issues
- Revising the look and function of our website so that it presents timely information on issues that impact the Black community and NABSW's response.
- Improving our capacity to respond to the needs and requests of members, chapters and the general public.
- Establishing an effective Twitter presence and other social media options that can enhance our reach.
- Making our website more user-friendly, engaging and instructive for members.
- Providing members and chapters opportunities to be linked to national advocacy issues.
- Re-establishing the African Centered Social Work Academy.
- Identifying a core of subject area experts who can respond to inquiries and requests for NABSW's perspective at meetings on federal, regional and local social service issues.

**“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”**

Martin Luther King,

As we maintain our focus on what needs to be done to enhance the operations of our organization I would be remiss if I did not remind us of our personal responsibility to make change where we stand.

We can say to our friends and family what we believe to be the problems and solutions in our society, but until we become active in issues in our communities, consciously support Black businesses and institutions we will continue to beg others to give us what we are capable of providing for ourselves. Lest we forget, we built this country and there is absolutely nothing we cannot do and accomplish together.

### **KNOW THAT YOU ALREADY HAVE ALL THAT YOU NEED ~ TAP THE POWER WITHIN**

Why do we beg for the approval and acceptance of others? What does recognition from the Oscars really mean when the box office has already spoken loudly with millions of dollars that we have value? What do promotions and titles really have to do with what we are capable of, what achievements we have made and what our value is to our community and society, at large? What businesses that we support are putting money and services into our community? Yet, on all accounts, we continuously support them, to the intentional exclusion of our own.

### **BUILD YOUR OWN BLACK WEALTH**

Learn to build your own wealth. Because of our reliance on others for our well being, over time we have become more dependent and sometimes hopeless in the belief that the die has been cast on our lot in life and we are limited in our ability to improve it. Wealth building has been cloaked in secrecy, presented in an intentionally confusing manner and often not welcoming or transparent to people of color. The smoke and mirrors presentation of personal finance typically leaves Blacks absent from the discussion, the information and the benefits. Just look at the intentionality of the erosion of Black wealth through predatory lending and massive foreclosures in the Black communities. It has finally been revealed that lenders received bonuses for negotiating predatory loans and those loans were routinely written for Black people, even when they had good to excellent credit scores.

We can thrive. We can survive. We can overcome. We've done it before. We can do it again. It is truly a matter of survival. D. Boyce Watkins is committed to improving the wealth quotient of Black folks. Check out his Black Wealth Bootcamp and mention the National Association of Black Social Workers to demonstrate the NABSW's interest in economic development and self sufficiency. <http://theblackwealthbootcamp.com/>.

### **EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO VOTE**

On the local and national levels, we must actively enforce our right to vote. Please become active in recruiting, selecting and voting for people who care about the civil and human rights of Black people and those focused on increasing the services and supports in our communities. As individual members and chapters, work for voter protection and be on the lookout for voter suppression tactics. <http://www.866ourvote.org/> Become active in voter education and voter transportation. Our vote is more serious now more than ever. Our lives and our futures are dependent on it in ways we cannot imagine.

### **SUPPORT AND BUILD BLACK BUSINESS**

Now is the time for us to intentionally be about the business of building our own communities and stop the madness that builds others instead of our. If you want to know your culpability, look around and look within. As you reach into your pocket to give up the money, take note of who is paying and who is taking. There is no clearer message to you about what and who you support and what and who you don't. It's time to change that picture.

I pray you will focus on this from now until we meet again and when we meet again, I pray that we can testify that we have worked **collectively** to improve our communities, the quality of life for people of African ancestry and to have aggressively advocated for social justice, restorative justice and human rights.

**~Harambee~**  
**(pulling together)**