

## Welcome California Social Workers and Colleagues

The opportunity for Professionals to come together in a conference such as this is a welcomed opportunity for likeminded individuals who subscribe to the fundamental values described in the NASW Code of Ethics. This is a time to reflect, interrogate and be resolute with our ideas and positions fighting for social justice. While licensed professionals are ensuring that they get their requisite CEUs, it is also a time for networking, reflection and battery recharging. This NASW conference serves to remind participants that we continue to value social justice while preserving the dignity of the individual without being judgmental. The NASW Annual Conference should give purpose, agency and meaning to those who gather together for the various activities that unfold over the meeting days.

Last year at the time of our annual conference, I reminded us about the policy being perpetuated by our national government in our name. I mentioned that the "country is facing governmental policies that undermine the core values of the fabric of the society and especially of those of the social work profession." Unfortunately, since then there has been no improvement in the situations and circumstances that were highlighted then. To the contrary, we continue to hear harrowing stories of the mistreatment of immigrant families, separation of children from caregivers and saddest of all stories of children dying while in Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) custody. One cannot miss the many gut-wrenching stories of children being separated from their parent(s) at the US border because these stories are so ubiquitous.

This year has seen the continuation of the slaughter of people partly because of the easy access to guns by individuals, intent on mayhem. Access even by people who have been denied the opportunity to purchase a firearm, but with the loophole in the laws as related to the private sale of firearm, they are still able to make a purchase and commit a mass shooting. We must continue to fight for gun safety regulations.

I do have to mention hurricane Dorian that has caused catastrophic damage in the Bahamas. The focus of Dorian's fury was focused on Abaco islands and at the time of writing the death toll was up to fifty (50) but is expected to rise dramatically as the government has reported that more than 1500 people are missing.

I mention these events to highlight the critical importance of the training, keynote and other conference related activities for the benefit of social workers who are prepared to work with vulnerable and traumatized populations who need the services, support and advocacy offered by professional social workers in our various capacities

I look forward to our conference Keynote speaker Kane Smego, an international touring Spoken Word Poet and Hip-Hop

Artist, Educator, and National Poetry Slam finalist. He is the Associate Director and an artist alumnus of Next Level, a cultural diplomacy program that sends American hip-hop artists around the world to use music and dance to promote cultural exchange, entrepreneurship, and conflict prevention. I have heard Mr. Smego perform at the NASW National conference and I know that Conferees are in for a treat.

So, in addition to ensuring that you get those CEUs, let us ensure that we take some time for renewal, rejuvenation, reflection and recharging. Take some time to engage with the various Council members in their special sessions. Find them and some of your Chapter board members and officers with the special tags on their conference badges; ask them about leadership opportunities for you in your region or with the California Chapter. And surely your workshop leaders, too, will inspire and motivate you to be your best self and do your best work in the coming year.

Visit and talk with the exhibitors who offer you bridges to organizations where Standing Up might be magnified! Their reps will be among us, with giveaways to entice your interest and remind you of the work they do.

As you, join us in this 2019 conference, I hope you will learn from and enjoy your workshop presenters, hear our keynote speaker describe how to meet and master the challenges being faced by modern social work practitioners, encounter our diverse members, instructors, guests, students, and colleagues, and perhaps spend some special time with a few of your co-workers and start thinking and planning how you will get involved in the voter mobilization efforts for the 2020 election cycle (it is not too early to start that effort during primary season).

I look forward to meeting you at our statewide gathering. If you see me, your president, introduce yourself and let me know how you want to become more involved.

The great African American writer, Nikki Giovanni Jr., reminds us that: "There is always something to do. There are hungry people to feed, naked people to clothe, sick people to comfort and make well. And while I don't expect you to save the world I do think it's not asking too much for you to love those with whom you sleep, share the happiness of those whom you call friend, engage those among you who are visionary and remove from your life those who offer you depression, despair and disrespect."

In your service  
Sylvester "Jim" Bowie

