



December 2003

Review of *Faithful Angels: Portraits of International Social Work Notables*. James O. Billups, (Ed.). Reviewed by Lynne M. Healy.

Lynne M. Healy
University of Connecticut

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Healy, Lynne M. (2003) "Review of *Faithful Angels: Portraits of International Social Work Notables*. James O. Billups, (Ed.). Reviewed by Lynne M. Healy.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 4 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol30/iss4/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



for strategies and directions that might lead towards durable solutions.

Bill Buffum
Barry University

James O. Billups, (Ed.), *Faithful Angels: Portraits of International Social Work Notables*. Washington, DC: NASW Press, 2002. \$34.99 paperback.

Most social workers, social work educators, and even scholars of social work history have little knowledge of the global history of the profession. The names of the most eminent historical figures in social work's development in Europe, such as Alice Salomon and Rene Sand, are largely unknown in the United States. *Faithful Angels: Portraits of International Social Work Notables*, edited by the late James Billups, will spark readers' interest in the worldwide history of social work through the diverse and sometimes inspirational life stories of social work leaders presented in the volume.

Billups conducted in-depth interviews with 15 notable social workers from six continents. Using oral history methodology, he reports the interviews in the words of the subjects. As explained in the preface, the author used the reputational method to identify the notables in the book, drawing upon the advice of social workers with expertise in international social work. All interviewees had retired from their regular full-time positions by the time of the interviews, although many remain active in various professional activities. In addition, all had made "exceptional professional contributions to social work and to people's well-being in their own country and beyond during a major part of the second half of the twentieth century" (p. xi).

Each of the fifteen chapters begins with a brief biographical summary, followed by the text of the interview. The interviews address early experiences that influenced career directions, professional experiences, accomplishments, philosophies, and hopes for the future. The notables are: Gloria Abate (Peru), Angelina Almanzor (Philippines), Seno Cornely (Brazil), Armaity Desai (India), Sattareh Farman-Farmaian (Iran), Aida Gindy (Egypt), Harriet Jakobsson (Sweden), Robin Huws Jones (England), Katherine Kendall (USA), John Lawrence (Australia), Esinet

Mapondera (Zimbabwe), Meher Nanavatty (India), Jona Rosenfeld (Israel), Richard Splane (Canada), and Herman Stein (USA). With about equal numbers of men and women, professionals from industrialized and developing countries, and spanning 6 continents and 13 countries, diversity is a strength of the book. If there is imbalance, educators are somewhat over represented, although many notables combined academic careers with government service and consultancies. All had numerous professional involvements.

Because social work is a relatively young profession, the stories of these 15 individuals address significant portions of the history of the development of social work and ways in which the profession's history is intertwined with larger movements. For example, Nanavatty talks of the influence of the independence movement in India on his ideas about social work and Mapondera shares the impact of her involvement in the liberation struggle in what is now Zimbabwe. Farman-Farmaian's efforts to establish social work education and launch family planning in Iran are set within the changing social and political climates of her country. Readers will learn about the early days of the United Nations from Kendall and Gindy, as well as others who took part in UN projects, while Stein discusses the work of UNICEF in some depth, as he was a consultant to the first three directors of that organization. The special contributions that social work has made and can make to world organizations is evident; Stein, for example, notes his call for attention to mental health in UNICEF programs and his push for an integrated approach to child development.

The book gets off to a slow start, as the first few interviews contain little elaboration on the most interesting questions. Could the editor have done more to encourage a more satisfying response, or is it appropriate to allow the interviewee to determine how far to go in answering the questions? While the latter may be good oral history technique, it does not always leave the reader satisfied. Other interviews stand out for the insights offered or the compelling stories told. Rosenfeld explicates his ideas about practice and professional-client relationships in an engaging way that helps the reader think about his or her own perspectives on these questions. Nanavatty discusses the complexities of the introduction of professional education in India, highlighting issues

around adaptation, indigenization efforts, and the impact of the global market economy. Cornely shares his experiences in contending with a climate of oppression, and Jakobsson reveals the horrors and difficulties of work in refugee camps.

A universal message from these 15 is the importance of professional involvements. All have been deeply involved in national and international organizations in social work and social welfare. They have used these involvements to contribute to social policy and to the refinement of social work education and knowledge, and they all noted the enhanced meaning these involvements have given to their lives including the important professional friendships that resulted. As internationalists, many express the value of international contact; as Kendall puts it, "whatever we do in social work has to be more community, internationally and globally oriented" (p. 159).

The collection would have been enhanced by the selection of additional representatives from practice. To the extent possible, additional probing would have resulted in more satisfying answers to some of the questions. The questions that solicited lists of awards and accomplishments yielded less interesting material and therefore should have been minimized.

On balance, however, readers will find much that is inspirational in *Faithful Angels*. The book makes a significant contribution through its message that social work leaders exist in all parts of the world, and that wisdom and practice innovations are widely distributed. Valuable historical information is documented through the collection of these 15 life stories. Hopefully, it will stimulate additional research on the worldwide history of the social work profession.

Lynne M. Healy
University of Connecticut

Maeve Quaid, *Workfare: Why Good Ideas Go Bad*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. \$60.00 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

Canadian scholar, Maeve Quaid, provides an insightful, forthright account regarding the politics of social policy, particularly