Candida Brooks and Sandra Bernabei • The Undoing Racism™ Internship Project (URIP)

Founding Members; President and First Vice President of the Board of Directors

2015 award winner
The National Association of Social Workers, NYC Chapter (NASW-NYC), founded the Undoing Racism™ Internship Project (URIP) to refocus social work education on areas of study that can help students break cycles of systemic racism that inhibit us as a society from building toward racial justice. Formed in collaboration with the Anti-Racist Alliance, the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services (JBFCS), and New York area universities, two program advisors have been instrumental in helping the URIP to grow and progress: Board President Sandra Bernabei and First Vice President Candida Brooks.

“Social work and education have a history that is steeped in social justice and reform,” says Brooks. “In order to achieve positive outcomes for all and to affect change, we must be flexible in our ability to synthesize different lived experiences, and keen in our analysis of the impact of inter-connected systems.”

“Our election in 2012, as a team, to the Board of Directors of NASW-NYC lifted up the work of so many we have been organizing with for so long,” says Bernabei. “Social work has many voices and areas of practice to build upon in collaboration.”

“Women can accomplish much when they work together,” she added. “Start by identifying the work that is meaningful to you; then, invest fully, join or create a collective, and find innovative ways carry the work forward.”

On the Person Who Has Had The Most Profound Influence In My Life

Sandra Bernabei: Ron Chisom, Executive Director of The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond is my mentor. He has inspired me to believe that each one of us has a role in and responsibility for undoing racism in our lifetime.

Candida Brooks: I was fortunate to be born into a family of activists during the ’60s, but it was my mother who taught me about social systems. She was the most intelligent woman I have ever known, yet she only obtained a sixth-grade formal education. This notwithstanding, she instilled the notion that education is the great equalizer and demonstrated how to move within a society that institutionalizes roadblocks. My family is and continues to be my first collective.

On the Hardest Challenge I’ve Had to Face in My Career

Sandra Bernabei: To not sell out my values for personal advancement.

Candida Brooks: Coming to a crossroad that emerged from a crisis situation allowed me the opportunity to make one of the boldest moves of my equity work and career. In that moment, I truly realized that as challenging it can be, the decision-making power was mine to keep or to give away. You must understand that you have power—power in the most challenging situations and power to decide.

1 Comment

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so proud to have these ladies dedicating their lives for social justice

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