

## 2007 Cross Cultural Conference \_ Feb 25 — Feb 28, 2007

Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

*“Poverty: It’s Impact on Individuals, Families and Communities”*

### President’s Message



*Greetings and Happy New Year!*

I am delighted to present a message of excitement about our Annual Cross Cultural Mental Health and Human Services Conference. Surely, there is much to be excited about when you examine the content of the 29<sup>th</sup> version of the longest standing conference of its kind in America. You may visit our website at [www.crossculturaltraining.org](http://www.crossculturaltraining.org) for additional information about the Action Council.

On February 25-28, 2007, at

the Hilton Resort Hotel in Myrtle Beach, psychologists, social workers, nurses, psychiatrists, educators, clergy and political leaders will convene to discuss the theme, “Poverty: It’s Impact on Individuals, Families and Communities.” What a line-up of experts to discuss this most important topic.

Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter, who represents District 66 in the South Carolina House of Representatives, will provide the keynote address to kick things off on Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. A licensed social worker, Cobb-Hunter will speak on the topic, “Combating Poverty in South Carolina: Legislative Perspectives.” Come early to hear this challenging speaker.

The Honorable Jim Clyburn, Majority Whip in the U.S. House

of Representatives will speak at the President’s Luncheon on Monday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Of course, Representative Clyburn is one of the top political leaders in America, and he has much to say about the government’s role in addressing poverty. You will not want to miss his insightful and thought provoking message.

The luncheon speaker on Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> will be Dr. Andrew Hugine, Jr., President of South Carolina State University. This dynamic leader in higher education has a compelling story to report about how S.C. State is perhaps the leading institution in America in transforming the lives of students who come from low-income backgrounds, yet who go on to become leaders in all sectors of the human enterprise.

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### From The Editor

*Greetings!*

First, let me thank each of you who contributed to this fourteenth edition of *The Action Council Communicator*. Excitement and anticipation is in the air as Cross Cultural Conference 2007 is fast approaching. The Cross Cultural Conference 2007, entitled, “Policy: Its Impact on Individuals, Families and Communities” is our first major event of the year. By the time you read this, hopefully, you will be preparing for your journey to Myrtle Beach as a Conference 2007 attendee. We are delighted and appreciative that you have chosen to share what we consider “a mountaintop” experience with us. The Conference program will address poverty issues and challenges with implications for several social institutions and human services organizations. The mission is to provide information, education, and practice skills based

on outcomes of outreach studies, social policies, and models for best practices.

Our conference plenary programs, workshops, forums, discussions and special events are designed to provide you with opportunities to network, dialogue and collaborate with persons who represent a cross-section of the community: educators, students, counselors, administrative support persons, cultural and religious leaders, health care and human service providers and consumers, business and community leaders, as well as representatives from local community organizations, churches and universities. We come together with the goal of enhancing our awareness, knowledge and skills to more effectively serve consumers, their families and communities.

This edition of our Newsletter features articles from Dr. Carl Jones, our Board President, who



Sharon Rice-Brown, MSW

brings greetings and Conference highlights in the “President’s Message”,

Dr. Carol Apt, a member of The Action Council, a sociologist at South Carolina State University and host of “Talk to Me,” a radio show about sexual issues, contributed an informative article on “The Culture of Poverty.” Our Board Vice President, Dr. Stephen McLeod-Bryant contributes an enlightening article, “Task Force on Action Council Functioning Being Created.” This task force will work to improve our

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### Conference Special Events

**Opening Session**  
Sunday, February 25th 2:30 pm

**Church Convocation**  
Sunday, February 25th 6:00 pm

**Administrative Support Staff Day**  
Monday, February 26th  
(Workshops/ Luncheon for Administrative Support Staff)

**Students Day**  
Monday, February 26th  
(Workshops and Luncheon for College Students)

**Cultural Event**  
Monday, February 26th  
Reception-  
Sponsored by National Direct  
Door Prizes!!!

**Conference Gala**  
Tuesday, Feb. 27th  
(Music, Dancing, and Fellowship)

**Closing Brunch**  
Wednesday, February 28  
Door Prizes!!!



**Sharon Rice-Brown,**  
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## "A Proud Heritage"

**Dr. Otis A. Corbitt, Conference Coordinator**



"We have come a long way" since the Department of Mental Health Executive Staff included one employee of color in the "Management" category. "We have come a long way" since the *inception of a dream* that focused on strategies for developing Cross-Cultural competence among community mental health planners, executives, clinicians and volunteers. And, we have come a long way since the Cross-Cultural

Conference became a reality and was born on May 21, 1979, at the Thunderbird Inn Motel, Greenville, South Carolina. The Wesley United Methodist Church hosted the Convocation, May 19, 1979, with the One Hundred Voice Choir of Greenville's First Baptist Church providing the music.

This broad-based educational forum was designed to give special attention to the mental health needs of un-served and under-served people of color and other special populations. Furthermore, it was designed to promote awareness, knowledge and skills pertaining to racial, ethnic, spiritual, and other cultural differences that impact the assessment, diagnoses, treatment and recovery of consumers and their families. Special attention was given to community mental health boards, administrative and clinical personnel as well as policy makers, community leaders and volunteers. There are special and rewarding memories of learning experiences and growth that resulted through the Cross Cultural, Black Males, and Female Conferences. Furthermore, growth and development in cultural competence resulted from the many retreats and ocean cruises focusing on culture and diversity

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organization. Dr. Otis Corbitt, our Founder and Conference Director, provides a very informative article that takes you through the lifespan of this Conference, entitled "A Proud Heritage". Dr. Dean Patrick presents an excerpt from a forum with Allen University students entitled, "You and Your Community" and Mr. Willie Bethune, Executive Director with Wateree Community Action Council provides an article on how, "Poverty Impacts All of Us".

This year we are again fortunate to have in attendance higher education students, administrative support persons and consumers of mental health and human services. We are certain their involvement will continue to challenge and inspire us.

In closing, your membership and input is important to us. We encourage your contributions to our Newsletter and Website [www.culturaltraining.org](http://www.culturaltraining.org). Please share with us any news, articles of interest, special accomplishments, gifts or talents you may have. Please feel free to communicate with me by telephone at (803) 609-8859 or e-mail [sdrcebrwn@aol.com](mailto:sdrcebrwn@aol.com)

*Blessings,*

*Sharon Rice-Brown, MSW, Editor Action Council Communicator  
Secretary, Action Council Board of Directors*

related to male/female relationships, human sexuality, the family in transition, the genetic and culture, etc. In addition, growth, development and work place harmony was enhanced through in-service education, in terms of gender conflict and resolution, supervisor/supervisee relationships, and management operations in an intra-cultural organization. It should also be noted that there are many special memories in terms of increased participation and inclusion of representatives from more diverse populations in community mental health center board compositions. Furthermore, the many changes in staffing patterns throughout the Department of Mental Health, and other agencies, institutions, programs and other systems are indicators of positive progress. The cross-cultural endeavors over the years have often generated effective relationships, collaboration and cooperation among Mental Health Agencies, Department of Social Services, Department of Corrections, Substance Abuse Services, Law Enforcement and Public Safety as well as other State, Federal and Voluntary Programs of Services.

It appears at this time however that our memories over shadows our dreams. This means that there is a time for re-awakening and renewal that would generate new challenges and opportunities for persons that appreciate and are committed to enhancing culture and diversity. This gives implications for strategies that would further ensure productivity, effectiveness and harmony in the workplace, home, school, church and community.

I am forever indebted to the many individuals, groups and organizations that have made the growth, development and progress related to the cross cultural movement possible.

## Who We Are

The Action Council for Cross-Cultural Mental Health and Human Services, Inc. (ACCMHS) is a voluntary organization dedicated to enhancing the involvement of minority citizens in the management, delivery and utilization of mental health and human services. The Council represents public and private business/industry and organization representatives, professionals, and volunteers who have an interest in cross-cultural issues.

The Council exists for the purpose of understanding diverse cultures, enhancing cultural relations and providing a forum for multi-cultural issues and management/personnel concerns. This includes educational training, resource management and networking toward providing service delivery and cultural awareness.

## Why You Should Belong

Statewide and regional support is needed to make the Council's goals a reality. By your membership and interest, you join in enhancing the participation of professionals from diverse cultures in mental health and human services.

## “You and Your Community”

**Dr. Dean C. Patrick, Guidance Director  
Eau Claire High School**

### What do you know?

Do you know the origin of the popular gangs of today? The Bloods, Crips, the Folk Nation etc.

Are you aware that the groups had a totally different intent? Which was to galvanize and develop local communities?

Do you know that a primary reason for the change in focus had to do with local plants and industry in those communities shutting down and leaving a significant workforce that had little or no education thereby leaving a dramatic void in those communities?

This progression of events was further exacerbated by documented governmental intervention to neutralize the efforts of such groups as the Black Panther Party and other Community Self help groups.

### So What Can You Do?

Each individual can decide to prepare themselves to compete in an increasingly competitive world to make themselves and their communities better.

This can be done by strengthening your sense of self through positive associations, productive group activity that can benefit your personal and professional development.

As you progress through this path to success, recognize that there are three parts to the total you: the perception you have of your self, the perception others have of you and a combination of the two.

Recognize the spirit in you; nurture it through conversation, worship, prayer or however you choose to acknowledge a higher being. This gives you a sense of the big picture and how you fit in it.

As you do your personal work of working to be the best you can be, understand that you are from a community, part of a community and ultimately responsible for the health of that community that you live in now or will live in, in the future.

So what do you know; you know you have life, energy, mental capacity, health and opportunity.

You also know that you came from a community, you currently reside in a community, and will live, work, and compete in a larger, greater, global community.

*So what can you do? You can prepare!  
You can take care of your mind and body!*

*You can develop healthy relationships!  
You can understand the art of communication  
by practicing appropriate skills!*

*You can disassociate from those influences that will hinder  
your ability to achieve success.*

And finally, you can acknowledge that change is needed! You are the catalyst for that change because you are our future. And most importantly, that that change will not take place if you are not willing to do what is necessary.

*\* The above is an excerpt from a speech delivered to the  
students of Allen University*

## The Culture of Poverty

**Dr. Carol Apt, Associate Professor, SCSU**

While I was not the first person to come up with the term, the culture of poverty, as a Sociologist, I'd like to explain it.

There's a saying that goes something like this, 'the very rich are different from you and me.' That statement could also be made about the very poor, who total about 13 million people in the United States. The poverty level is set by the US Department of Agriculture, and at present, it's about \$19,000 for a family of four. But a life of poverty is not just about the lack of money; it's naive to assume that if you give poor people money they will be just like you and me.

One explanation for why some families are poverty-stricken for generation after generation is that when one lives in poverty, one does not learn the behaviors and attitudes that will be of assistance in breaking this destructive cycle. A person learns most of his or her ideas about himself or herself, or about the world, from the family, from the community, and from the society at large. The largest social class in the United States is the middle class; not only are they the most numerous, but traditional middle class values are linked to success in the workplace, in relationships and in financial matters. We've all heard the old adages, 'early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise;' 'a stitch in time saves nine;' 'use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.' Many of us have grown up with the notion that if you study hard, work hard, spend money wisely and don't waste what you have, you'll have a good and comfortable life.

That may be, but poor people don't learn those lessons. The lessons they learn from their families, from their communities and from society can actually impair their ability to get out of poverty. Here are some examples:

The middle class generally teaches young people that they are in control of their own lives; if they want something to happen they have to work hard for it and their hard work will pay off. Middle class kids learn the values of ambition, hard work, and self-reliance. They are taught not to depend on others, but to develop those personal qualities that will contribute to their success. Poor people are not taught that they are in charge of their own lives, or that they can change their lives through the sheer force of their own ambition. They learn early on to become dependent on others – on social service workers, on welfare employees or on governmental agents. Self-reliance and ambition are not parts of the culture of poverty.

Middle class children are often given a sense of their own history and heritage. Some say it all started with the publication of Alex Haley's famous book, "Roots," which sent people of all races and backgrounds scurrying to find out the history of the people from whom they came. We have Black History Month, Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Festivals, and so on. Those are designed to celebrate and recognize differences, and to acquaint people with their respective heritages. In addition, middle class kids are also told to look forward to the future and to plan for it. Retirement programs, 401k's, and the like, are all designed to provide for one's future. Middle class kids are told to go to college and to graduate school because it will benefit them in the future. Poor people often don't have a sense of their own history, or of their own future. For as far back as they can see, and as far forward as they can anticipate, everyone they know has been and will be, in poverty. It's hard to rustle up a sense of nostalgia about a past fraught with the kinds of social ills brought about by poverty. It's hard to feel optimistic about a future if all you see is more of the same.

Middle class people and poor people are not the same; they think differently, they behave differently and they have different expectations for their lives. We've only begun to scratch the surface of this fascinating topic. Want to know more? I'll be discussing this in much greater detail on Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> in Myrtle Beach. I hope to see you there. —

## “Poverty Impacts All of Us”

**Willie Bethune, MSW, LISW, CP/AP, Exec. Director,  
Wateree Community Actions**

Representative Joe Neal of Richland and Sumter counties has spoken about the importance of a quality public education and the economic price this state and country will pay for the lack of a quality education for every child. Representative Neal iterates, “There are really two education systems in South Carolina. One does a good job of educating students, and its graduates perform at or above the national average. The other is simply failing children.” He cited statistics showing that fifty percent of South Carolina students fail to graduate from high school. He emphasized, “Among African Americans, sixty-three percent of males and sixty percent of females fail to graduate. Those failures are primarily in the poorest public school districts.” Neal believes it’s the responsibility of the entire state to attempt to fix these problems or the state as a whole will pay the price.



Here are a few statistics that show the need for education reform:

- *In today’s society, a worker with a high school diploma makes about fifty-five percent of what a college graduate earns. High school dropouts fare even worse, making less than half of what a college graduate earns.*
- *Forty percent of South Carolina students enter the workforce with minimal skills; only fifteen percent of the jobs available today require minimal skills.*
- *Sixty-one percent of all new jobs require skills that only twenty percent of the workforce possess* (continued on right)

## “Task Force on Action Council Functioning Being Created”

**Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD  
Vice-President, Action Council**



During the summer of 2006, the Board of the Action Council did a self-assessment of how well it was functioning in serving the mission of the Action Council. The Board’s self assessment suggested that our greatest strengths were in being actively involved in the planning of the organization, commitment to the organization’s mission and values, and the working relationship between the President, Dr. Carl Jones, and the rest of the

Board. However, as with any organization, opportunities for improvement were noted: orientation for new Board Members, the lack of clarity with respect to Board Member roles, and the extent to which disagreement might impair Board function were seen to be our biggest weaknesses.

The results of this self-assessment were discussed at the Board’s Fall Retreat in October 2006 at Santee State Park. Members and

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Our close-out speaker on Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, as well as our Convocation speaker on Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, is none other than **The Rev. Dr. Lewis Anthony from Washington, D.C.** This dynamic pastor is one of the best speakers in America, and he has a storied history of advocating for the poor. He will leave the conference participants not only spellbound, but energized and ready to go back into the “vineyards” to serve the less fortunate.

In between the plenary sessions will be 20 workshops dispersed among the four learning tracks, namely: 1) Policy and Government, 2) Behavioral Healthcare and Social Welfare, 3) Community and 4) Education. If you haven’t done so, register now! This is must training for health and human services professionals who work with culturally diverse populations. Our aim is to assist in increasing the number of culturally competent professionals.

I look forward to greeting each of you personally in Myrtle Beach. See you there.

According to Santee-Lynches Council of Governments, the nine South Carolina counties, Union, Chesterfield, Barnwell, Marlboro, Marion, Dillon, Williamsburg, Clarendon and Lee, with ten percent or greater unemployment over the last year are all rural, have a large minority population and are located between the fall line and the coastal plain. As you can probably guess, they have some of the poorest school districts in the state.

Jeff Stensland of the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services said, “Health care costs are going up across the board. While South Carolina’s medical spending is among the highest in the nation, its health outcomes are among the worst. Unhealthy people need more medical care.”

A community will not thrive or reach a high degree of attainment if the people are neglected. Poor health, ignorance, lack of a political and economic will to educate and teach children from poor family and communities impacts all of us.

Board Members discussed the need to examine how Board function could be improved to benefit the organization. One idea that was discussed was developing a five year plan for identifying the most important administrative functions needed to support the Action Council’s success, then seeking agencies, volunteers or employees to fulfill these functions.

It was even suggested that the goal might be to eventually hire an Executive Director to direct the day-to-day operations of the Council, freeing the Board to provide more policy oversight and advice.

The Board has agreed to create a task force to review the issue of Council function and develop a plan for Board approval. If you would be interested in participating on this task force, please Email me at [mcleodbs@musc.edu](mailto:mcleodbs@musc.edu), or contact one of the other Board Members, by March 15, 2007 and I will get back to you. Depending on where most interested people live, accessibility to computers, and work schedules, will determine how we will communicate or meet with one another.