

Social work histories of complicity and resistance

Online Event: 24 September 19.30 (BST-UK) / 14.30 (EDT-USA)

Presented by the Social Work History Network (UK)
and Social Welfare History Group (USA)

Booking and more information [here](#).

Speakers:



Vasilios Ioakimidis: Learning from the Past to Shape the Future: Making Sense of Social Work's Contested Histories

Synopsis: This presentation delves into the complex political history of social work. In light of current debates about the profession's future, there is a pressing need to explore social work's contested legacies. While uncovering disturbing elements of the past, it underscores that social work remains a "profession worth fighting for." Positioned between state policies and vulnerable populations, social workers and users of social services often witness state brutality. However, many have actively challenged violence and oppression, striving to transform the profession through broader social movements. This presentation illustrates how social work uniquely addresses the connections between public issues and private troubles, analyzing the profession's contested past through this lens.

Bio: Vasilios is a Professor of Comparative Social Work at the University of Essex and the University of West Attica, Greece. He also serves as the Global Education Commissioner in the International Federation of Social Workers. Vasilios co-edits the *British Journal of Social Work*. Most of his publications focus on the broad theme of social work theory and practice under extreme socio-political circumstances.



Jane McPherson: Well-intentioned complicity: One social worker's role in the destruction of a Black community

Synopsis: This talk will focus on one social worker—Maude Keeling—and the role she played in the destruction of an established Black community in Athens, Georgia (USA), in the 1960s. The presenter will show how Keeling's assessments were a necessary step in the "urban renewal" process, and question how her obedience to authority—as well as race- and class-based attitudes—may have contributed to her complicity in work for which the City of Athens is now paying reparations. Social workers will be encouraged to reflect on how "well-intentioned" helping can lead to very real harm.

Bio: Jane is an Associate Professor and Director of Global Engagement at the University of Georgia School of Social Work, where she conducts archival research exploring how local Georgia histories of charity and social work entwine with ideologies of white supremacy and capitalism, and asks questions about how these histories still echo in social work practice today. She develops, evaluates, and advocates for human rights-based approaches to social work practice in the U.S. and around the world.



Gianinna Munoz-Arce: Social Work in Chile: Impacts of political violence after 50 years.

Synopsis: In Chile, the right-wing dictatorship (1973–1990) implemented the first neoliberal 'experiment' in the world, affecting the development of social work in a traumatic way. 50 years after the coup, the inheritance from the dictatorship appears to still be blocking discussion and implementation of critical perspectives in social work. It has contributed to reinforcing depoliticised and individually oriented approaches of social workers' interventions, and, even more, some practices of complicity with the authoritarian rule. However, practices of resistance in this context have also been identified. This presentation analyses the way in which neoliberal ideology impacted Chilean social work and illuminates strategies employed by many in the profession to resist in such a context.

Bio: Gianinna is a Ph.D. in Social Work, Bristol University, England. Master in Social Work and Social Worker from the P. Universidad Catolica de Chile. Currently, she is an associate professor at the Department of Social Work at the University of Chile, where she coordinates the Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Work Research Cluster. With close to 20 years as a social work educator, her teaching has focused on social work theory and practices as well as social policy. Her research interests include critical theories, social interventions and disciplinary debates in social work.



Mimi Abramovitz: Compliance and Resistance When Democracy Falters

Synopsis: How might social workers think about/ manage pressure to comply or resist given the current threats to democracy in the US and internationally

Bio: Mimi, the Bertha Capen Reynolds Professor of Social Policy, *Emerita*, studies inequality, neoliberalism, non-profit organizations, and activism through the lens of race, class, gender and history. Author of four books and 90 plus articles she is currently writing *Gendered Obligations: The History of Activism Among Black and White Working-Class Women Since 1900*. A scholar and an activist, Abramovitz co-chairs *Voting is Social Work* (National Social Work Mobilization Campaign) and advises the US Social Welfare History Group. She has received 19 awards, most recently "The Lifetime Award for Excellence" (Hunter College, 2021) and an "Honorary Doctorate," (Lund University, Sweden, 2022).

