

FROM THE EDITOR

One of the more overlooked areas within the field of vocational rehabilitation involves ethnic and cultural issues. We live in a country that is becoming increasingly diverse; many people of different races live and work together. Individuals of Hispanic, African American, Native American, or Asian American origin all reflect different values and characteristics. With the rapid growth of people of different cultures and origins living and working in the United States, professionals, consumer organizations, advocates, and policy makers in the disability field must be very sensitive to the needs of these different groups. People with disabilities who represent different minority groups are presented daily with additional challenges. In this issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, we will review in depth many of those challenges.

Without greater participation from professionals who represent these ethnic groups, it seems unlikely that we will ever be able to reach out with the sensitivity that is necessary to help minorities with disabilities. Fortunately, the issue editor, Dr. Paul Leung, has been able to recruit a tremendous group of contributors who represent different ethnic backgrounds and are nationally known leaders in vocational rehabilitation. Most of the contributors are well known in the field of rehabilitation counseling and rehabilitation counselor education. Indeed, Dr. Leung himself is one of the top rehabilitation counselor educators in the world today; we are indebted to him for his willingness to provide leadership on this issue.

I believe that the two domestic issues of the 1990s in the United States are: 1) fiscal management and control at the federal and state government levels, and 2) the ability of communities to work and live together more productively with all types and groups of people. The most recent

round of embarrassment to the United States took place in May of 1992 in south central Los Angeles. These riots and the indignities that were suffered by all involved in this community are a negative commentary on our society. We must come to grips with how to manage our communities in such a way that the people from all walks of life have a feeling of hope and an opportunity to participate in the workplace and the community.

Those of us who work in the disability field and have dedicated our lives to helping people who are compromised with a disability are in a unique position and often have excellent skills for overcoming the ethnic and cultural barriers present throughout our country. This issue of the journal should not be viewed merely as a series of papers that reflect only ethnic and cultural issues for people with disabilities. Yes, it is written in this context; however, the message that must come through is that for us to be effective in our disability programs and help those individuals with disabilities, we must work with the *entire* community. We must be sensitive to the nondisabled minority members of our cities and rural areas. Rehabilitation supervisors, special education directors, and others who are in positions of leadership, must be sure that their staffs have sufficient training or knowledge to work with people with minority backgrounds; if they do not, then it is incumbent upon these administrators to begin training immediately! The tone of how to work with minority populations with disabilities is set by the management of an office. Positive attitudes and sensitivities can best be fostered in a constructive climate in the workplace. It is my hope that this issue will be a useful vehicle for developing and improving these relationships.

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