Harambee: Working Together to Engender Change in Communities of Color

by Aretha Faye Marbley, Fred A. Bonner II, Cynthia Wimberly, Hal Stevens, and Beatrice A. Tatem

Abstract

Working with communities of color to find solutions to the problems they face is a complex and challenging task. The "It Takes a Village" concept and the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente 1994) were used by the authors of this article in their work to empower clients of color to effect change in their communities. The narratives by these authors, European-American and African-American practitioners and educators, incorporate accounts of advocacy and social justice initiatives as they describe their interactions with grassroots organizations, such as educational and faith-based institutions, within communities of color.

People of color still reside on the edge of mainstream culture. Through the process of marginalization, non-majority groups are pushed to the fringe of society, which adversely affects their levels of achievement and success (Ogbu 1995a; 1995b) and their mental health (Sue and Sue.2003). To positively impact life options and conditions for these people over the next century, the importance and contribution of the concept "It Takes a Village" cannot be overemphasized (Frost 1999; Marbley et al. 2002; McRae, Thompson, and Cooper 1999; Sanders 1998).

Because the impact of marginalization on communities of color is so pervasive, professionals from all disciplines must develop multicultural competencies and skills and become active in social justice projects to provide more effective and culturally responsive services (Roysircar, Sandhu, and Bibbins 2003; Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis 1992). To empower people of color, professionals must immerse themselves in these cultures and see themselves as part of the village. Professionals in the village must be able to develop action strategies, cultivate resources, and interact with others to define and attain collective goals.
The Village Concept

Harambee is a Swahili word that denotes the village concept of coming together relationally so that one does not face life alone. By pulling together, the burdens one might face are eased. Though the power of one is not overlooked, the power of many is what drives this concept.

Unspoken notions of interdependency and reciprocity—that is, give-and-take and ‘together we stand, divided we fall’—exist among villagers. People collaborate rather than compete, and believe that the village is only as strong as its weakest link (Akbar 1979; Asante 2000). Professionals, therefore, must be eager to collaborate and partner with villagers rather than force expert opinions on them. Joining the village means building partnerships based on trust and mutual respect for a lifelong relationship.

A basic tenet of the multicultural approach to counseling is that everyone’s identity—whether counselor, educator, client, or student—is embedded in multiple levels of experiences and contexts. Therefore, professionals working with people of color must respect the value of each person in the system and recognize the system’s complexity (Sue, Ivey, and Pedersen 1996). For people of color, these complex social networks not only help to ease the burden, but also are critical to their survival. As the cliché goes, “the group exists, and therefore I am” (Billingsley 1992; Spence 1991). In the authors’ work as counselors and educators with people of color, they found that embracing these complex, indigenous systems enabled them to be successful with advocacy initiatives.

From the authors’ experiences, becoming a villager often entailed waiting and earning an invitation, and then spending time “in the hood.” They found that time and energy must be spent getting to know the village and that the village must be given time to know them. Time and energy translate to more than a few visits or projects; months, sometimes years, of working hand-in-hand and side-by-side with the villagers is necessary.

Using the village concept as a framework for education and mental health advocacy potentially could be very effective in these communities. However, the benefits of this approach have gone virtually unnoticed. Though community advocacy groups have offered educators and mental health professionals opportunities to become involved in the village approach on behalf of people of color, professionals have been reluctant to participate because of the unconventional methods used and the associated time commitments. Additionally, many faculty members have found that tenure and promotion committees consider this approach counterproductive compared to traditional approaches to scholarship.

As European-American and African-American professionals employed in higher education and mental health settings, the authors hope that their personal journeys as community advocates will demonstrate the power of harambee, the village concept. Though risky, they have found their efforts to be extremely rewarding and beneficial to the students and clients of color with whom they have worked.
Marbley, Bonner II, Wimberly, Stevens, and Tatem

A Social Action Framework for Advocacy

In addition to describing the applicability of the village concept in working with people of color, the authors also explore the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente 1994) for increasing a community’s sense of personal power and thereby fostering changes based on particular needs. They show how applying this model to community advocacy efforts facilitates self-efficacy within the community while addressing sociopolitical variables that affect a community’s capability for social action.

To empower people of color, professionals must immerse themselves in these cultures and see themselves as part of the village.

One premise of the Transtheoretical Model of Change (TMC) is that a behavioral change transitions through a series of stages. That is, a person—or in this case, a community—goes through a sequence of six stages: precontemplation; contemplation; preparation; action; maintenance; and termination.

Change does not begin with action, but with preparation and the ammunition to act. Wanting to change without the ability and means translates into failure. According to Prochaska et al. (1994), less than 20 percent of a population that needs to make a change is prepared for action at any given time. Yet, more than 90 percent of behavioral change programs are designed with this 20 percent in mind.

Another premise of the model is that in the early stages, a process is required to bring about changes in thoughts, emotions, and attitudes about problem situations. As an individual, community, or a community organization progresses from preparation to action, experience and social support reinforce the commitment to take action.

Change Comes in Stages

Before the model can be applied, the initial step is to assess where the community is within the change continuum. In the first stage, precontemplation, the targeted community often shows no desire to change its behavior in the immediate future and may be characterized as unable or unwilling to change. Community members may be in a state of denial or lack awareness of their needs.

The professional’s role in this first stage corresponds to one of the basic tenets of the village concept: to raise the community’s awareness and consciousness in a non-
meddling, unobtrusive manner. According to Freire (1993, 42), "A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust." The professional must educate and be educated by the people of the community about their specific advocacy needs and must remain supportive of the community's attempt at self-exploration. Again, harambee comes to bear on the collaborative decision-making processes of the group.

Some communities may be able to move from the precontemplation stage to the contemplation stage by increasing their level of awareness. Goals that are realistic, simple, immediate, measurable, and attainable potentially can increase community members' self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to make desired behavioral changes. Though professionals typically assist the community in moving to the next stage, factoring in the villagers' knowledge and wisdom is imperative.

In the contemplation stage, there is awareness of the need and intent to change. Based on past history, the community already may be aware of the challenges associated with pursuing certain goals. Though the positives of making a particular change may be clear, the pitfalls may not be as readily discerned. For example, the community may not have the human or financial resources to implement its goals. Hence, extra attention must be given to these needs. Professionals can use prompting, encouragement, and motivational techniques to help the community move to the next stage, but need to be patient and let change happen at its own pace. A commitment to action does not exist during this stage; therefore, the professional's role is to address hesitancy, encourage self-reevaluation in an unobtrusive way, and gently guide the community toward effective decision making.

The third stage, preparation, combines intent with behavior. At this stage, the community is ready for change. The professional's role is to help set the environment so that it is conducive for success. This may involve policy and systemic changes. The professional is responsible for focusing on specific areas of concern, such as educational, political, and economic development. Every effort should be made during this stage to provide the community with referrals and the necessary resources to help it reach its goals. For example, other communities that have had similar goals or experiences and are willing to serve as process consultants may be identified. Most importantly, the professional helps the community set simple, concrete, measurable, and attainable goals that are consistent with the culture and available resources.
During the fourth stage, action, the community's behavior, environment, and experiences are modified. This stage requires that the professional model direct and consistent behavioral patterns and help the community implement its goals. Because relapse is common, encouragement and praise should be given for small successes. The professional also verifies and supports the community's efforts and helps create supportive networks. If the community can sustain its new behavioral pattern for a reasonable length of time, it will move into the fourth stage—maintenance.

In the maintenance stage, the self-efficacy of the community is at its highest. The risk of relapse is low, and the temptation to scrap the established goals is also low. During this stage—which potentially could last for years—the community continues its education and growth. The community is empowered and gathers the necessary resources to successfully advocate for and facilitate policy-changing actions. As a safeguard, community villagers should prepare for relapses by establishing critical contingency plans.

The sixth and final stage, termination, occurs only when the community organization and its villagers are 100 percent confident in their success and autonomy regarding their current and future goals. At this stage, the temptation to engage in or return to previous behavioral patterns is zero. Termination, according to the model, rarely, if ever, occurs with individuals or communities.

Rolling Up Their Sleeves

The following sections are personal narratives of the authors—educators and counselors who have applied the harambee concept and the TMC model in their community advocacy efforts. Their goal is to share—perhaps in an unorthodox manner—memorable examples from their community engagements. They present non-positivist perspectives, using narrative descriptions rather than a traditional research method.

Each narrative reflects the experiences of a cohort of diverse professionals (a European-American male and female, two African-American females, and one African-American male) from various backgrounds in the fields of counseling and education. Their experiences of partnering with clients and constituents from communities of color have proven to be defining and beneficial engagements.

Maintenance Creates the Biggest Challenge

Scenario. I entered an old, wooden-frame African-American Baptist church located in a Latino/African-American community at the outskirts of my town—an area known as the Eastside. My invitation to the church had come from an 85-year-old woman who I affectionately referred to as Grandma, several African-American and Mexican-American...
ministers, and a number of community and church members from the Eastside community.

The meeting began with everyone holding hands and with Grandma leading the assembled mass in prayer. Upon completing the prayer, Grandma informed the attendees that criticism of any group member would not be tolerated. She stated, “I am the only critic in here.” About 15 people were in attendance, and all paid close attention to Grandma’s directives.

We spent about 10 minutes introducing ourselves; we then rolled up our sleeves and began the arduous task of trying to understand why we attended the meeting that day. I began with the statement, “As a counselor and educator at the university, I feel that I may have something to offer the community. But, instead of telling you what I am going to do, I am here to ask you what you need me to do. What are your needs and your concerns?”

The group visibly relaxed and began to talk about their needs. “First, we want our children to have a good education,” someone shouted. An older gentleman sitting near the door whispered, “We want our grown children not to leave, and we want them to find good jobs here in our town.” Another lady said, “We need someplace for our younger children to go and play safely.” After each person spoke, nods and grunts of approval freely circulated the room. Finally, the group reached some consensus on one key concern: the need for adequate housing. After the group had voiced their needs, I began to talk with them about ways to support them in getting their needs addressed.

We met on several occasions over the course of many months to organize a community-wide cleanup initiative and to address many of the groups’ articulated needs. Our meetings also served to connect myriad community and church groups.

Reflections. I initially entered the community not as a counselor-educator, but as an African-American woman with ties to my community. I was aware that some segments of the community were in the first stage, precontemplation, and were not willing, able, or interested in changing. I also knew that others were at least willing and interested in change.

Thus, I began my advocacy work with the group that was between the second phase, contemplation, and the third phase, preparation. Members of this group were certain that they wanted change, but did not know what to change or how to change. They were
required to articulate their needs, to come to a consensus, and to brainstorm plausible strategies. For example, at the end of the first two meetings, they agreed that they wanted a good education for their children, including after-school activities. For themselves, group members wanted good jobs and affordable and adequate housing. During the preparation stage, we invited other interested individuals and groups with various degrees of expertise to help us plan and organize.

After deciding on the objectives for the venture, group members were ready to begin one of the main initiatives they had identified: a neighborhood cleanup project. This was chosen as the initial project for several reasons: it could generate community cohesiveness and ownership among the constituents; it was simple, inexpensive, and would yield immediate success; and the local chamber of commerce had pledged to invest resources and to create businesses in the community based on the group’s efforts and outcomes.

The maintenance phase proved to be more challenging. The community required a great deal of support to become resilient, feel empowered, and avoid multiple relapses. To remain resilient and successful with its goals, the community group was strongly encouraged to partner with other community groups that had similar goals and that were more advanced, accomplished, and skilled at promoting community change.

Keeping the Kids

Scenario. An angry, young African-American girl paced back and forth in my office. The principal had referred her to me to discuss her attendance. She was 15 years old, a freshman and, until recently, a strong “B” student involved in athletics. During the past several months, her grades had fallen, her attendance had become erratic, and her behavior had caused her to be referred to the office several times. As we talked, the angry outer shell began to soften and tears slowly started to run down her cheeks. “No one understands,” she whispered. Slowly the story emerged that in the last few months, her mother had returned to town and insisted that the daughter move in with her. The girl now was responsible not only for her mother, but also for two younger siblings. Mom often was out late—if she came in at all—and my student was afraid to say anything because of the possibility of “losing my little bother and sister.”

As she relaxed and opened up, I could hear the fear and frustration in her voice. I asked her what she wanted to happen. She stated, “I want to go home” (home was living with her grandmother); however, she asked, “What would happen to the kids?” I
asked her if she was comfortable with me discussing her situation with "Ms. Edith." She seemed to brighten at that suggestion, but emphasized that no one could know she had talked to me. I agreed.

Ms. Edith was an elderly African-American woman who lived in an area called the flats. In referring to her domicile, she explained, "This is home. How else am I going to know what needs to be done if I'm not here to see?" Wise beyond her years, she was the one voice in the African-American community everyone in this small town respected, regardless of race.

I briefly explained the situation to Ms. Edith while maintaining my student's confidentiality. I discussed observable behaviors such as attendance and office referrals. Ms. Edith listened patiently and then replied, "I'm not going to lose that girl!" Within a week, my student was back with her grandmother. Ms. Edith had found relatives to take the younger siblings. Though my impression was that the Mom was not very happy, she didn't argue with Ms. Edith.

I met several more times with my student to make sure that things continued to go smoothly. I also talked regularly with Ms. Edith and began to discuss ways to actively involve parents in the school. The following academic year, the school began sponsoring "parenting sessions" at local churches during lunch or at night to encourage input and communication. As Ms. Edith would say, "I'm not going to lose any of my kids!

Reflections. School counselors provide the framework in which all students can be successful. The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2005, A.1.a) stated that "the primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients." With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, the success of each student has become a mandate. However, the students faring the worst in school—the poor and minority youths—also are the least served population in counseling. To close this achievement gap, school counselors must advocate for poor and minority children.

If school counselors believe that all students can be successful, then they must work actively to intervene in the social situations affecting them (Lee and Walz 1998). Counselors, as agents of change, must become proactive in the communities in which their students reside. Schools no longer can exist as separate entities because many students enter school buildings with personal and social issues that hinder academic learning. Both the school district and the community benefit by uniting to address the issues affecting student success (Hobbs and Collison 1995).
In the precontemplation stage, counselors must form personal relationships based on mutual respect and trust with people outside the school building. A multitude of outreach efforts and interventions should be used to inform the community of available programs, issues, and resources. An important component of this process is identifying key members of the community who are held in high esteem and enlisting them to actively reach out to members of the community who may feel uncomfortable, alienated, and intimidated by the public school system and help them overcome these feelings of distrust (Keys and Bemak 1997). The community then can begin to accept the idea that there “may be more out there for us.”

In the contemplation stage, community members begin considering the prospect of change, but still are unable to take decisive action. Therefore, counselors should focus discussions on actively exploring values, personal goals, community goals, and desired outcomes.

During the preparation stage, the community identifies and focuses on specific goals. The counselor serves as a resource in identifying financial support systems, community agencies, and economic foundations that can help (Keys and Bemak 1997; Petrocelli 2002).

Once the community has a sense of direction and preparedness, action must occur. The counselor must help to maintain the momentum and develop a supportive network. As goals are achieved, a sense of pride and ownership begins to develop. During the maintenance stage, the counselor must continue to advocate for the rights of the oppressed, empower the community, and facilitate in policy-changing actions.

---

Partnering for Change

Scenario. One Saturday at the start of the new year, I was asked to speak at a workshop for people of color. As I unpacked my car, several women greeted me with warm smiles, handshakes, and hugs. This reception made me feel at home, as though I had known these women for years. As the women settled into their seats, I mentally prepared to speak on depression and women of color.

The program, sponsored by a local chapter of a national organization dedicated to serving communities of color, began with a welcome. As Donna, the host and my inviter, introduced the program with the words, “I know you are all wondering why I wanted a program on depression,” I scanned the room and saw an audience of African-American women of diverse ages and religious, educational, and economic backgrounds who were sitting, listening, and nodding attentively to her words. Donna
continued, "Maybe I am worried about myself; however, I think everybody can relate
to being depressed, and I think it is something we need to talk about." Before the end of
her speech, my body began to relax and my spirit quickly was elevated. I felt privileged
and honored to be an African-American woman in the midst of these strong African-
American women.

What I thought was to be a 1-
hour program about depression,
women, and the need for mental
health care turned into an afternoon
discussion on empowerment, self-
care, self-love, love of family and,
ultimately, the community. Initially,
some of the women were unable to
focus on self and were more comfort-
able talking about their children and
their children’s needs. Most admitted
being hesitant to seek mental health
services from professionals because
of stigmas and the belief that mental
illness is taboo. Several participants
realized that this hesitancy was linked
to their inability to put themselves
first. Yet, on this day, their need to talk and express their feelings about depression, stress,
and the importance of self-care was apparent. I shared with them feminists’ perspectives
on women, specifically on women of color, and the oppressive role of culture, race, and
gender on depression. I told them how important it is for women of color to join in the
dialogue with all women on these issues. Before I continued, I circled the room and so-
licted ideas on the issues and ways of addressing the mental health needs and concerns
of women in the African-American community.

To my surprise, this formal presentation turned into a family-like gathering. Over
a bountiful repast, we talked about their struggles, challenges, faith, strength, and the
role they played in certain change processes. As true villagers, they expressed concern
not only for themselves, but also for those impacted by the many social ills within the
African-American community. They cited prejudicial treatment of African-American boys
in school, the practices of medicating children for poor behavior, teenage pregnancy, low
self-esteem, job discrimination, unemployment, and Social Security issues. Concern for
the safety, health, and overall well-being of the community was evident.

On the surface, I, as the credentialed person, appeared to be the leader of this group.
In truth, the elders, who in most instances did not have degrees in mental health, emerged
as the true leaders. The elders spoke with wisdom that reflected years of living. In fact,
their presence and acceptance of me gave my workshop credibility and empowered other
group members to realize their individual strengths. That’s when the real work began.
We discovered that our partnership, with me as a professional who respected the com-
Marbley, Bonner II, Wimberly, Stevens, and Tatem

Community and a community that respected me and my skills, provided an opportunity for us to promote change, growth, self-exploration, advocacy, and education within a safe and accepting environment.

In closing, the women were given advocacy resources, such as school counselor contact information, tools to help them monitor medicines recommended for their children, and brochures on mental health services. In my supportive and motivating role as a mental health professional, I challenged the women with the question, “Where do we go from here?” We ended the workshop with a commitment to future collaborations.

Reflections. The interaction and participation of this gathering was indicative of different stages of the model. Some group members were aware of the need for change and appeared to have a commitment to change, but others were dissident regarding the methods for change. Many participants were ready for change, but unaware of how to make it happen, which is characteristic of the contemplation stage. They were receptive to me and to the elders in the room who endorsed my comments. With the support of the elders, I was able to move the group to the preparation stage, providing encouragement and feedback as decisions were made. Many of the elders were ready for action, but recognized the need to support those who were not yet ready to accept the transition. For many of the retired women in the group, the need for change was important; however, equally important was for the younger members to be able to carry out the change. Many of the older women reminded the younger women that the problems were not new and that the younger members would have to take action to see that the problems of depression, mental-health services, teenage pregnancy, low self-esteem, Social Security, and the dispensing of medication to their children were resolved. To take this group to the action stage, I relied on elders and their wisdom to empower the women to advocate for their rights and to make viable changes that could subsequently influence policy.

Mutual Respect Creates Effective Changes

Scenario. Marshall, a small town located in the piney woods of northeast Texas, is home to one of the “best-kept secrets” in early childhood education. Located in what once served as a retail furniture store is University Kiddie Kollege—a childcare center and school dedicated to the uplifting and education of young children. For more than 25 years, this citadel of excellence has fought to keep education the centerpiece for children of low-income, minority parents: Seventy percent of the students attending the school are recipients of governmental funding for low-income youth.
To say that University Kiddie Kollege has been successful in producing graduates who have gone on to make numerous contributions to society is an understatement. If ever an institution has shattered the ongoing stereotypes and myths linking low-income and minority status to lethargy and underachievement, University Kiddie Kollege is it. A common refrain among teachers and administrators in the city of Marshall is, “You always know Kiddie Kollege graduates; they are far ahead of the other children who enter first grade.” This school’s track record is even more remarkable given society’s predisposition to view low-income communities of color from a deficit model approach—a far cry from the asset model approach used by the administration, faculty, and staff at Kiddie Kollege.

An institution so dynamic in character could flourish only under the leadership and direction of individuals who share a vision of excellence. Gertrude Fisher, owner and operator of Kiddie Kollege, along with Kay Davis, school director, and Traci Fisher, assistant school director and daughter of the school’s owner, serve as the powerful female troika. On matters ranging from state funding and budget allocations for day-care centers to the number of units of baby formula and computer programs necessary for the delivery of curriculum content, these women serve as the guiding force behind the school.

During one of my midterm breaks, Gertrude Fisher contacted me about my availability and willingness to develop a half-day workshop session on learning and development. Per her directions, I was not to “water down the content”—she was resolute in her belief that her staff members were quite capable of not only understanding the content, but also of implementing any and all strategies I intended to share. Throughout our conversation, Ms. Fisher reiterated that though the majority of her staff members did not hold formal degrees in teacher education, the informal knowledge and tacit skills they had amassed were sufficient prerequisites for any theory or conceptual model I could throw their way.

The faculty soaked up the information I presented. Somewhat of a role reversal occurred during our exchanges. I was supposed to be the ivory tower “theory head” educating the uninformed masses about student learning, growth, and development. However, what I found was a cadre of school innovators who already had an arsenal of effective best practices for meeting the educational needs of these children.

We spent the day making viable connections between the informal practices they employed and the more formal approaches I shared from textbooks. The workshop was a practice in authenticity—a virtual real-world laboratory experience in which both parties
felt validated by what they had to contribute. I walked away with a better understanding of how the litany of "academic speak" I spouted was used in actual contexts. They walked away with a better appreciation of the ways they were educating the children who sought knowledge and wisdom under their tutelage.

Reflections. University Kiddie Kollege staff members were pretty far along the TMC continuum (Prochaska et al. 1994). In their efforts to affect change, the majority of the school’s personnel were ahead of or very early in the model’s preparation stage. All expressed a willingness to embrace change and seek alternative instructional and developmental strategies that would benefit the children. Each staff member had what I would describe as an altruistic questioning core, a deep personal reserve that was not opposed to making needed shifts in thinking, particularly if those changes fit the educative contexts.

The workshop sessions provided faculty members with the requisite knowledge and skills to move beyond mere cogitation and to take action on matters related to student learning and development. A prime example was their immediate infusion of the "best practices" discussed in our dialogue on theory and its application to young learners, particularly students of color.

In my role as an ongoing consultant to University Kiddie Kollege, I have witnessed the final stages of the model—action and maintenance—in which critical changes have been made in the school’s curriculum and in the instructional practices used by the faculty. In response to these changes, the students have excelled both academically and socially, often outpacing their non-Kiddie Kollege peers in later public school years. This institution serves as a shining example of how not only adults, but also children, will rise to the level of expectation when a healthy balance between challenge and support exists.

Sharing Produces Change Strategies

Scenario. A community of about 300 African-American scholars had come together to attend a conference sponsored by an organization concerned about issues in higher education and how they affected the African-American population. One topic of discussion was the glass ceiling in higher education. A friend who was a member of this group had invited me. She asked me to be involved in facilitating and recording roundtable discussions after attendees had sat in on plenary sessions by notable educators. As the facilitator, I asked the members to respond to questions designed to elicit their personal
reactions to the speakers. As recorder, I was charged with capturing their responses as accurately as possible and reading back to the group what I had written to ensure accuracy and completeness.

During the first session, the members, who numbered about 15, were enthusiastic and responsive. At times, they produced so much information that I had to ask them to repeat what had been said. Several members wanted to ensure that I captured all of their comments. On several occasions, what I had written down was incomplete, and the members clarified their comments. At the end of the first session, one of the members checked to be sure I had recorded something that was said earlier that she had not heard me repeat back. I witnessed a group of people who knew that action was needed and who searched for effective plans that could be implemented.

After the second plenary session, I was part of a roundtable discussion group where I was one of two recorders. Much the same happened again. People shared information about concerns and areas of success with the goal of outlining effective strategies for change. The session also became a forum where people seemed to find unity in shared experiences and support from those who listened. As the session ended, most of the people still were engaged in conversations about the topics covered in the roundtable.

**Reflections.** In many respects, this group was attending to more than one stage of the model. They all seemed to be aware of different needs, and all had a commitment to action. Because they combined their intentions with behavior, they had moved past the precontemplation, contemplation, and preparation stages. They seemed to be in either the action or maintenance stages. They spoke of continuing to modify behaviors and environments while they worked to prevent the relapse of previous actions and behaviors by developing support systems and encouragement.

**Advocates for Social Justice**

The authors represent varying disciplines and different histories with and length of time in the village. Most have spent years working in communities of color. For example, one author has been involved in the Kiddie College community for more than 12 years, while another has partnered with a community for eight years via public school, clergy, postsecondary, and community initiatives. These authors encourage readers to join them as full partners, working as social justice advocates who are committed to finding solutions to the issues negatively impacting clients and students of color.
Though the five scenarios described occurred independently, in different arenas, and used different approaches, the ultimate goal was to help communities make successful, positive behavioral changes. Students and clients of color often come from complex social networks (Billingsley 1992). Therefore, intervening, preventive, and post-intervening social justice and advocacy initiatives must embrace the village concept by including systems in which clients and students are deeply embedded.

Remembering that communities need different kinds of assistance, assessing where they are on the TMC continuum is imperative. For example, a comprehensive approach was applied to addressing the needs of some communities, while others simply were provided needed services. When change is viewed as a process, goals become more realistic and attainable. Therefore, helping a community understand its issues and set both short-term and long-term goals constitutes a successful intervention.

**Conclusion**

Both a village approach and a social justice approach are needed to level the playing field for marginalized groups. More importantly, it takes harambee, working collaboratively with the villagers, to truly effect change.

Colleges and universities, because they are innately equipped with this knowledge, should draw from the wealth of their resources—both data and people—and take the lead to facilitate this process. Academe has a responsibility for the education as well as for the social and moral development of our nation’s masses; therefore, educators should focus on providing meaningful ways to reach out to people of color. Partnering with academic communities is a good place to start. Reciprocally, communities of color and their grassroots organizations, such as churches, clubs, and civic groups, must join forces with academe to create networks and working alliances that will aid people of color.

The authors hope that readers can glean valuable information from these five narratives from counseling professionals and educators who have chosen to reach out to communities of color to assist them with change efforts. The narratives not only offer a framework, but also a variety of ways to advocate for students and clients of color. TMC is a useful tool for assessing the developmental levels and specific needs of a community’s reception to new behavioral patterns and for empowering its members to make necessary changes. Too often, communities become mired in
discussions on equality, when their efforts should be directed toward equity. As Gordon (1999, xiv) asserted, “Most of us seem to agree that equality requires sameness, but equity requires treatments be appropriate and sufficient to the characteristics and needs of those treated.”

References


Aretha Faye Marbley is Associate Professor and Director of Community Counseling in Counselor Education at Texas Tech University and President-Elect for the Texas Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education. Her professional work esteems human diversity.

Fred A. Bonner II is an Associate Professor of Higher Education Administration at Texas A&M University and an American Council on Education Fellow at Old Dominion University (2005–2006). His upcoming book highlights the experiences of postsecondary gifted African-American male undergraduates at predominantly white and historically black colleges.
Cynthia Wimberly is an Elementary School Counselor at Lincoln Elementary School, Monroe, Louisiana. She is a doctoral candidate at Texas Tech University in Counselor Education. Her research interests include at-risk students, multiculturalism, motivation, locus of control, and the impact of school counseling programs.

Hal Stevens is the Coordinator of Training for the predoctoral psychology internship program at Clemson University's Counseling and Psychological Services. He previously worked at Texas Tech University's Student Counseling Center as an assistant director and staff psychologist. He is interested in multicultural and diversity issues.

Beatrice A. Tatem is a Licensed Professional Counselor, National Board Certified Counselor, and Licensed Professional Supervisor. She also is a Counseling Psychologist and the Director of Student Counseling and Testing Services at Mississippi State University. Her research interests include multicultural issues, particularly related to ethnicity and culture, ethics, and university counseling center services.