

# BRIDGING THE GAP

Newsletter of the Section for Women in Public Administration

Summer 2008



## This Edition of Bridging the Gap Features Mentoring: A Dialogue

### Letter from the Chair...



The SWPA events at the 2008 ASPA Conference concluded the great year we had under Becky Schergens fabulous leadership.

Becky's energy and big heart took SWPA to new levels of visibility and accomplishment. And, she did it all with grace and class – Thank you, Becky, for a great year.

The conference had many highlights: We honored four accomplished women at the Awards Breakfast. Dr. Jerri Killian won the Marcia P. Crowley Award for Outstanding Service To SWPA. Dr. Audrey Mathews won the Joan Fiss Bishop Award for contributions to the advancement of women in public Administration. Dr. Marilyn Rubin won the Rita Mae Kelly Award for Research for her research on women's issues. Finally, Dr. Orapin Sopchokchai won the

Julia B. Henderaon Award for substantial contributions to international public administration.

We recognized our student and new professional scholarship winners– Melaine Hesler (MPA student University of Alabama at Birmingham), Gail M. Nehls (MPA student University of Colorado) at Colorado Springs and Shinika McKiever (recent MPA graduate North Carolina Central University and new professional with Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust).

Jerri Killian and Suzanne Discenza put together a highly regarded professional development workshop “Transitions for Success: The New Norm.” This workshop offered insights into the trials, tribulations and successes experience when seeking success in various transitional stages of professional life. The interactive session included the experiences of students, emerging profes-

sionals, practitioners, academics at mid career and preretirement professionals. The Transitions Workshop was a fitting finale to a year devoted to studying transition issues.

As usual the SWPA booth was filled with women sharing their enthusiasm for issues related to women in public administration. Old friends caught up with each other, new ASPA members were welcomed encouraged to join us. Questions were asked and answered. Many thanks to Phin Xaypangna for all the time and energy she put into this important event.

The lively general membership meeting was well attended. As expected Treasurer Eileen Larence reported a healthy budget. Luminaries such as President, Harvey White, Vice President, Meredith Newman and Executive Director Antoinette Samuel made surprise visits and shared their thoughts.

The Awards Breakfast was a fabulous success. The speaker, the Honorable Frances Garcia, Inspector General, Government Accountability Office gave a thought provoking speech. Her presentation was a wake-up call. She used sobering facts to show the unsupported fiscal trajectory of the United States over the next 10 - 50 years. Unfortunately, we cannot grow out of this problem. The leaders and citizens United States must face facts and be ready to and make some hard decisions.

Toward the end of the conference I caught up with Becky Schergens and Frances Garcia having lunch. Obviously, Frances valued Becky's friendship as do I.

*Pat Shields*

## **2007-2008 Outstanding Year for SWPA**

The Section for Women in Public Administration (SWPA) won top awards at ASPA's 69th National Conference in Dallas, March 2007. SWPA was the only ASPA section awarded a Presidential Citation for increasing Society membership, was honored for increasing its own membership by 16% in 2007, and also won the Award for Outstanding Section Newsletter. For more information, check out [www.swpanet.org](http://www.swpanet.org).

### *Note from the Chair...*

*This year SWPA will focus on professional development by exploring mentoring. We begin with a dialogue between two women who have had a rewarding 15-year mentoring relationship. Since both women are African American, they discuss issues unique to the African American woman's experience. I have known Dr. Tamela Saldana for 10 years and am privileged that she also considers me a mentor.*  
*Pat Shields*

## **Mentoring: A Dialogue**

*Tamela C. Saldana and Susan M. Johnson*

Mentoring is a unique opportunity for an inexperienced woman to be guided by a seasoned professional. Ideally, the mentee is provided with information and resources to develop and enhance professional skills. It is our contention that for African American females developing a positive mentoring relationship is a key to a successful professional career because it helps them cope with the many unique barriers in their professional and personal lives. There is significant research that reveals the unique barriers African American women experience (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984; Saldana, 2003). According to Patricia Hill Collins

(2000) these barriers give African American women a distinct black feminist perspective. African American women are both black and female creating a unique social construction that produces an entangled identity – black and female and for many, poor, black and female.



Susan Johnson

The multiple identities and the intersection of barriers in the lives of African American females create a different experience, perspective, and need. The gender and

racial identities of African American females combine with social and political structures to formulate and create distinctive issues for African American woman (Saldana, 2003). A mentoring relationship between African American women helps them to better face these barriers.

The path to success is clear, obtain an education, develop valuable skills and gain professional experience. Oddly, there appears to be yet another factor that determines success among African American women. That factor, we contend, is developing positive mentoring relationships and social networks.

*Tamela Saldana:* I was not born a leader rather I believe I was molded to become one. I believe that African Americans are made to become leaders through a unique

combination of education attainment, development of skills, applicable professional experience and more importantly the development of positive mentoring and networking relationships. My relationship with Susan started much like most mentoring relationships, however, after fifteen years we have become friends and more like family. I was initially introduced to Susan by one of her friends while I was working as an intern at a Texas state agency. I was in my final semester as a communications major at the University of Texas where I had just completed four years of eligibility as an All-American student athlete. At the time, I was not sure which direction to pursue; a professional track career or hang up my spikes and begin a professional life outside athletics. Susan worked in state government when I met her, so naturally I looked at her career as a possible path. She was such an outstanding woman and the first truly successful African American woman that I knew who was not associated with my family or track.

*Susan Johnson:* One of my friends wanted to introduce me to her intern because she thought it was important that Tamela be exposed to a professional African American woman. As a favor to my friend, I agreed to meet Tamela. Little did I know that doing a favor for my friend would enrich my life as well. After our first meeting we were inseparable, my network of friends became Tamela's professional resource bank of lawyers, judges and other executive level managers. A key component of mentoring relationships is that they also offer the mentee exposure to other professionals that can serve as a network of resources.

*Tamela Saldana:* This aspect of our relationship was a key factor to my development as a professional and was the start to my career in the public sector. Susan intro-

duced me to one of her other friends, who was instrumental in me getting my first job in Texas state government. Day by day these two women were relentless in their efforts to mold me into a model professional career woman. Although I appreciated everything they did for me, at the time I did not realize the importance of their efforts in my professional development. Not only did these two women take me shopping for professional clothes, they made personal sacrifices and commitments to me that went beyond traditional mentoring relationship. They both provided me with opportunities through friends and organizations they were involved in to network with other professionals and develop skills that would enhance my professional portfolio.

I was overwhelmed at the time trying to juggle a professional career while maintaining a track and field training schedule. During these overwhelming times, Susan transitioned from a professional mentor to a personal friend. I had her number on speed dial, asking questions about everything including personal finances and yes even love. Not only was she available to me on her office phone, but I could call on her at anytime. This aspect of our relationship was particularly valuable because I found myself living in a city with no family and more importantly needing some adult guidance. Her willingness to be available beyond the workplace was important to me emotionally and spiritually.

*Susan Johnson:* Tamela was equally important in my life. At the time, I had two young daughters, one in high school. Tamela was an ideal candidate to mentor my daughters as she was a college graduate and possessed personal qualities that mother's try to instill in their children. She was intelligent, personable, dependable, and goal oriented. I welcomed the personal relationship as we shared some common qualities and interest. Developing a posi-

tive personal relationship outside of the workplace is also important in mentoring relationships. I certainly believe our personal commitment to each other has become the foundation of our relationship. Our relationship has evolved from mentor-mentee, to friendship and now we are more like family.

*Tamela Saldana:* Susan was at my wedding, in the delivery room with both of my babies and has held my hand through some professional and personal milestones. She has an ongoing and unwavering commitment to my professional development. I do where I have not consulted with Susan about a career decision. I value her sound advice, but more importantly I value the fact that Susan provides me with information, gives me her opinion and, without judgment, allows me to make my own decisions. I think a key ingredient to a positive and successful mentoring relationship is the willingness of the mentor to unselfishly provide assistance and not be judgmental.



Tamela Saldana

At this point, I still consider myself a work in progress. Susan once described me as “a diamond in the rough”. Susan’s presence in my life continues to be important professionally but more importantly personally. She is my kid’s nana and is like a mother to me. I feel I have achieved my educational goals, however, I am continually pursuing

professional goals while balancing family, kids, community service, personal and spiritual growth. The key ingredients to successfully balancing all the above is seldom as clear as obtaining career success. At times one aspect of life intrinsically impacts the other creating distinctive difficult to prioritize issues. These issues can become entangled with social and financial constraints and create an enormous amount of stress that is overwhelming. It is during these times, that I value my personal relationship with Susan. She has helped me to sort out these issues and provided me with information and resources that led to solutions. She contributed to my emotional and personal happiness particularly when I went back to graduate school.

*Susan Johnson:* When Tamela completed her doctorate degree, I was the proud mother. I had watched this single mother manage her household, raise two children, work three jobs and be a full time student. Jokingly, after her graduation I said to Tamela, "I guess I am going to have to go back to school because I am not going to call you doctor." The stage had been set for one of my greatest challenges, going back to school to get my Ph.D. This time, our roles were reversed, Tamela was the mentor and I was the mentee. I will never forget the first paper review I got back from her. I thought I was going to cry as the paper was full of red marks, arrows and comments to re-read or re-write.

During my Ph.D. program, Tamela became my academic coach, advisor, unofficial dissertation chair and more importantly the watch dog over my community service work and volunteer activities. This time, she was giving me advice on balancing a family, career, school and the numerous activities that engaged my life. The ultimate

advantage of an ongoing mentoring relationship is that it can evolve into a relationship with reciprocal benefits. This is an unexplored aspect of mentoring relationships. Today, younger generations have numerous of skill sets that more seasoned professional could certainly learn from for example in the area of technology. As such, individuals should not be afraid to move beyond the typical structure of formal mentoring programs.

*Susan Johnson and Tamela Saldana:* Formal workplace mentoring programs typically have established guidelines, time frames and strategic goals. Developing long term mentoring relationships that include personal relationships outside the workplace maybe more valuable particularly for African American females. Mentoring relationships can support both professional development and assist with other personal issues that become contingencies and barriers to professional development. This is particularly important for African American females as they balance careers and personal barriers. Mentoring should include assistance with networking and skill development that enhance career opportunities and professional growth. However, equally important is the personal commitment to one another that enhances and supports personal development and spiritual growth for both parties.

Collins, Patricia Hills (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1984) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End.

Saldana, Tamela. (2003). In Their Own Words: Exploring Race and Gender in the Lives of African American Athletes. Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Texas at Austin.

*Dr. Tamela C. Saldana is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a Ph.D. in Anthropology of the African & African American Diaspora. Dr. Saldana also has two Masters Degrees, a MPA from Texas State University and a MA in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. She has over fifteen years of experience in the public sector and is currently a program manager for small and minority businesses at Texas Department of Transportation. Dr. Saldana is also an adjunct professor in the MPA Program at Texas State University.*

*Dr. Susan M. Johnson is a graduate of Jackson State University with a Ph.D. in Higher Education. Dr. Johnson also holds a Masters Degree in HR Management and Leadership from the University of Texas at Austin. She has over twenty eight years of public sector experience in human resources, training and leadership development. She is currently the Associate Commission of Consumer Workforce and Development at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Dr. Johnson is also an adjunct professor in the MPA Program at Texas State University.*

## A Reminder...

**The deadline for conference papers and panel proposals for the 2009**



**ASPA National Conference is July 18, 2008. Each year, SWPA is well-represented at the conference. Please consider submitting a proposal or panel. For more conference information, visit the ASPA website: <http://www.aspanet.org>**

## In Memoriam Dr. Claire L. Felbinger

### Beloved friend and Colleague of ASPA

(June 9, 2008 from Dr. Wendy Haynes)

So many lives and institutions are far better for the presence of our beloved friend and colleague, *Dr. Claire L. Felbinger*. The world lost Claire on Wednesday, May 28, when she passed away suddenly at her home in Washington,



DC. She is survived by her husband, retired professor Dr. Richard (Dick) Bingham, and their extended families, including the grandchildren Claire adored.

Most recently, Claire worked as a Senior Research Associate for the Japan International Transport Institute in DC, preceded by arduous duty at the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies as a Senior Program Officer with a specialty in transportation and infrastructure.

Claire's legacy to the field of public policy and administration would fill volumes. In ASPA, Claire contributed immensely in roles ranging from Chair of the Section for Women in Public Administration to National Council Member to Chair of the Publications Committee to Chair of the Section

for Transportation Policy and Administration (STPA) and many task forces, committees, and leadership roles in between. The National Academy of Public Administration and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, too, claim Claire as the consummate professional who could be counted upon to follow through with tenacity and excellence on anything she undertook.

Our own Dr. Claire Felbinger was an accomplished scholar in public administration. She earned tenure early in her career and served as Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Public Administration at American University, Editor of *Public Works Management and Policy* and chief negotiator for STPA's co-sponsorship of the journal, Assistant and Associate Professor at Cleveland State University, following faculty time at Northern Illinois University. She earned her Ph.D. and M.A. from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. In the course of her distinguished academic career, Claire co-authored/co-edited six books, published over a dozen of articles in peer-reviewed journals, and collaborated on scores of book chapters and conference papers.

While impressive, none of those facts and figures adequately convey Claire's enormous contributions to the health and well being of every organization she touched. She worked tirelessly to ensure a strong organizational infrastructure and could be counted upon to unclog lines of communication and negotiate constructive solutions to thorny problems. The true value of her presence will only be fully realized in her absence, as we miss time and again the courageous and tenacious presence she brought to every situation.

SWPA and ASPA have truly lost a critical part of their history, progress, energy, and soul through Claire's untimely death. She was a consummate professional that practiced what she preached in terms of effective public administration and management, as well as the promotion of women's rights, capabilities, and value--from the classroom to the boardroom. She labored behind the scenes and would do anything for SWPA and ASPA at any time, from pushing critical policy changes to collating and stapling if it meant getting the job done. Most dramatically, however, so many of us lost a wonderful friend, someone who respected us, who was so much fun, who never put herself first, and who always had the time and ear to help. She never wore her illness on her sleeve and tried so hard to cheat death. We are heartbroken that she ultimately lost the battle but know that we personally and the Section and Association professionally will carry on the fight to remember Claire's contributions to life. *Eileen Larence*

I am so sorry to learn of this very sad news. Claire was one of a kind, a special woman, and I will miss her. Life is so fragile... *Jeri Killigan*

Our friend, Claire, who was with us such a short time but touched so many of us. She leaves a void for us, but will live on in memory. *Kathy Hensley*





These pictures were taken at the SWPA breakfast at the ASPA conference in 2007 when Claire Felbinger was chair of the section.

## *Member News....*

***Bethany M. Stich***, a public administration assistant professor who came to the university in 2006, recently was invited to join the leadership body of The Mississippi Heritage Trust dedicated to preserving state prehistoric and historic cultural resources.

***Larkin Dudley***, long time SWPA member and chair of the Section of Public Administration Education, ASPA, wants you to be on the lookout this summer for SPAE's new website and an announcement about competitive travel grants to ASPA, 2009 to be awarded for two junior professors who will be selected on the basis of teaching excellence.

***Bonni Mani*** has been promoted to Professor at East Carolina University. Congratulations!

***Becky Schergens*** has been named to the PA Times Advisory Board.

***Kristin Norman-Major*** has been promoted to Associate Professor of Public Administration in the Hamline School of Business.

***Kimberley Cox*** graduated this May 2008 with a Masters in Public Administration from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. She has taken a position as Program Analyst for the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters, Office of the Inspector General in Washington, D.C.

***Kim Hoffman*** has been tenured in the Department of Political Science at the University of Central Arkansas.

***Meghna Sabharwal*** completed her Ph.D. in Public Administration at Arizona State University.

***Melanie Hesler*** has been selected for a GAO internship in Washington, DC.

## SWPA 2008-2009 Officers

Pat Shields, Chair  
ps07@txstate.edu

Becky Schergens, Past Chair  
bschergens@hotmail.com

Donna Handley, Vice Chair  
dhandley@uab.edu

Dianna Noli Hill, Secretary  
dianna.noli.hill@phoenix.gov

Treasurer, Eileen Regan Larence  
erlarence@cox.net

## SWPA Board Members

*(Term ending 2009)*

L. Dara Baldwin  
dbaldwin@acnj.org

Vera Vogelsang-Coombs  
vera@urban.scuohio.edu

Phin Xaypangna  
xaypap@co.mechlenburg.nc.us

*(Term ending 2010)*

Pat Alt  
palt@towson.edu

Suzanne Discenza  
discenza@mscd.edu

Sharon H. Mastrocci  
mastracc@uic.edu

*(Term ending 2011)*

Sherri Greenberg

Yahong Zhang

Roslyn Alic-Batson

Student Member (term Ending 2008)  
Barbara Lewkowitz

National Council Liaison  
Steven Bobes  
BTV@miamidade.gov

Archivist Marcy Crowley  
marcyrc@aol.com

## SWPA Committees

ASPA National Conference	Roslyn Alic-Batson
ASPA Conference Program Liaison	Open
SPWA Awards Breakfast	Open
By-Laws & Policies	Marcy Crowley
Chapter Outreach	Open
Collaborative Initiatives	L. Dara Baldwin
Communications (BTG & Website)	Janet Hutchinson
Membership & Recruitment	Donna Handley
National Awards Program	Sherri Greenberg
National Council Liaison	Ann Ludwick
Nominations	Becky Schergens
Professional Development	Phin Xaypangna
PR & Marketing	Barbara Lewkowitz
Scholarship Program	Yahong Zang

**SWPA Website: <http://www.swpanet.org/>**

## *Bridging the Gap*

The Newsletter of the Section for  
Women in Public Administration  
Published in Spring, Fall and Summer

Send contributions electronically to  
Managing Editor, Janet R. Hutchinson  
jhutch@vcu.edu

Mail contributions to:  
Janet R. Hutchinson  
2221 Park Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23220

Deadlines: Fall Issue: October 1st  
Pre-Conference Issue: February 1st  
Summer Issue: June 1st

Book reviews, summaries of original research, mem-  
ber news, both professional and personal, and other  
items of interest to SWPA  
members are welcome.