

**Text of a letter by Phillip W. Weiss, LCSW, that was published in November/December 1999 edition of the NASW Currents.**

According to “Among Ourselves – Discussion Focuses on White Privilege and the Experience of Social Workers of Color,” (Currents, Volume XLII, Number 1, September, 1999), Executive Director Robert Schachter stated that “it is critical for White social workers to examine issues of privilege and bias within the profession.” I am puzzled by Dr. Schachter’s statement. Is Dr. Schachter suggesting that white social workers are afforded special privileges because of their race? Or that the problem of bias is confined only to white social workers? Or that people who are white have never been victims of bias?

The next time the chapter decides to have another roundtable on the problem of privilege and bias, perhaps the following incidents should be included for discussion:

1. March 14, 1891: Eleven Italians are lynched in New Orleans, Louisiana, the largest lynching in American history.
2. September 10, 1897: 21 Austro-Hungarian workers are killed and 40 are wounded by law enforcement officials in Lattimer, Pennsylvania.
3. July 31, 1902: Jewish mourners are pelted by factory workers and beaten by the police in New York City.
4. August 1913: A Jewish man is convicted of murder on Atlant, George, after a mob outside of the court sends messages to court officials stating “Hang the Jew or we’ll hang you.”

In all four incidents the victims were white.

Instead of presenting the problem of privilege and bias as a white vs. non-white issue, perhaps it would be more beneficial, both educationally and sociologically, if the chapter discussed the problem from a broader multi-cultural and multi-ethnic perspective that would take into account the experiences of the various ethnic, religious, and racial groups who have been victims of bias. By utilizing this approach, the Chapter will help foster the mutual understanding, mutual sensitivity, and mutual respect [that] are essential for achieving a just and bias-free society.