

NABSW was created during the 1960's Civil Rights Movement on May 8, 1968 in San Francisco, California by a group of Black Social Workers who were convened for the meeting of an established national social work organization. They disengaged from that meeting to form what has ultimately become the foremost advocacy group established to address social issues and concerns of the Black community.

Before May 8, 1968, under various names, several social work related groups of African ancestry had been addressing issues of racism and poverty in America. Their common goal was Black liberation, and improved social work practice and service delivery. They recognized the need for educational institutions to revamp curricula, and to demonstrate concern, appreciation, and understanding of all races and ethnic groups reflected in the social welfare service arena.

This coalition of human service practitioners of African ancestry brought together various disciplines, both degreed and non-degreed. They came together to form the National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc. For the first time, people of African ancestry had an opportunity to unify in combating racism and white supremacy in the social welfare system. The new organization immediately articulated demands for change within the existing welfare structure, and at the same time placed emphasis upon expanding and strengthening the NABSW network through local chapter development. The years 1968 and 1969 saw demands for change made upon traditional local and national Eurocentric focused human services and social welfare systems.

At its 1968 and 1969 national conferences, the National Conference on Social Welfare was presented with NABSW's position statement. In 1969, it was also presented to the Delegate Assembly of the National Association of Social Workers. As a result of the pressure felt by the united presence and influence of NABSW, both organizations, and the Council on Social Work Education made some changes that included, but were not limited to, increasing the number of people of African ancestry who served on committees and held various offices within these organizations.

Additionally, substantive efforts were also made by these organizations to address the existence of white supremacy and racism. NABSW, recognizing white racism as a white problem to be addressed by whites, advisedly redirected its energies to the accountability of social welfare systems in Black communities, and developing service delivery strategies that reflected the Black experience.

Since 1969, NABSW has sponsored annual National conferences that address issues of social work service delivery, education, research, and alternative ideas of improving communities in America for people of African ancestry. Effective at the 1979 National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, NABSW has provided the host chapter with an opportunity to address local inequities. This social action component has supported the efforts of local chapters and kept NABSW on the cutting edge of social issues and advocacy. Cenie “Jomo” Williams, Jr., the first National President, spearheaded much of the aforementioned activity. Brother Williams was appointed as the organization's first Executive Director (1974-1982). He began the organization of NABSW chapters in the

United States, South America, the Caribbean, and Canada.

In 1981, Dr. Morris F.X. Jeff, Jr. developed the annual conference Harambee Closing Ceremony in honor of our African culture. Harambee is a Kiswahili word that translates as “pulling together” or “we all pull together.” This closing ceremony has since been renamed to honor his legacy and immeasurable contributions to NABSW, and our brothers and sisters throughout the African Diaspora.

The establishment of NABSW's Office of Student Affairs exemplifies the importance and value of developing young professionals. This office, which is managed by students and financially supported by NABSW, is concerned with the recruitment and retention of students and faculty of African ancestry. NABSW scholarships are available, through the Office of Student Affairs, to NABSW student members.

NABSW publications include The Black Caucus Journal, and the National Newsletter. Respectively, they are published bi-annually and quarterly. Each publication reflects the historical development of the organization, practice issues within human services, social welfare and juvenile justice systems, and other systems that impact the client, community, staff, educator, and policy maker.

Recognition of NABSW's interconnectedness to people of the African Diaspora was emphasized in 1975 with the convening of the annual International Education Conference. International Education Conferences have been held throughout the continent of Africa, the

Caribbean, and in North, Central and South America. Subsequently, NABSW has established chapters and affiliates in Canada, the Caribbean, Ghana, and South Africa. In August 2003 NABSW held its 29th International Education Conference in Cuba, visiting Santiago and Havana.

Nationally and internationally, NABSW has consistently supported efforts of people of African ancestry. Our 1972 position statement on transracial adoption was clear evidence of attempts for Black Family Preservation. This position statement challenged agency practices and served to change procedures that discriminated against African American prospective adoptive families. Furthermore, the position fostered a movement that continues today, whereby agencies aggressively develop effective and ongoing recruitment procedures.

In December 2000, NABSW was a key co-sponsor of the State of the Black World Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. NABSW collaborated with Congressman Danny Davis (Illinois), and a Congressional sub-committee to host a Congressional Town Hall meeting in January 2002 that focused on the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system (Corpus Christi, Texas). NABSW activities also include participation in efforts to secure reparations for people of African ancestry; overrepresentation of African American children in child welfare and juvenile justice systems; health and wellness of African Americans; blood screening; voter education, and numerous advocacy efforts at the local chapter level.

In April 2002, NABSW Founders and other child welfare experts developed a Welfare Reform position paper. In collaboration with the National Center on Permanency for African American Children, NABSW's Robert L. Little Kinship Care Roundtable published a Kinship Care position paper (October 2002). Additional NABSW position papers include Preserving Families of African Ancestry (January 2003) and Domestic Violence in the African American Community (October 2002).

NABSW is designed to promote the welfare, survival, and liberation of the Black Community; and to advocate for social change at the national, state, and local level. NABSW is comprised of over 100 membership chapters, and over 30 university and college student chapters throughout the continental United States and the Caribbean. Additionally, affiliate groups are in both West and South Africa. Membership is available to persons of African ancestry who, regardless of profession, share similar concerns regarding health and welfare issues in the Black community.

NABSW hosts national and international annual conferences that are open to its membership and potential members. Convened in cities around the United States, our annual National Conference brings scholars, practitioners, and administrators together with conferees in a variety of social work settings to dialogue on social work issues in our communities. The International Education Conference provides a summer opportunity for travel to Africa and countries throughout the African Diaspora to experience African culture, heritage, and social institutions.

NABSW advocates for the inclusion of people of African ancestry at the decision and policy-making levels and continues to be a change agent in the areas of social work education, practice, and research. Members of NABSW recognize the necessity for people of African ancestry to maintain control of our communities and accountability of self and others of African ancestry. Through its membership, NABSW seeks to link with others of African ancestry throughout the Diaspora.