

Letter to the Editor: Transforming Long Term Care through Social Work

Dear Editors of Transformative Social Work,

I am writing to reflect on the CBC documentary *The Nursing Home That Lost Nearly 50 Seniors to COVID-19* (CBC News, 2020). As a student of social work, I found the story of Theresa, an 86 year old immigrant woman, and her daughter Audrey Da Cruz both heartbreaking and illuminating. Their experience highlights how structural problems such as ageism, racial inequity, and institutional opacity can intersect to leave marginalized families vulnerable during moments of crisis. This story is not isolated; it reflects a broader and urgent need for critical, equity-focused transformation in elder care.

Theresa's case reveals how social work must evolve to support aging populations with culturally responsive, relationship-centered practice. At the micro level, social workers must lead transparent, trauma-informed communication efforts with families like Da Cruz's. Families should be seen as essential collaborators in care, not as outsiders excluded from critical moments (Ives, Denov, & Sussman, 2020, Ch. 4).

At the mezzo level, long-term care homes must include social workers in interdisciplinary teams. Social workers can assess residents' emotional well-being, advocate for culturally safe supports, and build protocols for family involvement during health emergencies (Ives et al., 2020, Ch. 5). These group and organizational-level efforts are essential to make care institutions more inclusive and accountable.

At the macro level, systemic reform is needed to shift from profit-driven models to systems that prioritize dignity. Social workers must push for publicly funded, transparent elder care that addresses the intersections of aging, race, migration, and gender (Ives et al., 2020, Ch. 12). Coordinated action across micro, mezzo, and macro levels is necessary to build elder care systems rooted in equity, human dignity, and inclusion (*Assessing levels of practice* [Lecture video])

These reforms must be evaluated by centering those most impacted. At the micro level, resident and family feedback can help assess inclusion and emotional safety. At the mezzo level, staff accountability for communication and cultural competence must be monitored. At the macro level, disaggregated data should be used to track structural care outcomes and guide long-term policy shifts. Social workers must remain committed to reflection, research, and resistance to inequity in every area of practice.

Theresa and Audrey's story reminded me that advocacy and connection are not optional parts of social work. They are core tools for transformation. As a future social worker, I am committed to helping reimagine long-term care systems that reflect the values of social justice and human dignity.

Sincerely,

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References (APA 7th edition):

CBC News. (2020). The nursing home that lost nearly 50 seniors to COVID-19 [Video]. CBC News: The National. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/1.5604784>

Assessing levels of practice [Lecture video]. University of Calgary D2L.

Ives, N., Denov, M., & Sussman, T. (2020). Introduction to social work in Canada: Histories, contexts, and practices (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.