

Henry George School • CENTER FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

RITA WEBB SMITH

Mother, Concerned Citizen, Community Leader, Professional Social Worker, "Doer".

Perhaps Sidney Fields of the New York Daily News said it most succinctly in his column, Only Human-March 9, 1977- when he wrote: "ADD UP RITA SMITH and the sum is a study in survival."

Mr. Fields continued: "Mrs. Smith has seven children, had a taste of welfare and ditched it as fast as she could. She was born and reared in Harlem and won't leave it. Mrs. Smith was first married at 17. Her two marriages ended in divorce."

"She is up at 5:00 AM to prepare her day, get the children ready for school. In 1969 she was living in a crumbling tenement; for three years all 20 tenants were without heat or hot water. So she organized it into a co-op with the help of friends.....Four years ago she was admitted to Fordham University. She was 34. She took a full program at night, while working at her job during the day and earned a B.A. in two years because she got credit for life experience--organizing the co-op, starting an alternative high school, her block association, the Langston Hughes Child Development Center, and serving as PTA President of a neighborhood school."

"Because of her formidable accomplishments, she was asked to be the subject of a documentary film, My Mama and My Sister, Too. She helped write it. It earned her a Fordham Scholarship for her Master's in social work. She received her degree in May, 1978."

Mrs. Smith has since started a consultation center, Family Systems for Living Consultation Center. She has developed a series of "survival clinics" to help individuals, families, and community groups to cope with and resolve problems related to changes in their environment.

RITA WEBB SMITH AND THE HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL

Because of her successful struggle to survive in a hostile environment, Rita Webb Smith acts as an example of what individuals with a sense of purpose can do to make a difference in the world.

Rita's involvement with the Henry George School and the Incentive Tax League in New York City, affiliates of the Boston School and League, may be regarded as an indication of these groups' potential for actualizing basic social change in what, for many, has become a hostile environment.

The Henry George School and the Incentive Tax League welcome Rita to Boston to share her experience and knowledge.

