

40 years in the making, Tulane graduate reaches new milestone

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Newcomb College alumna Virginia Adolph, who will receive her doctorate in social work during the Unified Commencement ceremony, wants to inspire social workers to 'fight for change.' (Photo by Sally Asher)

Though it has been 40 years since she graduated from Newcomb College in 1978, Virginia Adolph is once again ready to celebrate commencement as a Tulane graduate.

Adolph is one of 11 students who took part in the inaugural [doctoral program](#) offered by the [School of Social Work](#) at the Tulane campus located in Biloxi, Mississippi.

“One of my main reasons for going back was to serve as a catalyst by showing others that it can be done,” she said. “I want to inspire new practitioners to fight for change. To do that, you can’t just talk the talk — you have to walk the walk.”

Adolph spent her early childhood living on the west side of Chicago before moving to the Mississippi Gulf Coast at age 10.

“At 4 years old, I lived in the neighborhood where Dr. King was doing work for disenfranchised communities,” she said.

Adolph said that witnessing Martin Luther King Jr.’s outreach motivated her to pursue a career that would allow her to positively impact her own community.

Since receiving her master’s degree in social work from Tulane in 1979, she has shared her 36 years of social work experience with undergraduate and graduate students as an adjunct instructor at the University of Southern Mississippi. She also served as president of the Mississippi chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and as chairperson for the Mississippi State Board of Licensure for Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapists.

Adolph currently specializes in assisting children enrolled in special-education programming in Harrison County School District, a public school district based in Gulfport, Mississippi, with 14,000 children.

While Adolph is looking forward to walking across the stage in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome during the [Unified Commencement Ceremony](#) on Saturday, May 19, she added that she’s also excited to hear two-time National Book Award winner [Jesmyn Ward](#) deliver the keynote address.

“I am elated that a fellow Mississippian will be speaking this year,” she said.

“I want to inspire new practitioners to fight for change.”

— Virginia Adolph