

## **Clinical Social Justice: History, Perspectives, and Applications in Practice**

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### **Author Note**

In response to a group assignment to explore a specific methodological approach to psychotherapy, the authors have prepared and delivered a 40-minute presentation including the following:

- Basics of this orientation
- Historical context
- Example of what it “looks like”
- Appropriateness of this approach

Presentation slides for facilitated discussion relevant to this paper are made available at

<https://presentation-archive.herokuapp.com/csj-presentation.html>.

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Social contexts are important determinants of individual behavior. To that end it behooves culturally humble and prepared counselors to have a ready network of referrals to services specifically established for addressing the needs of marginalized clients we hold in relationship as part of our practices. Maintaining right relationship within varying traditions provides for serving our clients most effectively, even when that means stepping out of the way. When we convey vulnerable clients into the care of elders and lineage holders, we embrace this community approach to care, and ultimately to the access of justice affirming and healing relationships.

There is a rich body of knowledge freely available when one's experience does not match the experiences of those they wish to serve. Where systems of oppression are concerned, counselors are advised to lean on time tested work from other liberatory practices. Effective social justice advocacy is broken down into detailed suggestions for serving marginalized populations, as adapted from Gustavsson and MacEachron (1998):

- contact organizations providing service to the affected populations
- formalize connections to your practice, strengthening referral credibility
- develop a program within your practice, start with a support group
- present population-affirming publications and decor in waiting rooms
- advertise service with specific mentions of the affected population
- act as a liaison between affected population and your practice
- prepare myth-busting talking points for on-demand education and guidance
- document services provided, and those needed which went unfulfilled

- raise both met and unmet needs to agency leadership
- provide public education via speaking engagements addressing community issues
- develop peer counseling and support options accessible to the community
- respond with details whenever interfacing with less informed organizations

Social justice is addressed through social responsibility. This is the space in clinical practice where one has the opportunity to move from a passive voice of education and encouragement into one of active protest. Sue (2003, p. 14) quoted Albert Einstein as writing, “The world is too dangerous to live in – not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen.” The authors’ exploration of this modality yielded some other takeaways for consideration (Unknown, 2016):

- understanding behaviors and experiences in the context of social oppression is fundamental to development of a multicultural counseling identity
- multicultural humility in counseling encourages a personal journey toward becoming an ally for social justice
- counselors with a social justice orientation challenge the medical model handed down by the APA, recognizing that diagnosis and treatment perpetuates injustice
- supporting positive change for all demands strength-based approaches to counseling and social advocacy practice
- minimal harm reduction practices require a social justice orientation in order to serve clients suffering social injustice

### References

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