

NEWS FROM THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS

THE VOICE

November 2007



ACPA
COMMISSION FOR
Social Justice
Educators

Message from the Chair

Greetings and happy fall!

I'm sure all of you are well into the swing of things for the fall term. I hope that this newsletter finds each of you in good health and happiness.

I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on some of the priorities that the leadership of the Commission for Social Justice Educators has identified for the upcoming year. The core leadership team - comprised of the four Vice Chairs, the Past Chair, the Chair-Elect (when s/he is elected) and myself plan to have focused discussions throughout the year on each of these areas of focus as we plan and implement strategies. Your input and suggestions are highly encouraged and greatly desired.

As you know, the CSJE is still a relatively new commission within the American College Personnel Association. The leadership team felt it was important to focus on enhancing and building infrastructures that ensure the sustainability and longevity of the Commission, even while maintaining efforts in key program and project areas that are already underway. (In fact, we encourage you to visit our home page at <http://www.myacpa.org/comm/social/> to learn more about how you can contribute to our program initiatives.)

Given our goal of sustainability,

we identified these three priority areas of focus for 2007-08:

1. Clarify roles, responsibilities, duties and purpose for each of the officer positions comprising the Directorate Body.

Feedback from our Directorate Body members indicated that while our officers are enthusiastic and committed to serving the Commission, not all of them necessarily understood the nature and scope of their expected roles and responsibilities. There are some basic descriptions for many of the positions, but not for all of them, and some of the descriptions are also not very...well, descriptive! The Vice Chairs and myself will be following up with each member of the DB to develop a more comprehensive document that details the duties and purpose of each officer position. Hopefully, this will help people feel more comfortable about stepping forward to take on a leadership role within the CSJE. Note that even if you are not a member of the Directorate Body, we would love to get your input on what you think the Commission leadership is doing – or should be doing!

2. Increase the quality and quantity of member engagement.

The CSJE listserv already comprises several hundred members, yet it is clear that the level of member in-

volvement varies greatly. As with so many other professional organizations, it appears that a small core group of individuals are most actively involved, while the vast majority of members do not feel engaged or know how to get involved. We would like to understand how we can break this usual pattern in the CSJE. Given our mission, the CSJE can and should play an important professional development and support network role in CSJE members' lives. Beginning first with the needs assessment recently conducted, we would like to find more viable ways to help members feel meaningfully connected with each

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other and with the Commission's mission and activities.

3. Increase and diversify the membership of CSJE.

Within both the ACPA and NASPA, as well as other professional organizations which serve higher education professionals, there are many identity-based groups and targeted interest groups that address topics of multicultural affairs. We have to examine who has joined the CSJE thus far and who has not, and then also ask why or why not? The CSJE is truly unique in that it has a broad, overarching mission that embraces the intersections of our multiple identities and simultaneously incorporates the work of diversity education, multicultural organizational development, and social justice activism and change. As such, we have the

potential to be the niche organization that can meet the needs of educators who work across organizational boundaries or who transcend traditional ways of organizing diversity and/or social justice work. We need to be sure to reach out to those individuals.

I continue to invite all of you to let the CSJE leadership know your thoughts, concerns, suggestions or feedback regarding any or all of these priorities.

Many thanks to all of you for being willing to invest the personal energy and professional passion that is essential to doing the work of social justice change well. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the ACPA Annual Meeting in Atlanta next March! ■

Luoluo Hong—Chair, Commission for Social Justice Educators



CSJE table at Convention Showcase in Orlando.

Submit an Article

Submit an article to be published in the quarterly newsletter published by the Commission for Social Justice Educators. We are happy to publish articles that address issues of diversity and social justice both in and outside of higher education.

Submissions for the January 2008 edition are due by January 15th. Details about content and formatting can be directed to the Newsletter Editor, Jen Frost and jenfrost@rci.rutgers.edu.



COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS

Upcoming in the World of Social Justice

Beyond the Typical Tools for Social Justice

November 11th —13th - Kansas City, MO
3rd Annual Tools for Social Justice Conference
Sponsored by ACPA and the Commission for Social Justice Educators

Campus Host: Office of Multicultural Affairs,
University of Kansas

Conference Overview

As higher education professionals living in a global society, it is our collective responsibility to facilitate a living and learning environment for which we strive to develop understanding and respect for each other. We must also foster programs and services that shape policies and patterns of behavior and communication which promote the value of each individual as well as the diverse groups within our campus communities.

This annual conference will help you go "Beyond the Typical" tools and rhetoric when it comes to social justice education. The conference will provide you with best practices and resources that you can bring back to your home campus. With experts from our field, learn or refine ways to address the challenges of infusing social justice into your everyday activities and conversations. This group of insightful and experienced speakers will also share their wisdom and expertise. You will learn about cutting edge and innovative campus programs and will be provided resources to help you implement or reshape programs back on your home campus. Plus, and more

importantly, we'll encourage you to learn from one another. We've designed an experience that goes beyond the "typical" conference scene to hit at the heart of the issues while also offering real-life tools to help you leverage social justice education on your campus. By educating ourselves - and our students - we can create a just global society where every person is valued.

Please join us for this third and exciting annual "Tools for Social Justice" conference to put your commitment to social justice education into action!

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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November 11—13
Kansas City, MO

ELEARNING: Unveiling White Privilege

Instructor: [Art Munin, DePaul University](#)

November 26th —December 14th

Course Description

Whiteness is a concept that must be defined historically. However, the power of White privilege has subverted history, perpetuating the perception that Whiteness does not exist nor is it privileged. Typically history is written by those who have won but this course will give voice to those who have been silenced. We will uncover how White privilege has evolved, how it is perpetuated and what we can do in our roles to unhinge its power.

Full Course Description available at:
myacpa.org/pd/e-learning/

Conference on Multiracial and Multiple Identities

Call for Programs now Open!

ACPA is pleased to sponsor a cutting-edge conference on issues related to multiracial and multiple identities. Join us on February 6-9, 2008 in St. Louis with keynote speakers Drs. Andrew Jolivet and Kristen Renn. "Stepping Inside and Outside the Box" is the theme of this new and exciting conference. Program submission deadline is November 16, 2007. For more information: <http://www.myacpa.org/pd/identities/>

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Showing Up White

By: Jessica Pettitt

This summer, I served in a number of leadership roles at different camps, institutes, and retreats and have come face to face with a startling realization. I came to realize that as a White person doing social justice work, even one with a firm understanding of the issues, I *show up* in an oppressive way as a result of my racial privilege. The further I looked at this issue, the more I found it to be true, even when surrounded by those who know me and my work and validate that I 'get it'. To some this might sound obvious, but I realized that my Whiteness can make a person of color challenge their correct thinking, to the point of feeling ignorant when I present an idea, blindly making a mistake! This observation rocked me to

the core and I decided to do something about it.

As I pulled together a program for ACPA's Tools for Social Justice Conference entitled *Doing White Privilege Work*, I wanted to provide a space to talk to folks about how Whiteness *shows up* when facilitating social justice workshops, discussions, and activities. I turned in the program and mapped out an agenda for the time allotted once I knew the program was accepted. I decided to develop a list, bulleted preferred, of ways that White social justice trainers *show up White*, while working. I stared at a blank screen for a while, came up with one funny example (using Comic Sans font) and then drew a blank again. My Social Justice voice started reminding me

that it is supposed to be hard for me to come up with this list, as it is a list of my privileged oblivion. The voice, then reminded me that I didn't want to 'use' people of color to educate me on this topic either. Finally, I turned to something I am very good at, judging other White people!

I thought of less skilled social justice trainers I have suffered through and started coming up with several statements to get my list started. I then perused my resources and emailed the list to a number of listservs, re-read Peggy McIntosh's article for inspiration, and flipped through the orange Teaching and blue Readings books on my bookshelves. I was nervous about sending out my project. I gave people per-

mission to write me back individually rather than having a *public* discussion for fear of filling up people's in-boxes. I was challenged on this, thankfully, and a public discussion began. At this time, I noticed that I was using third person and decided to use first person. This is for the readers benefit, but also for my own; I needed to embrace that I do these things and do them often.

I received one email from a person who self-identified as an Asian, male who challenged my attacking "White Folks" and then shared a number of stories about White people that served as mentors throughout his life. Two other people who identified themselves as Black men, questioned if I was targeting White people with this program

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and if I actually thought anyone would show up. They encouraged me to pick a new topic as they "would hate to see me waste my time and speak to an empty room." I decided that I was on to something. I continually updated the list and sent it out to the listservs again and again to continue conversation. I then decided to draw the line and ask folks to share it far and wide.

As you read the list, I ask that you remember one thing from my experience, and that is the idea that the journey is as important as the destination. Making this list or writing this article doesn't make me a 'better' or 'good' White person. In fact it is White privilege, that some people will honor and respect my words or work more for having written something "vulnerable" by "exposing"

a personal truth. This experience offered me opportunities to learn that I didn't have previously. It also reminded me that when I needed to learn more about this area, I relied on communities and resources to teach me about myself, so that I could use my understanding to have authentic conversation with others. That, after all, is what social justice is about.

In hopes of assisting White folks in understanding how we may show up White while facilitating a workshop or just in daily life the following list has been compiled for your review. The list is in no particular order or ranking.

"...it is supposed to be hard for me to come up with this list, as it is a list of my privileged oblivion."

- I am more comfortable with this information being presented in a bulleted list that demonstrates exactly what I need to do to "fix" this problem
- I struggled developing this list and have lots of books to refer to as well as a number of listserv communities to solicit assistance
 - If challenged, I tend to cite personal experiences or list off research, statistics, or literature reviews to further enforce my point to "overpower" or "win" a debate instead of hearing another experience
- I may be oblivious to oppressive experiences or the hurtful or negative impact of comments made during my own workshop by myself or other participants.
- I want to "fix" difficulties in the conversation during the session in a timely manner, rather than sit with them
- I feel the need to know all the answers or control the direction of the conversation within my comfort zone
- Using my subordinated identities to justify that I "get it" or that I am not part of an oppressive group
- I look to people of color for affirmation, acceptance, and/or approval
- I use examples of one dimensional identities

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- (specifically Black/White) throughout training or discussion
- I fill silence with my own voice rather in fear that silence will be perceived as ignorance or incompetence
- It is important to me to start and/or end "on time" and to stay "true" to the agenda
- I state "Perfectly Logical Explanations" when confronted by my own privilege or mistakes/errors
- I don't have to worry about being perceived as experienced enough to be facilitating a workshop or being seen as "in charge"
- I claim understanding because I have a(n) (insert under-represented group here) friend, partner, family member, etc., or have taken a class, read a book, seen a movie on the subject
- My clothing options, mannerisms, language choices can be much more variable without affecting the perceptions of my leadership or skill
- I can be late, forget, or make a mistake, etc., without much ramification
- I don't feel the need to share resources, food, supplies, etc., with others
- I can cut in line, break rules, be exempt from rules
- People of my race invent new language, holidays, label historical time periods, write history, develop policy, etc.
- I go to educational workshops to meet the "good White person" standard
- I don't make public physical contact with others of any gender that I am with whom I am not in a romantic relationship
- I focus on tasks, outcomes, or objectives, over emotions or relationships
- I overcompensate members of subordinated groups for their work, input, ideas, or participation
- I can set up for a presentation in advance without a chaperone or someone assuming I work for the hotel and asking for my assistance
- I am not questioned by staff as to why I am in the room alone or accused of stealing or potentially stealing equipment or supplies
- I can use my power to name the reality of people of color
- I can establish what is normal or accepted within any circumstance
- I can choose to be silent when it comes to race with no questions asked
- I can claim symbolic ethnicity -the power to claim one's ethnicity only when convenient
- I can claim my ancestors' historical oppression during a finite period in history as a means of conveying complete understanding of what it means for people of color to experience daily acts of injustice
- I can choose to ignore the race or color of my friends
- I can choose to never have to answer for behaviors associated with my race
- I can deny an inequality of chances between people of color and

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White people to succeed in just about every arena

- I never have to answer the question, "Why are you here?"
- I am given the benefit of the doubt without having to prove my value or experience
- I find it difficult if not impossible to just say "I don't know"
- I try to control the conversation through establishing ground rules that are designed to make dominant group members feel "safe" and "comfortable" engaging in conversations about "difficult topics"
- I feel a need to over-intellectualize topics or keep discussion on a calm/rational level rather than engaging the feelings or emotional experiences of participants

- I feel the need to justify the diversity activities I choose to do and how I choose to do them during a workshop
- I see people of my race in managerial positions more often than servers, bellhops, or valets. I am rarely served by people of my own race.
- I can be more assertive, aggressive, confrontational, controversial, funny, and blunt in my presentations, comments, and conversations both on and off the clock
- I can study other races with ease and focus on "them" without reflection or focus on Whiteness or "us"

I find it difficult if not impossible to just say "I don't know"

- Crying, guilt, defensiveness, anger, frustration, denial, avoidance, dismissal, disgust of self, are common reactions of mine, as are romanticizing, sympathizing, objectification of other
- It is easy for me to sympathize (not empathize) with subordinate groups and say "I wish everyone was equal" but never verbalize or acknowledge that I have benefited from White privilege
- Where a person of color may have an easier time coming up with this list, I will not face judgment or disdain from other White folks for having written it
- People who disagree with me can do so

without getting personal

- I am rarely if ever called "exceptional" or "articulate" in feedback as I do not defy race based stereotypes
- When doing Social Justice work, I will not be accused of or dismissed for having a race based agenda
- I get more credit than colleagues of color for my "diversity" work
- Doing Social Justice work like tracking observations is not a survival skill
- My professional opportunities are perceived to be based on merit instead of the result of Affirmation Action
- I experience less rejection based on my race
- Figurative language, metaphors, examples, and interactive games

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- are written in my language and from my experience
 - I don't have to go to Symbols in word to find the correct letters and accents to spell my name and may not ever have to learn how to do this
 - I describe my home and have areas that I visit described using a scale of "safety" based on how many acts of violence occur and if I can walk around at night without concern
 - I am oblivious to the misappropriated indigenous names and language used as symbolic compensation for land that was stolen, genocide, and other crimes against Native people
 - I employ "umbrella" terms such as Native, Hispanic, Black, Asian, Biracial, etc., to represent other racial groups with little or no regard for the diversity within each group or the preferred terms and labels created within these groups
 - If I identify as a bi/multiracial person I may be afforded White privilege which personally benefits me, but also alienates me from communities of color
 - When I am confronted with my privilege and become emotional, I look to people of color to "rescue" me or comfort me
 - I am afraid to admit I made a mistake, because I am afraid of being labeled a bad person
 - I may ask others to refrain from getting emotional because it makes me uncomfortable
 - If I work on oppression issues related to women's rights or LGBTQ inclusion, I feel pressure to "get it" in areas of oppression like race, class, ability, etc.
 - I demand being perceived as right, good, and judged on my individual merits rather than my perceived group affiliation
 - I correct or inform other White folks on their lack of acknowledgment of their privileged status to gain social power over them or to show them how "with it," intelligent, compassionate, or socially conscious I am
 - I am disappointed if at the end of a training, I am not verbally thanked for the training by participants and event contact
- Resources-
- ACPA's Commission for Social Justice Educators Listserv
 - Social Justice Training Institute Alumni Listserv
 - Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals Listserv
 - National Speaker's Association Diversity Education Group Listserv
 - Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies*
 - Maurianne Adams, Lee Ann Bell, and Pat Griffin's *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Second Edition*
 - Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blemenfield, Rosie Castañeda,

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Explaining Social Justice to My Conservative Family

By: Sylvester N. Gaskin, M.Ed

One rainy day, I was sitting in my office, sipping on a cup of free-trade coffee and listening to my new Joss Stone CD. When the song “Bruised but Not Broken” came on, my thoughts drifted towards my work of becoming an effective social justice activist. Soon thereafter, I started reminiscing about an encounter I had with my family in Iowa that tested my skills. I surmised that sharing my experience might lead for others to share their work to their respective families and possibly have a smoother time than I did.

During the summer of 2007, I attended the Social Justice Training Institute (SJTI) in Springfield, Massachusetts. Needless to say, it was a very powerful experience. I was able to freely express my frustrations about my work, learn about my own internalized oppression, and how to become a more effective educator. I was surrounded by a supportive faculty, participants willing to engage in difficult dialogue, and discussions that lasted beyond the scheduled sessions. I left SJTI with a renewed focus on becoming a more effective agent for positive social change, a refreshed perspective about working with my colleagues, and plenty of resources to take back and use. My first few days back in my

office were challenging; it didn't help that I came into work wearing a skull cap and was listening to James Brown's “Papa Don't Take No Mess” on repeat. However, after a week of being somewhat militant, it was time for me to attend a relaxing family reunion. And, the very skills I learned would be put to the test with a very unlikely group.

As I packed my car, I braced for a long trip. First off, I was driving six hours to the Amana Colonies in Iowa through a maze of cornfields and small towns. Secondly, this reunion was with my mother's side of the family, many of which still live in Iowa. I had not seen many of them since the last reunion (almost 10 years), and I was sure I had forgotten most of their names. Plus, a majority of my family is staunchly religious and conservative, made evident with crucifixes and Bush-Cheney stickers affixed to the back of their vehicles. Finally, it really didn't help that I was the only mixed-race member of a predomi-

nately Swedish family in attendance (with a couple of Norwegians thrown in the mix), and the fact my mother married a Black man was still a sore spot for some, even after 30 years and two children. Af-

However...it was time for me to attend a relaxing family reunion. And, the very skills I learned would be put to the test with a very unlikely group.

ter my drive, I got a huge hug from my mother, a firm handshake from my grandfather, and a lot of blank stares. I likened it to many of my family not seeing me in a while, but I was tracking some other things. I heard a cousin say “here comes mister college boy”, an uncle said “great, he's here” in a condescending way, and my cousin's wife (whom I'd never met until that day) shifted in her chair and hid her purse.

After I went into the large metal shed and met family members that I had never seen before, I sat down to get a bite to eat. Eager to catch up, my mom and grandmother wanted to know how my big, important conference in Boston went. I had told them I was going on a “training exercise” in Massachusetts, but neglected to mention that it was about social justice. I really didn't know how to explain the term “social justice” before my trip, and I was a little hesitant to

make an attempt. I told my mother and grandmother “Well, I was in Springfield, and my conference was about learning on how to deal with different people more effectively, and how to have easier conversations”. My grandmother responded with a simple “huh”, while my mother just simply smiled. For a quick second, I thought I had confused them enough that they simply forgot what I said. However, my mother told me, “That's a great skill to have, and I'm glad you got the chance to learn more about it”. I'm sure that's what a mother is supposed to say in those situations, but in that moment it made me feel a little more comfortable.

But, as the reunion progressed, more family members asked me about my business trip to Boston. Once again, I was put into a position of correcting my whereabouts and trying to explain the concepts of social justice. A cousin of mine, Jeremy, really took on to what I was saying, and we actually had a good conversation. He lives in a small town just east of Des Moines, and there is a growing Latino population that makes some of his neighbors uncomfortable. He mentioned some of the comments his coworkers say to him, and how they made him

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feel uneasy to even continue working there. I offered him some encouragement, and I even suggested we continue to talk about how he could handle the situation. It was great to help a family member, but not all of my conversations went that way. One of my uncles, who operates a church camp, overheard our conversation, and chimed in with unfunny jokes about his encounters with the Latino community. I felt my social justice training kicked in, and just as I was about to confront his comments, my mother jumped into the conversation and gently ordered me to help out in the kitchen. The social justice activist was thwarted by his own mother, relegated to mopping the floor with his younger cousins.

The next day, as my mother and I were driving to a restaurant, I asked her about the encounter that led to me making mashed potatoes and doing dishes. She told me that my uncle just has a weird sense of humor, and that I shouldn't pay him any attention. She also said that his experiences with the Latino community weren't always positive, so his thoughts were jaded. "Ha! That's just a P.L.E. you're using to justify his actions". Due to her perplexed look, I had to explain what a P.L.E. was (perfectly logical explanation), and how

people use them to justify their negative behaviors. She started getting mad with me and said, "You know, everyone in the world doesn't have the education you have, so just remember that". I responded with "But that doesn't absolve people to think about what they say and the impacts it has". She nodded with a hint of agreement, and then gave me a big hug and kiss.

Before I left back to work, I had lunch with a different uncle, my aunt, mother, grandmother and grandfather. We ordered lunch and struck up a conversation about the reunion. My grandfather was very proud that I found him a large Swedish flag for his new recreational vehicle, and how my other uncle (the one mentioned above) was jealous. I smirked with a sense of bravado, feeling proud that I could make my jerk of an uncle angry. The social justice activist wins the fight, I thought. Then, my uncle at the table asked, "Hey, could you get your uncle one of those rainbow flags?" I asked what he meant by a rainbow flag, and he said "You know, one of those flags 'those people' fly". As my family members shifted uncomfortably in their seats, my uncle said "You could put one on his camper, and wait to see his reaction. It would be pretty funny." I quickly responded,

"What would be funnier, the fact you would announce that he would be one of 'those people', or seeing his reaction that might announce his hatred towards 'those people'? I doubt he'd be happy with this prank either way". My family sat in stunned silence, while I continued to eat my lunch while humming "Papa Don't Take No Mess" to myself.

As I continue to reflect on my experiences during the reunion, I know that my family and I have different perspectives in life. We have had such varied experiences that shape our thought processes and make us who we are. Even though some of the encounters I had were painful, I did feel good that I was able to make some of my family members think about their place in the world, and how they impact the people around them. I know there was some pain involved, and I'm sure I'll hear about it at the next reunion. I also know that many of my family will be set in their thoughts and beliefs, and it won't matter how much social justice training I do, they'll never change. But, my experience gave me hope that my work can have an impact, and I must continue to work hard for positive change for all people, no matter if I end bruised but not broken in the process. ■

Nominations for the Governing Board are Now Open

Be a part of the exciting future of ACPA—College Student Educators International. Nominations are open NOW for creative, energetic, and committed student affairs professionals to serve as members of ACPA's 2008 Leadership Team. The deadline for nominations is December 3rd. Nominate a colleague or apply for a position at

<http://www.myacpa.org/elections/2008/jobdescriptions.php>

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Heather W. Hackman, Madeline L. Peters, Ximena Zúñiga's Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An Anthology of Racism, Antisemitism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism, and Classism

Thank you to Jennifer Frost and Henry Schneiderman for your editing assistance. ■