

Benchmark Social Justice Action Plan

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Exploration of Life Meaning and Commitment

Exploring life meaning and commitment is necessary and continuous for understanding and growth. I wear many hats as a preacher, a therapist, a songwriter, a musician, and a counselor educator in training. “What do I do?” I am teaching by word and/or by example in every aspect of my life. I embrace these roles because I feel called by God to do so and want Him to be glorified in everything that I say and do. I enjoy and love encouraging, talking, and helping people in any way possible and strive to do everything with humility and in love. I realize that I also do it for the people that I serve. My desire is to see people grow, work through their issues, know that God loves them, and move forward toward their destiny. This is not about monetary benefits but is done out of love and a sense of duty. If it is done because of money, that can become an ethical, social justice, and multicultural issue.

As it pertains to my students/clients, I hold to several beliefs. First, I believe that each person deserves the same respect, openness, honesty, and objectiveness. Regardless of their ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social status, each person deserves to be respected, heard, and provided a safe, trusting environment. Anything less than that is an ethical issue. Second, I believe that each person has free will to move forward or to change his/her mind. Third, I believe that each person is either positively or negatively affected by his/her worldview (including multicultural aspects). I must be empathetic and do my best to meet him/her where they are mentally and emotionally. Finally, I believe that each person is capable of change if he/she is committed to the process of change and growth.

Concerning myself, I must continue to grow in respecting other’s differing opinions and to remain objective. I want the best for people and like to proactively engage with

students/clients, which I believe can create better outcomes when embraced. I have experienced the results of my efforts when current or past students/clients have self-reported their growth having worked with me and have thanked me for working with them. I am committed to providing support to today's society via my life and work, and I am also dedicated and willing to continue to grow and learn as I provide that support and guidance.

Exploration of Personal Cultural Privilege

As an African American/Black male, I have struggled with this part of the paper. Within today's society, I do not believe that I experience personal privilege on the societal level. I feel that what is considered a privilege for the predominant culture looks differently as it pertains to me. I have to work 2x or 3x harder than my counterparts for the same position, even though my qualifications might be superior. In many instances throughout my life, I have been either the only Black person or the only Black male in the room and have learned to walk with my head up gracefully, graciously, and humbly; something that my mother instilled within me.

Within my community, there is a level of privilege that comes with being recognized as Rev. Dr. Gregory C. Wright. (My doctorate is honorary and in another field; and I do not refer to myself as a doctor in the counseling field.) When I walk and move within the community and within the church, I am often treated with more respect. I have also experienced being treated differently and with less respect when someone in the church did not know my titles. Regardless of my titles, I have always and will always advocate for the less fortunate, the brokenhearted, and the marginalized community or individual. As a counselor educator, I will also always advocate for those who need the extra support and who experience injustice.

In all honesty though, I must recognize that there is a level of personal privilege that comes from my mother's personal sacrifices toward my education and with having completed my educational programs, with having received 5 degrees and an honorary doctorate, and with presently being enrolled in the PhD program at Liberty. This brings a sense of personal accomplishment, and my goal is to also use every accomplishment to instill hope in everyone that I come across.

Exploration of the Nature of Oppression

Experiencing oppression and being a victim of oppression is degrading and can be very traumatic, especially when one is not treated fairly. I have experienced racism. In one instance, I was given the job on the phone; however, when I went in person to complete the paperwork and they saw my skin color, the receptionist said that unbeknownst to her the position was filled. In addition to this, I experienced workplace harassment and discrimination when I was working in the county public school system.

It is my belief that the lack of empathy can allow for the continuation of oppression. I always strive to be fair and objective. While I do not believe that I have honestly contributed to the continuation of oppression, I believe that it is important to recognize and validate the struggles of those, who sacrificed for the rights of Black people and injustice for all. Even though I have been blessed and have worked hard, I constantly remind myself that in our society I can lose everything that I do have in one second and remind myself to treat others the way that I would want to be treated. Everyone is important in God's eyes, and because of this, I cannot use personal or professional authority or power in an unjust way(s). It is unethical, and I could not

live with that on my conscience. Stifling someone's authenticity can become a major ethical and social issue. Everyone's voice is important and must be heard and recognized.

Becoming Multiculturally Literate

Embracing cultural humility is foundational in becoming multiculturally literate. It is important to understand that one does not know everything about someone else's culture. In order to become effective, remain ethical, and increase positive outcomes, it is important to embrace multiculturalism honestly, with humility, and with a willingness to learn. I must ask questions about specifics when I do not know and need clarification, and I must want to learn more about the different ethnicities in my community, with whom I might happen to serve. This can be done by researching the demographics in my community and then by going to libraries to read about the various cultures. Also, I love to talk with people and discover about their culture and their priorities, likes, and dislikes, as well as food.

It is also important to become exposed to different cultures in order to learn and better understand students/clients. I traveled to Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic last year and happened to meet one of the workers there. I know a little Spanish. When initially meeting, he gifted me with a bracelet, and I gifted him with a necklace in return. Although both gifts were not expensive, it opened the door for an appreciation and continued conversation. As a result, I have learned more Spanish words, am reigniting my passion to speak Spanish again, and am able to communicate better with Spanish-speaking people in my community.

Becoming multiculturally literate cannot be fully realized and embraced until personal biases are admitted and addressed, which can become an issue if ignored. I cannot become

effective if I go into this process thinking that my culture is better than the other individual's culture. I must be able to respect the differences and those things that I do not understand. Creating opportunities in the community to meet and greet the different ethnicities can be beneficial, professionally and personally rewarding, and culturally relevant. This process is continuous and interactive and cannot be avoided.

Establishing A Personal Social Justice Compass

Establishing a personal social justice compass cannot be achieved without embracing the importance of ethics, which is discussed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ACA Code of Ethics (2014), and the multicultural counseling competencies, which were created by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development of ACA (Lee, 2007). Studying and applying the ethical principles within these documents is the beginning of a strong and personal justice compass. I cannot truly advocate if I do not understand what is legally and professionally ethical, which can become an issue. Embracing these documents helps to develop a commitment and dedication to equality and justice. Also, joining and encouraging others to become proactive within a professional organization within the counseling field will also help to create a personal social justice compass. Finally, interacting with different ethnic groups and advocating with them can help to create a personal social justice compass. We can all grow hand in hand. My goals are to become more proactive, go to seminars, and meet people's needs in the best way possible.

In conclusion, we cannot grow and change without holistically exploring our worldview, our thoughts about oppression, our understanding about becoming multiculturally literate, and the need to establish a personal social justice compass. I am ready for this exploration in becoming a better, more effective, counselor educator.

Reference

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