

The History of Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ)

By

Jacqueline Anderson, Alex Hilert, Melissa Lara, Roberto Martinez, Shirin Sahraei Mavaneh

George Mason University

December, 2015

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This CSJ history is dynamic and the purpose of the following account is to provide a basis for further additions to come. The history was compiled from collective memories of the following individuals: Loretta Bradley, Hugh Crethar, Michael D'Andrea, Judy Daniels, Jane Goodman, Michael Hutchins, Manivong Ratts and Rebecca Toporek. We acknowledge and thank Michael Hutchins for his supervision and guidance with this project, and we thank all the contributors for their time in assisting us to compile this important document. We also recognize that since the document solely relies on memories that some of the information presented below may be inaccurate. We apologize if we have provided misinformation and also if we have inadvertently excluded important individuals and events. Hence this document is dynamic and we welcome any changes, modifications, additions and alterations.

The Beginning of CSJ

A group which eventually became Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) first came together in 1994 during the annual American Counseling Association (ACA) conference when Michael D'Andrea, Judy Daniels and Judy Lewis organized informal meetings with counselors, psychologists, practitioners and counselor educators who were all strong allies for social justice. These individuals came from groups such as the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), and the National Career Development Association (NCDA). The purpose of these initial meetings was to discuss the multicultural competency movement and the opportunity for ACA to better commit to multiculturalism. From there, the discussion turned to broader issues such as how social justice relates to healthy human development as well as

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the intimate linkage between multicultural advocacy and social justice advocacy from a developmental perspective. Participants also brainstormed different ways that social justice could be made more visible. Coming out of these first gatherings, the group began to take on specific tasks with the idea of eventually becoming an official ACA division.

On October 14, 1998, a special meeting was set up by Judy Lewis, a strong social justice advocate and leader in the community counseling movement, and Michael D'Andrea at the ACA headquarters in Alexandria, VA. This two-and-a-half day meeting was attended by 52 key individuals, including Mary Smith Arnold, Patricia Arredondo, Bob Barrett, Mary Patrick Burke, Ann Chapman, Stuart Chen-Hayes, Michael D'Andrea, Judy Daniels, Robert Davison-Aviles, Faith Deveaux, Julie Dinsmore, Ned Farley, Michael Hutchins, Kelly Kenny, Mark Kiselica, Judy Lewis, Vivian McCollum, Rod Merta, Beverly O'Bryant, Mark Pope, Portia Rothschild, Azara Santiago-Rivera, Rebecca Toporek, Janet Windwalker-Jones, and Richard Yep. The group felt that the time had come to push the importance of promoting social justice within ACA and the broader counseling profession. The decision was made to form an interest group within ACA. If the interest group was successful, the plan was then for CSJ to eventually become a formal division. In April 1999, CSJ was granted Organization Affiliate status by the ACA Governing Council.

In 2000, the ACA Governing Council accepted Counselors for Social Justice as an official ACA Division. The process included setting up goals, creating organizational bylaws, and presenting the work to ACA with a request to be identified as a formal association. At this point, CSJ had reached the required 500 members.

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As the first president of CSJ, Michael Hutchins and early members ensured that the by-laws were compliant with ACA's standards and came up with a plan to pull the organization together – while still being active. Along with Michael Hutchins, the first CSJ leadership team included Janet Jones as the Communications Officer, Stuart Chen-Hayes as the Treasurer, and Mary Smith Arnold as the Governing Council Representative to ACA. In 2000, Azara Santiago-Rivera was elected President-elect and became part of the team. Part of the foundational structure of CSJ was the selection of a Process Observer. Edil Torres-Rivera became the first process observer. The early 2000s was an exciting time because all of a sudden, groups that were formerly disparate had a place to focus. Much strategizing occurred around getting social justice people in ACA leadership positions. Members couldn't vote the first year because CSJ had not yet reached the minimum number required, but through Mary Smith Arnold, CSJ did push ACA to take a stand on healthcare for women, issues of discrimination against the LGBT community, and access for the disabled.

Notable Accomplishments

Since its conception, CSJ has been a consistent voice for counselors involved in social justice work. Founding members believed in fostering increased levels of empowerment, psychological liberation, critical thinking, and the importance of having a social justice voice within ACA and the counseling profession. CSJ members have successfully advocated on a number of issues including: healthcare for women, equal access for disabled, issues of discrimination against the LGBTQ community, racism, classism, and immigration to name a few.

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CSJ has had an active voice within ACA, taking positions and issuing a number of statements such as one criticizing the use of reparative therapy, promoting the Multicultural Competencies, developing and instituting the Social Justice Advocacy competencies and most recently ushering the multiracial competencies through the Governing Council. Specifically in 2003, CSJ helped lead to ACA's endorsement of the Social Justice Advocacy Competencies. These competencies, as developed by Judy Lewis, Mary Smith Arnold, Reese House, and Rebecca Toporek, have laid the groundwork for counselors intervening for systems change. In 2005, due to CSJ's efforts, ACA endorsed a number of resolutions promoting a socially responsible approach to counseling. In 2010, Manivong Ratts, Rebecca Toporek, and Judy Lewis published a book on the Social Justice Advocacy Competencies. Subsequently, a video including Judy Lewis, Hugh Crethar, Rebecca Toporek, and Michael Hutchins on social justice counseling as the fifth force was released through Alexandria Street Press. As a result of this work, there has been growth in the training of social justice in counselor education programs.

Since 2007, CSJ has partnered with Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) to publish *The Journal for Social Action in Counseling*. Under the CSJ-affiliated editor Rebecca Toporek and PsySR co-editor Tod Sloan, the journal has sustained its status as a high-quality, peer reviewed journal without funding. The journal has published numerous articles directed at social and systems change, covering topics like the experience of being a Native American in the United States, social justice approaches to school counseling, African American youth and exposure to community violence, using psychology to target perpetrators of racism, leadership strategies in advocating for the LGBTQ community, promot-

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ing counseling students' advocacy competencies through service learning, how to be culturally competent in counseling, and more. The journal has also responded to major crises such as in the special issue: *"Violence Against Individuals and Communities: Reflecting on the Trayvon Martin Case."*

CSJ gives out various grants and awards for graduate students and professionals taking on social justice research projects. An annual CSJ brunch was instituted in 2009 and has continued to take place at each subsequent ACA conference and at this event specific awards are awarded that include the Mary Smith-Arnold Anti-Oppression Award, the Reese House Award for school counselors, and the O'hana Award, which honors counselors who affirm diversity and social justice in the spirit of "O'hana," the Hawaiian concept of extended family. The Judy Lewis Social Justice Award was recently announced in honor of the late Judy Lewis and her contributions to social justice counseling; the first recipient was Judy Daniels.

Externally, CSJ has implemented a "Day of Action/Giving Back to the Community" each year at the national ACA conference to serve the local host community for the conference. Some examples include serving the transgender community in San Francisco as well as helping the homeless. The largest service project was in New Orleans in 2009 where CSJ took the lead in coordinating and organizing all ACA divisions to participate in a unified "Day of Action/Giving Back to the Community." In this effort CSJ, with the help of ACA, was able to organize several busloads of ACA members and their family members/friends to venture out into the New Orleans community and clean up a dilapidated civil war era cemetery for indigent individuals. This was followed by an afternoon of leadership development

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and training at the convention center. A total of 300 individuals participated in this inspirational event which provided valuable service to the community and social just leadership development training. Additionally, CSJ has periodically hosted brown bag lunches to gather community members and discuss ways to take action on social issues within local communities and on a national and international level. Each of these experiences has allowed counselors to give back to the community and spread awareness of social justice issues. CSJ has also provided additional social justice training opportunities for counselors. As one example, CSJ and Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) held a national conference in 2005 at Lewis and Clark University in Portland, Oregon, providing numerous workshops for practitioners, students, and educators on theory and practice.

The Future Direction of CSJ

Looking ahead, CSJ hopes to be a place of mentorship and support for counselors embarking on social justice work. It will be important to find and develop new social justice leaders who are committed to CSJ as an organization and who are willing to commit time and energy, all while continuing to stand on the principles that the founding members and subsequent leadership of CSJ have put in place. CSJ is also working on making new learning and training opportunities available around social justice issues, through webinars and other teaching tools. In addition to developing sources for counseling professionals with continuing education credits, CSJ is putting together a Leadership Handbook.

Since CSJ is a fairly young organization and still working through its own growing pains, the future of the group must involve inward reflection too. AS in most ACA divisions and other national organizations, there have been times, when leadership, personality, and

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opinion conflicts have occurred. As CSJ continues to develop and progress, it will be important to apply its own advocacy skills internally, developing a system of dialogue that will help the group to navigate difficult conversations. Old and new members alike should feel free to contribute without concern of any underlying organizational dynamics. Continuing to promote tolerance and an open exchange of ideas will aid CSJ in moving forward with greater strength and ability for action.

CSJ continues to conduct community outreach endeavors and recently implemented a grants program for social justice projects. As CSJ looks to influence and persuade larger bodies, there is a need for funding, consistent financial stability, careful stewardship of resources and, eventually, formal staff positions. To make an even greater impact, CSJ also hopes to bridge more connections with different national advocacy groups, continue to form meaningful partnerships with other ACA divisions, affiliates and regions, develop new local and international community initiatives, take on a social media presence, and enhance both resources and publications. CSJ is excited to bring in the next generation of social justice counselors who will contribute new ideas along with a commitment to see these ideas through to action.