

# SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN

## **Benchmark Social Justice Action Plan**

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I have no Conflicts to Disclose

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#### **Explore Life Meaning and Commitment**

For some people the meaning of life evades them and therefore the ability to have commitment is unachievable. As the saying goes, if you aim for nothing you will hit it every time. I am blessed to have been raised in a home that exposed me to the Christian faith and was taught to read and respect the Words in Bible as the Words of God that are meant to guide mankind into a loving relationship with the true and living God who spoke and all things that exist began to exist through His Words. This introduction as a child has led me on a lifelong journey that has reenforced the Bible as indeed being truth that is without any potential contradictions that could be reasonably be explained.

A person may wonder what the previous paragraph has to do with the topic at hand. The reality is Christianity is the original social justice advocate. Women prior to Christianity, and in many situations after, were treated as common chattel and therefore subject to their male authority figure who may as well have been their owners. Ephesians 5 is one area of scripture that refers to the correction of this demoralization of women. At first glance and without reading the entire context a person may stumble over the statement that the man is the head of the wife and call Paul (the writer) a sexist misogynist. When you keep reading you see “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). Gave Himself (Jesus) for her (the church) means being willing to die to protect her. Further, Jesus’s leadership as the Head of the Church was not a dictatorship but one built on the foundations of a loving relationship.

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Another illustration of this is regarding a husband-and-wife's sexual relations with one another where Paul says the man belongs to the woman and the woman belongs to the man and they are not to deprive one another of being together (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). This speaks to the duality of importance of both the man and the woman's sexual satisfaction. If page count allowed, we would discuss many other areas where the Bible demonstrates the idea of social justice. This Biblical or Christian Worldview that I adhere to wholly (though not perfectly) drives me to seek the ethical treatment and betterment of people regardless of their desire to live according to the truths found in God's written Word. What is often known as the Golden Rule comes straight from scripture, "In everything, treat others as you would want them to treat you..." (Mathew 7:12). This is the admonition to do good which is an active call to action. This principle aligns well with the counseling profession and the counselor educator's desire to help people to be uplifted in their pursuit to live life well. These principles will guide me into coming alongside of my students to help them to grow and mature into their roles as professional counselors. I believe students should be supported to be the best mental health workers they possibly can be and to help them see everyone as having the same high value as taught through Christian and counseling principles!

### **Explore Personal Privilege**

There are many nuances to this conversation that could fill volumes of books. The short answer is I am white, middle-aged, and a male and unashamed. According to Affirmative Action ideas and DEI thoughts, I am somehow more privileged because of these unearned and random traits that I had no control over having or not having. Yes, I experience blessings that are greater than most of the population of the world. This does not have to be discriminatory in nature but is

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the result of multiple generations seeking to grow and to be better than the previous. There are many people in what are known as minority groups who have served in offices as high as being the President of the United States. These outliers demonstrate it is not the color of one's skin, but their successes that are likely associated with the aspirations of the people who raised these individuals.

An unfortunate reality is often the very economic resources that are intended to be giving people a hand up often end up being the very shackles that are holding people back from being successful. I am not a conspiracy theorist but often wonder if this is an accidental consequence or an intentional design. These systems keep couples from marrying because of aspect like a decrease in welfare amounts when both parents are present. This has promoted generations of fatherless homes which is one of the ultimate social injustices of a well-functioning and healthy society. The U.S. Census reported 15.5 million children under age 18 living in mother only homes as of 2020 (Hemez & Washington, 2021).

I see my role as being one who seeks to promote the well-being of all people regardless of what they look like or their alignment with my understanding of how the world looks. I reject the implication that I am somehow an evil villain simply because I happen to have been born white, male, in a Christian home, in the United States, and in Alabama. I can choose to look past these attacks that desire to hold me down and choose to serve other humans who I may meet for counseling, have a part in training to be counselors who will serve other humans, and generally.

### **Explore the Nature of Oppression**

The idea of oppression is certainly one that has been overused in the world today. There are many people who are perfectly capable of working and participating in various activities but

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have found they can draw a paycheck or gain certain desirous results from being in the role of a victim. An amazing thing to me has been observing people who are truly handicapped are often the ones who are striving to be independent and overcome life issues with strength and integrity. I have had the blessing of knowing a blind guy who has the best attitude of any person I have ever met. There are certain things that he requires help with, but the guy does clothes washing and ironing (very well I might say) for extra money. This individual is only able to draw a minimal amount each month to help with his expenses and he is far from being independently wealthy. Why would this blind guy only be getting partial support from SSI when others with a lesser deficiency are getting a much larger supplement to their income?

I have not personally felt held back by systems of thought like Affirmative Action and DEI ideas but know these ideas have had real effects on people that are not appropriate or fair. There was a time when people were being clearly discriminated against for a variety of reasons (and unfortunately still are at times), but to then flip the coin and create discrimination in reverse is ridiculous. We must develop standards that would hold a person responsible for not hiring the best and most qualified person for a job because of some phobia of the God given attributes a person has which they had no control over (e.g., skin color, sex). On the other hand, if a person chooses to tattoo their face, describe themselves as an animal, or any other strange thing, an employer should have the right to pass them over or fire them.

### **Work to Become Multiculturally Literate**

I have had the blessing of traveling to parts of Jamaica, Honduras, Canada, and several places across these great United States. It is very frustrating to think that people would discriminate against another human because of their place of birth, or any attributes assigned

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them by God. I love to travel and to see the various ways people live, the foods they eat, the styles they appreciate from architecture to clothing, the accents and languages they speak. It always amazes me to be in a third world country where their children seem to have more joy in their hearts than children here in the states who often have been so blessed physically. Diversity is awesome and I am so thankful we are not all alike. Imagining how boring that would be!

### **Establish a Personal Social Justice Compass**

Studying varying ideas while also living and experiencing other cultural groups will ensure a well calibrated social justice compass. I have taught my children that you do the next right thing because it is the right thing to do rather than being forced. I would hope that we as humans will see all people as having significant value. I am ashamed of the ways groups of people are all lumped together and degraded often in the name of protecting that very group.

I am currently thinking of the current U.S. president's desire to deport all people who are currently in the country illegally. I may not like the extreme lengths required for a person to become a United States Citizen (an area where advocacy could be well focused), but it is the explicit reality that these individuals have broken the laws of the United States and there are consequences. The part that disgusts me is to say something like who is going to do all the hard work that illegals often perform (picking crops, construction, etc.). In essence, these arguments are referring to the illegal persons as a form of modern-day slaves while acting like and often thinking they have these persons best interest in mind.

Simply put, I have shared these thoughts to make clear that social justice is a very nuanced and complicated venture. It may be that the very acts often thought of as the cure to the

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United States' social justice issues may very-well be the infection that needs to be eradicated for healing to occur.

### References

Hemez, P. and Washington, C. (2021, April 12). Percentage and number of children living with two parents has dropped since 1968. Census.gov. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50-years.html>)

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