

"One who breaks an unjust law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law."

-Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*

"Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained."

-Helen Keller

"Let justice roll down like mighty waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream."

- Amos 5: 24

"I believe in justice and truth, without which there would be no basis for human hope."

- The Dalai Lama

DRAFT ONLY - THIS STATEMENT HAS NOT YET BEEN FINALIZED

Position Statement on Social Justice

Society for Humanistic Psychology

Division 32 of the American Psychological Association

The Society for Humanistic Psychology (Division 32 of the American Psychological Association) is committed to social justice, human rights, and human dignity. Humanistic psychologists believe in the equal rights of all human beings to dignity, respect, fairness, and justice; the right to access basic resources such as food, shelter, education, and health care; the right to a fair trial, to be innocent until proven guilty in a just and fair court of law; the right to freedom from violence and oppression, including epistemological and institutional oppression; the right to form relationships, marry, and build families; the right not to be forced into marriage or childbearing; and the freedom of speech, thought, writing, and belief. These rights are to be honored irrespective of differences in class, race, ethnicity, culture, language, location, nationality, legal status, socioeconomic status, health status, ability status, religion, age, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Humanistic psychologists unequivocally oppose the abuse of human rights, including the denial of basic freedoms and liberties, economic deprivation, social discrimination and humiliation, excessive or unjustified use of violence or other force, genocide and other crimes of war, physical and psychological torture, human trafficking, religious persecution, unjust restrictions on freedom of movement, and the imprisonment of persons without fair trial.

Humanistic psychologists are vigilant against subtler forms of violence and oppression, such as the structural oppression inherent in the pressure not to question authority or the status quo. Humanistic psychologists recognize the ways in which psychological research and practice, even when aimed at the betterment of human society, may in fact cause or perpetuate social injustices. Therefore, humanistic psychologists refrain from unreflective acquiescence to organizational or institutional demands that may further societal and other structural inequities. In situations where questionable discourse or practices emerge within their own institutions, humanistic psychologists aspire to challenge such discourse and practices to the best of their ability, and they do not hesitate to apply their education and expertise for the betterment of individuals and

human society. Humanistic psychologists also oppose ideological and cultural hegemonies, including the hegemony of Western psychology that renders invisible psychological theories and practices of non-Western cultures.

Humanistic psychologists recognize that the violation of human rights has often been sanctioned by the laws and regulations of governing bodies and related organizations, including the military. In response, when encountering conflicts between ethics and the practices or demands of governing bodies or organizations, humanistic psychologists prioritize ethics and the principles of social justice, human rights, and human dignity.

As Robin Fox (1991) points out, “We could not plead against inhuman tyrannies if we did not know what is inhuman” (p. 13). The statements put forward here are not prescriptions for specific behaviors so much as guidelines for thinking about issues of ethics and social justice. Humanistic psychologists aspire to live up to these values and principles when taking up ethical challenges in their own cultural, historical, and political contexts, according to the dictates of their own conscience

References

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