

# **Towards a Decolonization of Counseling: Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) Responds to Racial Violence & Injustice**

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## **Abstract**

The racist violence that occurred during the summer of 2020 was a tipping point forcing many people and institutions to acknowledge and address racial inequities in the United States. As the “conscience” of ACA, Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) responded to this crisis through immediate action and strategic planning. This article discusses the process used by CSJ leaders to meet the CSJ mission of “promoting social justice...through confronting oppressive systems of power and privilege that affect professional counselors and our clients and to assist in the positive change in our society through the professional development of counselors” during this critical time. Recommendations for moving toward a decolonization of counseling practice, supervision, education, and research also are provided.

*Keywords: social justice, racial justice, advocacy, organizational leadership, decolonization*

## **Towards a Decolonization of Counseling: Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) Responds to Racial Violence & Injustice**

The murder of George Floyd has been described as a tipping point forcing many people and institutions to acknowledge and address racism and racial inequities in the United States (Austin, 2020). For many Black Americans this opened or deepened a soul wound, while forcing many White Americans and institutions to acknowledge systemic institutionalized racism in the United States. As the “social conscience” (CSJ, 2021) of the American Counseling Association (ACA), Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) responded to this crisis through immediate action and strategic planning. This article outlines the process used by CSJ leaders to meet the CSJ mission of “work[ing] to promote social justice in our society through confronting oppressive systems of power and privilege that affect professional counselors and our clients and to assist in the positive change in our society through the professional development of counselors” (CSJ, 2021) during this critical time. This includes gathering sponsorship for large scale events, collecting and analyzing feedback survey data, and using this data to direct CSJ initiatives and strategic planning.

Research and statistics clearly indicate racial inequities in the access and delivery of counseling and other health services (McGuire & Miranda, 2008; Perzichilli, 2020). The ACA’s mission “to promote respect for human dignity and diversity” (ACA, 2011, p. 2) and the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) commitment to values such as “promoting social justice,” “honoring diversity,” “embracing a multicultural approach” (p. 3) are juxtaposed with documented long standing mental health disparities and inequities. As such, it is clear the counseling profession must engage in strategic and systematic efforts that address racial disparities and racial violence in order to truly embody ACA’s mission and ethical principles.

As counseling and psychotherapy is the most common treatment for mental health concerns (MHA, 2022), it is imperative that the counseling profession commits to a process of “decolonizing” and increasing equity, in terms of access to and delivery of services, for historically marginalized people and communities. The term *decolonization* was first coined by the German economist Moritz Julius Bonn in the 1930s to describe former colonies that achieved self-governance (O’Dowd & Heckenberg, 2020). However, for the purposes of this article, *decolonization* is defined as two phenomena. First, there is an understanding that the majority of the dominant institutions and systems in the United States were created by white male European colonists beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Second, in response to that understanding of colonization, U.S. society commits to an ongoing, intentional process of decentering Eurocentric values, worldviews, and ways of being while centralizing Black, Indigenous and other diverse ways of being. Further, decolonization occurs through a process of engaging with diverse perspectives, sharing power and decision making, and implementing social justice practices (Racial Equity Tools, 2020).

As the division of ACA committed to promoting social justice in the profession and larger society, CSJ engaged in immediate action and strategic planning to respond to this public murder, recognizing that George Floyd’s death was one more in a long line of murders of Black and Brown men, women, and children. The rationale for this article lies in the gap between the counseling profession’s aspirational mission and ethics and longstanding disparities in mental health treatment. This article will explain the process the CSJ Racial Justice Task Force used and provide recommendations for actions that can be taken by counseling practitioners, clinical supervisors, counselor educators, and researchers to move towards a decolonization of our profession to embody the ACA mission and *Code of Ethics*, and provide greater access, quality, and equity in counseling service delivery.

### **Creation of the CSJ Racial Justice Task Force**

On May 26, 2020, the day after George Floyd was murdered, 74 days after Breonna Taylor was murdered, and 92 days after Ahmaud Arbery was murdered, the CSJ Racial Justice Task Force was born. Following several emails, texts, and phone calls to the President of CSJ, a group of CSJ leaders gathered to discuss CSJ’s response

to these racially-motivated and violent murders. Of course, it was not just a response to these murders, it was a response to the historically ceaseless killing of Black people in this country. As a white woman, the CSJ President and first author of this article, I knew assembling a diverse group of leaders to curate CSJ's response was critical. It was natural to call for volunteers from the leadership of the organization, and many organizational leaders volunteered quickly to engage in this work. These seven CSJ leaders convened and began the immediate planning of events and initiatives in response to this crisis. The CSJ Racial Justice Task Force, comprised of the CSJ President (Lauren Shure), President-elect (Colette Dollarhide), Communications Officer (Frannie Neal), Co-Membership Committee chairs (Rachael Goodman and Shon Smith), Newsletter Co-Editor (Darius Green), and Advocacy Committee chair (Ebony White), began meeting and planning immediate and long-term responses.

### **CSJ's Immediate Response & Short-Term Planning**

During the summer of 2020 programming, ongoing communications with our members, leaders, partners, ACA, sibling divisions (those divisions whose missions called for clinical responses on the basis of specialized client groups, settings, or practice issues), and public relations was vital. Our Communications Officer conducted outreach and maintained active organizational correspondence via the CSJ website, ACA Connect, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and the CSJ member email list. Luckily, these platforms of communication with CSJ membership were already established and active.

In addition to planning events to support members and provide education and advocacy, the task force decided to hold a Moment of Silence at a previously scheduled CSJ Town Hall on June 3, 2020 and use it as an opportunity to inform CSJ members about upcoming events and resources. CSJ also published an "Open Letter and Call to Action" Statement on June 5, 2020.

Additionally, we planned two events to support those impacted by this racial violence and provide an opportunity for community building, collaboration, and education on how to employ anti-racist advocacy and social justice work. The first event on June 8, 2020 was named "*I Need A Minute*" because we, especially the Black people in leadership, were faced with the task of performing our various roles while managing the mental, emotional, and physiological effects of racial trauma caused by the public murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. As we navigated our own thoughts and emotions around these traumatic events, it was evident that our colleagues in the profession, including faculty, supervisors, and students, were also seeking an outlet for themselves.

On Juneteenth, June 19, 2020, CSJ leadership organized the very first interdivisional Town Hall event, "Racial Trauma and the Violent and Negligent Policing of Black Americans." This was historic in that we received support from all four regions and 18 divisions of the ACA, with close collaboration among the Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities' (SAIGE), the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development's (AMCD), and the Association for Specialists in Group Work's (ASGW) leadership, as well as the ACA Foundation. The event provided a community space to gather and share our anger and sadness, as well as provide information regarding engaging in advocacy. Leaders from the counseling branches in the states in which the most recent murders and public demonstrations occurred (Minnesota, Georgia, and Kentucky) shared regarding the emotional climate of their states and ways they were responding. These leaders shared feelings of distress, anger, sadness, and confusion throughout their communities as a result of this racist violence. In response, they reported holding community events similar to CSJ's "*I Need A Minute*" event to address community distress and advocating with elected officials to repeal laws such as Georgia's Citizens Arrest Law, which is seen as a barrier to prosecuting racially-motivated killings. The Citizens Arrest Law was repealed about 15 months after the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, as a result of community advocacy and outrage.

Gathering Feedback for Future Planning. Feedback surveys were created to gather information from event participants to inform the planning and logistics of future events. Four major themes emerged from this feedback. First, feedback from these events revealed participants desired a consistent space of gathering, which

resulted in a monthly gathering, also named *I Need A Minute*. These gatherings were an opportunity to hold space for those experiencing burnout, racial trauma, and racial battle fatigue. Attendees were from various racial and cultural backgrounds, as well as varying roles in the profession (students, faculty). In this space, two leaders in CSJ facilitated conversation, but all attendees had shared power. We were able to maintain this space from June 2020 through April 2021.

Second, event participants wanted to gain more knowledge and skills regarding advocacy and action to dismantle racial and other forms of systemic violence. During Summer 2020, a monthly CSJ webinar series was already in place. These webinars were organized by the Professional Development Committee and focused on topics to educate counselors on how to enact social justice and advocacy in their practice. In consultation with the Professional Development Committee and the CSJ board, previously scheduled webinars were delayed and the webinar series was transitioned to a Racial Justice Webinar Series. The first webinar was Dr. Darius Green's Webinar, "Counseling for Black Lives: Advocacy for Addressing Undue Police Violence," delivered on June 25, 2020. This was followed by a Summer Racial Justice School Counseling Webinar Series. Concurrently, and in conjunction with the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision's Advocacy Committee, a Call for Resources to Address Racial Trauma and Violent and Negligent Policing in Black Communities was published. Subsequently, an open access Racial Trauma Resource Bank was created on the CSJ website.

Third, participants wanted expanded curriculum and advanced training on advocacy and social justice. The creation of an Online Social Justice Institute was already underway before the summer of 2020. This institute, the CSJ Counselor Education and Supervision Task Force's Professional Development Institute, focused on the impact of different social justice issues on counselor education and supervision. On February 24, 2023, presenters from different divisions of the American Counseling Association, including the Association for Counselor Education & Supervision, Counselors for Social Justice, Humanistic Counseling Association, & Military and Government Counseling Association, discussed social justice issues in their respective areas and provided insight into how counselor educators and counselor educators-in-training can be more strategic as they approach these issues.

Lastly, in the feedback surveys, several event participants stated they wanted access to educational spaces exclusively for white individuals so they could explore their white identities, gain knowledge, and learn and practice skills and actions to advocate as allies and co-conspirators. This led to the development of the first CSJ Anti-Racism Discussion and Action Group. This group ran for six months between November 2021 and April 2022. Data collected for the study conducted on the efficacy of this group is currently being analyzed.

### **ACA Interdivisional Social Compact**

Another outcome of the initial CSJ events planned and coordinated by the CSJ Racial Justice Task Force was the proposal to create an ACA Interdivisional Social Compact and Commitment to Action. A draft of this Interdivisional Social Compact and Commitment to Action was drafted in collaboration with leaders from ASGW, AMCD, and SAIGE. This compact outlines a proposal to establish a standing "inter-divisional and inter-regional advocacy and social action" ACA committee. The vision for this committee is to have a member from ACA, a member from each of the four regions, and a member from each of the 18 divisions to serve on a standing committee to promote social justice in our society through acknowledging and confronting oppressive systems of power and privilege within our society and profession that affect professional counselors, clients, and communities. Given the understanding that social justice and the dismantling of white supremacy and systemic, institutionalized racism is a continuous and long-term process, we believe the establishment of a standing committee within ACA to address these issues is imperative. The goal of this committee will be to ensure that the dynamics of power and privilege within ACA, the counseling profession, and client communities are acknowledged and confronted through thoughtful reflection, discussion, and action. This will be beyond human rights. The committee will combine anti-colonial strategies, multicultural competencies, and social justice advocacy guidelines to guide their

work. The initial focus of this committee will be to establish a commitment from ACA, its four regions, and its 18 divisions. This commitment includes:

1. Designating a member to serve on the committee;
2. Integrating goals to promote and take action on social justice issues into strategic planning;
3. Commitment to engage in this “advocacy and social action committee” by including language in division and region bylaws;
4. Establishing (or maintaining) the role of “community representative” as a voting board member;
5. Developing goals and initiatives specific to addressing white supremacy and institutionalized racism.

The advocacy and social action committee will begin by assisting ACA, its divisions, and its regions in establishing these commitments. Once these commitments are established, the committee will work collaboratively to support ACA, its divisions, and its regions in acknowledging and confronting oppressive systems and dynamics and reaching the goals established as part of this commitment [e.g., (a) developing and implementing a plan to promote increased racial/ethnic diversity within leadership roles of ACA, its branches and divisions; (b) development and delivery of curriculum to address racial trauma; and (c) the creation of initiatives and networks to encourage and support people from historically underrepresented groups to pursue careers in counseling and counselor education]. As these goals are met and social issues emerge, the committee will continue to assist ACA, its divisions, and its regions in developing and attaining goals to promote and act upon social justice issues with the acknowledgment that the attainment of social justice is a longstanding goal and ideal.

### **Long-term Strategic Planning Focused on Racial Justice**

In order to create accountability for continuing the work of racial justice, CSJ engaged in strategic planning with racial justice as the focus. This included focusing the work of the organization in intentional ways on the issue that brought greater clarity and activity from those involved. Each component of the organization, listed below, looked for ways to bring racial justice into their CSJ contributions. All three Presidential offices, Past (Lauren Shure), Current (Colette Dollarhide), and Elect (Delila Owens), agreed the focus of CSJ would be Racial Justice in 2020-2021. This was enacted with the start of the year’s strategic planning retreat to ensure that each part of the organization was similarly focused. Some examples of these strategic planning efforts are below:

- Professional Development Committee, Part A: This group planned, organized, and presented several webinars in the Racial Justice Webinar Series 2020-2021.
- Professional Development Committee, Part B: With input from other organizational leaders, the Committee also began work on the Online Social Justice Institute, which was designed with racial equity issues as the central theme. This online institute is an opportunity for CSJ members to engage in interactive training to deepen their understanding of advocacy and learn how to enact advocacy skills and actions in their counseling roles.
- Communications Officer and Marketing, Media, and Public Relations Committee: These professionals focused on messaging, with broad input, and designing ongoing communications designed to facilitate activism and share resources for racial justice work.

### **Recommendations for Moving Towards Decolonization**

This article highlights the work of the CSJ leadership following the high-profile murders of Black Americans in 2020 to advocate for anti-racist actions in counseling, support CSJ members impacted by this violence, and provide education and training to professional counselors interested in deepening their advocacy and social justice work. Immediately organizing a task force to take action was imperative, as it was evident through communications with CSJ leadership that practitioners, clients, and communities were deeply affected and motivated to take action. Immediate task force actions included: (a) creating and disseminating a statement condemning racial violence along with the provision of advocacy resources and a call to action, (b) creating space for those impacted by the

violence to be in community and mourn together employing indigenous (native to the culture of those being served) healing methods, (c) collaborating with other ACA leaders and entities to plan and implement a town hall on racial trauma and violence, (d) gathering and disseminating anti-racist resources via an online resource bank, and (e) gathering and analyzing feedback from CSJ members and event participants in order to drive long-term strategic planning of the organization. To promote sustained change and leverage collaboration, another important aspect of CSJ's immediate response was organizing with other ACA division leaders to discuss how to drive long-term, systemic anti-racist efforts through ACA and the counseling field. The Social Compact and Commitment to Action was a result of this work.

While the hope of presenting CSJ's response in this article is to assist other organizations in developing short- and long-term responses to combat racial violence and injustice, there are additional actions that can be taken to promote racial equity and justice within the counseling profession. For example, another current initiative of CSJ is a mentorship program to promote and support advocacy and social justice work among professional counselors, supervisors, and educators. This program also has the goal of identifying, supporting, and encouraging a diverse pipeline of CSJ leaders. The promotion and support of emerging Leaders of Color in ACA, its divisions, and its branches is an important aspect of promoting racial equity in the counseling field. Advocating for the hiring, retention and promotion of Counselor Educators of Color is another important action to move the field towards greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. While we acknowledge the importance of efforts to focus on increasing the number of BIPOC counselor educators and leaders, we also acknowledge the unique struggles of Black academics and counseling professionals. We believe specific attention and efforts should be directed specifically on the hiring, promotion, and retention of Black counselor educators and leaders. This will likely necessitate qualitative and potentially mixed methods research capturing the voices of Black counseling professionals and other Counseling Professionals and Leaders of Color who understand anti-racist practices as a function of personal and professional experiences from a non-dominant racial lens.

With regards to counselor education curriculum and training methods, the critique of dominant theories of counseling and psychology and their white supremacist roots are imperative. This includes implementing "decolonized" counselor education curricular and instructional methods that train students to enact anti-oppressive, advocacy and social justice work. Further explanation is provided below in the "Implications" section. This includes integration of diverse conceptualizations of wellness and mental health, as well as scholarship created by Scholars of Color, including culture-centered and indigenous methods of healing. Another aspect of this is integrating the conceptualization, assessment, and treatment of racial trauma into counseling coursework. Lastly, the authors of this article advocate for efforts aimed at making counselor education programs more accessible for historically marginalized and minoritized students. While more research would assist in directing these efforts, a commitment to offer need-based scholarships, as well are warranted.

### **Getting Started and Lessons Learned**

While CSJ has a long history of social justice work and advocacy, the summer of 2020 was a "wake up call" for many organizations who realized the nation was being called to face institutional racism and make systemic changes. For organizations at the beginning of a decolonization journey, it will be necessary to seek consultation from experts. There are many counseling and other professionals who have expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), anti-racism, and social justice training. For individuals at the beginning of their decolonization journey, there are many racial justice educators such as Rachel Cargle, Layla Saad, Ijeoma Oluo, Ibram Kendi, Marc Lamont Hill, and Kimberle Crenshaw who publish their work online and in print, as well as websites like [www.racialequitytools.org](http://www.racialequitytools.org) and the New York Times "The 1619 Project." There also are many free access resources about the history and current state of racial injustice in this country. This includes resources posted on the CSJ website and archived webinars on the CSJ YouTube channel.

Inherent in the above recommendations is a need for individuals in the profession to engage in introspection with the goal of increased self-awareness. Locating ourselves within the appropriate racial identity models (Cross & Strauss, 1998; Ferdmen & Gallegos, 2001; Helms, 1995; Horse, 2005; Kim, 1981; Poston, 1990) is a useful tool in understanding ourselves as racialized beings and the impact of our stage of development on our interactions with our clients, colleagues, and peers. The book, *A race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life* (Helms, 2019), is a good place to begin this journey.

Organizations at the beginning stages of decentering Eurocentric and colonized policies and practices can access counseling leaders and experts for consultation. There is a temptation to ask BIPOC colleagues for assistance in this work simply because of their racial identities. It is important to seek anti-racism experts through universities and consulting groups and pay them for their knowledge and expertise to reduce the burden on BIPOC individuals or communities who are already negatively impacted by systemic racism. Many consultation groups and experts, such as the Arredondo Advisory Group, specialize in organizational diversity planning.

Lessons learned by the CSJ Racial Justice Task Force include the importance of collaboration among a diverse team in planning decolonization efforts and gathering stakeholder feedback for ongoing evaluation and planning. The significance of organizing a team that included diversity in regard to racial identity and decolonization expertise was imperative in CSJ's experience. A strong and swift response to the racist violence of 2020 demonstrated CSJ's commitment to justice and support for our members and communities. Administering feedback surveys to our community members as we launched our initial responses provided opportunities to use this stakeholder feedback to guide the longer-term strategic planning and action. Lastly, reaching out to engage in collaborative efforts with allies and leaders in the field, such as ACA, who have large membership and influence can exponentially increase impact.

For sustained decolonization efforts to take root and flourish, intentional planning and action need to be taken along with ongoing evaluation and improvement. Decolonization does not happen by accident. It is done through a process of reflection, discussion, and action or praxis (Freire, 2018). More specific recommendations for advancing advocacy in counseling, supervision, education, and research follow.

### **Advocacy in Counseling**

Supporting clients who are BIPOC in their liberation from systems of racial and state-sanctioned violence and oppression is essential for professional counselors. Racialized violence from oppressive systems may result in racial trauma—the physical, psychological, and emotional harm that often results from interpersonal, vicarious, and systemic racist encounters (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Comas-Díaz, 2019). Emerging research suggests that many counselors do not receive adequate training in addressing matters of racial trauma and undue police violence through counseling and advocacy (Green & Evans, 2021; Hemmings & Evans, 2018). To advance competence, counselors must consider the importance of decolonization in the practice of counseling (Singh et al., 2020). While uprooting practices that reinforce white supremacy and colonization from our repertoire, counselors should simultaneously develop and utilize approaches that foster healing from racial trauma.

Models of healing created by and for BIPOC clients and communities are key to effective and liberatory counseling practice. For example, Comas-Díaz (2016) created a model for racial trauma recovery that has applications for many BIPOC communities. Similarly, French et al. (2020) developed a framework to promote radical healing among BIPOC communities. Models specific to BIPOC communities also have been developed, such as Gone's (2009) community-based treatment to address historical trauma among Native Americans and Mosely et al.'s (2021) model to prevent and resist anti-Black racism. Counselors should critically analyze the counseling models and techniques they are currently using as their approaches may fail to consider the sociopolitical context, racial trauma, or the ways in which communities are resisting oppression (Goodman, 2014). Moreover, while racial trauma can be addressed through traditional approaches to counseling (e.g., individual counseling), solely relying on intrapsychic approaches to addressing systemic racism inappropriately places a burden and

responsibility on BIPOC communities to navigate, resist, and overcome the deleterious effects of racism. Thus, it is essential that counselors be actively engaged in advocacy in communities and in the public arena to address and prevent systemic racism. Specifically, counselors can support BIPOC communities in protesting against systemic racism, strategizing with community leaders to construct antiracist change, and developing networks of care and mutual aid during times of sociopolitical unrest (Green et al., 2021).

### **Advocacy in Supervision**

One concrete model for supervision, designed to develop, enhance, and promote social justice for supervisor, supervisee, and client was introduced by Dollarhide, Hale, and Stone-Sabali (2021). This model can be used alone or with other models (feminist, ecological, etc.) in a four-stage series of supervisory actions that prioritize social justice goals along with therapeutic goals. This model was presented to problematize traditional colonized supervision and to bring supervisor and supervisee into alignment to practice and celebrate culturally grounded healing. In the first stage, the supervisor works to decolonize themselves through examining and disputing implicit biases and white hegemonic assumptions and structures that pervade assumptions about learning, counseling, and supervision. In the second stage, the supervisor extends cultural and identity affirmation through extensive discussion of the identity intersectionality found in the supervisory dyad. In the third stage, this cultural and identity affirmation is extended to the client as systemic counseling strategies are fostered to design social justice and therapeutic goals. In the final stage, the supervisor and supervisee evaluate the extent to which both social justice and therapeutic goals are achieved.

### **Advocacy in Education**

Given the acknowledgment of the white supremacist roots of psychology and counseling (Guthrie, 2003) and current findings that many counselor education programs do not adequately train students to assess and treat racial trauma or to enact advocacy and social justice (Singh, Appling, & Trepal, 2020), it is clear that updates to traditional curriculum and introduction are needed. While a larger conversation and agenda to “decolonize” higher education has been evident in the last few years, much work is left to be done, especially in counselor education. Several researchers have suggested the addition of counseling courses that pointedly focus on anti-racism (Gonzalez & Cokley, 2021; Sharma & Hipolito-Delgado, 2021). The purposes of these courses are to amplify the impact of anti-Blackness and white supremacy on society, specifically in clinical settings, and instill critical consciousness as a way to promote anti-racism in theory and practice (Gonzalez & Cokley, 2021; Sharma & Hipolito-Delgado, 2021). This is essential because often counselors in training, counselors, and counselor educators express a desire to be anti-racist yet struggle with implementation. However, courses with a focus on anti-racism can provide strategies to address these concerns. Furthermore, educators have provided toolkits such as *Taking Action: Creating Social Change through Strength, Solidarity, Strategy, and Sustainability*, by Rebecca Toporek and Muninder Kaur Ahluwalia (2021), and *The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing* by Annaliese Singh (2019), which includes specific activities and strategies that center social justice and anti-racism.

Resources such as those references above can be utilized in counselor education programs to assist counseling students with developing an anti-racism and social justice lens and acquiring advocacy skills. In addition to curriculum, counselor education programs must examine their entire program, including student admission and retention, faculty hiring and retention, and instructional methods (Goodman et al., 2014). Programs should examine disaggregated data on program outcomes to identify disparities, particularly for BIPOC students, and to redress these disparities with systemic changes to policies and practices, including critical course reviews and anti-racist faculty training. Program- and college- or university-level data on hiring, retention, salary, promotion, and status (e.g., tenure-line or contract faculty) are also important in identifying how racism and discrimination are endemic to the faculty experience. Such information must be followed by action on the part of decision makers in order to redress these harms and should be guided by those impacted by these injustices (i.e., BIPOC faculty).



## Advocacy in Research

While academic research has often failed to enact social justice ideals, models exist that enable researchers to work in ways that are more culturally congruent, action-oriented, and liberatory. Community based participatory action research (CBPAR) is one such model; using this approach, researchers seek to work collaboratively, equitably, and sustainably (Israel et al., 2005). Furthermore, a CBPAR approach to research involves the development of community-researcher partnerships, whereby a dual program of research *and* action is developed, so that there is not only the generation of new knowledge, but also tangible benefits to the community (Israel et al., 2005). The CBPAR program is community-driven, in that community members, usually through the formation of a leadership and working group called a community advisory board (CAB), determine what should be researched and how. CAB members can ensure that “outside” researchers, such as university or agency partners, have a more accurate understanding of the sociopolitical context, cultural factors, and lived experiences of community members. This nuanced “insider” understanding is also critical to the data analysis process, where CAB members can ensure the accuracy of the interpretations and themes (Vesely et al., 2019). This data can then be used to engage in advocacy on behalf of and, when possible, with the CAB and community members. For instance, CAB members could hold a community meeting to share out the data with the wider community and get feedback about the accuracy of the analysis and the possible associated action steps. Findings also can be shared out with, for instance, counselors, social service workers, educators, school administrators, and policymakers. Often, information about BIPOC and other marginalized communities is missing from the literature, inaccurate, or deficit oriented. By conducting research using justice-oriented frameworks such as CPBAR, researchers can add an understanding of resistance to the knowledge base, and engage in collaborative action.

One area of study that warrants further investigation is development of best practices for training white counselors and counselor educators to enact advocacy and social justice in their practice. As part of the long-term response of CSJ to racial violence and injustice, in the fall of 2021 an anti-racism discussion and action group for white CSJ members who wanted to deepen their advocacy and social justice skills and behaviors was launched. IRB approval was secured to analyze the participants’ reflections, as well as the audio transcripts of the monthly group meetings. Readings and/or videos were assigned to be completed before each of six monthly meetings, along with journal prompts asking participants to reflect upon how the assigned materials made them feel, think, and act. Participants also were asked to complete journal entries following each group meeting, answering the question of how each group meeting impacted the way they feel, think, and behave in regard to anti-racist advocacy and social justice work. Analysis of the data is set to begin in the summer of 2023. The hope is that this study will provide information about the effectiveness of the group, as well as shed light on how to improve this group moving forward to reach the goal of training counselors and counselor educators who are committed, competent, and feel efficacious in integrating anti-oppressive and anti-racist advocacy and social justice into their personal and professional roles and responsibilities.

## Conclusion

The mission of CSJ includes serving as “the conscience of ACA.” As such, following the high-profile murders of several Black Americans in the summer of 2020, CSJ responded to the immediate needs of members impacted by these events, as well as the clients and communities they serve through organizing events and other actions to provide support, education, and advocacy. Additionally, recognizing that a sustained and aggressive effort was needed, the CSJ racial justice task force, composed of seven CSJ leaders, also focused effort on long term strategic planning informed by feedback gathered during the initial events. The strategic planning included the following: the creation of a monthly space for those impacted by the violence to be in community and mourn together employing indigenous healing methods, the Racial Justice Webinar Series, an Online Social Justice Institute, the Racial Trauma Resource Bank, an Anti-Racism Discussion and Action Group, and the development of the Interdivisional Social Compact and Commitment to Action proposal. In order to close the gap between the

counseling profession's mission and ethics and persistent racial inequities in the access and delivery of counseling and other health services, this article provided details about the process and practices the CSJ racial justice task force used to respond to the racial violence of 2020, as well as other steps that should be taken to “decolonize” and increase equity in counseling practice, supervision, education, and research. Lessons learned and best practices were discussed for moving professional counseling organizations towards decolonization.

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