The Seven Habits to Social Justice Education
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“If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. We need not wait to see what others do.” — Mahatma Gandhi

Social justice education involves understanding oneself and conditions in which change are possible to promote inclusivity and advocate for injustices. The term social justice could easily be nestled into the work and roles student affairs professionals complete in their day-to-day tasks. Understanding the need and drive for social justice education allows the many students we serve to advocate for equitable and full participation of all social identity groups in society. Social justice is often seen as a goal and a process, the goal of equity and the process of continuous learning experiences. As fraternity/sorority professionals, the desire to learn more about social justice may often arrive during times of distress, busyness, and inconvenience. Since we are educators for members that interact on campuses with diverse student populations and communicate with colleagues of diverse experiences, we need to advocate for our personal education and awareness of social justice topics, issues, and understandings. Below are suggested readings:

• *Advancing Social Justice: Tools, Pedagogies, and Strategies to Transform Your Campus* by Tracy Davis and Laura M. Harrison
• *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups* by Diane J. Goodman
• *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators* edited by Lisa M. Landreman

Above are four resources that provide further education on social justice topics. Each book begins with outlining the purpose, goal, and process of social justice education. Common vernaculars are used to bring the readers close to the subject matter, which is attempting to find a common definition for social justice. Many of the contributors define social justice as multifaceted and ever changing to replicate the lived-experiences of the individuals receiving awareness and further education (Davis & Harrison, 2013; Goodman, 2011; Gorski, Zenkov, Osei-Kofi, & Sapp, 2013; Landreman, 2013). As fraternity/sorority professionals, there are seven important concepts from the referred book list that enable us to seek transgressions and work collaboratively, all through an inclusive lens while understanding social justice education and the work we conduct as professionals. I call these the seven habits of highly effective fraternity/sorority professionals to promote social justice education.

Begin with language
*Advancing Social Justice* offers critical definitions to common language for discussing social justice (Davis & Harrison, 2013). “The ever-changing and dynamic nature of language and the constructed nature of reality itself inhibit the establishment of terms and definitions that are true once and for all” (Davis & Harrison, 2013, p. 26). In order to engage with students, we must have common language to share our experiences. Fraternity/sorority professionals facilitate conversations surrounding equity,
diversity and inclusion when they themselves are using the language. Our students mirror behaviors and actions through role modeling, and once students recognize that dialogue around identities of privilege and oppression are acceptable learning can occur (Goodman, 2011; Landreman, 2013). Fraternity and sorority communities are driven from a social justice language. While many campuses include chapters of culturally or identity-based organizations, it is these organizations that once were founded on tenets of marginalized communities and injustices (Kimbrough, 2003). Opportunities to share the language of social justice are embedded in fraternity and sorority community culture.

Personal reflection
“As social justice educators, we aim to help educators identify and analyze dehumanizing processes on our campuses and in the larger society, reflect on our own socialization, and engage in proactive strategies to dismantle oppression” (Landreman, 2013, p. xiv). The Art of Effective Facilitation aims to offer personal accounts of student affairs professionals navigating moments of discomfort and dissonance while engaging in work related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (Landreman, 2013). These include presenting to a group of students regarding diverse issues or engaging in difficult dialogues with fellow colleagues on race, gender, religion, or other identity based topics. As a fraternity/sorority professional, situating yourself in your identity is one layer of personal reflection (Davis & Harrison, 2013; Landreman, 2013). In order to create opportunities for our students to engage in diverse dialogues for recruitment, new member education, or membership development, we must be willing to understand and articulate our social identities (Davis & Harrison, 2013; Goodman, 2011; Landreman, 2013).

From theory to practice
“Social justice facilitation is an art that comes from understanding oneself, designing optimal learning environments, developing authentic relationships, and articulating multicultural concepts, but also from practice—practice that includes ongoing reflection, action, and relearning as facilitators” (Landreman, 2013, p. ix). Often times, fraternity/sorority professionals hear the word ‘theory’ and cringe. Further educating ourselves in areas and subject matter that is unknown, whether that is attending an out of the ordinary session during professional development conferences such as the Annual Meeting of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors or picking up a book of a different topic for leisure reading, like the referred book list above, are just two opportunities to engage within social justice education through theoretical concepts that inform practice. While social justice education can be learned through practical situations, knowledge of historical perspectives and theoretical frameworks can enhance understanding and practice of inclusion efforts (Bell, 2007; Davis & Harrison, 2013; Goodman, 2011; Gorski, et al., 2013).

Educating others through how, not what
Critical theorist, Paulo Freire stated, “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (as cited in Davis & Harrison, 2013, p. 83). Therefore, the authors of Cultivating Social Justice Teachers include chapters that identify models of teaching and educating others on social justice topics (Gorski, et al., 2013). Educating our students on social justice topics can more effectively be achieved through pedagogical practices of instruction, rather than the topics that are conveyed (Davis & Harrison, 2013; Gorski, et al., 2013). Social justice topics, such as understanding intersectionality (that our multiple social identities function in sync to identify our core sense of self) or ways of understanding White privilege to the complexities of traditions embedded in Christian privilege on college and university campuses and the broader society, are topics that aid in the development of social justice consciousness and understanding (Davis & Harrison, 2013; Goodman, 2011; Gorski, et al., 2013). Therefore, the influence of social justice education involves the pedagogical
practices, or how the training and workshops are conducted. Have you ever attend a presentation where the content interested you, but the presenter turned you off? Methods of facilitating conversations of social justice education are explained in *The Art of Effective Facilitation, Cultivating Social Justice Teachers, and Promoting Diversity and Social Justice* (Landreman, 2013; Gorski, et al., 2013; Goodman, 2011).

**Be positive**
While engaging in difficult dialogues surrounding privileged and oppressed identities, fraternity/sorority professionals can provide insightful and impactful learning moments to practice inclusivity. “I understand many of the changes in my practice are because of my personal development as an individual and as a professional, and that along with my own maturation, the field of social justice education has also evolved” (Merrill, 2013, p. 59). As professionals entrenched in the work of social justice education, positivity and seeking to challenge status quo programming, events, and traditions are ways of practicing such skills (Goodman, 2011). The times that students practice non-inclusive activities, such as racial/ethnic identity themed parties or recruitment strategies for potential new members, are times that fraternity/sorority professionals can practice positivity and supportive behavior. Being positive is recognizing the faults of students’ behavior, allowing students to take responsibility, and supporting students in facing critics (Goodman, 2011; Merrill, 2013).

**Storytelling is powerful**
“I came to see that there is not only the danger of a single story, there is also the danger of a collection of stories. Which stories get told and how their telling influences one another matters” (Blackburn, 2013, p. 54). As fraternity/sorority professionals, vulnerability and storytelling are ways in which the abstract and complex social justice education surrounding equity, diversity, and inclusion become personal. The moments that campus-based professionals can authentically tell their stories to students are moments of little wins and connection building. While organization staff members often work with members in virtual or multimedia capacities, these professionals have the potential to cast their nets to wider audiences in their inter/national roles. Storytelling can become revolutionary for fraternity/sorority professionals; the opportunity to share stories and impact others through words and lived experiences is significant (Blackburn, 2013).

**Ready, set, action**
The final habit to effectively promote social justice education is to take action. It seems simple enough, but barriers make it harder to implement (Davis & Harrison, 2013). Fraternity/sorority professionals are engaged in a multitude of activities on their respective campuses or inter/national offices, which are barriers to devoting time to social justice education. Although, taking small steps to furthering education through professional development conferences or leisure reading related to the diverse topics of social justice are ways to start. Action does not have to be a grand party or elaborate plan, but rather action is the eye of the beholder. “One can do more harm than good when one’s social justice practice is either passively reflective or uncritically implemented. Social justice action is most effective when practice emerges from a deeply integrated sense of self in the world” (Davis & Harrison, 2013, p. 174). As a fraternity/sorority professional, the action you take to confront non-inclusive language, re-think non-inclusive practices, or reflect on your personal social identities are small steps in taking action (Davis & Harrison, 2013).
References

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