**The Alliance of Anti-Racist Social Work Practitioners**

**University of Maryland, Baltimore**

**School of Social Work**

**Student Government Association**

**Mission Statement/Statement of Purpose**

Context

As social workers, we are called upon to work within a Code of Ethics framework defined by social justice values and multicultural codes. Yet opportunities for serious exploration of the systemic roots of racism as they anchor physical and emotional health, cycles of violence, trauma, and poverty, as well as broader American social and political inequalities, are sorely lacking in our education and practice. This critical gap indicates a large body of practitioners who must be challenged and called upon to reframe healing, therapy, and advocacy within the context of an anti-racist agenda.

The NASW notes: “The irony is that by being a ‘helping’ profession, social work reduces the pressure on the larger society for social change.”[iii] Indeed, social work practitioners, in both macro and clinical roles, find themselves embedded within programs and policies that, to the extent that they are deemed successful and supportive, may act in oppressive ways that perpetuate a racialized society. Further, roughly 85% of U.S. social workers identify as white non-Hispanic,[i] and 56% of students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work identify as white.[ii] This predominantly white field may advance an ethnocentric focus for social work modalities and agencies at large. Subsequently, social work practitioners are complicit in systems perpetuating institutional racism.

However, social work practitioners are also integral to systemic shifts toward anti-racism. We believe that for all social workers, self-reflection and processing manifestations of our own race-based prejudice are key to facilitating this change. We also believe that education led by anti-racist social workers and community members is necessary to contextualize and shape both anti-racist social work practice and white allyship in terms of advocacy and accountability. Baltimore City demands a greater level of engagement and a stronger impetus to reform how social workers view their roles as service providers. In turn, social workers can reform their practice while combating racism as a dehumanizing force.

Statement of Purpose

The Alliance of Anti-Racist Social Work Practitioners (the Alliance) is a new organization at the University of Maryland School of Social Work dedicated to racial justice. Within the context of activism and social justice, our group seeks to examine and redefine the work of social workers in a racialized United States. As there is no clear definition of anti-racist social worker, we intend to pursue a broad set of activities and questions that challenge the implicit and explicit racism buttressing the deep inequities in contemporary America.

The Alliance is composed of a series of seminars. These discussions are open to faculty, students, staff and community members. The seminars are meant to explore the concept of “anti-racist social worker” and establish a network of practitioners for organized response and support in Baltimore City. Seminar discussions will be facilitated by students, teachers, staff and community members who are committed to the principles of anti-racism. Ideally, each seminar will be followed by group action to further support and collaborate with existing anti-racist agendas.

**The goal is to create a body of knowledge around social work, emphasizing the tenets of social justice and anti-racism.** The group will meet monthly.

This exploration will take place within the following groups:

Informal reflection, discussion and processing for social workers of color and white social workers

Seminars leading to activism and supporting Anti-Racist groups and leaders

Alliance of Anti-Racist Social Work Practitioners

White social worker reflection group

Social workers of color reflection group

1. Seminars on anti-racist practice open to social workers of all racial and ethnic backgrounds with discussions led by students, community members, existing anti-racist organizations, and others. Participants will gain opportunities to support activism activities and contribute to a body of knowledge and resource for anti-racism in social work practice.

2. Bi-weekly reflection, discussion, and processing for both white social workers and social workers of color: Use of an anti-racist framework and group discussion to facilitate learning and processing of seminar discussions and anti-racist principles within a social work context. Separation of these groups is intended to acknowledge the differences in experiences between white people and people of other racial and ethnic groups.

The following seminar topics are suggested. Final seminar topics will be selected through group discussion:

1. Social workers as anti-racist allies, including the integration of community feedback in social work practice, as well as establishing means of accountability for anti-racist practice;

2. Social justice action and anti-racist response;

3. Examining the history of social work and institutions;

4. Technology and organizing for transformation;

5. Financial justice; and

6. How anti-racist social workers can navigate dominant social work and workplace norms.

References

[i] National Association of Social Workers. (2009). NASW fact sheets. Retrieved from http://www.socialworkers.org /pressroom/features/general/nasw.asp

[ii] University of Maryland, School of Social Work. (2016). Strategic Plan: Diversity. Retrieved from [http://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/about-the-ssw/strategic-plan/diversity/http://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/about-the-ssw/strategic-plan/diversity/http://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/about-the-ssw/strategic-plan/diversity/](http://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/about-the-ssw/strategic-plan/diversity/)

[iii] National Association of Social Workers. (2007). Institutional Racism & The Social Work Profession: A Call to Action. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/diversity/institutionalracism.pdf

Additional information

People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. (n.d.). Our principles. Retrieved from

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