

OCTOBER 2022

UNDOING RACISM THROUGH SOCIAL WORK

VOL. 2

A Collaborative
Vision for an
Anti-Racist Future



SOCIAL WORKERS CHALLENGE SOCIAL INJUSTICE.



Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

— NASW Code of Ethics

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VISION FOR AN ANTI-RACIST FUTURE



In May 2020, the world was galvanized by horrifying images of a Black man losing his life to a police officer on the streets of Minneapolis. George Floyd's death, along with other public acts of violence against people of color, became a tipping point in the U.S. for fighting back against persistent disparities and unchecked institutional racism. For some Americans, the Floyd tragedy was the last straw following years of increasingly brazen racist behavior by authorities. For others, the global pandemic allowed more space to hear the voices of marginalized communities.

One year after the nationwide racial reckoning began, our organization released a formal apology on behalf of the social work profession for historic harms against people of color. NASW's first *Undoing Racism Through Social Work* report in June 2021 described pivotal mistakes made by social workers in every generation since the profession's founding and pledged anti-racist reform.

NASW, like many other prominent social work organizations, responded publicly with new commitments to study, fight, and eliminate attitudes and practices within our profession that continue to cause harm. We offered hundreds of hours of racial justice programming, hosted frequent town halls, and implemented comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion assessments for the entire association. We stood up. We spoke out. And we acted quickly to close gaps between our core ethical principles and organizational practices.

We are proud of these relevant and impactful efforts, yet we know there is still much work to be done.

This spring, NASW convened racial justice scholars and activists across the profession to help build a collaborative vision for achieving anti-racist social work. The resulting report chronicles key milestones from our field's anti-racism journey, and it identifies new priorities for social work education, practice and advocacy in the years ahead.

Social work can and will achieve an anti-racist future. Each social work organization and every social worker has an important role to play in dismantling racial injustice in our nation and demanding human well-being for all in society.

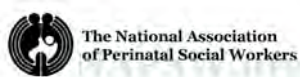
We invite you to learn more at socialworkers.org/RacialJustice and we thank you for getting involved.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mildred C. Joyner".

Mildred "Mit" Joyner, NASW President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angelo M. McClain".

Angelo McClain, NASW Chief Executive Officer



NASW BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT

FEBRUARY 23, 2022



Founded in 1955, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. Our members represent a diverse group of professionals committed to the values of integrity, competence, service, the importance of human relationships, dignity and worth of the person, and social justice. The mission of social work is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people with particular attention to those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. To honor this mission and realize our core professional values we must understand and commit to doing our part in abolishing racist and oppressive systems.

NASW adheres to its commitment of being an anti-racist organization. Anti-racism is defined as uplifting the innate humanity and individuality of Black, Latin A/O/X, Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islander, and other People of Color; demonstrating best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion; and taking conscious and deliberate actions to ensure equal opportunities for all people and communities. Anti-racism requires active resistance to and dismantling of the system of racism to obtain racial equity.

Anti-racism involves a commitment to personal and professional action. It requires that NASW, which includes all related entities, in accordance with our *Code of Ethics*, take a stance against racial hatred, bias, systemic racism, and the oppression of specific groups on an individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural level. It also requires that NASW analyze the role of institutions and systems in racial inequities and work within our organization, our networks, and our institutions to consciously and consistently challenge them personally and professionally.

**“SOCIAL JUSTICE STARTS AT HOME...WE HAVE
TO FOCUS ON THE FUTURE GENERATION OF
SOCIAL WORK, TO IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE
FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS.”**

DARRELL WHEELER
NASW President, 2014–2017

NASW is committed to:

1. Taking conscious and deliberate actions to ensure that we provide equal opportunities for all people and communities served. These actions include:

- a. **Ensuring** that individuals in decision-making positions and key stakeholders across the association represent the diversity of Black, Latin A/O/X, Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islander, and other People of Color and demonstrate best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion.
- b. **Providing** financial means within the Association’s budget to support and advance its commitment to being an anti-racist organization.
- c. **Examining** best practices to eradicate poverty and close wage gaps within communities of color.
- d. **Acknowledging** the existence of racism in the history of the profession and committing to learn from and correct our mistakes.
- e. **Addressing** the empathy gap between white social workers and clients of color.

2. Promoting anti-racism through professional development, public education, and racial justice advocacy. Maintaining an ongoing commitment to continue our conversations with our staff, members and partners about action and advocacy that builds the goal of being an anti-racist organization.

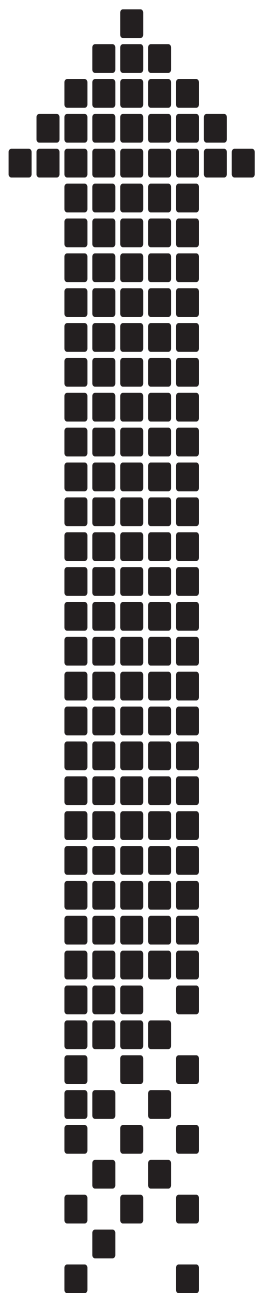
3. Confronting and working to change policies, practices, and procedures that create inequities among racial groups, understanding these systems of oppression are based in and uphold white supremacy.

This includes examining best practices to eradicate poverty and close wage gaps within communities of color and working to address biases that exist among social work professionals.

4. Confronting leaders in positions of authority and key stakeholders in government and private and nonprofit organizations who have upheld racist institutions and structures. Offering our social work skills to help establish anti-racist policies, practices, and procedures that promote racial equity.

5. Challenging racist and discriminatory legislation. Working to introduce legislation that addresses the impact of racism on people and their social, economic, health and environmental conditions.

NASW FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING ANTI-RACIST SOCIAL WORK



Highlights from the NASW Program Plan 2021-2022

Society

Draw community attention to racial equity issues, and raise awareness about the history and systems behind the issues. Offer action steps through our social justice briefs, policy statements and social justice advocacy. Create momentum toward systemic changes that reduce disparate outcomes by race.

- ▶ NASW coordinated a social issues forum with White House officials in 2021.
- ▶ Several NASW Chapters successfully opposed state legislation that would have weakened or eliminated anti-racism curricula in public education.
- ▶ More than 500 people attended an NASW-North Carolina webinar on the social work profession's involvement in the eugenics movement.
- ▶ Hired field organizers to mobilize social workers for voter registration assistance.
- ▶ Sponsored and promoted Poor People's March and featured the Rev. Dr. William Barber, Repairers of the Breach founder, at 2022 NASW National Conference.
- ▶ Contributed to public discourse on SCOTUS decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. NASW-Ohio successfully blocked total anti-abortion ban in Lebanon, Ohio, in ACLU suit.
- ▶ Participated in the August 2021 national "March On for Voting Rights" with democracy activists in Washington, DC, Atlanta, Miami, Houston and Phoenix. Livestreamed event activities for social workers on NASW social media channels.

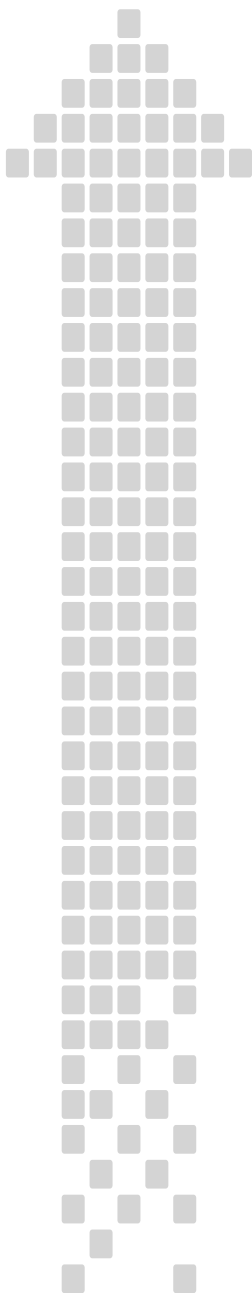
Profession

Stay solution-focused and forward-thinking in addressing the systemic barriers to equal opportunity and equal justice. Host national and local discussions on race, post resources and policy briefs for social workers, collaborate with social work leaders and offer learning forums. Pursue our social justice priorities.

- ▶ NASW deepened and expanded relationships with non-social work partners and coalitions, such as the Medical Society Consortium for Climate Control Conference, Coalition on Human Needs, Americans for Financial Reform and #cancel student debt.
- ▶ NASW is actively engaged with more than 60 national groups and over 1,000 state-level coalitions to advance social justice and social care issues.
- ▶ Helped secure national student debt cancellation by the Biden Administration and an extension for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness application process.
- ▶ Held a November 2021 Health Equity Virtual Forum featuring anti-racism scholar Dr. Ibram Kendi and other thought leaders.
- ▶ Produced a Social Work Resiliency Through the COVID Continuum Virtual Forum in 2022, featuring multiple racial equity experts.
- ▶ Released a statement in response to pass rate racial disparities on the ASWB exam. Committed to working in partnership with members of the Social Work Workforce Coalition to review the exam for bias and explore alternative pathways to licensure.
- ▶ NASW-Illinois published "Social Work Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities," which is used in workforce advocacy with the state legislature, schools of social work and other partners. Chapter also helped remove the exam requirement for non-clinical licensure in Illinois, increasing the diverse social worker job pool by more than 3,000 this year.
- ▶ Co-hosted a free joint social work conference for students with the Canadian Association of Social Workers in 2021 called "Ubuntu: Welcome to the Profession." Nearly 5,000 students and educators participated virtually from several countries.
- ▶ Co-hosted the 2022 IFSW North American Region Virtual Conference, "Honoring the Indigenous Journey." IFSW Global Indigenous Commissioner Hilary Weaver presented along with other Indigenous scholars in Canada and the United States. Social workers around the globe participated.

“CHANGE DOESN'T HAPPEN BY CHANCE.”

ANGELO McCLAIN
NASW CEO



Association

Hold ourselves accountable to addressing systemic racism and the root causes of inequity—internally and externally. Facilitate genuine discussions across the organization, strengthening our diversity and inclusion capacity and infrastructure.

Emphasize transformative solutions that impact multiple systems.

- ▶ Adopted a formal DEI Plan to influence staff hiring and retention, program development, member recruitment, internal communications, and CE training.
- ▶ Advocated for relief for vulnerable populations in all federal COVID-19 relief packages and advocated for telehealth permanence to increase mental health access in underserved areas.
- ▶ Actively incorporated Grand Challenges content and research into policy and editorial projects, including the 2021 Blueprint for Federal Public Policy Priorities and multiple Social Work Advocates magazine feature articles.
- ▶ Board of Directors released anti-racism statement during Black History Month 2022.

Teams

Evolve our workplace culture to truly value all people's contributions through authentic discussions among team members. Formulate a shared affirmative vision of a fair and inclusive society.


- ▶ Introduced a shared leadership team model to enhance inclusion and belonging among staff. Diverse teams have priority setting authority on key organizational projects.
- ▶ NASW Board hired a minority and woman-owned executive recruitment firm to manage the NASW CEO Search in 2022.

Individual


Do the work to understand white supremacy and the oppressive logic used to justify violence, exclusion, exploitation, and negative messaging through self-examination and reflection. Work through personal fears, biases, and complicity.

- ▶ Provided all NASW staff training on inclusive communications, DEI principles and unconscious bias this year. Established a staff DEI Committee and diversity issues staff portal for resource sharing.
- ▶ NASW Chapters continue developing compelling webinars, workshops and conferences focused on anti-racist skill building for social workers. NASW-New York State followed up their 17-part “Revolutionize Social Work” town hall series with webinar content on Indigenous domestic violence and social work leadership opportunities for Black male social workers.





SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS



MEETING OVERVIEW

In April, NASW convened social work thought leaders deeply involved in racial equity work to discuss and recommend priorities for building an anti-racist future for the profession. Three small groups of 8-12 summit participants explored issues facing social work practitioners, educators and students as they are called to help dismantle racist systems, laws, policies and behaviors in their communities.

Require
content on
diverse
populations

Given its century-long contributions to social justice and social welfare, the social work field is in many ways far ahead of other disciplines. However, like all professions built within our country's racist institutions, social work has a long way to go to overcome its own history of racism, discrimination and oppression.

The following six sections provide recommendations for how social work education, training, policy, research, practice and our workforce can be improved through anti-racist choices. Also identified are some of the social work groups who are leading targeted initiatives in each domain. These efforts, plus new commitments from our nation's schools of social work, human service agencies, advocacy organizations and philanthropies, will ensure our profession's anti-racist future.

Student loan
debt relief

Implement internal
DEI programs; invest
in research and
programs; partner
with minority-owned
community-based
organizations.

Seek out opportunities to lead around anti-racism in joint initiatives that improve community access to services.

Policies addressing the school to prison pipeline which criminalizes Black and Brown children

Connect empirical research around anti-racist theory to practice through continuing education, and staff development activities

o help people determine their implicit biases



Student Loan Forgiveness

Create mechanisms for organizations to learn how to best implement anti-racist practices

Collect more robust data about racial/ethnicity factors and look for patterns & opportunities

Undoing Racism in Social Work Summit Participants – April 26, 2022

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**"I AM NO LONGER ACCEPTING
THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE.
I AM CHANGING THE THINGS
I CANNOT ACCEPT."**

ANGELA DAVIS
Political Activist & Scholar



EDUCATION

QUESTION: What educational experiences could help social work students develop anti-racist skills?

The foundation of anti-racist social work education must be grounded in a common language that decenters whiteness, encourages self-interrogation and supports the ethical use of technology.

Recommendations

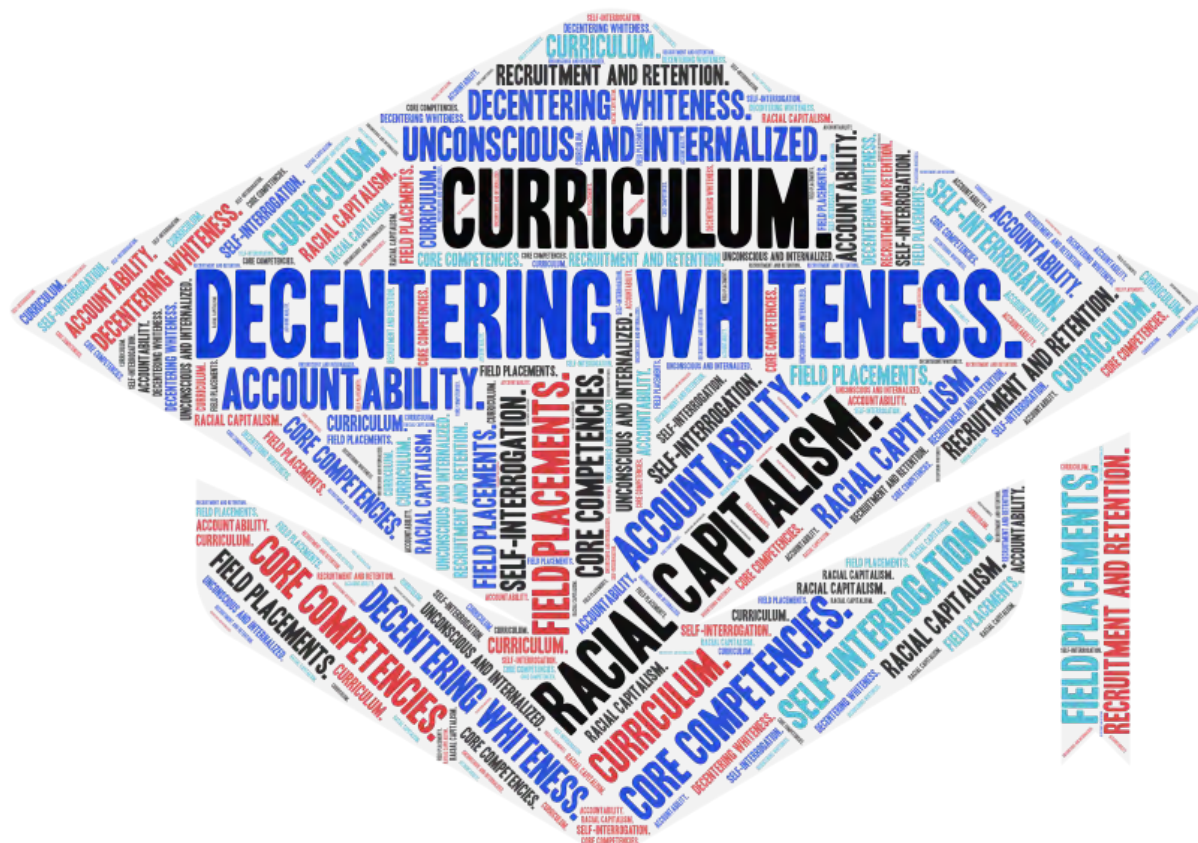
- ▶ Provide all social work students with a consistent anti-racist orientation to the profession.
- ▶ Expand field placement and course options to include community activist organizations.
- ▶ Ensure faculty recruitment, retention and development reflect DEI commitments.



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Social Work Initiatives

Council on Social Work Education

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the national association of social work education programs and is responsible for establishing the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for the 800-plus accredited programs in the U.S. and its territories. Requiring programs to achieve and maintain competency in the areas of diversity, privilege, oppression, and intersectionality has been central to social work accreditation standards since 1952. A fundamental aspect of this foundational knowledge is to teach about historical institutionalization of privilege and oppression that has permeated our systems and social fabric. In the current iteration of the CSWE EPAS, accredited social work programs are required to teach about racism and social justice based on two (of nine) social work competencies and are provided guidance on developing activities, lessons, and courses that align with social work values and accreditation needs. In addition, the CSWE Task Force to Advance Anti-Racism in Social Work Education continues its work to implement recommendations focused on accreditation, data, training, and curricula.

National Association of Deans and Directors

In August 2014, social work education leaders participated in a task force focused on NADD's response to the events taking place in Ferguson, Mo., surrounding the shooting of an unarmed teenager, Michael Brown, and the national public outcry that followed. naddssw.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SUMMARY-OF-FINDINGS-NADD-Task-Force1.pdf

NADD social justice and racial violence taskforce priorities:

- ▶ Promote a greater focus on community organization and macro practice.
- ▶ Create an active public voice for NADD.
- ▶ Take a public stance on social justice and social injustice.
- ▶ Highlight the intersectionality of structural inequalities.
- ▶ Focus the Grand Challenges to address social justice issues in disenfranchised communities.
- ▶ Collaborate with other social service organizations.

EDUCATION PARTICIPANT COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

KNOWLEDGE BASE

"Ensure the social work history we are teaching is more than Jane Addams."

"My early perception was that social work was middle-class white women doing things out of the kindness of their heart. Now we see more Black and Brown people joining the field because of harm caused by the profession."

"Decentering whiteness when talking about history and reframing it as the umbrella. The central issue is decentering whiteness while the tactics are various things."

"A different way of thinking about it is 'wealthy whiteness'. There are resources that could uplift learning about racial capitalism."

"Not organizing ourselves around certain white privilege that a poor person wouldn't have access to has shaped our profession from the very beginning."

"Technology goes hand in hand because algorithms can be racist and social work students may be engaging with it. In all applications, we need better understanding in skills to use technology."

"You're making me think about critical inquiry because students usually take things at face value."

"I don't think we're teaching students how to protect themselves from technology and how it impacts Black women. Technology is being used to harass and disrupt. We need to understand how to combat that and use it in a positive way. The social work profession could lead this."

"Teach the harm that social work has done to communities of color along with strategies to change the profession and oppressive systems."

"Teach anti-racism informed decision making."

"I think white students need to learn accountability and have more challenging experiences."

"Focus on interrogating whiteness. That's how whiteness gets centered and how all roads lead to whiteness. Putting students in a position where they have to look at themselves rather than at problems facing Black and Brown people."

"I would like to see the interrogation piece as part of the profession's entrance process. That's where the issues really lie."

"Self-interrogation for everyone, in general, plus faculty and administration."

"For students not categorized as white it's helpful to interrogate their own complicity because they don't often have that opportunity. I think that's part of the story. It often gets labeled as internalized racism, but oftentimes it's not unconscious. Some intentionally benefit from racism."

NEW MODELS

"There's a gatekeeper aspect in terms of how we recruit and select people."

"I am actually doing the community partnership idea into one of my classes. Rather than students doing research on 'made up' problems, they will now collaborate with local non-profits to provide research on those issues/problems and potential solutions."

"Students should take courses in Asian American Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, Gender Studies, etc. to broaden their understanding of these communities."

"The BIPOC term results in othering students. We need to discuss this honestly in social work."

"My students of Indigenous backgrounds face racism also, so I do not like POC either."

"Are we getting the right people into the profession? We're talking about skill building among people who already have access."

"I'm struggling with how social work education can be anti-racist in institutions that perpetuate racism. And it's these institutions that create credentials to become social workers. It feels like cognitive dissonance."

"In the words of Audre Lorde: The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."

"Reject binary of macro and micro – we need applications of social justice, anti-racism, et al, in direct practice."



"Using a model from nursing/medicine, priorities should be where the most harm is occurring."

"Develop deep learning that pulls the student into a new way of seeing the world. Deep learning goes beyond simple information transmission to create a transformation — political, social, emotional, mental."

"Develop a curriculum that is abolitionist in its vision and practice."

"Include a global focused curriculum that interrogates colonialism and cultural imperialism on social work education and practice."

FIELD PLACEMENT

"Embrace abolitionism and develop abolitionist field placements and learning curricula."

"Engage local networks of radical people of color in social work placements."

"Offer explicitly anti-racist field placements."

"Provide experiences with activism through an activist residence program to help students learn about organizing directly from the people leading these efforts."

SKILL BUILDING

"Practice mindfulness and presence."

"Learning and practicing critical inquiry."

"Learn to speak with respect. Understand what respectful communication looks like for each community."

"Move away from fear of clients and otherness."

"Raise the bar in reflexivity for white students to engage in more challenging experiences. Help schools become more open to accountability and the process of interrogating whiteness."

INSTRUCTION

"Hire community organizers and activists to teach."

"Ensure representation in the faculty and staff from all racial groups (no tokens). Make sure everyone has meaningful input in decision making."

"Decenter whiteness as the measure of 'normal' and decolonize practice."

"Required training in anti-oppressive practice models for all faculty."

"We should also discuss hoarding of positions of power such as who achieves tenure, and even if tenure should exist."

TRAINING

QUESTION: What professional development experiences should be created to help social workers improve their anti-racist ethical practice?

Anti-racist training should reflect social justice values from the Code of Ethics, and address resistance, critical inquiry and racial justice outcomes.

Recommendations

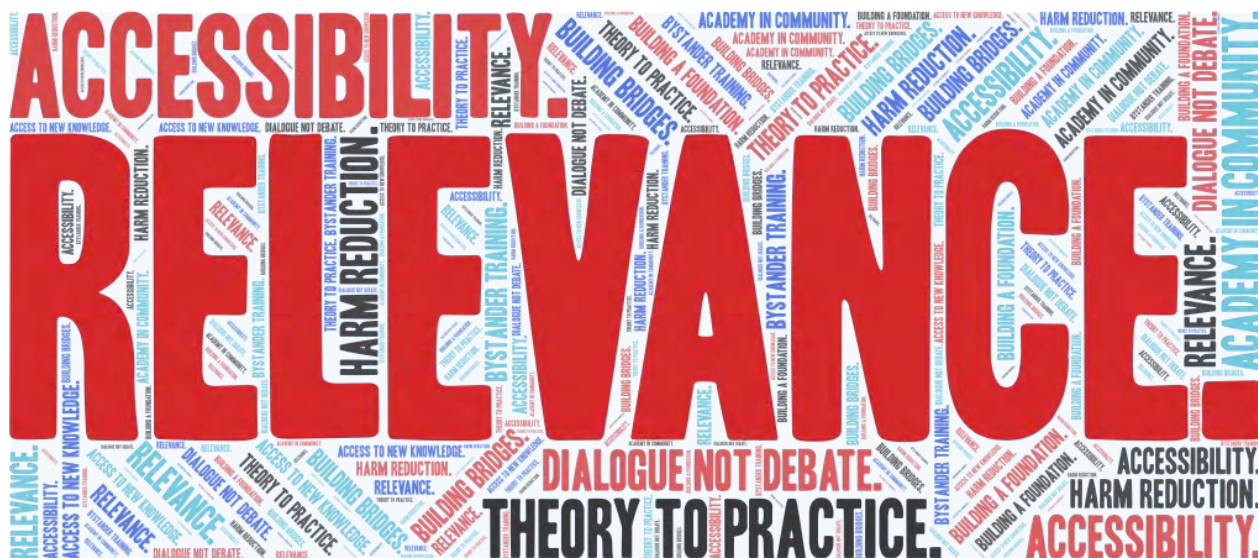
- ▶ Model workplace inclusion in all social work employment settings.
- ▶ Require annual anti-racist CE for all practitioners, centered on harm reduction.
- ▶ Improve supervision quality through racial justice inquiry.
- ▶ Increase practitioner access to relevant anti-racist, community-based research.



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Social Work Initiatives

National Association of Social Workers

NASW is committed to ending racism through public education, social justice advocacy and professional training. Social workers have access to a wide selection of anti-racism and culturally responsive training options throughout the year. Programming on discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice are all offered via NASW Chapters and NASW National CE platforms, including virtual and in-person conferences. Work has begun to review all CE offerings through a DEI lens.

Society for Social Work Research

The Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), supports social workers, social welfare professionals, social work students, social work faculty and researchers in related fields. The SSWR Annual Conference offers a scientific program that reflects a broad range of research interests, from workshops on the latest quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to symposia featuring studies in child welfare, aging, mental health, welfare reform, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS. Research methods workshops are designed to enhance methods expertise and grant-writing skills and special sessions on research priorities and capacity building that target cutting-edge topics vital to contemporary social work research. The 2022 SSWR Conference featured many racial justice presentations.

Social Work Helper

SWHELPER is a news, information, resources, and entertainment website related to social good, social work, and social justice. The award-winning media platform hosted two virtual racial justice conferences in 2021 and features stories on racial equity innovations across the human services field.

TRAINING PARTICIPANT COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

ETHICS FOUNDATION

"Ensure that the Code of Ethics explicitly articulates an anti-racist set of beliefs and accountabilities."

"Re-examine and update the mission and vision statement for social work to have it represent the current ideals and values people are trying to uphold."

"Create space to define what anti-racist ethics are."

"There is something important about unpacking rhetoric and defining language; the first step in all of this work."

"Create working and measurable definitions for cultural competence, anti-racist practice."

"Address white practitioner resistance, being proactive instead of reactive."

"Understanding what anti-racist outcomes look like on a clinical level = racial equity."

"Using a model from nursing and medicine, prioritize action where the most harm is occurring. Consider harm reduction and eradication in all objectives."

"Prioritize critical inquiry."

"We are really looking at a harm reduction model for social work going forward."

"Elevating all of humanity seems like a beautiful vision. Humanity and justice for all."

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

"Each organization must start somewhere."

"Operationalize what social justice looks like in practice."

"Attend at least one anti/undoing racism conference per year. Develop anti-racism and ethics CEUs and require a mandatory number per year by practitioners."

"Social workers need to learn about moral courage and organizational change (the 'how' within a theory of change); ethics of mandated reporting; and anti-racist supervision skills. They should develop abolitionist skill sets - divorcing policing from social work practice, for example."

"Make anti-racism CE trainings mandatory in every state."

"There has to be ongoing anti-racism training for social workers. Also 'unlearning' has to happen."

"Relevance and accessibility are key to this work."

"We need professional development for managers/supervisors/leaders in organizations. The anti-racist content is similar to what students need, but the context is different. Concrete anti-racist clinical practice skills are important. Changing mindsets and skillsets is the objective."

"Attending an anti-racist convening changes your perspective."

"There is a piece about getting clear about concepts and outcomes. I also need a way to assess the way I am doing it."

"Practitioners need reflexivity skills."

"Learn how to call in their colleagues and how to be an ally."

"Social workers need skills to lead dialogue vs. debate."

"I find that students and practitioners don't know how to dialogue; people move fast into debate. I think teaching people to dialogue is a really important skill. How do you disrupt those spaces with compassion and love for people of power instead of just saying that's just the way they are?"

"In DEI work, we do call this dialogue. Dialogues across difference."

"Basic skills of engagement are lost. If we just go back to the basics; being human is needed in social work - there is a great NY Times article about this."

"What happens a lot of times is that people put the onus on the people being oppressed to address inequity and injustice which is not realistic. Bystander intervention is something that social work needs to lead, which goes along with having dialogue. As an ally I should be stopping this."

"People as supervisors often don't have that skillset so it will have a super ripple effect."

"Offer monthly anti-racist trainings for social workers, for free if possible."

"Continue public discussions with social workers that focus on the nuances of racism to assist practitioners with developing skills of recognizing racism in all its insidious forms. Once they recognize, they can stop it."

"I want to expand on bystander intervention which is the biggest challenge to converting white supremacist thinking and action. Broaden that impact."

"Develop AI anti-racist practice experiences and simulations."

"I have great concern about who's creating these training simulations."

"Learn to create systems that represent the lived realities and experiences of communities and individuals who have been historically marginalized."

"Explore research informed anti-racist approaches to practice."

RESEARCH ACCESS

"Social workers need time to read journal articles. Where do you actually go to find social work research if you are not in school? Your typical practitioner does not have easy access to journals. What are other ways they can get scientific literature?"

"Compel land grant colleges to provide more public access to journals."

Providing training on how to find open access materials from librarians would be really practical. Learning how to access information out of school is important."

"Interrogate and challenge what is accepted as evidence as it relates to practice."

"Connect empirical research around anti-racist theory to practice, through continuing education, staff development and activities."

"NASW members have full access to EBSCO research databases."

"Basically, knowledge and learning needs to be democratized and support self-determination."

"Learn how to conduct and assess research in our field."

"Address gatekeeping. I make sure there are people who look like me in places to make sure certain articles get through."

"Building bridges to practice for academia and research."

"Boston University has a large DEI portal that anyone can access; I think an anti-racism portal would be a simple thing for the profession to create without requiring membership."

"One caveat is that there is a gatekeeping function which is different than having the skillset to find information. There are people who can help people get around paywalls."

"There aren't that many scholar-activists so maybe there could be collaboration between schools and organizations. As a faculty member I feel like I have the responsibility to make sure to get what I write out into the field through organizations and to deepen that collaboration between social work and community partners."

"My concern is that we can get people there but how can we help students and practitioners discern the evidence?"

"It's important to measure outcomes and changes."

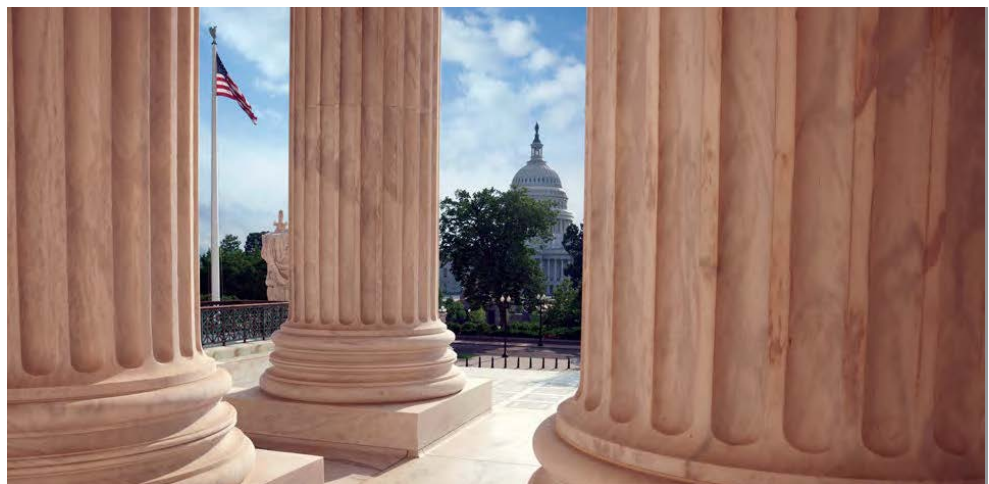
POLICY

QUESTION: What public policies that most improve quality of life outcomes for communities of color can social workers implement or help enforce?

Social workers work to ensure true freedom for all people by upholding democracy and eliminating social inequities.

Recommendations

- ▶ Prioritize social work public policy advocacy efforts for: health care equity, economic security, public education, freedom and democracy, and criminal justice.
- ▶ Center community needs in all publicly funded social service program assessments.
- ▶ Educate the public on issues of inequity and discrimination, through a social work lens.



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Melvin Wilson, LCSW, MBA

"IN EVERY POLICY WE TALK ABOUT, WE MUST TALK ABOUT HOW IT WILL AFFECT BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE. THAT GOES WITH EVERYTHING WE TEACH IN SOCIAL WORK."

IRIS CARLTON-LaNEY

Professor Emeritus, UNC Chapel Hill School of Social Work



POLICY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

"Address racism and intersection with ableism in the child welfare system by tweaking the Adoption & Safe Families Act to be more responsive to clinical needs in health and social domains."

"Environmental justice. Quality of life matters."

"Use demographic data on health care, poverty, et al. to inform a community advocacy focus."

ECONOMIC SECURITY

"Economic security is the baseline to health and education."

"Provide universal basic income."

"Offer SSI survivor benefits for dependents through college. Also eliminate SSI marriage penalty (loss of benefits) for disabled folks. There is an overrepresentation of communities of color in that group."

"Permanent refundable child tax credit and child development accounts."

"Student loan debt relief and tuition-free community college."

"Eliminate Department of Labor sub-minimum wage for disabled people. Overrepresentation of communities of color. Poverty is very high in the disability community."

"Racism is baked into the system. If we don't do some structural change, we're not going to accomplish much. Economic inequality is the major piece in this."

PUBLIC EDUCATION

"We have now accepted a white supremacist definition of CRT. In fact, education about historical truth is CRT. We must put civics back into the classroom."

"We need to challenge the narrative and the attacks, the false narratives. We need easy to use advocacy toolkits that are easily accessible."

"The end goal of prohibiting CRT and culturally inclusive training is to have federal funding of private schools. The whole CRT debate is just a smokescreen."

"We have unequal education systems that are explicitly segregated."

"We have a bifurcated school system because it is financed by property taxes."

"Financing of public education."

"Provide adequate funding for Head Start in rural areas."

"High quality daycare and pre-K for all children."

"Address intersection of ableism and racism in school suspensions with a national reconsideration of education discipline policy."

"Policies addressing the school to prison pipeline which has criminalized Black and Brown children."

"Improve access to high quality K-12 education for all students."

"Hire more social workers in schools."

FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

"Every social worker needs to adopt the identity of being a political social worker."

"We expect social workers to understand policy as if they were running for office. Help colleagues understand effective advocacy work; that it's an expectation throughout the profession."

"We are often siloed in social work. Other professions, like nurses and teachers, are a large, established voting block. We need an umbrella group that helps us move collectively."

"Freedom for all is the beauty of America. All people deserve to be free."

"Pass voting rights legislation. Provide free access to the ballot, encouraging voter registration and empowerment."

"Balance public safety, sentencing reform and bail reform."

"Develop strategies to respond in red and purple states. Learn how to build coalitions."

"How to get social workers to live out their Code of Ethics through advocacy?"

"Social work has failed to let the community define critical race theory. We could help define CRT for the public. How do we use our intelligence and our research to reposition critical race theory?"

"Conservative groups are using convoluted tactics such as front groups that make it seem like they are anti-racist. It requires special training to understand."

"Use community-based research to create a school without walls. There is so much we can do with teachers and community centers. On this corner, in this synagogue—teach about American history. We never pushed back on the indoctrination that we know like the pledge of allegiance."

"Require a social worker in every office—legislative, judicial and executive branches of government."

"We need social workers participating in every democratic process."

"Strengthen community organizing and policy partnerships. Also explore social worker and legal partnerships."

"Encourage state-level anti-racism training for law enforcement to reduce killings of Black and Brown people. 50% of deaths involve a disabled person of color. We need to think intersectional."

RESEARCH

QUESTION: What research studies could advance anti-racism in the social work profession?

Anti-racism research needs to lead to action-oriented solutions in order to achieve societal change.

Recommendations

- ▶ Conduct more social work research with community organizations as lead partners. Use community-based participatory research.
- ▶ Identify best practices for anti-racist social work service delivery through anti-racism practice implementation research.
- ▶ Translate more social work research for practice and policy application.



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RESEARCH PARTICIPANT COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

RESEARCH TOPICS

"Community-based participatory research puts the research into the community. It helps us get closer to understanding the dynamics of the communities and populations we are serving."

"Social workers must do more research that is relevant to the issues that are being deliberated in legislative settings, whether that is Congress or state and local government."

"We have a lot of research that documents disparities. We need implementation research about the process of infusing anti-racist principles across practice contexts. I would include a sub-study on how to practice supervision as an anti-racist practitioner."

"People often choose research topics that are 'pie in the sky.' Instead, let's look at what works and put that into the literature. Ask people what would make a better community for you?"

"Anti-racism practice comes from community-based research. Research needs to be collaborative where community people are part of your grant."

"Community-based research, also called action research, is labor intensive. There are systemic barriers to choosing this research approach. People in the academy have to write a lot of articles quickly to get tenure and promotion. We have to address this."

"We cannot have people doing research just to get tenure in an area that is not relevant. We are in a mental health crisis in America. Communities are falling down and we need to lift them back up. We could get corporate dollars for community-based research."

"We need research that informs practice. In some states, there is legislation that bans us from teaching anti-racist principles. How do we address these extensions of racist practice?"

"We need participatory research on building political power. The pathway to change is economic disparities, but also understanding how we debunk generations of manufactured apathy that depresses political power."

"How social work from a policy perspective can address the systemic and structural racism in schools and the child welfare system."

"Conduct racial justice-driven disaggregated data analysis of how programs are faring for all students by race and ethnicity, both strengths-based (honors) and deficits-based measures."

"Do research on how to develop allyship."

"Identify measurements that demonstrate anti-racist practice, effective critical reflection, self-awareness, self-regulation to track how to do and promote this work more effectively."

"How to measure the racial justice-related competencies in the 2022 EPAS."

"All social workers need access to research by people of color about people of color."

"We need intervention research that is generalizable to communities of color."

"All research should be inclusive and include communities of color and underserved communities."

"Research the process of infusing anti-racist principles across practice contexts. What is working to get anti-racist practices to take hold? What are barriers to the true embrace of anti-racist work in organizations?"

"Student research on the policy making process."

"Social work workforce research is needed. Data regarding our contributions to better understand how to recruit and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce."

RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

"We need anti-racism training for leadership teams in all Schools of Social Work."

"How do we combine the interpersonal with the structural? So much of the research is whitewashed and not generalizable."

"There is a difference between what research exists and what gets promoted. How do we carry anti-racist research into organizations that are engaged in racist practice?"

"So much of this research is unavailable because it is published in academic journals."

"People have biases and they truly and honestly do not believe they have biases. These are the people we need to reach. We need to help people be more caring and understand that their biases have impact on others' quality of life."

"The transition of research to policy and practice underlies all of this. The way we present research is inaccessible to most communities and practitioners. Academia needs to change so more people can use their research."

"There are structural barriers that prevent academics from getting into advocacy."

"We need a research approach that honors macro level social work and implementation."

"Require educational seminars and webinars on diverse groups."

"Study the benefits of police departments that have social workers within their departments to accompany police to scenes. Offer police training around trauma, et al."

"Create mechanisms for organizations to learn how to best implement anti-racist practices over the long term, beyond one-shot training."

"Require licensing bodies and other organizations to implement an acceptable body of knowledge that is approved by the groups that are identified."

"Increase research that supports policy and practice changes. We need research scholars to plan for the application of their research."

"Ensure exposure of existing research. Reach a wider audience than social work."

WORKFORCE

QUESTION: What strategies can organizations implement to create anti-racist social work employment experiences and workplaces?

Anti-racist workplaces begin with leadership that ensures diversity at all levels of the organization, race-focused professional development opportunities, proper supervision for all staff members and a healthy work environment.

Recommendations

- ▶ Increase agency leadership support for growing a diverse workforce.
- ▶ Develop and promote anti-racist organizational policies and accountability mechanisms to be shared publicly.
- ▶ Create alternative pathways to social work licensure.
- ▶ Ensure equitable career advancement, competitive wages and leadership opportunities.



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WORKFORCE PARTICIPANT COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

"We need to rethink social work licensing to strengthen the diversity pipeline to the profession."

"Offer competitive wages and benefits."

"Practice salary transparency, ensure supportive interviewing and recruitment practices, and make intentional investment in those who represent the communities you serve."

"Seek a diverse workforce in all settings to reflect the diversity of service recipients. Promote cultural and anti-racist practices."

"We need a serious review of social work licensure, how the exam is constructed, and consider alternatives to non-clinical licensures."

"Increase historically excluded groups in the profession."

"Publicly post equity audits about workplace environments and tie anti-racism 'scores' to public funding."

"Continue to address the barrier that student debt poses to entry into the profession, especially for students of color and first-generation college students. Remove and eliminate student debt as a barrier to entry and retention in the profession."

"Increase compensation for all social workers. Until this is addressed, we risk losing a pipeline."

"Strive for a professional workforce that reflects the diversity of service participants."

"Offer social work degrees through community colleges, and offer social work learning experiences in high schools to broaden access to the profession."

"Capitalize on the current cultural moment where there is growing interest among people in having careers that make a difference."

"Influence national accreditation bodies to include anti-racist measures."

"Ensure diverse social workers are at the table when designing social work programs and developing infrastructure to support the social work workforce."

"Partner with HBCUs to create high quality internships and employment opportunities for diverse populations."

WORKPLACE RETENTION

"The guiding framework for leadership development should include models for clinical supervision that incorporate anti-racist practices and intersectional principles."

"Center a human-rights and an anti-oppressive approach in workplaces."

"Rather than asking employees to take care of themselves, employers should develop internal supports and practices to ensure their workforce has the resources they need to feel cared for and sustained in their work."

"Develop anti-racist capacity building opportunities and invest in non-hierarchical structures for leadership. Cultivate cultures of co-creation and collaboration to ensure anti-racist policies and principles can be adopted."

"Offer high quality professional development around the topic of anti-racism. Many people do not feel comfortable having these conversations for fear of being ostracized."

"Clinical supervision needs to include an anti-racist framework."

"Provide professional mentoring opportunities."

"Work with HR to ensure that organizational policies are inclusive and not punitive to historically marginalized populations."

"Make sure organizational documents such as strategic plans include anti-racism and equity."

"Implement internal DEI programs. Invest in research and program development. Partner with minority-owned community-based organizations."

"Interdisciplinary collaboration for justice. Most social work practice is delivered within diverse teams of professionals with varying levels of exposure to anti-racist practices."



"Invest in research and program designs."

"Develop policies around language access and best practices and ethical guidelines. Also frame it as a civil rights issue."

"Offer training and support to help social workers of color navigate host settings dominated by other disciplines, such as medical providers and teachers."

"Help support diverse social workers in leadership roles on licensing boards, foundations and other grantmaking entities."

"Annually review policies to look for areas that promote institutional racism and inequities, such as policies that restrict employees from wearing natural hair styles."

"Create model organizational policies that enhance social work professional well-being."

"Center anti-racism in the workplace through education and evaluation."

"Ensure that DEI initiatives and resources are inclusive of shared governance to affect organizational change."

"Document retention among social workers of color in organizations."

"Implement community needs assessments and client advisory boards to ensure provided services align with immediate needs of communities served."

PRACTICE

QUESTION: How can the social work profession provide anti-racist services?

Anti-racist social work practice is grounded in an anti-oppressive, cultural humility, equity and human rights framework.

Recommendations

- ▶ Collect and publish data scorecards for best practice service delivery.
- ▶ Create standards, protocols and strategic plans with an anti-oppressive lens.
- ▶ Prioritize growing and supporting a diverse workforce.
- ▶ Develop accountability mechanisms, including self-assessment tools.
- ▶ Provide training about white supremacy and how it affects all groups of people in society.



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PRACTICE PARTICIPANT COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

"Self-determination. Historical trauma informed perspective. Workforce reflects community served."

"Shifting the onus away from the individuals and onto the collective and onto systems in power and privilege to provide sustainable conditions and supports for the workforce."

"Advocacy for embracing anti-racism in organizations for care on all levels of policy, practice, culture."

"Clarifying what anti-racist practice looks like in a variety of settings: healthcare (including sub-specialties such as oncology), schools, community clinics, correctional facilities."

"Self-determination to be included in deciding the services that will support the individual's growth and development."

"Models and frameworks of practice that center equity and explicitly name anti-racism."

"Support awareness of the importance of a macro/micro lens. In other words, social workers direct practices are more effective when they have awareness of the macro social context and how that shapes the lived experiences."

"Historical trauma perspective."

"Identify opportunities where social work services (mental health, social care, other) can be a mechanism for advancing anti-racism."

"Continue to create public awareness of the issues. Seek out opportunities to lead around anti-racism in joint initiatives that improve community access to services."

"Models of practice that center equity, are explicitly anti-racist, and provide vision for practice."

"As the only social work professionals in many host settings (schools, hospitals, long-term care settings, etc.) collaborate with colleagues and other stakeholders on how to center anti-racism in service delivery."

"Develop policies around language access and best practices, and ethical guidelines, also frame it as a civil rights issue."

"Alignment with anti-racism, human rights, and anti-oppressive practice."

"We talk about racism and white supremacy, but we don't talk about the insanity of it all. It's all untrue, but we hold onto pieces of it still. We skate around in cultural competency, but don't get at the root of white supremacy as the root of the racism issue."

"As a profession we have not acknowledged how we have internalized white supremacy."

"Systems can hinder equity or foster racism; we have to address this too."

"People and social environments matter. Traditional models and approaches to care don't hold water when you're trying to respond to needs of the moment. How can we look at a strengths-based framework – versus a pathological one?"

"We may be trying to take a rational approach to an irrational construct. If we don't address the insanity of white supremacy we're not going to get anywhere."

"The first step to undoing racism is looking at what has us all tied up...We need to shake the foundation that we all stand on, but is there something making us hesitant?"

EQUITY AUDITS

"Using more inclusive language on our agency forms and patient/client assessments; more culturally competent services and staff training opportunities."

"Complete equity audits of their individual and organizational prices? When opportunities for growth are encountered how do you confront?"

"Make sure accountability measure outcomes and service evaluations as they relate to those who inform the next iteration of programming and organizational change."

"What actions enable us to do the most good across the most settings."

"Alignment with strategic plan and metrics to demonstrate progress in this area."

"Influence accreditation bodies, i.e. Joint Commission, COA, CARF, to make sure anti-racist standards are part of the evaluation."

"Audits can shed light on the racism that exists. Numbers make sense for a lot of people and audits are a practical way."

"Make the invisible visible."

"When I think of an equity audit, I think of it as a concrete way of developing benchmarks and progress. What will that look like and what are these actions?"

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

"Social work workforce must reflect community served."

"Access to quality of care in settings that service diverse populations."

"Involve community members (all types) in defining their social work service needs and how anti-racist frameworks can be infused and reflected in these service experiences."

"Implement community needs assessments and client advisory boards to ensure that services provided align with the needs of the immediate community/communities served."

"We need to look at who we are partnering with; strengthening those bonds is important."

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

"Centering a human rights framework and training in anti-oppressive practice. Developing interventions that are indigenous and grounded in the communities served. Too much emphasis on race-neutral approaches."

"Incorporating critical theories into our training. Our students generally don't have that background. So much of what we do that is anti-racist is about us and how we approach the work. Integration of micro and macro."

"Invest in cultivating/challenging the whole person to embody anti-racist principles."

"Social work organizations could incorporate anti-racist framework into clinical supervision models."

"Professional concept of vicarious trauma needs to include the racial and cultural trauma experienced by these services in the profession."

"Training and equity audits. People often expect social workers to know and do, but I'm not always sure how to get those conversations going, for people to join your team and hear the intent behind your message. You don't want to be ostracized in your work."

"I want to re-emphasize the need for addressing white supremacy within social work professionals. White social workers are shown to be less likely to understand those facing racial inequity. Highlighting whiteness in our profession is important."

"We need models and tools for practice as it weaves through all and shows what you need instead of social workers picking and choosing on their own."

"How are we teaching about trauma informed care and are we addressing intersectionality?"

SERVICE DELIVERY

"Resources for working with consumers, such as students and parents."

"Prevention services. Culturally competent services. Access to quality services."

"Evidence that intervention works for intended population."

"Ensure that our strategies and actions are not reproducing harm."



**"IT'S UP TO US TO STEP INTO SPACES,
CONVERSATIONS AND TERRITORIES THAT OTHERS
ARE UNCOMFORTABLE DOING."**

GARY BAILEY
NASW President 2003-2005



TOOLS & RESOURCES

ONLINE TOOLS

[SOCIALWORKERS.ORG/RACIALJUSTICE](https://socialworkers.org/racialjustice)



Chapter Activities



Training



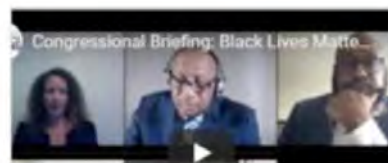
Briefs & Reports



Immigration



Police Reform



Critical
Conversations



Advocacy



In the News



History Notes



Indigenous Rights



Recommended Reading



Partner Resources

Partner Resources

ACLU

aclu.org

African American Policy Forum

aapf.org

American Public Human Services Association

aphsa.org

Annie E. Casey Foundation

aecf.org

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

astho.org

Center for Antiracist Research

bu.edu/antiracism-center

Center for Policing Equity

policingequity.org

Center on Race and Social Problems

crsp.pitt.edu

Children's Defense Fund

childrensdefense.org

Coalition on Human Needs

chn.org

Declaration for American Democracy

dfadcoalition.org

Frameworks Institute

frameworksinstitute.org

Immigration Hub

theimmigrationhub.org/about-us

Independent Sector - Upswell

independentsector.org/upswell

Justice Roundtable

justiceroundtable.org/contact

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

civilrights.org

NAACP

naacp.org

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

pisab.org

Pew Research Center

pewresearch.org

Policy Link

policylink.org

Southern Poverty Law Center

splcenter.org

Stop AAPI Hate

stopaapihate.org

Othering and Belonging Institute

belonging.berkeley.edu

**"PEOPLE ARE NOT NECESSARILY TAUGHT TO BE RACIST;
THEY ARE TAUGHT TO DENY BEING RACIST. THE HEART OF
BEING RACIST IS DENIAL ITSELF."**

IBRAM X. KENDI

Author & Activist

MILESTONES

2001-2022

2001 – NASW *Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* are published. Indicators of competency were added in 2007; both documents were last revised in 2015.



“Social workers shall be change agents who demonstrate the leadership skills to work effectively with multicultural groups in agencies, organizational settings, and communities. Social workers should also demonstrate responsibility for advancing cultural competence within and beyond their organizations, helping to challenge structural and institutional oppression and build and sustain diverse and inclusive institutions and communities.”

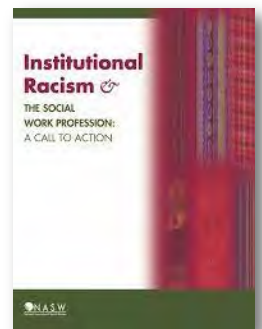
2005 – Social Work Congress participants, 400 people representing all fields of practice, adopted two imperatives for fighting racism in society and in the social work profession.



- ▶ “Address the impact of racism, other forms of oppression, social injustice, and other human rights violations through social work education and practice.”
- ▶ “Continuously acknowledge, recognize, confront and address pervasive racism within social work practice at the individual, agency, and institutional levels.”

2007 – NASW Presidential Task Force publishes “Institutional Racism and the Social Work Profession: A Call to Action.”

“The responsibility of individual social workers is to recognize that structural racism plays out in their personal and professional lives and to use that awareness to ameliorate its influence in all aspects of social work practice, inclusive of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation.”



2014 – The Social Work Policy Institute and the NASW Foundation publish “Achieving Racial Equity: Call the Social Work Profession to Action” following a series of expert panels and roundtable discussions.

“Social workers should be leading efforts to implement specific strategies to change their own practice and the institutions in which they work. At the heart of all our programs and services, we’re about people. And we want to make sure that every person is treated with respect and dignity.”





2020 – NASW Delegate Assembly adopts new language for the NASW *Code of Ethics* to directly address the role of social workers in addressing racism in practice. The updated *Code* was published in 2021.

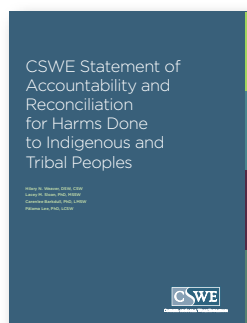
“Social workers must take action against oppression, racism, discrimination, and inequities, and acknowledge personal privilege.”

2021 – NASW releases “Undoing Racism Through Social Work: NASW Report to the Profession on Racial Justice Priorities and Action” which includes a formal apology.

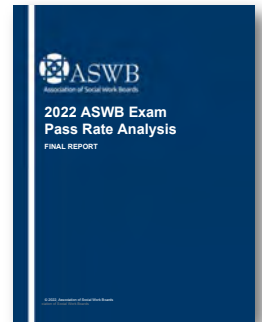


“Our profession has not always lived up to its mission of pursuing social justice for all. Despite visible leadership in our nation’s most important social justice movements and in creating our country’s social safety net, the social work profession has also contributed to ongoing discrimination and oppression of people of color through its systems, policies and practices. Our history is linked to many shameful chapters in America’s story.”

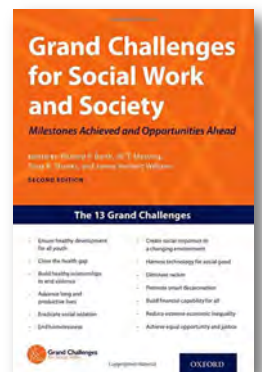
2021 – As social work educators, CSWE and its members are responsible for educating future generations of social workers. Understanding our history informs our efforts to move forward. This statement is one mechanism for holding our profession accountable for ways social workers have harmed Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. This statement documents specific examples, past and present, of harms done by social workers, accompanied by a call to action for our profession to recognize these wrongs and commit to just and equitable practices, now and in the future.



2022 – On November 9, 2021, ASWB’s Board of Directors made the decision to gather, analyze, and release performance data for its examinations. ASWB’s decision reflects a desire to contribute to the larger conversation in the field about diversity, equity, and inclusion. The resulting report, released on August 5, 2022, has galvanized ASWB and the social work community to address disparities in pass rates for different groups.



2022 – Grand Challenges for Social Work and Society, 2nd Edition, is published by Oxford University Press with the 13th challenge, “Eliminating Racism,” now included.



“As a critical social and political institution within U.S. society, the profession of social work is built upon the values of social justice. A world free of racism and white supremacy is central to our professional vision. Our history as a profession, however, demonstrates that we have also served as perpetrators and/or complicit bystanders to racism and white supremacy. Therefore, it is imperative that social work take specific steps to eliminate racism, promote an antiracism perspective and foster racial equity.”

2022 – NASW releases “Undoing Racism Through Social Work” Vol. 2 to the profession. It describes anti-racist goals and initiatives for six domains in social work: education, training, practice, workforce, policy and research.

“Social work can and will achieve an anti-racist future. Every social work organization and each social worker has a specific role to play in dismantling racial injustice in our nation, and demanding human well-being in society.”

GRAND CHALLENGES for Social Work

Eliminating Racism Becomes 13th Challenge as Initiative Evolves

SOCIAL WORK ADVOCATES REPRINT
OCT/NOV 2022 ISSUE

When the Grand Challenges for Social Work initiative was launched in 2016, there were 12 challenges addressing critical social issues in society. At that time, it was thought that eliminating racism was a part of all 12 challenges, so that issue did not have its own challenge. All that changed in 2020, when the initiative's leadership added a 13th challenge: The Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism.

A Work in Progress

Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW, professor at the University of Maryland School of Social Work and chair of the executive committee of the Grand Challenges for Social Work, said maintaining and updating the challenges is important and ongoing. He recently stepped down from his role as Grand Challenges director, and Kira Silk was named.

Racism counters social work's efforts to address all the other Grand Challenges, Barth said, and adding a challenge to eliminate racism further underscores the importance of this issue.

"Indeed, the argument could be well-made that eliminating racism and responding to its long and horrendous impact is the fundamental challenge of American society," he said.

The book "Grand Challenges for Social Work and Society" (second edition), was published this year by Oxford University Press and includes 13 chapters, one for each challenge and the areas they address. Another book, still in development, addresses the way each of the Grand Challenges is affected by structural and persistent racism, Barth said, and "the Grand Challenges leadership continues to seek ways to communicate about methods to eliminate

racism and develop evidence behind new practices, programs and policies that redress racism's lasting legacy."

Achieving gender equality was another topic considered for inclusion in the original set of Grand Challenges, then not included, "because it was hard to conceptualize what interventions could reasonably address this topic," Barth said.

Jill Messing, PhD, MSW, professor at Arizona State University and a member of the Grand Challenges initiative and NASW's National Committee on Women's Issues, and a team of social work colleagues addressed this concern in a special issue of NASW's journal "Social Work," he said, which took the position that we should mainstream gender equity into each of the Grand Challenges. "This is what they have done in the (second edition of the Grand Challenges) book—written a stand-alone piece that brings together the framework and strategies of gender equity scholars with those of each of the 13 Grand Challenges."

Gender mainstreaming during the last two decades became the international development community's strategy, writes Kristy Kelly in one example of a stand-alone piece in the book titled "Revisiting the

Transformative Potential of Gender Mainstreaming in Social Work.”

“Rather than conceptualizing women as a separate category needing special attention or special programs, the aim of gender mainstreaming is to integrate women and intersectional gender equity into all elements of policy design, programming, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation,” Kelly writes, and it has been largely adopted worldwide.

In the next phase of the Grand Challenges, which is called Going Grander, “We are looking to continue the work of making modifications to our original decisions by being more inclusive of those who want to have more voice, have new ideas, were not adequately engaged in the past, and are eager to make the commitment to refresh and expand this work,” Barth said. “This may mean launching new grand challenges, or framing new ‘working papers’ under the existing grand challenges, or making other significant changes to ensure that this effort is as influential as possible.”

Sarah Butts, NASW’s director of public policy, was named to the Grand Challenges for Social Work leadership board, he said, and “the Grand Challenges have long had the strong support of NASW’s CEO.” Barth added that the initiative looks forward to a continued partnership with NASW and other major social work organizations “as we endeavor to clarify to our allies across social work and other fields that we have the intention and capacity to strengthen society through science and social work.”

Eliminating Racism

Democrats in Congress attempted to address racism when in the fall of 2020 they filed in both houses the “Anti-Racism in Public Health Act,” a bill “to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for public health research and investment into understanding and eliminating structural racism and police violence.” It was introduced and read but never acted on. Early in 2021, it was refiled, but again, no action was taken.

Racism was added as a stand-alone Grand Challenge in June 2020 with two co-leads: Michael S. Spencer and Martell Lee Teasley, PhD, MSW, LPN, dean of and professor at the University of Utah College of Social Work in Salt Lake City. He also is president of the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work.

Spencer, PhD, MSW, is associate dean for academic affairs and presidential term professor in social work at the University of Washington in Seattle. He also is director of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and Oceania Affairs at the university’s Indigenous Wellness Research Institute. In the Department of Global Health, he is adjunct professor of Global Health and of Health Systems and Population Health, and he is a research affiliate at the Center for Studies in Demography & Ecology at the university.

“I think following the murder of George Floyd, there was a sense that we couldn’t just pay lip service to this issue anymore,” Spencer said. Work accomplished so far includes a concept paper outlining goals and a national webinar series on eliminating racism within the context of the Grand Challenges. The seven-part series “examined solutions and interventions at the intersection of racism and each of the other Grand Challenges,” Spencer said.

The series was hosted by the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work and ran from July 2021 to December 2021. It can be viewed on the Grand Challenges website at: grandchallengesfor-socialwork.org/webinar/grand-challenge-to-eliminate-racism-webinar-series-launch/

Why racism is so deeply embedded in parts of American society and difficult to change “is the million-dollar question,” Spencer said. “It’s a question many of us have pondered.”

In talking to people about the issue, he said responses included that racism was around them when growing up, not something they were taught.

“I think that’s true for a portion of the population,” Spencer said. “And there’s a proportion of people who think ‘if it doesn’t affect me, I don’t care.’ I think we don’t really know the answer, but I think there’s a group that benefits from it. It’s very, very deep because it’s history. It was created by this country.”

This year, Spencer personally wants to focus on what can be done within the curriculum at the University of Washington.

“How can you do national work if you’re not doing it at your own home?” Spencer said. “I’m thinking we can continue to build this within our school’s mission, and also build it within the fabric and the structures of social work. I believe it’s actually part of my job.”

“The Grand Challenges are supposed to be what our profession does. We’re speaking out on what’s important, and actual work needs to be done by all those who call themselves social workers. It’s a call-in, and it’s part of our work.”

That means social workers should meet, organize and amplify the work of others and some of what they’ve done themselves. He would like to see it as a movement within the profession.

The pandemic created challenges, but racism already was prevalent, Spencer said. “I think the goal of this Grand Challenge is to put out to people racism is something we as professionals care very deeply about.”

Economic Inequality

Trina R. Shanks, PhD, MSW, M.Phil, is the Harold R. Johnson Collegiate Professor of Social Work at the University of Michigan School of Social Work in Ann Arbor and faculty associate at the Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research. She is co-leader of the Grand Challenge to Reduce Extreme Economic Inequality and one of the editors for the new Grand Challenges book.

“Given the history of sexism, racism and anti-Black sentiments in the United States, most issues present gender and racial inequities,” Shanks said. “Regarding economic inequality, white males on average earn higher income and are hired into jobs with better benefits and working conditions. Wealth is more unequal than income, and historically white households have had a net worth eight to 12 times that of Black and Latino households.”

The gaps between those at the top and others are striking, she said. “Based on a survey of American families in 2019 called the Survey of Consumer Finances, the median yearly income of non-Hispanic white families (\$68,000) exceeded that of non-Hispanic Black families (\$39,000) and Hispanic families (\$43,000) by a large margin.”

In that survey, white families have the highest level of both median and mean family wealth: \$188,200 and \$983,400, respectively, she said. Black and Hispanic families have considerably less wealth than white families. Black families’ median and mean wealth is less than 15 percent that of white families, at \$24,100 and \$142,500, respectively. And Hispanic families’ median and mean wealth is \$36,100 and \$165,500, respectively.

“Economic inequality often has intergenerational repercussions in addition to historical and current racism that is baked into institutional structures,” Shanks said.

For example, she said, white families and European immigrants were the most likely to benefit from the 1862 Homestead Act, then their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are more likely to have access to land and capital than the children and descendants of formerly enslaved people or more recent non-white immigrants.

“Similarly, if white families were the ones to take advantage of the GI Bill and favorable home ownership conditions of the 1950s and 1960s, then their children had a considerable foundation of wealth and growth in equity from which to build that other households did not,” Shanks said. “And if a family has only a legacy of poverty and economic struggle, then they have little or no economic benefit to pass on to the next generation.”

In addition to generational disparities extending across generations, she said, “geographic segregation and current-day racism tends to replicate and bake in the same inequalities. Stereotypes about the type of people that ‘deserve’ the benefit of the doubt regarding economic opportunity often perpetuates racial and gender inequity.”

When people do not have dependable income and regular work hours, they can fall further behind. And without wealth and enough savings to navigate unexpected expenses, it’s easy to fall even more behind and become discouraged about one’s ability to save or invest in the future, Shanks said, and this does not even take into account targeting for scams and inappropriate financial products.

Social workers are well-suited to help clients navigate resources and services targeted toward the poor, but are not always prepared to help families build wealth and make sound financial decisions, she said.

“Many of us in the Grand Challenges to ‘Reduce Extreme Economic Inequality’ and ‘Build Financial Capability and Assets for All’ advocate for things such as child development accounts, removal of asset limits, and other approaches to these entrenched problems,” Shanks said.

Challenge co-lead Jennie Romich said social workers can help turn these situations around by working

on “policy reforms at the local, state and national levels by drawing attention to how historic policies have caused these inequalities.”

Social workers also can advocate for more balanced tax structures, Romich said, and they can work to cultivate pro-equity voters. Romich, PhD, is director of the West Coast Poverty Center at the University of Washington School of Social Work, where she is a professor and teaches social welfare policy and policy practice.

Partnerships Are Beneficial

NASW CEO Angelo McClain, PhD, LICSW, has been active in Grand Challenges work. He participated on the leadership board for more than five years and is a contributor for the Grand Challenges book’s commentary section. Below is part of what he wrote.

“As the Grand Challenges advance in coming years, we need to leverage even more partnerships with allies and partners outside the profession. We need the benefit of other perspectives, experience and expertise. We need to leverage the common

ground between our commitments and those of other disciplines and sectors. By leveraging today’s critical issues, we can build a broader constituency base that includes new partners, clients, communities, and practitioners from all fields of social work practice.”

“It’s been said that ‘social work is the special sauce’ for addressing society’s grandest challenges. Perhaps the Grand Challenges are the special ingredient that bridges, solidifies, galvanizes, and powers social work to contribute grandly to creating a more just society that ensures a vibrant social fabric, a more compassionate social safety net, and truly centers individual and family well-being at the forefront of all policy and social development decisions.”

Resources:

Grand Challenges for Social Work: Vision, Mission, Domain, Guiding Principles, & Guideposts to Action
grandchallengesforsocialwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GCSW-Principles-2-5-19.pdf

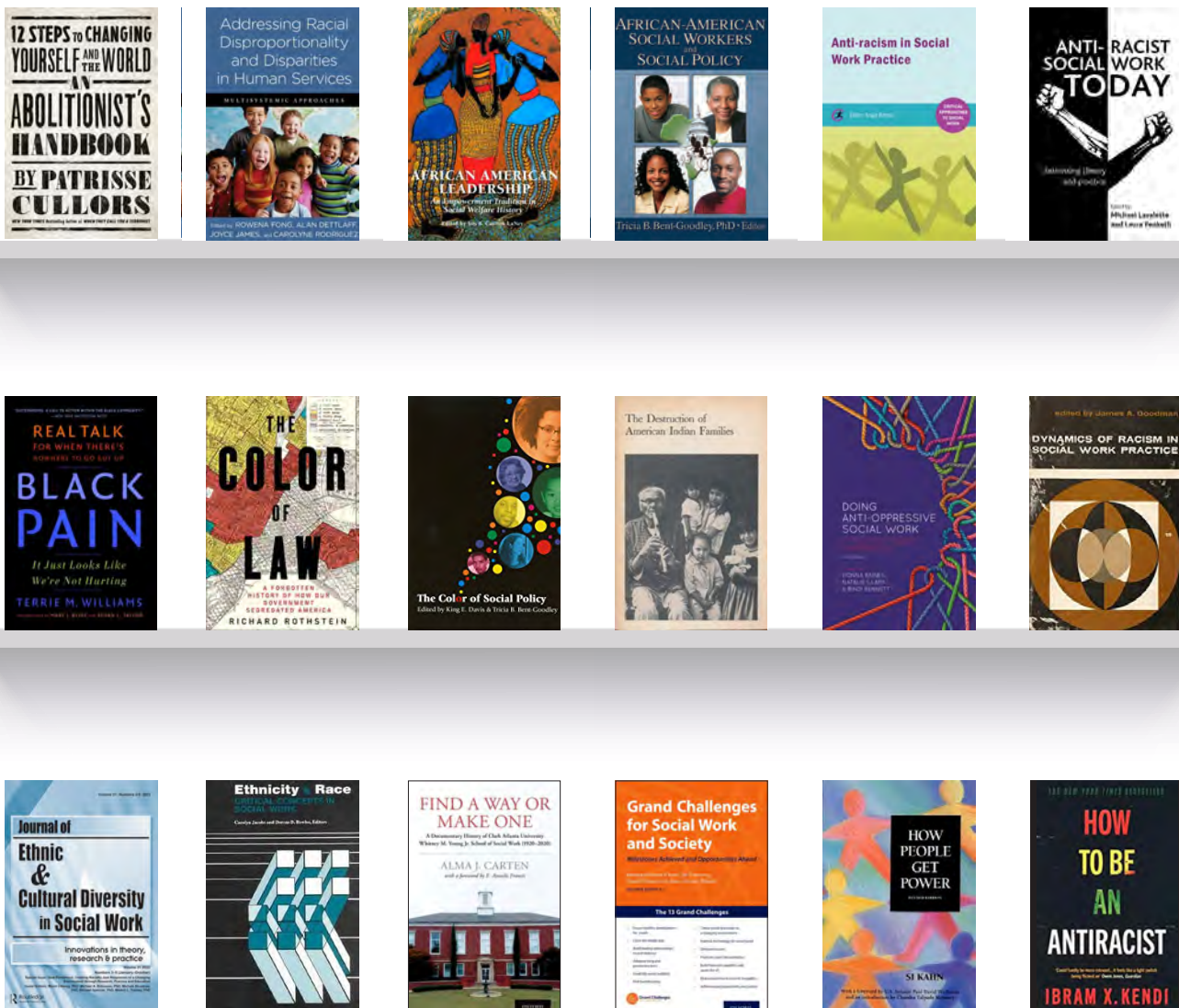
NASW’s Racial Justice Resource Page:
socialworkers.org/Practice/Ethnicity-Race/Racial-Justice

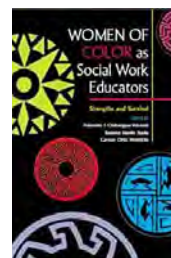
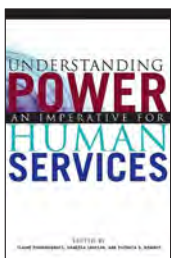
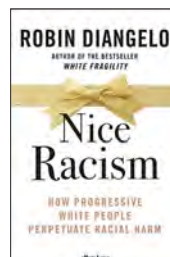
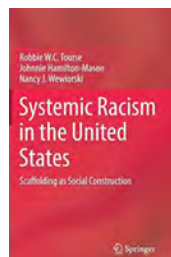
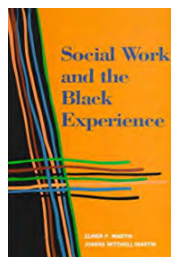
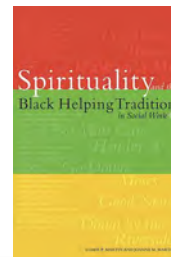
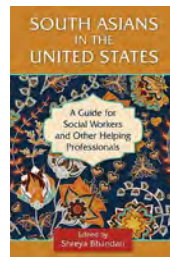
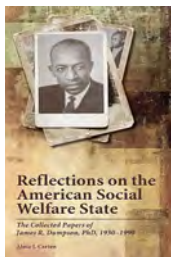
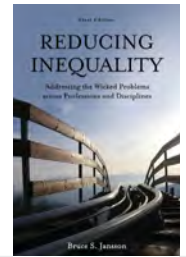
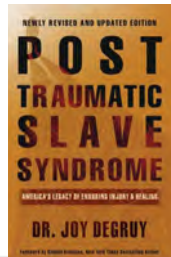
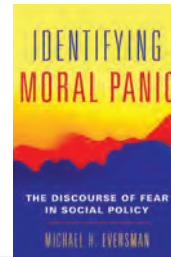
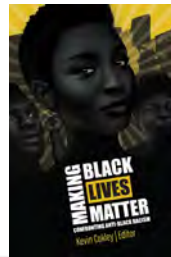
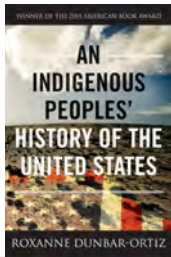
The Grand Challenges for Social Work was launched in 2016, initiated by the American Academy for Social Work and Social Welfare. It calls for “bold innovation and collective action powered by proven and evolving scientific interventions to address critical social issues facing society.” The initiative began with 12 challenges, adding a 13th challenge in 2020 to Eliminate Racism.

THE ORIGINAL 12 CHALLENGES ARE:	
1	Ensuring Healthy Development for Youth
2	Closing the Health Gap
3	Building Healthy Relationships to End Violence
4	Advancing Long and Productive Lives
5	Eradicating Social Isolation
6	Ending Homelessness
7	Creating Social Responses to a Changing Environment
8	Harnessing Technology for Social Good
9	Promoting Smart Decarceration
10	Reducing Extreme Economic Inequality
11	Building Financial Capabilities and Assets for All
12	Achieving Equal Opportunity and Justice

BOOKSHELF

There are thousands of publications that enrich our understanding of race and racism in America and across the globe. Here is a small sample of resources that can help social workers understand the unique anti-racist challenges they will face while serving people in our nation's flawed systems of care.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NASW is grateful to the numerous volunteer leaders, staff members and subject matter experts who contributed to the resources and activities described in this publication. We would also like to extend a special thank you to the extraordinary scholars and activists who have dedicated their careers to training generations of social workers in anti-racist principles and advocacy strategies.

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Citation: National Association of Social Workers. *Undoing Racism Through Social Work*, Vol.2, Washington, DC 2022.



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