
Social Work Artfully: Beyond Borders and Boundaries by Christina Sinding and Hazel Barnes (Eds.). Waterloo, ON: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2015. 254pp. ISBN BN 978-1-77112-122-4

Social Work Artfully: Beyond Borders and Boundaries emerged from a meeting between Dr. Hazel Barnes (from Johannesburg) and Christine Sinding (from Ontario), while at the 2010 African Research Conference. This fruitful initial encounter, along with subsequent conversations, set the stage for the creation of both a series of international workshops and what would become *Social Work Artfully*.

Both Barnes and Sinding are experts in the field of arts in social justice. As a Senior Research Associate in Drama and Performance Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Research Committee Chair for Drama for Life, Dr. Barnes has authored several works on applied theatre for social justice. Christine Sinding is an Associate Professor at McMaster University and the Director of the School of Social Work, researching the intersections between health, social justice, and arts-informed social sciences. These two distinct backgrounds fostered the creation of an international collaborative pedagogical book, with contributions from researchers such as Edwell Kaseke, Edmarié Pretorius, Liebe Kellen, Linda Harms Smith, Moltalepule Nathane-Taulela, and Patti McGillicuddy, among others.

Social Work Artfully weaves together chapters from compassionate authors, ranging from counselors and academics, to dramaturges and A/R/Tographers. These individuals' writings discuss conscientious methods to de-colonize and liberate social work practice, with chapters that discuss societal inequities within postcolonial and post-Apartheid South Africa and Canada and providing examples of creative arts-based methods used to empower the oppressed and marginalized. These methods include integrating drama, forum theatre, introspective journaling, poetry, and visual arts, creating safe and imaginative opportunities to express a plurality of voices, and creating community engagement for collective healing. In my opinion, the book as a whole achieves its purpose by offering examples of arts-informed social justice work, and how such work can craft equitable healing spaces.

The opening section of the book maps out the effects of oppressive practices on social work in Canada and South Africa. In the two chapters titled, "Where we've been and what we are up against", contributors Donna Baines and Edwell Kaseke explore how colonialism still bleeds into welfare and healthcare practices. They describe how colonial paradigms seep into the perpetuation of oppression through the denial of suffering of disenfranchised individuals, intergenerational trauma, and intersectional inequalities. Baines further discusses systematic inequalities in Canadian welfare systems, while Kaseke examines how the detrimental colonial history, experiences of Apartheid, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic shaped social work practices in South Africa. Both chapters end with glimmers of hope when Sinding and Barnes propose that psychodrama, sociodrama, and drama therapy can advance social justice commitments in anti-oppressive social work.¹

¹ See Jennings, S. (Ed.). (1987). *Dramatherapy: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge Chapman & Hall, and Moreno, J. L. (1947). *The theatre of spontaneity*. New York: Beacon House.

As a Canadian art therapist who has worked north of the South African border in Gaborone, Botswana, as well as in cities across Canada, these introductory chapters were powerful to read, and helped to clarify my experiences working in hospitals and non-government organizations. Through Baines and Kaseke's examples, I began to deeply understand more about the structure of oppression and how social work (and mental health services) can simultaneously support people with diverse needs, while remaining complicit to larger historical systems of oppression.

In the second section, "Art for Conscientization and Re-storying Selves", authors explore the fundamental critical theoretical frameworks of Augusto Boal and Paulo Friere, providing examples of these theories working out in contemporary practice. Chapters in this section describe working with native South Africans and newcomer migrant youth to develop alternative postcolonial and post-Apartheid narratives through meaningful symbolic metaphors. Such arts-based methods include the use of maps and dolls in counseling ("Art towards critical conscientization and social change during social work and human rights education, in the South African post-apartheid and post-colonial context", by Linda Harms Smith & Motlalepule Nathane-Taluela) and performance-based redress to re-story life narratives ("*When we are naked: An approach to cathartic experience and emotional autonomy within the post-apartheid South African landscape*", by Khayelihle Gumede).

Subsequent sections within this volume include "Art for Community and Cultural Healing, Sustainability and Resilience", "Art for Transforming Social Relations", and "Art for Transforming Social Care Practice". Within each section, focus is placed on how creative arts and community engagement, informed by interdisciplinary indigenous, critical-theory, feminist, post-colonial, and aesthetic ontologies and epistemologies, can provide support to diverse populations. For example, in the chapter, "Towards an Indigenous narrative inquiry: The importance of composite, artful representations", Randy Jackson, Corena Debassige, Renée Masching, and Wanda Whitebird present an indigenous research methodology that braids oral history with symbolism to better understand two-spirited indigenous participants' experiences of living with HIV/AIDS. Ann Fudge Schormans's contribution, "Corroding the comforts of social work knowing", expands on her research with adults with special needs, and invites participants to observe, critique, and alter photographs representing those with disabilities in order to challenge ableism in media.

Social Work Artfully: Beyond Borders and Boundaries begins with a very strong introduction and body, but feels unresolved due to a lack of a dedicated conclusion chapter. Rather, the final chapter, "Making meaning of our experiences of bearing witness to suffering", is an A/R/Tographic exploration of the experiences of suffering in the lives of social workers and nurses. The concepts discussed in this essay imply the use of dedicated art therapy approaches, but the authors (Patti McGillicuddy, Nadine Cross, Gail Mitchell, Nancy Davis Halifax, and Carolyn Plummer) miss an opportunity to mention important literature that would have informed their research. For example, acknowledging and interacting with writings such as Catherine Moon's *Studio Art Therapy: Cultivating the Artist Identity within the Art Therapist* (2001) and Cathy Malchiodi's *Medical Art Therapy with Adults* (1999) could have

provided further context to the authors' approach. While evocative and colourful, and with wording that felt hypnotic and fluid, this closing chapter felt unfinished. Perhaps this was the authors' intent.

Social workers, mental health workers, primary care practitioners, and policy-makers within community health could benefit from reading this book. This could be particularly helpful for practitioners who have foundational, cross-cultural, ethics, and/or arts-based counseling and training. I would also recommend this book be read at a post-graduate level in counseling, community psychology, creative arts therapies, and social work training programs—particularly social justice courses informed by qualitative and arts-based research. While this work highlights anti-colonial practices in Canada and South Africa, colonization, intergenerational trauma, genocide, and oppression are not limited to these countries. The literature can expand different countries' pedagogy, praxis, and public policy implementation. The subtitle *Beyond Borders and Boundaries* holds multilayered meanings, as the chapters expand preconceived boundaries of social work and interdisciplinary practices to include more artful, inclusive, evocative, and creative approaches to community healing.

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