



The National Board for Certified Counselors

## **Innovations in Counseling: Working with Minority Populations- Part 2**

### **Session 3: Finding Your Voice as a Social Justice Advocate**

#### **Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Jennifer Cook**

##### **Question from Susan Branco Alvarado**

What are some practical strategies to find/engage with a supportive network of other counselors with similar social justice/advocacy beliefs and practices?

##### **Answer from Presenter**

First, I would ask around/Google to find out if there are listservs, counselor meet-ups, or local associations that might meet your needs. Second, I would reach out to local universities (or somewhat local if you're in a rural area without a university), and ask if they know of any networks like this. Third, I would try to connect with other counselors who may share your desire to network in this way. If you're in a small community, you may know of some folks who may be a fit. If you're in a larger area, Google counselors in your zip code or immediate area and start reading their websites. You may find like-minded people are just around the corner from you. Fourth, attend local, regional, and even national conferences. You may not live near folks, and with electronic media, it's possible to have support at a distance. It may take a little "leg work," but I suspect you will find folks to connect with who want to support one another.

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##### **Question from Janet Pace**

How does one advocate for change of the mindset of teachers who operate in racial favoritism toward the dominate culture while not paying attention to the gifts of the non-dominate culture. For example, not acknowledging the input or desire to input from non-dominate students in the classroom, thereby including them in the learning process?

##### **Answer from Presenter**

I think this is a tough question. The way I read your question, it sounds like you may be a graduate student in a college/university where this is happening. If that's the case, I'm sorry you and your colleagues are experiencing that—it is completely unfair, and it can feel belittling, devaluing, and even aggressive (just to name a few things). Also, if you are a student, I'm sure you recognize you are in a "one down" position because faculty members are in the position of power. I am all for talking with the faculty member, and I recognize, too, you may not get anywhere and it may not be safe to do so. Do you have an ombudsperson at your institution you can speak with about this? Are there other faculty members who are safe to speak with and advise you?

As a student, you can use your voice inside the classroom to affirm people of the non-dominate culture, their gifts, their worth, and abilities. And in reality, I recognize you may get shut down by the instructor if s/he does not agree with your position. That doesn't mean you stop doing it, but use caution with confronting the instructor during class time, especially if you are a person of the non-dominate culture yourself. Unfortunately, grad students have little power to change instructors' behavior because of the power differential (unless something illegal occurs). You can lead by example with your fellow students, and take as few courses as possible with said instructor (if that's a possibility).

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**Question from Mary Davis**

What was your greatest challenge as an advocate? What area of advocacy was that in?

**Answer from Presenter**

I think my greatest challenge as an advocate was when I have felt moved to advocate on behalf of person(s), and there was a power differential between me and the person who had the power to change the situation. The time I'm thinking about right now was in an academic context, and I was not in the position of power. In this situation, I decided to risk my own comfort and safety when I decided to advocate. With that, I had to decide if the "battle was worth fighting." In this case, it was worth it, and it sure wasn't easy.

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**Question from Mary Louise Hildebrandt**

Have you any experience with Climate Change advocacy with regard to carbon emissions coming up against powerful fossil fuel companies and their government lobbyists?

**Answer from Presenter**

Outside of signing petitions on this issue, and reading about the different environmental facets (e.g. fracking), I'm sorry I don't.

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