



California Career Developments Journal

Sp. '16 Edition: *Career Counseling for Social Justice*

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Kristy Cho has a master's degree in Social Work from the University of Southern California. She is currently a Case Manager & Data Specialist at the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST).

Career Development Practices and Social Justice

Dr. Lisa Raufman, CCDA President

Abstract

It “takes a village” to create an educational environment that is conducive to student learning, success, growth and development. The counselor is in the pivotal role to connect students with this

“village.” This article provides examples of educators promoting social justice in the community college.

‘Not till society wakes up to its responsibilities and its privileges in this relation shall we be able to harvest more than a fraction of our human resources, or develop and utilize the genius and ability that are latent in each new generation.’ (Parsons, 1909, p. 165)

Frank Parsons, a founder of the career development movement, reflects the roots of “the career development movements” commitment to all achieving their potential and the social activism that may be required to achieve it. On May 13, the CCDA Southern California Regional Conference will provide opportunities to explore the ways in which career practitioners can incorporate social justice into our work. In this Spring issue, we highlight examples from community college, secondary schools, business and non-profit organizations to show how career counselor can promote social justice in their communities. We hope this Spring Journal will inspire some of you to present your own examples of career counseling promoting social justice. This [Call for Proposals](#) can be found on our website until April 8th.

Inclusivity

I believe it “takes a village” to create an educational environment that is conducive to student learning, success, growth and development. I believe that the counselor is in the pivotal role to connect students with this “village.” My hope is that the conference will challenge educators to examine the inclusivity of their village. So, if inclusive education is about how we develop and design our classrooms, programs and activities so that all students learn and participate together, what is missing? When we examine the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other human differences, it is important to also challenge our human resources that effect participation. Has our educational philosophy evolved to respond to an ever changing population of clients, students and staff?

Accessibility

I resonate with this definition of social justice: “actions that contribute to the advancement of society and advocate for equal access to resources for the marginalized or less fortunate individuals in society” (O’Brien, 2001, p. 66). In the United States, we have many venues where “career counselors” can contribute to social justice for people of all ages and backgrounds. I have been fortunate to be directly involved in community college career counseling for the past three decades. I have seen people from all socio-economic backgrounds become more aware of career options that help them expand beyond their prior family circumstances by learning to become aware of their own purpose, believe in themselves, find a mission, explore career options, get involved in work that has led to better futures. However, the community college could improve accessibility to low-income, undocumented, emotionally disabled and many educationally disadvantaged individuals. At our conference, we hope to explore policies, procedures and systems that influence accessibility to career development services.

Fairness and Equity

Career development professionals frequently struggle with the concepts of fairness and equity. Community colleges are considering how cultural, linguistic, and ability differences influence fairness as they engage in student equity planning. Career practitioners play an important part in increasing degree completion and employment for populations such as foster youth, veterans, diverse ethnic groups, and low income students. One of my favorite projects that addressed educational equity, was

a Basic Skills Initiative where the Counselors collaborated with English and Mathematics faculty to launch an instructional program that addressed the academic and personal needs of basic skills students in the classroom. I, as a career counselor, was able to integrate career awareness into the curriculum for that program. I believe that the counselor is in the pivotal role to connect students and faculty with the resources that promote all students' career development and growth.

The Basic Skills semester-long presentations in Math and English classes related to campus resources, study skills, and the transfer and degree process made a difference. Research on this Basic Skills program indicated that more students who were exposed to counselors in these classes advanced to the next level classes. The general counselor emphasized study skills, financial aid resources, and academic information related to finishing a college degree. As a career counselor, I added an emphasis on achieving goals by creating career options. I also taught general counselors how to integrate career education options, including certificates, on the way to degrees, how to give hope to students who felt that a college degree would take too long and who needed job skills (or to drop out to get a job) immediately. I take pride in helping and teaching students how to find a path in college that can lead them to multiple directions with multiple options that will allow the student to express their true talents and be motivated to finish college. I have been able to live my philosophy through individual, group, in-class presentations and in collaborating with instructional faculty to reach more students.

Opportunity and Options

Career development is a recognized avenue to empower all citizens to develop their potential. The rate of change and chaos in the job market requires the insight and expertise of career counselors to empower students to expand their options, to have alternatives, to continue to believe in themselves and to never give up pursuing their dreams.

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O'Brien, K. M. (2001). The legacy of Parsons: Career counselors and vocational psychologists as agents of social change. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 50 (1), 66-76. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2003). *Career guidance and public policy: Bridging the gap*. Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://www.oecd.org>



Dr. Lisa Raufman is currently the President, CCDA and co-author of [The Career Fitness Program Exercising Your Options](#). She has spent over three decades working at Moorpark and El Camino Community College, as a counselor, instructor, coordinator of programs, and Dean of Counseling.

Social Justice and Moorpark College: It takes a Village

Danita Redd

Abstract

Moorpark College has a campus wide call for Social Justice that has contributed to its nationwide fourth place ranking for community colleges. Its approach to educating students is reminiscent of the African Proverb, "It takes a Village." Across all departments, the strategies for helping the most at-risk students are utilized for all students.

Student Success and Student Equity monies have allowed California Community Colleges to increase services, create new programs, and enhance existing ones. Often seen as a source to increase student services, particularly academic counseling, Moorpark College took a broad community (our village) approach to allocating funds. The main idea is, "Everyone is responsible." Meaning, faculty (which includes counselors), staff, administrators, student workers, and student leaders all have a role in helping the most at-risk students. The reforms have included increased intrusiveness in getting students to counseling sessions to providing campus-wide professional development.

Counselors of The Village

All Counseling Faculty, across programs and services meet weekly. EOPS, ACCESS (disabled students), Basic Skills, Transfer Center, Career Center, and Veterans are included. All counselors recognize themselves as part of the same group, "Counselors," and take equal ownership of helping students. In fact, academic counselors are academic department liaisons. We recognize that counselors must be connected to all programs and services to coordinate common goals. Weekly meetings allow for sharing ideas and strategies. The meetings also help in the understanding of what each program and service is doing to assist students and allows for accuracy in direct explanations and referrals. Categorical counselors, such as EOPS, work side by-side with other counselors in developing methods for helping students.

These meetings also allow for counseling strategy trainings within the group. For example, counselors learn from each other how to be intrusive, correct ways to complete forms, and the most helpful way to solve student problems. Utilization of a new district web-based student performance monitoring system, GradesFirst, allows counselors easy access to students. In addition to their email addresses, we have students' class lists. This information aids in follow-up needed for situations such as campus wide early alert (for students with substandard attendance and grades in a class), academic probation, and graduation applications.

A unique task of Moorpark College counselors is to serve on hiring and tenure review committees for most classroom faculty across all disciplines. This helps the campus hire and retain people who have a deep commitment to being student-centered educators. This allegiance to student-centered educators is most notable at Moorpark College in its work with professional development. The following list has examples from our ongoing training for all employees:

The Village Programs

"What the heck is wrong with these students and why aren't they doing what it takes for them to be successful here?"

~ From On Course Training Materials

On Course: Founded more than 20 years ago by Skip Downing, it teaches in-class and campus wide strategies for ensuring student retention and success. Two-day and four-day training sessions, some targeting faculty and administrators, others targeting classified staff, elucidates how each person be they maintenance, office worker, or classroom teacher is responsible for the atmosphere of welcome and safety on our campus. Other strategies target instruction, collaborative learning, and

learning styles. The training focus is on how to help our students to take responsibility for their future. <http://oncourseworkshop.com/>

M2C3: The ongoing work on our campus by Drs. Frank Harris, III and J. Luke Wood teaches us strategies to increase African American and Latino male student recruitment and retention. The **Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3)** is a project of San Diego State University. The goal of the project is to partner with community colleges across the United States to enhance access, achievement, and success among minority male community college students. M2C3's research and practice agenda prioritizes men who have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved in postsecondary education." <http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/m2c3/>

Growing Roses in Concrete: Jeff Duncan-Andrade, Ph.D., spent a day training us about how education helps heal students from difficult life situations and experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. The entire campus community was part of the training. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CwS60ykM8s>

Safe Zone: After training, Safe Zone members are given a rainbow designed placard and other items to hang near their desk or office door. It indicates they are allies to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Gay students and that their work space is free from homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia talk and behaviors. <http://iamsafezone.com/>

Consulting Psychologists Press: All counseling faculty and many classroom faculty completed training for using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Strong Interest Inventory in understanding students and helping them choose majors. The MBTI has implications not only for major and career selection but for cognition and learning styles. <https://www.cpp.com>

With a "students first" philosophy and thorough integration of instruction and student services, Moorpark College empowers its diverse community of learners to complete their goals for academic transfer, basic skills, and career technical education. As a Moorpark College counselor, I feel empowered and constantly inspired to do a better job due to the campus-wide commitment to making the needs of the most at-risk students the top priority. I must say, I start each work day with a smile and a swell of pride for Moorpark College.



Danita Redd, M.A. has been counseling faculty at Moorpark College for 22.5 years and recently won its Academic Senate's Outstanding Faculty of the Year Award. She specializes in Health Sciences, STEM, and Career Counseling. She is an ambassador for Shared Hope International (<http://sharedhope.org/>), an organization committed to ending sex trafficking. She has provided supplies to susceptible populations in Egypt, Peru, and Mexico. Since 2002, she has provided ongoing service related to education, small business, and career development in Mexico. Professor Redd may be contacted through her STEM and Career Development Website: <http://dredd1.wix.com/profred-stem-medsci>

Trends in the Career Counseling Field – A New Approach to Assessing College & Career Readiness

Abstract

Four professionals in the field of career and school counseling discuss the trends that emerged in 2015, and how these trends will impact the field of school and career counseling. In addition, they explain how counseling professionals can incorporate social justice into their work.

The area of career counseling and career development gained renewed focus in 2015 as a result of recent legislation. Four professionals explain emerging trends and their effect on the field of counseling.

What trends did you see emerge in the field of School/Career Counseling in the year 2015? Looking forward, how do you see the field of School Counseling remaining the same, and / or changing during the year 2016? How do you define Social Justice, and how might professionals in the field of counseling, incorporate Social Justice into their work, in the year 2016?

Dr. Yamonte Cooper - Dr. Cooper Yamonte is a Career Center Coordinator, Career Counselor and President-Elect of California Career Development Association (CCDA). Dr. Cooper has an Ed.D. and a M.S.

Dr. Yamonte Cooper states that the field of career counseling and career development is in a state of transition and expansion as a result of Senate Bill 1456 (Student Success and Support Program). He explained, "The California Community College Chancellor's Office understood the importance of career counseling especially in relation to students selecting a major." Dr. Cooper projected that there will be a need to accommodate the attitudes, ideology and demands of the millennial generation now entering the work force. He said the millennial generation, focused on social media and technology, has a different interpretation of the meaning of work and career expectations.

Dr. Cooper said, "My definition of social justice includes advocating and raising awareness to ensure diversity, equity, and access. Diversity is viewed from an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the ways in which race; ethnicity; socio-economic status; age; gender identity and expression; mental and physical (dis)ability; sexual orientation; religion; and other identity categories exist along axes of power, privilege, and oppression." In order to increase cultural and social competencies, Dr. Cooper advises counseling professionals to seek social justice training and professional development opportunities, as well as read books on disenfranchised or oppressed populations. In addition, he advises career development professionals to "become trained and knowledgeable in cultural competence (as well as) become aware of personal biases, micro-aggressions, white privilege, discrimination, and racism (individual/institutional)".

Dr. Lisa Raufman is the California Career Development Association President and co-author of The Career Fitness Program, Exercising Your Options. Dr. Raufmann has an Ed.D., M.S. and MFT.

Dr. Lisa Raufman affirms that college readiness and career development emerged as the leading trends in 2015. She explained that, "with more people interested in lifelong learning, counseling is becoming more crucial to help people to see a bigger picture." Dr. Raufman reminds us that a shift has occurred in both career expectations and the labor market. The generation now entering the workforce wants to "build a meaningful life, not just making money with their career." She suggested that as counselors, we must keep in mind this new career expectation, while at the same time acknowledging the labor market changes. "Now, it is not enough to just get a degree, [we] must know

what to do with a college degree," Dr. Raufman said. As career counselors, our mission is to help students gather information about themselves, select the right career and obtain gainful employment.

Dr. Raufman states that, "one definition of social justice I resonate with is, 'actions that contribute to the advancement of society and advocate for equal access to resources for the marginalized or less fortunate individuals in society' (O'Brien, 2001, p. 66). Dr. Raufman asserts that the expanding integration of college and career readiness in all American secondary schools results directly from the increasing recognition of career development as an avenue to empower all citizens. She contends that, as career counselors, we have many venues to empower citizens of all ages.

You can read more of her philosophy and her examples about the importance and potential of the career counselor's role in promoting social change in her article in this Journal. From her own experience, Dr. Raufman has discovered the importance of assisting students from a diversity of socioeconomic backgrounds to expand beyond their familial circumstances.

In summary, Dr. Raufman contends that, career counselors are helping all students to become more aware of their options, to have alternatives, to learn to believe in themselves, to plan their own futures and to never give up pursuing their dreams.

Tracy DiFilippis is a Sector Strategy Manager with Goodwill Southern California and is currently leading a Manufacturing Sector Intermediary for L.A. County. DiFilippis has an M.S. GCDF.

Tracy DiFilippis said that California launched a "Workforce Revolution" in 2015 by passing legislation focused on career readiness and preparedness. The new legislation includes: AB288 (allows dual enrollment and articulation between high school and community colleges), AB104 (Career and Technical Education grants), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA which funds workforce investment programs, adult education and vocational rehabilitation) and California Career Partnership Trust Grants (funds kindergarten through grade fourteen Career Pathways Programs.) The Governor's budget to infuse Career Technical Education (CTE) and the Board of Governors' decision to endorse comprehensive recommendations to better align CTE programs with the workforce needs of California's employers have highlighted the need for a reinterpretation of our current education and employment link system. DiFilippis stated, "These are exciting times of system[ic] change in favor of a more demand-driven training and educational system." As counselors, we must keep up with the rapid changes occurring in the labor market and economy to help people adapt to this change.

DiFilippis predicted that equity will increase as K-12 education moves to a Pathway Model that will result in clear, intentional roads to employment. She states, "We are in a time where both our national educational system and our workforce laws are coming into agreement with what appropriate preparation is and what college and career readiness is." For instance, the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) Waiver allows school districts to measure success in a more holistic way, including college and career readiness. This model of education will create more equity because it will create more options (career pathways) for students.

Dr. Jorge Torres is the Director of College and Counseling Services for the Compton Unified School District. He began his career as a Foster Care Social Worker, then worked as a high school counselor for 11 years. Dr. Torres has an Ed.D. and an LPCC.

Dr. Jorge Torres points out that in 2015 the terms "college" and "career" became buzzwords through all levels of the counseling field. He highlighted the importance of assigning clear definitions to these common terms. Dr. Torres explains, that "schools are [often] using both words interchangeably [so we

must] develop definitions around [these terms], metrics, accountability etc." to better help students understand the link between college and career.

Another related trend this year, is a push toward revising the current guidelines used to assess college readiness and preparedness. Dr. Torres asserts that the current indicators used to assess college readiness, such as: Advanced Placement tests scores, high school graduation and A-G readiness, form an "incomplete [list] of what it means to be college ready." He points to the CORE Waiver as a step in the right direction when it comes to determining college readiness. The CORE is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to create equity and provide all students access to higher education. The nine school districts in California implementing this new holistic assessment will include, "a social/emotional domain in their accountability framework that includes non-cognitive skills, suspension/expulsion and absenteeism". Dr. Torres claims that the move toward assessing "the whole child" will level the playing field because it will take into account parameters other than academics to assess a student's readiness. He recommended that counselors become familiar with all parameters affecting students to be able to better help them reach higher education.

Conclusion – The Take Away

The school and career counseling fields are becoming more conscientious about the inequality gap. The CORE Waiver, Pathway Model of education and individualized major and career selection, are examples of this awareness and attempts to create more parity for students facing social inequality. As counselors, we must keep in mind that the students we are guiding toward higher education and career paths, each have a unique narrative, different than our own. This is especially true for students of different race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental and physical (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religion and other identity categories that exist along axes of power, privilege, and oppression. As counselors, we must have a "social justice consciousness," and be of service to all students.



Anne-Marie Beck is an Adjunct Career Counselor at Cypress College and El Camino College. She has a Masters in Counseling, specializing in Career, from Cal State University, Northridge.

Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility

Ron Elsdon

Abstract

Why does business social responsibility matter to communities, organizations and our clients? What is our role as career counselors in addressing this topic? This article comments on such questions and the importance of addressing social justice and social responsibility.

Rising inequality means that our community and career counseling clients are hurting. In this setting, occasionally the path ahead is clear for our clients. It's as if the lights on the road ahead all turn

green. However, more often, it's challenging to navigate that road, with unexpected detours and many red lights. We can assist clients in equipping themselves to navigate this road, where careers frequently unfold in organizational settings. Values and practices in our organizations and society shape opportunities for our clients. Here I comment on those organizational and community aspects and what career counselors can do.

Creating Legacy

He walked over slowly, slightly reticent, his bag of food waiting by the door. He was in his seventies; originally perhaps from Eastern Europe, English didn't come naturally. I was one of many volunteers conducting a survey on food insecurity (a euphemism for hunger). When asked whether he was sometimes hungry because he couldn't afford to buy food he answered yes, almost apologetically. There was a tear in the corner of his eye, and in mine. There was something about his quiet grace that was deeply moving. I found myself wondering how, in one of the most prosperous societies on earth, we can exclude people who depend on sporadic, charitable support for something as basic as food (Elsdon, 2013). And I wonder about my role as a career counselor in addressing such issues of social justice?

The community we choose to create is our legacy. It is a reflection of our beliefs, values, and common humanity. And it is hurting. We have a particular challenge in the United States since inequality is back to the levels in the 1920s. This inequality creates social, economic and emotional problems. Social problems include increased crime, homicide, lower levels of trust, and lower economic mobility. The fuel to power our economy is depleted, and the engine of our economy stalls.

Meanwhile, our overall happiness suffers. Here is David Shipler's (2004, p. 300) view: "The forgotten [in America] wage a daily struggle to keep themselves from falling over the cliff. It is time to be ashamed." There are voices of hope, such as Nobel Peace Prize recipient Muhammad Yunus (1998) who said, "We can create a world where there won't be a single human being who may be described as a poor person." Shouldn't career counselors also be voices of hope?

Embracing Hope

Voices of hope were heard 100 years ago when Frank Parsons was director of the Vocation Bureau (created in Boston in 1908). The Bureau's motto was "Light, Information, Inspiration, Cooperation" (Parsons, 1909, p. 92, as cited in Wilson, 2010). Its mission was to educate the under-privileged and immigrants on the importance of making good vocational choices, thus escaping the vicious circle of poverty. Early vocational guidance pioneers can serve as models for today's career counselors when serving in the role of advocate.

Business, often in collaboration with nonprofits and the public sector, is instrumental in salving these hurts through socially responsible practices. Businesses are part of a network affecting employees, investors, communities, and partner, customer, and supplier organizations. Successful businesses embrace social responsibility as the essence of long-term value creation, by honoring all of their constituent communities. Recent economic turmoil calls for more socially responsible business practices, supported by enlightened public policy and thoughtful individual responsibility.

Business, nonprofits, and the public sector working together, honoring principles of social responsibility and social justice, have the opportunity to make this a better society for everyone. What action steps can we take? At an organizational level we can focus on establishing effective corporate governance to respect the interests of all constituencies, ensure that compensation is equitable, implement collaborative workforce practices, and sponsor causes that benefit all.

Steps for each of us as individuals, and as career counselors (Elsdon, 2013), include:

- Staying informed about emerging social, business, and workplace issues so we can decide where to commit our time, and discern what these issues might mean for our clients.
- Being well informed about how organizations approach social responsibility so that, based on their performance, we can decide to engage or not, whether as employee, contractor, supplier, investor, or customer, and we can assist our clients in understanding organizations' culture and values.
- Influencing public policy by supporting candidates who speak to the needs of all in our society, and engaging in legislative campaigns and direct action in this regard.

Growing economic inequities in our society have led to constrained life choices for many of our clients. Businesses, nonprofits, and the public sector can embrace principles of social responsibility and address these inequities, for the benefit of all. We can play an important advocacy role, which will require courage and conviction. It is in embracing such courage that we can create a better world for our clients and for all.

The article, *Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility*, by Ron Elsdon, originally appeared in NCDA's web magazine, *Career Convergence*, at www.ncda.org. Copyright © [February 2013]. Reprinted with permission.

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Ron Elsdon is a founder of organizations in the career and workforce development fields. He has also been active in speaking, writing about, and promoting a range of social causes. His published works include: *How to Build a Nontraditional Career Path: Embracing Economic Disruption* (Praeger, 2014) and editor of *Business Behaving Well: Social Responsibility, from Learning to Doing* (Potomac Books, Inc., 2013). He holds a doctorate in chemical engineering from Cambridge University, and a master's in career development from John F. Kennedy University. Ron can be reached at renewal@elsdon.com, web site: www.elsdon.com.

Advocating for Formerly Incarcerated Clients

Debra Ann Arviso

Abstract

Formerly incarcerated jobseekers face stigma and many barriers to employment. The Center for Living and Learning is a nonprofit organization that provides employment services for reentry clients. The executive director explains how she is advocating for systemic change in the legal system and helping reentry clients remove obstacles to self-sufficiency.

Challenges

Access to employment is particularly challenging for people who have spent time in prison. However, Maria “Alex” Alexander is an example of an ex-felon who was able to find meaningful employment while advocating for other formerly incarcerated clients. As the Executive Director at the Center for Living and Learning (CLL), Alexander said that the biggest misconception about these clients is that they are unemployable and they can’t change. In dispelling this myth, she often cites her own transformation from being a heroin and cocaine user, and being service-resistant, to leading a nonprofit organization.

“The most rewarding part of my job is being able to go from homeless and having my kids taken away to being a homeowner, supporting my kids with a job, and being able to help people who are excluded,” she explained. “There are plenty of us out there employed at all types of corporate, labor and nonprofit organizations.”

Advocacy and Education

CLL is a nonprofit organization that provides employment services to rehabilitated criminals, recovering addicts and at risk youth. Although CLL’s main focus learning is on providing vocational apprenticeships, she said that her passion is outreach and advocacy aimed at removing barriers to employment. For instance, Alexander attends resource fairs to educate people about Proposition 47, the law which reduces certain drug possession felonies to misdemeanors. Alexander explained that although removing a felony from a criminal record removes barriers to employment, few eligible people have applied.

In addition to education, Alexander advocates for Proposition 47 implementation. She said that her felony appeared on a recent background check even though she filed her “Petition for Resentencing” two years ago. She worries that people like her may not know that they have been excluded from jobs because their criminal records were not changed. Alexander recently went to Sacramento with representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union and Californians for Safety and Justice to ask lawmakers for an accounting of the \$23 million saved from state prison cost savings from the changes. The funds were supposed to be invested in grants for drug treatment and mental health services for people in the criminal justice system.

Of her advocacy work, Alexander said, “I love going around to events that are going to make policy changes and help people who have never met me.”

In Los Angeles County, CLL employees also educate employers who avoid hiring reentry applicants because of liability issues. Alexander says that many CLL clients find jobs at recycling businesses through staffing agencies, where the employer is absolved from liability. The challenge is to convince

employers to hire ex-offenders after the contract expires. She asks employers to consider work performance, the length of time since the conviction, and prior employment when making hiring decisions. Alexander said that many clients work on several one-year contracts until they get hired by employers who do not do background checks.

Career Development Assistance: Providing Hope

Alexander said that career development professionals who want to help reentry clients overcome these barriers are most successful when they give individuals hope and convey a sincere desire to help. She suggested 'meeting the client where they're at' because seeking employment can be very frightening and many clients do not want to admit their fear. Although Alexander said that resistant clients can be challenging, they get hope from meeting CLL staff members who demonstrate that they can find meaningful work with a criminal record. CLL staff provide personal guidance when they teach clients how to explain their convictions and take responsibility for their actions during interviews. Clients feel better after she conveys that they have control over common mistakes such as overstating qualifications, being unreliable and having poor interpersonal skills.

Alexander also suggests that career professionals approach ex-offenders like clients without felonies. She stressed the importance of treating clients as individuals, establishing the same expectations as for non-felons and setting clear boundaries. She accomplishes this by speaking honestly about "red flags" in mock interviews, often asking - is it your record that is affecting your employment, or is it you?

"I have the same concerns as any other employer. If you act like you are avoiding talking about convictions or seem like a difficult personality, I would worry that you might cause problems," she explained.

Alexander says that another misconception about reentry clients is that they all look the same, yet many people are unaware that they work with someone who has a felony. The shame and stigma of people involved in recovery often deters ex-felons from talking about their criminal records. Alexander says that not having to hide her criminal record is another benefit of working with this population.

Funding is Always an Issue

The most challenging aspect of Alexander's job is obtaining funding and resources for the organization. She said that the need for services is great, yet the value of her work is not always recognized by the people who make funding decisions. In spite of the stress of obtaining funding without a grant-writer on staff, Alexander said that the accomplishment for which she is most proud is winning a contract with the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

Alexander recalls the memory of one of her first clients who received his first paycheck. He exclaimed, "Damn, I'm paying taxes now. I'm so happy!" He felt like a human being who was contributing to his own well-being.



Debra Ann Arviso, MS, is an Adjunct Counselor in the CalWORKs and First Year Experience Departments at El Camino College Compton Center. Debra's advocacy work includes the Human Trafficking Project (NCJW), National Institutional Coming out Day (United We Dream), and

Working with Survivors of Human Trafficking

Kristy Cho

Abstract

The issues and needs of survivors of human trafficking are complex and challenging to meet. In this Q&A, Kristine Cho provides insight about her clients, career development and advocacy work at the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST). She sheds light on the rewards of accompanying clients on the slow journey toward self-sufficiency and family reunification.

What is your job title and what population do you work with?

I am a Case Manager, Data Specialist and I work with both foreign-born and domestic victims of human trafficking at the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST).

Our Spring Conference theme is Career Counseling for Social Justice. How do you incorporate social justice into your service with survivors of human trafficking?

It's almost always about action. Every day I choose to do something that will promote the rights and well-being of my clients. It can be as small as reframing an ignorant statement made by another service provider or as big as standing up in front of Congress to lobby for legislative change.

Why did you choose to work with human trafficking survivors?

Many of our foreign national clients were trafficked simply because they hoped for a better life in the U.S. Isn't that the American dream that my own parents - that our parents - immigrated for? I think I envisioned all that potential being derailed by a trafficker and felt that I had to invest in being an agent of change for this population.

What are some of the biggest misconceptions about this population?

That most victims are trafficked for sex when statistics show that there are more victims of labor trafficking being identified each year. That victims are "over there", or from another country, and not here in the U.S. which is totally untrue. That victims are poor and/or uneducated - some of my clients have master's degrees, owned their own homes, or had a highly profitable business/trade before being trafficked.

How does your job search or career counseling approach with survivors differ from clients who have not experienced trauma?

I'm not sure it's that different. You help figure out a person's strengths, skills and experience and focus on identifying the steps it will take to get a job or get into the career they want. I suppose that clients who are dealing with a lot of unaddressed issues related to their trauma may need more time, patience and supportive services at first, but we generally get to where they want to be in the end.

What counseling and human development theories do you incorporate into your interactions with human trafficking survivors?

Although case managers don't provide clinical therapy, our Emergency Response services use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs when working with clients. A person doesn't particularly want to talk about their career goals when they're not sure where their next meal is coming from, or if they'll have a place to sleep for the night. Safety first is another theory we use - is that even a theory? - because it is so critical for a person to feel that they are both physically and emotionally in a safe place. I could nerd out pretty hard on the different workshops and seminars I've gone to that discuss the effects of trauma on the brain and nervous system, but I'll save that for another time.

How are human trafficking survivors achieving self-sufficiency?

With support, encouragement and lots of lessons on how to search for things on Google.

What advice would you give to CCDA members who would like to work with human trafficking survivors?

Ask yourself if you're in this for the slow burn: it's easy to get passionate about this issue and it's tempting to go into this work because you want to rescue or "save" victims, but the real work starts after the person is out of their trafficking situation. It can be exhausting, frustrating and slow-going so a lot of people burnout. It's also confusing because of how little research is out there on this population and on what works. The issues and needs are complex and challenging to meet, but definitely a rewarding challenge!

Throughout your work with survivors of human trafficking, of which accomplishment are you most proud?

Hands down, the family reunifications for some of my foreign-born clients. We work with the International Office of Migration, or IOM, who handle the bulk of the reunification, but there is still so much (paper)work to be done before anything can happen. If a client is ready for reunification, it means that they are in a stable place, independent and able to care for their families when they arrive and that's worth a lot to me too. There can be lots of problems post-reunification - think of your one client suddenly expanding into a family of five - but it's worth it to see that look on your client's face when they're holding their kids or their spouse for the first time in years.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

I'd have to say dealing with burnout, vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. It's a huge part of being in a service or helping profession, especially working with victims of trauma, and the challenge comes from the need to have a personal and organizational plan to address it.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Honestly, it's seeing clients grow from victim to survivor to leader. It doesn't always happen, and it's usually quite subtle when a client stops thinking about themselves not as a victim but a survivor, or leader. But when it does, I don't just have another "successful client outcome", I have another partner, another advocate, another voice in the fight to end the epidemic of human trafficking.

Kristy Cho has a master's degree in Social Work from the University of Southern California. She is currently a Case Manager & Data Specialist at the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST).

She provides intensive case management for adults, both foreign and domestic, who are trafficked in the U.S. *Kristy can be reached on [LinkedIn](#).*



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