

Social Justice

Here you will find definitions and excerpts related to the principles of social justice, with links to organizations, publications and references for exploring social justice as it relates to health equity and social determinants of health.

A social justice perspective “explicitly analyzes who benefits from—and who is harmed by—economic exploitation, oppression, discrimination, inequality, and degradation of natural resources” (Krieger 2001).

In order to eliminate root causes of social injustices, organizations must identify and eliminate oppression and discrimination. Values and beliefs shape discrimination; the decision to create a more just society is, at heart, a choice over values. Values that support social justice and health equity include honesty, inclusion, innovation, solidarity, and humility (Hofrichter and Bhatia 2010). For further discussion regarding how a county health department addressed Social Justice, see [Health Equity Initiative, Multnomah County, Oregon](#).

Social Injustice and Public Health (Levy and Sidel 2006), provides a thought-provoking and expansive discourse on this subject and includes contributions by many renowned authors. The Preface notes that:

“Social injustice underlies many public health problems throughout the world. It is manifested in many ways, ranging from various forms of overt discrimination to wide gaps between the “haves” and “have nots” within a country and between rich and poor countries. It leads to higher rates of disease, injury, disability and premature death. Public health professionals as well as students of the health professions need a clear understanding of social injustice in order to address these problems, but relatively few books address the wide range of issues involved.”

The discussion section includes a description of the seminal United Nations work [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) signed December 10, 1948, the nature of social injustice, the impact of injustice across many aspects of public health and populations, and ends with an action agenda to prevent social injustice and minimize its impact on health.

The following web sites are resources for further discussion about social justice and its health impact on underserved and minority populations.

Global or General

- [Ebola — Underscoring the Global Disparities in Health Care Resources](#) This journal article by CDC’s Anthony S. Fauci, M.D. discusses a case in point where the environment, a poor economy, limited health education, lack of health resources/infrastructure as

Social Justice

well as provider trust, have made the typical patient's experience and outlook for survival very different in Africa than in the United States.

- [*Asset-Based Community Development Institute \(ABCD\)*](#) – Community Development is viewed by many as a powerful tool for social justice. ABCD and its affiliated faculty have created a library of community building workbooks, published scholarly articles, books, and chapters oriented to an array of audiences, and developed training curricula and other materials associated with the asset-based community development approach. See VDH-OMHHE- health equity resources for this tool as well as other approaches to understanding and improving social justice.

National

- [*Health Care in Canada – What Makes Us Sick?*](#) is a 2013 report by the Canadian Medical Association based on a series of online and town hall meetings held across the country to discuss what factors contributed to poor health, and what could be done about these issues. Social Determinants of Health figured prominently in these discussions. The twelve final recommendations from these physicians addressed social justice issues: poverty, housing, food, education, health in all policy, drug availability for all, developing community resource guides, and targeted services to aboriginal peoples.
- [*Dellums Commission Reports*](#) The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' Dellums Commission produced nine reports that contained policy recommendations to improve life paths for young men of color, many of which have been adopted in places like Oakland, California and Chicago, Illinois. The Joint Center is currently reconvening the Dellums Commission to collaborate with the efforts around the My Brother's Keeper initiative, which employed public and private sector partnerships to improve life opportunities for boys and men of color.

State

- [*Health Justice CT*](#) – This organization's stated purpose is to provide a public forum for conversations, ideas and collective action based on their belief "that everyone should have an equal opportunity to be healthy, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or education. We're a movement of Connecticut residents dedicated to working together to raise awareness about the issue of racial and ethnic health disparities. We are here to find innovative solutions, and ultimately achieve health justice for everyone

Social Justice

in Connecticut.” The project is managed by the Society of New Communications Research, Inc and funded by the [Connecticut Health Foundation](#).

- [CT Multicultural Health Partnership](#) (CMHP, or “the Partnership”) was launched in July 2008, through the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH). The Partnership was established to draw together expertise, resources, and programming to eliminate health disparities in Connecticut. DPH has supported CMHP efforts with federal grant funds from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health and the US Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. The Partnership developed and continues to function with an organizational structure that relies on volunteers to serve in executive-level positions and a large member base of individuals dedicated to eliminating health disparities through policy and program initiatives. The Partnership’s CLAS Standards Project, 2013 – 2015, promoted the adoption of the CLAS Standards across a range of community-based groups and organizations, and educated limited English proficiency Connecticut residents about their rights to interpreter services in medical care and social services settings.

Local

- [Alameda County Report on Inequities](#) – This report, *Life and Death from Unnatural Causes: Health and Social Inequity in Alameda County* (2008), takes an in-depth look at health inequities and underlying social inequities in Alameda County, California based on local data. Part One describes the nature and magnitude of health inequities in the county. Part Two describes social inequities and proposes policies to address social inequities - the root causes of health inequities.

In the News

A sampling of Social Justice Issues making the news recently:

- **Racial Justice** – The Matter of Black Lives (The New Yorker, 3/14/16): www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed
- **Gender/Transgender Justice** – Supreme Court Considers Transgender Access To Preferred Bathroom (Washington Post, 10/31/16): https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/10/31/sex-discrimination-and-the-transgender-bathroom-case/?utm_term=.d4c0437bb1c1

Social Justice

- **Immigrant Rights** – Mayors in ‘Sanctuary Cities’ Vow To Protect People From Deportation (Associated Press, 11/15/16):
<http://www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/mayors-in-sanctuary-cities-vow-to-protect-people-from-deportation/>
- **Religious Freedom** – After Outcry, Georgia Lawmaker Abandons Bill That Would Have Banned Muslims From Wearing Veils (Washington Post, 10/18/16):
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/18/after-outcry-georgia-lawmaker-abandons-bill-that-would-have-banned-muslims-from-wearing-veils/>
- **Environmental Justice** – Showdown Over Oil Pipeline Becomes A National Movement For Native Americans (Washington Post, 9/6/16):
https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/showdown-over-oil-pipeline-becomes-a-national-movement-for-native-americans/2016/09/06/ea0cb042-7167-11e6-8533-6b0b0ded0253_story.html
- **Rights for Persons with Disabilities** – Georgia Agrees To Ensure Equal Access For Individuals With Disabilities To Foster And Adoption Programs And Services (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1/11/16): <http://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/newsroom/index.html>
- **Food Security** – Pediatricians Will Screen For Hungry Kids (Hartford Courant, 12/31/15):
<http://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-pediatricians-ask-about-hunger-20151231-story.html>

REFERENCES

Hofrichter, R. and R. Bhatia, editors. 2010. *Tackling Health Inequities through Public Health Practice* New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2010.

Fauci, A.S. 2014. “Ebola: Underscoring the Global Disparities in Health Care Resources,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 371: 1084-1086. September 18, 2014

Krieger, Nancy. 2001. “A Glossary for Social Epidemiology,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 55: 693-700.

Levy, B.S. and V. Sidel, editors. 2006. *Social Injustice and Public Health* New York: Oxford University Press.