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### What is Social Justice?

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Michael Soisson

Dr. Houser

Social Justice

28 November 2020

### What is social justice?

Social Justice is defined as the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. The following response is my opinion on social justice and how it has played out in my personal life and the community around me. The following social justice issues that I will be discussing are adoption, gender, call out culture, poverty, identity, and prodigies.

There are 107,918 foster children eligible for and waiting to be adopted. (Ashley Fogle). My hometown has a population of around 8,000 people. The innocent children waiting for homes is 13 times the population of Jasper, Texas. Adoption can be such wonderful experience for the receiving parents and in the same breath a devastating experience for the giving parents. I think that adoption is a really touch subject. It can be hard for the parents to give up their child. Many times feelings of failure, not be good enough, or doubt plague their minds. Children should never be kept in bad situations because adults do not know how to handle the parental role. Reasons for adoptions can vary. People might have to place their child for adoption due to economic situations. Another cause of adoption might be because of rape. The mother, though she has been through a terrible ordeal still would want her child to have the best life. The act of

the mother's part is very selfless, and gives the child a wonderful opportunity. A definite beauty from ashes situation. Every parent should have their right to do with their children as they see fit. In no way does that mean abuse or neglect in any form. This opinion also applies to the adoptive parent's as well. The biological parent and well as the adoptive should be afforded the same respect and rights. Adoption should not be viewed as a shameful or "let's not talk about that" subject. It's very real and deserves an honest conversation. No matter the reason for an adoption, there are many lives involved in the process, and all deserve their voices to be heard. Many times the most important voice in the adoption, is the one that has the smallest voice. In my own community, I personally know of someone who is a child of rape. Often times, these issues seem to exist elsewhere. Ashley works with my mom, and I was truly shocked to learn of this. Then I pause to think, would a child of rape look different, act different. In Ashley's case, and the many others, not at all. She is a tremendous woman with an amazing story. Her story along with others, need to be heard and shared. It is through hearing these stories, that we as a society can build our compassion and understanding for adoption whatever the reason.

Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, and Tik-Tok are today's communication platforms. Gone are the days of having face to face conversations with family and friends. In my opinion, callouts in something you do when you have a problem with someone, and you chose to discuss the matter over social media, instead of addressing them personally. Social media is probably the worst place to comment about someone or a situation. Many times the "whole story" is not known, which can in fact inflate a situation to a level that it was never meant to get to. As an athlete myself, I have seen on more than one occasion, athletes lose large scholarships due to some tweet or Facebook post. Many issues that arise today can be worked out through face to face conversations. Personal attacks are easy, but wanting to understand a differing point of

view is what allows growth and unity. To realize how other people have different lives and different opinions is a big part of this world today and could help you understand more things. Let me be clear, understanding people's point of view does not mean you agree. Our lives and experiences shape how we feel about all social justice issues. It often hard to understand an issue unless that particular issue is your reality. Unfortunately, I feel that's how Facebook, Twitter, and all other media platforms are negative. People are quick to attack those that do not understand a particular issue the way they do. Just thinking back on the most recent Presidential Election, the social media platforms were controlling what was being posted and not posted. For me, that is saying your opinion and thoughts don't matter if they aren't what WE say. I saw more times than I care to recall people who I thought were friends attacking each other. The hide behind your computer screen mentality has caused these call out attacks to rise and unfortunately turn into riots. Turn on any media platform and you will see businesses being destroyed, personal property destroyed, and lives lost. Civil debates and face to face conversations should always be the answer. To quote the article I'm a Black Feminist: I think call out Culture is toxic: "We can change the culture. Calling-in is simply a call-out done with love. Some corrections can be made privately. Others will necessarily be public but done with respect. It helps avoid the weaponization of suffering that prevents constructive healing." We all need Grace. Don't let others harsh words being typed safely behind a computer screen change who you are. Strive to learn and see the other side of the coin. If you can't agree you can always give respect. Grace and Respect are tools that have been put away for far too long

Poverty is defined as the state of being extremely poor. According to Poverty USA, in 2019, 34 million people lived in poverty in America. For a family of four, that means earning just 25,000 a year. I have always been of the belief system to just get a job and pay your bills.

However, I was only thinking about my bills, my wants, and nothing else. If you are only responsible for you, things might be a little easier. If you add wife and children into the picture, things get complicated very quickly. Making a little over 2,000 a month to feed, clothe, and cover all expenses for a family of 4 seems almost impossible. I was so blessed to have most of the things that I have now. I have been very fortunate and have never worried about where my next meal was coming from, if I was going to have lights, or gas in my vehicle. While in high school, I started working and paying for my own stuff. I had no idea how much money I spent on a daily basis. I would buy gas weekly, I would play golf at least two times a week, buy food, shoes, and clothing for myself. It really took a lot out of my check to do all these things. When I was watching the video in class, I really started to think about my views, and really felt bad. I came to realize that even if people had a job, they would still have to pay rent, but clothes, and do all the things that they would have to for their kids and spouse. I did not have to worry about kids, but the man in the video did. I definitely came to realize that it is not easy and that my opinion was wrong. I have done some reading on the Cycle of Poverty. It has really captured my attention. Just to think or say, get out of poverty, get a better job, do this or do that; it is just not that easy. The Cycle of Poverty is a trap or cycle that is caused by self-reinforcing mechanisms, that cause poverty, once it exists, it will continue to persist across generations. In my hometown, which has a high poverty rate, it seems that if they lived in poverty, then its easier to adapt to that circumstance than to change. Housing Secretary Ben Carson says that he thinks poverty “is a state of mind.” I agree with his statement, however, I think more than just the people in poverty need to have a change in the “state of mind.” Simply eating the proper amount of meals a day and getting the proper amount of calories and nutrients can help to address the cycle of poverty. When people do not have enough food to eat, they do not have the strength and energy to eat.

Also, while reading articles on poverty, UNESCO stated that if all students that were in poverty had just basic reading skills, that an overwhelming amount of these people could escape extreme poverty. Education develops skills and abilities, corrects some of the imbalances that come out of marginalization, and decreases both risk and vulnerability. (UNESCO) Reading about poverty has made me realize that unless these issues are not something that is apart of your life or that of someone that you have a close relationship with then you really don't have a clear understanding of it. It's almost like its not a problem unless its your problem. In referencing Medium.com, poverty is much more than inadequate living resources. Instead true poverty is best understood as a lack of justice-and we must address the injustice on both and economic and political level. Seeing things from the other side of the coin concerning this issue, has really opened my eyes. Poverty is everyone's problem, and we should all work to find a common ground.

Identity is defined as the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. When the word identity comes to mind, I think of male or female, race, and sexual orientation. Now, I am very aware that identity is much more complex than that. This particular social issue has truly shown me how important identity is to ones self. Developing a sense of self or an identity is an essential part of every individual becoming mature. We are born with certain traits, and some traits can be modified later in life. Good Therapy.org states that not having a strong sense of self of struggling with identity issues may lead to anxiety and insecurity. (Good Therapy.org) With identity I fell like you are who you are, and you should not be judged for that. Also, when you are introducing yourself to someone you shouldn't have to tell someone hello, I am Michael, and I am straight. That to me is just silly and not needed. You should not have to identify yourself like that when you are introducing yourself to someone. An individual's social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong. People typically want to hang out

with similar people. For me, I play baseball, hunt, and fish. I love to hang out with people who do the same thing as me. It is no way that I don't like people that don't do those things, but we all have a tendency to hang out with and communicate with people who are like us. I went to school with a young man named Jacob. Jacob has down syndrome. Jacob was always the happiest, kindest, and most helpful person. He greeted you everyday with a smile. His encouragement was so inspiring. He still to this day works at the school with young children. I really never thought about his life, his struggles, and his feelings. He has a label or an identity that people notice right away. Does that identity keep people from going around him? Talking to him? For me, the answer is a strong NO, but how many other people might avoid Jacob. How many people who have down syndrome, or any other "identity" that makes them stand out are avoided and shamed. Getting to know about people identity can only instill compassion and understanding. Now, there are certain identity's that I am not comfortable with. I can not understand transgender. I actually believe that it is more of an attention getter than anything else. I have such an issue with this because of my Faith. I in no way think that God makes mistakes. I whole heartedly believe that there are only two genders male and female. Going against God's perfect creation is a slippery slope. Race is apart of identity. In many societies, skin color is an important maker of identity. I see in the United States for sure, that great importance is put on skin color. It typically is one of the first labels that we put on people when we see them. If we are asked to describe someone, we are going to state the obvious first, which is race. Knowing who you are and loving yourself are so very important. You cannot understand or appreciate other forms of identity without first knowing yourself.

The last social justice issue that I will be discussing is prodigy. At first, I did not know what one was until we had the discussion in class. A prodigy is a person, especially a young one,

endowed with exceptional quality and abilities. An example of a prodigy is Mozart. He was a musical prodigy. He played the keyboard starting at age 3 and was composing music by age 5. At the young age of 14 his works were being performed to great success. He worked hours upon hours to master his skill. Prodigy's like Mozart are not average in any aspect of the word. Their IQ's are well about average. However, where they excel in matters of IQ, they lack in social skills. They are considered odd and out of touch. They have a hard time relating to average people in society. They can find themselves without a social outlet and become hermit. What feels like an easy life, these prodigy's have anything but an easy go. Stevie Wonder is another prodigy. He was born blind but managed to become a skilled musician early in life. At the tender age of 12, he can began recording and performing professionally. His talent to this day is unmatched. Blindness never stopped him and only drove him to work harder. His hard work allowed him to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame when he was only 38 years old. Most child prodigy's struggle with adult hood. What always seemed as an amazing skill and talent as a child may not seem as great when they are adults. Many times, they suffer with depression. They also have a tendency to point out their weaknesses more than their strengths. To quote Anne-Marie Imafidon, "A prodigy is a child who is very precocious in a certain field, mastering a domain that has already been invented. A genius, is someone who revolutionizes a field of knowledge." These prodigies are a rarity in this world and should be valued for what they bring to the table. Their lives like many others are not easy. They often seek to find the normalcy that often escapes them.

In conclusion, social justice is a broad and far reaching topic. Social justice is not a quick fix with one answer for all the problems. It will require hard word, patience, understanding, and



compassion. From the most successful, to those barely making it, the goal should remain the same. We should strive for equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities for all.

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