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CRM 214: Restorative Justice

Midterm: Social Action Report

1. Write a paragraph of the mission of the organization. Some questions to consider are: what are the organization's goals? What do they do? (1 paragraph) (8 points)
  - a. Make sure in this answer that you hyperlink to the agency/organization. ([Hidden Water](#) is a local organization that.....)

As the name suggests, the [California Conference for Equality and Justice](#) (CCEJ) is an organization platformed on advancing equality among all humans, and thus seeking to cultivate more positive human communities and interrelationships. A major focus of CCEJ's work is equality centered around race, and working to eliminate injustices rooted in discrimination and biases both at a structural and interpersonal level. The CCEJ aims to do this work both preemptively through education and advocacy, and responsively through conflict resolution strategies that make use of the tools and precepts of restorative justice. The CCEJ works to accomplish these aims through three major programs: 1) their youth arm ("Building Bridges for Youth" targeting anti biases), 2) their conflict resolution arm ("Healing Harms" aimed at "conflict transformation" and 3) their training arm ("Illuminar" and Restorative Justice training) (California Conference for Equality and Justice, 2020, What We Do section). The organization has an overall goal of creating new cultures of "connection, respect and accountability" and fostering meaningful dialogue and healing in the face difference-based conflict (California Conference for Equality and Justice, 2020, Our Work section, para. 2). The CCEJ's focuses its work in the institutions of the school, the workplace, the local community, and the wider criminal justice system in an overall effort to foster inclusive and peaceful communities in their locale of Southern California.

2. Pick a 1) review an archived webinar, 2) a live virtual event, 3) listen to a podcast episode (if they have one) or 4) read a resource document or report (any type of written document regarding the organization's research/advocacy, etc) and write a short paragraph summary (1 paragraph) on what it was about (8 points) **Question: Past tense or present tense?**
  - a. Make sure you hyperlink to the resource/webinar/podcast you listened to/reviewed/watched (E.g., I read the report entitled [Love with Accountability](#))
  - b. If you choose a report/written document:
    - i. If what you choose is 5 pages or longer, read 3-4 pages of it, and indicate which pages you read.
    - ii. Do NOT include one page factsheets (or several factsheets).

For this Social Action Report, I reviewed Season 3, Episode 3 of the California Conference for Equality and Justice's podcast, "Whatchu Know about RJ", entitled, "[How to 'unsettle' myself: Can Restorative Justice help us grapple with Settler Colonialism?](#)"

This podcast episode called for an intentional reflection on our everyday interactions with Indigenous lands in ways that have often been overlooked. The episode explored the concept of settler colonialism, and its intersection with the work of restorative justice. In large part, the episode's guest speaker, and native of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate nation (Burnt Thigh/Rosebud Sioux), Dr. Waŋbli Wapháha Hokšíla used the podcast episode to present and explore a renewed understanding of who may be considered a "settler" and how this understanding may impact the way we examine settler colonialism. Sharing primarily from the perspective of native groups in both the United States and Canada, Dr. Hokšíla highlighted not only the historical context of settler colonialism, but also the ways in which this form of unjust displacement takes place within modern-day structures. The podcast episode examined the harms that this system of colonialism has created for Indigenous populations (displacement, cultural erasure, genocide, etc.), and underscored the need for not only acknowledging and addressing these harms, but affirming the agency and personhood of Indigenous peoples. The podcast episode brought in to play the tenets and tools of restorative justice, and explored the ways in which these may be used to heal the hurts created by settler colonialism.

3. Relate what you learned from the webinar, event, podcast, or resource document or report from #2 back to course material. Make 4 separate connections. Make these connections explicit, do not expect me to know what connection you're making. Write answers in four bullet points. (16 points total, 4 points per connection)
  - a. DO NOT MAKE CONNECTIONS TO THE WEBSITE IN GENERAL. The connections you make should be based on the resource you read/watched/reviewed/listened to from #2.

From the podcast episode I reviewed, there are several connections that may be made to the course material for this class:

**Connection 1:** One clear connection between this class' course material, and the podcast episode reviewed is the concept of **narratives** as a tool in helping us understand the underpinnings of any story we tell and are being told. From our course material, we have gained an understanding of narratives as the meaning and context that we use to interpret the world around us, and then broadcast in order to propagate these beliefs. Narratives speak to the stories we tell ourselves and others that inform the way we view the world. In the podcast episode, Dr. Hokšíla speaks directly to this concept of narratives as described in our course material. Hokšíla speaks in detail about what he refers to as the "settler narrative", and how this informs our notions of ownership. The "settler narrative" of which Hokšíla speaks is a narrative from the perspective of the powerful and a "self-indigenizing" narrative that sees settlers asserting dominant rights of ownership to these native lands (~14 mins.). This narrative constructs a reality that says that, because we

have invested labour into this land, we hold rights and entitlement to this land, and indeed, that this land is ours. This narrative of the powerful attempts to justify the displacement and oppression of truly Indigenous groups by feeding a popular discourse of “national pride” through the fallacy of ownership through control and investment (~16 mins.). As we have come to understand in our course, “the powerful control the narrative”. It is easy to buy into the narrative of nationhood and rightful ownership of settler groups that emphasize the labour and investment that they have put into the land after arriving. Dr. Hokšila reminds us, however, that we must always question the source of a narrative and be able to differentiate between facts and popular narratives.

**Connection 2:** Closely related to our first connection is the connection to be made between this podcast episode, and the notion that “**history matters**” and an attention to the **People’s history** from our course’s lectures. This reminder from our week 3 class lecture challenges us to bring into focus the importance of paying attention to historical context in our understanding of realities today. Again, an interplay between the dynamics of the powerful and the powerless happens here as we note that history is often reconstructed or even denied in the interest of the most powerful groups in society. Dr. Hokšila speaks to this very notion, and uses the podcast episode to highlight the underacknowledged but integral history of the native populations in the Northern American region prior to the arrival of settler groups. The history of theft of Indigenous lands and the genocide of Indigenous peoples is critical to our modern-day understanding of the systemic subjugation of Indigenous groups in North America, and the denial of much of their cultural and political identities (16 mins). At around 34 minutes, the podcast further underscores the principle that “history matters” by the issuing of a challenge to all “settlers” to meaningfully consider the history, parentage, and story behind the lands that they occupy today. Leaning on the concept of “land acknowledgements”, the podcast underscored the value of considering not only that “history matters”, but that the “people’s history” matters.

**Connection 3:** Another important connection to be made between our course material and the content of this organization’s podcast is the importance of acknowledging **intersectionality** and identity as a part of the wider work of “desettling”. Intersectionality underscores firstly: the different layers and facets of an individual’s identity, and secondly: how these layers interact to inform how the dynamics of oppression affect the individual. In the podcast under review, Dr. Hokšila brings our attention to the involved notion of the “settler of colour” (~45 mins). In this discussion, the podcast underscores the complexity of the intersectional identity. In their example of the settler of colour, there is a dynamic in which the settler (who is herself an agent of the colonial force), also experiences oppression of race and/or culture. Indeed, Dr. Hokšila suggests that there is a duality in which the oppressed is also a beneficiary of the colonial exploit. This takes us back to the privilege vs. oppression wheel explored in our lecture, and an understanding that individuals can live on both the privileged, and oppressed sides of the wheel.

**Connection 4:** The final connection between the reviewed podcast and our course material that we will highlight is an understanding of the “empathic fallacy”. This was introduced to us in this course as one of the primary tenets of the Critical Race Theory. Under this understanding, we learned that “Simply being empathetic to people’s lived experiences will not change racism” (Week 2 Lecture, Slide 32). While speaking more to the world of colonialism rather than directly racism, Dr. Hokšila makes a very similar assertion in relation to the work of countering settler colonialism. At several points throughout the podcast, Hokšila highlighted what would be essentially the empathetic fallacy in countering colonial ideologies. Here, Hokšila emphasized that merely being empathetic and effectively “feeling sorry” for displaced native groups does nothing to meaningfully challenge the narratives and harm of decades of settler colonialism. Rather, Dr. Hokšila asserts that true change only comes when we tackle the realities of “settler fragility” and directly work to address the “First Harm” of early settler colonialism. This takes meaningful action, self-reflection, and challenging of the accepted narratives, and not merely empathetic cries.

4. Indicate what you thought about the webinar/podcast/resource document. Tell me what you liked, what you think could be improved, and provide some suggestions on how they could have improved it. Your suggestions could be based on the content itself, delivery or presentation. (1 paragraph) (5 points)

It is always an invaluable resource to have insights and reflections on matters of suffered injustice provided in the voice of the people of whose story we are acknowledging. This podcast did this effectively by centering the voice of a native academic of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate nation (Burnt Thigh/Rosebud Sioux), Dr. Wanbli Wapháha Hokšila. This very clearly links back to our idea of standpoint epistemology as it reminds us that the best authority on the history of the people are the people themselves. It tells us that, in order to gain valuable insight on history as it really was for many persons, we need to explore, listen to, and teach historical realities from their standpoint and using their voice. I appreciated this aspect of the podcast very much. The value of this shone through as the podcast episode provided very insightful understandings of defining the “settler”, as well as the felt effects of a history that silenced the voice of the powerless. Notwithstanding these valuable components, I unfortunately did not find the content and presentation of the discussion particularly engaging or content-rich. While questions were asked directly about the value of the tenets of restorative justice in this fight against settler colonialism and its ideologies, I did not find that Dr. Hokšila took the opportunity to meaningfully speak on how the tools of RJ could be useful here. Unfortunately, the insights felt repetitive and not as engaging as I was hoping for from this podcast. Perhaps this could be remedied by having another speaker (perhaps from another gender identity) from within the native community to complement the conversation and share insights from a varied, but similar perspective.

5. Based on what you read about the organization and the resource you reviewed, how does this institute/organization frame the issue of restorative and/or transformative justice? If it

is not explicitly framed, how does this organization and resource you reviewed embody RJ and/or TJ principles? (1 paragraph) (5 points)

Based on what I read about the organization and the resource I reviewed, the California Conference for Equality and Justice (CCEJ) frames the issue of restorative justice as a critical tool in the arsenal of combatting structural oppression and systemic injustice. The CCEJ emphasizes the tools and methods of restorative justice as central to many of their different initiatives. In working with targeted populations through direct referrals from the police department, the district attorney's office, and even the school, the CCEJ sees restorative justice as useful in building united communities and relationships. They employ restorative justice practices in working to resolve conflicts and facilitate meaningful dialogue among harmed and harming parties, especially among youth peer groups. Here, emphasis is on justice that features accountability and an understanding and repairing of the harmful impacts of one's actions. The CCEJ further sees restorative justice as critical to mediating all types of unequal relationships, even using restorative justice principles to navigate unhealthy supervisor/supervisee relationships. The CCEJ's work seems to hint at some kind of transformative work in highlighting the need for "alternative approaches" to systems of discipline in schools, and in the wider criminal justice system at large.

The podcast episode in particular attempted to speak on the value of restorative justice to the wider work of "unsettling" colonial ideologies. Here, the podcast guest spoke briefly on the restorative justice healing circles, and saw restorative justice as key to erasing the harms (and "First Harm") of colonial ideologies.

6. Based on what you read about the organization and the resource you reviewed, did they frame the issues of interpersonal, state violence, harm, etc. in line with the critical criminology approach we've discussed in class (e.g., power over, crimes of the powerful, global elite, etc.)? If yes, how? If not, how do you know? (1 paragraph) (5 points)

Based on what I have read about the organization and the resource I reviewed, the California Conference for Equality and Justice (CCEJ) does somewhat frame the issues of interpersonal, state violence, harm, etc. in line with the critical criminology approach we've discussed in class. Though not done in an explicit way, the organization does appear to frame their work in line with our understandings of such paradigms as "power over" and understandings of the global elite. In relating the mission of their organization, the CCEJ seems to take a critical criminological approach to their work by highlighting the systemic and structural nature of many of the justice challenges they seek to address. They acknowledge dynamics of "bias" and "bigotry" which implicitly embody this "power over" paradigm studied in our class. I also identified their critical criminological framing through the resources they shared in their "[Racial Justice Guide](#)." The fact that they rely on works such "The New Jim Crow" by Michelle Alexander, "Me & White Supremacy" by Layla F. Saad, and "A People's History of the United States" by Howard Zinn show that they do aim to take a critical criminological approach to understanding interpersonal and state violence.

Notwithstanding the above, I must underscore that I found their framing of these realities much more centered in general ideas of inclusivity and respect, rather than a sharp critical approach to these imbalances.

7. Write a professional email as if you were trying to volunteer, get an internship, or get a referral from that organization/agency/institute (1 paragraph) (5 points)

Dear Ms. Kathleah Pagdilao,

I am very impressed with the work of the California Conference for Equality and Justice. I would love to volunteer to work with your team on the “Building Bridges Leadership Academy (BBLA)” training program shared on the organization’s website. My experience serving as a camp counselor at the Kingston YMCA’s youth leadership summer program has inspired a genuine interest in working with these youth communities. The KYMCA’s program has provided previous training in effective youth mentorship and leadership building which lays a strong foundation for working under the mission of your academy. I currently serve as a youth residential coordinator at St. John’s University and would love to join the efforts of your team. I have attached a copy of my resume for your perusal. Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to connecting with you in the near future.

Warm regards,

Bethanie Jones.

8. Reflect on this assignment. Some questions to consider: Did you like learning about what this organization is doing? This assignment is also meant to show you that there are tons of think tanks, institutes, non-profit, activist, and academic organizations that are out there. Does it give you any desire to search for additional organizations for your own career interests? What was the most difficult part of this assignment and why? Do you have any suggestions on how I can improve this assignment in the future? Any other comments? (1 paragraph) (8 points)

One of my foremost reflections on this assignment is that I truly appreciated the structure of this designed assignment. Rather than linearly assessing our knowledge through direct-recall-type questions, this assignment challenged us to explore and process the knowledge-base gained through the course thus far using an integrated applied approach. Having the ability to apply the knowledge of this course to practical work being done in noted justice organizations really helped to underscore for me the value of the tools we are building in this course thus far. I also did truly enjoy looking into the work being done by the California Conference for Equality and Justice (CCEJ). As the weeks went on, I developed almost a sort of personal solidarity with the organization as it became my personal deep-dive project. Even as I am still in the process of exploring my own career interests, the approach to justice and harm prevention of the CCEJ has piqued my interest. As a point of further exploration, I would certainly be interested in perhaps an organization that does this very work serving youth as their primary community of focus as a personal career path.