

## IJIDI: Book Review

Cooke, N.A., & Sweeny, M.E. (Eds.). (2017). *Teaching for justice: Implementing social justice in the LIS classroom*. Sacramento, CA: [Library Juice](#). ISBN 9781634000178. 317 pp. \$35 US.

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When matriculating for the MLIS degree, I learned of the value of libraries and their communities of service. My training and education insisted on the importance of the organization of information, responding to patrons, the value of collections, community engagement, access to information, literacy instruction, privacy, and the digital universe. Often in course discussion, social justice issues were a persistent undercurrent within the historical and contemporary function of the profession I was eager to enter. As an African-American adult student of color, I trained myself to use my experiential lens in my role as a recently returned Peace Corps volunteer with previous experience teaching students of color in an urban setting. My critical consciousness was ever present and my previous graduate study in Education informed my questions and world view. I emerged from Library and Information Science (LIS) education equipped with the latest knowledge, eager to contribute to the organizations and communities I worked with. However, I found that explicit theoretical foundations of social justice, what it means and how it contributes to library practice, was missing. This is not an indictment of my rich LIS educational experience, it is an acknowledgement of a different time. The text under review addresses the needs of the present time to explicitly make social justice education a primary feature of LIS teaching and learning. Nicole Cooke and Miriam Sweeney make the argument that LIS educators should actively engage tensions represented in the social spaces in which professionals operate, becoming central tools in preparation for future generations of librarians and information professionals. This text is the answer to questions on the value of teaching social justice to information professionals, by offering both epistemological and applied examples on how this can be accomplished.

*Teaching for Justice: Implementing Social Justice in the LIS Classroom* is a grassroots project originating from an Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) 2015 pre-conference workshop on social justice teaching in LIS. The editors and contributors offer experiences in a myriad of approaches to embedding social justice in the LIS curriculum. In the introduction to the text, the editors state that “social justice implies action, it challenges us to work towards the betterment, equality, and respect for those we want to include” (p.6). This admonition is foundational to the call for LIS educators to facilitate LIS students’ navigation of, and engagement with, diverse communities. The text holistically shifts librarianship and the training of professionals from awareness and acknowledgement of diverse communities to checking imposition of ideals and embracing engagement through the lens of other populations. It is not just diversity. Social justice becomes the credo for professional training with activity and critical scrutiny that provides reciprocal benefit both to teacher and student.

The text examines teaching for justice in three parts: theoretical frameworks, teaching in the classroom, and teaching outside the classroom. Each area addresses topics using innovative thinking and pedagogical practice beyond templates, encouraging both curiosity and creativity for the reader.

What does teaching for justice look like? Following the tradition of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), the text contributors emulate praxis, the embodiment of theory to practice, in a variety of LIS educational environments. In the first section, *Theoretical Frameworks for Social Justice in LIS Curricula*, contributors theoretically examine the social justice paradigm in LIS teaching and practice, sustainability frameworks, and the journey towards social justice in LIS. Each chapter makes the case for social justice thought and curricula, which is foundational to understanding the need for a critical approach to society and professional activity. This approach to teaching engenders liberation of the self, through understanding power relations, that influence practice in the field. The second section tackles *Teaching Social Justice in the LIS Classroom*. In four chapters, contributors address course development in diversity, youth services, explicit teaching tools for social justice, undergraduate race and justice course development for non-LIS undergraduates, and implementing exercises in an online environment. The chapters provide detailed examples of various engagement experiences with students through theoretical-based course development and exercises. Section three tackles social justice in study abroad activities and leadership training of paraprofessionals in rural communities. The chapters address the challenges of teaching social justice in LIS workspaces and community environments.

The strength of this ground-breaking text is the theoretically rich placement of many pedagogical considerations in teaching in the context of social justice. The book rightly assumes the non- separation of social justice to LIS. The text overtly addresses the current climate wrought with divisionary thought and discourse by challenging systemic injustices in teaching and learning. Although the book purports to offer implementation in the LIS classroom, it delivers so much more. It offers a shifting of the instructive paradigm in LIS beyond inclusion of social justice to a clearly stated argument and justification of the centrality of social justice in disciplinary and professional considerations. Each chapter brilliantly stands alone and is in concert with others. The collective essays provide both personal narrative and practical tools often found in classroom teaching texts. The fusion of theoretically informed pedagogical attention brings a reflexive tone to the book which makes it an enjoyable read. The obvious audience is LIS educators and doctoral students. I believe that it can be used in the MLIS classroom as a transparent text supporting classroom engagement in social justice learning.

The concluding chapter is rightly entitled *A Call to Action*, which demonstrates the collective power of engagement each author addresses throughout the text. In my training as a future LIS educator, I interpret the call as an opening to consider what the text offers in my teaching and professional contributions. I highly recommend this text to educators, practitioners, and students in LIS and beyond.

## Reference

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum.

**LaVerne Gray** ([lgray7@vols.utk.edu](mailto:lgray7@vols.utk.edu)) is a PhD candidate in the College of Communication and Information with a concentration in Information Sciences. Her education includes MLIS at Dominican University, MS Ed in Educational Psychology (Northern Illinois University), and a BA in Rehabilitation/Child Development at (Wilberforce University). Before beginning doctoral studies, she was a librarian for eight years at several academic institutions. Her research focuses on black feminist activism in information environments, cultural studies, social justice, and critical pedagogy. She was inspired to become a librarian from her Peace Corps Service in West Africa.