

SUMMARY: VIKKI REYNOLDS DISSERTATION FOR TILBURG TAOS DOING JUSTICE AS A PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY IN COMMUNITY WORK

I believe that it is possible to stay alive and useful in community work that takes place in contexts of social injustices. Sustaining ourselves in this difficult and sometimes spiritually painful work becomes more possible when we are able to work in accord with our ethics, embrace a spirit of solidarity, and see our collective work as *doing justice*.

In the frame of this writing, I describe the paths that have led me to this work from social justice activism. The clients I have worked alongside have impacted my work, particularly survivors of torture and political violence, and people of the downtown Eastside of Vancouver who are subjected to social injustices and extreme marginalization. I am the supervisor for counsellors, community workers, and practitioners who work in these contexts of social injustice, and it is my task to shoulder them up to be useful for the long haul.

In Part I, I outline my ethical stance for *doing justice*. This stance is comprised of six Guiding Intentions. Centering Ethics helps us put our shared ethics at the center by taking positions against neutrality and for justice. Doing Solidarity means that we see all of our work towards justice as inter-connected and that we act collectively. Naming Power requires identifying injustices and taking positions that address abuses of power. It includes witnessing peoples' resistance to oppression, addressing privilege, and creating practices of accountability. Fostering Collective Sustainability acknowledges that we are meant to do this work together. We resist individualism, and invite collective social responsibility for a *just* society without putting the burden of an unjust society on the backs of individual workers. Critically Engaging with Language acknowledges the power of language, and commitments to using language in liberatory ways. It welcomes the language that occurs outside of words. Structuring Safety creates practices that invite safety into our work, informs us to act as allies where we are privileged, and to honour collaboration.

In Part II, I outline the Solidarity Group practice that I created in response to both the contexts of injustice I worked in, and my longstanding commitment to this ethical stance for *doing justice*. The Solidarity Group promotes collective sustainability by nourishing workers connections with an ethic of doing justice in their work and their lives. It brings forward a spirit of social justice, and invites us to act in solidarity with the aim of creating an experience of community while contesting isolation and individualism. The center of the Solidarity Group is collective. I invite participants into group work that holds the entire group at the center as the resource. The supervisor is not the resource. The dialogue is organized around experiences which may include acts of justice, ethical struggles, startling successes, or painful losses. This is a different emphasis because we do not organize around "cases" or problems of individual workers. Solidarity Groups are inspired by Collaborative and Narrative therapies and are influenced by the innovative history of Reflecting Teams.

In bridging activism and community work my hope is that the ethical stance of *doing justice* can make a contribution to our collective sustainability. As with clients, we do not want to be merely survivors of this