



# CSJ Activist

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## From the President's Pen: The Countdown

**Edil Torres Rivera, CSJ President**

Wow, I cannot believe that as I start to write this short message it is already January and countdown to the ACA convention has already began. I am in a slow beginning mode, as everything seems to move very fast. We are having an excellent day of action at the upcoming ACA conference. We are also looking at creating accommodations in our bylaws to recognize state chapters and to provide continuity in the leadership role as well.

I am very excited to report that we are part of the upcoming "Giving Back to the Community Project" which the National Institute for Multicultural Competence (<http://www.coedu.usf.edu/zalaquett/nimc/nimc.html>) have launched as part of the activities at the ACA convention in Detroit this March. This is a very exciting project in which action is part of what we are doing. In a related subject, the first issue of the social justice journal will be available in August with issues that are tied to action as well. Again moving beyond theory and into solutions and real life practice.

Finally, I will like to recognize everyone in the executive committee of CSJ this year as we are working as a team and we are doing everything to represent a true spirit of cooperation.

## Weaving a Thread of Hope

**A. Michael Hutchins, Ph.D.**

In 2005, hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated regions on the Gulf Coast of the United States. In September, 2006, I was honored to be invited to facilitate a workshop sponsored by the Chi Sigma Iota chapter at the University of New Orleans. The workshop was for counselors and other mental health professionals who live and work in that devastated region. The theme of the workshop was "Weaving a thread of hope in a fabric of loss".

began to be more evident. In some of the wealthier neighborhoods, blue tarps still covered some of the roofs. I learned that many of these roofs had survived Katrina only to be blown off when Rita went through before repairs could be made. I had yet to experience what had happened in the poorer neighborhoods.

*(Continued on page 3)*

# New Orleans Outreach Project Report

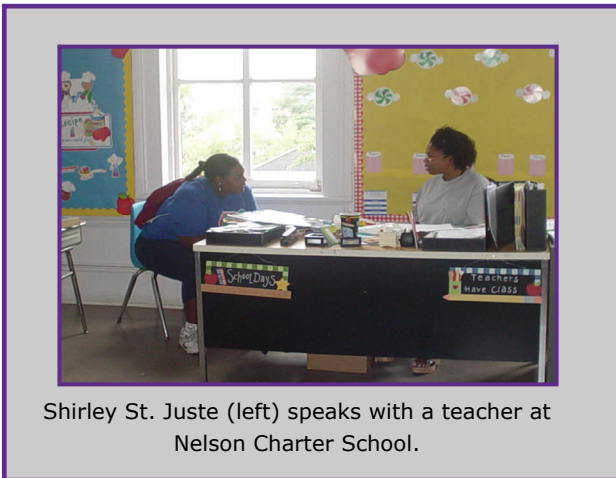
Cirecie A. West-Olatunji, Ph. D.  
Rachael D. Goodman, M. Ed., Ed. S.  
Sejal Mehta  
Christine Peters  
Jennifer Pritchett  
Shirley St Juste  
Laura Shannonhouse  
Kathryn Williams



The New Orleans Outreach Project was organized as one of several piloted trips to the Post-Katrina Gulf Coast region under the auspices of the Association for Multicultural Counseling & Development (AMCD). The goal of the project was to assist in the development of a model for culture-centered disaster mental health relief outreach. Other outreach endeavors included a trip conducted earlier this year in March by members of the partner group from Antioch University New England. The current trip was sponsored by the UF Department of Counselor Education, the UF Center for Leadership and Service, the Association for Multicultural Counseling & Development (AMCD), Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ), and the Beta Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota.

## New Orleans Outreach Project Mission

The primary objectives of the New Orleans Outreach Project were: (a) to provide culture-centered disaster mental health counseling; (b) to pilot a unified culture-centered disaster response service delivery project for interdisciplinary teams at national and international levels; (c) to provide community-centered services through local contacts; (d) to establish a prolonged engagement whereby services contact is maintained over time; (e) to conduct research that informs disaster relief practices.



Shirley St. Juste (left) speaks with a teacher at Nelson Charter School.

## New Orleans Outreach Project Team

The team consisted of members from the University of Florida, Antioch University New England, and the University of New Orleans. University of Florida members were Faculty Member Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji, Graduate Research Assistant Rachael Goodman, Sejal Mehta, Christine Peters, Jennifer Pritchett, Shirley St. Juste, Laura Shannonhouse, and Kathryn Williams. All of the University of Florida members were in the Department of Counselor Education with the exception of Christine Peters who is in the School Psychology program within the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Florida.

The Antioch University New England members were Faculty Member Dr. Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky, Vanessa Partridge, and Wendy Vincent. The University of New Orleans member was Faculty Member Dr. Zarus Watson (faculty in residence at Nelson Charter School).

## New Orleans Outreach Project Primary Activities

The primary activities engaged in by the participants in the outreach were: (a) learning about New Orleans & disaster impact, (b) providing follow-up counseling and consulting services for employees at the

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I arrived in time for dinner. I was excited to see Diana and to hear her stories. We ate quietly. I had no comprehension of the loss. Diana and Jim spoke in terms of having evacuated their home, anticipating that they would be gone a few days. As it turned out, they would be gone much longer. Their home received some physical damage— little damage compared to others in their neighborhood and other parts of the city. However, the social, spiritual and psychological loss was much greater. They spoke of losses at the university and of the sadness and anger as communities were torn apart. They were adjusting to the knowledge that their electricity was beginning to be more consistently on and that water pressure was returning to pre-hurricane levels. They spoke of traffic lights now returning. Trash pickup continued to be erratic, but it was happening. Still, I struggled to integrate what this might mean. I had some intellectual understanding. I had yet to touch the experience.

The next day, I drove with Diana and Jim to Café Du Monde for coffee and beignets. I was used to encountering heavy crowds and the sounds of jazz seductively enticing tourists into the French Quarter. We found a parking space easily. There were no crowds at the Café and one solo sax player entertained the sparse group of early morning diners. I felt pain in the pit of my stomach as I purchased one of the CDs the solo artist offered. No seduction here.

We then drove to the University of New Orleans. Streets that were once lined with lush vegetation and thriving neighborhoods were empty. On side streets, shells of homes stood eerily vacant. As we drove by one home in a middle class neighborhood, I looked in an open door and saw

the photos of two young children hammered to the wooden frame that once divided rooms in a comfortable home. The markings of the emergency workers were scrawled along the face of the home... identifying that no bodies were left inside. We drove past a street address where a friend once lived. The home had been torn down just days before I arrived. The friend was struggling to find work, since his job at Loyola University was eliminated as the university restructured and eliminated departments.

The University of New Orleans stands in a wasteland of debris. The once-enchancing neighborhood surrounding the university is covered in loss. Not only are buildings still in indescribable disrepair, there is also a scent of destruction. I was struck by how much the neighborhood

looked and smelled like a war zone. Occasionally, a FEMA trailer stood before a home... perhaps, inviting some hope. I was later to learn that "FEMA" was a new 4-letter word for citizens of New Orleans. I also learned that for many, the FEMA vil-



lages were emblematic of assistance gone awry, or never having shown up in the first place. Buildings on campus seemed lonely and desolate. This is where I was to do my workshop on the next day. I was beginning to feel the impact of the devastation. I found no words to describe my response.


Jim drove me through areas of the community which were most directly affected. These neighborhoods were mostly the vacant homes of the poor and African American community. There was no question about the devastating affect of the storms and the aftermath. Where the winds from the hurricane had spared some neighbor-

(Continued on page 6)

## "Black in the Eyes of White" Introduction

Missie Milligan

Upon entering the Missouri State University Counseling Program, I felt I was already conducting myself at an advanced level of multicultural development. I unconsciously resisted the need to expand my knowledge of racism in the world. Because I have been a foster parent for over three years, I have seen for myself the inequities in our society that are self-perpetuating. But to my surprise, until taking multicultural counseling, I never fully understood my role in advocating social justice. Allan G. Johnson's (2006) *Privilege, Power, and the Difference* was my first taste of the knowledge that oppression runs our society. I began to examine that as a white person in the United States, I have an unfair and unseen advantage over people of other races and in other cultures. The predominant representation of whites in entertainment, advertising, and books of Western society repeatedly categorize Caucasians as "human beings" and subliminally identifies people of color as "something else," something outside of "the norm." I started to resent the way many whites think that "they" should be more like "us." As our class proceeded, we participated in activities and read journal articles that were intended to improve our interdependence skills, cultural competence and our overall sense of social responsibility. I began to recognize the injuries involved with the benefits of my whiteness. This course has helped me to move toward the integrative awareness phase of racial identity development.

Because these topics so intrigued me, I would share nearly everything I learned with my children and husband. I deeply involved my entire family in many of my assignments and began integrating what I gathered from the class into my individual reality. I found that social injustice is incorporated into every aspect of our culture, and then 



## Introduction to "Black in the Eyes of White"

Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White

Multicultural competence is an ethical mandate and as D'Andrea and Daniels (2006) recently wrote in the January Dignity, Development and Diversity column of *Counseling Today*, social justice is "the deep structure of multicultural counseling" (p. 44). Hence, as a Counselor Educator, I aim to infuse social justice issues into every class I teach. Two methods that have helped are service learning and learner-centered expressive arts. Students often explore how privilege has destructive and exterminating effects not just upon cultural and bio diversity, but also white identity development. Service learning encourages students to learn in cooperation with a community or school partner through reflection, advocacy, and social change initiatives. The arts help us freely and non-defensively access oppressive, liberating, and interdependent aspects of our identity. To me some of the most beneficial aspects of social justice education are how it allows white persons to open themselves up to see what is lost and disconnected in their lives. Identity development without social justice and interdependence is usually shallow and provincial. I am proud to introduce the artistic, interdependent identity work of a student and her foster son that developed in the context of an integrated learner-centered service learning multicultural counseling class.

*Jeffrey H. D. Cornelius-White, Psy.D., LPC is an Assistant Professor at Missouri State University.*

**Enjoy *Black in the Eyes of White***

**on the next page**

I explained to my family that injustice must be noticed by the privileged if it is to be rectified. My 15-year-old foster son, Terry, who has been part of our family for over two years, seemed greatly affected by what our family had learned and, as a result, he helped me produce the following expressive piece.

## Black in the Eyes of the White

By Missie Milligan and foster son Terry Drake

Black is considered the opposite of white

Black is “bad”... while white is “good”

See a black cloud.... A storm is looming

Colors of the rainbow do not include black

Artists use black when creating gloomy images

Black, the color of night...perceived the evil shade

Evil always lurks in the black shadows

Bible metaphors...“blackest darkness” as hell Jude 1:13

Christians use black to portray the color of sin

The bad sheep are always the “black sheep”

Black is used to terrify you in horror movies

Black Magic...knowledge of evil rituals and spells

Halloween...witches in black, vampires, black cats

Being “b lack balled”...you are cut off from a lot

No one wants a “black mark” on their record

What do you wear to a funeral?...Black

Death is represented by the black grim reaper

White is considered the compliment of black

White is “right” and black is “wrong”

Images in heaven include white fluffy clouds

Mix all colors of light and the result is white

Artists use white when creating pleasing images

White, the color of daytime...exposes the truth

Wicked spirits are scared away by white light

Go into the light...this light of eternity is white

Forgiveness washes your sins as “white as snow”

The white sheep are counted to fall asleep

White is the color of the “good” knight’s horse

White Magic...knowledge of various love spells

White Christmas... angels in white top the trees

Our nation’s capital is named “The White House”

Everyone wants a clean, white slate to start from

What does a virgin wear to get married?...White

The Holy Spirit is represented by a white dove

Many say they aren’t prejudice...

Most say they don’t discriminate...

Nearly all are unaware of their bias.

But the inequity is everywhere; it’s in our cultures and even our speech.

Society can only change this injustice if our human\_nature is suppressed.

But reprogramming human behavior... you’d think that would take an act of God!

Now that I’m more aware...I’m up for the challenge of shifting the way I think ...are you?

(Note: Please see associated articles on page 4)

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hoods, the breaking of the levees had allowed rushing waters to flood and overpower the neighborhoods. Many of the residents did not have the resources to evacuate. Markings on the buildings here indicated that bodies were found inside. On some buildings, the waterlines were still evident. I wondered if family members would ever return to see what had come of the remnants of their lives. Some did not have the resources to return even if they wanted to. Others did not have the resources to leave. Some of the construction work going on was deceptive. One could be led to believe that neighborhoods might someday soon be returning. That does not seem likely. I also was troubled by the ineffective hu-



man and social structures and resources. I hurt as we drove.

We stopped for lunch at a neighborhood restaurant. I was struck by the sense of community and resilience. Folks in the restaurant seemed committed to rebuilding the community. Just a few days before the Superdome had reopened and the Saints had won their first game. There was room for hope. Later in the afternoon, we stopped at a small local store and I bought a flag which reads "Louisiana: Recover, Rebuild, Rebirth".

On Friday evening, I met with counseling students from the University of New Orleans. They are a wonderfully creative and committed group.

They represent the next generation of counselors and counselor educators. They shared stories of loss and pain, of hope and passion, and of endurance and resilience. I was deeply moved.

On Saturday morning, we stopped at a newly-reopened coffee shop on the way to the workshop. I take the availability of freshly roasted coffee for granted. My colleagues have learned to not take such things for granted. This was a celebration of community.

Coffee was brewing as I prepared to meet the participants in the workshop. I'm a group worker. So, the first task was to restructure the room for small group activities. We began with folks telling stories about what we had each done today to create hope. From there, working with stories and drawings we built a community... referring to these groups as "communities of hope". In the afternoon session, participants shared their stories with each other and spoke about "next steps". We explored the effects of personal and community trauma. Folks shared stories of loss and exhaustion. Tears were evident as group members spoke of personal loss and the difficulty of helping others when their own wells of resilience were so low. There was laughter amidst the tears. Folks struggled with not laying blame on systems that do not work and expressed guarded optimism that, perhaps, a new way of working together could come forth. Some folks spoke of generations of discrimination and oppression, and its impact on the social fabric of the community... and of those in the room. No one spoke of "resilience" and many of those present provided evidence of incredible resilience. There were significant differences in the ways that folks experienced the ongoing trauma. Many shared their stories and reported finding some thread of hope as a result of the discussions.

One participant touched me deeply. She came to me at the afternoon break and requested to leave the workshop a few minutes early. She reported that she needed to go to a funeral and that she was the only family member left who could attend.

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Monteleone Hotel, (c) donating school supplies to Nelson Charter School teachers and students, (d) providing services at Nelson Charter School, such as establishing rapport, building relationships for prolonged engagement, and providing counseling/consulting services for school personnel and parents, (e) participating in professional development related to disaster relief at APA Conference, (f) enhancing cultural competencies in disaster mental health counseling endeavors, and (g) contributing to the knowledge base regarding culture-centered disaster mental health response.



The outreach team at the Charter School. From left: Shirley St Juste, Christine Peters, Jennifer Pritchett, Sejal Mehta, Kathryn Williams, Rachel Goodman, Laura Shannonhouse, Cirecie West-Olatunji

### **The Research Study**

Research was a primary objective of the outreach endeavor. The researchers sought to deepen their understanding of how counselor-trainees can enhance their culturally competencies to more effectively provide mental health counseling relief efforts. Participants' application essays as well as daily journal entries during the outreach endeavor were analyzed for relevant themes. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be used to inform future outreach projects and enhance students' personal and professional lives while engaged in real world experiences.

### **Preparatory Activities**

Before participating in this outreach project, applicants were required to complete a comprehensive screening process. After their selection, the participants attended a four-hour orientation to better prepare them for the project and the setting. Participants also helped to coordinate a school supply drive within their department and community to deliver school resources to schoolchildren and teachers at Nelson Charter School.

### **Nelson Charter School**

Nelson is a pre-kindergarten through 8th-grade charter school under the auspices of the University of New Orleans. The population is predominantly African American. In February 2006, Nelson reopened in temporary location after being damaged by flooding post-Katrina. The school plans to return to its original location in October 2006. Until that time, the school will function at this temporary site.

### **Daily Schedule: August 6-13 2006**

The daily schedule of the UF participants on the eight-day trip is as follows:

Sunday, August 6

The group from the University of Florida departed from Gainesville, FL at 9:00am Sunday morning. The group arrived at the Center of Jesus the Lord in New Orleans (a retreat facility) at 6:00pm. The entire

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Don't miss the...

## **CSJ Day of Action**

at the AEA conference in Detroit this March



### **BUILDING UNITY AND VISIONING: LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN ADVOCACY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE**

**Friday, March 23, 7:45 am – 8:45 am  
60-Minute Program, COBO Center,  
Room 35/36**

**Edil Torres-Rivera, Hugh C. Crethar, Sandra Lopez-  
Baez, Vivian McCollum, Rebecca Toporek**

## **Social Justice Online**

- Echoing Green  
<http://www.echoinggreen.org/index.cfm>
- Psychologists for Social Responsibility  
<http://www.psyr.org/>
- Just Choices  
<http://www.justchoices.com/index.html>

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team met over dinner and afterwards received an orientation in which plans were reviewed for the week.

Monday, August 7

Some team members provided follow-up services at the Monteleone Hotel where the Antioch team had worked in March. These members were Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji, Dr. Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky, Vanessa Partridge, and Wendy Vincent. Dr. Zarus Watson introduced the other University of Florida members to the stakeholders at Nelson Charter School where they would be providing services for the rest of the week. Stakeholders included the school counselor who would be the team's point person, as well as the school principal, the principal's supervisor, and the assistant principal. The stakeholders gave the team an orientation including the school's history, strategies for post-Katrina operation, and current conditions. The team delivered school supply donations from the University of Florida and Gainesville community.

An orientation to the city of New Orleans for the UF team members was provided. The orientation entailed information and observation of the effects of Hurricane Katrina, including the levee breaches, and understanding of the socio-cultural history of the city.

Tuesday, August 8

Upon arrival at Nelson Charter School, the team was invited to attend a portion of the pre-service professional development training given by the dean of the UNO College of Education. The team then spoke with teachers and staff who were preparing their classrooms for the start of the school year. Team members initiated the rapport building phase by facilitating discussions regarding personal and professional post-Katrina conditions.

In the evening the team attended Nelson's parent orientation meeting. Team members provided resources for parents and teachers outlining children's responses to trauma and recommendations for teachers and parents. The team members lis-

tened as teachers and parents talked about concerns related to post-traumatic responses among children during the upcoming school year. They facilitated discussions about possible interventions and resources within the school and community.



Dr. West-Olatunji and Dr. Watson of the University of New Orleans talk with parents.

Dr. West-Olatunji briefly spoke with the parents (approximately 150-200 parents in attendance) to introduce the students and provide information on the outreach efforts.

Wednesday, August 9

The team returned to Nelson to build upon the rapport established during the previous two days. Team members were able to assist personnel with setting up classrooms as well as contacting parents. Discussions about the effect of the disaster followed from these interactions. Participants facilitated conversations in which school personnel could continue in the process of sharing narratives as an important piece of post-trauma recovery.

Thursday, August 10

The team again provided services at Nelson while continuing to assist personnel in pre-service activities. Interactions continued to focus on the personal narratives as well as use of the community's resources. Team members reinforced resilient coping behaviors and facilitated the ongoing use of local and national resources.

Friday, August 11

The team terminated their work with Nelson school, reiterating the promise of sustained contact. Also noted in the termination process were the team members' observations of the evident strengths of the school community and central ele-

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ments in the school's continued recovery and growth. The team also attended a panel presentation at the annual conference of the American Psychological Association (APA) chaired by Dr. Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky that included presentations by Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji and Wendy Vincent on culture-centered disaster mental health response. The team was subsequently invited to attend a meeting in the hospitality suite of APA's Division 52 (International Psychology) where they discussed opportunities and training for student to engage in outreach.

Saturday, August 12

This day was a free day for sight-seeing and shopping. In the evening, the entire team met for a communal dinner and closure.

Sunday, August 13

In the morning the team attended the APA Division 17 (The Society of Counseling Psy-

***“... participants worked within the community, allowing the community members to inform and guide our practice. “***

chology) meeting to discuss collaborative efforts with AMCD to advance culture-centered disaster response. Then the team loaded up their van and

***“ ... Students will read their poetry and Dr. West-Olatunji will provide information to parents and teachers on children's reactions to disasters and what they can do to intervene.”***

returned home.

### **Outcomes**

The New Orleans Outreach Project team provided culture-centered disaster mental health services to the Nelson personnel. These services were culture-centered in that participants worked within the community, allowing the community members to inform and guide our practice. This included engaging with Nelson personnel during their pre-service activities in order to develop rapport and learn about the needs of the personnel. Culture-centered services also involved the participants understanding the culture of the personnel so that participants can attend to their specific needs and concerns.

We established a partnership between our team and the Nelson Charter School with plans for prolonged engagement between the team and the school whereby we can continue to assist in their psycho-emotional

recovery. The partnership will be continued through a variety of activities coordinated by the outreach team. One of these is the partnership's successful linking of the school's English teacher, Sunday Angleton, with media resources to enable her students to share their writings about surviving Hurricane Katrina. We connected Sunday to Mr. John Fox, a poetry therapist and Dr. John Cech, UF English professor and founder of the National Public Radio (NPR) broadcast, Recess!, a radio program serving the needs of children. Mr. Fox plans to post the

***The model incorporated cultural competency, vicarious traumatization issues, and advocacy.***

middle grade students' poetry on a website. Dr. Cech is working with Ms. Angleton to develop and air a series of Recess! programs during the month of December in which students will read their poetry and Dr. West-Olatunji will provide information to parents and teachers on children's reactions to disasters and what they can do to intervene. Additionally, students at UF are working on a possible return trip to New Orleans as another Florida Alternative Break. Finally, there is continued research collaboration between Dr. West-

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I asked her what led her to be at the workshop, and to stay, if this event was part of what was happening in her life. She reported that she knew that she had to come to the workshop to listen to stories and to tell her own. She shared with me that the workshop was part of her ongoing healing process. Also, she reported, being in the workshop helped her to be at the funeral. There were many stories like this as counselors shared their pain, anger, fear, and hope. They were able to weave threads of hope in the on-



*As helping professionals, we in the counseling field must work  
to ensure that New Orleans is not forgotten.*

going trauma of loss.

A theme that was voiced by many is the theme that led me to write down these thoughts. I was asked to "not let people forget New Orleans". It has been over a year and the trauma continues. There are many stories to tell. Many of the resources have not been utilized. Many others are not present. As helping professionals, we in the counseling field must work to ensure that New Orleans is not forgotten.

The University of New Orleans is working within the community to develop and provide counseling services for many of the residents. Traditional services are not sufficient. Collaborative efforts are being developed with those community centers which are operable, under-funded and understaffed charter schools, local churches, and institutions of higher education. Our community needs our assistance. Let us take action to ensure that New Orleans is not forgotten... Let us weave a thread of hope in a fabric of loss.

One way that we can be helpful is to support the ACA Foundation and the Counselors Care Fund. If we can financially support the Counselors Care Fund, the ACAF can support collaborative ongoing efforts by New Orleans counselors to give back to our community.

In hope,

Michael

*A. Michael Hutchins, Ph.D. is a licensed professional counselor in private practice in Tucson, AZ. He is a past president of the Association for Specialists in Group Work and a past president of Counselors for Social Justice.*

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Olatunji and Dr. Watson, faculty-in-residence at Nelson.


During the outreach, we worked toward the further development of a culture-centered disaster outreach model. This second piloted project allowed for continued understanding of how students can be involved in disaster relief and how to provide culturally appropriate services post-disaster. The model incorporated cultural competency, vicarious traumatization issues, and advocacy. We emphasized professional development of graduate students through the advancement of culturally competent disaster mental health counseling skills through leadership, critical consciousness and research-practitioner skill enhancement. We established faculty-to-student and student-to-student professional networking for continued scholarship through community building experiences, mentoring activities, and the exemplification of a research culture. We also shared knowledge within the Gainesville community regarding civic engagement of UF College of Education students through a Gainesville Sun article published while we were in New Orleans.

### Challenges

We encountered various challenges during our process. There was a struggle in identifying

screening and management protocols for participant screening, training, and orientation. On this trip, there were participants with different levels of clinical training and experience among the participants. This created variance in participant expectations, counseling abilities, and supervision needs. There was a need to create protocols to reduce the effects of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and eventual burnout, all common experiences during disaster relief efforts. Also, funding and resources need to be obtained to limit the financial burden of trip participants. Some students also had added stress in negotiating the logistics relating to departmental and clinical internship site approval for student absences.

### Next Steps

Following this trip, data will be analyzed to further investigate and disseminate the experience of counseling students' participation in culture-centered disaster relief mental health counseling. It is anticipated that dissemination will be through manuscript submissions, presentations within courses, departmental meetings, at clinical sites, local/regional/national conferences, and web sites. There are also plans for conducting an international pilot project to Namibia in Summer 2007 through AMCD. 

## CSJ Elected Leadership

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## CSJ ACTIVIST

The newsletter of Counselors  
for Social Justice

A Division of the American  
Counseling Association

