



Liberatory Leadership & Praxis in Action:

Delivering Anti-Racist Service
Delivery & Policy Advocacy

Erika Chambers, LMSW
Krystal Folk-Nagua, DSW



Agenda

01

Intro to Liberatory Praxis

What it is & why it is important

02

Liberatory Leadership

Implementing Liberatory Praxis
at the workplace

03

Liberatory Service Delivery & Political Advocacy

Putting liberatory praxis into
programming and advocacy

04

Wrap Up

Summary & Q&A



Introduction



Erika Chambers, LMSW



Krystal Folk-Nagua, DSW



01

Intro to Liberatory Praxis

What it is & why it is
important



Brief History of the US

- The conquering and colonization of the land known as the United States
- The Transatlantic Slave Trade
- The 13th Amendment
- Jim Crow Laws
- Civil Right Movement
- “Law and Order” Policies, “Super Predator”, 1994 Crime Bill
- Police Brutality and the policing of BIPOC people



Why this Matters?

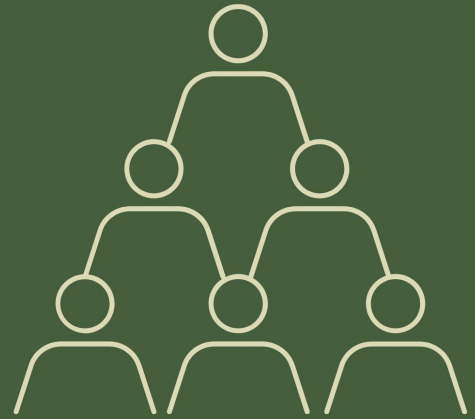
White Supremacy & White Dominance

The ideas that white people are inherently superior to people of other races and ethnicities

Oppression

When people reduce the potential for other people to be fully human by treating them in a dehumanizing manner & denying people of opportunities

••
Power is
Always
Present





Ethical, anti-racist practice means
acknowledging, naming, &
redistributing power to promote
equity, trust, & collaboration

Anti-Racist Social Work

Model

- Rooted in power analysis, equity, & client liberation
- Focused on dismantling structural inequalities rather than “treating symptoms”
- Grounded in reflexivity, cultural humility, & accountability
- Centers clients self-determination, dignity, & resistance
- Examines how power, privilege, & oppression shape clients lives

Core Tenants

- Making power visible in practice
- Challenging institutional & systemic harms
- Centering marginalized voices, histories, & knowledge
- Reframing clients’ experiences through strengths, resilience, & context

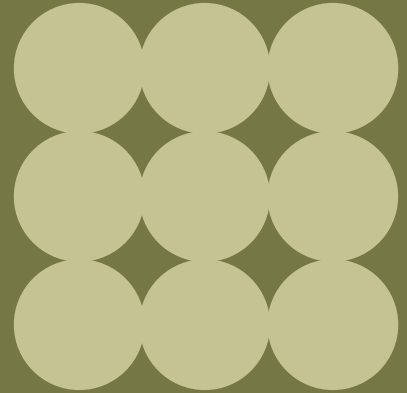


Liberation Theory

Aims to transform the social,
political, & institutional conditions
that create oppression by
focusing on raising critical
consciousness & fostering social
change through action

Key Principles

- Centers client power, agency, & self-determination
- Explicitly names & analyze systems of oppression
- Support client & community resistance and collective action
- Integrate political education into clinical work
- Approaches healing as personal & systemic





Liberation is achieved when
social workers address the
structural roots of suffering



Elements of Liberation Practice

Critical Consciousness (Freire)

- Developing awareness of structural oppression
- Naming power dynamics in real time

Structural Intervention

- Challenging unjust policies
- Advocating in agencies & institutions

Client & Community Engagement

- Supporting collective action
- Validating community-led strategies

Healing as Political

- Understanding that trauma is tied to structural violence
 - Framing healing as part of liberation & resistance
- 

Liberatory Praxis

Liberatory → freedom from domination, oppression, and systems of exploitation for all people

Praxis → Theory + Action + Reflection

Liberatory Praxis: The cycle of reflection & action aimed at dismantling oppression & creating collective liberation

Collective liberation:

- Shared struggle through conspiratorship
- Grounded in critical consciousness & solidarity
- Requires humility, courage, & long-term commitment

Healing Justice

Model

- A political framework that seeks to address and transform collective & generational trauma from systemic oppression to build collective power & healing towards liberation
- Conceived by Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective in 2006 and informed by ancestral traditions of healing and community care.
- A framework to inform the ways in which we approach movement work

Elements

- Centers survivors, healing, & human dignity
- Creates capacity for relational accountability
- Creates infrastructure to support collective care outside of carceral & surveillance systems
- Empowers practitioners to analyze and challenge their positionality within systems of oppression.



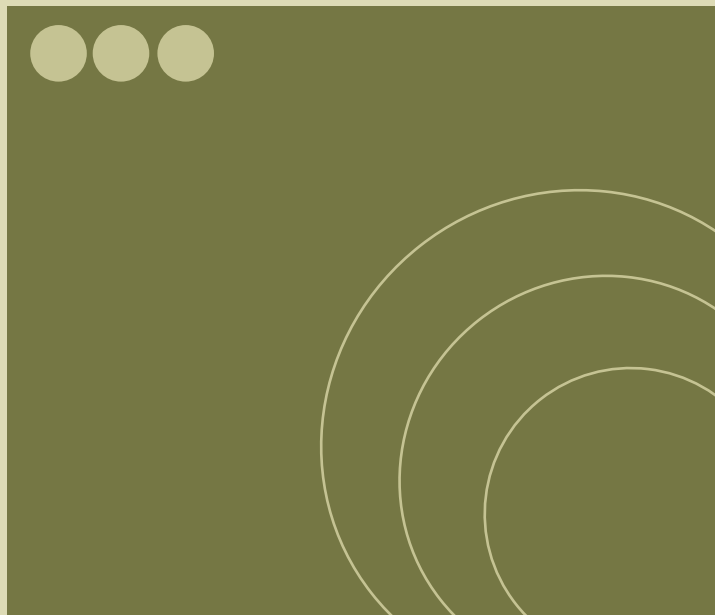
02

Liberatory Leadership

Implementing Liberatory
Praxis at the workplace

Leadership is a Verb

- Anyone can exercise leadership, not only people in positions of power & authority.
- Within your role,
 - What are the decisions that you make daily, weekly, monthly?
 - What are the impacts of your actions?
 - In what ways can you organize to build community, advocate, & affect change with colleagues, service-recipients, and stakeholders?





Liberatory Leadership

Core Leadership Skills

- Make ethical decisions under constraint
- Communicate across disciplines & power differences
- Analyze systems & anticipate unintended harm
- Influence decisions without positional authority
- Advocate strategically for equitable outcomes
- Build & sustain interdisciplinary relationships

Ethical Leadership as Practice

- Rooted in professional values & social justice
- Leadership without justice often reinforces harm
- Justice-centered leadership means:
 - Aligning daily actions with stated values
 - Moving beyond statements to structural change
 - Using influence intentionally

Redistributing Power

Mapping Power Structures

- Power over: power structure in which there is a power imbalance & it is utilized
- Power with: power structure in which there is shared power
- Power within: power structure in which there is full self-agency

Mapping Power Dynamics

- Hierarchical structures
- Leadership vs. authority
- Decision-making structures
- Cultures of feedback
- Cultures of consent

Redistributing Power

Mapping Identity & Power

Race	Sexual Orientation	Ability
Ethnicity	Socio-Economic Status	Immigration Status
Complexion/Color	Mandated Status	Nationality
Sex	Education Level	Religion/Spirituality
Gender	Mental Health	Political Identity
Age	Professional Position/ Seniority	

Organizational Policy & Infrastructure Audit

- Which policies & protocols align with the mission, vision & values of your organization or practice?
 - Which might need stronger alignment?
- What structures exist that support the mission, vision & values of your organization or practice?
 - Which might need stronger alignment?
- Who has decision making rights (from infrastructure & policy to daily implementation)?

Is it
rooted in
safety or
control

?



03

Liberatory Service Delivery & Political Advocacy

Putting liberatory praxis into
programming and advocacy

Shifting Power Across Models

<u>Model</u>	<u>What it is?</u>	<u>How Power Shifts?</u>
Participatory Budgeting	Community members directly decide how funds are allocated	Decision-making authority moves from executive/ funders to the impacted communities
Participatory Action Research	Community members act as researchers defining problems, collecting data, & shaping policy recommendations	Knowledge production moves from institutions to those most impacted
Healing Justice Infrastructure	Community-led systems of care that operate outside carceral or punitive structures	Community define safety, healing, and accountability on their own terms rather than “typical” or carceral systems
Co-creation of Services	Community members are embedded as co-designers, co-facilitators, & decision-makers in programs, policies, and advocacy strategies.	Staff shift from directors to collaborators and co-conspirators



Putting Liberatory Practice To Work

Case Example

Organizational Policy & Infrastructure that Supports Liberatory Practices:

- Power mapping and power distribution
 - Regular internal analysis of power dynamics & structures, how we show up in spaces & how we can uplift the voices of young people
 - Co-facilitated team meetings with staff input and collective decision-making
- Healing justice & holistic wellness while doing the work
 - Always check in and allow time to be human (human-centered approach)
 - Capacity checks, analysis of urgency culture & infrastructure to prevent burnout



Putting Liberatory Praxis To Work

Case Example

Collective Liberation → Staff work collaboratively with youth while centering & protecting youth input & wellness

Youth-Centered

Youth guide the work and are seen as the experts



Staff follow youth guidance to shape work plan objectives

Activism (policy work)

Intergenerational moments with staff and youth



Use art and activism to advance our policy demands

Policy Demands

Youth create their policy demands



Staff work with them to advocate for the demands



This impacts both program and policy spaces

Program Design Strategies

Youth provide feedback on every factor of the program implementation process, including events & advocacy work



Programs & events are designed using this feedback



Youth become co-facilitators and co-organizers & lead implementation



Liberatory Leadership Action Plan

- What areas of your work/role can you exercise liberatory leadership?
- Redistributing Power & Infrastructure Shift
 - Questions to consider:
 - Whose voices are being prioritized in decision-making?
 - Which outcomes are being prioritized?
 - How is success defined and measured?
 - Who is this working for?
 - Who is missing from this decision?
 - What harm might this cause?
 - What are small changes that would result in more power sharing?
 - What are larger changes that would result in more power sharing?





This work is not easy!

Challenges that you might confront:

- Structural change takes time: Changes don't happen overnight!
 - Creating buy-in and foundational knowledge
 - Working with other colleagues and teams like HR to find places of existing alignment and where there might need to be further alignment
 - Who has decision making rights?
 - Who do you already have in your corner (your supports)?
 - Who needs a little more information/alignment in order to get on board?
 - Willingness of decision makers to enact change and support liberatory praxis
 - Legal/structural constraints
- 

Thanks!

Any questions?

Erika: erika.e.chambers@gmail.com

Krystal: kfolksocialwork@gmail.com

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by **Slidesgo**, and includes icons by **Flaticon**, and infographics & images by **Freepik** and **Canva**

