

Urban Social Justice Focus Groups  
Report of Results

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Desired outcomes:

1. To arrive at an accurate definition of social justice.
2. To identify the pressing justice concerns of urban youth workers today.
3. To identify best practices already being implemented by urban youth workers.
4. To gather a list of advocates and practitioners who can be invited into the ongoing national conversation.
5. To identify the types of resources that would be most helpful locally.

Notes:

1. The answers listed in **bold** are those that emerged in multiple cities.
2. In preparing this report, Kara Powell tried to use the language of focus group respondents as much as possible.
3. When geography seems important, it is noted. Cities involved were Fresno, New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Bay Area, Pittsburgh, Memphis, and Philadelphia.

Focus Group Questions:

1. How would you define social justice? NOTE: don't expect to get a consensus on an answer for this question, but try to see if there are common themes that emerge.

<b>Righting wrongs – particularly through systemic change</b>
<b>Leveling the playing field/Giving equal opportunities – especially in housing, education, safety, and holistic support</b>
<b>Well-being – economic and social</b>
<b>Speaking the truth</b>
<b>Giving skills for them to help themselves</b>
<b>Giving a voice to those who are often voiceless</b>
Seeing others as God sees them; being equal and being loved
Reconciliation
Respect
Reaching out to families
The call of discipleship
Meeting immediate needs

2. What is social justice NOT? In other words, what are some ministry strategies and programs that are often called “social justice” but aren’t true social justice?

<b>Handouts</b>
<b>Compassion, although compassion is often involved</b>
<b>Service without systemic change</b>
<b>Focused on individuals</b>
<b>Free giving without personal involvement/relationship</b>
<b>Programs</b>
Mercy
A formula
Acting as victims

3. Think of a youth worker who is doing effective social justice ministry. What is it about their work that makes it so effective?

<b>MINDSET</b>	<b>Not view as projects but people</b>
	<b>Realizing that we don’t always know what people need</b>
	<b>Involving kids</b>
	<b>Working Holistically</b>
	<b>Asking WHY</b>
	<b>Thinking communally (versus individually)</b>
	<b>Keeping it real</b>
	<b>Realizing that we need to act outside of our own church</b>
	<b>Realizing that we can’t wait for someone else to act</b>
	Viewing justice work as spiritual confrontation
	Being on the offense, not on the defense
	Hip Hop raises important issues
	Moving past fear
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>Being part of the neighborhood</b>
	Mentoring college students
	Partnering with other ministries

<b>SKILLS</b>	Developing jobs for gang members
	Ability to mobilize a team and give individuals particular tasks to accomplish.
<b>MONEY</b>	Protest and invest
	College scholarships
<b>ADVOCACY</b>	Working with both local and national governments
	Work with those who have power to help remove the misuse of power

4. What justice issues are the most important to your community? What makes them so important?

<b>Police/criminal justice system/juvenile justice system</b>
<b>Racism</b>
<b>Unequal access to services – housing, health, education, safety</b>
<b>Violence, gangs</b>
<b>Housing</b>
<b>Education</b>
<b>Gentrification</b>
<b>Family/the home</b>
<b>Poverty</b>
Mental health
Injustice to kids by media and the lies the media sells them
Power distribution
Drugs
Absentee parents
Immigration

5. How are those justice needs currently being addressed? (If you're running short on time, feel free to skip this question or touch on it only briefly.) **NOTE:** Not many groups answered this question.

<b>After school tutoring, education</b>
<b>Moving into the community, relocation</b>
Working with the whole family
Preaching

6. What social justice resources/training/networks already exist that you, or others you know, are utilizing? What makes them helpful? What would make them more helpful?

<b>Multiple cities</b>	<b>Sojourners</b>
	<b>CCDA/John Perkins</b>
	<b>UYWI</b>
Fresno	John Quarter
	Jonathan Kozol
	McClain
	Shane Claiborne
New York City	Dr. Edmond Gordon from the Institute for Urban Minority Education
	The Poverty initiative
	Full Circle Health
	Geoffrey Canada
Bay Area	Gutierrez
	Dr. King
	Liberation theology
	Charismatic Peace Organization
	Ron Sider
	Walter Wink
Philadelphia	Harvey Cohn
	Newark University
	Karen Pittman (policy)
	Manuel Ortiz
	Bell Hooks
	Lisa Delpit
	Milbury McClaughlin
	Carl Ellis
Memphis	Pauline St Juvenile Girls Facility
	JIFF Ministry
	Daisy Diaz
	Girls, Inc.
	Shelby Training Center
	YO! (Youth Opportunity) Memphis
	Urban Youth Initiative (UYI)
	National Civil Rights Museum (training)
	New Direction Christian Church

	Hope Presbyterian Church
	Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church
	Catholic Charities
	Grizzlies Academy & Foundation
	NAACP Youth
	Neighborhood Christian Center
	Service Over Self
	Habitat for Humanity
	Junior Achievement
	Boys and Girls Clubs
	Urban League
	Public library
	MIFA (Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association)
	Norman Redwing (UYWI/Op Hope)
	Youth United Way
	Youth Development Collaborative
Pittsburgh	East Liberty Family Health Center
	North Side Christian Health
	East Liberty Presbyterian Church
	Arita Gilliam Educator
	One Vision One Life – Crisis Meditation
	Richard Garlan

7. Who are the social justice advocates and practitioners who need to be invited to a national conversation?

New York City	Alphonso Wyatt
Philadelphia	Noelle Jones
	Tiffany Childress
	Roy "Soup" Campbell
	Pastor Ronald Walker
	Steve Bussey
	Boston Urban Youth Foundation
Fresno	Randy White
	Roger Minassian
	Sarah Brady
	H. Spees
	Farmer Workers Advocate
	Rudy Carrasco
Memphis	Rev La Simba Gray
	Rev Dwight Montgomery
	Mrs. Johnnie Turner
	Commissioner Henri Brooks
	Congressman Steve Cohen
	Commissioner Mulroy
	Dr. Stacy Spencer
	Harold Ford, Jr.
	Dr. Eugene Gibson
	John Hall

8. What kind of national initiative would be most helpful for your community – networking around justice issues, curriculum, training, an awareness campaign to educate the church on social justice issues, a national advocacy platform, written materials about justice, or other?

<b>Access/Networking/Database – by far, the top response</b>
<b>Awareness</b>
<b>Written curriculum – or something that would help make kids more aware</b>
<b>Advocacy</b>
<b>Leadership Development</b>
<b>Training in how to listen to people</b>
<b>Conferences, or emphases within conferences</b>

9. Of the above, what would be least helpful?

Written material – was voiced by one city; the other cities didn't answer this question.
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