

SERVING THE COMMUNITY: TEACHING AND RESEARCHING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AT BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

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The decline of the welfare state, the erosion of social benefits and growing privatization of social services have exacerbated social problems in Israel, including food insecurity, hunger and abusive employment. The weakness of community organizations and agencies thrusts greater responsibility onto schools of social work to address these problems.

In this narrative the author relates his personal experiences during the last ten years in developing and implementing an innovative program that integrates teaching, training, research, and community engagement to promote social justice.

"Nae Doresh Nae Mekayem."

Translation: *"Practice what you preach."* - Talmudic saying

A significant barrier to direct Higher Education (HE) community engagement for social justice is the lack of practical knowledge among students and faculty: How do you start an activity and how do you maintain it over time? How do you mobilize the students? How do you integrate policy change activities, teaching, and research?

My main goal in writing this reflection is to encourage both faculty and students to promote direct social justice activities in their schools by involvement as an organized action group rather than as individuals. In this paper I describe the social justice program that I developed in collaboration with students and other faculty members of the Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) during the 2000s. The Department of Social Work (which I will refer to as "the Department") is a mid-size generic school of 450 students in a mid-sized university numbering approximately 20,000 students. Because direct social justice programs are not common in HE, I preface my reflections with a short discussion of the need for such

programs and the major barriers to their initiation.

The Need for a Social Justice Program

In the current anti-social-justice climate of Israel and other Western countries that have adopted a global economy approach and conservative ideology and practices, HE in general, and schools of social work in particular, must actively engage their faculty and students in planned and organized activities to promote social justice. The weakness of community organizations in such an environment has imposed even greater responsibility on schools of social work to address social problems such as poverty and hunger and the abusive employment of marginalized and non-unionized employees. In an era defined as a "war against the poor," social work faculty and students should champion victimized members of society and actively use their unique expertise, as well as their personal and organizational resources, to fulfill their professional mission and code of ethics of promoting social justice (Israel Association of Social Workers, 1994). It is not enough to teach our profession's commitment to social reform and the methods of community organization solely as a legacy of the profession, if it remains detached from the daily

practice of social workers. While at the university, every social work student needs to go through a meaningful experience of intervening in social problems, both in the classroom and in the field. Students who learn and actively participate in such interventions are more likely to embrace them as a part of their practice after they graduate.

As there is growing interest in scholar activism and intellectual public engagement (Croteau, Hoynes, & Ryan, 2005; Hale, 2008; Johnson, 1994; Krager & Hernandez, 2004), and HE leaders (for example Boyer, 1990) have legitimized and even called for direct HE social justice engagement, the time seems ripe for it. Recently, the Israeli Academy of Higher Education established a special program to support HE community engagement for social change (<http://law.huji.ac.il/merkazim.asp>, 2011)

Barriers to HE Community Engagement for Social Justice

The literature points to various barriers and obstacles to the development of effective, direct and ongoing HE community engagement for social justice. In an article I authored with a colleague about the first phase of our activity (Weis & Kaufman, 2006) we mentioned the following barriers: (1) The intensified process of professionalization in social work in Israel (Spiro, 2001); (2) the conservative nature of many HE faculty and students and their identification with mainstream community institutions and power structures; (3) the preference of schools and students for micro-practice and the role of neutral, non-political spectators or experts; (4) the lack of educators and students who are trained community organizers; (5) the limited opportunities in HE for training, learning and experiencing social activism; (6) the limited time available to students and faculty for voluntary work; and (7) the absence of intra-academic action structures and mechanisms that can facilitate both training and action.

After our 10 years of community engagement, my conclusion is that it is possible to overcome most of these barriers to a certain degree if three preconditions exist: *legitimacy*, both internal (school and university) and

external (community), *commitment* of faculty and students for ongoing community engagement, and *competence* in community organizing strategies (Kaufman, 2004).

Overview of the Social Justice Program

The main incentive behind the initiation of our social justice activities and their ongoing existence is the scarcity of community action to change the anti-social policies of the government, which affect many people in the southern part of Israel—the Negev—and in the country in general. The Negev, where our university is located, is one of the most socially and economically vulnerable regions in the country. It has the largest number of income-supplement recipients in Israel, and the Bedouins, comprising 25% of the region's population, are the poorest residents of the country.

It was clear to me that this social context demanded that we as individuals and as a Department become involved in social change activities and that we train our students to act as agents of social change. In 2000, I suggested that our Department initiate a project promoting social justice through intervention in social problems. The objectives were to encourage students and faculty members to become involved in social activism, to educate and train students as social change activists, and, from the academic point of view, to develop much-needed knowledge on the role of HE as an agent of social change and on socialization for social activism.

During our 10 years of activity we applied three major strategies to achieve the first two objectives. In the beginning we relied mostly on informal strategy: mobilizing students and faculty on an ad hoc basis to support selected community struggles for social justice initiated by students and faculty or by the community. For example, in 2001 we initiated a community conference, a petition campaign and rallies at the University in support of the struggle of organizations of the disabled for better social security benefits. Our second strategy was to initiate pro-active campaigns promoting social justice policy, and building coalitions with community groups and organizations to implement these campaigns. The social

problems we focused on were food insecurity and hunger and abusive employment of non-unionized social workers and unionized University cleaning staff. We chose to intervene in these issues because, at that time, they had not been resolved by other meaningful agents of social change, and because our students and faculty felt profoundly that we had the obligation, as well as the ability, to make a difference.

Main Achievements and Contributions of the Program

Although it is difficult to evaluate the impact of a specific intervention program on community change because of the many variables involved, I can nevertheless point out the following major achievements and contributions of our activities (jointly conducted with various community and university allies):

1. The establishment, in 2000, of the Faculty and Students Joint Forum for Social Justice. The Forum has since served as the major infrastructure for ad hoc social justice activities.
2. The establishment of a community coalition that successfully lobbied for the legislation of the national Hot Lunch Bill in 2005. The bill ensured provision of a hot meal to 140,000 children throughout Israel. It was the first expression of governmental responsibility for food security and opened the door to community demands for more programs and policies.
3. The 2007 establishment of the National Food Security Center (NFSC), a community-Forum partnership which is a Department-based non-governmental organization (NGO). The NFSC plays a leading role in grass roots organizing and advocacy and in research on the scale and impact of food insecurity and hunger in Israel.
4. The acknowledgment by the Israeli Social Work Union (ISWU) and other major social work institutions (universities, the Ministry of Welfare) and the social workers themselves of the severity of the problem of the abusive

employment of one-third of all social workers employed in privatized (formerly governmental) welfare services. This led to the inclusion of the social and labor rights and benefits of privatized social workers as a central issue in the ISWU national strike in 2011 and in the agreement signed between the union and the government.

5. The foundation in 2008 of the National Center for Social Workers Labor Organizing (NCSWLO). This center, jointly established by the Forum and the ISWU, is actively engaged in the organization and unionization of workers; in the education of social workers and social work students on their social and labor rights; and in the campaign for legal reforms in employee conditions.

6. Building an intra-University coalition (professors and students' organizations) to protect the rights of the cleaning staff against hostile actions by University authorities and contractors; organizing the cleaning staff to formally unionize and hold public and democratic elections (for the first time in Israel); and providing ongoing organizing assistance to the cleaning staff union.

A recent summary of the main social change activities that occurred as part of our program in 2001-2011 reveals the intensity and the scope of the program: five national campaigns and two intra-university campaign; 20 petition campaigns and various street and media protest events; seven community action studies and surveys; 16 public conferences and rallies, most within BGU but also in the Knesset (Israeli parliament) and other locations. Most of our students participated in the activities, at various level of intensity, and hundreds of publications appeared in the local and national media. The projects were presented in numerous forums, including most schools of social work and in Israeli conferences to promote HE community engagement. Thus far 12 scholarly publications and thesis papers have appeared on various aspects of these projects. A good pictorial summary of the activities (petitions, rallies, demonstrations) can be found in a special publication prepared for

our Department's 25th anniversary: "Eight Years of Struggle for Social Justice" (Department of Social Work, 2009).

My Professional Orientation

The structure of this narrative reflects my belief that one of the best ways to understand the entrepreneurial activities of community organizers is to view their activities as an interaction between their own background and orientations, the issues they choose to focus on, and the opportunities they identify to promote their social change agendas (Taylor, 2007).

When I joined the Department in 1998, I was impressed with its declared and actual commitment to the various communities in the Negev. But at that time the University and Department's engagement with the community was based on the "traditional model," i.e., collaboration with major community institutions and power structures, an apolitical, consensual and expertise-based orientation, and the provision of direct service to needy individuals. There were no opportunities or action structures for social change engagement: collaboration with oppositional community organizations; promotion of activities that were political and conflict-oriented when the situation called for challenging decision makers; or activities aimed at politicizing the disadvantaged and promoting their interests by developing oppositional power bases.

When I was an undergraduate social work student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the late 1970s, both the political atmosphere and the nature of community engagement were very different from what I encountered at BGU. In the late seventies, hundreds of students, conservative and progressive alike, were involved on a daily basis in debates and demonstrations on issues of social justice and peace. I joined the progressive student organization and was active in it for three years, acquiring excellent informal training in activism for social change. I learned how a social movement functions organizationally and politically and how to mobilize people for social justice campaigns. I also discovered the power of students. The media showed much interest in our activities, perhaps because we acted

out of idealism and were highly motivated. I was also surprised at the interest that many local and national politicians showed in our activities; no doubt some were looking for our active support in their political campaigns.

In addition to this experience, in classes on community organization and in my field training I studied methods and processes of grass roots organizing, developed in the U.S., which I found very effective for organizing poor people. My favorite book at that time was "Rules for Radicals" (Alinsky, 1972), which introduced me to several useful tactics to pressure establishments to change policies in regard to the victims of social problems. During my studies I met Israeli community workers and activist social workers who were working with the Israeli "Black Panthers" protest movement, which was very active in the early 1970s (Cohen, 1972). Years later, I wrote an article on the important work done by one of them, Avner Amiel, which presented an ideal model of a social worker committed to activism for social justice (Mansbach & Kaufman, 2003).

The three years of my BSW studies provided me with a solid activist orientation and know-how, as well as with faith in the efficacy and relevance of student community engagement. In the 1970s and early 1980s, social protest supported by many segments of Israeli society led to significant progressive welfare reforms. Like many social workers, I too believed then that Israeli society was on the way to becoming a leading welfare state in the world. To our disappointment, Israeli governments since 1985 have embraced the conservative values and practices of a global economy. The government's adoption of neo-liberal economic principles has led to a pronounced erosion in social benefits, major cuts in social budgets, the decline of the welfare state, and changes in the job market. All these have led to the exacerbation of existing social problems. For example, from 1998-2009 the rate of Israeli children living below the poverty line increased by 60%, and from 1989-2009 it increased by 90%. As a result, Israel is presently leading the Western world in the rate of children living below the poverty line (36%) and is only second to the

United States in the gap between rich and poor. New social problems have also arisen, such as food insecurity and hunger and the abusive employment of non-unionized workers, those problems upon which we later focused our activities toward social change.

Having presented the rationale, my personal motives, and the contribution of our activities, I will consider important junctures in our work.

Starting the Activity – The First Community Action Study

Before I joined the Department in 1998, I had worked as a community organizer for 20 years, both in governmental and non-governmental agencies (Korazim-Korosy, 2000). Naturally, I was assigned to teach community organization and social justice courses, which I found problematic to teach because I felt the discussions were theoretical only. Most of the students had not experienced active engagement in social change activities in their field work (BSW) or at agencies (MSW). During my first years in the Department I realized that some of the faculty and students shared my desire for a more activist engagement with the community. I also discovered that the powerful president of BGU was community-oriented; and in 2001 I received the green light from the new Department chairperson, Vered Slonim-Nevo, “to activate the students.”

I decided to use a community action research technique that I had often found effective for mobilizing passive and unorganized communities. This technique integrates academic activity - research - with activities to promote community change (Stoecker & Beckwith, 1992). Research of this type helps raise the awareness of community members to issues addressed in the study questionnaire and defines common problems in an operative manner. It provides data needed for action, empowers the participants in the research, creates foci of power within the community, and activates a previously passive community (Rubin & Rubin, 2001). In order to turn research into a mechanism for social change, the research team needs to expand its involvement beyond

data collection to the following activities: sharing the findings about community needs and problems with the general public (through the media) and decision makers (by preparing a policy paper); organizing community meetings with all parties that have a stake in the social problem in order to develop a community plan to achieve the desired change goals; “cutting the issue,” i.e., selecting an aspect of the social problem that has the best chance of supported from the public and demanding that decision makers accept the community program for policy or service on this issue; conducting a social change campaign to advocate for the desired community solution; developing a formal structure that would monitor policy changes and their implementation and press for solutions to further problems.

I started by designing a survey for action research with a group of eight students from my community research course. First, we conducted open interviews with selected faculty and students. Next, we surveyed all students, faculty and field supervisors by means of a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that there was a near-consensus among students and faculty that we, as a Department, should be directly involved in promoting social justice.

Hundreds of students and many faculty members joined an open meeting I called in order to decide what to do in light of the survey results. One operative decision was to create a new structure within the Department that would enable students and faculty to engage in meaningful community change action. Another decision was to add social-change-oriented courses to the curriculum in order to enhance student willingness and competence to engage in social action. Among the courses added were “Community Interventions in Social Problems,” “Building Community Coalitions and Partnerships,” and “Activism in Social Work.” In addition, a field experience track in social change organization was built for all first-year students.

In 2000, a group of 40 students and faculty members formed the Joint Faculty and Students Forum for Social Justice, an informal and voluntary community intervention platform

that has been the source of all social change projects. I was appointed Forum Coordinator. During its first two years, the Forum's main activities were to support community struggles for social justice. For example, on the national level we supported the struggles of the organizations of single mothers and of the disabled against cuts in their social security benefits. Locally we supported the housing struggle of young couples in Beer-Sheva, the city in which BGU is located. Our activities included petition campaigns, joining demonstrations and organizing community conferences at the University. Hundreds of students and faculty members participated in these activities.

The Forum activists who had participated in the decision making processes and organized the events gained practical experience in community mobilization for social justice. In addition, working relations evolved between the Forum and organizations in the community, such as the Union of Social Workers, welfare agencies in the Negev, advocacy groups, client organizations, local and national media, and politicians. This stage demonstrated that the Department was interested in and able to act for social justice, and had formulated the action principles which guided future activities, especially the use of community action research as the main mechanism to integrate action, teaching, and research. Two of our key projects, the right for food security project and the labor rights project, were developed along similar lines.

Majority Strategy

During my MSW studies in the United States (1983-85, Hebrew Union College [HUC] and Washington University) and at a two-week community organizers' training course at Midwest Academy, I was introduced to a model for organizing for social change in conservative times: "Majority Strategy" (Bobo, Kendall & Max, 2001). I used the model a number of times while organizing with various excluded and marginalized communities, such as the Bedouin and Ethiopian Jews. The model calls for building inclusive community coalitions with a wide community base and a variety of members: victims of social problems,

community activists, public leaders, unions, advocacy organizations, politicians, students and professors. Such coalitions are based on cooperation between members and agreed mutual goals and may be active with differing intensities of involvement on an ad hoc or ongoing basis. In my PhD dissertation I focused on issues related to the successful operation of such coalitions and concluded that social workers have an important role, an obligation and the requisite knowledge base to construct and operate social change community coalitions (Kaufman, 2001). I thought this strategy could be suitable for organizing for social justice in HE settings and, reflecting back on 10 years of activity, I still consider it very effective.

Mobilizing for the Right for Food Security

Following the success of the Forum, I felt we had the infrastructure and ability to proceed to more pro-active social change activities. In 2001 I suggested to the Forum activists that we direct our efforts at promoting policy changes vis a vis the new social problem for which the government refused to take responsibility, namely, food insecurity and hunger. I thought this problem was suitable for our engagement and that there was a clear need for our intervention. Moreover, I knew that both the University and the community would legitimize our activities, even if we confronted the government about the scope of this problem and the government's lack of action. On the local community level, a major source of legitimacy was the soup kitchen founded by Department faculty and students in collaboration with BGU and community service agencies. The first of its kind in the Negev region, the soup kitchen was highly regarded by the community because it provided a much-needed service. It also provided an opportunity for interested students and faculty members to study the problem of hunger, which had not been studied before in Israel.

A review of the literature on strategies to fight hunger in the U.S. and other Western countries (Poppendieck, 1997) led us to realize that voluntary activity could provide only a partial and very limited solution. It became

obvious that the government, and not society, should take responsibility for this social problem. The question was how to “force” the government to define food insecurity as a social problem, formulate policies and allocate funds to deal with it. Based on the American experience (Eisinger, 1998), it became clear to me that the first step should be to show that the problem could be measured, since measurement was likely to transform the public and professional discourse from “feeding the hungry” to assessing how widespread the problem was, and determining the populations at risk that required special programs and services. I hoped that once “scientific” data on the scale of the problem were publicly presented, the government would stop treating food insecurity in Israel as a minor, episodic problem that could be handled by volunteers. We also hoped that after our findings were made available to them, community organizations and leaders would be encouraged to add the right to food security to their agendas and demand governmental responsibility and appropriate programs.

Our initial step was a community action study; For the first time in Israel, we surveyed clients of social services with the Food Security Core Survey Module, an instrument widely used to measure food insecurity and hunger (Holben, 2002). The development and application of the questionnaire was a Department project; faculty and students in research courses participated in developing the questionnaire and in the data analysis, and about 100 students collected the data. The students surveyed 953 clients of 23 social services in 11 localities in the Negev, including cities, small towns, and Bedouin settlements.

The findings showed that only 28% of households surveyed enjoyed food security, and that 50% of the children were at risk for food insecurity. These findings had tremendous repercussions: they garnered abundant media attention, even making front-page headlines in one of the national newspapers. I was invited to report our findings to professional agencies and political institutions. But I knew that only massive community pressure would lead to policy change. An immediate effect of our survey was the 2003 national food security

survey undertaken by a government-sponsored research institute, which revealed that 22% of households nationwide were food-insecure, a rate twice as high as that of the U.S. at the time (Kaufman & Slonim-Nevo, 2004).

In a Forum-sponsored community conference held to present the findings, the conference participants decided to campaign for the right to food security. Using my personal connections with social change organizations, I convinced the leaders of two major national social change organizations, “Yedid” (the Association for Community Empowerment in Israel) and “Shatil” (the Empowerment and Training Center for Social Change Organizations), to collaborate with us in this campaign. The coalition that was formed included the Forum, these social change organizations, school activists, and politicians. We decided to focus on children’s food security, assessed as meaningful for many in the community, widely felt, and potentially “winnable.” The coalition designed and launched a public campaign for a universal food program in schools, including a national petition campaign and two community action studies. One survey was conducted in 15 schools in the Negev and provided the first available data on the scale of food insecurity among children in Israel, with one-third of the respondents reporting food insecurity. The second survey was carried out among 250 professionals (social workers, health professionals, and teachers) and found that the vast majority of these professionals encountered food insecurity or hunger among children they met and that almost all of them were in favor of a national and universal food program for children. Following a community conference in which the findings were presented, parents, teachers and other professionals joined the campaign; a majority coalition was formed. What followed was intensive lobbying activity in the Knesset, including a conference in which Forum activists presented the survey findings. Hundreds of students participated in the research work and the petition campaign, in which tens of thousands of signatures were collected. Students and parents also initiated

several protest and media events which assured the campaign ongoing media coverage. These activities led to the formulation of the School Hot Lunch Bill, drafted by two Knesset members, Yuli Tamir (Labor-opposition) and Eti Livni (Shinui-coalition). The School Hot Lunch Act was passed in 2005 and the national program went into operation in 2006. The following summary by a student who had been active in the campaign for three years demonstrates what he learned: *"I learned about the power of academia, and as a student, about my ability to promote solutions to social problems, mainly by investigating the problems before starting the process. I learned how to identify community stakeholders and how to mobilize them to promote social change."*

The Establishment of the Center for Food Security

The euphoria that I and other activists in the Forum felt in the wake of the Hot Lunch legislation vanished in 2007, when accumulating reports from parents and professionals revealed how problematic program implementation was proving to be. Mediocre drafting of the bill itself, coupled with inept implementation, led to the failure to supply meals to tens of thousands of children included in the program, and to the total exclusion from the program of hundreds of thousands of children, among them all the children living in Jerusalem, one of the poorest cities in Israel. I realized that in order to ensure food security it was not sufficient to assume the role of a mere catalyst.

When I teach and write about community intervention in social problems, I emphasize that achieving a new welfare program is not the end of the road, and that the program must be continuously monitored. And that is precisely what we had to do in this case. To effectively monitor the Hot Lunch Program, we needed to organize the clients at the grass-roots level. Monitoring and organizing activities demand a formal organization, able to raise funds for paid staff to coordinate activities. Thus in 2007, we established the Israeli Center for Food Security (ICFS), a partnership between the Forum and Jewish and Bedouin

community activists. Since its establishment, the ICFS office has been located at the Department, which also assists with administration. The budget for paid staff and advocacy activities is raised from progressive foundations. The ICFS functions as a training center; each year ten students carry out their field work in the context of its projects, and other students carry out research and policy projects for various courses. In addition to organizing and campaigning for reform in the School Hot Lunch Program, the ICFS lobbies with national and local authorities to take full responsibility for developing and implementing policies and projects to reduce and eliminate food insecurity. The lobbying is carried out by community action groups organized in four poor communities in the Negev, a Tel Aviv group, and groups in Haifa and in the Galilee. In cooperation with other organizations, the ICFS holds an annual alternative Passover meal as well as an annual march, near the Knesset, demanding reform of the Hot Lunch Program. More than 500 demonstrators from across the country, representing all sectors of the population, participated in the Passover meal in March 2010, including members of the Knesset, community activists, academics, and students. These events received extensive media coverage.

A recent ICFS achievement was its involvement in the food insecurity report prepared and published by the Ministry of Welfare. This was the first time the Israeli government officially related to the scale and severity of food insecurity and hunger in the country, thus exhibiting increasing responsibility for the problem. The authors of this report consulted ICFS experts and adopted many ICFS recommendations for government policies to minimize food insecurity, among them reform of the Hot Lunch Program.

Mobilizing for Equal Labor Rights for Non-Unionized Social Workers

In 2008, one year after the establishment of the ICFS, another social justice center was founded in the Department in partnership with the Forum and the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW): the Israeli Social Workers' Labor Rights Organizing Center (ISWLROC).

This center is chaired jointly by me and by the elected IUSW chairperson, Itzick Perri. Its main goals are: (1) to promote the rights of non-unionized social workers and other welfare workers employed in the formerly governmental and now privatized welfare services by helping them negotiate, organize and unionize; (2) to educate all social work students in Israel on their labor rights and to teach them how to secure these rights; (3) to organize clients of privatized services to advocate for their rights; and (4) to oppose further privatization of additional welfare services by national and local authorities (Kaufman & Ehud, 2008). Like the ICFS, the ISWLROC has a paid staff (a graduate of BGU School of Social Work who carried out field work in the center) whose salary and expenses are paid for by the IUSW; the Department provides office space, student supervision, and administrative help. About ten students do their field training at the center every year and many others do their field research there (especially in community work and policy courses).

The ISWLROC's establishment was the result of a two-year educational campaign conducted by the Forum to promote the social work community's awareness of the plight of social workers in privatized services (most of whom graduated during the 2000s). Before we undertook activities on behalf of these workers, many of whom had been students in our own MSW program, their problem had not been on the agenda of any major social work organization and no programs promoting their labor rights existed (Kaufman & Ehud, 2008). The main goal of our activity was to activate both the social workers and the social work institutions to demand policy changes that would eliminate abusive practices.

We began with two surveys and community action studies, one among 400 workers employed in privatized welfare services and one among union leaders (150 elected social workers). The findings, which revealed large-scale abuse of labor rights, were presented in two public conferences at BGU which received considerable media attention. Interestingly, when I suggested at a Forum meeting that we intervene to promote the labor

rights of social workers in privatized welfare services, several faculty members and students raised objections, claiming that, as a Forum, we should focus on problems of clients not those of social workers. Once the findings and testimonies concerning the difficult circumstances of this marginalized group of workers became public, all objections vanished.

After a large demonstration with the participation of hundreds of students and "privatized" social workers wearing masks (to demonstrate the state of the unprotected workers), the union accepted my offer to establish a joint center to organize and promote the rights of social workers and their clients in privatized settings. Our activities increased the interest of students at BGU and at other schools of social work in labor organizing and stimulated them to join the union. Students connected to ISWLROC activities formed a national union of social work students, which played an important role in a recent national strike of social workers.

Our activities in support of the labor rights of social workers inspired students and faculty from the Forum to initiate the organization of BGU cleaning staffers, who also suffer from employment abuse. As I write this article, the first strike of cleaning personnel is taking place in response to the refusal of the BGU administration and the employees' contractor to negotiate with the union representative. Tens of our students are active on a daily basis in mobilizing faculty and student backing as well as public support and resources to help the cleaning staff in this struggle.

Crossroads

In the ten years since we began the BGU social justice program, its goals have remained unchanged. We focused on promoting social justice in our own community (the University), in our professional community, and in Israeli society as a whole. We constructed activities to promote student participation and education toward the values and methods of community mobilization against the neglect of social problems. We also maintained our "majority strategy" and other action strategies and tactics. Significant changes have occurred in

the action structures we employ. At first, our activities were based on the Forum, an informal, ad hoc, voluntary structure; now they are based on two formal social justice centers partnering with community activists and the IUSW. Working with partners demands joint decision making, which sometimes makes it more difficult to design activities that meet the needs of students. The formalization of activities intensifies the internal tensions that are embedded in every social change organization. The need to raise money every year for staff salaries demands from me, as chair, a considerable investment in time.

Because the centers train students, we are constantly involved in searching for qualified field supervisors. Paradoxically, the centers' successful campaigns raised reservations concerning the legitimacy of our community engagement, reservations voiced by some of the target institutions against whom we campaign, by community organizations in competition with us for funding resources, by BGU's new administration, which is more conservative than the previous one, and by other groups. Following a student strike against our Department's field training system, questions regarding the program's contribution to the Department were raised by new faculty members who had not participated in the development of our social justice activity. Recently I also discovered that formalization makes it harder to mobilize students on a voluntary basis, perhaps because they do not have the same sense of ownership as the students who were active in the Forum.

I feel that the program has reached a crossroads and decisions need to be made regarding the future format and nature of our social justice activities. We have developed a useful and effective model for HE community engagement for social change and for promoting interest and ability in community activism on the part of social work students. But I am not certain which action system is more suitable: the informal model of the Forum, or the formal model of the centers.

The advantages of the Forum's informal model are that it demands little organizational investment and enables ad hoc mobilization. This model can support the role of community

change catalyst, which is instrumental to community action aimed at achieving specific goals. The disadvantages of this model include its limited ability to influence issues that demand more structured and ongoing activities. Furthermore, the Forum's informal structure enables only informal student instruction in the art of social change, while the centers facilitate the training of professional community organizers for social change. Another advantage of the formal center model is the ability to achieve long-term goals, such as building strong community coalitions and community groups and maintaining ongoing educational and advocacy campaigns. The disadvantages of the centers are the substantial maintenance costs which limit their action ability. I discovered, not for the first time, that as a social entrepreneur, I personally derive more satisfaction from the innovative rather than the maintenance phase of social change activity. Different characteristics and personality traits are needed to best practice each of the phases of the social change process. Following this reflection and analysis, I concluded that the nature of future social justice activity should be discussed and decisions need to be taken by all stakeholders: Forum students and faculty activists, the directors and student supervisors of the centers, our community partners and activists, union leaders, and the graduate of BGU School of Social Work who volunteered and led the Forum over the years. Can we create a hybrid model? Or do we need to move in one direction only and let others take the lead in the one left behind?

My main goal in writing this reflection was to encourage HE community engagement for social justice. Such activity is sorely needed in the present anti-social services era. Two paths for the promotion of social justice lie before scholars who are also activists: they can either teach social justice values, theories, and methods in class and practice their activism in non-academic social change organizations, or they can integrate teaching, research and activism. I hope that my experience highlights some of the processes, dilemmas and benefits of an integrated approach.

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