

JUSTICE-BASED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (JBOT)

6/16/20

RESPONSE TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STATEMENTS ON JUSTICE AND RACISM

The murder of a Black man, George Floyd, by a White police officer was not the first, but one of many displays of systemic racism and a flawed criminal justice system in the United States.

The international Justice-Based Occupational Therapy (JBOT) network is deeply troubled by words omitted by many national organizations representing the global occupational therapy (OT) profession. We need leaders with vision and resolve to radically transform our organizational makeup, operations, and practices to thoroughly address systemic racism and bias in the criminal justice system and beyond. As a profession, we must face the hard truth that because of systemic racism all people do not have the same access to and/or ability to engage in occupations. We are not fully animating our professional ethics if we do not address how racism affects our practice sites, interactions, selection of interventions, and therapy outcomes.

JBOT is united with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Multicultural, Diversity, and Inclusion (MDI) Network and the Coalition of Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity (COTAD). We support their efforts to create actionable change. JBOT endorses calls made during the World Federation of Occupational Therapy Congress (2018) to decolonize the profession and to utilize the concept of 'occupational consciousness' as a means to achieve that goal. The repeated modern-day lynching and overcriminalization of Black persons highlights the inadequacy of our collective response. An urgent shift by OTs is required to “[adopt] transgressive acts to disrupt the cycle of oppression through human occupation... everyday doing... [as] probably the most powerful mechanism through which to resist dominant discourses and practices” (Ramugondo, 2015, p.497).

We challenge the limited depth and scope of the AOTA Board of Directors, *“Statement on Justice and Systemic Racism,”* and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) leadership’s, *“No Silence in the Face of Inequality and Injustice.”* These statements appear complicit in maintaining the existing environment and do not articulate meaningful change. JBOT seeks to transform the profession, to include and elevate the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), to solicit and use new strategies, and to ensure equitable representation. We seek an integrated, inclusive OT community that is equipped to eliminate systemic racism and address disparities with and for BIPOC.

JBOT has solicited and compiled suggestions, resources, and examples of how we might work to facilitate this discourse and take action. We offer a compilation of actions that can be taken at various levels within our profession, including in our national associations, academia, practice settings, and with community health and criminal justice reform organizations/allies.

JBOT is calling on our national leaders to utilize our resources to initiate a dynamic dialectic process within our profession; and our fellow practitioners to [further] equip yourselves and take action. We expect healing actions. We expect change and growth. We expect your participation and leadership to enable a more diverse, unified, aware, and occupationally just profession. We look forward to walking with you in accountability as we demand more from ourselves, organizations, leaders, governing bodies, and our society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

These recommendations for direct actions were compiled by JBOT members and allies in the U.S., Canada and South Africa including students, practicing therapists, faculty, researchers, and leaders in the profession (referred to here as practitioners). They represent a collaborative brainstorm with initial efforts to clarify, organize, and reduce redundancies and no effort to prioritize or judge the merits of each recommendation. While our recommendations specify actions for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), we also consider groups who experience discrimination due to age, disability, race, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. We expect this list to evolve over time and acknowledge it is simply the beginning to a new and just normal.

Action Steps: Professional Associations

- I. Direct the professional associations' boards of directors, representative assemblies, commissions and other internal governing bodies to initiate SWOT analysis and develop strategic plans that transparently define action steps demonstrating a commitment to occupational justice, diversity and inclusion.
- II. Establish and immediately seat a board level position within associations charged specifically to ensure issues of systemic racism, occupational justice, inclusion, and diversity are considered in association actions, decisions, and governance. Expect national associations to advocate for all state and district associations to do the same.
- III. Develop and fund leadership and mentorship programs designed to recruit, mentor, and support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to hold elected leadership positions.
- IV. Review mission and vision statements of OT national organizations to ensure they articulate a clear focus on addressing systemic injustice, diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- V. Direct audits to identify and analyze the effectiveness of all current strategies to promote diversity and inclusion within the profession at all levels.
- VI. Solicit proposals and fund research that elicit and analyze stories from practitioners, students, and academics about the day-to-day struggles they face regarding systemic injustices.
- VII. Support the creation of communities of practice with a focused charge to engage in action steps that address these issues of occupational justice, human rights, and systemic racism.
- VIII. Explore ways to strengthen, formalize and provide funding for diversity organizations that exist within associations.
- IX. Take direct actions to welcome and build relationships with local/national organizations outside the OT profession that work with communities of color and who seek to address systemic racism, criminal justice, and poverty as public health issues in society.
- X. Transparently invest in the above activities through budgetary, personnel, and organizational resources and communicate the investment to association membership.

Action Steps: Academia

- I. Advocate that all academic programs establish holistic admission policies, practices, and recruitment processes that target BIPOC and other underrepresented groups within the profession.
- II. Develop and fund faculty mentorship programs designed to recruit, mentor, and support BIPOC in academia.
- III. Review all educational curricular standards addressing how systemic racism impacts occupation and health, inclusion, diversity, cultural responsiveness and anti-racist policies, political activism as occupation, and social factors impacting health; and propose revisions to ensure educational outcomes for these issues are articulated.
- IV. Establish a multinational task force charged to produce training resources using an interprofessional approach that address issues such as systemic racism in health and criminal justice systems, the reduction and prevention of implicit and unconscious biases, white supremacy culture, white fragility, and anti-racist allyship to better educate and train OTs.
- V. Establish a multinational task force charged to curate textbooks, articles, video materials, and other resources written by authors, especially people of BIPOC, to ensure these resources are disseminated and a wide range of diverse perspectives are incorporated in classroom education.
- VI. Build capacity to correct or redirect social and occupational injustices particularly in the criminal justice system by including content on occupational injustice in correctional systems in OT curricula; partnering with city, county, state, and national justice systems and settings to promote OT and occupational justice solutions.
- VII. Advocate for academic programs to establish focused and intentional fundraising efforts (e.g. grants, foundations, alumni) to develop scholarships and financial supports for BIPOC students to matriculate in OT programs.
- VIII. Expect academic programs to report on the strategies they employ to recruit and retain BIPOC and students from other underrepresented groups to their program, including how they cultivate a supportive diversity climate for these and all students.
- IX. Develop effective recruitment materials appropriate for BIPOC and students from other underrepresented groups, which differentially target individuals in grade school, high school, and college and second career seekers; as well as their school teachers, and career counselors.
- X. Encourage collaborations between academic programs, health systems, and other practice settings to develop programs that offer paid internships for BIPOC and students from underrepresented groups to provide exposure to careers in OT.

Action Steps: Practice

- I. Elicit and analyze stories from practitioners, students, and academics about the day-to-day struggles they encounter related to systemic racism, occupational and social injustice within educational, practice and community settings; and utilize their messages in evidence-informed methods (e.g. practice, research, and education).
- II. Highlight anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and other advocacy efforts of practitioners and students on OT organizations' webpages and link to free educational and advocacy resources that facilitate extension of these efforts by others.
- III. Engage in creative use of media (e.g. email badges; signs to post in classrooms, clinics, and other practice sites; shareable social media posts; feature stories; editorials; etc.) to spread the message for occupational justice and to communicate the impact of systemic injustices on occupation both within and outside the profession.
- IV. Seek out, participate in advocacy efforts, join as members, and attend conference meetings of the various inclusion and diversity groups within the profession to encourage cross-collaboration and participation. Commit to having more diverse speakers (compensated) across disciplines with lived and/or relevant experience at conferences and continuing education events, as consumers and collaborators.
- V. Utilize existing evidence-based tools and participate in studies that validate new self-reflection assessment tools to assess OT practices, reflect on internal and implicit biases, and assess needs to change beliefs and actions in practice for specific and/or across racial, cultural, and ethnic groups.
- VI. Identify and address unconscious bias in all areas of practice, teaching, and research by offering specific examples of how systemic racism is perpetuated through acts, such as use of a condescending tone, ignoring BIPOC clients, not addressing their needs, and restraining their children differently.
- VII. Participate in the development of resources for practitioners including practice site educators that can facilitate identification, problem solving, and support for when a student or colleague is struggling with race-related issues during training or in practice.
- VIII. Contribute to building capacity to correct the injustice of mass incarceration by including content on occupational injustice within and surrounding criminal justice systems in OT curricula, partnering with schools (to prevent the school to prison pipeline) and local criminal justice settings to promote occupational justice solutions that prevent incarceration and facilitate transition out of incarceration, and work with state and national political advocacy groups and systems to advocate for criminal justice reform.

Action Steps: Community Health and Criminal Justice Reform

- I. Connect/reconnect with local/national organizations specifically targeted toward relevant advocacy groups, to integrate OT into community health promotion services.
- II. Collaborate with national organizations, academia, and practitioners to advocate for supporting population health approaches and health care systems that are accessible, safe, and equitable for all; and promote/support them without fear of hostility and retaliation.
- III. Combat health disparities by supporting population health approaches and systems.
- IV. Provide incentives for programs to recruit and retain BIPOC workers.
- V. Work with communities to heal using established models such as the Participatory Occupational Justice Framework.
- VI. Facilitate community informed health efforts to address social determinants of health and disparities in BIPOC communities.
- VII. Participate in efforts to end school to prison pipelines through early intervention (e.g. pre-conception health, prenatal care), school and community intervention (preschool, elementary, middle and high school).
- VIII. Reduce incarceration by working with law enforcement and communities through deflection, diversion, community resource identification, housing, and mental health services to name a few.
- IX. Lead occupation-based reentry (transition and integration) of people arrested or incarcerated to prevent their return to the criminal justice system.

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ALLIANCE

ORGANIZATIONS

Coalition of Occupational
Therapy Advocates for
Diversity (COTAD)

***AOTA Multicultural,
Diversity, and Inclusion
(MDI) Network
Independent Groups:***

National Black
Occupational Therapy
Caucus (NBOTC)

Terapia Ocupacional para
Diversidad, Oportunidad, y
Solidaridad (TODOS)
Network of Hispanic
Practitioners

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Please send content for
future newsletters to:

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This newsletter was developed
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Engagement.



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JBOT Web:
http://bit.ly/ottis_jbot

In the News

AOTA Statement on Justice and Systemic Racism

<https://www.aota.org/Publications-News/AOTANews/2020/AOTA-Statement-On-Systemic-Racism.aspx>

RCOT Statement on Diversity

<https://www.rcot.co.uk/news/rcot-statement-diversity>

RCOT shares the outrage of members, colleagues and friends across the world, and condemns the murder of George Floyd. The principles of diversity and equality are core to the practice of occupational therapy and are enshrined within the RCOT Code of Ethics.

We believe that all people should be treated with dignity and respect, as equal members of society with the same choices, rights and privileges. Discrimination and prejudice have no place in our practice and no place in society.

We stand in solidarity with our BAME members, colleagues and communities against racism and injustice of all kinds. #BlackLivesMatter



CAOT No Silence in the Face of Inequality and Injustice

<https://www.caot.ca/document/7299/No%20silence%20in%20the%20face%20of%20inequality%20and%20injustice.pdf>

BLACK OTs MATTER

*changing your OT practice to combat racism,
address racial trauma, and promote healing*

Black OTs Matter: Changing Your OT Practice to Combat Racism, Address Racial Trauma, and Promote Healing

<https://gottabeot.wordpress.com/2020/05/31/black-ots-matter-changing-your-ot-practice-to-combat-racism-address-racial-trauma-and-promote-healing/>

Continuing Education

Due to overwhelming interest and in an effort to support the needs of those interested in criminal justice practice, education, research, and program development, Saint Louis University has developed an online continuing education course that is now open for trainees. Proceeds from the course go directly back to the SLU OT Transition & Integration Services (OTTIS) program. For more info, go to: <https://www.slu.edu/mission-identity/initiatives/transformation-justice/ottis.php> or contact: Christine Hayes at 314-977-8583 or christine.hayes@health.slu.edu

Save The Date

2021 AOTA Annual Conference & Expo

- April 8-11, 2020
- San Diego



2021 Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) Conference

- June 15-19, 2021
- Gatineau, QC



2021 1st World Occupational Science Conference (WOSC)

- August (25), 26-28
- Vancouver, British Columbia

International Society for Occupational Science

Society for the Study of Occupation (SSO): USA

- 2021/2022 TBD



JBOT:
<https://www.slu.edu/mission-identity/initiatives/transformation-justice/jbot.php>