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Canadian Scholars Press, 2019, 486 pages

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Spirituality and Social Justice: Spirit in the Political Quest for a Just World

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Social work has seen a resurgence of interest in spirituality in the last couple of decades. This revived interest is very welcome for social work practice and education. When I was studying for my Master of Social Work, there was no content about spirituality. All these years later, there is still not enough in our social work programs. The book *Spirituality and Social Justice: Spirit in the Political Quest for a Just World*, by Norma Jean Profitt and Cyndy Baskin, is a much-needed contribution. If I had had access to the knowledge contained in this book earlier, my education and practice career would have been much richer.

The book's approach to the subject matter moves the conversation on spirituality in social work forward. It not only achieves its aim of moving toward a critical understanding of spirituality, but the authors also firmly root the topic in social justice and the creation of a "kinder, fairer, and more just world" (p. 2). This aim and statement, written before the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, is more pertinent than ever. The chapters are filled with various examples of the interconnectedness of all beings.

This book appeared in 2019, well before the events of 2020, and yet it seems to foreshadow them. For example, Kathy Absolon, in writing about spirit as decolonization, comments, "What ought to be concerning to all peoples is that if we do not awaken from this colonial coma, inequity, inequality, and injustice will continue, to our collective detriment, while global elites get richer under the guise of development and progress" (p. 51). I cannot think of a better description of the global pandemic and its consequences, all of which are still playing out at the time of writing this review.

Each chapter begins with a summary and questions. This makes it useful in classroom settings for students who are new to the subject area. In addition, the questions serve as a guide to critical reflection for all readers.

I was disappointed that there is no index in the volume. As I use an index often, I would very much like to see one included in future volumes of this work.

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The book has an introduction, three parts, and a closing circle conclusion chapter. The introduction, written by Profitt, poignantly describes her experience as a non-Indigenous person taking stock of her own spirituality in relation to the Indigenous Peoples of this land, and her realization that, as a White settler, she could be doing much more. Her co-authoring and partnering with Baskin, who is Indigenous, and beginning the book sections with the Indigenous perspectives, is part of that reckoning. Both describe how they had been scholars of social work and spirituality for many years, and so came together for this volume.

The first part consists of three chapters addressing Indigenous spirituality as resistance and decolonization. The first chapter is about the interconnectedness of all and (re)centering the spirit as an act of decolonization. It does an excellent job of breaking down decolonization into understandable pieces. Chapter 2 presents a dialogue between two individuals: one Indigenous and the other, Jewish. The third chapter discusses the activism of the Indigenous Quechua women in Peru.

The section on ethical and political dimensions of spirituality has six chapters. The first chapter in this section addresses the interaction of spirituality, feminism, and social justice. Chapter 5 describes how the central notion of social justice in Islam inspires its numerous followers throughout the world. The sixth chapter is about witchcraft and ethics; it describes how all humans are interconnected. Chapter 7 delves into Catholic thought about the environment and economic justice, while the following chapter focuses on Christian approaches to social justice. The final chapter in the second section proposes that the spiritual is political: it explores social justice efforts to address oppression and violence.

The third section of the volume addresses spirituality, social justice, and education in two chapters. Mindfulness and critical social work education are woven together in Chapter 10. Chapter 11 is written by a professor and two students, and is based on a social work course exploring spirituality and social justice through art.

Baskin wrote the final chapter entitled “Closing Circle, Not Closing the Circle.” I especially appreciate this distinction, as I interpret it, in part, as indicating that there is more to come. Because I believe that this volume should only be the beginning of more of its kind. The events of 2020-2021 have demonstrated the increased need for better understanding spirituality and social justice in social work. More is needed about the role of social work and spirituality in response to the global pandemic. More is needed in terms of fighting anti-Black racism and in supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. More is needed in terms of the Land Back efforts in various parts of what is known as “Canada.” More is needed about the reckoning of the role of social work in the so-called “residential schools” where unmarked graves are being uncovered.

In not closing the circle, Baskin has left the possibility of expanding the circle that this volume represents. The book is an important and timely contribution and I look forward to seeing more.

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