

FROM THE PRESIDENT



“We must be the change we wish to see.”

– M.K. Gandhi

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2008 CPA President

As I reflected on the politics of social change, I was reminded of an article written by Isaac Prilleltensky entitled, *Psychology and the Status Quo*. In this article Prilleltensky (1989) states, “Every ruling group of an organized community requires the existence of cultural mechanisms designed to ensure, or at least facilitate, the perpetuation of its position” (p.796). My interpretation of this statement reminded me of the multitude of ways that dominant groups in our global world continue to perpetuate their already existing power over others, as a way to maintain the status quo.

Psychology, and the CPA, can be instrumental in creating a more just social world. Additionally, Freire (1975) provided an enlightened understanding of our personal responsibility when he described the term *conscientization*, or “critical consciousness.” Freire’s contributions to psychology must not be overlooked when discussing the “politics of social change.”

As members of organized psychology, it is important that we approach all that we do with a critical understanding of what is happening around us, reflect thoughtfully, and be willing to make different decisions when larger dominant perspectives represent inequalities. There has always been an on-going debate about whether organized psychology should engage in decisions related to social issues. I believe that as psychologists, we can not simply reproduce social beliefs that may not benefit those that we serve, but to challenge those beliefs when needed and when we have the knowledge and expertise to do so. In our efforts to bring forth the humanity in those that we serve and to create a more just social arrangement in society at large, it is our responsibility collectively, and personally. If not us, then who?

Prilleltensky (1989) further states, “Constructive change must be preceded by reflection” (p.801). It is important that we view our efforts with a critically conscious lens as we attempt to create an ethically just society. We can be at the forefront of doing so, and I applaud CPA for making some decisions that may have been controversial by some. I also applaud the voices of our members who have continued to express their concerns about the decisions made by CPA. People are taking personal responsibility to be the change they wish to see, as is the CPA.

Changing the “status quo” is not always easy, whether it be in our work environments, the communities where we live, or statewide and nationally in the field. My recommendation to the leaders of the CPA has always been to engage in reflective, respectful discourse about any decisions we make. I also encourage the members of the association to do the same. Our appreciation for the diversity of perspectives should remain principal as we attempt to change that which is massively larger than any one association or several individuals collectively. It is good for us to hear, and respect, all voices. My hope is that we continue to expand the lens by which we view our world collectively, and by the actions we take individually. The communities we serve are counting on us to do so. 

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