

Advocacy Paper: Advocacy and Action Plan

Joselouita Joint

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling

Dr. Anna Locke

### Case Advocacy Paper: The Case of Esperanza

In Esperanza's case study, various cultural components contribute to Esperanza's mental health issues. Among those components can be found her identity as a Mexican woman, religion, and immigration status. These cited elements are hindrances to Esperanza's overall emotional and psychological wellbeing, for they are the main culprits of the bouts of anxiety, sleeplessness, loneliness, and rage she tends to experience. Thus, a therapist assigned to her case needs to develop a strategic plan to combat these issues and advocate for her needs.

#### **Apply the advocacy competencies to her situation**

Combatting social injustice and inequality should be a therapist's ultimate aspiration. Esperanza faces systemic oppression at the cultural and institutional level due to her gender role and attraction to the same sex. She is caged in her culture and professes faith, Catholicism, command. She cannot follow her heart's desire, for if she does, she will be backlashed and discriminated against by both her family and religion. Her culture does not allow women to play men's roles or vice versa. Her religion, culture, and family are the ones in power. As someone in the oppressed group, a woman, she needs to acquire the skills and resources that would empower her to escape this dilemma. She will not be able to confront the barriers imposed by her culture and professed faith if she utilizes them as a mask to conceal who she truly is.

Furthermore, Esperanza is not emotionally attached, nor is she in love with her husband. She mentioned that she often feels lonely, and she does not attribute her loneliness to attention or desire from her husband. Her husband could have granted her petition and quest for mutual love; instead, his "machismo," or masculine pride, inhibited him from thinking coherently; he, therefore, threatened to reveal her secret, being a lesbian, to her family and church. This is clear evidence of oppression by deprivation, for her husband, the one with power, menaced to take her

right to be a mother and obstruct her from embracing her feeling, which is to be a lesbian. Thus, to dismantle the blockage that her gender role posed, she will need to recognize her strengths. Based on the case study, Esperanza's honesty and maternal love can be identified as her strengths. These delineated strengths will serve as powerful tools to assist her in navigating the resources presented to her; for example, consult with an experienced legal representative for advice on divorce petition and custody battle.

Now, if I were bestowed the possibility of being Esperanza's mental health counselor, to construct my personal social justice plan, I would utilize Lee's (2007) five personal action steps to assist me in this endeavor. Lee's (2007) action steps are: explore life meaning and commitment, explore personal privilege, explore the nature of oppression, work to become multiculturally literate and establish a personal social justice compass.

Personalizing Lee's (2007) five action steps, I would commence with asking myself a series of questions regarding my desire to help Esperanza. Questions that may arise are: what is my aim for helping her? How can I advocate and help her face the obstacles imposed by her culture? Second, I would explore my history with power, privilege, and oppression. Prejudice and oppression affect everyone at some level. In my case, my gender and race automatically place me in the oppressed group. Hence, as a black woman, I fully understand issues that dominate the systems (racism, oppression, prejudice, discrimination, and power.)

Moreover, I have always sought to be abreast of the issues that govern the systems, specifically on matters involving minority groups. Therefore, with the multitude of knowledge I acquired in this arena, I believe I can be an agent of social justice and equity. However, as Esperanza and I are from different cultural backgrounds, I would continue to quest for sustainable knowledge about her culture. This will be done through exposure to Esperanza's

cultural groups and by learning her native roots and beliefs through books, articles, and newspapers.

**How would you help her advocate at the various systemic levels described in the advocacy competencies?**

To efficiently help Esperanza dismantle the cultural hurdles that impact her emotional and behavioral health, as her therapist, I would utilize the American Counseling Association (ACA) advocacy competency model to aid her. For optimal advocacy outcomes, we need to work collaboratively. Primarily, I would ask Esperanza to design a self-advocacy plan to orient her toward her goals. Beforehand, she would be trained on self-advocacy and how it can be developed. Some of the elements that would be included in the self-advocacy plan are her goals, self-care activities, the areas she excels at, the information of the organization and individuals she would contact, office, physical and clinical appointments. In brief, the self-advocacy plan is aimed to enlighten her about herself, others, and entitled rights.

On my end, I would ally with the organizations that can aid her in realizing her goals and combat cultural oppression. These allies are schools, community-based programs, immigration representatives and services, and lawyers. Moreover, I would ensure she has access to the necessary tools or gadgets she would need to support her during the journey of self-advocacy. For instance, if she does not have access to a computer or internet, I will connect her to external organizations or agencies to acquire them through monetary funds or donations. Lastly, I would sporadically revise her self-advocacy plan to ascertain that her goals are met and that she receives all necessary services to confront all the barriers contributing to her current mental health concern.

**What would be your goals in this action and advocacy plan?**

In the delineated action and advocacy plan, my goals are to aid Esperanza to be aware of the powers at work in her current situation and empower her through training, community

collaboration, and resources to become resilient, confident, and be her true self. Thus, in short, my goal is to fight against social and cultural injustice. If these factors (culture, religion, and family) are not addressed or voted against, Esperanza will continue to experience anxiety, solitude, bouts of rage, and insomnia. As human beings, regardless of our race, gender, economic status, and language, we are entitled to happiness and respect.

Esperanza will fail to combat discrimination and culture-based prejudice if she continues to be unaware of her fundamental rights. Laws could not be enacted if there were no imbalance in the systems. I am conscious that advocating on Esperanza's behalf and implementing an action plan will not abruptly destroy the systems that posed a barrier to her mental health since they have existed and been in control for years. Nonetheless, this plan could be a pathway toward freedom and may contribute to positive change in the system in the future.

## References

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