Social Welfare and Policy

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Greenwood Performance Piece: How would I show up?

I am always amazed at the way performance art and art in general can be used as a medium to communicate. This performance art piece on the events that took place in Greenwood is no different. When I witnessed clips of the piece many emotions were invoked in me, sadness, frustration and anger in particular. The way that I would show up, which I assume would be a common response for all social workers would be to provide immediate aid to those affected by the massacre. In particular the elderly and the children, those who would be the most vulnerable in this situation. Providing medical resources to the people who have been severely injured, as well as emergency resources such as food, clothing and places for displaced families to live while trying to find more permanent living situations. Not to mention, providing mental health services for those affected by the trauma they experienced; as a way for them come to terms with what is their new reality. As well as provide mental health services for those who are providing services to the people affected as they could be experiencing vicarious trauma. Social workers could also advocate changes in laws and policy that allowed this man-made disaster to happen with no repercussions.

The one aspect that I didn't consider that was brought to my attention by my cohorts would be showing up for the community of those responsible for the massacre. They may be individuals may not have the same feeling towards African Americans and don't feel that they have power to go against

community thought for fear of being ostracized or worse. If I'm being honest with myself, I didn't care about what feelings that community might have after what happened in Greenwood. It was hard for me to learn about these events and not be angry about it, so why would I want to even consider being compassionate towards those responsible for this heinous act. However, I know that according to James 1:20 "Human anger does not produced the righteousness that God desires." I know that as a social worker I have to help people no matter the race, gender, or economic standing, I am aware of my implicit biases and am actively working towards improving myself in regards to these biases. So that begs the question how would I show up for this particular community. Perhaps creating a space for those individuals in that community that don't share the same hateful sentiments as the rest of the community, to have open dialogue about race and how to improve relations between them and those from the black and brown community. Also providing mental health for them as they may have feelings that what took place and how to help get through them.

Figuring out how to help those and the families of those who have inflicted harm upon another person or community has been stretching my thinking when it comes to Social work. As I continue to learn and better understand what it truly mean to be service minded, I realize that I cant deny those who need help regardless of who they are or what they have done.