

Reflection on Chattanooga Systems

By Savannah Grignon

Reaction

Over the past few days, I have seen several systems at work in Chattanooga. From an overlooked, impoverished school district, the project housing that in which many of these same kids might live, and the laws that are at the foundation of it all, I have had the opportunity to analyze the macro-level implications that these systems have on the social work profession. To describe it as a social justice issue does not do it justice. While I did not see anything outstandingly unexpected, hearing from working professionals in these areas renewed my desire and passion for social justice and helped me to see how these systems are all connected in a way that I had not visualized before.

Implications

Over the past several days, I have considered many implications that these systems have on me as a professional. As a social worker, I am called to social justice work. In order to conduct my work in social justice competently, it is important that I keep myself aware of what is going on in that community, including areas that I am not necessarily working in. This is because, as I saw this past week, all community systems are connected in some way. In addition to social justice and competence, it is also important that I do not get burned out in my field. Social work burnout is said to be one of the highest of any profession, so I know that the risks are high. When speaking with the professionals working in the systems we visited, they did not seem burned out, despite having many reasons to be. Rather, their passions seemed as high as anyone's. When asked, one man said he is renewed with hope each day, knowing that he made a

difference in at least one person's life, even if he could not help everyone. That is why I would like to end my reflection with my favorite quote, so that it may serve as a constant reminder and personal goal to me when burnout draws near.

“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

-Edward Everett Hale