

# Costs of Oppression to People from Dominant Groups

## **Psychological Costs: Loss of Authentic Sense of Self**

- Socialized into limited roles and patterns of behavior
- Denial of emotions and empathy
- Distorted view of self and false sense of superiority
- Discrepancy between others' perceptions and own, internal reality
- Fears (of doing and saying the wrong thing, of retaliation from oppressed groups, of judgment if reveal true self, of different people and experiences)

## **Moral and Spiritual Costs: Loss of Moral and Spiritual Integrity**

- Guilt and shame
- Moral ambivalence (doing the right thing vs. social pressures to conform to dominant role)
- Spiritual emptiness and pain

## **Social Costs: Loss and Diminishment of Relationships**

- Isolation from people who are different from oneself
- Barriers to deeper, more authentic relationships
- Ostracism from others in own group if do not conform

## **Intellectual Costs: Loss of Developing Full Range of Knowledge**

- Ignorance of other people and cultures
- Distorted and limited view of reality

## **Material Costs: Loss of Safety and Resources**

- Living in a world of increasing violence and unrest (restricted ability to move about freely; increased fear for self and others; limited desirable places to live, work, go to school, recreate)
- Loss of knowledge to foster societal growth and well-being
- Waste of resources (to deal with effects of inequality)
- Loss of valuable employees, clients and customers
- Diminished collective action for common concerns

## **Benefits of Eliminating Oppression for People from Dominant Groups**

- Fuller, more authentic sense of self
- More authentic relationships and human connection
- Moral integrity and consistency
- Freedom from fears
- Improved living and working conditions
- Access to other cultures and wisdom
- More resources to address common concerns
- Greater opportunity for genuine democracy and justice

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## WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE FROM DOMINANT GROUPS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL JUSTICE

**EMPATHY:** Identifying with the situation and feelings of another person. The capacity to share in the emotional life of another, as well as the ability to imagine the way the world looks from another's vantage point

Motivation:

- 1) to comply with one's own internalized standards
- 2) to reduce one's own negative feelings
- 3) altruism

**MORAL PRINCIPLES AND SPIRITUAL VALUES:** Beliefs about what is right and wrong.

*Justice oriented-* Focused on rights and fairness. Concerned with upholding principles or standards that are rooted in a sense of equality and reciprocity (treating others as you would want to be treated).

*Care oriented-* Focused on relationships and responsiveness. Concerned with promoting the welfare of others, preventing harm, and relieving physical or psychological suffering.

Motivation:

- 1) to live up to and according to one's moral/spiritual values
- 2) to right what one perceives as a wrong.

**SELF-INTEREST:** Benefits to oneself, that do not necessarily exclude benefits to others as well.

Motivation: to get one's needs met

### CONTINUUM OF SELF-INTEREST

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INDIVIDUALISTIC  
"ME"

MUTUAL  
"YOU AND ME"

INTERDEPENDENT  
"US"

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