

The Voices Of Silence: Decolonising social work education and practice

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Abstract

Can one divorce a concept and practice from the context and the guiding principle under which it was created? Professional social work theory, education, knowledge production and practices were not only created in the same time and space (19th and century Europe) as colonisation but the need for its proliferation around the world was further exacerbated by the same systems of oppression that it seeks to address. The object of this project therefore was to explore how/where/ and when social work (which in its most basic form is the acknowledgement of the humanity of those in need and developing relationships that provide help) became a professional practice and an academic study. This project not only posits that social work is colonized given that it was introduced in African countries and other European colonies through the colonial masters but that today, its practice reproduces and reinforces colonial power structures. With the history of its inherent links to colonialism in mind, this project explored how this need for decolonization is currently being articulated by social work professionals and academics.