During the 1930s and 1940s, German-Jewish scholars were expelled from their academic posts in German universities by the Nazi regime. Becoming refugees and in danger of being deported to concentration camps, many academics pleaded for asylum in the United States and requested teaching appointments in American colleges and universities. Many universities did not offer these scholars positions, and the scholars were denied entry into the United States (Edgcomb 1993).

The exception was a group of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), institutions that were founded to educate the sons and daughters of American slaves. HBCUs offered teaching positions to approximately 50 German-Jewish refugee scholars in fields ranging from mathematics to visual art (Edgcomb 1993). Part of the core educational missions of these institutions was to address social inequality and to work toward racial justice. Administrators at HBCUs saw an opportunity to extend this commitment by welcoming refugee scholars to their campuses. Merging international education and social justice ideals led to extraordinary results. The Jewish scholars provided HBCU students with a high-quality education, which the students could not have accessed elsewhere in the United States. Shocked by the segregation and racial violence in the South, many refugee scholars observed chilling parallels to the anti-Semitism they had left behind in Europe. Some were compelled to encourage students to resist racism by protesting segregation laws and participating in the civil rights movement. In this case, HBCUs set an example by providing refuge to German-Jewish scholars, who in turn...
taught Black students to use their critical thinking skills to challenge white supremacy.

This is just one example of how international education can be both a catalyst and an incubator for transformational work in communities at home and abroad. Social Justice and International Education: Research, Practice, and Perspectives features the perspectives of contemporary scholars and practitioners from around the world who are doing innovative work at the intersection of these two areas. The authors bring a depth of experience to their integration of social justice theories and concepts in international education. They are research scholars, education abroad professionals, teachers, university administrators, poets, and community activists who are using international education to work for social equality. Designed to reach a wide audience, the chapters address critical issues in the fields of international education and social justice. Young professionals, graduate students, activists, K–12 teachers and administrators, senior university leadership, and citizens who wish to take action in their communities, among others, will gain valuable insight into the ways in which international education can apply a social justice perspective to cultivate and support global citizenship.

Key Themes
This book illuminates the ways in which the field of international education uses social justice pedagogy, curriculum design, and community engagement practices to address inequality and systems of oppression in various forms around the world. Its aims are twofold. First, this book provides multiple frameworks for defining and thinking about social justice in international education, as there is no singular approach or method for this work. Authors draw from a variety of academic disciplines and theories for their work, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and colleagues’ Critical Race Theory (1995); Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972); and Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot’s theorization of view, voice, and visibility (2017). Second, the book is a call to action, prompting readers to be introspective and think critically about what steps they can take to initiate or amplify the global dimensions of their social justice work. The authors discuss how to guide students in the classroom and in communities in thinking about their dual roles
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as learners and as social justice advocates. International educators acknowledge that issues such as equalizing access, addressing implicit bias, promoting inclusive excellence, and supporting peacebuilding are shared goals in both social justice and international education (Womack-Wynne 2018). However, what can we do now to take more decisive action on these issues and assess the outcomes? How can we bring more voices and perspectives together in constructive dialogue about social justice and how it shapes internationalization (Olson, Evans, and Schoenberg 2007)? To help readers with this second aim, a number of the authors present recommendations and questions for the reader to consider as they think about integrating social justice principles into their work and the work of their institutions.

Throughout the book, the authors find different ways to articulate the concept of a social justice mindset in international education. This mindset includes a framework for, and an approach to thinking about, social issues and institutional barriers in a global context that address three important themes: (1) identifying and challenging institutional structures that perpetuate social inequality using a critical theoretical lens; (2) embracing a “bottom up” approach to thinking about how specific marginalized groups are affected by their relationships to power and privilege; and (3) developing processes and exercises that seek to analyze and interrogate individual and group biases. Throughout the book, the authors present concrete examples of how these themes inform research, practice, and perspectives on social justice and international education.

Overview of the Book

This book is divided into three sections: Social Justice Research (part I), Social Justice in Practice (part II), and Perspectives from the Field (part III). In part I, academic researchers share their findings from conducting social justice-oriented research in international education. These chapters demonstrate how to ask scholarly questions with a social justice mindset. David Wick and Tasha Willis open this section with an overview of the scholarly social justice questions that impact the field of international education, arguing that all international educators should approach their work with a social justice lens because peacebuilding...
Social Justice and International Education

and mutual understanding are shared goals of international educators and social justice advocates. Yecid Ortega uses a similar argument in his study of a social justice curriculum for English language learners in Colombia, reiterating the claim that together, peacebuilding and social justice work can promote social transformation and racial healing. Aaron Clevenger offers alternative ways to think about the history and evolution of the term “social justice” and how to design international social justice programs for students who are underrepresented in education abroad but considered privileged in almost every other context (e.g., male students in STEM fields). Supriya Baily’s chapter looks at the problems that nationalist political ideologies present for international education and how social justice advocacy can help counteract nationalist tendencies. Shontay Delalue analyzes the challenges that Black African international students face in being racialized in the U.S. higher education context and marginalized as racial minorities; for many of these students, it is the first time in their lives they have this experience.

The chapters in part II are written by practitioners in international education who provide examples and recommendations for how readers can use social justice principles in their own work. Eduardo Contreras urges education abroad professionals to discontinue the “deficit mindset” approach to advising students and warns against the “prejudice of invisibility” in overlooking underrepresented students or assuming they have little to contribute to shaping education abroad experiences. In her chapter on developing an education abroad program specifically for HBCU students interested in social justice, Tonija Hope Navas underscores the importance of foreign language fluency in supporting students’ cross-cultural social justice learning. Malaika Marable Serrano brings the concepts of intersectionality and multiple identities to the center of social justice teaching in education abroad. Helping students understand how their identities relate to their academic content abroad, she argues, creates opportunities for conversation about empathy and engaging across differences. Becca AbuRakia-Einhorn writes about her work with students who are deaf and hard of hearing in the education abroad office at Gallaudet University, the only university in the United States specifically for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Advocating for deaf students
to have the resources needed for equal access to study abroad opportunities, AbuRakia-Einhorn raises awareness of the difficulties and additional costs that these students incur to study abroad. Bryce Loo argues that from a social justice perspective, refugee students at U.S. higher education institutions need to be supported academically but also fully integrated into campus life so that their intellectual interests and life experiences become part of an inclusive campus culture. Finally, Christina W. Yao, Chrystal A. George Mwangi, and Victoria K. Malaney Brown use Critical Race Theory to consider how international students are racialized on U.S. college campuses and how this racialization negatively affects their learning and co-curricular experiences. In the process of developing their argument, the authors call for an expansion of the Critical Race Theory into a transnational framework.

Part III includes 11 short essays and a poem, or “Perspectives from the Field,” from authors’ direct experiences working on social justice issues in international education. Authors in this section come from a variety of sectors, including human rights, secondary schools, nonprofits, universities, peacebuilding, and community activism. The essays provide specific examples of how each author challenges the prevailing assumptions in their sectors to expand opportunities and access to marginalized groups. As a collection, the essays complement the book’s earlier chapters by describing examples of what the authors’ theories and practical recommendations look like “on the ground.”

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Response to Systemic Racial Injustice

This book was published in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and a movement across the United States and around the world to confront systemic racial injustice. These issues and the global responses to them—as well as their economic, social, and political consequences—have dramatically impacted higher education broadly, with consequences specifically for international education. Those working in international education should approach these global challenges with a social justice lens.
The coronavirus has unequal outcomes, disproportionately affecting communities of color around the world, those living in environmentally degraded areas, and people who have fewer financial means or lack access to quality healthcare. In addition, the first cases of the virus were diagnosed in Wuhan, China, which has provoked racist acts against people of Asian descent around the world and sparked xenophobic policies targeted toward foreigners and immigrants.

The United States and many other countries have also been forced to reckon with systemic racial injustice that is manifested through white supremacy, police violence, health disparities, social and economic inequality, and other forms of oppression. The collective outrage about these issues has started a global conversation about the international dimensions of white privilege and the specific need to name, confront, and end anti-Black racism by unequivocally asserting that Black Lives Matter.

As the pandemic and the response to systemic racial injustice continue, one thing is clear: The international education community is entering a new and critical phase in which the work of those in the field can make a direct contribution to fostering social change. International education professionals must think critically about how the social justice principles and themes in this book can inform international education more broadly, reaching more disciplines, faculty, programs, and research collaborations.

A Note on Capitalization
Readers may notice some variation in capitalization throughout the book, specifically with regard to “Black”/”black,” “white”/”White,” and “people or students of color”/”people or students of Color.” Recognizing ethnic identity is an important aspect of social justice scholarship, practice, and pedagogy. In some chapters, authors capitalize or lowercase terms such as “Black,” “white,” or “people/students of Color” to recognize and affirm people from marginalized groups and identities. To support the authors in this work and to respect their perspectives, NAFSA has diverged a bit from its style guidelines that would typically treat these terms in the same way throughout the book.
Conclusion

Social Justice and International Education: Research, Practice, and Perspectives aims to educate, challenge long-held assumptions, and inspire action. Leading scholars and practitioners from around the world are working to imagine new ways of thinking about how to broaden and deepen widespread engagement in social issues and communicate their global significance. Now, more than ever before, the intersection of social justice and international education is relevant, urgent, and consequential.

References


