

REVIEWS

BOOKS

Care or control? Examining our past to ensure our future

Title: Social work's histories of complicity and resistance

Editors: Vasilios Ioakimidis & Aaron Wylie

ISBN: 978-1-4473-6428-3

Price: £27.99 (www.policypress.co.uk)

This book focuses on social work's legacy and history of both political resistance and complicity with oppressive and punitive practices. It examines social work complicity with systems and practices of colonialism and racism in the US, Canada, Australia and South Africa. Social work's support and/or resistance to explicitly ideological agendas pursued by dictatorial/authoritarian regimes, including Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, is outlined.

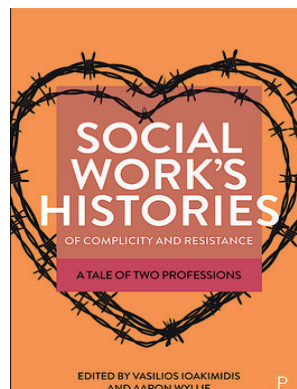
It looks at social work in Portugal and Palestine where conflict and political turmoil enabled social work to be less embroiled in the state apparatus and be reconfigured in new, more progressive forms. The book refers to histories of social work in relation to the 'care' and 'control' of those deemed deviant or morally transgressive; and perspectives and reflections on the personal impact of social work's conflicted histories as well as acknowledging the

need to redress pain and ongoing injustice.

I particularly liked Dettlaff's and Copeland's chapter on the oppressive history of the child welfare system in the US. It is referred to as the 'family policing system', which has racist origins with the rate of forced removal of Black children from families being nearly double that of white children. The call is for the system's abolition with funds reinvested in families and communities to help all children remain safely at home. As critical/radical social workers have long advocated, community-led and community-driven systems of support are needed to ensure families thrive.

This is an important book examining social work's collective past in order to ensure a future where human rights and social justice are upheld in marginalised communities.

Steve Rogowski



EXHIBITIONS

Art meets social work

'Thirty-Six', MAC
Marley Starskey Butler
(until Sun Jan 28 2024)

Thirty-Six is a poignant exploration of the human experience, delving into themes of family, empathy, trauma, identity, and understanding. A curated collection of photographs, records, and interactive displays creates a profound narrative that invites visitors to contemplate the intricate dynamics of social work. As a social worker, I felt connected to how deeply the challenges of the role affect us personally. Themes of empathy are skilfully woven, emphasising the vital role of compassion in social work. Identity emerges as a central focus, with Marley offering a unique perspective on their experience of social work, both as care-experienced and a practitioner.

It is impossible not to reflect on how disturbing it can be to intervene in children's and parents' lives on behalf of the state. Marley's photos taken from train windows on the way to assessments spoke to me about those times when we begin to make sense of a family's story, interweaving our own.

I've been to this exhibition twice because it is the first art show I've encountered dealing with what it is to be a social worker. I felt Marley expressed the often uncomfortable and conflicting feelings that are integral to the role. My takeaway is that we must carefully process these feelings for ourselves, and for others.

Charlotte Jenkins

BOOKS

Child's diaries about autism turned into compelling novel

Title: Do You Know Me?

Author: Libby Scott & Rebecca Westcott

ISBN: 9780702300950

Price: £5.99 (www.shop.scholastic.co.uk/products/131783)

This innovative collaboration between a young writer with autism and a published author follows a neurodiverse girl as she makes the massive shift to secondary school.

Tally often sits on top of the shed, a safe space to escape to, and sometimes adopts the mask of Tiger Girl, which allows her to manage trigger points.

One such trigger is a meal out in a posh restaurant where other families comment on her refusal to eat anything on the menu.

Tally's schoolfriends are observed well, particularly Layla, who comes across as understanding, and Luke, a boy who unkindly calls her Weirdo Adams.

Tally finds solace in drama lessons, although in the first lesson of term she takes literally the teacher's

suggestion to place thoughts about her lesson in an ideas bin. The teacher uses it to introduce Tally's idea of a quiet space to go to when needed. Through drama Tally begins to see that she is not that different to her peers.

When Tally's tiger mask is found by her peers and passed around, she decides that the incident is a catalyst to finally unmask herself.

I found this book a refresher on the subject of autism, told from the character's perspective in an authentic and believable way. As I return to a frontline social work role, it reminded me of the importance of being both person-centred and strength-based in approach.

Daniel Keeler

