

Book Review

Delgado, M. (2020). *State-sanctioned violence: Advancing a social work and social justice agenda*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by Ottis Murray, Ed.D.
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

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As I begin this book, I flash back to the 1960s with protests and demonstrations against the war and calls for racial, social, political, and economic justice. Now, 60 years later, those same calls for social justice still ring true; the headlines today provide evidence of the continuing struggle for social justice contrasted with state-sanctioned repressive counteractions in the name of law and order.

This book traces and describes the evolution and use of state-sanctioned violence to perpetuate the status quo, which serve to reinforce continued institutional racism. The words of Malcom X (1962) lay the foundation for this examination:

As long as he is black and a member of the Negro community, the white public thinks that the white policeman is justified in going in there and trampling on that man's civil rights and that man's human rights. Once the police have convinced the white public that the so-called Negro community is a criminal element, they can go in and question, brutalize, murder unarmed, innocent Negroes and the white public is gullible enough to back them up. (p. 41)

As a social worker, researcher, and scholar for over 40 years, Dr. Delgado's work has centered on urban populations, especially youth and minorities. He has published over 30 books on community practice, ranging from "youth-led community organizing" to "urban social work practice" to "urban youth

trauma" to "health care in the nation's prisons" and others. The array and scope of his scholarship and practice is astonishing. Dr. Delgado is a professor in the School of Social Work at Boston University.

With more than 1,000 references, this book has three sections which focus on foundations, manifestations, and practice. The sections address five goals: (1) provide a conceptual foundation of state-sanctioned violence; (2) critique and provide relevance for the social work profession; (3) examine how violence gets manifested; (4) identify cross-cutting themes; and (5) speculate as to potential developments in the future.

Displaying his research and scholarship skills, Dr. Delgado crafts a compelling exploration and understanding of our current state of affairs, with clear, powerful gems that illustrate critical concepts such as state-sponsored violence. For example; the words of Frederick Douglas (1886):

Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe. (p. 48)

The book is compelling and thought providing, with numerous examples of the current state of affairs for both consideration and debate. The hope is to ultimately assist the reader in a better understanding

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and renewed consideration of the intersection of history with contemporary practices and realities.

Dr. Delgado seeks to challenge current and future social workers evaluate their obligations and current challenges to act to address clear, present, and persisting inequalities. In his words:

Finding the middle ground between stark assessments and maintaining hope is my goal. Readers will be the ultimate judges as to whether this goal was accomplished. That conclusion takes time because it necessitates a deliberative process. After all, we are social workers! (p. 184)