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## New book on social justice by Dr Joan Beckwith exposes and challenges abuses of structural power

Invitation to join a conversation about social equity; every contribution counts to this collective work in progress

Melbourne's long winter lockdown in 2020 proved fruitful for Dr Joan Beckwith, enabling her to write and publish her latest book, *Social Justice Is For Everyone*, an Invitation in Essays to Join a Conversation.

A decades-long advocate of social justice, former academic Dr Beckwith has also been a psychologist-practitioner in health, mental health, university and refugee settings.

This proud and officially retired 'feminist psychologist' is currently working with two Melbourne councils on reconciliation plans and is donating \$10 from every book sold to the Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Council.

Dr Beckwith's 300-page book comprises 41 essays that develop the idea that every issue of social justice is part of the issue of social equity, highlighting the intersections between, for example, race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, refugee status, health and mental health, economic inequality and access to education.

"Promoting social justice is, the argument develops, all about unpacking power," she says. "Hierarchical power relations between social groups are the meta-issue. Social justice work is about exposing and challenging abuses, subverting and redistributing structural power.

"Social justice work celebrates diversity, respects difference, forges connections across issues and groups and amplifies marginalised voices.

"The book is designed to open up conversations rather than prescribing a particular opinion and is a valuable resource for people who want to review their engagement with social issues and consider alternative but well researched issues along the way," she said.

Chapters come under 10 broad topics including:

- \* Racism
- \* Gender and sexuality
- \* Disability policy–refugee policy
- \* Worker abuse
- \* Children
- \* Older generations
- \* Health and mental health
- \* Economic injustice
- \* Education

*Social Justice Is For Everyone* is aimed at anyone with any level of interest in any dimension of social justice and their intersections. It draws on academic theory and Dr Beckwith's professional background, but the writing style is conversational and broadly accessible.

Ms Colleen Turner, a fellow and former director of social issues at the Australian Psychological Society, said, "Dr Joan Beckwith's analysis is based on the impact of real power differentials and focusses on how to even them for the benefit of everyone. She places the least powerful at the centre of her analysis reversing the usual privileging. The book uses examples that are clear, compelling and concrete."

Dr Lorraine Jessie Harrison, a social worker with experience in working with carers, elder abuse, and sexual assault, said, "Dr Joan Beckwith's book has a rich variety of chapters on many areas of social justice including racism, gender and sexuality, disability, worker abuse, children, ageism, mental health, economic injustice and education. It is an exemplary piece of work bringing together an edited collection of well researched essays."

Published by Busybird Publishing, the book is available from online retailers as a paperback (various prices from \$28.60-\$38.26 inc P&P) and Kindle eBook from Amazon for \$7.33. It is also available from the author at [joan.beckwith@outlook.com](mailto:joan.beckwith@outlook.com) in return for a donation to the Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Council. Further details can be found at <https://2020socialjustice.com/>

The first chapter is available free from: <https://2020socialjustice.com/social-justice-for-all/>

Ends

About the author:

Dr Joan Beckwith's career commenced as a Registered Psychologist in 1987 and continued to 2010. She has a BA with Majors in Psychology and Media Studies (Swinburne), an MA Preliminary (Psychology) (Melbourne University) an MA (Coursework, Women's Studies) (Latrobe University) a Graduate Diploma in Education (Tertiary) and a PhD (Psychology) (Melbourne University). Dr Beckwith is now retired as a professional psychologist, but continues to draw on her background and experience in her writing and activism.

"Feminism and psychology have an uneasy relationship, and the tension has shaped the way I have worked as an academic, a counsellor in a university, a practitioner in community-based mental health and drug services, and with people seeking asylum in unwelcoming times.

"The day one of my feminist mentors introduced me to a colleague as a 'feminist psychologist' was a landmark, even though many mainstream

psychologists (as well as many feminists) would see such a description as an oxymoron.

"Feminist theory started me thinking about relationships of power wherever they occur, given that gender intersects with other key dimensions (including race, class, and sexuality, for example) which in turn intersect with each other. Relationships of power underlie issues of social justice so that these, in turn, also form an intersecting web.

"Social justice has provided the unifying theme across the personal, professional and political domains of my life. I have worked towards it in theory and practice with students, clients and colleagues, as well as closer to home. I have marched and rallied, signed petitions and collected signatures, lobbied, produced papers and given presentations."

Dr Joan Beckwith

<https://2020socialjustice.com/>

Reviews:

"This book is an invaluable opportunity to sit down with a knowledgeable writer and esteemed psychologist in the field of social justice. Dr Beckwith offers a gentle challenge to the way one perceives a wide-ranging set of social justice issues, turning them over and viewing them from new angles. She exemplifies the curiosity and empathy that is pivotal to productive engagement with social justice concerns. No matter what stage of awareness about matters of social justice one has reached, we all have a lot to learn from this book."

Sam Stevens (they/them) (Poet; Editor at Busybird Publishing; Associate Editor at The Suburban Review; BA in Literature and Creative Writing from Melbourne University)

"It's a book that will have a big impact on readers because it raises issues about which we should all be concerned. The writing style is engaging, provocative, but non-judgmental to promote thoughtfulness and hopefully social change."

Dr Christine Baxter (two decades of teaching and research in disability studies at Deakin University)

"Dr Joan Beckwith's book has a rich variety of chapters on many areas of social justice including racism, gender and sexuality, disability, worker abuse, children, ageism, mental health, economic injustice and education. It is an exemplary piece of work bringing together an edited collection of well researched essays. I have found chapters informative, incisive and easily readable. I congratulate Joan on this excellent book and many, many years fighting and writing about social justice for all."

Dr Lorraine Jessie Harrison (Social Worker with experience in working with carers, elder abuse, and sexual assault)

More reviews in media release.

Media enquiries:

Issued on behalf of Dr Joan Beckwith by WMC Public Relations Pty Ltd.

To request a copy of the book (please specify printed copy or PDF), high-res photos or an interview with Joan Beckwith, please contact Wendy McWilliams on 03 9803 2588 / 0421 364 665.

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