

# Conflict Resolution and Social Change: The Convergence Of Professional Social Work Identity in the Practice of Public Dialogue

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This bibliography was developed in conjunction with Adrienne's ongoing work in public dialogue and the three co-authors' preparation of a manuscript currently under review. We presented the manuscript at the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting in New York, March, 2005; there is a short piece in *The ACOSA Update!* newsletter ([www.acosa.org](http://www.acosa.org)) Winter 2005 18(3) issue. We hope you find these references to be useful. *We welcome your contacting us with comments and with suggested additions to the bibliography.*

## From the manuscript:

**Abstract:** Topics such as politics, racism, and religion are often flashpoints for social conflict. This article examines public dialogue work as a bridging mechanism through which social workers across the micro-macro spectrum, but particularly those with a clinical focus, can engage with people in conflict to advance advocacy, justice and social change. First, public dialogue work is defined. Second, applications of public dialogue are reviewed, with an emphasis on the not-for-profit/civil society and academic sectors. Finally, suggestions are offered in regard to how social workers can more fully use public dialogue work to promote social justice and change.

**Definition:** Public dialogue work is a process designed to involve individuals and groups in an exploration of societal issues about which views differ, often to the extent that polarization and conflict occur. Participants are engaged in, witness, and are affected by a facilitated community experience. They strive to avoid old unproductive language, foster new listening skills, improve communication patterns, value differences, and develop shared meanings (Chasin, Herzig, Roth, Chasin, Becker, & Stains, 1996). Public dialogue potentiates a democratic process that acknowledges and respects all parties, creates a context that reinforces the notion that change is possible, and transforms relationships toward positive social change.

Characteristics of dialogue include fostering an environment that enables participants to speak and listen in the present while understanding the contributions of the past and the unfolding of the future. This type of environment is created by factors such as the choice of location for public dialogue, the establishment of communication and relationships with dialogue participants, and knowledgeable design and facilitation of public dialogue...They are encouraged to collaborate willingly, be vulnerable, and believe in the authenticity of all participants (Cissna & Anderson, 2002). Public dialogue is a facilitated process with various pedagogical, participatory, and other dynamic approaches to such facilitation (Shor & Friere, 1987).

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