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Dr. Joseph L. Jones is a scholar activist who is the Founding Director of the Social Justice Initiative at Philander Smith College. He received his B.A. in Political Science from Philander Smith College and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from Clark Atlanta University. Dr. Jones has had fellowships at W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University and the Black Panther Party Research Project at Stanford University. He is currently finishing a book entitled *“An Institutional Black Messiah: W.E.B. Du Bois Political Philosophy of Education for Black Institutions of Higher Education”*. His research interests include: 21st Century Public Diplomacy, African American Political Thought, Politics of Education, and the Politics of Hip-hop.



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Terrance L. Thomas is the Program Coordinator of the Social Justice Initiative at Philander Smith College. A native of Chicago IL, he received a B.A. in Inner City Studies and Sociology from Northeastern Illinois University. He has worked as Program Coordinator for Olive Harvey College’s Black Studies Conference, as a Male Involvement Specialist for Headstart with Henry Booth House, and as a Corporate Salesman for Borders. He has volunteered with various community organizations throughout the Chicago area and remains a very active member of his home church. Mr. Thomas is the father of four children.

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Liz Harris is the Administrative Assistant for the Social Justice Initiative at Philander Smith College. She received her B.B.A. in Business Management and her M.B.A. from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. During her academic career, Ms. Harris completed a three-year internship with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and received numerous awards, honors, and recognitions. She is a member of two prestigious national honor societies, Beta Gamma Sigma and Phi Kappa Phi.



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From the Office of

The Social Justice Initiative



T H I N K J U S T I C E



History of the Social Justice Initiative

Philander Smith College launched its Social Justice Initiative (SJI) in August of 2007 under the leadership and vision of President Walter M. Kimbrough. With support and backing from faculty, alumni, students and the board of trustees, Philander Smith College changed its mission **“to graduate academically accomplished students, grounded as advocates for social justice, determined to change the world for the better.”** This rebranding of the college’s identity compliments Philander’s history, which has always had a social justice focus, as well as its commitment to the social principles of the United Methodist Church.

Following the changing of the college mission, other critical milestones followed:

- *The inclusion of special guest speakers and justice themes for Opening Convocation*
- *Inviting Bless The Mic lecturers who are renowned for their noteworthy activism*
- *The creation of the Ozell Sutton Medal of Justice*
- *The infusion of social justice themes in the Freshman Colloquium*
- *Increase of Justice-related internships for students*
- *Changing the College's address to honor social justice activist Daisy L. Gatson Bates*
- *The establishment and meeting of the Social Justice Advisory Board*
- *The founding of the student organization “The Social Justice League”*

In 2010 the Kresge Foundation awarded the college \$1.2 million dollars to establish an office for the SJI to continue to infuse social justice into the college’s culture. It is out of this opportunity that the office of the SJI was created and the vision, mission, strategic objectives and organizational values were contrived.

SJI’s Four Core Values:

- **PROFESSIONALISM**-Presenting the vision, mission, and objectives of the SJI with competency, accountability, and éclat.
- **INTEGRITY**-Adhering to the principles of honesty, truthfulness, and ethical behavior when advocating social justice.
- **COMPASSION**-As a United Methodist related institution, we are committed to identifying with the suffering of the least of these who have been/are marginalized due to their social status.
- **CONSCIENTIZATION**-Learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against it through sustained critical consciousness.

“What is Social Justice?”

Social justice demands equity for groups that have been/are marginalized because of political, patriarchal, physical economic, racial/ethnic, and/or religious oppression.

SJI Core Values



SJI’s Vision

To create a culture where social justice is a permanent part of the institutional make-up by engendering a community of consciousness, academic engagement, and advocacy grounded in justice.

SJI’s Mission

To cultivate consciousness, provide intellectual activities, and serve as champion for social justice causes on the campus of Philander Smith College that will have an impact locally, nationally, and internationally.

SJI’s Four Objectives

Objective 1: To provide *academic* opportunities for faculty and students to deepen their knowledge about social justice.

The SJI will provide several academic opportunities for both faculty and students. The SJI will offer faculty development opportunities for faculty involving course development, service learning and social justice training. Likewise, the students will have the opportunity to participate in service learning, internships, and social justice related training. Additionally, faculty and staff will have the opportunity to interact with visiting professors/ practitioners from various academic backgrounds.

Objective 2: To serve as an intellectual *think tank* by hosting campus, local, and national conferences on salient social justice problems facing society.

The SJI will initiate and partner with other organizations to hold conferences aimed at bringing awareness and developing critical consciousness on campus and the Little Rock community. The SJI understands that any effort at developing a campus culture devoted to social justice must actively be thinking and planning about how to best address and confront these problems. These conferences will provide a vehicle for scholars, students, faculty, and community members to come together and strategically plan on how to eradicate injustice.

Objective 3: To conduct and provide *research* opportunities for faculty and students on social justice issues in the African American community.

As the premier HBCU in Arkansas, we believe that we should be at the forefront for addressing and researching social justice issues specific to the African American community. Therefore, the SJI is committed to conducting major research projects on social justice problems by collaborating with non-profit and foundations that focus on the African American community. Additionally, we will create research opportunities for student and faculty members involving other social justice related issues.

Objective 4: To serve as an *advocate* by championing social justice issues by collaborating with individuals and organizations.

The SJI is committed to becoming advocate for marginalized groups who have experienced injustice by supporting them thorough direct or indirect action. The SJI believes that at the core of social justice is the need to protect, defend, and respond for those groups who ordinarily cannot do so for themselves. The SJI will coalesce with other organizations and individuals by lending morale, intellectual and scholarly support.