

20

Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)

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Macro, meso, and micro perspectives

Global organizations are placing growing emphasis on the fair and respectful treatment of marginalized communities. The World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization (2001; 2018) call for health care that is not only accessible but also culturally sensitive, ensuring it genuinely meets the needs of diverse populations. The United Nations (2015) continues to champion equal rights, with a particular focus on migrants and minority groups who often face systemic barriers. Similarly, the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2016) underscores the importance of ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities, recognizing this as essential to health, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

Both the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) and the United Nations (UN) frame mental health as a universal human right, inseparable from dignity, equity, and social justice. WFOT's (2019a) *Position Statement on Occupational Therapy and Mental Health* underscores that poverty, discrimination, forced migration, and social exclusion profoundly affect wellbeing, particularly for marginalized communities. It calls for culturally responsive, occupation-based interventions that restore participation, purpose, and a sense of belonging, grounded in the principle of occupational justice – the right of all people to engage in meaningful activities that sustain both personal and community wellbeing (WFOT, 2019b).

The UN's global mental health framework echoes these priorities, highlighting how ethnic minorities – including Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, and Roma – face entrenched barriers, such as racism, poverty, and lack of culturally appropriate care (UN, n.d.a). These inequities, magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic, are rooted in structural factors: segregated housing, language barriers in healthcare, and exclusion from education, employment, and political participation (UN, n.d.b).

UN Special Rapporteurs Fernand De Varennes and Tlaleng Mofokeng have linked poor mental health outcomes to hate speech, statelessness, systemic racism, and poverty – drivers of police brutality, mass incarceration, and restricted access to housing and healthcare (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). In response, the UN established the Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, bringing together over 20 agencies to promote intersectional, culturally sensitive health services that respect identity and lived experience (UN, n.d.b).

The World Health Organization (WHO), as a specialized UN agency, reinforces this agenda by embedding human rights, equity, and intercultural approaches into public health policy. It advocates for community-based, non-institutional care that reduces stigma, strengthens resilience, and ensures that those facing racial discrimination can access comprehensive mental health support (UN, n.d.a).

Together, WFOT and the UN present a shared vision: tackling the structural causes of mental health disparities, challenging stigma, and promoting inclusive, culturally grounded care. Their approach recognizes that recovery is not only about reducing symptoms, but about restoring dignity, opportunity, and full participation in community life

Occupational Gift

Occupational gift: goat water and bread roll by Patricia Willock

The national dish of Monserrat. I made from meat of a male goat. It has a distinct taste and smell so it is not easy to perfect. It can't be too much like soup or too much like a stew. It has been served at every family gathering that I can remember. The reason I don't eat it and became a vegetarian is because of this very dish and my Grandad's putting an untimely end to my little friend 'Goatie'. Anyway, If it isn't served at an event, you'll hear 'no goat water?' as if the cook must be from another planet or another island. It is often accompanied by a bread roll. My Granny ran a bakery and my mum and her siblings made bread and sold it. Their 'penny bread' was well known on the island. Although the family did not have much,

they also gave bread rolls to those who were not so fortunate. Growing up with the smell of Mum's bread rolls was wondrous and fresh from oven, they were always a treat.

Occupational gift: dahlpuri by Roxanne Nembhard

One of my fondest memories is making dahlpuri with my mum, who was from Trinidad – a type of roti filled with ground yellow split peas. She'd part-boil the peas first, and I'd sit with a hand grinder, slowly working them down while we chatted about everything and anything. She'd cook the roti on a tawa, a flat iron griddle passed down through generations. My mum made the best dahlpuri – quick, flawless, and always for weddings, gatherings, and family dinners. It was her specialty, and she'd make them just for me when I visited. That simple act held our bond, our laughter, and the comfort of home.

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