

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

READING GUIDE #20

STRUCTURAL INJUSTICE

WHEN doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

READING

Shelby, T. (2007). Justice, deviance, and the dark ghetto. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 35(2), 126–160.

QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. The title of Tommie Shelby's article two potentially loaded words: "deviance" and "ghetto"? What does he mean by each of these?
2. What three main types of "deviances" does Shelby consider? How do these arise in poor urban black neighborhoods in the United States? In what ways does Shelby consider these "deviances" as potentially reasonable responses to structural injustice?
3. What is Shelby's distinction between civic obligations and natural duties? Why does he believe that civic obligations have a lesser claim on those living in poor urban black neighborhoods? What two natural duties does Shelby consider and what obligations do they create on those living in those neighborhoods?
4. According to Shelby, what is John Rawls' understanding of the "two different ways a society might be unjust" (p. 157)? What two forms of political resistance does Shelby draw from that distinction?
5. No matter the form of political resistance against structural injustice, what role does Shelby suggest that solidarity should play within it? In what ways might solidarity involve a repudiation of the ethics of the gangster and the hustler?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.