

## A foundational tenet of community justice

“A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.”

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu*  
1999

## A lawyer's responsibility

Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.

*1997 South African Governmental  
White Paper for Social Welfare*

How can a university help people and communities who face complex legal, psychological and social issues and lack the resources to pay for the professional services they need? One answer is the Interprofessional Center for Counseling and Legal Services, a joint effort by the School of Law, the Graduate School of Professional Psychology (a division of the College of Applied Professional Studies), and the University of St. Thomas-College of St. Catherine School of Social Work. Working collaboratively, law, psychology and social work students strive to meet the needs of underserved people while gaining valuable real-world experience.



## Community Justice Project

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# Community Justice Project

School of Law



UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS  
**Interprofessional Center**  
FOR COUNSELING AND LEGAL SERVICES

## Engineers of social justice

The Community Justice Project of the University of St. Thomas Interprofessional Center for Counseling and Legal Services offers an opportunity for students to integrate the University's mission into their Clinic experience as they work for justice and reconciliation. Following the sub-Saharan African ideology of "ubuntu," students focus on creating systemic changes that will further humanitarian goals.

The goal of CJP is to train law students to become, not just lawyers, but engineers of social change. Students gain valuable advocacy, legal research and writing, litigation and outreach skills. Students in the practice group are agents of change who ensure that justice is obtained for underserved members of the community. For example, lawyers who practice ubuntu may perform public service work through the community, or tackle the community problems that can arise when people lack access to attorneys in our system of justice.

CJP students are among the law students sworn in at the start of the academic year.



## The goal of CJP is to train law students to become, not just lawyers, but engineers of social change.

The Community Justice Project focuses on bridge building with community stakeholders and problem solving in distressed communities, taking a comprehensive look at improving lives in the Twin Cities African American community. The CJP has begun to implement practical solutions to longstanding challenges such as racial disparities in the criminal justice system, police brutality, and racial disparities in the educational and juvenile justice systems for at-risk youth.

### CJP projects have included

- Providing community education and mobilization around social justice issues and improving relationships between community members, the police department and local government;
- Creating a Community Awareness Program, through which law students travel to local elementary and secondary schools to educate youth about the law, their rights and interactions with police officers;
- Proposing and organizing an integrated approach to addressing gang violence by

creating a reintegration/prevention program called Brotherhood, Inc., patterned on an organization in Los Angeles (offering a social enterprise and integrated social services for young African-American men who have had contact with the criminal justice system);

Collaboration is a hallmark of the CJP.



- Working in restorative justice programs by drawing upon principles of community building, reconciliation, healing and peacemaking;
- Conducting research related to current civil rights topics, community policing models, police conduct review boards, and alternative dispute resolution methods; and
- Organizing community town hall forums and symposium addressing the intersection of race, poverty and the criminal justice system.