Value: Social and Economic Justice

Description of Perspective
This is one of the core social work values concerning the perception and treatment of people.

Examples of Social and Economic Injustice
- Profiteering during or after a disaster or war.
- Housing programs that provide shelter while segregating the have-nots from resources and mainstream activities.
- Programs that disempower, e.g., spending money to hire people to help the have-nots rather than spending the same money to empower the have-nots to help themselves.
- Economic injustice such as taxation that disproportionately takes money from the poor and gives it to the rich, e.g., taking social security out of the paychecks of illegal immigrants.
- Oppression, e.g., racism, sexism, civil rights, etc.
- Discrimination, e.g., the TV shows COPS exposes faults of poor but never the rich.
- Health care, e.g., in Haiti, life expectancy is 30 years less than in the US
- Environmental racism where toxic and property devaluing industries are put into low income neighborhoods, e.g., putting a land fill in the poor part of town or running an interstate highway on the border between the rich and poor side of a city thus isolating the poor from economic development. By DAVID PACE, Associated Press Writer 16Dec05, CAMDEN, N.J. - Lula Williams says, “open the front door some days and, Lord have mercy, you just can't breathe.” For 23 years, Williams has lived in front of the sewage treatment plant, around the corner from a licorice mulch plant, down the street from three scrap metal recyclers and within a few hundred yards of a radiation-contaminated Superfund site that languished for two decades before authorities cleaned it up. Since the early 1990s, she also has seen the county's trash-to-steam incinerator move into her neighborhood, as well as a new fossil-fuel-burning power plant and a recycling facility. But when the St. Lawrence Cement Co. began building its new plant down the street a few years ago, the 74-year-old Williams decided it was time to start fighting back. "This is a poor, black neighborhood, Hispanic and white," she said. "No other city or state that you go to would you find all this in it where residents live. You understand what I'm saying?" The AP's analysis of government data found that seven Camden NJ neighborhoods rank among the top 1 percent in the nation in the long-term health risk posed by industrial air pollution. All seven are mostly black and Hispanic. An AP analysis of 2000 census data found that African-Americans are 79% more likely than whites to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution is suspected of posing the greatest health danger.

Examples of Social and Economic Justice
- Reparations for past mass violations of human rights, e.g., U.S. African American slavery, South African Apartheid reparations, indigenous people's cases for reparations.
- Debt cancellation of developing countries whose corrupt leaders received and pilfered loans made to those countries by developed nations while the poor received nothing but debt.

Issues
- Are businesses exempt from practices of social and economic justice?
- Can churches discriminate just because they are churches?
- Are programs that try to change the culture of minorities into the majority culture ethical, e.g., attempts to make minority populations adapt into the larger culture by restricting their customs, languages, religious practices, etc?