

Social Work is a Lighthouse

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Abstract

My visual for social work comes from my BöK (Book of Ken), a tool to engage in reflective practice and foster my professional identity development. Social work is a lighthouse, a beacon of hope. Social work shines a light on the problems society tries to hide. This action is critical as the only way to gain the hope needed to solve a problem is by first seeing the problem and then the path beyond it. Social work does not guarantee success but provides hope that strengths can be found, the rocks can be avoided, and the client can sail freely. Social workers, like lighthouse keepers, are guides to solutions. Just as the ship has to work not to hit the rocks, the client has to work to improve their condition. There is a partnership (clear communication) between the lighthouse and the ship, similar to that between the social worker and the client.

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Social Work is a Lighthouse

"The unique contribution of social work practice is the duality of the profession's person and environment mandate: social workers must help society work better for people and help people function better within society" (Segal et al., 2019, p. 3). I reflected on this concept in my Bök (Book of Ken), a self-reflective tool to develop critical thinking and stimulate transformative learning (Saddler & Larrison, 2021, p. 80). Saddler (2021) defines a Bök "as a vessel to process and sift ideas, feelings, and thoughts throughout learning and living experiences" (p. 82). Therefore, a Bök provides a safe space for social workers to holistically examine how their attitudes and beliefs can grow in response to acquired knowledge. As a visual learner, I created an image of the function and purpose of social work. Hence, my depiction of social work as a lighthouse, a symbol of light, hope, and communication (see Figures 1 and 2).

The duality of social work can only be accomplished by seeing the client and the environment from multiple perspectives. To symbolize this, I focused on the importance of light. Illumination is critical to identifying problems, interactions, and systemic racism that thwart a client's growth. Likewise, strengths are often invisible under the darkness of depression and circumstance. Therefore, to engage in social justice and raise clients, social work must shine a light on what darkness strives to hide.

Light alone is not a solution. Seeing a problem does not solve it, but it offers hope and a place for work to begin. I selected a lighthouse because it symbolizes the hope that ships will use its light to avoid the rocks. Likewise, it is always society's and a client's choice to follow the light. Ultimately to succeed, people must accept responsibility and do the work. Regardless of the acceptance of light, social work must remain vigilant. Just as the lighthouse shines through all storms, social workers must work tirelessly as a guide for what is just and possible.

There are many sources of light in our world, but not all are forms of communication. A lighthouse uses its light to communicate a path. To follow the path, the communication between the lighthouse and the ship must be constant because a break can result in a shipwreck. Likewise, the lines of communication between a social worker and a client must remain open and honest. Additionally, when social work fails to communicate injustice, society sinks into depravity, and clients are deprived of lifelines. Fortunately, social work has the power to ignite the light that illuminates the way to recovery by guiding sailors (clients) to safe harbors.

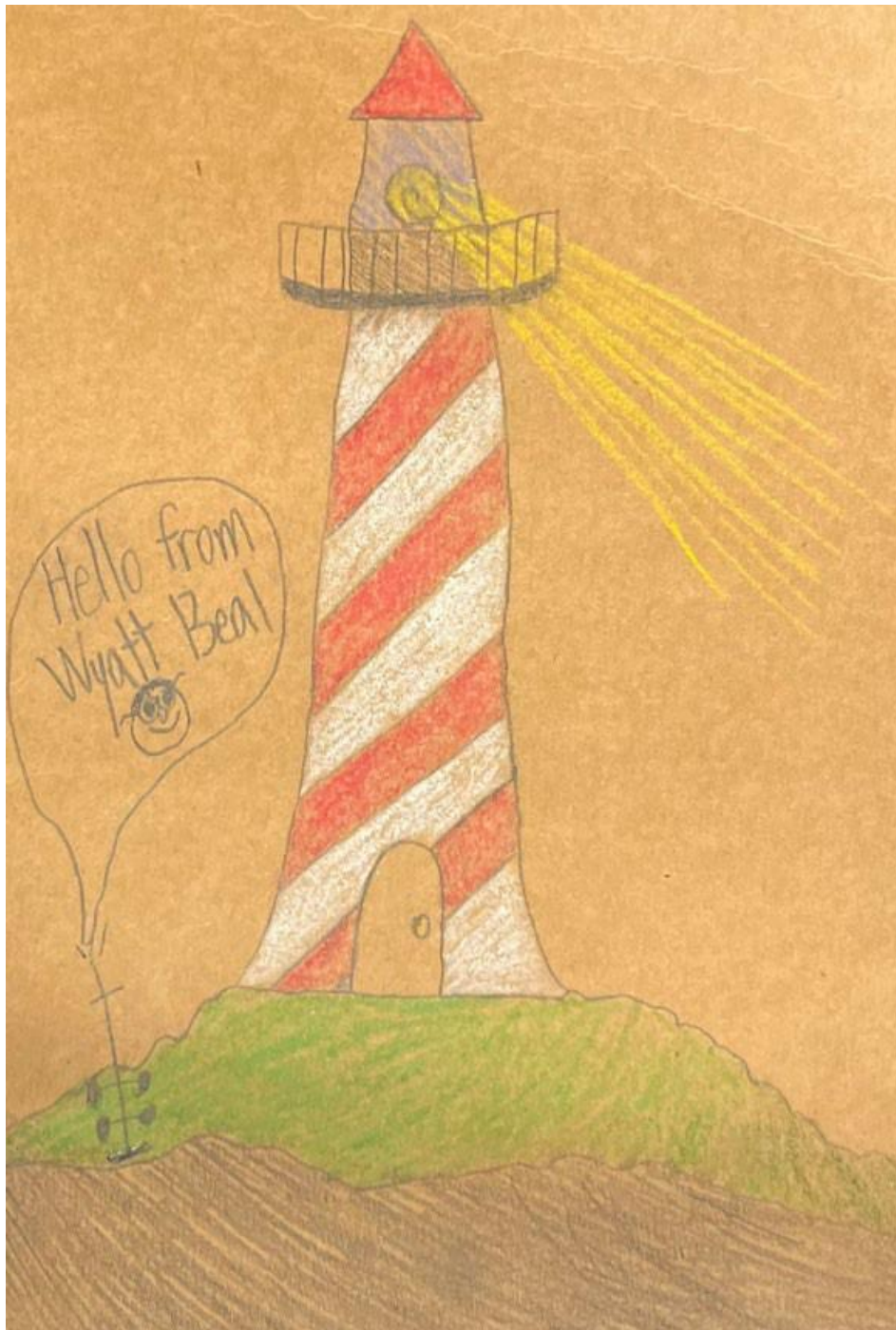
The image of a lighthouse conveys the function and purpose of social work. To meet the demands of the profession's duality, social work has the courage to shine a light on injustice, to offer hope for a better path forward, and to communicate honestly. Just as the lighthouse stands firm against the elements, social work remains steadfast in its commitment to guiding the vulnerable.

References

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Figure 1

Social Work as a Lighthouse on My Bök Cover



Note. My original visualization of social work as a lighthouse.

Figure 2

Social Work is a Lighthouse



Note. I visualize social work as a lighthouse, a beacon of hope.