**Case in Social Justice: Confidentiality, Anti-Racism, and Civil Disobedience**

Bill Smith has been enrolled in a drug rehabilitation program to break his cocaine addiction. The program's treatment routine includes pharmacological treatment, group therapy, and individual therapy. You are his social worker. You have succeeded in establishing a good relationship with Bill in the daily treatment sessions. Bill is a 25 year old African American man who is employed in the catering industry. Bill is deeply concerned about social justice and racism and is especially troubled by the spate of killings of young Black men and women by the police. Bill personally experienced being stopped and frisked by the police for no reason other than being Black when he was a teenager. Bill participated in many of the rallies held over the summer of 2020 organized by the various groups within the Black Lives Matter movement. One morning he tells you that, during one rally, he and another protestor were being assaulted by the police and Bill retaliated by hitting and injuring the officer. He was never caught, but the other protestor was convicted for this act and now sits in prison. For several days you have been trying to convince Bill that he should talk to the police in order to free an innocent man from prison. You are sympathetic to the cause and to the right to civil disobedience and self-defense. You wonder what the legal and moral ramifications are of this situation. Bill not only refused to listen to your suggestion but said that he expects you keep in complete confidence what he has told you. What should you do?

1. Does Bill have a legal or a moral right to have another man serve a lengthy sentence in his place?

2. Is the "wrong" that you may cause by breaking confidentiality of the same importance as the wrong inflicted on an innocent person who is now imprisoned?

3. The effectiveness of the entire program may be compromised if it becomes known that social workers do not always keep confidential the information they receive from clients, plus you risk losing Bill’s trust and he may never recover.

4. On the other hand, your whistle-blowing can cause the release of the wrongly convicted person.

Alternative Scenarios

One morning he tells you that, during one rally, he and another protestor were being assaulted by the police. Bill was able to extricate himself but in anger, he retaliated by:

* Smashing the windows of a police car
* Throwing a stink bomb into the local precinct entrance way
* Smashing windows of local stores

Or

One morning he tells you that, during one rally, he became agitated and decided to take matters into his own hands by:

* Smashing the windows of a police car
* Throwing a stink bomb into the local precinct entrance way
* Smashing windows of local stores

He was never caught. You are sympathetic to the cause and to the right to civil disobedience. You wonder what the legal and moral ramifications are of this situation.