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Post- Course Reflection
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Taking from everything that I have learned in class and through my service learning experience, I have had the opportunity to reflect upon my own personal experience with social issues such as classism - the discrimination of certain social classes in our society such as the middle class. I come from a middle class or “working class” family. As the cost of living has risen over the years, I have become part of the lower class. This is primarily due to various economic factors such as finding and maintaining steady work and earning a livable income. As it has become more difficult to keep up with the high costs of living, middle-class Americans such as me have struggled to stay up float in the economic ladder. The middle class has been pushed down and lumped in with the lower class; creating a larger lower class. The gap between rich and poor continues to grow every year. I have had to struggle to pay my rent, food, and choose between owning a smartphone and filling up my gas tank. Institutional structures support and maintain these systems of oppression by electing officials who will serve in the senate and congress and pass certain laws that help the rich get richer and poor remain in poverty. Having to struggle in order to have a roof over my head and food in my belly, has allowed me to understand and relate to others in similar situations. It has empowered me to advocate for those who are always being oppressed by society because they lack financial resources. Due to my own experience I have learned that financial status does not make the person. Hard work and determination does. America was built on this ideology. However, it has been increasingly difficult for most Americans to reach that level of socio and economic success. This is why I

believe that education and advocacy is the key to success. It is also the solution to fighting intolerance in our society.

I would give myself a rating of 10 because I strongly agree that I have a responsibility to contribute to greater societal well-being because I have acted on this ideology many times already in my life. I have worked and volunteered within the community helping others and making a difference. I have benefitted from this in many ways, such as utilizing any new skills and resources I gain from those experiences. The goals of service learning are building connections between ourselves and others within the communities that we serve, developing relationships that will foster our educational and career goals, developing the skills to work within a multicultural community. The greatest acts of service are devotion and commitment which help to create positive change. I believe the root cause for the disparities among African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans is racism. Poverty, lack of education, and resources are a result of racism. I believe it is all of our responsibility to address this issue, but more importantly it is the responsibility of those who have the education, resources, skills, and abilities to change these statistics. To be an American means to me that our nation should be a role model for other nations around the world. The American way of life should represent all that is just and fair. As Americans, we should collaborate with other nations and teach them about the value of our way of life while at the same time respecting theirs. The core of the American identity is the ideals of freedom, equality, justice and liberty for every person in this great country..

I feel that the Congress of the United States should declare English as the primary language because our forefathers all spoke English and all the laws are in English. I believe it would also be beneficial to those who come into this country to learn the language so that they can have

more opportunities. I would rate myself as being a 10, in relevance to the statement which states: that I have the power to bring about change in the social conditions of my community, society, nation and the world. We all are a part of this world and therefore, have a moral responsibility to help one another and take care of one another. When one person suffers-we all suffer. I believe through community service and education I am already a part of a social movement today through the work of my actions. I also feel that I will be a part of the movement for social change because I will place myself in a field where I can help those individuals who have the desire to enhance their skills or talents in a multicultural environment, but need extra guidance from an experienced professional.

I think the causes for discrimination on the basis of language and culture exist because many people do not understand these differences and are afraid of what is unknown. Stereotypes, assumptions, presumptions are a result of pure ignorance. Ways that can help reduce discrimination in terms of language and culture are to immerse ourselves into a community of a different culture, and learn the language, and study the history of that culture. The above statement is probably one of the most ignorant, disgusting, offensive, and disrespectful statement I have ever heard! It is the most uneducated statement a person representing himself as a great political figure of this country can say. I don't think that people should be forced to speak English in the workplace or anywhere else. I do think it is important however that everyone understand the language. A person should be able to speak their native language other than English whenever they want except when they need to communicate with people who only understand the English language. Every country has problems with crime. Nobody is like us per se, we are supposed to be unique but what makes us (Americans) special, is the fact that America

was built on differences of all kinds of people who come from various cultural, religious, and ethnic, backgrounds. Our country benefits by utilizing all these elements together and strengthens us as a nation, serves as a role model for the rest of the world.

The most important insights I gained from this learning experience was that when people work together regardless of their differences, they are more successful at accomplishing anything. Respect is earned and shared among each individual. The differences that make us unique, bind people together as a network composed of many beneficial elements. During this experience, I noticed that my tone did not change from the first recording to the last. I think this was due to the fact that I pretty much have known enough about these topics through my life's experiences. However, the lessons that I learned in class did help to understand certain issues from a variety of perspectives not utilized before during my life experience. I did feel more confident in myself and how view issues relating to racial injustice and intolerance, because what I have already known has been reinforced through my academic instruction here, at CSUMB. Many, if not all, of the questions were very complex questions which required a more in -depth and analytical observation using a multitude of various view-points and critical thinking. In other words, there is no right or wrong answer-only perspective that determines the value of what has been learned. I have also learned that these social issues are a result of many determinants and there is cause-and-effect that generally dictates the nature of each issue such as racism. These issues can be seen as problems of society or as a system of give and take. For example, in this world there exists those who have and those who do not have or have less. Regardless of whether it is money, education, access to resources, etc, I have learned that there can not exist a world where everybody has an equal amount of everything, even though we would like to think so.

Especially in a capitalistic nation where the survival of the fittest is determined by financial status. Oppressive systems and institutions exist because the distribution of power has to be unequal in order to keep the masses controlled. A society uncontrolled is a society filled with chaos!

I did learn that each individual in our society has a privilege. These privileges may be different like race, education, social status etc, but every person has some sort of advantage and disadvantage over another person. It all depends on the environment in which they live. When I do become a professional in my field of expertise, I will have an advantage of many people who for a variety of reasons, are oppressed in some way or another. The key is that I will have a social responsibility to address these oppressive issues and use my skills and knowledge to better those societies, communities, etc. Someone in my field of study usually needs good communication and social skills, empathy, compassion, and understanding the value of hard work, motivation, persistence, and has to be goal orientated. A person in my position would have to know the importance of sacrifice and commitment. As a professional entering the job world, I should be prepared to face many challenges. I must know how to place myself in the world where people are classified, labeled, separated, discriminated, objectified and divided.

My responses to questions 5 and 6 tell me that inequality in any form is something that has existed since the beginning of time and will continue to exist. The reason for this is because everyone wants to be powerful and in control, this requires the access to many resources, knowledge, information, etc. it is part of our human nature. Some of these issues can be addressed by individuals such as myself, organize and participate in community events, inform the communities in need of available resources and provide helpful information through their

work, charity, or cause. My service learning has allowed me to reinforce my opinions of volunteering within the community. It is crucial and beneficial to any person, to participate within their community because there are so many benefits to receive. A community survives on the actions and work of its people. Without people there is no community. In order for me to be completely engaged in my career, I first have to be passionate about what I do. I must want to do something because it moves me in my soul. It must give me reason and purpose. That purpose must drive me to want to do more for those who are systematically oppressed. The reason is not just to help them, but also to help myself. A system can not function properly if all the parts do not work. Every part is important and vital for its survival. What is most meaningful to me from this entire experience, has been to appreciate and value diversity. Service learning has given me the ability to relate to others and to realize my full potential of what I can do to make a real difference in the world, and see the affect it can have on others.