



## **SOCIAL ACTION 164**

### SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT REFLECTIONS

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**Organization:** *Campus Alliance for Economic Justice (CAFÉ J)*

**Occupation:** Currently, an Analyst for the City of San José's Housing Department, where she helps to shape policy for the development of affordable housing in the city. Previously, worked for the Sunnyvale Community Services as a Housing Case Manager where she connected low-income residents resources to resources and to build a network of landlords; InnVision Shelter Network as a Landlord Liaison to advocate with mom and pop landlords to give second chances to people who had bad credit, criminal records and possible evictions; and as an AmeriCorps Public Ally.

**Impact of Social Action:** "The Social Action class transformed my life. Prior to joining this course, I never in my life dared to dream I was capable of making a difference. I learned more importantly through this class it takes one person to inspire another, but most importantly believing in yourself, and that your community starts first with you. Nothing is impossible when you have a small group of faithful people ready to make a change for the betterment of their community. True leadership involves everyone and not one person can bring about change without others. It takes a village to advocate, empower, and support one another. In my career, I learned I have skills to offer and I need others to build upon my skills to ensure I am fostering inclusivity beyond my sphere of influences.

Through the Social Action course, I've gained confidence to engage my audience, know my targeted influencers and be able to publicly speak on behalf of my campaign. Being able to speak to council members, the mayor, and mass media was very rewarding, as it helped me gain personal skills. My advice to anyone is never dream small, and never allow resistance to deter your steps to change the world. I went from an ordinary person just wanting to make a change in my community to a spokeswoman for *Campus Alliance for Economic Justice* at San José State."

#### **Soci. 164: Social Action Alumni Questions:**

- 1. What were the overall takeaways that you learned from working on your campaign? What did you learn about social change? about power? leadership? yourself? community? etc.**

Prior to taking this social action course, I did not know anything about public speaking, canvassing and/or petition gathering but now after working on the minimum wage campaign I learned each of these skills and more. Being able to speak to council members, the mayor and mass media was very rewarding and helped me to gain personal skills.

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**2. What did you learn about issue development? (i.e, making demands, finding the target, desire to fight for an issue)? Has this learning had any impact on you since you have graduated?**

Traditionally, colleges are institutions where students learn how to compete in the workforce. Marxist theorist posits, higher education maintains the social division of labor by having minimal interactive participation. Hence, the continuance and replica of a labor is reinforced. Students participate in higher education to obtain or maintain a status quo. As a result, social and political and economic infrastructures are established and maintained.

However, theorists have given us the ability to look at higher education in a different lens. For example, my education at San José State consists of my teachers distributing their knowledge of what they've been taught. I have been asked to critically analyze social problems and find solutions. Yet, I am not taught how to empower a community or myself on how to overcome the infrastructure. For example, in my communication course I was taught on how to perform and engage when public speaking. However, I was not taught how to be clear and concise in order to move a target.

**3. How did your research (e.g., Historical Analysis, Target Analysis, and Power Map) help you in your campaign? Has this learning had any impact on you since you have graduated?**

Target Analysis and Power Mapping were two key tools we used as a group to move our campaign. We focused on identifying the key players of our campaign and connect to power players who can move our target in supporting our cause. An individual problem is defined as only affecting one person and does not have a structural impact on the broader community, whereas, a social problem a direct impact on the broader communities and social structures, and prevents communities from having access . Through identifying the issues as a collective systematic issue (i.e., “community power-building”), the community can organize and find a solution to ratify the problem. Yet, if no one is willing to address the issue, then it is seen as an individual problem rather than a social. By analyzing potential Targets and “stakeholders”, you can find who can be held accountable to implement the demands. Stakeholders will either support you or will be your opponents. It is important to understand the power dynamics; it is not about how much power the target holds, but whether or not they will move to implement or deny our initiative.

**4. How did you recruit students and allies for your campaign? What worked? What didn't work? Has this learning had any impact on you since you have graduated?**

Our campaign recruited students through canvassing. We focused on a social issue which impacts everyone. Importantly, what was important was always to communicate with each other. This was very crucial in our role as students because we all had personal lives going on but the more we communicate the more we were able to be efficient. We made demands and stuck by three phrases. One of them was, "if you work hard, play by the rules, you deserve a fair wage." While our opponents had money against us, we had people power backed by moral support. People understood the negative impact of working two jobs, low wages and poor working conditions. We were the voice to the voiceless. We restored faith in our community that civic engagement works.

**5. How was your group dynamic? Did your group work well together? If yes, what contributed to your positive group process. If not, what contributed to that? Has this learning had any impact on you since you have graduated?**

Our group dynamic had a problem with its retention rate among student involvement in regards to Economic Bill of Rights. While, there are many different facets to why this has occurred, I have come to my own conclusion. The vision and mission was clouded by our opinions and we lost focus. As a result, the history of who and what CAFÉ J has not been told from a horizontal perspective, but a hierarchical chain. Understanding a team, an organization and/or a community should have a solid foundation of what they're proud of and what they're fighting for. You can't convince others to follow your vision if you do not understand your goal or mission.

**6. Who was your target, and what strategies and tactics did you use to get them to meet your demands? Were you successful in meeting your demands? If so, why? If not, why not? What was your favorite "action" that your group did?**

We are able to look at the landscape of our issue and analyze our target(s), and identify any power they might hold surrounding our issue. This allowed us to assess our capacity to move our target or understand our target(s) position, and/or learn where the target derives his/her power. Through our assessing, our target(s) analysis will help us determine how our target(s) thinks, acts and reacts and why.

Then as a group you will be able to get the target to meet our demand and use our people power to move him/her to give us what we want. In order to do this, we had to first look at what policies our target was working on, whom does he/she listen to, any self-interest, and/or what has moved him/her in the past.

**7. Did your group get press? If so, how?**

In the beginning we did not have a lot of press. However, after we won our campaign, we received a lot of interest across United States for speaking engagements.

**8. Did your group use social media? If so, please explain.**

We did not use social media during this time, a lot of our work was direct communication and cold calling.

**9. What advice would you give current Soci. 164 Social Action students?**

Social Action with professor Scott Myers Lipton has transformed my life dramatically. If you want a class to wake you up in life and be the change you want to see in the world then I highly recommend this class. Couple reasons are because you do not just learn, but you apply everything you learn from the books, lecture and discussions to real life events.