



## **SOCIAL ACTION 164**

### SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT REFLECTIONS

**ESTELIA VELASQUEZ**, enrolled in Social Action in fall 2014, graduated BA, Sociology from SJSU in 2016, with a minor in Women Studies. Currently a Master of Social Work student at University of Southern California, with a concentration in children, family and welfare.

**Organization:** *Students for Racial Equality*

**Occupation:** Currently, Behavior Technician, working with special needs children and their families with the goal of helping the child with communication and becoming independent.

**Impact of Social Action:** “My experience in social action made a huge impact on my life. I took Social Action without knowing anything about starting a campaign and how to get people to listen. Starting a campaign was a new experience for me and my group mates. After taking this class and becoming involved in social action, I found myself being able to work effectively with others, and to not be afraid to show solidarity. Social action made an impact in my life as it taught me to stand up for those whose voices are not being heard. I have been working as a behavior technician for the past three years. My clients, both verbal and non-verbal, look to us and others to be their advocate. Social action has taught me to not be afraid of speaking up and be an advocate for others. This has been a quality that has helped me in my current position. I know how to effectively collaborate with others and to make sure that the needs of the client is met.

In 2018, I applied to various graduate schools to obtain a master’s degree in social work, but I did not get into any of them, which discouraged me and I doubted my decision to pursue such a degree. However, from my experience with social action, I remembered not to give up and this was just another obstacle in life that I knew I could overcome. I needed to keep moving forward and fighting for my dream of becoming a social worker. Two years later, I was accepted into the USC social work program. Currently, I am at USC, and after graduation, I plan to be a social worker in a K-12 school.

Social action lit a spark in me and gave me a passion to pursue social work. I know how change is made and how working together with like-minded people can have an impact on your campaign and in your profession. Overall social action is something everyone should participate in as it is a very rewarding. If you get a win, even it is a small win, it gives you hope. I do see myself using the tips that I learned from doing social action work in my social work career.”

**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.**

What I learned from social changes was that change does not happen overnight and do not become discouraged if you do not get a win right away. Take advantage of the resources, speak to other groups, and become involve with other groups. I do not consider myself a leader as I do not enjoy the spotlight but sometimes you have to take charge and guide the group if there is no direction. I learned to speak up and not be afraid to voice my opinion. Power comes numbers and organization. Stick to your guns and keep moving forward and you will be able to overcome any hurdle thrown at you.

**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?**

In one of social work classes, we had to write a memo and meet with a city official or someone who we thought we can speak about our issue. When I was looking for my city official, I began looking at all the city officials in my city and trying to figure out who would be the best person to talk to. This was something that I remembered from this class. There can be many targets but find the one that shares similar views as you and who can help in becoming your ally. What I learned in making demands, finding the target, and the desire to fight for an issue will be something that will come in handy in my social work career.

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

The Power Map helped us to decide who should be the first person we should talk to. Historical Analysis is an important part of campaign because you should familiarize yourself with past and current events that could strengthen your campaign. In my graduate classes, I use historical analysis to support the claims I am making. Historical Analysis, Target Analysis and Power Mapping are an essential part of your campaign as it will help to figure out a plan of action.

**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?**

Luckily, we had a group member who had friends in different organizations and was able to get them to support our campaign. What worked for us was to show up to an organization's protest, meeting, etc. We talked to these organizations about their mission and what we can do together to make change happen on campus. We did have difficulty getting students to sign our petition and to join our group as many students questioned us and asked if it did not affect them directly, why they should care. Finding allies is all about social networking and aligning yourself with like-minded people that will have your back. This is something I will definitely use in my social work profession.

**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?**

My groups members and I worked well together. There was never an argument that escalated to the point where it put the campaign on a standstill. We all shared the same views, and we all respected each other's opinion. Whether or not we agreed on where to take the campaign we always made sure to talk it out and again respect each other's opinion. That by far is the most important piece of working with others. Each of us where leaders no one in the group was the main leader.

**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?**

Our target was the president of university at that time. We had difficulty getting a meeting with the president at the start of our campaign. We had to be persistent by calling and emailing the president's office. We were successful in getting our demands met. However, it did take a few months after we won our initial demand (i.e., the removal of Wanda Ginner from the Tower Board) to get the president to send a letter of apology to the person affected by the issue, which was our second demand. Our press conference was by far my favorite experience because we were all over the Bay Area news, online newspapers, and radio stations. It was a great accomplishment getting the press at our conference and our non-violent sit-in at Tower Hall.

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

Our group did get press. It took a lot of time and effort to be able to get them there. We called every day and sent numerous emails. Dr. Myers-Lipton gave us great advice on the times we should be contacting the media. We also talked to new reporters that came on campus and explained a bit of our campaign and got their contact information. Dr. Myers-Lipton also provided us with some of his media contacts, which was a great start.

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

We did not use social media as much as we wanted. We did make an Instagram page in which we shared updates on the campaign and events. We spent more time interacting with students and teachers on campus and was enough for us.

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

Be patient and persistent when contacting the media. When securing a spot for your press conference ensure that there are no other events that would conflict with your conference. Take advantage of all the resources on campus and the advice that your professors give. Socialize with other organizations on campus as they can become a strong ally. Use social media to your advantage, make sure you assign someone in your group to keep your pages up to date so as to create a following. Be kind to yourselves and you got this! No matter how small the win is, it is a still a win, and know that you can make a difference.