

I believe that one example I have from my experience with HONR 401: Exploring Personal Leadership through Social Change, will allow me to reflect on all that I have learned this semester. One instance that I had my volunteer organization encapsulates the many themes that we have learned this semester in class. It was only through volunteering and truly emerging myself in an organization that I was able to witness what I sense this class the kind of leadership this class was truly trying to initiate. During a busy day at my volunteer organization (Echo Food Shelf), when many individuals and families were coming in to go shopping for the food they would need for the week, I was assisting an individual get their groceries. In trying to manage the influx of people, the manager of Echo approached me and asked if I would assist a different client. She described that he was homeless and that we could have anything we wanted from the shelves that would fit in his one plastic bag. During my previous shifts at Echo, I had yet to assist someone who was completely homeless. I walked around the building with the man and allowed him to pick up anything he wanted. He gathered what I thought was an odd assortment of food and didn't quite fill up his sack. He announced that he was finished shopping and I asked him if he was sure. He politely said yes and left the building. Later on, while completing a different job, the manager asked me if I was successful in helping the man with gathering his groceries. I told her yes, but I was surprised that he didn't fill up his sack and that when I asked if he wanted milk or juice he said no. She replied that he only took what he could carry. He has no fridge so he wouldn't take milk because it would spoil. He only took things that were light and that would sustain him until he visited again. This seemed obvious in retrospect, but in that moment I was shocked. I had never before witnessed this kind of poverty in my life, in which you have to choose what to eat based on what you can carry because you have nowhere to store it, no way to refrigerate items and no home to go to. It made me fully realize the privileges I have and the true amount of poverty in this community. I felt embarrassed that I even asked this question. That my own fortune clouded me from seeing that people within miles of me struggle to find enough food every day.

In relation to the context of working at Echo, I think that this interaction turned out not as I thought it would, as I had the opinion that the man would grab any food that we could, due to his hunger, when really he had to consider what he could take and what would benefit him. When you don't have the privilege of having food security this is one of many things that you have to take into consideration. I assume that when I asked the man if that was all he wanted, he might have expected this response, that I wouldn't have enough awareness and understanding of food insecurity in my life to truly consider his situation. The manager might have felt this same way during this particular interaction, as I was not conscious enough of this issue in the community as I could be. From my own thoughts and the assumptions from those involved, I believe that I can progress into this particular issue with greater clarity as to the difficulties that those impacted face.

My plans for future community service through this experience and this course made me realize that by helping others and social issues, I can be a leader. My personal understanding for

service has also changed. My thoughts on service were not only impacted by my experience, but by the *Helping, Fixing, or Serving* reading. Helping is temporary, fixing is difficult, though beneficial, but service is what above all changes you and leaves a personal impact on your life. My understanding of service is now different because I realized that service is becoming involved in some way. It may not be for a long period of time, but it is seeing personally what the issue is, and doing what you can to help that affects you and your comprehension of the issue. It is not viewing the social issue from far away, and disengaging yourself from those it involves. My understanding of power and culture is different as well. Cultures are complex and varying wherever that you may go and a culture can impact the issues that take place. Service doesn't mean that you must change the culture, but that you specifically target the issues that weaken the affected cultures. I have also discovered that whatever power you attain, you must spread to others in order to raise them up. Use your power to assist those who need and the issues that you are passionate about. As Bukata Hayes said, "Realize the power you attain and be more than willing to give it up." I plan to work more with community partners in the future, and to keep assisting with the issue of food insecurity because I now have personal experience with it. I want to continue to waste little to no food, create less garbage, donate food, and to give my time to organizations like Echo. Volunteers are the way that organizations like this stay open and they need my and the community's full support. I know that I will continue to experience food insecurity in my future and I want to always remain aware of this issue and how I am able to help. To use the fortune I do possess to always assist those who are not as fortunate.

From what I encountered at Echo, my involvement there can apply to the many things that we learned in class. This particular event along with my experience volunteering at Echo, allowed me to see the social change model of leadership in action, and how each of the managers and organizers of Echo demonstrate these values. The partnership of the volunteers of Echo and its stakeholders, and the processes used at Echo are applied in order to keep Echo successfully running in relation to the social change model of leadership. Some broad examples include that all stakeholders share a common purpose, they collaborate daily to keep the organization running, and overall they want to present a change to the community through the availability of the food shelf. Some of the social change model that I have developed myself from volunteering at Echo includes a greater consciousness of self, in my this issue and the agency I have to help it, and knowing that the citizenship that I will develop anywhere can benefit me in caring for and providing service to others. From one of the first days of class, I have realized my personal values aligned with how I was able to apply my leadership at Echo. My values could be recognized in the way that I wanted **justice** for those who have food insecurity, acknowledging that they deserve all the help and respect they can get from the community, **love** in giving my time to assist families, individuals and organizations who need it, **knowledge** in being informed of how much of an issue this is and to always be aware of my own actions, **freedom** in having an open attitude and always having a kind, helpful disposition so people feel welcome in coming to get the assistance they need, and **creativity** in always trying to bring my individual voice to the benefit of the organization. The last value was the most difficult to develop, but I think through

more time volunteering, I could further utilize this value, as well my other values along with the social change model of leadership.

Additionally, I feel I have learned that my understanding of service learning has altered through this particular interaction with this individual at Echo. Before I could breezily say that food insecurity was an issue, but I wouldn't know firsthand the impact it would have on me, until this particularly moving interaction and through volunteering my time to help others who face food insecurity every day. Simply put, people in this community and around the nation do not have enough to eat. My simple view before was that someone who was food insecure would take whatever food was available due to their hunger, but I realized they have to think not only of themselves, but of their families. What food are we really going to use, what food do we already have, what food should I take to make healthy meals for myself and my family? I would not know of the complications and large impact of this issue without serving, without witnessing these events with my own eyes. This class and this particular project and interaction made me realize that leadership can come in many forms and that social change is a vital way to further become and utilize your skills as a leader. I have become all the more aware of the power I hold in my newly developed knowledge of social change and leadership. I hope to bestow this powerful knowledge and skill on the issues I care deeply about in my future, in order to make a difference and give these issues the kind of awareness and support that they will forever need. This class inspired me to be the change that I wish to see in not only myself, but in my community, and in my world.