

Portfolios 4-7

Due: Tuesday, April 9th

PORTFOLIO 4: BUILDING POWER

4.1 Power, defined by Dr. Myers-Lipton, is the ability to accomplish what you want to be done (2018:33). Furthermore, it is what provides the necessary strength to organize around political, social, and economic change (Myers-Lipton 2018:71). In common conceptions of “power” is it seen to be authoritative and forceful. In my own prior conception, I would even go as far to say it is violent. I had negative feelings about power in that I had only thought deeply about it in terms of oppression. I had always found the idea of “power-hungry” people to be people who wanted to accumulate it all for themselves and wield it over others. Personally, I tend to be a non-confrontational person who wouldn’t have defined myself as “powerful”, as I associated it with being loud, confrontational, and authoritative.

Dr. Martin Luther King would have had a bone to pick with my previous conception of power. Dr. King believed that power and love were complementary, rather than at odds with one another. He said, “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic,” (2018:70). Marianne Williams spoke to the notion of fear and hesitation I felt surrounding embracing my power when she said, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?” (2018:71). Not only after reflecting on the words of King and Williams, but also after reflecting on all that I have been a part of accomplishing with the Student Homeless Alliance in the past two months, I have begun to step into my power. I recognize that power doesn’t have to be authoritative, it can be collaborative. It also doesn’t have to be used as a tool of oppression but rather as a tool of liberation and of justice. We gain power through love when we connect with others who share the same desire for justice, and we express love when we use our power to advocate against the injustice of others.

4.2 The three types of power described by Dr. Myers-Lipton are power over, power with, and power for (2018:71). Power over is “where an individual, organization, or the state uses its power to limit or expand rights or resources,” (2018:71). This type of power is what many of us conceptualize when we think about power. While this type of power has been historically oppressive, it can be used in social action to match the power of elites in order to win demands. Power with is shared power (2018:71). This is the type of power that we use in the Student Homeless Alliance. Using the concept of power with, we collectively organize and make decisions together. We utilize group-centered leadership and consensus decision-making. Furthermore, we are an alliance made up of students who both do and do not have a direct stake in the issue – in our case, student homelessness – so power is shared between advocates and the affected community. In “Temblador, class of ‘11” Christopher Temblador spoke on the importance of leveraging collective power by building alliances with other groups who are working on similar issues. He said that building these alliances allowed them to “form a unifying front that would carry a deeper message on campus.” For this reason, we utilize power with by seeking out any opportunity to build alliances with other organizations on campus and in the broader community. Being that our group tends to follow a more women-centered model of organizing, it is logical that we utilize power with. Finally, power for is when an organization advocates on behalf of a person or community (2018:71). In a way, the Student Homeless Alliance uses a little bit of this type of power, in that the majority of us aren’t housing insecure and we advocate for housing insecure students. However, we want these students to be empowered, and we make efforts to outreach to these directly affected students so they can become advocates for themselves.

4.3 The three forms in which power manifests itself are organized people, organized money and organized violence (2018:71). Organized people is where members of a community, often marginalized members, come together to work on the implementation of a demand to better their community (2018:71) Organized people can work on campaigns, in social movements, in various institutions, and within political parties. This is the type of manifestation of power which we focus on. Organized money is where the economic elite organize to collectively use their wealth to influence policies in their own self-interests (2018:71). This manifestation is expressed in political action committees, think-tanks, lobbyists, and political campaign contributions. Organized money is often at odds with

organized people. Finally, power manifests itself through organized violence, which is used by the state to maintain control over other states, over groups, and over individuals (2018:72). Revolutionary social action groups, such as Antifa, also use organized violence in their tactics.

A group of “organized people” that interests me is the Women’s Political Council (WPC) of Montgomery, Alabama. This group formed in 1946 as a civic organization for Black women in the city, and they went on to become the first group to officially call for a boycott during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. The organization lost momentum into the 1960s and slowly disbanded as the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., formed and took over the work of addressing racial issues in the city. The WPC encountered organized violence when the White Citizens Council tried to sabotage the bus boycott by having police arrest Black people who were waiting for the alternative transportation provided by the MIA for those participating in the boycott. The city officials of Montgomery also tried to sabotage the boycott, arresting leaders like King and many others. Dr. King’s home was also bombed.

(https://www.workers.org/2005/us/boycott_0217/, <http://www.ushistory.org/us/54b.asp>)

4.4

a. In the Student Homeless Alliance, we do recruitment at various sites across campus. We sometimes table on the Smith and Carlos Lawn in front of Clark Hall, but we most often table on 7th street because of the high amount of foot traffic passing through the area. This is also a site where other groups table, so we can count on their presence to bring even more traffic through. We have also been tabling and recruiting in front of the monthly mobile food pantry in the Event Center so that we can target students who may be experiencing hardships related to our issue. Finally, we have recruited by doing classroom presentations in our own classes as well as classes that we have been invited to speak in. This is a great way to ensure that we will have a large group to recruit from in each presentation.

b. Being that the Student Homeless Alliance is a fairly large and growing organization, we have a lot of members that we can count on to do recruitment through tabling. We usually table on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. The core team typically consists of myself, Elsa, Alejandro, David, Mayra, Genesis, Guillermo, and Alexander. Most often, we work in shifts according to our class schedules so core team

members as well as anyone else who can make it rotate in and out. We have also recruited in front of the monthly mobile food pantry which runs for about an hour. Now that the permanent food pantry is open, we are looking into when the food pantry receives the most foot traffic so that we can plan to recruit there as well. Recruitment thus far has been successful, and the response has been very positive. When we recruited on Diversity Day, we accumulated over 20 contacts for students who are interested in joining or learning more about us. On less busy days, we are still typically able to recruit a handful of students. Something that has made it easier to get people to join us has been letting them know that they can commit however much time and energy into SHA as they would like. For example, we have a member who isn't very active, but who we could rely on to help create or distribute flyers. Everyone has something to contribute no matter how small. Recruiting, thus far, has been an empowering and engaging experience as it has been a testament to how many other students on campus share our same concerns.

c. We have been doing classroom presentations since the beginning of the semester.

Class	Professor	Day/Time	Presenters
Justice Studies 171	Dr. Pacheco	Thursday 12 PM	Alejandro
SOCI 100W	Dr. Dehaan	Wednesday 3 PM	Alejandro
Race and Ethnicity	Dr. Armaline	Wednesday 3 PM	Juan
Healthy Communities	Dr. Shaw	Tuesday 12 PM	Mayra, Guillermo, Alexander
Poverty, Wealth, and Privilege	Dr. Myers- Lipton	Tuesday/Thursday 12 PM	David, Maria

The responses to our classroom presentations thus far have been positive. Students who listen to our presentation often become more engaged with what we are doing, even if they aren't quite interested in joining us. Those who have given presentations have found that in the following weeks, students from those classes were

more likely to ask for updates. Classroom presentations were also highly effective when we were using them to promote our petition.

d. We have been flyering all semester, and just about every member has been responsible for posting flyers. I posted flyers in Dudley Moorhead Hall, making sure to cover the bulletin boards in the stairwells, the glass-cased bulletin boards in the halls, and in various spots on the walls. I also made it a point to keep flyers in my backpack so I could post them while walking around campus. Alejandro posted flyers on each floor of the library, and he wrote our contact information on whiteboards in DMH classrooms. Mayra posted in the Engineering building. David went around to the various offices in the Student Union including the Chicax/Latinx Student Success Center, African American/Black Student Success Center, and the Veterans Center, among others. He posted flyers and left small stacks of mini flyers for students to pick up. One of our newest recruits, Jay, posted fliers in the Industrial Studies building, in Duncan Hall, and in McQuarrie Hall. Mario posted flyers in Boccardo and in the Music building. Elsa posted in Clark Hall on the available boards as well as in departments such as EOP and the ACCESS Center. Finally, Alura and Lindsey posted flyers and wrote our contact information on classroom whiteboards in both Sweeney Hall and Hugh Gillis.

I have learned several lessons from students who worked on previous campaigns in both *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action* and in the Social Action reader, which we have also seen play out in the course of our campaign and our development as a student organization. Natasha Bradley, a member of Students for Campus Safety in Fall of 2011, spoke about the importance of having connections with other resource centers and organizations on campus. Her connection with Associated Students provided them with the knowledge to effectively spread the word and write petitions (p.55). She also noted that being able to reach different groups in this way allowed them to get their issue addressed more quickly since there was a lot of attention on it. Christopher Temblador, a member of Students for EOP in Spring of 2008, spoke about how collaborating with faculty members and the Cesar Chavez Community Action Center allowed them to inform a broader group of students without having to do active recruitment, which saved them time and energy (p. 15). We have seen this play out in our own recruitment, as we can spend hours tabling and sometimes only get a couple of contacts. Being able to rely on faculty members or the community action center allows us to reach more students even when we aren't actively

tabling. When recruiting through tabling, the College Awareness Network (CAN) had candy on the table by their sign-up sheet which was effective in drawing students in (Myers-Lipton 2018:84). We have employed a similar technique when we offered donut holes, hot chocolate, and other snacks when we held a two-day event to garner support on our petition. Not only did we gather hundreds of signatures, but we also recruited many of our newest members from that event.

e. Our current social media accounts include Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. On Twitter and Instagram, our handle is @sjsu_sha. As for Facebook, we can be found at [facebook.com/sjsu.sha](https://www.facebook.com/sjsu.sha) or by searching for “Sjsu Sha”. Elsa is the lead for Social Media Communications. She posts daily on Twitter and Instagram, and we aim to post daily on Facebook. We find that most students tend to use Twitter and Instagram more than Facebook, so we prioritize those two outlets first. While Elsa is the lead for making sure that we are posting regularly, especially when we are tabling or meeting, all active members have access to our social media. This means that if you are doing something individually or in a smaller group related to SHA, you can still update social media. For example, last week three of us were interviewed for a documentary on accessibility and affordability in higher education in California. Elsa was not there, so I had the responsibility of making sure we shared something related to what we were doing that day. The rest of the media team (Alejandro, Mayra, and I) double check to make sure that we are active daily and to fill in the blanks when needed. Since the Student Homeless Alliance has been an active and growing organization for the past few semesters, we have garnered plenty of engagement on social media. When we gathered in front of Tower Hall for SHA’s meeting with the President, Elsa and I live-streamed on Facebook and Instagram. A student activist who does a lot of work in the East Side of San Jose, whom I had been following on social media since before I joined SHA, saw our live stream and offered to come and hold a poster and show her support. This demonstrated to me the ways that we can use social media to boost community engagement in our campaign.

g. Being that the Student Homeless Alliance was already formed and working actively on a campaign when I and others in Social Action joined, we already had a bit of power in

numbers. We have over 20 active members, not including many more who attend our events, share our news, and contribute to our campaign in other ways. While we do believe that we can win our campaign with this number of people, we also recognize that the more people we have, the more power we have, and the faster we can win. We estimate that we can get at least 10-15 recruit contacts per tabling session and upwards of 20 recruit contacts during larger events.

h. Organizational rap:

Hi, everyone! I'm Brooke and I'm with the Student Homeless Alliance – a student organization here on campus advocating for unhoused and housing insecure students.

As you may or may not know, we have dedicated the past two semesters to leading a campaign for a safe parking program, an expansion of the dorms held for emergency housing, and for a one-time emergency grant for students to remain in their housing. We were able to get a meeting with the university's president, and while our demands were rejected, President Papazian has committed to housing every Spartan in need. So, we at SHA are encouraging all students who are houseless, housing insecure, or in need of more food to reach out to us. We know that the stigma surrounding housing and food insecurity often keep students from coming forward, but the Student Homeless Alliance understands that these situations are often no fault of your own and rather are rooted in the larger shortage of affordable housing and existing income inequalities in the Bay Area. We want to connect to you with the resources available on campus and be a friend to you during this time. Joining us can also be really empowering – you can be an advocate for yourself and for others with similar experiences and struggles. If you yourself aren't facing any of these issues but are interested in learning more or getting involved we would love to have you. To join us or get connected with campus resources like SJSU Cares, please fill out our contact form which you can access by scanning the QR code on this flyer. You can also reach out to us through our email or social media listed on the flyer.

i. Sign-up sheet, flier, and social media attached.

4.5 In *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*, Dr. Myers-Lipton suggests that people are provided more or less privilege and status within a society based on certain characteristics, which include gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, religious affiliation, educational attainment, and immigration status (2018:47). In order to better

understand your own group dynamics and to work better together, it is important to understand the differing levels of privilege between yourself and your group members. A related example that I would like to highlight comes from a Regional Tenant Organizing Project meeting at Sacred Heart, which the Student Homeless Alliance was invited to attend. This was a meeting hosted by Sacred Heart in which several groups from all over Northern California gathered to discuss legislation surrounding tenants rights and affordable housing. I have often heard stories of people being discouraged to attend local city or town hall meetings, or other kinds of public forums because they either did not speak English or didn't feel they spoke fluently enough to take part in a discussion about local public issues. This especially resonates in a place like San Jose where many non-native born people call home. During the meeting at Sacred Heart, they had interpreters present who translated the whole meeting into a small microphone which fed into ear-pieces worn by Spanish speaking organizers. Everyone at the meeting was asked to be considerate of the interpreters and to speak clearly and at a reasonable pace. When someone who spoke Spanish had something to say in the discussion, they would first speak to the group in Spanish and then Matt King, the Organizing Director at Sacred Heart, would interpret in English for anyone who did not understand Spanish. This was a perfect lesson on prioritizing the voices of those who are often given less privilege and less access to public forums like these.

The characteristics that I feel provide me with the most privilege and power in U.S. society today are educational attainment and social class. Being from a relatively well-off middle-class family, I have been provided with many opportunities and privileges not available to people whose families don't have as many resources. My father was always able to move strategically to keep me in the best school districts, which undoubtedly gave me a different kind of education than those with fewer resources receive, as well as positioned me for a less challenging and more accessible college experience. The characteristic that I find provides me with the least privilege is being a woman. Not to say that I feel oppressed in my womanhood, but I do recognize the ways in which it can be used to belittle me or minimize my concerns when it comes to my work as an organizer and an activist.

4.6 In *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*, Dr. Myers-Lipton suggests that your level of privilege will affect your social action work and that you will be perceived differently by the on- or off- campus community based on your level of privilege (2018:85).

Being that I come from a relatively well-off, middle-class family and that I currently still live at home with my father where I can rely on him for a lot of financial support, my socioeconomic status makes it harder for me to relate to students who are facing housing or food insecurity. This means that I have to take extra care in being a good listener so that I can better understand the experiences I have not personally lived. When speaking at events, I am also careful to make sure that I am not taking up a spot that could be better filled by someone who has this lived experience.

4.7 As a college student, I'm afforded a number of privileges which are often inaccessible for non-college students. We have access to career-related resources, food pantries, networking, and grants. Specifically related to activism and community organizing, being college students gives us a few extra advantages. We are able to network with many people all over campus, particularly faculty members who can help us reach our goals and provide us with off-campus connections. For example, as students leading a campaign, we were able to get a list of media contacts from Professor Myers-Lipton to help us get involved with the press. More recently, as we have garnered support from city lawmakers and the Mayor, it seems that being students has given us a certain level of status in which we are taken more seriously by city officials.

4.8 Being that we are a group of students who are currently all housed at the moment, with many of us never having had faced any kind of housing or food insecurity, we recognize the differing levels of privilege between us and the people that we are advocating for, some of our allies, and some of our members. Lucila Ortiz, a member of the Collective Voices for Undocumented Students, said that the group addressed the imbalance of privilege between documented and undocumented students in the group by giving primacy to the less privileged voices – the undocumented students (Myers-Lipton 2018:87). In the Student Homeless Alliance, we have incorporated the voices of unhoused students into as much of our work and in our events as possible. The two-day event held prior to our meeting with the President where we encouraged students to share their experiences on sticky notes was intended to be a way to gather the voices and struggles of students and bring them with us into the meeting. As an officially recognized student organization, we were able to use our privilege to deliver their concerns. Within our own group, we work to ensure that a student with lived experience is present in all of our key meetings and events. At our rally and press conference, we made sure

to give Quenia and Saline space to share their experiences – two students who have faced homelessness. When we did get our meeting with the President, those two students were also given primacy. We had a limited number of spaces available for members to attend the meeting, and we made sure that Saline and Quenia got two of them.