

Portfolio #2: Chapter 2 of CHANGE! and Reader

2.1 What do you already know about social change?

- Some things that I already know about social change is that it has happened in the past, and continues to happen now, but that it requires a significant amount of time, teamwork, and dedication. Social change has come about in many ways oftentimes using violence or other peaceful forms of action such as boycotts, marches, rallies, tabling, sit-ins, and so forth. Social change also requires confronting powerful people as well as many other people who may not agree with what you are fighting for. As mentioned in “CHANGE! A Student’s Guide to Social Action,” social change is about democracy which means that the individuals are expected to engage and participate actively from the very beginning of this experience. Additionally, it also mentions that we must demonstrate some type of leadership in one way or another as well as a variety of other skills (Myer-Lipton 2017: 21-22). I view social change as a way of trying to create a positive change within our society through these steps.

2.2 Do you believe social change is possible? Why do many students believe that change is not possible?

- I have always been interested in social issues ever since I was young. Even at a young age, I could not understand how humans can allow other living beings to live in inhumane, poor, or inequitable conditions. I have written essays, voiced my opinions, signed petitions, and even participated in marches all of which felt futile. I have never felt that I, one single individual, could possibly create social change in this big world we live in. As someone who has grown up being told to strictly follow the path in front of me, respect those older than me, and simply worry about myself in this individualistic culture. How could I, a first-generation college student who grew up as a low-income Mexican-American child of an immigrant single mother, possibly create social change? This class is slowly, but surely, making me realize that social change is possible. It is making me realize that it is exactly because of my identity and experiences that I have the power to create social change by joining with others. As mentioned in the reading “CHANGE! A Student’s Guide to Social Action,” many students may not believe that change is possible especially due to our academic experience which has told us to listen to the teacher without being actively engaged or participating which makes us believe that our voice isn’t important (Myers-Lipton 2017: 21). However, there are other reasons why students may believe that change is not possible. For example, there are numerous social issues in the world that can feel overwhelming and at times, hard to believe that social change is possible. Additionally, we are aware that social change has occurred in

the past, however, we are also aware of the effort, time, and commitment that this has required from a collective group.

2.3 How do you think social change takes place? What were the various steps that 2-3 student campaigns took to bring about change from the Reader and CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action?

- I think social change takes place when a student recognizes a social issue by discussing it with others. Then, the student will gather (in this case with 2-3) other people and create a group that will be advocating for this social issue. Steps for social change to take place include acknowledging it as a social issue, creating a collective group, establishing 1-3 demands, identifying a clear target, and framing your issue (Myers-Lipton 2017: 3-6). An example is the Students for Campus Safety which started with Natasha realizing that safety was an issue on campus, she formed a group of students, listed 3 specific demands, and had a clear target which was the UPD police chief (Myers-Lipton 2017: 7). Another example is the Students for Racial Equality which consisted of 14 students who recognized that there was an issue, formed a group, established 3 demands, and identified a clear target which was the university president (Myers-Lipton 2017: 9-10).

2.4 Why do you think someone would become involved in social change? Why are you interested in social change? What from your life story has made this so? What were some of the specific reasons why students in 2-3 campaigns from the Reader and CHANGE! became involved in social change?

- I think someone would become involved in social change because they're passionate, have a personal connection to the issue, and they believe that they can be a part of social change. I am and have been, interested in social change because I feel outraged when I view and experience social issues in my day-to-day life. I want to change this world so that it is a better and more equitable place to live for everyone. I grew up as a Mexican-American child of a single immigrant parent who worked hard but on a minimum wage and therefore we were of low income. Additionally, I was a first-generation student which meant that it was hard for me to transition from high school to college, especially without access to various resources that others had. At a young age, after experiencing a few social issues, I was able to realize the inequality that was occurring within our society and wanted to make a difference. After learning more about the social issues that occur within our world, I found myself more passionate and spoke about these social issues. Some specific reasons as to why students in the campaigns from "CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action" became involved in social change because of their personal connection to the issue and their passion. More specifically, the Students for Campus Safety was created by Natasha after learning about some criminal activity that had happened on her campus, making her fear for her safety whenever she was on campus. As mentioned in the reading, she was so passionate about

the issue of safety on campus that she made this her campaign (Myers-Lipton 2017: 7). Another example is Marisela and the Campus Alliance for Economic Justice which she, and many other students, had a direct connection to this campaign since they were making minimum wage and therefore experiencing things such as food insecurity (Myers-Lipton 2017: 11).

Please reflect on the following questions about leadership:

2.5 Explain the traditional and the new definition of leadership, provide some examples from the reading, and then explore which definition you prefer and why?

- The traditional definition of leadership is typically someone with initiative who possesses qualities such as charisma, is powerful, and insightful (Myers-Lipton 2017: 22). This can make it hard to imagine oneself as a leader, especially if one is shy since leaders are often put on a pedestal and possess qualities that require courage or putting oneself out there. However, the new definition of leadership is someone who considers the group's needs in order to help it progress more efficiently which means that a leader can possess a variety of skills depending on the group. Additionally, the leader would also have to assess what the group needs and figure out a solution to this by taking responsibility for the group (Myers-Lipton 2017: 22). Some examples in the reading are that leadership qualities require listening skills, integrity, persistence, and becoming aware of how the group is “feeling” among other things (Myers-Lipton 2017: 23-24). As someone who is more reserved and shy, I prefer the new definition of leadership because it inspires and encourages me to be a leader. Previously, I would never consider myself a leader so I would never pursue leadership opportunities, however, this new definition has made me reflect on how I could be a leader, even if it is in small ways.

2.6 What are your strongest and weakest leadership qualities and skills, as described on pages 23-26 of CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action? In your answer, provide specific insights about these leadership qualities and skills from CHANGE! What quality and skills would you like to develop in this campaign?

- My strongest leadership qualities are being a good listener, having integrity, understanding how privilege operates and learning to work with groups who are “different” than you, and being persistent. My weakest leadership qualities are learning to say no, becoming comfortable talking in a small group and in public, and becoming aware of how the group is “feeling” (Myers-Lipton 2017: 23-26). I have always considered myself as someone who likes to make everyone happy, even if it means compromising at my expense which is why I have always been bad at saying no to others. Additionally, I have a little bit of social anxiety as well as not particularly enjoying public speaking which is why I am not very comfortable talking in small groups or in public. However, these are all skills that I hope that I can develop throughout the campaign. I hope to use the leadership qualities that I am good at such as listening, integrity,

persistence, and empathy throughout the campaign as well. Other qualities and skills that I would like to develop in this campaign are facilitating a meeting, recruiting members, event planning, and confronting and negotiating with a target. Although, all of the additional qualities and skills listed on “CHANGE! A Student’s Guide to Social Action” would be extremely useful to possess in life (Myers-Lipton 2017: 26).

2.7 In previous group experiences, has the new or old leadership model been used? In addition, how have the qualities and skills discussed above played out? For example, has leadership been shared, and has everyone had the opportunity to exercise leadership? How have you had to deal with people not taking responsibility, or where a person has been too dominant? What will you do to ensure that your group puts this new leadership into practice?

- I would say that the old leadership model has been used more in groups that were not as effective but the new leadership model has been used in groups that have been effective for me. For example, I have been in multiple groups throughout college but the one that was the most disastrous was my Public Speaking class in which the leader essentially held the title, led the discussions, and assigned groups but there was fallout within the group because no one was trying to assess how the group was feeling and there was no integrity within the group. In this situation, our leader did not try to take on too much responsibility and did not seem to care much for the group. However, in one of my classes for Braven, we had to create a presentation for a company and our leader made sure to check in with how our group was feeling, was honest about our work within the group, and was a good listener to what we had to say among many other good qualities. In this situation, our leader demonstrated that they did care about the group by ensuring the group’s success through the contribution of all of its group members. Something that I will do to ensure that my group puts this new leadership into practice is to use my strongest leadership qualities and speak up when I notice that something could be improved within our group. An example of this would be, being honest, contributing frequently, and dedicating time and effort to this group.

Please analyze the following questions about Plato’s Allegory of the Cave.

2.8 So what is the situation in the cave? What do the shadows, fire, and cave represent?

- The situation in the cave is that there are people who have been chained since birth that all think in one way due to the way that they grew up and it is not until one person breaks from these chains that they realize the reality. It is hard for many people to break from these chains because we live in a world of ignorance and ignorance is bliss. The shadows represent the truth beyond what society only wants us to see. The fire represents society which is the one controlling what they want us to see and how we should perceive society. The cave represents the world that we are living in as society wants us to see it. The situation of Plato’s cave represents people who are being deceived by society

because society only shows people what they want us to see from birth making it hard to think otherwise.

2.9 What happens when the prisoners are released? Why is it difficult (for us humans) to see when she/he/they (or us) first see “the truth”? In other words, why do people find it hard to change their understanding of the world? What are the implications of this for your campaign?

- Initially, the prisoners are hurt when they are released due to neck pains and some confusion as he glances around and is observing the reality of their situation. Then, they are able to gain awareness of their situation and gain wisdom afterward, therefore, freeing them and their minds. People find it hard to change their understanding of the world because it is what we know since birth and what we grow up knowing. Additionally, we live in a world that is ignorant and we feel sheltered in this ignorance because it is all that we know how to do since birth. Trying to follow the path of least resistance is easiest for us since we will not face any consequences or push back. Society internalizes ideas into our heads that make it hard for us to challenge. However, it is difficult for us when we first see the “truth” because we are trying to adjust to something that is new and different to us from our “normal.” The implications of this for my campaign are that it will be hard for us to realize all of the negative factors associated with our issue because we have grown up in a specific way. Schools are funded by things such as neighborhood tax which means that if you live in a poor neighborhood then your school is more likely to be poorly funded and the opposite would be that if you live in a rich neighborhood then your school is very well funded. Additionally, schools are set up so that those in low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be taught how to be obedient and submissive whereas schools set up in high-income neighborhoods are more likely to teach values such as creativity and leadership. This is how we have grown up in our world and the system continues often without being questioned or challenged which is why we have not yet begun to realize the full truths of our world. Many people may hear this and refuse to have undergone this experience because they don’t realize that the way that they have been living is unequal or different from others, especially if they benefit from it. This is why our campaign wants to be that guidance and program that students can turn to when they want to learn more about college and higher education.

2.10 What does the ascent out of the cave represent? Why is it a reluctant ascent (ex: painful, going against what others think)? What does the prisoner in the story see when she leaves the cave, and what does this represent?

- The ascent out of the cave represents the process of freeing our minds and gaining awareness of social issues. It is a reluctant ascent because they are doing something that they have never done before and are being met with resistance from others. He is also pained from the way he was previously living and is used to that lifestyle meaning it

requires effort to accept change. The prisoner in the story sees a clearer version of objects than he initially perceived before. Additionally, they are also forced into the presence of the sun, see the shadows, the objects, and much more but from a new perspective which will change their way of thinking. This represents that they are gaining wisdom after breaking free from their chains and are realizing the reality of their situation.

2.11 What happens to the person when they return to the cave, and why does this happen? What are the implications of this for your campaign? What might happen to you if you return to the cave? How does the cave apply to us today? Why did I have you read Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"?

- When the person returns to the cave they inform the people about what they observed and shared their wisdom. Something that might happen to you if you return to the cave is that you might be met with rejection, resistance, or confusion by others since their chains might not be broken or they have not yet gained awareness. On the other hand, hearing one's experience might aid others in breaking their chains or allow them to somewhat change their minds to how they are currently living. This applies to us today because this is an analogy to how we are currently living within society. We read Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" because it told us about how society has internalized us to believe and act in a certain way. However, breaking from these chains and liberating our minds is done once we become aware of social issues within our society, become enlightened, and inform others to create a social change.

2.12 How does social action and service-learning (ex: the integration of social action, reading, and critical reflection) help us get to Plato's Cave? Please use specific examples of students who have gotten out of the cave using social action and service-learning.

- Social action and service-learning will help us get to Plato's Cave because it will provide us with the wisdom that we need to gain awareness of the reality of our situation. Additionally, it will provide us with the materials, skills, and tools that we need to create social change. It was inspiring to read about a story that is similar to the situation that our society is in now. We are living in a world that from birth we are internalized to believe specific ideals projected by society and live in ignorance. However, Plato's Cave illustrated that breaking us from these chains will allow us to gain insight into the "truth" of our situation and can inform others through our campaigns and raise awareness, therefore, creating social change. As mentioned in Plato's Cave, this ascent might be reluctant or painful but that is because we are going against the path of least resistance and gaining awareness which we will do by applying the concepts we learn to our campaign. Students who have gotten out of the cave using social action and service-learning are those who were part of the Gulf Coast Civic Works Project, Society for Teaching Responsible Options in Nutrition and Growth (STRONG), and Campus Alliance for Economic Justice. I listed these three specifically because some students

appeared to have a hard time coming to terms with the process of social change. For example, Marisela had gotten out of the cave by realizing that there are students who are food insecure. This realization was extremely shocking and upsetting to her which encouraged her to take Sociology 164 and opened her eyes to the reality of the situation which allowed her to gain wisdom (Myers-Lipton 2017: 11). Similarly, the students of the Gulf Coast Civic Works Project were not directly impacted by this issue but got out of the cave through the process of coming to the realization of this issue through the awareness of Hurricane Katrina. Furthermore, STRONG was also not directly impacted by the issue but began to realize the importance of nutrition after being exposed to it by a representative from Sacred Heart Community Services which allowed them to go through the process of learning more and creating social change (Myers-Lipton 2017: 15). All three campaigns began by realizing an issue, struggling but continuing to learn, fighting for it through their campaign, and creating positive change, therefore, escaping the cave.