Panelist Remarks
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McCoy Family Center Undergraduate Human Rights Summer Fellowships
Human Rights at Stanford
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I. Ecuador Study Abroad
• What it meant to negotiate my role—outsider, blond, gringa; as well as within internship: intermediary between indigenous midwives and western hospital—foreign to both and caught in the middle of political workings I didn’t fully understand at the outset.
  o Feeling as if I came in with attention to my role as westerner—wanting to be sensitive and not appear “neo-colonial.”
• Program outline: 10 weeks studying in Quito w/host family; 5 weeks of rural internship in community about 2 hours from capital
• Relationships formed, one of the best parts of the experience: students, co-workers, host families
• Positive experience with specific challenges—didn’t realize the significance of the challenges until much later:
  o Clarity of role
  o Personal contribution? Meaning?
  o Outsider status
• NET: Came back questioning:
  o What can be my role as an outsider to any community (in a foreign country, in a foreign ethnic community, in a neighborhood not my own)?
  o It’s more than being a blond gringa, but telling a community what they need and how to go about doing it: uncomfortable. So how to go about applying the privilege of broad knowledge I have experienced through my education (esp at Stanford).

II. Haas Spirituality, Service, and Social Change Fellowship
• Desire upon entering: learn about the intersections of faith, service, social change; figure out my role (see above)
• Placement: San Francisco Organizing Project (SFOP)—grassroots community organizing group. Issue areas: health care, workforce development, housing, immigration, education.
• Role as an organizer: Provide space and place for community leaders to advocate for change in their communities + place elected officials in front of those to whom they are responsible.
• Location and process: Bayview/Hunters Point; Mission; Visitation Valley
  o Transformative leadership development and empowerment through specific cyclical process: listening, research, action, and reflection.
• Wins over summer:
  o Healthcare reform: press conference with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; conference call with President Obama (140,000+)
Education: Formation of Citywide Education Committee to address SFUSD district-level policy…culmination in Education Convention 10/3/09.

- NET: Process allowed me to see my role:
  - As facilitating a democratic process from the ground up
  - As an organizer—standing behind community leaders to support as they plan and execute.

III. Local v. Global
- There is still a huge place in my heart for Ecuador and given the mentorship and financial support, I hope to return in the near future.
- However, I’ve also learned first-hand that it doesn’t take a trip across a continent to make an impact, and in fact, sometimes the impact is more meaningful when it occurs in our own communities. I don’t have it all together—nor to do I feel like I know that deep answer to world injustice, but I have come to recognize the power of being in relationship with those in our own communities.

IV. Relation to Human Rights—bringing it back
- May not be standard/canonical experience of human rights promotion.
- However, whether democracy is a necessary prerequisite for human rights or the inverse is true, giving citizens the right and ability to access the democratic process and ask for what they need of those who represent them is most decidedly an issue of human rights.