

Part I: Reflection on Social Action Project

This past year within Leadership has been an impactful learning experience for me. My research and my project showed and taught me the importance of servant and humble leadership. These leadership concepts have always been taught and supported within my family, community, and church growing up. These two theories continue to be incredibly important to me as I grow into myself. My project centered on low-income housing policies within DC. Thousands of residents face deepening disparities and lacking resources as the nation's capital requires over 20,000 affordable housing units to alleviate the cost-burdened people and families. My project showed me that the communities were the ones responding readily to the need. Change begins with seeking out leaders with humility and compassion to put in the necessary work. Humble and servant leadership styles foster a clear mindset that will build long-term success.

Within my group and myself, I also noticed a need for humble leadership. Humility is a powerful thing. Our program brings a diverse group of leaders together. In other instances, this could lead to disaster. However, there is something that bonds are leadership students together that allow us to thrive together. I believe this "something" begins with respect, humility, and compassion. The humble leadership style brings out the strength of these traits and encourages leaders to understand themselves first. Through understanding your own goals, beliefs, and limitations, leaders with polar opposite leadership styles or personalities can find harmony. It makes setting realistic goals and clarifying boundaries easier. Overall, taking time to know yourself, stay humble, and have grace for others sets everyone in the right direction.

Part II: Reflection on Leaders & Leadership

Taking time to sit in class and listen to the diverse group of speakers has been my favorite part of the semester. Being able to interact with leaders in action has led me to confront aspects of my leadership style that I had not considered before. Honestly, I had deep takeaways from each speaker that came into our class. The two most memorable ones for me were Shannon Saks and Michael Aronin. These two individuals brought an air of realness into the room. Their presence was fun and inviting. Confronting difficult areas of identity, leadership, and politics were paired with jokes, college stories, and anecdotes. I struggle with aspects of my personal identity and leadership. I ask the same questions to each leader because I seek guidance. I know it may be annoying at times, but I have lots of questions. Michael Aronin and Shannon Saks were not scared off by the deeper questions. They were not afraid to say they did not know or were not qualified to answer a question or elaborate on a point. I enjoy being around people who do not need to know all the answers, but rather humor the process of learning.

I will say I am a little embarrassed that I kept asking the same questions to the speakers. As a queer woman in leadership positions, I struggle with my identities and with serving a system that was not made for me. I learned that some people are not comfortable with these conversations. Some people have the privilege to never consider these questions. Some know exactly what I mean. This dropped a huge realization onto my chest. I suddenly realized that everyone is their own real-life, living, breathing person that is completely unique. Thousands of people make decisions every day that affect the lives of thousands. Between all the people that make this world run, trust is necessary. In the end, all these speakers taught me to continue being vocal about my perspective while also taking into consideration their perspective. Leadership (and life) are reciprocal. Putting in that effort to find commonalities and familiar ground may make all the difference.