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The Editor's Notes

In Loving Memory to Professor Joyce Fields

This is the last volume for the *Journal for Service-Learning, Leadership, and Social Change*

When my late friend and colleague Joyce Fields and I started *The Journal*, we did so after reflecting on the impact service-learning/community-based learning had on the students with whom we were working, and the impact service-learning was having in the community in which our college claimed to be a part. Admittedly, we were dreamers. Like many others, we asked if we could create a campus-wide experience that would foster civic engagement in our students. Could we embody the nature of liberal learning and have our students reflect on their own personal ethos as they reflected on the nature of social justice in real ways? Could we do this in our two required service-learning courses if we integrated our students-lives-as-text into our pedagogy? We weren't interested in critical service-learning as a tool to help our students examine the current systems of oppression and institutional marginalization that underlies community-based work and community-based learning.

Our college worked with historically underserved minorities and DACA students, many of whom graduated from severely under-resourced high schools. Our students were well-aware of systems of oppression and institutional marginalization because they were living it daily. Our college itself was under-resourced. But Joyce and I believed that that did not matter. What mattered to us is what could be done if we could learn to work together, across boundaries, to impact day-to-day social justice. I confess that we did get lucky. We had help from some very remarkable VISTA's – Jamie Opdyke, Amy Sommers, Sarah Gay, Morgan Anderson, and Molly Preston. Each came to the College with their own sense that by working together we could do better. Each believed that social justice is not something to study and debate; it is something we do every day in our most mundane interactions. They contributed in ways that at times surprised them. Our work was honored with The Washington Center Award for Civic Engagement in October 2012.

It was our students' voices that convinced us that what we thought what we could only hope for did in fact turn into what we believed education is for – developmental and transformational growth. As one student noted, "I lacked confident [sic] to believe in the power of one. I found myself actually believing I can make a difference. I have the potential to change the educational system in South Carolina. I have the power to lobby for change in gender discrimination in the family courts, and I simply have the power to lead". Another student noted, "I no longer am embarrassed where I reside. I now believe that the expectations of the 29203 [zip code] community is only limited to my biases. I must also admit that 'I got some nerve' to ostracize, to be embarrassed of, or reduce my role of being a part of the 29203 community. I have taken from

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this class to have great pride in where you come from, who you are, where you're going, and how to utilize those skills, life experiences and education". One student remarked, "I no longer have to sit in the dugout. I just have step to the plate and swing at the ball. Home run or not, each swing brings me closer to a goal I did not know existed". Still another said, "I was thinking about every issue from a black and white perspective, not discovering yet how I had been normed to do so. I started dealing in the 'grey' or 'make it messy for ya' area. The challenging of a person comes with a certain risk. Either that person will become offended and deny the truth heading their way, or they will face it with open arms and kneel at the altar of humility". I could go on. Our students learned, as well as so many others who took the 2 courses learned, they could pursue their careers and still work for that elusive thing we call the common good.

Joyce and I believed that service-learning could challenge us to cross partisan divides. It could help us sense that "founding fathers" are always conflicted souls, victims of their socio-historical milieu, as we all are. It could help us sense that founding documents also come from a socio-historical milieu we no longer live in. It could challenge us to look at others, ourselves, and question if we could learn see beyond "social identities" of people and into "the content of their character" not just to develop understanding, but to push us to work together for just social change. We knew there were other voices of students across the country and in other countries we needed to hear, that all of us needed to hear. So we created this niche Journal, one dedicated to hearing students voices, their experiences, their reflections, their sense that they could make a difference, and their sense of how they could still pursue their professional interests while at the same time being mindful that we must always be in conversations with others if we hope to negotiate the tenuous relationship between the pace of social change and the need to define and redefine and redefine again our sense of a common good, a common wealth.

We started simply with a word document posted on a webpage. Today, *The IUJSL* has an ISBN number and has been downloaded almost 15,000 times in 150 different countries. Throughout its pages we have been awed by students' voices. It has been quite a ride. But times change. It has become a struggle to get submissions. Recently, I was talking with an Associate Director of Community-based Learning and asked if he had received the call for papers. He noted that he did, but did not think it important. A telling comment. I do realize that others who receive the call for papers usually post it on a website. I do understand. I also wonder what this says about our engagement with our students. But that is a different issue.

It is enough to say that it has been a unique honor to work with the students who had someone to mentor them to submit. Their voices and their stories would give anyone hope in whom we can become. Joyce....It has been joy.

--Ned Laff, Ph.D. --

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