

Assignment 3: Reflections and Lessons from the Internship

Kirsten Elsaden

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This Summer, I had the privilege of being a Jean Donovan Fellow through Santa Clara University, partnering with Urban Sanctuary and Recovery Cafe San Jose. Urban Sanctuary is a spiritual community that integrates the arts, spirituality, and social justice. The Recovery Cafe offers healing and recovery services for people healing from trauma, addiction, and homelessness. I worked 30-35 hours a week as a Spirituality and Social Justice Intern. I led trauma-informed sound healing sessions, conducted workshops on the subconscious mind and compassion, served meals, designed weekly digital communications for the chapel, participated in healing circles, and listened and learned deeply from the stories of members. One of my favorite projects this summer was creating the Solidarity room in Urban Sanctuary, where I collaborated with a local artist on its design. Then I created descriptions for different art pieces commemorating individuals who have fought in solidarity with social justice causes. This room is designed to inspire solidarity among all individuals who gather to fight for social justice initiatives.

This summer has opened my heart to empathy, love, and healing in a whole new way. The community members have shown me that healing is not a linear process, but when we come together, we have a chance to begin anew. I am truly inspired and in awe of this community's resilience and strength. Overall, this experience deepened my commitment to creating spaces that foster healing, creativity, and solidarity, where both individual and collective transformation can occur. I am incredibly grateful for the mentors, community members, and peers who have guided me along the way!

Through my internship, I gained a deeper understanding of myself and the marginalized communities in San Jose. I learned about how many systems in society, from housing, healthcare, and food, fail to create rehabilitative services for those coming out of incarceration, homelessness, or mental health disorders. I learned and saw how these community members were ostracized from society, almost as if they were disposable. The Cafe and Sanctuary community created a space of belonging so that people could be valued in their humanness. This summer taught me that everyone wants to feel seen, valued, and contribute. I was in awe of community members who had made significant progress on their healing journey, and even if they relapsed, they would come back to try again. There was so much resilience, strength, and courage I saw in people who were trying to get back on their feet.

I also learned about the inner workings of a non-profit organization as I sat with the finance committee at the Sanctuary while they reviewed their annual budget. I also oversaw member orientation in the cafe, where I introduced new members to the cafe. I would register their paperwork in the system following the orientation, and it was interesting to see how they kept track of each community member's needs and goals for being with the organization.

I learned how to hold sacred space and lead this summer. I led sound healing for the community members and guided meditations. I led a workshop on the subconscious mind and inner child healing. I also shared poetry and reflection at church on Sunday. I learned not to be afraid to speak my truth as it resonates and can evoke healing in others.

One difficulty that I encountered this summer was with my work in Urban Sanctuary. Dana (my boss) asked me to help create the Solidarity room, a space where people gather to advocate for social justice issues. We partnered with a local artist to paint the words solidarity on the wall. Then I worked to organize different posters of well-known people in society who

worked in solidarity for social justice issues. I labeled the posters of what we had and sent out a survey to Urban Sanctuary Community Members to see who they would like to be recognized in the room. In my survey, it read, "Solidarity Icons." A woman in the church came up to me and was upset that I used the word Icon. She said that she didn't want us to be worshipping the individuals in the room. I apologized, explaining that my intention was not to worship but to show respect to the individuals we commemorate in the room. I told her I would change the word in the survey. I ended up deleting the survey because I had gotten over thirty requests. I felt compelled to send this community member an email to clarify her questions and address her feedback. I explained the definition of "Icon" to her, contrasting it with the one she had in mind. I clarified and responded to her questions. She responded with gratitude. I am proud of the way I handled, clarified, and responded to the situation. It made me realize the importance of the words I choose and the need to be clear/intentional about them.

My experience has made me more confident in myself. I have always been empathetic, compassionate, and wanting to learn from others. This experience helped me fully embody these aspects of myself. This summer showed me what true belonging and self-acceptance mean. This makes me different because now that I know what it's like to be loved for who I truly am, I feel intolerant of spaces that do not welcome me in my fullness. This experience has ignited a fire in me to create spaces where people feel welcomed and sacred. I aim to lead in a way that empowers others. I loved the feeling of witnessing others have "aha" moments in their healing process and reclaim their power. It was genuinely moving and made me feel empowered to reclaim my own power in my own life. Often, we learn things in paradox. For community members who have experienced such loss or trauma in their lives, they truly value life differently, having survived their obstacles. They value presence, joy, and fun more than any

community I have ever seen. I feel so humbled and blessed to be a part of it. I laughed so much this summer and had such deep connections with community members. It has made me want to bring more presence, joy, play, and fun into my life. I felt welcomed in sharing my creative endeavors with everyone, and they gave me great feedback.

My skills in leadership and holding sacred space will serve me well in the career field I am entering. I intend to offer alternative healing therapies to people, and this summer helped me develop skills in sound healing, energy work, strong communication, public speaking, community organizing, organization, and creative expression. I will share these skills and utilize them to advance my career in the field I aspire to enter.

EMPAC was relevant through different facets of the internship. For matching, the Cafe uses a system to input all the new members' information. This database is utilized across the various Recovery Cafes to share information in case a member needs to switch locations or otherwise. The “price” for entry or becoming a member at the cafe requires following the three main rules: being clean and sober for 24 hours, completing two chores a month, and attending your weekly recovery circle. If the members do not abide by these rules, they will have to restart at orientation and could eventually have to wait a couple of months for re-enrollment if these rules are not met. Members gain access to meals, recovery support services, classes, and workshops. The cost of membership is free, as they are people coming out of incarceration, homelessness, and mental health disorders. There is a recovery school, which offers optional classes ranging from a diverse array of topics, including yoga, mindset, gratitude, trauma reflection, spiritual reflection, and "Meet Me in the Art Room," among others. These classes are not required to maintain membership, but many members attend them to utilize their free time in a productive and healing way. The schedule is the same every day (lunch, check in, chores, etc.)

with different class offerings daily. The Cafe is right at the heart of San Jose, and many members are from the area, so the location is an easy spot to come to every day. Therefore, the EMPAC model of this organization is designed to engage members who are actively involved in and moving toward recovery and healing.

Note: This is the internship I ended up doing this summer

Currently, I am continuing this work with Urban Sanctuary and Recovery Cafe

I also just started running social media for a start-up called “Seeking Center,” but since it is so new, I figured I would speak of my summer internship in this reflection.