Reflection Page

This class sincerely shifted my outlook regarding my abilities as a citizen and a student. Discussing the power of each sphere of action made me realize the effectiveness of each sphere in relation to social change. In particular, the power of the civic sphere in changing the lives of those who they set out to help through nonprofits. Essentially, nonprofits are a way to provide useful—temporary but immediate—solutions. However, they do not have the resources or platform to permanently solve any problem because they do not have the power or scalability the government sphere has. Also, one of the best things I’ve learned through this course is the uselessness of volunteering and how every volunteering effort is inherently selfish. Doing our project made me realize the power of advocating and how we, as citizens, have the power to actually facilitate change in society.

Going to Lansing with my group was the best experience of my semester. Although coordinating the trip was a nightmare, the lessons we learned that day and the things we experienced was worth it. Contacting each of our respective representatives’ offices was a hassle in itself considering one of my group member’s representative had just resigned to run for senate. Timing was another issue, we had unknowingly picked Good Friday to travel to Lansing. Once we got to Lansing, we had to wait an hour before our scheduled meeting and another hour waiting outside the locked and empty office. After getting stood up for our first appointment—which had been our only appointment in Lansing—we had to drive to Dearborn to meet with Representative Abdullah Hammoud. The library we were supposed to meet him at was closed for Good Friday. So then began our third waiting game in which we waited in an empty parking lot for two hours. Finally, Representative Hammoud pulled up and told us to meet him at the coffee shop down the road. All these obstacles were worth it because the meeting we had with Hammoud was extremely informative and we learned a lot about politics from our discussion. Hammoud had told us he is in the process of proposing a bill which would provide incentives to businesses to hire veterans, immigrants and—because of the information my group presented—women. Representative Hammoud walked us through the hardships behind getting a bill passed and persuading the opposite political party to vote in favor, he also told us his bill probably won’t get passed. Nonetheless, being able to speak directly to someone who can cause—somewhat—immediate and significant change, was a great experience.

Overall, this class was everything I anticipated and more. Social issues were broken down in a way which we were able to analyze the causes and possible, practical solutions. The semester-long project went beyond the typical service hours at a soup kitchen and forced students to exercise their power as citizens. In lecture, we not only analyzed social issues, we discussed the causes and the structures which prevent us from permanently solving these problems in society. This course was empowering and enlightening.