**Alternative Spring Breaks—Some Writings**

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**Reflection - Nahomi**

The alternative Spring Break in Guatemala was an unforgettable experience, not only because it was a different spring break, but most importantly because of everything I learned while immersed in the Guatemalan culture. Starting with the team I thought was great and helped this experience be a great one. We all got along really well and each had something unique to give to the students. While one was better in planning a lesson, the other was better in playing sports with the kids, etc.

I am from Mexico and the people in Mexico are a lot like Guatemalan people. They are generous and loving. I realized that people in Guatemala are happy with what they have. They do not need to have the best house, clothes, or any material possessions; as long as their family is united they are happy. I speak fluent Spanish and I had the opportunity to talk to people in Patulup, the town we were teaching and in Chichicastenango, where we stayed. I met a woman in the market who was selling purses, while we were talking she mentioned she had five children, and how they were all a blessing from God. That really struck me to see how people in Guatemala value the importance of life and live every day to the fullest.

In addition to this wonderful experience, I also noticed how fortunate I am of having had a great education and life, I couldn’t ask for more. Having prepared the lesson plans for the students and teaching them, made me realize my passion for teaching others, especially those who have not had the same opportunities I’ve had. I have decided to teach low income students, and am looking forward for this upcoming experience, which I know this Guatemalan trip has taught me great skills that will prepare me for my future.

Finally, I want to thank you Dr. Branch for all your effort invested in this trip. It was worth it! I had one of the best times of my life!

**Main page for the class:** [**http://go.sdsu.edu/education/guatemala/Default.aspx**](http://go.sdsu.edu/education/guatemala/Default.aspx)

**ASB trips see largest applicant pool to-date** April 6, 2015 Ada Statler-Throckmorton

Over spring break, 189 participants and 34 trip leaders went on Stanford Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trips in locations both in the Bay Area and across the country. The students participated in a total of 17 different trips, each with its own student-planned theme.

**A growing program** The program saw an increase of over 30 participants this year. Additionally, the number of trips offered increased from 15 to 17. This reflects requests from past ASB participants, who are eligible to propose a new trip for the following year.

“The program is definitely growing in size, and we hope to continue that trend,” said James Huynh ’15, the executive director of Stanford ASB.

Cecily Foote ’16, leader of the ASB trip “Beyond Organic: Down n’ Dirty with California’s Food System in Monterey Bay,” attributes part of this growth to increased publicity efforts by ASB online, in addition to the fliers put around dorms beginning in October.

“There was definitely a huge media push – we were on the Stanford instagram and are even on the Stanford homepage right now,” Foote said.

According to Foote, the program had more applicants this year than ever before. For her trip alone, Foote and her co-leader had to sort through over 50 applications for a trip capped at 12 participants.

**Varying themes of service** Foote led one of three ASB trips that focused on food production; however, each took a different approach. While Foote and her co-leader focused on different types of food production, another trip focused on how farming can influence child health, while a third trip focused specifically on food production in urban areas.

Other common ASB themes included technology and innovation, education, democracy, immigration, health and identity. However, many of the trips such as “The Fruit of Their Labor: Migrant Health in California” or “The Silicon Classroom: Education Equity in a Changing Digital World” touched upon the intersections of many of these issues.

According to Alice Fang ’15, two-time leader of the Silicon Classroom trip, because the themes and curriculum are student-designed, they follow students’ interests particularly well and people feel passionate about pursuing the topic.

“I didn’t lead the trip because I already knew a lot about it, but because I wanted to learn a lot more, and I couldn’t think of a better way than ASB,” Fang said.

**Unique structure** While Stanford is not the only university with an Alternative Break program, many schools tend to work with one organization for the entirety of the break.  Stanford ASBs tend to tour different types of organizations – from schools to startups to NGOs – over the course of a week in various locations ranging from the Bay Area to South Dakota to Washington.

According to Fang, Stanford ASB is also unique in the approach it takes in framing service as a long term skill to develop.

“Stanford really thinks about service and learning combined,” Fang said. “When we were doing service on our trip, it wasn’t service for the sake of service. For example, with small workshops at local schools, it was about what it means to engage diverse students in an activity and what we can take away from that experience to learn more in the future.”

While Fang and Foote both wanted to design and lead their own trips after participating in an ASB, other students choose to continue at the participant level.

“One of our participants went on his third trip as a junior,” Foote said. “He said that for him it’s the only opportunity to meet so many organizations in such a short time and see different ways of working in fields that interest him.”

Fang said that what makes Stanford ASB special for her are the added benefits of working and learning in a small group of peers. According to Fang, most ASB trips participate in team bonding exercises such as “spotlights” at night.

“Based on some of our feedback forms, hearing people’s life stories and the diversity of their experiences is really interesting and something our participants enjoy,” Fang said. “It’s so much different than a class where you might learn some of the same things.”

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<http://www.stanforddaily.com/2015/04/06/asb-trips-see-largest-applicant-pool-to-date/>

OPINIONS: The case for service learning October 16, 2014

Recently, Stefan Norgaard, the chair of Stanford in Government, wrote an op-ed inviting students to engage in more experiential learning opportunities on campus. Norgaard listed several key opportunities: “service learning courses like the International Urbanization Seminar or Sustainable Cities, Stanford in Government (SIG) Fellowships and Stipends, Haas Center Fellowships.” Norgaard correctly stated that “experiential learning ought to have a larger place in a Stanford education.” That sentiment can go one step further: Service learning can be much more integrated into the Stanford experience.

According to [*The Study of Undergraduate Education at Stanford University (SUES) Report 2012*](http://news.stanford.edu/news/2012/january/SUES_Report.pdf), “community-based learning has emerged as one of the most exciting fields in American higher education.” As a student who is actively involved in public service and who has experienced the direct impacts of community-based learning – a term synonymous with service learning – I know that this approach to education is fundamental to the Stanford undergraduate experience. From partaking in community-based learning course, students will “think reflectively about the nature of their service work, to approach communities not just as beneficiaries of their aid but as partners in a common enterprise.”

Stanford’s [Alternative Spring Break](http://web.stanford.edu/group/ASB/cgi-bin/prod/) (ASB) program is one such service-learning course, and the one through which I have learned the most. ASB is a student-led program housed at the Haas Center that introduces students to complex social and cultural issues through community visits, experiential learning, direct service, group discussions, readings, and reflective activities.

I first became involved with ASB as freshman, participating in the Asian American Issues course and trip, led by Thanh D. Nguyen ’14 and Van Anh Tran ’13, ’14. Taking this course and trip radically changed my academic and professional trajectory. During the course, we extensively discussed what it meant to be Asian American, how the term came about, and how this community has been affected by important U.S. policies and events. It was the first time that I had ever reflected on my Asian American identity. I learned about how the Asian American community galvanized and protested in the face of Vincent Chin’s murder in 1982. Learning about my own community’s history shattered my world. The typical U.S. history textbook mentions Asian Americans in only one context: Japanese internment camps. Going through this ASB, I realized that the Asian American community has a rich history that is much more nuanced than what our high school education conveyed.

This process of learning and reflecting allowed me to go on the spring break trip with a clear idea of whom I would be interacting with and what issues they would be tackling. During the trip, we met with a variety community-based organizations that addressed issues in the Asian American community through advocacy, grass roots organizing, politics, legal aid, academia, and mental health services. Through these organizations, we experienced firsthand issues of oil refineries affecting Richmond residents’ health, wage theft in Chinatown, mom and pop businesses competing against large retail stores like Walmart, LGBTQ stigma in the community, and much more.

The beauty of service learning is combining scholarly work with experiential learning in a way that benefits the community that you are working *with*. Many times at Stanford we are so focused on solving problems that we often forget who lives those problems day to day. There is a sense of humility associated with service learning. In order for us to carry out service in an ethical way, we need to understand our intentions and the impact behind our actions.

Community members know what changes they want. However, they often feel they have a lack of power and privilege to voice their opinions. Many times, the systems around them disenfranchise their ability to mobilize and create solutions. And that is where Stanford students can step in. But before we step in, we need to understand our own intentions and biases.

I challenge you to take on a service learning opportunity here at Stanford. Identify a community of interest, and develop a partnership in which you can empower folks to create their own solutions. --James Huynh ’15

*James Huynh is the Executive Director of Alternative Spring Break. He can be contacted at jhuynh93 ‘at’ stanford.edu.* <http://www.stanforddaily.com/2014/10/16/the-case-for-service-learning/>

**Discussion Questions**:

1. **The appeals:** Consider these all as arguments and look at how the three appeals are working, particularly pathos. What values are these writers appealing to? What emotions are they trying to stir up? Does it work with you? Why or why not?
2. **Audiences:** Who are the target audiences for these writing? How can you tell? How might the arguments be adapted if this were for SJSU audience(s)?
3. **Voice**: The 1st and 3rd piece are told in first person, the 2nd is written by an objective 3rd person (a journalist). How does that affect your reaction to the different pieces? Do the writers seem credible, relatable, likeable? Why or why not?