

Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement

Experience: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Reflection Assignment:

Let's recap. **What** did we do today?

In *The Trumpet of Conscience*, Dr. King wrote, "the emergency we now face is economic, and it is a desperate and worsening situation. For the ... poor people in America ... there is a kind of strangulation in the air. In our society it is murder, psychologically, to deprive a man of a job or an income. You are in substance saying to that man that he has no right to exist. You are in a real way depriving him of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, denying his case the very creed of this society. Now, millions of people are being strangled that way ... and it is getting worse, as the gap between the poor and the 'affluent society' increase."

- What is the broader context for what you did today?
 - Where did you volunteer?
 - In what neighborhood?
 - Who did you see while volunteering? Who did you not see?
- What privileges and systems of inequality are at play?
- What are some ways these systems are maintained?

Why did we do this work today?

- What, if any, immediate needs did you help address? Who does your site serve?
- What values or beliefs do you have that would cause you to work to help others or to improve our community?
- Do you find value in this kind of work? Why or why not?
- When you think about our society, why is work like this needed?
- One aspect of the Puget Sound mission is to help students 'meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship.' How does this fit with the work we did today?

Much of King's message is still relevant today. So, **what now?**

Dr. King wrote "the cities are gasping in polluted air and enduring contaminated water; public facilities are outworn and inadequate; financial disaster is an annual crisis. Within this chaos of neglect, Negroes are stifled at the very bottom in slums so squalid their equal is not to be found in any other industrialized nation ... It is noteworthy that many distinguished periodicals and leaders of the white community, even while the conflict raged, in clear terms accepted responsibility for neglect, evasion, and centuries of injustice. They did not quibble nor did they seek to fasten exclusive culpability on the Negro. They asked for action and a facing-up to the need for drastic social reformation."

- Volunteering is an important part of being an active citizen, but volunteering only goes so far. Dr. King also wrote, "When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied." What are examples of other things you can do alongside service and volunteer work, that might help address the underlying issues at play?

- How might you incorporate such involvement into your academic and co-curricular experiences while here at Puget Sound? Do these lead you off-campus and into the broader Tacoma community? Should they?
- What underlying structural issues did today's work not address?