Reflections on Justice in Action

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I’ve been involved with NYLC by serving on their Youth Advisory Council (YAC), a team of servant leaders (pictured above) from across the country that advises NYLC on its programming and brings valuable youth perspectives to the organization’s work.

Over the past two years, I’ve gotten so many incredible opportunities through NYLC, including:

- co-developing and co-facilitating educator trainings
- working on a marketing + outreach committee
- being on staff at the national youth leadership training

Most recently, I attended the 26th annual National Service-Learning Conference, JUSTICE IN ACTION, hosted by NYLC in St. Paul, Minnesota. I was highly involved in many different aspects of it. I am so excited to share my reflections on this amazing experience.

Educator Institute

Before the actual conference, I got to spend two days with a group of teachers and administrators, co-facilitating a training about service-learning with NYLC staff. I got to share my perspectives as a young person, and I learned so much about what it takes to be a teacher, and how much goes into the planning!

It was hard (but rewarding!) work, for both the attendees and the facilitators. It was cool to see how everyone planned to bring high quality service-learning into their own schools and classrooms.

The group included educators from California, Alaska, and even the U.K. There were so many awesome conversations and new connections being
made! It was so cool to be there!

Plenary Speech

Definitely one of my highlights of the conference was that I got the chance to speak on the plenary stage, in front of everyone. It was certainly nerve wracking, but I actually enjoyed it! I talked about my experience with education, what education equity means to me, and my vision for a world with education. I spent so much time in the previous month fleshing out all the different ideas and possibilities, but I was making edits and revising up until the day before! I decided to mostly speak from the heart, but I kept up with the general structure I had planned. I felt really good after I finally finished, and I received so many amazing responses from everyone afterwards, it was amazing! I’m really glad that I took the opportunity, and I hope my public speaking will only get better from here!

Youth Room

Another role I took on at the conference was being the chair of the Youth Room committee, which meant I got to coordinate a speed-networking event and a dance party. We went with a jungle theme, and I picked out some decorations and (in my opinion) some great food options, including a pretty sweet candy bar and some healthy options! We also got our hands on a giant Connect Four, and giant Jenga, which were awesome. It was so fun to just bring people together and have a good time with my fellow YAC members. It was also great experience with event planning, and I learned more about decision making, delegating, and reaching out for help when I needed it.

Day of Service

Something that makes the National Service-Learning really special is that after the workshops and sessions are over, we have a day of service to go into the community and bring our discussions about service into action! My site for the day of service was the Twin Cities YMCA Equity Innovation Lab. It’s a newly designed center and we got to tour around and see the building. It was so well designed, from the architecture to the workspace layouts, to the furniture choice. I got the chance to really get into conversations with people as we worked on our service project, which was writing cards for the YMCA’s international partners. We learned all about how the YMCA actually has very different perceptions across the world; it’s not necessarily the gym and swim centers that we think about. It’s hostels and community support, and so many different things! Making the cards was perfectly up my alley, but I think the most important part of the day of service was the new friends and getting inspiration from the space!

In Summary

I got to do even more, over the course of the whole conference. I presented a workshop with tips to get involved in your community with politics, which went well! I helped staff the registration desk and talked to lots of new people from across the world, even from Singapore and Taiwan! I had conversations with different sponsors and exhibitors and was thoroughly impressed by how many great things are going on in the service field!

I attended several workshops and sessions and got lots of new ideas about service-learning and education. One of my absolute favorites was the Gathering of Elders, which was a two-hour session where elders shared wisdom they had gathered through their experiences with life. Their stories were so raw and authentic and impactful, yet still uplifting. I also heard some really awesome speeches during the plenary stage sessions.

Some of the best moments were also just hanging out with the rest of the YAC, and there’s always so much I learn from spending time with them! We got to see downtown St. Paul, which was a nice area set right by the Mississippi River.
Overall, it was a crazy, busy, exhausting week, but an extremely inspiring, truly awesome experience that I am so grateful for!

**Tags:** community action, day of service, educator institute, justice in action, service-learning.