

Teaching the Reflective Approach Within the Service-Learning Model

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I. Introduction

Over the course of the past seven academic years, we have come to embrace the service-learning model in our law school curriculum. While our school is known for a clinic-centered curriculum, like other law schools we have lagged behind in understanding, creating and applying the pedagogy of service-learning.

Although closely aligned with clinical legal education, service-learning derives from a somewhat different legacy, in part because it focuses on the development of different skills. We have written extensively on the role of service-learning in the law school curriculum as providing a uniquely effective “third apprenticeship” for law students, particularly those from the millennial generation.¹ We have urged the development and use of service-learning in law schools because the experience enhances professional identity and grows core values, while serving communities in crisis.

In this essay, we discuss the application of the “planning-doing-reflecting” paradigm in the service-learning context. More specifically, we focus on the use of student reflection in instilling humanitarian values, nurturing empathy towards the importance of social justice lawyering, and deepening the overall learning process. The core philosophy of this essay is that teaching reflection and the reflective process is an integral and indeed essential aspect of the service-learning pedagogy.

In Part II of this essay we provide an overview of the evolution of our Disaster Law course called “Katrina and Beyond.” The course includes a practicum that has evolved into a service-learning experience. We describe both the years that we brought students to New Orleans to work on the post-Katrina recovery, and also subsequent years when we traveled to Biloxi, Mississippi to work with the Mississippi Center for Justice on a variety of post-Katrina and BP oil spill legal and humanitarian issues.

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1. See Laurie Morin & Susan Waysdorf, *The Service-Learning Model in the Law School Curriculum: Expanding Opportunities for the Ethical-Social Apprenticeship*, 56 *New York L. Sch. Rev.* 561 (2011).

In Part III we describe how we developed the reflective approach with our students through journaling, beginning with the course's first offering in spring 2007, and the role that this eventually played in deepening the learning process for the students. We also describe how we instructed our students in the reflective process, focusing on the use of journals and videos.

In Part IV, we discuss the reflective questions that we posed to the students, focusing on the spring 2011 trip to Biloxi, Mississippi. Here we discuss the specific role of reflective dialogue and "reflection circles" that we conducted while in Biloxi on that service-learning trip. We discuss why reflection deepens our students' learning of the law, while strengthening students' foundational and contextual understanding of social justice. Furthermore, we describe the multi-faceted and multi-layered approach to teaching and engaging in reflection that we developed since 2007.

Finally, in Part V we conclude by offering suggestions and approaches based on our experience for utilizing reflection as an essential aspect of deepening the learning process for students as they engage in social justice legal work and humanitarian efforts.

II. The "Katrina and Beyond" Service-Learning Course

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the breaching of the levees, in August 2005, thousands of law students from around the country traveled to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast to help in the recovery efforts. We initiated the course "Katrina and Beyond" as part of that experience. However, our course was different from other initiatives for several distinct reasons because (1) ours was a semester-long, for-credit course, with the service trip sandwiched between classes; (2) professors were involved from beginning to end and participated not only in the classroom aspects, but also in the service-learning trip; and (3) professors developed and carried out a Disaster Law curriculum, including seminar reading materials, a law-based textbook and weekly reading and writing assignments.

Initially we conceived the spring break volunteer trip to New Orleans to be a "mini-clinic" with aspects that mirrored a traditional clinic, but in a more concentrated timeline and in a traumatized setting. However, over the years, we understood that the entire course, including the volunteer trip, was a particular pedagogical model called service-learning.² This model has a distinctive history throughout the nation's educational programs from high school through graduate schools. But service-learning has received scant recognition and application by law schools to date.

For four consecutive years, from academic year 2006-2007 through 2009-2010, the course curriculum focused on New Orleans, the impact of Katrina on the city, the unprecedented scope of the devastation, and the recovery efforts. We worked with a variety of legal services, recovery and humanitarian

2. For a detailed discussion of service-learning and more on the "Katrina and Beyond" course, see Morin & Waysdorf, *supra* note 1.

non-profits, including the Pro Bono Project, the Office of the Public Defender, the St. Bernard Project, Juvenile Justice Project, and the Migrant Workers Rights organization.

During those years, we and our students won the release of dozens of Louisiana prisoners who had been lost in the criminal defense system since Katrina. We assisted families in establishing ownership of their homes so they could file claims with FEMA, insurance companies and later, the Road Home Program. We provided legal assistance to homeowners, renters, the elderly and disabled, and those seeking claims against unscrupulous contractors. And, we advocated for migrant workers who had come to New Orleans seeking work but who had been denied pay by those who hired them and who lived in squalor instead of the conditions they had been promised.

We progressively expanded the scope and breadth of our work, building new relationships with community and other recovery groups over the four years we traveled to and worked in post-Katrina New Orleans. These groups included the Make It Right organization which built homes in the Lower 9th Ward and the Broadmoor Improvement Association, which led efforts to rebuild that community.

Then in academic year 2010–2011, we shifted our focus to the Mississippi Gulf Coast and developed a relationship with the Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ). The MCJ is a seasoned civil rights organization which has played a central role in the post-Katrina recovery and more recently, recovery from the BP oil spill disaster. In March 2011 we traveled to Biloxi, Mississippi and worked with the MCJ on a variety of legal issues challenging the people of that community and the surrounding Mississippi Gulf Coast area. We assisted people seeking claims against BP for the losses they suffered due to the spill disaster; we advocated for community members seeking to reopen their historically black school closed in the aftermath of the storm. Finally, we provided legal assistance to homeowners and others seeking to rebuild their homes, still devastated from Hurricane Katrina.

III. Reflecting by Recording the Service-Learning Experience

From the beginning of the course in 2007, we asked students to journal about their experiences. Initially, we described the journaling process to students as a way of documenting their personal transformation. Journaling was to also serve as a means for students to bear witness to the devastation and trauma they would see in post-Katrina New Orleans. Writing about their experiences, personal lessons, insights and concerns through journaling became an integral aspect of the service-learning course and experience.

We also described journaling as a method to achieve deeper learning. We explained that by contemporaneously writing down observations and thoughts about the experience, deliberate thinking about what the experience means would occur. We advanced the importance of written reflection as a means to enhance the impact of the immediate experience on the rest of one's

personal life and professional development. Some students proposed that they video their reflections instead and, although only a handful chose video over journals, these videos proved to be invaluable and unique records of the collective experience, as seen through individual eyes.

Many of our students, particularly those of the millennial generation, found the process of reflecting through journaling to be foreign and for some, unfathomable. While some students embraced the assignment to keep a journal, others resisted it. We decided that meaningful and effective reflecting requires that we teach students the process of reflection. We realized that we needed to engender consistency, prompt interest in contemporaneous contemplation, and provide direction of scope and purpose across the various levels of experience with journaling among our students. Therefore, we began a deliberate process of “teaching” the reflective process, through journaling.

After teaching the course for several years, we began to provide students with guidelines for the reflective journaling assignment, one aspect of the semester-long writing project.³ In addition to the journaling, students were asked to draft a research paper or a book review on a topic related to some aspect of the Katrina disaster or the post-Katrina reality. However, we believed that the student journals would be the centerpiece of the learning process. Journaling was the most direct method for instilling deeper and lasting insights about the impact legal advocacy could have on the promotion of social justice.

The process of teaching and learning reflection has had several aspects. The first was a type of modeling necessitated by students asking what a journal entry looks like. One of us shared journal entries that had been written and distributed to family and friends while on sabbatical and volunteering in New Orleans in 2008 and 2009. We introduced the entries this way:

Some of you have been asking what a journal entry looks like Personally, I found that writing down what I was witnessing and experiencing helped me to better understand what was going on around me, and pushed me to organize my thoughts. Writing the journal entries and knowing that I was sharing with others made me be more reflective and deliberate about what I was doing. As a result, I literally learned more from my volunteer service experience. This is an important aspect of the service-learning experience ... being deliberate and reflective so that the immediate volunteer experience has a more enduring impact on the rest of one's life and personal growth. No matter what we normally do, as lawyer, student, parent, partner, teacher, we carry the experience forward with us ... and let it change us.⁴

We also provided concrete guidance to students on how to organize, conceptualize and draft the journal entries. First, we asked that students

3. *Katrina and Beyond: Disaster Prevention and Recovery, Social Justice and Government Accountability*, [hereinafter *Katrina and Beyond*], course adopted by UDC-DCSL faculty, Semester Writing Assignment, Spring 2010 (on file with authors).
4. See TWEN course email from Professor Susan Waysdorf to course participants, dated Feb. 17, 2010 (on file with authors).

write in grammatically correct narrative form, and in complete sentences. We suggested that students follow a three-part timeline: (1) pre-service trip goals, issues and preconceptions; (2) contemporaneous descriptions of the service-learning experience; and (3) post-service trip reflections, concerns and lessons learned.⁵

For each time segment, we also provided sample questions for possible reflective writing. For example, prior to the trip students might write about why they decided to take the service-learning course or discuss their personal goals and expectations for the experience. During the trip, students might write of their eye-witness impressions of Hurricane Katrina's devastation or more specifically, of their thoughts on the role of government in the recovery process. Upon returning, students might write about the lessons they learned about humanitarian recovery work, how their skills were put to use, or how the experience will impact their future law practice.

Yet we found that this modeling and preparation did not uniformly generate deep-learning through reflective writing. The quality, depth and scope of the journal entries were uneven from student to student. Some journals read like Facebook entries or Twitter posts. These journals listed activities and quick, simplistic impressions of a student's day, e.g., "just jumped out of the shower, another great day, off to dinner with the pros." Other journals were more impersonal, expounding on theories of recovery and loss. However, these lacked a connection to the student's own experience and growth. Yet others bore witness to what the student saw and did, connecting the broader issues of trauma and recovery to the student's own personal and professional growth.

Our analysis of these differences led us to several general conclusions. We found that older, more mature students with more pre-law school life experience wrote deeper and more meaningful journals. At the same time, younger, Millennial generation students wrote entries that were more similar to Facebook or email type posts. Yet, there were exceptions for both groups, and age appeared to be only one explanatory factor.

While some entries have proven to be invaluable learning vehicles for professors as well as the student authors, the written journals and occasional videos were of limited value. They did provide us with a window onto what some students were thinking, experiencing and processing about the service-learning aspects of the course. However, as individual work products, they reflected a lack of collective input and discourse. We sought to correct this limitation during the spring 2011 course, when we initiated "reflection circles" as discussed below.

IV. Using a Reflection Circle

On our first service learning trip to Biloxi, in March 2011, we added a new reflective component to our curriculum. We have utilized this new component on subsequent trips. For 45 minutes each morning before departing for the

5. Katrina and Beyond Semester Writing Assignment, *supra* note 3.

workplace, we met in a reflection circle to get students to talk about the meaning of their experiences.⁶ Our role in the reflection circle was as coach/facilitator.⁷ We raised questions to start students thinking about their experience, validated comments, encouraged a free exchange of ideas, and sometimes asked follow-up questions to deepen the dialogue. At the same time, the reflective circle was a democratic process in which every participant had the right and opportunity to speak, everyone's contributions were valued, and students were responsible for their own learning.

We started each reflective circle with an open-ended question designed to encourage students to think about what they were learning from their service at the Mississippi Center for Justice. The questions centered on three key themes to help students develop "reflective judgment."⁸ Reflective judgment

6. For a good introduction to reflection circles, see Julie Reed & Christopher Koliba, *Facilitating Reflection: A Manual For Leaders And Educators*, ch. 5, John Dewey Project on Progressive Education (1995), available at <http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflect.pdf>. The John Dewey Project on Progressive Education was begun in September of 1997 as an independent grant-funded project in the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont. The purpose of the project is to build on the knowledge base and heritage of progressive education begun by Dewey and others in the early part of the 20th century and to extend these ideas into the future. The project engages in a critical examination of contemporary educational issues framed by its concern for justice, equality, human development, creativity, care, and ethics.
7. *See id.* at ch. 2. "Facilitators assist groups as they work toward achieving group goals, and in most instances *do not interject their own personal opinions or agenda*. ... They remain alert to group dynamics and encourage challenging reflection while maintaining respect and safety within the group. Although facilitators may help guide a discussion, they also recognize and *foster the group's own ability to lead itself*." *Id.* at 2 (italics in original). *See also* Service Learning: Using Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning from Service, Structuring the Reflection Process: Coaching Students, Campus Compact, available at <http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/structuring/coaching.html>. Educational philosopher Donald Schon described the coaching process as a "ladder of reflection" in which the participants reflect on their own and others' actions and reflections. *Id.* at 1. By using this coaching process to solve real-world problems, Schon believes that professors can help students learn "the artistry of practice." *Id.* Campus Compact is a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents—representing some 6 million students—who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. As the only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement, Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students' citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum.
8. *See* William M. Sullivan, Anne Colby, Judith Welch Wegner, Lloyd Bond & Lee S. Shulman, *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law 115* (Jossey-Bass 2007) [hereinafter Carnegie Report]. The Carnegie Report promotes pedagogies that move students toward reflective judgment by integrating experiential learning experiences (such as clinics) into the curriculum so that students can learn from "the wisdom of practice." *Id.* In addition to the traditional knowledge and analytical skills of lawyering, reflective judgment requires more intangible skills, including "the ability to size up a situation well, discerning the salient features relevant not just to the law but to legal practice, and, most of all, knowing what general knowledge, principles, and commitments to call on in deciding on a course of action." *Id.* *See also* Louise Howells & Laurie Morin, *The Reflective Judgment Project*, 9 Clin. L. Rev. 623 (2002).

permits an expert to move easily between “theoretical reasoning and a highly contextual understanding of client, case and situation.”⁹ Although reflective judgment is learned primarily through experience, expert teaching and the intimate relationship of an apprenticeship can hasten students’ progress toward that goal.¹⁰ We envisioned the service learning experience as a pedagogical tool to deepen the students’ awareness of what they were experiencing in Biloxi and its significance for their professional growth and identities.

The three professional identity themes we raised with students were: (1) professionalism and responsibility to clients and others in the legal system;¹¹ (2) broader issues of responsibility for social justice¹²; and (3) theory and strategy for individual cases and broader social justice movements.¹³ We started each morning’s reflection circle with a specific question drawn from their experience on the previous day, related to one or more of the professional identity themes, as discussed in more detail below.

A. Professionalism Themes

Our first reflection circle was held at the beginning of our service week in Biloxi on Sunday, March 6, 2011. Our plan for the day was to take students on a tour of the Biloxi-Gulfport area, followed by an orientation session at our host-partner agency, the Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ).

Since students did not yet have any direct experience upon which to reflect, we used this morning as an opportunity to tie our service learning week with the preparation they had done in weekly seminars leading up to the trip. In addition, we wanted them to consider and incorporate into their service trip the “planning, doing, reflecting” approach we had instituted with the journals. The questions we asked were as follows:

- As we are about to begin the week, think about what expectations and goals you came here with.
- How can the “planning, doing, reflecting” approach to legal work and lawyering help you throughout the week?
- Thinking about the bigger picture, what does it mean to be a professional in this context?

9. Howells & Morin, *supra* note 8, at 115.

10. *Id.*

11. See Carnegie Report, *supra* note 8, at 129–131. One important aspect of the ethical-social values of the profession concerns individual behavior and values such as honesty, trustworthiness, trust, respect and personal responsibility.

12. *Id.* at 131–32. Professionals must learn to balance the tensions (or potential conflicts) between their responsibility to individual clients and their responsibility to promote justice in a broader sense.

13. See *id.* at 122–25. The Carnegie Report discusses the development of case theory as a tool to foster competence in legal judgment. We believe that discussing the broader theory of advancing a social justice movement expands the dialogue to include both responsibilities to clients and responsibilities to a broader sense of justice.

We continued with this line of questioning on Monday morning, asking students to reflect on what difference it made to their experience that they had come to Biloxi with professors as part of a semester-long service learning class, as opposed to students from other law schools who were at MCJ for a week with no preparation and no mentoring from professors.

These questions elicited some rich responses. Students reported that they felt well-prepared for their service because they had developed an understanding of the context through their seminar readings and discussions. They saw the professors as leaders/coaches who provided them with resources to support their experience. They recognized the paradox of going to a community to “help” without first developing relationships, and were grateful that MCJ had already established ties to the community. They recognized that journaling had provided them with a space for reflection, forcing them to think about what they were learning. Finally, they understood that volunteering was providing them with an opportunity to learn as well as to serve, and that they had to balance the two goals while being committed to their own learning.

Tuesday, March 8 was Mardi Gras in Biloxi. Students worked for the first half of the day, then were invited to accompany one of the supervising attorneys to watch the festivities. At that morning’s reflection circle, we asked them to ponder what it meant to maintain professionalism while being hosted by our supervising attorney. How do we act, have fun, have a beer, take it all in, and still stay professional in that context?

This seemed to take the students by surprise. They made some general comments about respecting the culture, “being loose,” but not going overboard and throwing up in the corner. It gave us an opportunity to remind students that an attorney’s ethical obligations do not end when they close the office door, and that the duty to act with professionalism extends beyond clients to the general public, the profession, and the legal system in general.

The next day, we followed up, asking students what they learned about the Biloxi community from the Mardi Gras experience, and how it would affect their work for the rest of the week? Students were generally positive about the people they had met. They commented that people in Biloxi were generally “more real” than people in the District of Columbia, where they perceive relationships to be based more on status than friendship.¹⁴ They also saw the Biloxi community as more diverse and integrated than the District. They observed black and white families watching the parade side-by-side despite segregation in housing, although some students commented that standing together at a street festival does not necessarily mean they have a deep connection.

14. In fact, there was lively conversation about how much people try to impress one another in D.C., how they are defined by their roles and where they got their degrees. Students seemed turned off by the excess competition and intensity, and generally praised the friendliness and slower pace of life in Biloxi. If we had more time, this easily could have led to a conversation about work-life balance, what kinds of careers students want to pursue, and what other values are important in their lives.

When we asked how that would impact their work at MCJ, students talked about the resiliency of the human spirit and how people bond during stress. This led them to a deeper recognition of why MCJ means so much to people who are trying to make a comeback from disaster. One student commented that she felt her role had changed from “savior” to “comrades working together.” Another worried whether outsiders might be seen as “carpetbaggers.” This insight into client-centered and community-based lawyering is something that we try to teach in our clinics, but students seemed to really understand it based on their real-world experience in Mississippi.

Finally, one student acknowledged that he had some prejudices against Mississippi, which his attendance at Mardi Gras and other community events caused him to question. He now recognized that the issues and relationships among various constituencies were complicated and that some of his preconceptions had been wrong. He saw that the African American community is not monolithic, and that their interests on some issues might diverge. He also acknowledged that his skepticism about white attorneys working with the African American community turned out to be unwarranted, at least with respect to this particular organization. Although we teach cultural competence in our clinics, this kind of nuanced reflection on race and professional relationships is all too rare in law school.

Toward the end of the week, we asked students what they had accomplished that they were most proud of. We also inquired as to what about the setting and work environment at MCJ pushed them toward these accomplishments.

Many of the comments focused on the teamwork and collaboration of the groups students participated in. They recognized that the energy of working together enabled them to accomplish more than they could have on their own. Yet, at the same time, they took incredible pride in being responsible for their individual assignments within the group. For some, this seemed to be a new way of working professionally—one that we hope they will take with them when they graduate from law school and enter the practice of law.

Students also took pride in being well-prepared for the work, based on the readings and discussions they had in seminar, as well as their prior clinical experience. They felt that they were flexible, capable, and adaptable—ready to hit the ground running and figure out problems on their own. At the same time, they appreciated the experience of working closely with their professors and supervising attorneys in a collaborative environment. For some, this seemed to be the first time they saw themselves as real professionals.

B. Social Justice Themes

Discussions about social justice permeated the week, both at MCJ and in our morning discussions. Many of our specific questions about social justice overlap with the theory and strategy questions discussed in the next section of this article. However, on the last morning in Biloxi, we wanted to get students to focus their reflections on the larger meaning of their experience.

The previous evening, they had attended a panel discussion presented by new attorneys who had chosen to pursue public interest careers in Mississippi and Louisiana. We asked an open-ended question about what they had taken from that experience. We also asked an open-ended question about the extent to which the week in Biloxi had met their expectations.

One important insight students had was that the work of MCJ went far beyond just legal issues and recovery from disaster. MCJ, in partnership with the community, addressed evolving issues from food security in poor neighborhoods to protecting local schools to preserving historically black housing. Students recognized that this was all based on a shared passion for keeping the community alive. They were moved by the efforts supervising attorneys made to connect them with the community. Students in various groups had the opportunity to visit a Vietnamese fishing community, a land trust in historic North Gulfport, a community garden, and food desserts in the heart of Biloxi. One student commented that she knew MCJ did great work by reading about it, but by talking to people at the community garden she understood how important the work was to the people who lived there. Overall, students got to experience a truly community-based approach to lawyering that defined justice by the goals and aspirations of people living in the community.

The panel discussion also renewed some students' commitment to public service. Students were reassured to hear that the panelists had doubts and insecurities about the trajectory of their careers, but chose public service despite them. They found the panelists' passion and commitment to be inspiring and uplifting. They appreciated seeing new attorneys who were not caught up in the competition for a big firm job, because they valued commitment to community. One student who already had his career planned was nonetheless inspired by the panel, and recognized that even in private practice he could incorporate a commitment to social justice.

The highlight of the trip for some students was when MCJ's lead attorneys took them to lunch and told them stories about law, life, and the communities they served. What we take from this is that the best way to instill a commitment to social justice is not to preach about it, but to expose students to attorneys who are passionate and articulate about the choices they have made.

C. Theory and Strategy Themes

One of the benefits of working with a civil rights organization like the Mississippi Center for Justice is that it provides students with a rare glimpse into larger social justice movements. At our orientation session, lead attorneys from MCJ described their relationships with various communities in the Biloxi-Gulfport area, and how they worked with community-based groups to develop social justice goals and conceptualize legal theories while simultaneously collaborating on non-legal strategies such as political lobbying and media campaigns to pursue those goals. For example, students got to see first-hand how a case against the Mississippi Housing Authority challenging

its use of federal recovery dollars after Hurricane Katrina—although ultimately unsuccessful in the courtroom—nonetheless resulted in a multi-million dollar settlement to provide housing assistance for low-income homeowners and renters who had been left out of earlier recovery programs.

Students on another project participated in the early stages of designing strategy to keep a successful, historically black school open after the city council voted to close it, ostensibly for funding reasons, and relocate its students to a neighboring white school. Along with the supervising attorney and prominent members of the African American community, students pondered the appropriate choice of forum, legal theories, and accompanying political and media strategies.

On yet another project, students worked with supervising attorneys and members of the largely Vietnamese fishing community to devise strategies to secure assistance for subsistence fishermen (and women) whose livelihoods were damaged by the BP oil spill. Members of this community relied on fishing for their nutritional needs, but had been denied assistance based on their inability to document their damages (i.e., how many fish they had caught). In addition to conducting legal research on remedies, students participated in a media strategy to bring the plight of this community into the public consciousness.

The typical law school experience does not generate this kind of open-ended discussion of theory and strategy. In doctrinal courses, students read cases that have already been conceptualized and slotted into legal theories. Even in clinic, students often are given cases to work on without having the opportunity to participate in the larger discussion of the clinic's social justice goals, its relationship with the community, and why certain cases have been chosen to further those goals.

We asked several questions to get students to reflect on these larger issues of legal theory and strategy:

- How does the specific task you were assigned fit into the larger picture of the issues facing Mississippi?
- How can each of you push past completion of immediate tasks to seeing the bigger picture?
- How do we do legal “multi-tasking,” that is, taking charge of and completing the individual tasks, while keeping the bigger picture of why we are doing this in the forefront of our minds?

This line of questioning generated much excitement among the students. They recognized that “you can win the battle even if you lose the case” by strategic lawyering. They experienced first-hand the power of narrative and story-telling and its importance to both legal and non-legal strategizing. They recognized that the housing settlement came about because MCJ pursued parallel media and legal strategies that put political pressure on the state to settle the case. And they witnessed the state trying to narrow the scope of the

settlement by using an arcane law to bar low-income people from recovery if they weren't current on the property taxes on their uninhabitable homes.

V. Conclusion

Over the years since we began the service-learning *Katrina and Beyond* course in 2006-7, we found that teaching students to engage in the reflective process was an integral aspect of the service-learning pedagogy. Reflection, through journaling, creating videos and collectively engaging in “reflection circles” has become an essential added value in the learning process. As discussed throughout this Essay, we have found that these different forms of reflection have had mixed success. Nonetheless, taken together these methods of self- and collective examination conducted simultaneously with the service work have improved our teaching and student learning.

While important in all aspects of legal education, reflection—that is, deliberate contemplation and self-examination of one's actions, goals and personal transformation—during a service-learning experience is particularly important. Thoughtful self-examination while engaging in service-learning deepens the learning process by instilling empathy. Directed reflection carried out during the service-learning project, often in unfamiliar territory and in the aftermath of a disaster that has traumatized the community, clarifies the importance and possibilities of achieving social justice through legal advocacy in the worst of circumstances.

The core philosophy that has motivated us to include service-learning in our law school's curriculum is our belief that engaging in humanitarian efforts not only provides needed services to wounded communities but also grows our own humanity. This in turn should make us, and eventually our students more humane and compassionate lawyers, more effective strategists and problem-solvers, and better equipped to see the “bigger picture” through theory and practice. Reflection and self-examination helps to bring students “out of the moment” and can sharpen the lessons of their service-learning experience. This will hopefully keep them motivated through the ups and downs of a legal career to understand their professional responsibility to work for social justice.