

The issue that I'm passionate about is homelessness and food insecurity in Raleigh. I've always lived in Raleigh, which means that I'm downtown often. Especially as more starts to go on downtown. As a Raleigh local, I adore being downtown and I think the growth is cool. But as I've gotten older, I'm able to see how little the city of Raleigh cares about its homeless and low income community. We are becoming increasingly gentrified and downtown businesses are charging more because of it. I love doing service work and that threw me into the going ons of the struggles that people are facing because of Raleigh's outright hatred for people who aren't white and wealthy. For over a year now, I've had the amazing opportunity to work with A Place at the Table. This means that I'm working alongside homeless or low income people every day. A lot of people know me well enough to share stories with me. As much of an honor as it is for people to trust me like that, it's so infuriating to hear what they're going through and knowing that they don't deserve it. A question that I get asked often when people learn about APATT is if I'm ever "scared" to work with homeless people. That absolutely grinds me. Very few times have the people that I get to work with been disrespectful to me. Most of them are ridiculously kind and keep an eye on me. The only problems I ever have downtown are with men who think they deserve more of me than I'm willing to give, and when I tell people exactly that, they're shocked. It makes me so frustrated that there is such a stigma around homelessness when it's something that absolutely could happen to anyone. It's similar when I work at the LGBT center of Raleigh. Since we offer food, drink, internet usage, and a place to just chill, we get a lot of homeless people. Again, I'm asked to listen to people's stories and again, it makes me frustrated that Raleigh makes it so easy to struggle. Through my service work, I hear when shelters or soup kitchens are trying to expand and are blocked because Raleigh doesn't want that image.

I'm personally drawn to this topic because it's what I work with. APATT has given me the opportunity to make bonds that are important to me. Not only that, but I'm drawn to it because anyone should be able to see that it's an issue. We should have more empathy to those beside us. I don't think this aligns completely with my philosophy selector because I had Benedictus, who believed that the external circumstances of life are irrelevant and to achieve virtue you must become indifferent to them. I believe that the external circumstances of life are important to how happy you are. Maslow's hierarchy dictates that we need at least the basics to hold happiness: food, water, and shelter. I agree with that. Without stability in where your next meal will come from and where you will sleep tonight, it's hard to consistently be happy. It connects to my ethical framework because I strongly believe that everyone deserves to live comfortably unless they commit a moral sin.

The power that contributes to this problem is the idea that white, wealthy people deserve more. While there are obviously white homeless and food insecure people, it tends to be people of color. Gentrification is racist, plain and simple, and it's gentrification that contributes to homelessness. In order to effectively combat homelessness and food insecurity, we have to address racism. Without active anti-racist movement and working to combat homelessness at the same time, it will continue to be an issue.

This information informs my service proposal because it gives background on why pay what you can restaurants are so important. Soup kitchens are also wildly important and I by no means am trying to discredit them. But at pay what you can restaurants you are allowed to make your own choice about the food, and that awards a little more dignity. The information shows my reasoning to choose to work with APATT for my service proposal.

The relational leadership model connects with social responsibility at a very basic level. In order to be a good leader you must be connected to the social issues. Otherwise you are burying yourself in the privilege that allows you to ignore social issues and it limits you from being able to connect with your group and to understand where they are coming from.