Welcome to the Alternative Breaks Spring 2015 Newsletter! This vine contains poetry, prose, photography, and art on the themes of justice and social change. All pieces are submitted by participants and Break Leaders of the 2014-2015 AltBreaks cohort.

Brought to you by:

Emily Gillespie, Communications Director
Anna Costello, Environmental Justice Break Leader
Jessica Jin, Animal Welfare Break Leader
Emily Droge, Food Justice Break Leader
Becky Sarahi Montes, San Diego-Tijuana Break Leader
The Ever Upward March
by Emily Gillespie

Another spring break passes! Students in the Alternative Breaks program have just returned from their trips and have celebrated together at our All Community Meeting. Participants, Break Leaders, and Directors alike are dreaming of how we should take action post trip.

Since its founding in 2001, the AltBreaks program has gone from two small half-week trips to twelve seven-day trips. We’ve sharpened our focus from the broadest idea of community service to the deeper issues of food and environmental justice, animal welfare, economic justice, and immigrant welfare. While we maintain our commitment to serving within a 500-mile radius of our campus, we have also ventured to communities in Arizona, Oregon, and New Orleans. Our service paradigm has developed to be more inclusive, critical, and catalyzing, and it continues to deepen its complexity with each new leadership cohort. As we like to say around the Public Service Center, we’re standing on the shoulders of giants!

Yet for all the work we have done over the years, we are hardly closer to reaching our vision for justice than when these efforts began. After all, true justice would undo the need for service work in the first place, and here we are, still serving. Agricultural workers in the Central Valley are still unable to afford the food they spend hours toiling in the fields to produce for little to no wages, and with a worsening drought are unable to even shower on most days. Meanwhile their employers consume 80% of California’s freshwater, uninhibited. Since our program’s founding, 10 generations of sows (mother pigs) have atrophied in tiny metal cages for their brief, miserable lives. Hundreds of people have been robbed, raped, or killed attempting to cross the US Mexico border. For the children who did make it, our elected officials sent them back to violent slums created by the very global trade policies our government wrote. One can hardly scroll through their Facebook feed without seeing headlines of another black person murdered by a cop, another transgender person whose life was lost to suicide, another case of street harassment turned deadly.

With such dire social norms as these, it’s tempting to retreat into the comfort of our own privileges, to feel a sense of completion at the end of an intense week of service. It is tempting to step back from the garden that was tilled or the protest that was supported or the excited dogs that were walked and say “work here is done”. Or on the other hand, to be so daunted by the vastness of social inequalities that we disengage, shut off completely, and again retreat into our privileges.

For the communities that we serve with, disengaging is not an option. And for us, if we love one another radically, if we see every other person as ourselves, then disengaging is also not an option. But how do we learn to reconcile the seeming impossibility of making meaningful change and the constant temptation of retreating into privilege with the deeply rooted need to create justice for our extended communities?
First, we must let go of the assumption that someone else is solving the problem. Let go of the assumption that our Congressional officials are ever going to take action against environmental pollution. Let go of the assumption that our mayors are going to build enough affordable housing in the Bay, or that our police force is going to train itself to be less racist. Once we have surrendered the idea that those in power will create the change, there is only one thing left for us to do: make change ourselves. The community partners with whom we serve have already acquired this wisdom of letting go of those assumptions. In serving them, we not only seek to provide support in their daily operations of the fight against injustice, but we seek to be ignited by their fire. We seek to learn what it means to give up letting others solve the problems, and thus discover the taproot of our empowerment. One person can inspire and lead thousands to march, can spearhead a campaign to abolish an unjust policy, can save another person from an irreversible decision. Individuals have immense agency to influence the patterns of their immediate and their global society, through their actions and their ways of being.

Next, we must rethink our perception of time. Social change has historically, and always will, take many generations of people spending much of their lives doing the difficult, heart heavy work of resisting systems of oppression. And for every person who is fighting for their community or who is spreading the knowledge of oppression itself, there are many people who are in apathy or who are in favor of oppressive systems. We must be ready to endure the slow transformation. We must challenge individualism and see ourselves as part of an infinitely greater whole. Many of our community partners have existed since we student leaders were but children, and they'll continue to exist after we are old and have children of our own. Some of them, be they public or private institutions, will fold under the pressures of capitalism. Others will spring up in their place. Like trees, the bodies of our work may die, but in their lives they have left behind many new seeds.

As a program, Alternative Breaks seeks to plant some of those seeds. Each of us may become an advocate for justice through activism, policy development, education, or even the simple act of being open to transformation through others. The road toward justice is indefinitely long, and it is always uphill. But the fire in our own hearts and the wisdom of our communities is a testament to the reality of that change, however slow. The stories of our people are the beating pace of that ever upward march.
As a participant on the environmental justice spring break a year ago, I found myself very tired by the end of the trip. My fatigue could have easily been explained by the hard linoleum floor our group slept on, the physical labor during our service, or the late nights we pulled discussing root causes of injustice, so I resolved to catch up on sleep. But after resting well I began to look back on my break and realize that I wasn’t over being “tired.” Rather I had been emotionally, not physically, exhausted. Additionally, my emotional drain was not as easy to remedy as my sore shoulders. What had tired me was a week full of entering new places, learning from community partners, and then leaving all too quickly. What had tired me was being shown how many people lack the powers I take for granted, powers of choice and mobility. Whereas the people I met both experienced and encountered suffering on a daily basis, I had the ability to witness social inequality for a brief time and retreat to my comfortable life.

As I began to understand my power and privileges, I questioned the usefulness of my break. While my head knew that a week of service could not possibly change much, my heart wanted it to. I wanted to enact change, to work more deeply with community partners, and I longed for the time to do so in a way I could consider successful. But the more I thought about “doing,” the more I lost sight of one of the biggest lessons in Alternative Breaks: the service-learning triangle.

The service triangle is the cornerstone of our program. Its assets of education, service, and reflection form the strongest shape, which keeps our program balanced. We find that each of the three pillars magnifies our experience of the other two; pre-service education deepens the engagement we have in service, service transforms and moves us to action, and post-service reflection increases the intentionality of our future actions.

It turns out that AltBreaks both is and is not about the Spring break trip. Yes, the reason we gather is to do something meaningful during our week off, but at the same time, the emphasis of AltBreaks is not entirely on accomplishing service work. To view the seven days of our trip as the endpoint would be to ignore the significance of the months of educational preparation we undergo during our DeCal courses. Learning about the history of the areas we immerse ourselves in allows us to better understand the social and political dynamics that shape community life. And without an understanding of our anchor organizations, we would not be able to continue our trips’ partnerships, which are based on relationship. Additionally, if the only important measurements of “success” were in our time volunteering, there would be no reason to spend hours debriefing in post-service reflection. The work that we do through the Alt Breaks program is not about immediate results, but about getting a glimpse of a much larger movement towards social justice, which are community partners are involved with daily.
Since AltBreaks is not all about volunteer hours, we prefer using the rhetoric of service to volunteering. While the terms may appear synonymous, our philosophy sees service as a lifelong pursuit as opposed to a Saturday afternoon cleanup. Service is the act of caring for others, but not with the end goal of making ourselves feel better. Instead, our end goal is for our world to be equitable. In order to care for others, we must first listen to those we are serving so that we might address the root causes of injustices and not perpetuate cycles of neglect.

Social justice isn’t something that’s accomplished, but rather created. And in order to create it, we must be deeply involved in the work that we do and deeply connected to the lives which we touch and are touched by. Through our journey towards developing a more equitable world, we will take part in the sadness and brokenness and suffering which so many go through. And by experiencing pain, we will often feel tired. But it is important that we recognize we are not alone in our fatigue when we strive for social justice in community, where we will always be supported by those around us.

In time, I have seen that my feelings of exhaustion and of being tired of injustice will never really end. And this is a blessing in disguise. Since my endeavors for social justice have made me more involved as an ally, I have become more emotionally invested in struggles and movements for change. Within this there is inevitably hurt, but I have also found that my fatigue and sadness actually inspire my continued action. So much of what motivates me to live and work consciously is listening to the people I care about who are able to both feel deeply and simultaneously never lose hope. I strive to emulate these inspirational community partners and serve them by mirroring their strength to combat hardship.

Alternative Breaks is alternative because it teaches us to create and facilitate intentional spaces in which we share and grow in community to further social justice. Instead of developing apathy and numbing ourselves to emotions of sadness or exhaustion, Alt Breaks enables us to channel our longing for social justice into conscious action. If we were to harbor our hurt, we would only further it by bearing it alone. But through our DeCals, we allow one another to feel more openly so that together we might remedy our exhaustion by energizing each other with hope in spaces of creativity and collaboration. The only remedy for our longing for social justice is through collaboration with others who encourage our education, service, and reflection, and motivate us in our conscious action.
May love surround you always

Get Involved with Alternative Breaks!
Alternative Breaks relies on grants, fundraising, and donations to maintain an affordable program for as many students as possible, regardless of their financial situation. Throughout the years, we have managed to provide highly subsidized trips to many students, but we would not be able to do so without your support!

$25 = Financial aid scholarship
$50 = Course materials for a trip
$100 = Communal housing for a week
$500 = Feeds 14 students for a week

Donate online at: https://give.berkeley.edu/egiving/index.cfm?Fund=FU0993000
Scott Hovdey will join the Public Service Center this May, working as the interim Alternative Breaks Coordinator while our current staff director, Sunshine Oey, is on maternity leave. Scott will support summer interns in New Orleans and Los Angeles, supervise the AltBreaks Student Director Team, and support Break Leaders in successfully leading the winter service-learning trips. Scott graduated from UC Berkeley in 2013 with a degree in Gender and Women's Studies. During his time as an undergraduate, he interned at the Gender Equity Resource Center, served as a leader and student coordinator for the Cal Student Orientation Program (CalSO), co-facilitated two Critical Dialogues Across Difference courses, worked as a summer resident assistant and as a mentor for the Unity House Theme Program in the residence halls, and wrote and edited for several student publications. After graduating, Scott co-led two Alternative Breaks trips: the Magnolia Project in New Orleans, in which he participated his senior year, as well as the Urban Pathways Project in Los Angeles, CA.
Why Altruism Does Not Exist
by Nazia Rahman

During my Alt Breaks Trip on Food Systems and Food Justice, there were many instances where I identified being uncomfortable taking space and supporting urban farms which address nutritional struggles of the urban and suburban poor. While I feel passionately about lack of fresh foods in diets of low income households, the first time I set foot into these communities coincided with the first time I was working alongside these community urban farmers. I never had to live in food scarcity before I worked to end it. There were questions in my head that were bothering me. Did I truly appreciate why the work was important? By not experiencing any extreme limitations to food access, did I understand why I was there? At that point, shoveling dirt and speaking to community members, I was very hesitant to say yes.

But through sharing and connecting with those running the farms, I realized that they were in a slightly similar position to my own. Most had not lived in the adjacent areas before working on the farms, but still had very strong connections to the struggles of the community that engulfed them.

Fortunately, after a particular day of service, I was given materials to lead the day’s reflection. The first question took me by surprise and I realized the significance of where my energies fit into specific social and political struggles:

*What does it mean to be an Ally?*

An ally. That is what I was and that was also an identity shared by some of these urban farmers. But now other questions were swiftly bubbling to the surface. Why are people drawn to being an ally at all? Why do we act to support challenges that we have not lived? Why are we interested in pushing forward solutions to struggles that are not our own?

These questions reminded me of a debate in my high school Psychology class (back when I didn’t hold such a torch for the word dialogue). Our teacher had asked us if altruism existed or if we were, in some way, always benefitting ourselves.

I clearly remember my anger and frustration at one of my friends who had argued that altruism did not exist. He had said something about everything we do for others being traced back to our own well-being whether it was a heightened sense of pride or high regard for our benevolence. I had challenged the heck out of that. How could he belittle the hard work of so many sung and unsung heroes and humanitarians throughout history?
But a few years later, by the time I was on my Alternative Spring Break, I had another philosophy of thought that would allow me to critically question the idea of altruism: the interconnectedness of society.

I can no longer say that someone else’s struggles have nothing to do with me. I can also no longer say that improving their condition would take away from my time, money and voice. We tend to define altruism by saying that it is the opposite of selfishness, which implies that altruistic deeds can have no “self” benefit. I think that this idea of altruism has no place in today’s world.

In fact, we do benefit from the rise of others. I think that it is inevitable. We benefit from a world where people are taken care of. We have somehow tricked ourselves into thinking that a world where everyone’s needs are met is not possible. Our individualistic, capitalistic culture has taught us that we all live separate lives. When it comes to supporting one another, we are paralyzed out of fear that we will lose something, be it our time or money or health. But I know that if positive outcomes are created for any of my community members, my society and the world I live in becomes a healthier and more beautiful place for me and those I love.

By the same token, we live in an interconnected world where everyone creates a collective reality, and many times the collective challenges, of our communities. And, as I have learned in my college poverty classes, offering to “take up a responsibility” to address inequities does not do justice to the idea of an intertwined world to. Responsibility implies that there is a choice; that you have chosen to serve some purpose but were not obligated to. A better word that carries an understanding of our interconnectedness is accountability; acknowledging that our actions, or lack thereof, create social circumstances which we are obligated to oversee and safeguard.

Because we create the realities of others through our actions, we must recognize privileges we hold though society’s structure and use them to be accountable to our fellow human beings.

In closing, there is a related excerpt from a famous Australian Aboriginal poem that came to mind while thinking about altruism:

If you have come here to help me,
You are wasting your time...
But if you have come because
Your liberation is bound up with mine,
Then let us work together.

~Lilla Watson

We must remember that not only are our struggles interconnected, but so is our happiness, success, and outlook in life. It is quite simply, our collective liberation. Separation is delay.
Our group shared a fruitful week in West Oakland, and learned about organic urban farming and engaging with community. I drew this girl with a plant. The species of the plant is a mystery, just like the future of the girl. Food is the future, and the girl is smiling. It implicates hope.
San Diego Tijuana participants protest in solidarity with the 43 missing students at Ayotzinapa, in a march from San Diego City Hall to the Federal Building.

Homelessness and Poverty Break Leaders sort clothes for My Sister's Closet, a thrift store non-profit located in Sacramento, CA.

Central Valley participants prepare to cut wood for constructing a house in the town of Goshen through Self-Help Enterprises.
Reflections on the Central Valley
by Margaret Shyu

It’s hard to pinpoint just one experience that impacted me during my time in the Central Valley because the entire trip was life changing. Just living in Central Valley for the week and being fortunate enough to visit multiple cities each day allowed me understand some of the issues facing the area. I came in with a blank slate and left with a heavy heart after seeing many examples of the vast inequality present in the United States. There was a difference between learning about the Central Valley in class and actually seeing it.

The trip allowed me to finally understand that there are different kinds of privilege. At Berkeley, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other types of privilege are often discussed in the spaces I am in. However, less often discussed is the privilege of living in an urban environment, which the students at Berkeley have. When I was in the Central Valley, I saw the lack of resources available to rural communities. I rarely saw drugstores or any chain stores that I was used to seeing. When I walked into one of the few stores present, there wouldn’t be any produce. What I couldn’t understand was: how can there be food deserts in an area famous for its agriculture? Seeing how the people working in the fields were not even able to access, let alone afford, the food they gathered made me want to cry.

Additionally, I witnessed the lack of potable drinking water in communities heavily affected by the drought. Throughout my whole life I had taken clean water for granted, and seeing how this is also a form of privilege hit me hard. I was and still am upset when I think about it. Water is necessary for life and the United States is a developed country! How can there be communities lacking access to tap water and why isn’t there more being done about it?
I also noticed a disparity in access to higher education. While universities such as UC Berkeley do outreach to underrepresented communities, these efforts do not stretch as far as the Central Valley, but primarily affect children in urban areas. At my Cal freshman Student Orientation four years ago, the coordinators said, "Stand up if you are from Central California." I could count on one hand the number of people who stood up in that 200-person room. Because residents from the Central Valley are underrepresented in higher education, the privilege associated with living in an urban environment is often overlooked here. Before my Alternative Spring Break, I lacked awareness of the issues impacting Central Valley communities. I now realize that universities are missing the insights their presence can bring.

When I came back, I was different. I was sickened by how much privilege I had and how ignorant I had been before. Here I was, able to return to a city where I had easy access to free clean water and fresh produce. I cried later that day because I didn’t ask for or deserve these benefits. Sharing my emotions on social media allowed me to find myself; I started to understand the importance of bringing these issues to light and opening up a dialogue about them. It became part of my commitment to action to continue sharing my experiences with others in order to create awareness.
It's amazing how someone can say something that instantly changes your view on life. We met a wonderful and sincere volunteer named Steve during our work with CSED, Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development. Steve gave everyone great insight about the work he has been doing and also helped me to better understand why I was on this trip. While service has always been important to me, I used to feel frustrated when I couldn't see results immediately. This time, I learned that the thing about service is that investing my time is just half of the process. The other half involves my understanding about what it means to me and the people I'm serving. Although change might seem slow, it's a work in progress, just like you and me. True service is an ongoing process. What we gain and learn from every experience stays with us. This same knowledge continues to build up and impacts the way we view the world. It shapes our interactions and can strengthen our passion for change. Everything we do today will have some sort of impact tomorrow. Even if we can't see it right away and lose our patience once in a while, there is one thing we can't lose: hope.
The Door to the Campo EPA Greenhouse
Betsy Vincent

On our recent trip to the Campo Kumeyaay Native Reservation in Southern California, the Campo Alternative Breaks group spent a day hoeing and raking the grounds of the Environmental Protection Agency Field Office in preparation for their upcoming Earth Day Environmental Showcase. The office is located just across the street from the reservation’s Education Center, where we were staying, and adjacent to the fire department. It is thus one of the most congested, important areas on the rural reservation. These agencies provide crucial services to the community in areas of education, environmental protection, and general safety.

It is common to find rattlesnakes, gopher snakes, and tarantulas scattered across the rural landscape of Campo. Our service at the EPA intended to help clean up the yard where the fair would be held so that people could spot these creatures and avoid any nerve-rattling or potentially dangerous encounters.

While talking to Raymond, one of the environmental technicians at the Campo EPA, we learned about some of the environmental issues faced by the community — illegal dumping, overgrazing of native trees, and the impact of industrialization on air quality. As a group we reflected on the ways in which rural communities like Campo are often places where industrialized, urban centers think that they can dump their waste, regardless of the impact this might have on people living there. This can have devastating effects on the well-being of the community in these areas. Thus, events such as the showcase which brings together 150-200 people — a large number on a reservation of only 300 — give people the chance to talk about the issues their community faces. Community gatherings provide a space for people to learn and educate one another about the ways in which they can combat harmful environmental practices and protect their health and livelihood.
A Week
by Jeanette Zhukov

Houses settled within time
Eyes burning like the coal they breathe
They scream
Horizon so dark

With the looming corporate head
Where is the sunlight
They scream
As if it was heard

Communities lost and communities found
A glimpse of the rays above
They build
Working through the push

A sprout
An afternoon
They build
Basking in the sunlight

People talk
Some are aware
Yet they still scream
But this time we listen
A Reflection on APEN
By Omar Alonzo

One of my favorite community partners was APEN (Asian Pacific Environmental Network). This organization serves marginalized neighborhoods of color in Richmond, California. I was inspired to learn that they address local environmental justice issues, including disproportionate health impacts on Asian Pacific Islanders from poisoned fish, the influence of the Chevron oil refinery on local politics, and the incidence of air pollution in Richmond. I was also amazed by the beauty of APEN’s resilience, passion, and knowledge about both local politics and community dynamics. When we arrived at their office, we were immediately welcomed with warm smiles, delicious snacks, and fun activities to keep us engaged. The presenters were skilled at training us to improve the quality of our service for the community. The fact that the two facilitators were API women made me very happy because when it comes to social justice issues, men tend to overshadow women’s contributions. Seeing this leadership at the forefront of the fight for equity and a safer environment was powerful because it challenges stereotypes about API women, such as that of submissiveness.

The service we did was canvassing for APEN’s crude-by-rail campaign, which seeks to stop oil tankers from traveling through Richmond. Due to numerous de-railings in the last month, these tankers are known as “bomb trains”, and pose the potential risk of explosion. Our canvassing work to prevent the hazard of chemical explosions is a measure that should be suggested by public health officials to prevent harm. As a Public Health major, this insight intrigued me and allowed me to see that APEN analyzes issues at a variety of levels to advocate for community welfare. While canvassing, it gave me hope to see respondents’ positive reactions to the crude-by-rail campaign. Their support of our efforts showed that there are other people who care about Richmond’s security and wellbeing. This type of service was very interesting because it allowed me to have conversations with folks about how they don’t want any more damage done to their city and communities. I realized that APEN had already laid a strong foundation of advocacy and community inclusion, and this allowed me to serve as a channel for their message on the crude-by-rail campaign.
I realized that organizations such as APEN are pivotal for the improvement of the city-wide community, which has historically been marginalized. Now, thinking about the way in which they make their outreach inclusive and geared towards sustainable solutions inspired me to believe that everyone deserves a better place to live, healthy air to breathe, a safe community to reside in, and policies that sustain and protect these fundamental rights.

I learned a lot about the history of Richmond through APEN, the necessity of community outreach, and the role of Chevron in the politics of the city, which facilitates continued abuse of people and the environment. I was upset when I heard about the “compensations” Chevron provides to those hospitalized during explosions and fires at the plant; one hundred dollars is an insignificant amount compared to the company’s immense profits, and not nearly adequate compensation for an individual’s lifelong respiratory complications. On the flipside, however, listening to the way that APEN systematically approaches community welfare at both the policy and community levels was remarkable, and gave me hope. By organizing their meetings in multiple languages, for example, they allowed anyone, regardless of nationality or language, to contribute to and even lead the process of solution-building.
A Central Valley participant stands beside a community member at a garden in Huron, CA.

San Diego Tijuana Participants walk along the US Mexico border with community partner Border Angels, a group that leaves bottles of water in the desert for people who are crossing.
Weeds
by Genna Fudin

I was part of the Environmental Justice (EJ) DeCal and Alternative Spring Break trip around the Bay area (specifically exploring the human environmental health conditions in Alameda, Oakland, Bay View Hunter's Point, and Richmond. Some inspiring people and groups we worked with were the Alameda Point Collaborative. APC is located in the Northern part of Alameda Island on an old naval base. They provide transitional housing and green-minded job-training programs to its residents. Another community partner is a man named Leodes, and he lives in Bay View Hunter's Point, San Francisco. He is an advocate for better health measures and more sustainable community engagement in the largely marginalized, black community he is a part of.

Leodes was a particularly inspiring part of the EJ trip because his resilient narrative is that of an insider. Although he had to confront the reality of his family and friends dying from cancer and other diseases of pollution, violence, and drug abuse, over his life he became stronger and more aware of his environment so that he could protect his health. He got involved in a social organization called Greenaction that brings community together to educate themselves and promote a safe and healthy environment through grassroots action. He is well aware of the gentrification happening in Bay View and is concerned that the people moving in do not realize the pollution and hazardous wastes in the air, beneath their homes in the soil, and nearby in the Bay. He wants all people to be intentional with their time on this earth and not take unique narratives for-granted. I think Leodes is leading a life of navigating between what is healthy to take in and what can keep him afloat one day at a time, much like how plants know how much water and nutrients to absorb in order to properly grow. Of course healthy resources also have to be available for living organisms to survive and contribute positively to the land we inhabit.

Weeds often want to wildly grow in the same soil as plants that are intentionally being grown—take an urban garden for example. Farmers who are maintaining the beauty of the space and health of the plant will sometimes pull out the weeds crowding the soil to give the growing plants more space to breathe and spread out their leaves unimpeded! In a way, weeds remind me of gentrification. Let's think of Bay View Hunter's Point as a case study. Some middle class families are moving into newly built condominiums by the old naval shipyard, living very close to low income households in the hills of Bay View. Middle class families are coming in to this area because the housing is more affordable relative to some other parts of San Francisco, but what they may not be thinking about is the implications of where they are living, perhaps on top of soil polluted by chemicals from the nearby shipyards. These people may also not be considering their low income neighbors who are trying to survive a day at a time. Are these new people going to be interested in becoming a part of the historical Bay View community, coexisting with the people who have been there longer, becoming a part of the culture, and improving the quality of life for the marginalized community of Bay View, or are they just going to be commuting away from the community to work without acknowledging the culture they live amongst? I'm an advocate for coexistence and mixed income housing, as long as people acknowledge each other, respect different histories, and are good, caring neighbors who genuinely are devoted to a physical space, rather than just inhabiting land without recognizing the deeply rooted culture and ecological context that may already exist.

In this metaphor, weeds represent capitalism. When corporations or groups of people develop in a place and disrupt the natural equilibrium of those around them, or affect the future of a place without cleaning up what they left behind (i.e. refineries that don't use clean energy and emit harmful particulate matter), they are disregarding the basic human rights of the people. Like a developing plant, humans do not want weeds (in this case capitalism) to drown out their existence and mobility to accessing a healthy environment.

It is not people and families moving into Bay View causing stratification: it is the capitalistic system present in American society. The people with all the money have so much power to change the system for the better, but it is also important to keep in mind that the marginalized communities have enormous power and rights as citizens to fight against a corrupt and unjust system.

I am confident that organizations like Greenaction and people who are part of the Bay View Hunter's Point area will continue to combat the growing stratification that is infiltrating the land. Educating the broader community can make a huge difference in mobilizing to take action and fight for their rights and equality.
Sanctuary One is a beautiful farm located near Medford, Oregon. They're the five year anchor organization of the Animal Welfare trip, and focus their energy on giving rescued domestic animals (be they llamas, goats, pigs, or dogs!) a place to live in peace. They believe in creating a safe space for animals and a healing space for people by promoting environmental stewardship.
The Root Causes Tree is a metaphorical tool that aids in the engagement of a more profound interrogation and understanding of a social justice issue. The fruit of the tree represents symptoms of a social problem in our society, the trunk represents the institutions or social policies and practices that sustain these symptoms, and the roots are the ideologies that feed the motivations behind these practices.

by Amy Chieng
Two community members show their spirit at a Self Help Enterprises housing development in Goshen, CA.

"If I learned anything from this DeCal and the trip, it is that the poverty and homelessness present in Fresno and Merced results from income inequality built into our tax structure and our economy. Although it is imperative to understand how such a system operates, solely looking at charts and graphs makes it easy for us to distance ourselves from the reality of the situation. By going to Fresno and Merced and speaking with families and individuals, I saw the very real effects of income inequality."

- Jasmine Virk,
VITA Participant