

**Spring, 2018:**

When I began the major in the Spring Semester of my junior year, I thought about inequality in a way largely influenced by academics rather than my own experiences. In the paper I wrote, I borrowed from prominent urban planning theorists on their ideas regarding how urban spaces can shape inequality. The construction of inequality as described by these theorists is through the physical shaping of cities better suiting certain populations (such as gender) or the effects of policy (such as the historic effect of redlining.) These are ideas that I did not come to on my own, but rather ones that I accepted without my own analysis or critiques. This is not to say that the problems of redlining or gender are untrue or irrelevant in cities, but that upon further reflection, they are not issues that have directly framed my own theory of inequality. Rather, the theories I was taught in the classroom I embraced without coming to my own conclusions about inequality based on my own observations and experiences. This is the main difference that will present itself in the next paragraph. I am now able to better articulate theory that is representative of how I have seen inequality not how others have.

**Spring, 2019:**

One year later, I am approaching my theory of inequality with the influence of my time at Centro, as well as an additional year at university. When I think about social inequality, I still hold the same beliefs about the ways in which inequalities come about whether that is from social structure or policy. However, I now have much more first hand experience in the ways in which these structures or policies play out to create social inequality. An example of this took place through a class I took last semester that was held in the Boys & Girls club. Often times, the

club could not afford to heat or cool the building and our class would be cancelled due to closure. I began to think about the impacts of so many closures on the programming the students would have been receiving. Within my praxis project, several examples arose as well. Through my observation and particular awareness for issues regarding real estate, I noticed an overwhelming number of staff that rented their homes rather than owning because many often spoke of moving due to rising prices. This is an issue that is often brought up in urban planning courses or theory, but I had never spoken to individuals affected about it nor seen it in such a saturated way, as the majority of staff are Latinx. These examples serve as highlights of the ways in which the ideas I have learned about social inequality become more prominent.

It is important to me to be self-critical, and in complete transparency after reflecting, I also believe that these examples were always there, but through longer term exposure, I was not able to be as ignorant or “blind “as I may have been in the past. This past year is the most time I have spent in a nonprofit in a lower income neighborhood, but also just walking there increased my time. I couldn’t avoid these experiences through temporary involvement or simply driving past, I more immersed into Centro and the neighborhood through the commitment I had made. In addition, the conversations we were having as a cohort created a pressure that had not existed before that made me examine the ways in which I, myself, was engaging. Over the past year, my interest and care about these experiences that create social inequality has grown immensely and through my time at Centro and in Main South, I have seen more vividly and gradually the effects.