

Matthew Serafin

Service Learning Fellowship writeup

October 30, 2017

The Inland Empire Brown Berets is a collective that operates in the Inland Empire region (Riverside, San Bernardino, Corona, Moreno Valley, etc.). It is a Chican@ group that is dedicated to familia, health, justice, and revolution. The organization focuses on capacity development and community organizing. However, there is no limit to the direction this organization can take. Their current activities reflect the desires of members and the community they represent.

The organization was formed over the spring and summer of 2017 and provides resources and services to the community. Direct services included assistance in expungement of criminal records, promotions for local businesses that fit the objectives of the organization, late night transportation escort services, operating a Cop-Watch, and providing information that help individuals save money and connect with community members.

I was one of the founding Comandantes of the organization and helped develop the infrastructure and organizational capacity. I helped develop the website and social media outreach mechanisms along with writing the Brown Book (operations manual). I gathered data on local community groups and organizations to potentially partner with them. I attended local community events organized by community groups, non-profits, and car clubs to recruit and provide services. We organized a service outreach event at the Ysmael Villegas Community Center where we distributed donated food and cloths and provided our regular services.

The Inland Empire Brown Berets offered many learning opportunities. I learned how to connect Chicano culture, barrio living, community organizing, and theory (political, economic, sociological, etc.) to grow a unique organization that is collectively ran by community members. I would like to thank the Blum Institute at UCR for their Service Learning Fellowship and for allowing me to follow my passion of community empowerment.