

## **SECTION 1: Learning about FLA**

### **1) How did you first learn about FLA?**

- From family: my mom was an ACT board member; my sister a participant of FLA.
- From CAN program, Erin talked about FLA, wanted to get out of my shell, talk to others.
- COS: Head of COS Social Work program recommended FLA and gave tickets for the Coming Out for Justice event; a counselor at COS
- From FLA alumni (specifically Carmen): at an outreach table at COS, at class.
- From FLA current participants: heard them talking about FLA, about what they were doing, and they basically signed me up.
- From friends: a girlfriend's girlfriend was in FLA and I helped them work on their Coming Out for Justice Project. So I decided to join.
- I was always waiting for FLA, I don't know if I found it or if it found me.
- *Outreach capacity at participant level → through current and alumni FLA participants, friends and family.*
- *Outreach capacity at agency level → through personal contact and organization events (Coming Out for Justice)*
- *Outreach capacity at community level → through college especially (COS Social Work program, counselor) and high school (teachers, theater group).*

*Note: important to consider further formalizing the outreach at the different levels*

## **SECTION 2: Motivations to enroll in FLA**

### **2) What motivated you to apply and participate with FLA? (Participants identify and/or list general goals or specific objectives as much as possible)**

#### **5) Is there something you especially want (emotional) or want to achieve (skills) in your internship?**

- **(Apply) Learn professional/leadership skills:** to speak to people; be able to talk in public; become a public speaker; be able to express myself with confidence; prepare for a professional career; develop my leadership skills; to become a better leader; find my leadership skills; be outspoken; be able to speak well and connect to people at different levels (from a gay old man to a little girl); be able to delegate, to allow others to take on tasks and to trust in their abilities; to organize my thoughts and plan; to know how to take action; how to be organized; leadership so I could be more spoken out to women issues; to speak out in big crowds, to project my voice, a place to be accepted for my opinion.
- **(Emotional) To Belong, to be intimate and safe:** to be part of the community; to be part of the club; to be with women; to be part of what my sister was part to; to talk at a personal level about issues you don't usually talk about; fight for what is right; there is nothing more conservative than Visalia: Prop 8!; I am so different from people raised here, I am from San Diego a big city and want Visalia to be like a big city. My passion is in civil rights; I grew up experiencing domestic violence, then experiencing LGBT issues; there is nothing like FLA in this area; I want to experience the way women interact with each other; to find a safe haven; everything is very oppressed in Visalia and the family I grew up with. My single mom never talks about things like that; to know about what I believed in; see other sisters do the work so if they could do it I could do it; to be assertive, I have a passive personality, I am the baby and have older brothers, and it's hard for me to ask for something, to speak out; I am always be careful not to cross the boundaries; I want to understand my issues and address them; I still hate people when they discriminate against others and me, I get hurt being African American in the Central Valley, there is a white curtain, and you have to go through that. FLA is a comfort zone; my defenses can be down because I feel safe. People put you down and you want to get back up, I am strong but I want to be stronger, for my family. Hard when your own

family is pushing you down. I really connect with you guys. I don't get that much support from my family. They are not involved in the stuff I am involved. They don't say "oh you can do it!".

- (Achieve) Learn about community issues/be active in the community: to learn more about the community; to learn about women's right; be part of a movement I don't really know what type of movement but I knew things were happening; to be part of a community fighting for human rights; to see my community progress; to make a change in the world; to be out there; to take action; to make a difference; gain knowledge on women's rights and put my knowledge out there; increase my knowledge on women's rights; to know about sex, HIV, and other issues; to do something about women getting beaten (mom helped at a domestic violence organization) about the environment, and other social justice issues.
- *FLA perceived as an opportunity to give back to the community*
- *FLA perceived as an instrument to gain a sense of belonging, to break personal isolation created by the social norms of their peers, families, and communities.*
- *FLA also perceived as an opportunity to develop professional skills for the future. e.g., work, college, leadership, public speaking.*

*Note: considerations for the application process to address personal issues during the academy as they arise; these statements urge to look at major motivations to join in (e.g., feelings of oppression, wanting to be part of a movement) in addition to learning leadership skills.*

### SECTION 3: Participation in the community before FLA

#### 3) How many of you were active before participating in the FLA?

- I was an Americorp member working on health centers reaching out to migrant families, offering health benefits, putting together baskets for new moms.
- I participated in a recycling program: picking up items from trash and getting \$\$ to then use it for scholarships. I did that for a year and now they are offering me a job there instead of volunteering.
- I wasn't active, just listening to political songs about indigenous people abuse
- I helped with my family's church doing food drives, but that was just faith work.
- I did peer education on issues like anorexia, mental disability, special needs through a best buddies program in my high school
- I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity,
- I did some social work like going to feed the homeless
- *FLA majority of participants report being active in the community before joining the academy. FLA participants are young women that already have a drive to give back through their networks. So FLA attracts participants with a high potential to be successful doing leadership work.*

### SECTION 4: Awareness of social justice issues

#### 4) Before FLA, were you aware of the different issues girls face in Tulare County? Probe: name some of the issues and problems that face girls in Tulare County

- Latino families pressure girls to get pregnant and not go to college.
- High school dropout rates among Latina women
- Teen pregnancy
- Bullying
- LGBT issues
- *Some level of awareness of issues based on their own personal experiences. Teen pregnancy and school dropout rates, LGBT issues, bullying, immigration issues.*

### SECTION 5: Personal transformation and learned skills (SECTION 6 for alumni focus group)

Have you changed through your participation in the FLA? How so? Are you doing something that you don't think you would be doing if you had not enrolled in FLA? How have your feelings change and your thinking changed---the way you see yourself in the world because of this experience.

*(These are answers from FLA current participants that are really FLA alumni because they are doing the academy for the second time)*

### Personal growth

- Increased self-confidence, I saw things going on in my community that shouldn't be happening and I didn't know what to do. I found myself in the academy and it gave me a voice I didn't even know I had.
- Stronger. I am out of the closet (LGBT). My partner was a Jehovah Witness so my relationship was underground. I was looking for a place to voice myself, that was a big deal for me and now I got that and I am also working on other personal issues; I have more goals.
- More confident. I am able to do what I wanted to do, nobody tells me what to do or not to do regardless of my gender, my age, my sexual orientation.
- Less angry. I was angry about injustices but I didn't know how to channel the anger. FLA helps me channel the anger in a different way; it has fine tuned my passion and anger.
- Less hurt and more active. FLA is the soothing, is the band aid. I am hurting and see others hurting, so acting helps me being at ease, I don't have to hold it. FLA gives me what to do with it. I can be active, go to a march, action brings something to your ache.
- FLA makes me feel I am amazing.
- I can express my opinions better despite my environment putting me down. I can hear others opinions; I can be heard, I have a voice.
- I am not that confidence yet but I am going through self-discovery, it is the best feeling in the world. I am a miracle baby. My mom will tell me I am here (FLA) for something big.
- LGBT rights got me started. When I was in high school I had a friend (guy) dressing like a girl, and he got bullied so much. I hated it when they called him "retard". I wanted to educate those people. It is not just about me but about other people too. I feel happy, successful when I can educate, when I can help others. It motivates me to continue to doing it.
- Understanding the history and politics, helps me to understand why things are the way they are, why people discriminate, and I can deal better with my anger
- FLA gives you the tools to help others. E.g. what we have learned about contraception and reproductive health this weekend. Youth have the options, to get protected, to get informed.
- FLA gives you exposure to tools on how to address issues, face the opposition.
- FLA supports so you don't have to go through it by yourself, you have a support network, my peers.
- FLA helps me see a vision for my future, it gives me a drive, and I can see where I want to go.

### Challenges to personal growth:

- I get put down a lot, teachers, nobody thought I could go to college (dyslexic disability) so everybody thought I wasn't going to do anything. My dad told me just don't go to school, drop it. But I wanted it really bad. And I am going to college now. So helping others helps me feel better. It was very hurtful to hear from an older person: "No you can't do that"
- The mom that is active (board ACT) but she doesn't encourage me to go to Harvard or other college away from home even though I want to. My mom wants me to stay here with her. I am not going to let anybody push me down. I will not go down. I will stay up there.
- I always wanted my dad's love, but he rather sees me knocked up than going to college. I want to go to a 4 year university. And for me hearing that from him is so hurtful. My dad will tell me to quit soccer, that it is a sport for men, but I really like soccer.
- To have my mom not trust me, makes me feel that I am alone. So I have to be on my own. Telling the doctor I am a virgin, and I am proud of it. I am not planning on having kids. I am not going to do what my parents say about getting pregnant.

## SECTION 6: Why did you enroll and participated in FLA training twice? (SECTION 7 for alumni focus group)

6) For those who are back for an additional year, what were the primary reasons?

- FLA puts out there what we believe in.
- Learn more about how not to be an angry woman, because I have lots of reasons to be angry. FLA teaches me to control myself, let my emotions cool down, speak out and reach out to others.
- FLA helps me to take action, to share my voice and deal with the community we live in
- My mom keeps pushing female leadership so I wanted to keep testing it.
- To stay connected, in the network, to continue sharing incredible experiences, like going to the State capital which made me realized how many other people are working toward the same issues, that I am part of an advocacy community!
- Main motivation is to continue support (leadership, emotional, and personal) through a network and refine what they get from FLA

## SECTION 7: Recommendations to improve FLA (SECTION 8 for alumni focus group)

7) Do you have concerns or fears about your involvement or participation at this point in the training? (Probe: Such as time commitment, comments from friends and family, speaking out in your team, language, race, etc.) How can these obstacles be solved or lessen?

- Facilitate more sharing of personal experiences: FLA should set up a structure to share among the group. We need more of those therapy group experiences to bond more, to work together better on the projects. To provide a safe space to speak out our own issues, what we have gone through, what we are going through, our fears, our pains, our joys. The bonding we do here affects external relationships with friends, with family, with community.
- Provide individual attention: FLA should provide some individual, one on one attention, a mentor for example. Besides the group, to have the individual attention so we get individual support. Incorporate individual attention into the program.

## SECTION 8: Anything else? (SECTION 10 for alumni focus group)

8) Last question for everyone: Is there something we needed to ask and didn't or you want to share that was left-out in our question and discussion?

FLA rocks!