

Peter Coe's Democracy Camp Journal (March 22-24, 2020)



Peter Coe is a third-year undergraduate studying Political Science and Public Policy at UC Berkeley. He is currently rebuilding the UC Berkeley SunRise Movement Club to leverage membership to motivate local and national politicians to champion environmental policies. The Sunrise movement is a "movement of young people to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs" by fighting for the Green New Deal. As a member of the Partners in Health Engage advocacy team, Peter advocates for policies (such as Medicare for All) to reduce health inequity. On a state level, Peter wants to replicate the Rhode Island Cooperative (a grassroots movement that recruits, trains, and supports left-wing candidates to replace corporate politicians within the state legislature) in California. On a national level, Peter wants to build an Economic Populist Caucus in Congress to pass majoritarian economic policies that will ensure Americans don't have to live in constant fear of economic disaster.

Monday, March 22nd, 2021

• **Lisa García Bedolla, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies & Dean of the Graduate Division**

Dr. Garcia Bedolla's background and knowledge about career paths for public service were incredibly inspiring. Garcia Bedolla grew up in Los Angeles, as the daughter of Cuban immigrants. Even though her dad wanted her to be a lawyer, she decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Latin American History from Yale University. She was especially motivated to pursue a Ph.D. because there were very few people of Latin American descent teaching Latin American History. Garcia Bedolla has leveraged her Ph.D. to become a successful author, research the causes of American political inequalities, and augment organizing strategies throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

During Democracy Camp, Garcia Bedolla initially talked about her "Data for Social Good" (DSG) project, a data center aimed to help organizing in communities of color. Garcia Bedolla aims to shift the narrative around non-voters. Specifically, "We need to respect their life experiences and what they care about most, and teach them how they can do what they want. This requires a level of respect that we don't have." Garcia Bedolla advised students interested in pursuing a Ph.D. to follow their heart and study what they find is meaningful.

Overall, I thought Dr. Garcia Bedolla's insights on the contrast between work in an academic, governmental, and private setting was incredibly helpful. Specifically, it was useful to learn that in a government setting, "most of the time you are not using research because you don't have time," while in policy think tanks you are always thinking at the 30,000-foot level."

- **Imposter Syndrome Workshop with Yi Du, PhD - Licensed Psychologist at CAPS**

Dr. Yu's lecture on Imposter syndrome was incredibly useful as she explained what imposter syndrome is, the signs of imposter syndrome, and how to cope with imposter syndrome. During the lecture, the students shared their own experiences with imposter syndrome. Most notably, an undocumented student with disabilities shared, "When you don't see people who look like you or have different experiences, it makes you feel othered and separated from the community." As a transfer student who has struggled with imposter syndrome, Dr. Yu's advice to "develop a routine, provide self-affirmation, and know when to ask for help" was incredibly helpful to me.

- **Councilmember Rigel Robson, Berkeley Councilmember**

Rigel Robinson is currently the Council Member for UC Berkeley's District 7. During his freshman year of college, students successfully campaigned to redistrict District 7 to become a student supermajority district. Four years later, when the district was up for election, student activists and long-term community organizers helped Robinson win the race. As a city councilmember, Robinson has advocated for the homeless population, proposed solutions to the housing crisis, and placed environmentalism at the forefront of policy discussions.

During the discussion, Robinson explained that even though "everyone on the city council is well left of center, there are still factions. Some people care more about labor, policing, or environment." In response to numerous campaign advice questions, Robinson stressed that "Representatives should be good listeners and fight like hell for you."

I found Robinson's insights on how to leverage the city council to create media cycles and push the issues onto a national stage, incredibly powerful. Robinson noted that he works with Local Pro.

Tuesday, March 23rd, 2021

- **Speaker: Linda Yeung, Unified Commander for the COVID Command Center City and County of San Francisco**

Linda Yeung double majored in Oriental Languages and political science at UC Berkeley. After graduation, Yeung worked in Washington, DC on public policy at the highest level - trade negotiations. After a couple of years in Washington, Yeung attended Tufts Fletcher School of Law and diplomacy to study international relations. However, following the LA riots, Yeung worked for the non-profit, Rebuild LA, transitioned to economic development, and then worked in San Francisco local government.

Throughout the student discussion, Yeung touched on a typical day in the life of a public servant, how to get involved with trade negotiations, and what she looks for in applicants. To my surprise, Yeung does not look at schools when considering an applicant and "would choose someone who had to work their way through school and got a degree" over someone who solely went to an elite academic institution.

In addition to admiring Yeung's life trajectory and passion for public service, I was amazed by the strategies she uses to streamline communication and projects. I was amazed that Yeung goes out of her way to have one-on-one discussions with team members she most disagrees with and writes down three main takeaways from every meeting. I aim to utilize Ms. Yeung's tactics to improve my project management skills.

- **Community Organization/Policy Advocacy Panel with Muhammad Alameldin, Molly Culton, Brian Rivas, Janine Shinomura, DeZhon Grace, and Mar Velez**

Personally, I found Mr. Alameldin's commentary on unpaid internships to be fascinating. Specifically, the notion that "A social equity organization that doesn't pay its interns is not a social equity organization" forced me to take a step back and think. Throughout my entire academic career, I've always thought that I had to take any internship I can in order to get a foot in the door. However, Mr. Alameldin's emphasis that students are valuable resources shifted my thought process. Although I will probably still work in numerous unpaid internships, I find it incredibly empowering to know that I am valuable. With regards to theories of change, Mr. Grace contributed a unique perspective. Specifically, DeZhon explained that in order to implement progressive policies one must play the inside-outside game, "visualize the debate from your opponents view, and adapt to folks' concerns."

- **Mayor Libby Schaff, Mayor of Oakland**

Mayor Libby Schaff had an unorthodox academic trajectory. Schaff transferred to UC Berkeley from Florida but unfortunately had to drop out because she had to work two full-time jobs. In order to finish her degree, Mayor Schaff ended up driving back to Florida "for one last semester to graduate college." After a stint in marketing and event planning, Mayor Schaaf studied entertainment law at Loyola Law School. While taking law and poverty, Mayor Schaaf learned "laws themselves are an instrument of injustice as they preserve the status quo." After working at a corporate law firm, Mayor Schaaf was a lawyer at Oakland Cares, a non-profit that connects community members with local volunteering. The connections Mayor Schaaf made through informational interviews helped her become District Four's Oakland City Councilmember, a stepping stone that enabled her to become the mayor of Oakland.

Throughout the student discussion, Mayor Schaaf sold the students on the importance of local government. Specifically, Mayor Schaaf explained that "Local government is the place where you fly at the perfect altitude to change the world because you are touching the systems that impact every person's life. What happens in cities can influence the international and federal government. You are low enough that you have helped people in their worst moment of trauma and the policy work is incredibly personal."

I found Mayor Schaaf's commentary on how to deal with a constrained budget, incredibly inspiring. Prior to her talk, I thought the only way local government could finish a project was by neglecting other issues. However, Mayor Schaaf explained, "Every Oakland girl has a side hustle. My side hustle is getting money from others in Oakland. We are not like the

federal government who can do deficit spending. The longer I have stayed mayor, the further I have gone out to get more money for Oakland.” Mayor Schaaf’s ability to procure extra funds was incredibly inspiring as it showed me, even at the local level, politicians can leverage innovative strategies to materially improve their constituents’ lives.

- **Linda Lundberg, Transition Services Manager**

Ms. Lundberg taught the Democracy Camp students how to write a resume geared towards public service. Specifically, Lundberg recommended we highlight all of our experiences, skills, and accomplishments that demonstrate a personal commitment to one area of public service. Once we have demonstrated this commitment, we must build a message that demonstrates the overlap between our passions and the employer’s vision. On a logistical level, Ms. Lundberg taught us the pars method, a resume summary that highlights the challenge you faced, how you impacted the problem, and the outcome. My favorite piece of Ms. Lundberg’s advice was to read your resume backward (from character to character) when finalizing revisions.

Wednesday, March 24th, 2021

- **Xiomara Pena, Vice President, Engagement, Small Business Majority & Claudia Moreno, MBA student at MIT Sloan School of Management**

During her time in college, Xiomara Pena interned with a city council member, worked for the mayor, and tutored on the side. After graduation, Ms. Pena worked for Small Business Majority, a national advocacy organization for small businesses, to aid small businesses in Compton and Inglewood through macro-level economic policies. Like Ms. Pena, Claudia Morena worked for Small Business Majority after graduating from UC Berkeley. After her work with Small Business Majority, Ms. Morena simultaneously joined MIT’s MBA graduate program and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government’s MPA program.

Throughout the student discussion section, Ms. Pena and Ms. Morena advised the students on networking, imposter syndrome, and the push back they received from their family for moving away to pursue their careers. Ms. Pena advised students to build their social capital through networking, while Ms. Morena stressed the importance of creating your own board of advisors, a select group of confidants who hold you accountable to your goals. To overcome pushback from family members who don’t want you to move away, Ms. Morena explained, “In a Mexican household, there’s the same expectation that a woman shouldn’t leave the household. To overcome these barriers, you should get a stranger or validator who can talk to them.”

- **Alumni in Public Service Panel with Arabi Hassan, Margie Estrada, Tom Negrete, and Janelly Mendoza**

Before attending Harvard Law School, Arabi Hassan worked at UC Berkeley’s Human Rights Lab and started First Gen Empower, a non-profit organization that helps first-generation

students navigate the college admissions process. As the Chief Counsel for California's Senate Judiciary Committee, Margie Estrada manages a staff of 5 attorneys and 5 assistants to analyze the legality of newly proposed Californian laws. After working at the New York Times as an editor, Tom Negrete is now the Acting Director of the California Research Bureau. Like many other public servants, Janely Mendoza transitioned from a boutique law firm to public service and is now Staff Attorney/Clinical Supervisor for Immigration Practice at East Bay Community Law Center.

After telling their personal stories, the panelists advised students on networking and how to not let the personal nature of public service cloud one's judgment. I was personally struck by Ms. Estrada's career trajectory and her experience with labor unions. Ms. Estrada recommended I read Saul Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals" and research Cesar Chavez in order to gain a complete understanding that "Organizing is about building a committee of leaders within the organization." Like many other panelists, Ms. Estrada stressed the importance of local government. Specifically, Ms. Estrada recommended the fellows go into local government because "not a lot that happens on the federal level, since, most of the day to day federal actions are based on state law."

- **Goodwin Liu, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court**

Justice Liu had an unorthodox path to the California Supreme Court. Despite being accepted to medical school, Justice Liu decided to work on Capitol Hill and subsequently attend Yale Law School. After clerking for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Liu taught constitutional law at UC Berkeley for 8 years and was nominated to the California Supreme Court by Governor Jerry Brown.

In response to student questions, Justice Liu expanded on his judicial philosophy, his experience clerking for Justice Ginsburg, and his concerns about our democracy. With regards to his judicial philosophy, Justice Liu explained that "Judges are not there to enact their own policy preferences, they are there to discern what the law is and let the chips fall as they may. That is not to say there are judgment calls. But they are constrained by precedent and legal statutes." I found this response incredibly refreshing because it demonstrates that for the government to function, each governing body must act within its jurisdiction.

I was especially excited to learn what Justice Ginsburg was like in person. Justice Liu said, "RBG was a fantastic mentor, a hero. As a judge, she was incredibly disciplined and collegial with her colleagues. She was very shy. She was a very savvy person in terms of managing her own public identity. She always had a very shy demeanor and in social settings, she was not a loud person. But, she knew she had become a social icon." Concerning the state of American democracy, Justice Liu is "very concerned about polarization and the inability of our democratic process to have real engagement with one another."

- **Lisa Rykert, Staff Career Development Program**

Ms. Rykert is a life and career coach, the strategic thought partner for professionals and executives, and Head of UC Berkeley's Staff Career Development Program. In her presentation, Ms. Rykert explained what networking is, what it is not, and why networking is important. I was shocked to learn that 85% of people landed jobs by networking. After learning this statistic, I was motivated to practice networking conversations with my fellow Democracy Camp members and send out contact emails to the Democracy Camp panelists. Ms. Rykert's talk was especially useful as she broke down the three different tiers of contacts and how to cater an email to each contact.

Thursday, March 24th, 2021

- **Senator Monique Limón, CA State Senator**

Senator Limon was in the last class to enter UC Berkeley with affirmative action and is a strong advocate for affirmative action. After graduation, Senator Limon worked numerous part-time jobs until she was offered a full-time job at a non-profit organization. Initially, Senator Limon piloted a "program to use city or county parking lots to house individuals living in their cars." In 2010, Senator Limon won her first school board race and was "one of a few women of color to serve on the Santa Barbara school board." Flashforward to 2020, Senator Limon represents California's 19th district and prides herself on championing environmental justice, equal access to education, and consumer protections.

In the student discussion, Senator Limon answered how to successfully compromise, get involved in education policy, and deal with a lack of representation in an industry. Senator Limon advised underrepresented students to adjust to a lack of representation by "finding a way to create your own space within these broader spaces" and acknowledging that "A lot of the people who help us, don't look like us, but that's ok."

Regarding compromising, Senator Limon explained that "Compromise is a part of being in elected office. Compromise has to happen and it gets difficult when we equate compromise with selling out. I don't compromise on my values, but I do have to sit down and negotiate." I found this response incredibly useful as she did not respond with an absolute; she did not say you can never compromise or we must always compromise. I agree that it is important to negotiate based on one's values and withhold your vote when your red lines are crossed.

- **Public Service and Research Panel with Cristina Mora, Eric Schckler, and Amy Lerman**

Cristina Mora is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of the Institute for Governmental Studies (IGS) at UC Berkeley. In addition to being a Professor of Political Science and Co-Director of IGS at UC Berkeley, Eric Schickler is the co-chair of the APSA Task Force on Congressional Reform. Amy Lerman is a UC Berkeley Public Policy professor, Associate Dean of the Goldman School of Public Policy, and Co-Director of The People Lab. Professor

Lerman founded The People Lab to analyze all aspects of the interaction between people and government.

The panelists discussed recommended changes to Congress, advised students interested in using research to make social change, and shared their experiences working in Washington D.C. Regarding leveraging research to make social change, Professor Schickler emphasized the importance of talking “to people who have gone through Ph.D. programs,” “tune in to what you actually want to do,” and remember “graduate school will always be there while other things won’t.”

In reference to one of Dr. Mora’s earlier statements, I asked how to shift hegemonic narratives about why inequality exists. Dr. Mora responded, “We must shift our thinking about racial inequality in terms of individuals (abilities, skills, wants) as something that is produced by a system of institutions that has functioned in a way to make society unequal. As a sociologist, we must present the structural level.” I found this response compelling because it reminded me of one of my mentor's main pieces of advice: make structural critiques, not personal attacks. Overall, this panel provided a unique perspective as the speakers’ work focused on shifting the structures of Congress, government and society, rather than solely playing by the rules of the game.

- **Campus Resources & Program Panel with Christine Trost, Mary Crabb, and Karla Gutierrez**

Christine Trost is the Director of the Matsui Center for Politics and Public Service. Mary Crabb is the Program Director for UCDC, the University of California internship program in Washington, D.C. Karla Gutierrez is the Program Manager for the UC Berkeley Labor Center. As coordinators for three major public service programs in UC Berkeley, Trost, Crabb, and Gutierrez advised the Democracy Camp fellows on the importance of their programs and how to get involved.

For students interested in doing research, Dr. Trost explained how to get involved with the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP), Center for Community Innovation, and The People Lab. Additionally, she recommended we apply to Cal in Sacramento, the Schaeffer Fellows in Government Service program, and the Matsui Washington fellowship. Ms. Crabb explained what UCDC is, the experiences one will gain from the program, and how to be a strong applicant. Karla Gutierrez recommended we take Public Policy 160AC (work justice and the labor movement), Public Policy 162AC (a labor field study course), and apply for the Labor Center’s summer internship program. In addition to explaining logistics, Ms. Gutierrez answered numerous questions about labor history. I was especially interested to learn about the evolution from the Saul Alinsky’s method of organizing to the contemporary top-down approach to organizing.