

Gina Carroll
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Class XXX

Why is it exciting to be part of the ALF network?

Being part of the ALF network is overwhelmingly awesome. I'm sure that I am like everyone who thinks that their ALF class is special. Class XXX has remained very close. We meet for breakfast regularly, but more than that, we continue to be supports for each other in our endeavors. My ALF class is the first group that I think of to connect others or if I want advice. My classmates from Class XXX are my first stop - my most efficient and effective stop. For example, I recently started an internship program for 30 high school students at our energy company to expose students to the energy industry. I called on a number of my classmates, for a number of reasons in starting this program. Several classmates have come to speak to our interns and have helped me with curriculum for this program. I think of ALF every single Saturday when we start the day in a circle and our interns check-in. Every single intern feels valued and heard as we get a feel for how each intern is that day. We also check-out at the end of the day, which has also been a wonderful part of the program.

When I started ALF I was just establishing a small budding writing services business to encourage people to get their life stories written. In that program, like ALF, we ask participants tell a three minute story and at the beginning of each workshop, we check-in. Just as in my ALF class, this usually opens the group up immediately. Participants are able to share and learn from the obstacles that they are finding with their writing. At the end of the day, we return to the circle and check-out. I've watched these groups become cohesive writing support groups, which is wonderful to observe.

Why were you interested in serving on the ALF board?

I felt like I got so much out of ALF and I wanted to give back. Also so many from our class are on the board and I welcome any opportunity to work with the folks that I adore!

What committee(s) do you serve on and what are you most excited to work on?

I currently serve on the Senior Fellows committee which I love! Being on that committee encourages me go to all of the great Senior Fellows events.

Please describe a memorable ALF class experience?

At the time that we were asked to choose an "Experience as Other" I was feeling sorry for myself for the work that I was doing at the time; feeling that it was not so fruitful in terms of income. I have a friend who has franchises and asked him if I could work for him for a day and that's how I ended up in charge of sides at Popeye's (a fast food restaurant).

Immediately upon arrival, my friend handed me over to the store manager who asked me to read the manual which laid out guidelines for safety and sanitation. After I read the manual, I remember thinking that things were much more complicated than I expected. The manager instructed me that I would be in charge of the side dishes. He explained to me the importance they place on providing fresh food for guests so side dishes had to be served fast but had to remain fresh (there were lots of rules related to

keeping items fresh, and not putting too many items out too early). I learned that things are timed after an order is placed, so efficiency and timeliness are very important. I was amazed at how difficult the job actually was. I was not the best employee; not very quick. I was however, very impressed with the employees, who were very committed to their jobs and to doing them well.

It was a great experience that I talk about all the time. It was a true perspective shifter. The fast food/restaurant experience looks very different from the other side. Employees are on a timer, so in trying to do their job quickly and efficiently, they have to be a team player and they must make the customer happy. This "Experience as Other" changed the way that I look at people who are working in those situations.

Can you describe an experience/conversation where people from different backgrounds/perspectives learned something from one another in your class?

I think that our class had a text book example of a conversation about differences. We had a very difficult but valuable conversation about the different perspectives of race and socioeconomic differences. Our class came together pretty early during our wilderness experience so that kind of conversation was possible. I felt like I was heard and I know just from subsequent conversations and comments from others in the group that it was very valuable. This conversation shifted many of my classmates' world views about differences and racial groups. It was difficult, but it was certainly meaningful.