

MELANIE PANG, MSW

MEPANG@UH.EDU

Education

University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work

Master of Social Work – Specialization in Political Social Work, 2012

Mahatma Gandhi Peace Award, 2012

University of Houston

Bachelor of Arts, Communication – Journalism, 2010; Cum Laude

Minor: LGBT Studies

Presidential Excellence Award - President of the LGBTQ student organization GLOBAL, 2009

Experience

Director of Advocacy - Houston Food Bank (June 2020 - March 2021)

Government Relations Officer (Oct 2018 - June 2020)

- Led Houston Food Bank's first Advocacy department; worked directly with the CEO to shift the organization toward its new anti-poverty vision: "a world that doesn't need food banks."
- Coached and managed ≈ 6 person team of full time employees, fellows, and interns. Through the new Advocacy team efforts, we made tremendous impact in three key areas:

Advancement of Policy and Civic Engagement Initiatives

- Published HFB's first public statement in opposition to a policy: the Trump administration's proposed changes to the Public Charge rule and coordinated a press conference with local service agencies and elected officials.
- Established HFB as a voting location for the first time in its 30+ year history to host one of the most consequential elections in history, the 2020 United States Presidential Election. More than 1,000 voters chose HFB for their voting location, using the in-person, curbside, and drive-thru options provided.
- Collaborated with a coalition of community organizations and Harris County Commissioners to pass the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, Harris County's first mechanism for grant funding to expand healthy food access across Harris County, resulting in a \$1,000,000 investment for the county.
- Established, recruited, and facilitated the HFB Board Advocacy Committee composed of members from powerful public and private institutions, such as Houston in Action, BakerRipley, Shell Oil, and The Greater Houston Partnership, to advise and coordinate advocacy efforts to further anti-poverty policies at the city, county, and state levels.

Shifting Culture from Transactional to Transformational

- Facilitated a 12 month pilot of learning groups called Equity Work Groups: three diverse cohorts of HFB employees and volunteers who met monthly to build trust and shared wisdom and knowledge in order to develop recommendations toward a more just and equitable food bank.
 - Resulted in reported closer interdepartmental relationships and empathy, better disaggregated data collection and reporting, and a final affirmation across leadership to finalize a \$15 minimum rate per hour across the organization.
 - Surfaced gaps, including a need for more intensive anti-racism training opportunities and support for staff at all levels.

- Cross-department collaborations led to the creation of the Community Voice Council, an org-wide initiative to explore opportunities to become more inclusive of community stakeholders in decision-making and program development.
- Implemented HFB's first internal Racial Equity Organizational Assessment, which provided a snapshot of insights into disparities across staff and leadership understanding of the org's work in five key dimensions (as adapted from JustLead Washington): racial equity commitment, culture, workforce practices (such as recruitment, retainment, and hiring), accountability and partnership with communities of color, and the application of an anti-racist lens across programs.

Secured \$11M+ in Government Funding

- Secured grant funding totaling \$25,000, including funding from Houston in Action, to conduct 2020 Census outreach and implemented a successful campaign with one staff member and COVID-safe volunteer canvassers, mass-distributed Census materials in multiple languages inside of food boxes at sites seeing 5,000+ households a weekend, QR codes socially distanced smartphone completion, and developed seed funding incentives for the HFB partner network to dedicate volunteers to support clients to complete their 2020 Census forms.
- Secured new investments: at the city level, a \$2,000,000 investment of CARES Act Funds from the City of Houston); \$9,000,000+ contract with Harris County; and welcomed high profile Congress members which brought national attention, donations, raised state and federal policy attention to food programs releasing FEMA funding for food banks. The Congresswomen raised more than \$5,000,000 for various Texas nonprofits, a portion of which was provided to HFB.

Manager of Emergency Services - The Salvation Army of Greater Houston

(September 2017- September 2018)

- Led Salvation Army's response and recovery efforts, including mass feeding of first responders and community (provided 422K hot meals and snacks; distributed 43K food boxes in Harris County alone), emotional and spiritual care to meet the immediate needs of disaster survivors, and managed the disbursement of more than \$1,000,000 in financial assistance to survivors 4 counties, in addition to nearly \$500,000 in grant funds.
- Community liaison at the City of Houston Emergency Operation Center; Interfaced directly with the Mayor of Houston, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and other government and community leaders.
- Vice-Chair of Texas Gulf Coast Regional Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster; led the communication, training, and collaboration necessary to coordinate the disaster efforts of more than 100 volunteer organizations in the Texas Gulf Coast Region.
 - Co-led monthly meetings and established the group's new set of by-laws.
- Advocated for policy to alleviate suffering after disasters both environmental and personal; published op-ed in the Houston Chronicle.
- Supervised a team of 3-10 staff.

Qualitative Research and Evaluation Manager - The Salvation Army of Greater Houston

(January 2016 – September 2018)

- Analyzed trends in data to provide policy insights and improve service delivery through the Homeless Management Information System.
- Prepared, reviewed, and submitted agency reports to interagency leadership, funders, and local coalition committees working to end homelessness.

Lecturer – University of Houston

Course: Organizational Behavior and Change (Summer 2016)

- ≈ 14 graduate students.

Course: Introduction to GLBT Studies (Fall 2012 – Spring 2013)

- ≈ 35 undergraduate students.

Program Director of Voices for Change – One Voice Texas

(September 2015 – January 2016)

- Developed and implemented strategic plan to grow Voices for Change, an advocacy initiative for youth and young adults with experience in the Texas foster care system.
- Ensured that all decisions, activities and planning were foremost driven by and about youth voice.
- Collaborated with policymakers and stakeholders who provide services to children and youth in foster care in a variety of settings to identify community resources and gaps.

Training Director – First Person LLC

(February 2014 – September 2015)

- Coordinated stakeholder and coalition partner communication and grassroots participation across Texas Wins, a statewide campaign to secure nondiscrimination protections for all people, including LGBTQ Texans.
 - Advocated for the passage of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, which would have expanded & established protections and recourse for 15 protected classes.
- Facilitated educational dialogues featuring experts in immigration, foster care, LGBTQ rights, food scarcity, and more.
- Served as Program Manager to CAN DO Houston to oversee the Community Leadership and Advocacy Training program.

Community Case Manager - Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston St. Jerome's Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Foster Care Program

(December 2012 – February 2014)

- Provided comprehensive case management to 18 unaccompanied refugee minors.
- Collaborated with youth's biological and foster families, immigration and citizenship specialists, health specialists, social services, and school administration to expand youth's circle of support and for coordination of care.

AmeriCorps: Community Projects Specialist - Collaborative for Children/CAN DO Houston

(July 2012 – October 2012)

- Collaborated with a small team in the development of curriculum, planning, implementation, and evaluation of an advocacy and leadership training program for Sunnyside residents and stakeholders.
- Interfaced with and managed communication between Neighborhood Advisory Committee members and partners, local businesses, and other organizations.

Case Manager: Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing – The Salvation Army

(April 2011 – November 2011)

- Provided comprehensive case management and referrals to professional assistance for clients experiencing multiple losses, emotional trauma, and homelessness.

- Assessed clients for housing assistance eligibility and collaborated with local agencies to increase access to services at an LGBTQ+-friendly homeless young adult drop-in site.

Presentations

- Keynote - Phenomenal Woman Speaker Series, UH Women and Gender Resource Center (2017)
- Keynote - Lavender Graduation, UH Women and Gender Resource Center (2017)
- Keynote - Amplify Your Voice: Beyond the First 100 Days, UH GCSW (2017)
- Houston Eviction Data - Heat Map Project, Pitch Finalist - White House LGBTQ Tech & Innovation Summit, Lesbians Who Tech (2017)
- "Making a Difference" - Harmony School of Nature, Fort Worth, On food scarcity and civic engagement for the high school senior class (2015)
- "Organic Leadership" - Urban Harvest - On effective meetings and sustainable organizations for Urban Harvest's quarterly community garden orientation series (2014)

Honors

- 2021 Female Identifying Pride Grand Marshal, Pride Houston
- Unsung Champion Award, Female Founders Alliance (August 2020)
- Field Site Supervisor of Year Award, Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship Program, Congressional Hunger Center (2019 - 2020)
- Most Valuable Volunteer, *OutSmart* 20th Annual Gayest & Greatest Readers' Choice Awards (October 2016)
- President's Award for Distinguished Community Service, The Houston GLBT Political Caucus (September 2016)
- Social Worker of the Year, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Houston (February 2015)
- Board Member and Volunteer, Hawthorne Homeless Youth Dinner, Open Gate Ministries (March 2013 – July 2014)

Press

- Featured in *The Story Behind the Faces*, LOCAL Magazine (December 2015)
- *LGBTQ Asian Americans Leading Houston*, OutSmart Magazine (May 2015)
- Featured in *Houston Gives*, Houston Chronicle (March 2015)
- *20 Queer People of Color You Should Know* – OutSmart Magazine (May 2014)

Activities & Affiliations

- Ukombozi Fellow, The Race Equity Leadership & Research Collective (June 2021 - June 2022)
- Volunteer, Transgender Education Network of Texas (March - May 2021)
- Young Leaders Council, Houston Public Media (2019 - 2021)
- Fellow, New Leaders Council, Class III (2017 - 2018)
- Co-Chair, Mayor Turner's LGBTQ Advisory Board (June 2016 – 2018)
- Volunteer, Gender Infinity Conference (September 2016, October 2015)
- Rising Star, League of Women Voters (October 2014)
- Leadership Houston, Class of XXXIII (August 2014 – June 2015)
- Kickboxing, writing, and hiking