“Honestly I think the community is what inspires me so much. I had never thought that I could walk into a room with 20 strangers and have so much in common with them. In the group there are so many inspirational people, I could name something that inspires me about every single person in the program, which is unique to their discipline, or their service-learning, or just their personality. In the beginning I thought that we were all involved because we wanted to change the world (that happy little ideal) but over time I realized that we all had so much in common, especially by sharing our political and spiritual autobiographies. I realized that I have such a deep, common thread with a lot of these people. And it makes me wonder that if a small group of students at UMass, 20 strangers, how perhaps I and others can reach out to people in our community, people in Amherst, students in groups like STAND, and how powerful those connections can be.

I think it’s valuable to be able to tie in my community service with reflections in class. A lot of times I didn’t even realize how much I was learning from my community service, until I sat down and thought about things like “why am I doing it? What is the purpose of it? How does it work?” I’m the sort of person that learns a lot by writing things out, so being able to go home and write reflections, come to class, participate in a group discussion, and bring whatever I took from our discussions into the real world is really...
valuable to me. So I think that’s the really awesome thing about CSP."