

Blog Post – Global Citizenship | Julie Dory | Laidlaw Cohort 2021 | Trinity College Dublin

Throughout the duration of my few years within the Laidlaw community, I have been amazed by the scale of the projects that my fellow scholars have undertaken. I have seen many travel far and wide, and have equally seen many do fantastic work in their own communities. We have attended many workshops that have challenged our mindsets and attitudes – from such topics as ethical leadership, to topics such as climate consciousness. One belief that I did not clearly articulate to myself until much later in the programme that was largely prompted by two sessions on ethical leadership with Professor Daniel Efron from the London Business School and following countless conversations with other programme participants, was the belief that it is of paramount importance that we must act first in our own communities. As Dr Grace Lordan – the founding director of The Inclusion Initiative at the London School of Economics – said, we must “think big and act small”, although this in no way implies that acting within our community is any small thing. I intend to say, simply, that we must look close before looking afar.

I have been challenged to see the value in acting with broader groups and populations in mind, but also in not avoiding acting within my local community as a result of wanting to exoticize a CV or online presence. There seemed to have been a heavy focus on expanding outward and to travelling – which, of course, I truly believe to have its own wonderful impacts and benefits. However, there is an equal opportunity for additional damage to be caused by failing to acknowledge that our services may best be placed elsewhere, and that in our eagerness to spread our wings, we can cause harm. I found it difficult to have conversations with peers who I believed to be acting (in almost every case, unintentionally) unethically in engaging with behaviours that put certain people in awkward positions in terms of power dynamics. I am grateful that we were all in such an environment that encouraged these conversations, and we all listened and came to mutual understandings. I am also

grateful to our leaders for guiding these conversations without directly instructing us, allowing me to grow in ways that I had not foreseen.

I also now firmly see the need for further development to continuously made in our own communities. There are many people, in Dublin for example, who would benefit in an infinite number of ways from community engagement programmes that are currently sorely lacking. Our ambition to reach far and wide is admirable and exciting, and will – no doubt – one day in some way bring great change. However, I believe it is also this very ambition that must be monitored and harnessed in a way that can be utilised at our own doorsteps. Having the opportunity to attend the annual Laidlaw conference at the London School of Economics in October of 2022 allowed myself and my peers to have this exact conversation with other scholars who came from all over the globe, and many of us agree – both those who had worked closely in their communities and farther afield for their Leadership in Action projects.