



## **Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps Intern Report**

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The sheet listing the deadlines for RRASC interns that we received in our orientation folders instructed us to write our final reports as soon as possible after returning to the five college area. While I can see that for certain people information about the summer would be fresh in their heads while at the same time fleeting, I really believe that ruminating about the summer has provided me with more potent memories rather than writing down earlier less digested thoughts. Indeed, after lots of careful thinking it became clear that working at Political Research Associates (PRA) truly provided me with one of the most satisfying summers of my life.

My supervisor at PRA, Pam Chamberlain and the entire staff as a whole made me feel like I was a full time member of the office, not just a summer intern. They gave me tasks that utilized my talents and let me have a real impact on the field of reproductive rights. One of my principal tasks from this past summer was the search for and gather information pertinent to the PRA's reproductive rights activist resource kit (ARK). This involved utilizing the internet and PRA's library to find recent news articles and facts regarding tactics used by both the political right and left concerning the reproductive rights struggle. I was also given considerable independence in this project. My supervisor told me simply to gather as much information as possible but the form that information could take for presentation was totally up to me. I completed this project by creating a power point with all of the relevant info. In addition to this assignment I also had some classic intern work. Yet, as I mentioned in my midterm report and my exit interview, even the filing that

was required forced me to read newsletters from the KKK, Family research council, and Focus on the Family. Before this summer I never knew that reading and filing mail could be so interesting.

I also worked on numerous projects with nearly every member of the staff. Senior analyst Chip Berlet has asked me to find information on international racist and nativist movements from around the world. The other intern, Doug Foote, and I go through the foot-notes and bibliography of a report or a paper and make sure the facts are accurate and correctly cited. The communications department under director Tom Louie has also given me an assignment. Using the massive Bacon's media directory I have to update all of PRA's media contacts at most major daily newspapers around the United States.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know all of the members of the office. Each person brought a certain energy to the office dynamic and made the experience that much more enjoyable. If I had to give any advice to future interns at PRA it would be to really get to know the staff. They are a collective wealth of experience and information. Almost any assignment that I worked on was improved simply by asking a member of the office what they thought about this idea or this topic. If I could do it over I would get to know the staff a little bit better. At some times I felt like I was too focused on assignments, instead of learning from the staff themselves. It was only after I had given my power point presentation to the whole office that I discovered the Executive Director of PRA was also on the board of directors of NARAL.

Another part of the summer that future interns should have advice on is the aspect of city living. Although I have some experience with public transportation after living in the Pioneer Valley for two years, the transition required to use public transportation all the time was not easy. It required a lot of almost strategic planning to get somewhere on time due to the MBTA's lack of punctuality. It is probably also more cost effective to ride the bus and subway rather than driving a car especially given the fixed income that RRASC interns are on. I was extremely lucky in that the bus passes directly in front of my apartment and has

its terminus literally in front of Political Research Associates. Choosing a place to live can also have a huge impact on the quality of the internship experience. I was lucky in that my apartment was right next to the Somerville central library. This allowed me to rent movies and borrow books for free. Added amenities like this made my time away from PRA really interesting and enjoyable. For me things like this were totally unexpected and I would advise future interns to take that kind of thing into account when choosing a place to live.

My supervisor Pam Chamberlain was very nice and equally helpful. She organized and put together a fantastic intern orientation and was clear and direct in her instructions and in the way she gives assignments. In fact the orientation process was so smooth and well done that even though Pam went on vacation only 4 days after I arrived and was out of contact for several weeks, I did not feel lost or bewildered at all. She left me several assignments and her instructions were close to perfect.

Since writing my summer report I have had a lot of time to try and think about something that I could improve about my overall experience at PRA. The number one thing that I would improve, besides getting to know the staff better, is probably the length of time that I spent at PRA. It seemed that the summer went by entirely too fast. If I could do it over I would try and start much earlier in the month of June. Another thing that I mentioned in my mid-summer report that has really stuck with me is the disconnect from the study that I was asked to engage in at PRA. After researching and studying for a summer at PRA and discovering some pretty terrible things about the world it has been kind of difficult to return to pastoral western Massachusetts to pursue education in a sanctuary of liberalism knowing full well that most people will never have access to that type of experience.

My orientation packet told me to "Not let the superstructure get you down", telling me that it's always possible to work against even the most powerful of majorities. The nature of PRA appears to involve finding some humor and hope in many of the sometimes scary things that we study here and that is something that I'm just not that good at yet.