The National Network is staffed by a small, dedicated group of veteran immigration reform advocates committed to a long-term program of equal rights, and they are here for the long haul. They are not a bureaucratic, mainstream organization with broad-based, top-down approaches to immigration reform, which often have little wind in their sails and are politically bound to the Democratic Party, and whose main strategy is to find a seat at the bargaining table with the objective of compromise and concession, in an attempt to see what’s “passable” and “realistic” in Washington. NNIRR is an organization that is deeply embedded in the communities it serves and not willing to compromise on key issues facing immigrants, with the knowledge that true immigration reform is not complete if the end goal is to throw conciliatory minimal reforms at one group of immigrants at the expense of another.

With such momentous work, it was inspiring to see NNIRR’s commitment and goal to encompass all political issues concerning immigration, a reflection of the depth and sophisticated outlook of their policies, its diversity and, quite frankly, its truthfulness and commitment to immigrant communities. Its work includes an incredibly important and integral international perspective on global migration, climate change, the overwhelming importance of a gender lens on migration and immigration and the newly forming topic of queer immigration.

At NNIRR, my work consisted of keeping up with legislative updates, bills and markers; documenting human rights abuses on the ground through the Human Rights Immigrant Community Action Network initiative (HURRICANE); using a database known as Martus, accessed by other immigrants’ rights groups nationwide; and editing and revising parts of NNIRR’s annual report on human rights abuses, drawing patterns and compiling them into educational factsheets that could be used for future reports. My specific interests lay in the connections between human rights abuses and the state’s intervention in the private lives of that part of the population that could be stripped of all protections, constitutional, universal or natural, as well as the for-profit takeover of the federal detention of immigrants.

For a social justice activist, the internship and my assignments added a new depth to my understanding of racism and sexism in this country, and the state’s obsession with the control of bodies and reproductive rights of women of color, in particular, and their intersection with the women’s movement. The collaboration of state and federal agencies that had no relation to law enforcement, and the intrusion upon familial relations, became a big part of my focus.

—continued on page 2—
WHAT IS CIVIL LIBERTIES & PUBLIC POLICY (CLPP)?

CLPP is dedicated to the leadership development of students and activists. CLPP organizes for advocacy and education around reproductive justice, which is the connection of reproductive health to all social justice causes. These include abortion, contraception, economic justice, racial justice, queer rights, immigrants' rights, incarceration, sex workers' rights, HIV/AIDS, and many more.

PROJECTS

CLPP Community Student Group
The CLPP student group consists of young activists from the 5 Colleges and broader community who want to develop their skills to organize for reproductive and social justice. During the Fall semester, the CLPP student group participates in “Activist 101” trainings, meets weekly to dialogue and discuss current issues, and takes an active role in organizing CLPP events. During the Spring semester, the student group works as the driving force behind the annual reproductive justice conference.

Annual Reproductive Justice Conference
CLPP’s annual conference for student and community activists, From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom, connects people to organizations and campaigns locally, nationally, and internationally, and provides them with information, analysis, and “how-to” organizing to bring back to their own campuses and communities. Join us this year, April 9-11, 2010!

RRASC Summer Internship Program
The Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps is a paid summer internship program that places students from several Western Massachusetts colleges with reproductive rights and social justice organizations in the U.S. and abroad.

New Leadership Networking Initiative (NLNI)
NLNI is a training and leadership-building network for new and emerging reproductive justice activists. NLNI members work at a wide range of reproductive rights and social justice organizations and, through participation in the network, create new relationships and collaborations that are energizing and expanding the movement.

Contact clpp@hampshire.edu or 413.559.5416 for more info!

continued from page 1—

Oftentimes parental rights are delegitimized when social workers and hospital workers report to local law enforcement their suspicions of the parents’ undocumented status and, after close collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, the parents are detained or deported and the child placed for adoption. This is of course not news for people working with African American mothers who have had their children taken away and been vilified for being bad mothers or welfare queens. I’ve noticed this close pattern where enforcement and armed bodies of the state here do not reinvent the wheel when thinking up ways to criminalize immigrants. They simply take a chapter from the book on criminalizing African Americans, and use it to shoot, flag, deport, or lock up indefinitely undocumented and documented immigrants. I think it is a general lesson for anti-racists, to evaluate how racism can be fought and ended: only when the criminal justice system and the prison system are abolished can all people of color in this country start believing that we have reached a new era.

This, coupled with the Obama administration’s intransigence, was a good lesson for me in analyzing how and where change really comes from. By my sixth week, and during the height of right wing frenzy about health care reform, it became more or less a general
consensus among immigration reform groups that nothing was going to go ahead this fall. We were left hoping for some meaningful legislation next spring, but were also aware that while we focused on Congress, the White House was not going to willingly move on the issue so as not to jeopardize Obama’s chances of reelection. If the Obama Administration would have its way, comprehensive immigration reform would have to wait until Obama was reelected.

The media’s coverage of immigration also showed me how coverage comes about: from the bottom up, with the mainstream media often being the last to cover an issue or campaign. Grassroots organizers and communities were typically behind the momentum, before large national organizations took up a cause and before the media decided it should invest some time covering an issue. This reinforced, for me, the need to not wait for the media to cover an action before it is addressed, because change doesn’t come from the journalist’s pen, nor is it validated after it’s been set in ink.

I was also frustrated several times by mainstream, national advocacy organizations, which many students, myself included, have aspired to join or work for post-graduation. They essentially dismissed many cases we came across that were not automatically considered easy, and then rode the wave of grassroots organizations who were on the ground fighting the longer battles. This was particularly disheartening because of all the amazing people I watched everyday come in and work hard on these very issues with very little of the funding given to those other organizations.

The stories and cases I would cover or document would be emotionally intense and would go home with me at the end of the day. The severity of the reports could also be emotionally isolating, if it hadn’t been for NNIRR’s strategy of what I like to call a “zoom-in, zoom out”. NNIRR’s commitment to community-based actions and advocacy, along with a larger, broader, national agenda, allowed me to feel less isolated and more empowered, and feel not only that I was part of a bigger picture, but that work on the ground was happening to change the realities I was looking at.

With all the challenges, I loved working at NNIRR. I can’t imagine working in a better place in the immigrants’ rights movement, in such a wonderful and sincere working environment with unwavering and committed advocates, fiercely loyal to immigrant and human rights. I set about at the beginning of the summer wanting to be a part of the movement, and by the end of it, was offered a job at the National Network. It was wonderful to hear from them their appreciation and gratitude (which was definitely reciprocated), and to know that they had valued my presence, above and beyond what I could have imagined.

Here’s a look at a few of our 2009 RRASC’s:

Mia Giardina
Smith College ’10
Major: Study of Women & Gender
Hometown: New York City
RRASC Site: Justice Now

Why did you apply? Because of my dedication to antiracist social justice work and to the reproductive rights movement. The RRASC program gave me the opportunity to do the work I knew I wanted to do.

What was the best part of your internship? Justice Now is an amazing organization, more inspiring than I ever imagined. Part of the reason it can do as much as it does is because of how much it invests in its interns. It was, at first, overwhelming to jump into real legal advocacy and doing such substantial work almost immediately, but I learned so much about prison abolition and about legal advocacy right from the start. The first week was comprised of intense training including workshops on human rights, intersectionality, prison abolition, trans people and the prison industrial complex, and more. By the second week I was already answering phone calls from people inside women’s prisons, answering letters, and sitting in on meetings concerning transmen inside women’s prisons.

What was the most challenging part? The most challenging part is that I was expected as an intern to begin speaking on behalf of Justice Now almost immediately. I was so terrified to pick up the “prison phone” the first time, because every caller has only 15 minutes to speak and very well may have traded in some other privilege just to speak to me and receive some much needed help. The first time I picked up the phone I wanted to hand it right over to my supervisor to answer the person’s questions, but my supervisor would not let me, which pushed me to become more confident and self-sufficient. By the end of the internship, speaking about prison abolition, answering people’s questions, and doing interviews with people inside became extremely natural.

If you had to do it again, would you be a RRASC? In a second! This was a fantastic experience!

What are you bringing back to campus? I have learned so much about the prison industrial complex and prison abolition and hope to bring back to campus some awareness of the many forces of oppression which place people in prison and keep people in prison, the utter inhumanity of the prison system, and alternatives systems of accountability which should replace the prison system. I hope to become a trained doula in the fall and to eventually become a part of those new movements.

SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS

Your donation will help bring new activists and leaders into the movement for reproductive freedom and justice. Please use the enclosed envelope to send as generous a gift as you can, or visit our website at: http://clpp.hampshire.edu/ and click Donate.

THANK YOU!
I discovered such an amazing organization. I was totally blown away. I am really glad that I went to the CLPP conference and on getting one. After I applied and was accepted I went to the RRASC Site: Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide

Why did you apply? The RRASC program was an opportunity for me to be able to afford to work where I otherwise couldn’t by virtue of my life situation. CLPP and the RRASC program have opened so many doors for past RRASC interns, and certainly for me as well.

If you had to do it again, would you be a RRASC? I wish I could be a RRASC twice! I would love to experience working with the other organizations that were so interesting to me.

What did you do during your free time? I attended meetings and gatherings held by neighboring organizations such as SPARK Reproductive Justice Now – these were great opportunities for networking and building relationships. I went dancing a lot with my roommate who interned at SPARK. I tried new foods, got involved in community activities, explored Atlanta on foot, and read a ton.

What are you bringing back to campus? I have learned so much this summer through the youth I worked with, my supervisors and adult allies. One major skill I am taking back to campus is how to facilitate workshops more efficiently. Building dialogue is extremely important on and off campus and knowing how to build that dialogue is key. I also developed great outreach skills that I cannot wait to apply to my work at Hampshire College!

Monika Martinez
Hampshire College ’12
Major: Media Studies
Hometown: Maracas, Trinidad
RRASC Site: Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide

Emily Ryan
Hampshire College ’10
Major: Women’s Health & Anthropology
Hometown: Concord, New Hampshire
RRASC Site: MergerWatch

What was the best part of your internship? The best part about my internship was getting to work with teen mothers. I gave birth to my son when I was in high school and I think it was really powerful for them to see a woman coming from a similar place as them going to a great college and doing really well. I also really love math so tutoring in math was great. I loved when the students had breakthroughs both academically and also really appreciated the chances I had to have conversations about sexual health, self-worth, and reproductive justice.

What are you bringing back to campus? I plan to continue working with my students at the Care Center and bring them to Smith. I think it is strange that a super privileged school like Smith exists minutes away from Holyoke, an economically depressed city. I think it would be great to get Smith students working with issues in Holyoke.

Emily Ryan
Hampshire College ’10
Major: Women’s Health & Anthropology
Hometown: Concord, New Hampshire
RRASC Site: MergerWatch

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Emily Ryan
Hampshire College ’10
Major: Women’s Health & Anthropology
Hometown: Concord, New Hampshire
RRASC Site: MergerWatch

Did you like your internship placement? Yes! NAPW is an incredible organization that does legal advocacy and organizing on behalf of pregnant and parenting women. Throughout the whole summer I felt like I was a part of the team and NAPW has a lovely staff that was careful to give me every opportunity to learn from the work I was doing. As a NAPW intern my projects were interesting, engaging and included directly contributing to legal briefs, researching legal cases for a national report, planning events, and writing a research proposal.

What did you do during your free time? New York City is incredible. There is always something going on, and I probably learned as much from living in the city as I did from my amazing internship. I was a little overwhelmed in the beginning and on first glance the subway map looked more like a plate of spaghetti than public transportation, but I got used to it pretty quickly and took the subway all over the place. I went to lots of museums and parks, saw free concerts, plays, and outdoor movies, went dancing, did yoga, shopped at farmer’s markets, hung out with other friends in the city, went to Coney Island, Staten Island, and Governor’s Island, got a New York Public Library card and read non-school books, cooked a lot,
and did lots and lots of people watching and walking around. After work I liked to pick a random direction and see what I happened to come across, which never got old because there is so much to see.

What is your advice for future interns? Look carefully at the placement options before you pick your top choices, but be flexible and open to different options and organizations. Also, be sure to keep an open dialogue about your internship experience both with the staff at your host organization as well as with the RRASC staff.

Laura Turyatemba
Mt. Holyoke College ’11
Major: Economics & International Relations
Hometown: Kampala, Uganda
RRASC Site: Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS)

Why did you apply? For one, I needed a summer job. Second, three of my friends had been RRSCs and all had come back with quite the inspiring and rousing tales from their experiences. I knew there must be something to these stories, not least because three very different girls had been able to find amazing summer experiences in the same program. Third, I pored over CLPP’s website, specifically the internship descriptions that were available for this summer, and I attended info sessions with the passionate, driven Corinna Yazbek. Subsequently, my decision to apply was equal parts fate, positive peer pressure and the conviction that I would learn a lot about myself and how my goals and dreams fit into my world.

What was the best part of your internship? Being exposed to a different way of thinking, a new way of solving issues and crises – that seems to be the underlying theme to HIPS. It was educational, engaging, exciting, uncertain, wonderful, amazing and basically awesome to be surrounded by people who, sometimes unknowingly, were inspiring in the uncanny ease with which they thought outside EVERY box.

What did you do during your free time? With my HIPS family: conversations over ice cream, coffee, or lunch as well as sports, swimming and potlucks at work socials. With my host family that is also from Uganda: tennis, movies, concerts, parties, even roadtrips. I also made a lot of new friends, with whom I did everything from book hunting to wine tasting.

What is your advice for future interns? Don’t waste a single day of your internship in timidity or fear. Like Mary Lyon said, “Jump in, you may ride very fast!” The days will fly by, and you’ll be sorry you didn’t emerge from your cocoon sooner! Don’t miss a thing, be a sponge, remain optimistic and allow yourself to learn, learn, learn!

What are you bringing back to campus? For one thing, I am not going to allow the new flexibility of my mind and thought processes to atrophy! I intend to use much of the knowledge I gleaned from the work we did on HIV/AIDS and other STDs in my role as chair for Youth Action International, and in a group I am intimately involved in: the Global AIDS Awareness Campaign. I will be incorporating the research we used and did on public policy in my class on the same that I will be taking in the International Relations department next semester.

Lucy Zhou
Amherst ‘10
Major: Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought
Hometown: Guilford, CT
RRASC Site: National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum

Why did you apply? I was really impressed with the overall organization of the RRASC program, and in particular how it defined reproductive justice to encompass other social justice issues that are not typically associated with it. The list of participating organizations was incredible, and I was pleasantly surprised to see an organization dedicated to the issues of Asian and Pacific Islander women. I was fortunate enough to end up interning for NAPAWF.

What was the best part of your internship? It’s impossible to identify one thing. I loved the people I was working with: from the very beginning, they treated me as an equal, taking the time to get to know me, and asking for my opinion even when I felt sorely unqualified to offer one. I had a great balance of independence and supervision: I had several projects to myself through which I was able to make my own decisions and even use some creativity, but I also had weekly check-ins with my supervisor where I could discuss my thoughts and ask any questions. My work week was never boring: I attended so many amazing events, from intern brown bags to congressional briefings to national conferences. Being in DC had its advantages, as I had the opportunity to see former President Bill Clinton, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Representative Mike Honda, among others—I even got to shake President Obama’s hand at a town hall meeting on health care.

Did you like the location of your internship? I really fell in love with DC. Timing, location, everything fell into place. This past summer was a critical time for both health care and immigration, so I had the opportunity to attend events with key political figures in the same room. DC gets flooded with interns during the summer, so there were also events specifically for interns every week, where I was able to network with other young activists and even made some good friends along the way. With the monuments, museums, and free events, there was always something to do.

What is your advice for future interns? Get to know your supervisor and/or co-workers outside of a work setting! Since I was able to hang out with my co-workers outside of the office, we got to know each other much better and attain a level of comfort and trust that we probably could not have otherwise. I truly consider everyone at NAPAWF a friend, and because we had that relationship, I wasn’t as afraid to ask questions and offer my opinion. And of course, it also makes going to work that much more fun.

To read more about the 2009 RRASCs’ summers, please visit our website:
http://clpp.hampshire.edu/projects/internship
By Chelsea Kline, RRASC '06

My introduction to modern reproductive rights issues came in 1996, when I became pregnant. I was 18, newly out of high school, and had no clue what to do with my life let alone how to raise a child. Many of my liberal friends assumed I would get an abortion and that would be it. When I floated the idea of continuing my pregnancy, I was met with intense opposition from a few friends who argued that I was too young, too unmarried, too directionless, too broke. They were right, but I can’t help but feel some irony because for countless other women in this country, their friends and families quickly assume abortion is not an option because of their religious or personal beliefs.

It seems that no matter what a woman wants to do with her body, everyone else has an opinion. The strongest lesson I have gleaned as an activist is that reproductive justice means different things for each individual. The question of choice goes both ways, and in my case, I chose to become a mother.

Let me be clear: having the option of a safe and legal abortion, and financial resources and parental support for my decision, are precisely the reasons I was able to be a mother. If I had had no choice, if motherhood was something I was accidentally thrown into, I can only imagine how frightened, resentful and trapped I would have felt. But I was fully in control of my body and, in turn, my child and my future. My daughter was born in March 1997, and she forced me to get my act together. Once I discovered how having a baby changes everything — my body, my relationships with everyone I knew and would meet, my time, energy, money, goals, and dreams — I realized how essential it is that every woman truly have the choice whether or not to become a mother.

My journey into motherhood opened me up to a greater sense of empathy, and to becoming a reproductive rights activist. I worked multiple low-wage jobs, raised my child and started to take community college courses. I had been a miserable student, but now that my focus as a mother and an activist became clearer, I had a much easier time hitting my academic stride. I started to volunteer assembling clean needle kits at a health center and as a mentor to pregnant teens. The more I became involved in projects I felt passionately about, the hungrier I became for an education. I took classes at night and online, and little by little started to feel confident in an academic setting.

In 2001, I moved to western Massachusetts and worked in retail until someone told me about the Ada Comstock program for non-traditional age students at Smith College. I went to the open house and was inspired to work my hardest to get accepted. My first spring in the area, I also happened to stumble on the CLPP conference. It was such a magical experience, and I accidentally discovered the women I had been looking for — the peers and mentors I had always dreamed of. Even now, every year at the opening plenary I get teary from the intense upwelling of hope and connectedness that I feel with all the powerful and amazing activists gathered together in one room.

Inspired by what I had learned, I began to take classes with the idea of becoming an abortion provider. But soon after I was accepted at Smith, in 2004, I realized I was more drawn to studying people’s beliefs around the beginning of life, abortion, women’s bodies and rights.

The CLPP Conference remained a mainstay for me every spring, as a volunteer and participant. In 2006, I received a RRASC grant to work at the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF), and traveled to Oregon for their annual conference. One of the keynote speakers was Dr. George Tiller.

Dr. Tiller gave a talk about his evolution as a doctor, his beliefs about reproductive freedom, how he ran his clinic, the struggles he faced every day, the constant presence of protesters who had set up a permanent camp across from his clinic, the attacks he had endured and the bullets he had taken, all because he honored and respected the physical and emotional wellbeing of women. I remember watching that room full of women — activists, advocates, providers and patients — react to his lecture. I remember people crying, nodding, laughing and cheering as he shared his stories and extended his kind and generous appreciation of all the hard work so many activists do on a daily basis in the name of helping women.

I thought of a friend who had been trying to get pregnant for over a year, who was overjoyed when she finally conceived. More than halfway through her pregnancy, she discovered that the child had a rare genetic condition and would die soon after birth. My friend was devastated. After much painful introspection, she decided she wanted to decrease her child’s suffering as much as possible. She also knew she could not carry the pregnancy and go through with labor and childbirth. Her doctor referred her to one of the only doctors that performed late-term abortions, in Kansas. My friend flew out immediately with her husband, and Dr. Tiller greeted them at his clinic with his signature, gentle style and eased her through the difficult procedure.

My friend told me that the most painful and upsetting part was having to face the protesters outside the clinic. She was already so overcome with grief over the loss of a baby she had wanted so badly that to endure a wall of angry strangers who didn’t have the slightest idea about her situation was agonizing. She said she felt belittled; that they seemed to assume they knew better about her body and her life than she did.

—continued on the next page
At NNAF, Dr. Tiller invited me to sit and talk with him after learning that I was a student. We talked about medicine, religion, children, careers, and the sacrifices that parents have to make to care for their families. He was genuinely interested in talking about my non-traditional path, and where I was headed next. As we talked, women stopped every few moments to shake Dr. Tiller’s hand, pose for a picture, or share a quick hug or words of thanks. Even in that small arena, he had touched so many lives in a positive way.

I have learned that mentors can come to you from a variety of places—something you’ve read, school, attending conferences, joining local volunteer groups, or sitting in a hotel lobby for an hour. Everyone around us has something to offer, teach or share. After meeting Dr. Tiller, I decided to write my honors thesis on modern reproductive technology and Jewish Law, exploring the intersections of religion and women’s health. I am now at Harvard Divinity School, earning a master’s in theological studies with a focus on women, religion, gender and sexuality.

My time working on the CLPP Conference, in RRASC, and meeting Dr. Tiller taught me so much that I carry with me everyday. From every dedicated and passionate individual who I have met through CLPP and RRASC, I have learned how broad the movement is. There is so much work to be done that whatever your talents are, there is a need for you. I have come to think of the reproductive justice movement as a kind of global family, where each member has their own special interests and talents. This movement is a family that has a place for you at the table and will welcome you with open arms.

CLPP WELCOMES TINA BARSBY!

Tina Barsby is excited to join CLPP and to return to Hampshire College. Tina is the Development Officer at CLPP, where she oversees grant writing and administration, CLPP’s Endowment Initiative, and stewardship and reporting of grants. Before joining CLPP, Tina was Director of Development and Alumni Relations for the University of Cape Town Fund, a U.S. organization supporting the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Previously she was Program Coordinator for the Five College African Scholars Program, and an Associate Director of Admissions for Hampshire College. Tina has varied experience in higher education and non-profit administration, including program planning, international education and communications, both in the U.S. and in South Africa. Tina has a master’s degree in English from the University of Cape Town. She can be reached at 413.559.6692 or tbarsby@hampshire.edu.
From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

24TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR STUDENT AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS
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SAVE THE DATE!
APRIL 9-11, 2010

CLPP’s annual conference connects young people to reproductive rights organizations and campaigns locally, nationally, and internationally, and provides them with information, analysis, and “how-to” organizing to bring back to their own campuses and communities. The conference presents a broad view of the issues, linking reproductive justice to civil liberties, LGBT rights, environmental justice, peace and security, youth liberation, disability rights, access to health care and child care, and freedom from violence and abuse.