1. **Describe the projects and tasks you worked on and the results that were achieved.**

Through the RRASC Program I received an internship with the LUZ Reproductive Justice Think Tank in Denver, CO. During my ten week stay in Denver, I was assigned to work on a website, and also to create a documentary about the Think Tank’s structure and method of organization.

Prior to my arrival at the COLOR (Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights), which was the organization that housed me, I worked and finished the website while I was still vacationing in New York. On June 13th, when I arrived in Denver, my co-workers told me that the final product greatly exceeded their expectations. The website had many features that they did not expect to see. It had a clear and very easy to follow structure, a fresh layout, and a logo. And it also included a page with the biographies and photos of all the members of the Think Tank.

Looking back at the work I did this summer, I know that my decision to work on the website before my arrival was not only beneficial in that it allowed me to focus wholly on the film, but it was also crucial to my ensuing success. Working on the website before my internship started, gave me the opportunity to really get the most out of working on the film. The website took me a week and a half to finish, while on the movie I could have easily spent more than ten weeks of work.

The film required a lot more coordination on my part, because unlike the website which only depended on my contribution, the film depended on the participation of other members. I was given no previous footage of the members doing work, and although I received some photos, I basically had to start from zero. And because it was summer, and because I was in Denver (where everyone is always active and engaged), I had to invest a large portion of my time simply waiting for folks to get back to me. So it took me about six weeks to finish interviewing nine members of the Think Tank, to finish collecting photos and stills for use as B-roll, and to organize a monthly meeting so as to get more footage of the members in action. Now that I’m past that period, I can easily say that without patience, persistence and determination, those six weeks could have proven to be a lot more challenging than they were. But with the support of my co-workers, my hosts and family- I was really able to push through the hardest part of my work. And finally, in my last month, when I started to edit the film and my work became less dependent on other people’s involvement, I was finally able to enjoy everything much more. In those last four weeks it became very easy for me to monitor the evolution of my work and my ensuing happiness, because finally I had full control over the project. Although both
the website and the film had continuous support, and a committed effort from the members guiding me with suggestions and help, I can say with ease that it was during those self-sufficient moments when I really felt most accomplished.

2. **What were the skills you used most often in your internship?**

   During my internship at LUZ, the skills that I used most often were the skills I learned throughout my six years working with a Media Justice organization in New York City. I made efficient use of the technical knowledge I acquired, using HTML and other web-developing language to build the website, as well as using my knowledge on how to shoot, use light and sound, and edit the film using the newest version of Final Cut Pro. I also made professional use of the knowledge I acquired as an activist and organizer from my previous community organizing work. With that knowledge I was able to schedule interviews and meetings, organize screenings, follow-through with members of the Think Tank, respond positively to criticism, and develop in areas where growth was needed.

3. **What difficulties did you have and how did you address or overcome these difficulties?**

   As I mentioned earlier, I experienced a lot of difficulties and frustration whenever my work depended wholly on other people’s participation and schedules. Since I wasn’t a typical intern, as a filmmaker I had to fight very hard to acquire work for myself. And oftentimes that meant becoming more aggressive in my tactics, which meant sending more emails, calling periodically, and in general making my work more personal.

   At times I was afraid I wouldn’t even have enough time to finish the movie. And in the end, it really helped me when I realized that I shouldn’t take the lack of participation from some members personally. So I continued to work and try to prove myself harder, but once I started to edit the film and became immersed in the images I had collected- it became impossible to allow the difficulties in the past cloud my newfound delight and thrill at having this ability to transfer people’s passions and wishes for the Reproductive Justice Movement onto film.

4. **What do you view as the highlight(s) of your internship experience?**

   The best part of my internship experience was during the process of interviewing the members of the Think Tank. During the interviewing process, as a filmmaker I had special access into these leaders’ lives and work experience. And it was very exciting to experience how through my talent and skill I could get even closer to many of these Reproductive Justice advocates and fighters.
5. **What do you think are the most important skills/abilities/characteristics that you have developed as a result of your internship?**

As a result of my internship at LUZ, I think that I greatly developed my filmmaking skills. Because the project I was assigned to work on was not only challenging, but also the first of its kind that I’ve gotten, it was particularly unsettling for me to take on. I was worried that I couldn’t finish it in time, that it wouldn’t be as powerful or thought provoking as some of the previous media I had produced. But fortunately for everyone, the film I produced came out to be something I’m quite proud of.

The internship also made me realize how much I still have to learn if I want to continue this type of work. I always thought that I would major in History, or Sociology or Critical Social Thought, and then continue to make film on the side. But after this summer, I realized that I had to make room to learn filmmaking at a more professional level. In that sense, the internship focused my studies and now I feel more confident about what path I wish to take.

6. **What would you have done differently to make the internship experience even more meaningful?**

If I could change anything, I would probably change my state of mind at the beginning of this summer. I really feel like I entered this internship with this awkward sense of entitlement. But the raw truth was that I was simply an outsider, an intern who like any intern had to prove themselves in this new space. I know if I’d come in a bit more modest, I wouldn’t have taken everything so personally.

7. **How did your academic studies help to prepare you for this internship?**

I don’t think my academic studies had anything to do with the responsibilities I had this summer. As I mentioned earlier, I’ve always been involved in community work, whether it was through media justice, community organizing or activism. My strong range of experience helped me get this internship, and helped me keep it. However, at LUZ I definitely worked harder than I ever did, and I know I couldn’t have done half of that work without the experience I was blessed to acquire in my previous years of community involvement.

8. **How did your internship contribute to your career goals or life path?**

Working with LUZ this summer, reminded me again how important it is to have a good command over all kinds of media tools. It is imperative for community organizations to advertise themselves through websites, films, and literature - for the benefit of those who are often left into the hands of
biased media, and government control. It is important for our movement to be advertised because misinformation is our greatest enemy, and we can only destroy it with our own benevolence and concern.

There were a lot of things I didn’t expect to happen as a result of the RRASC internship, but one important thing that did occur to my surprise was my realization that all of a sudden my academic and work interests became more focused. Besides reminding me how important media can be to community work, the internship increased my understanding of what I want to do next. I definitely feel more secure and more ready to take on another year at school.

9. How beneficial or relevant does your internship seem to you now as compared to your initial expectations?

At first I wasn’t exactly sure how the internship could benefit me. It seemed to ask more from me, more than it could actually offer. But in asking me to do so much, I learned so much more. (Excuse the repetitiveness) Truthfully speaking though, LUZ and COLOR have given me so much more than I could ever explain in words. And it’s truly a beautiful surprise to look back and see how much I was touched by my experiences there. I feel like I learned skills that I wouldn’t have learned anywhere else.

And generally speaking, besides organizational impact, I think I also experienced an impact from the local community. Denver was really such a beautiful city to live in. I come from New York and I never thought there would be a city out there more suited to my needs, but I think Denver fulfilled those needs one by one in a very humble way. Denver is modest, a big city with a town-like feel, family-oriented, but simultaneously ready for party and celebration of the kind you’ve never seen before. It’s a city of contradictions and complexities, a city that I’ve learned to love. Of course it had its minuses, but I learned to live with them because my positive experiences always outweighed the negative ones.

10. What did you think of your internship and the organization?

Working in the COLOR office (Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights) was such an appropriate experience for this summer. Although I was working on the film whenever I could, I tried never to miss the staff meetings on Wednesdays. Because being able to attend the staff meetings provided me with a sense of normalcy, in that during a few hours of my week I was able to hear, comment and deal with a more public policy and community organizing agenda. And although I wasn’t officially part of COLOR (since I was working for LUZ), the fact that they took me in as a member of their staff greatly increased my respect for them.

Throughout this summer, I was happy to experience the more atypical internship experience, but on occasions I felt a deep yearning to be a part of
something more typical. And fortunately for me, COLOR was there to act as the association to a more standard experience whenever I needed it.

11. **Did you learn more about the intersections of reproductive rights and social justice issues?**

   Since my work involved working on a film and making a website about a particular organization working for particular things, it’s hard for me to say that I gained a considerable amount of knowledge about the intersections of reproductive rights and social justice. However, what I can say is that being part of a think tank as rich as LUZ, allowed me to explore how these intersections eventually bring people together to fight in a movement. All the members of LUZ are leaders in many different fields, but what they have in common is a desire to fight for their similarities. They are transgender women of color and their allies who come together because reproductive rights are a social justice issue.

12. **Do you have any suggestions for potential future interns?**

   I would suggest anyone to come into a space with as little preconceived notions of what they think the work will be like, because from my experience and the experiences I’ve heard of - it really allows you to focus on learning more, as opposed to unlearning. I think that’s the best advice I would have wanted to hear, and the best advice I can give out.