As a media and communications intern, I discovered a passion I never knew I had. I also redefined the way I think of myself as an activist.

My RRASC internship with Women With A Vision has been beyond rewarding. It was the best experience I’ve had thus far in my young life. I began my internship with sadness and uncertainty, but ended it understanding the importance of social justice and reproductive justice in our society.

Women With A Vision’s mission is to improve the lives of marginalized women, their families and communities by addressing the social conditions that hinder their health and well-being. I spent my time creating the blog “WWAV After the Fire,” writing posts, creating videos, and helping to update WWAV’s other social media platforms. As a media and communications intern, I discovered a passion I never knew I had. I also redefined the way I think of myself as an activist.

WWAV was founded in 1991 by a grassroots collective of African American women seeking to respond to the spread of HIV/AIDS in communities of color. Since then, they have advocated relentlessly for HIV/AIDS prevention and testing, substance abuse resources, and education on a range of women’s health needs.

But on May 25, while I was still at home in New York, I received a phone call from my sister asking if I had heard the devastating news that WWAV’s offices had been destroyed by an arson fire. Fear and sadness filled my body, as I worried about the organization and its clients (and my summer internship).

On my first day, WWAV’s executive director, Deon Haywood, and her staff greeted me and jokingly commented on my choice to bike while wearing a sweater under Louisiana’s hot sun. I looked into the room that had been burned the worst; all that remained were black ashes. Cleaning supplies and bottles of water were placed on the main table, and we quickly got to work. An immense amount of tears were shed for the office building, but not for the end of the organization. No one in the office that day doubted that WWAV would continue its work to serve the community that desperately needed it.

I chose to intern at WWAV because I thought it was a passionate grassroots organization that worked with and lived for its community, and after my first day at the cleanup I knew I was right. By the end of the work day,
Civil Liberties and Public Policy is a national reproductive rights and justice organization dedicated to educating, mentoring, and inspiring new generations of advocates, leaders, and supporters. Combining activism, organizing, leadership training, and movement building, CLPP promotes an inclusive agenda that advances reproductive rights and health, and social and economic justice.

Projects

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 next year, April 12-14, 2013!

Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps (RRASC)
RRASC is a national program that supports the leadership development of local students interested in connecting their academic studies to reproductive rights and social justice activism through paid summer internships.

New Leadership Networking Initiative (NLNI)
NLNI is a training and leadership-building network for new and emerging activists. 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.

CLPP Student Activist Group
The CLPP student group consists of activists from the Five Colleges and broader community who want to develop their skills to organize for reproductive and social justice. The group runs “Activist 101” trainings and is the driving force behind CLPP’s annual conference.

Classes and Community Engaged Learning
CLPP faculty and staff teach courses at Hampshire College that introduce students to a broad range of reproductive rights issues and the history of activism surrounding them. Local students can fulfill high school, college, and graduate-level community service and community engagement requirements through involvement with CLPP.

CLPP is supported by Hampshire College, individual donors, and the following foundations:

- 30th Anniversary Fund
- Anderson-Rogers Foundation
- Anonymous
- The Educational Foundation of America
- The Ford Foundation
- Gallagher Family Fund
- The General Service Foundation
- The George Gund Foundation
- The Moriah Fund
- Ms. Foundation for Women
- The Overbrook Foundation
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The Prentice Foundation
- The Mary Wohlford Foundation
- The Prentice Foundation
- The Mary Wohlford Foundation

RRASC interns with CLPP staff and staff of Hampshire’s Population and Development Program at CLPP’s intern training in April 2012.
my dapper outfit was dirty, but I never felt more like an activist involved in a cause.

After the cleanup, Deon and her staff dove into crisis management mode. My first project, which later led to the launch of WWAV’s media and communications department, was creating the blog “WWAV After the Fire.” I had never created a blog before, but I put my best foot forward and learned a new skill, while finding a love for connecting social media to social justice. The blog allowed the public to stay updated on WWAV’s progress, and also created a platform for the many voices of WWAV to be represented. I was surprised when even I, the new intern, was asked to contribute a piece on my experience after the fire. Since then, the blog has become a key aspect of how WWAV reaches out to the public as well as a stepping stone to creating a new media and communications department.

Before all the RRASC interns ventured off to our respective internships this summer, CLPP’s senior programs manager, Corinna Yazbek, left us with a few words of wisdom: “Working in a non-profit entails many different jobs, and all are very important.” Though I did not have frequent interactions with WWAV clients due to lack of space in our temporary offices, I still felt very involved. Through blogging, creating videos, and posting to social media, I was able to alert the public on our progress and share important information. I learned that activism can be done in many ways.

The biggest highlight of this summer was having the opportunity to attend AIDS 2012, the international AIDS conference in Washington, D.C. Updating the public on the conference was both rewarding and tiring. Attending an event with tens of thousands of people representing hundreds of countries and organizations coming together to address the same challenge, I began to realize that HIV/AIDS is a global issue.

The most inspiring event at the conference for me was participating alongside others in the March to End AIDS. Millions of people have died from HIV/AIDS, millions have been infected, and millions are at risk—for those millions we marched.

Another amazing moment on that trip was when Deon told me she saw an activist in me. As we were sitting and conversing at the Positive Women’s Network event, she said, “Sean, right now you’re an infant in the activist world, but I can’t wait until we have these same conversations ten years from now and see how your mind has changed.”

As an African American Studies major at Mount Holyoke College with a concentration in African American women, I aim to understand the history, role, and perceptions of black women in America. Last semester I took a course about black female grassroots organizers during the early and mid 1900’s, including Fannie Lou Hammer, Julia Cooper, and Ella Baker. Having studied about these amazing activists, it was surreal to find myself a few months later working for Deon Haywood, whom I believe is a heroine for New Orleans and black women in the South. At college, I wrote a paper on how HIV/AIDS is a disease of social stigma that has greatly impacted black women because of the image of sexual deviancy that has been associated with their identity since slavery—and then at my internship, I saw firsthand how intertwined poverty, gender, and HIV/AIDS are.

Though my summer internship is over, I am excited to continue my RRASC internship with WWAV this fall! I will be making more videos, blogging, and creating a media and communications manual for the interns and staff that will continue the department after me. This has truly been a life-changing experience. I am not only an intern at WWAV, but I have become a part of the family. When I leave WWAV I can do so with the joy of knowing I helped create something that wasn’t there before and that will greatly help the organization.

During my time at WWAV, I have discovered myself. I have been exposed to new skills and passions, and have become convinced that I, along with countless others, need to join and continue the fight for social and reproductive justice. I look forward to returning to the Valley for my senior year and sharing all the knowledge that I have had the privilege of receiving.
This summer, CLPP sent 22 students from six western Massachusetts schools to internships across the country. By partnering with organizations that range from community-based, grassroots groups to international policy advocacy institutions, the RRASC program provides students with invaluable, hands-on learning experiences. In September, interns presented on their experiences during a symposium at Hampshire College.

Anna Shaddae Rodriguez  
Class Action, Boston, MA  
School: Hampshire College  
Major: Legal Theory and Ethnography  
Hometown: Boston, MA  

Why did you apply to RRASC? As a young person of color I’ve often been on the receiving end of non-profit organizations, which caused me to be very jaded about the functions of many non-profits. I felt that the RRASC program would give me a means to explore spaces that made me uncomfortable in the past.

What was the best part of your internship? The literature that I was exposed to. I found quite a few books written by people affiliated with Class Action, which really helped me understand their thought processes.

What did you do in your “free” time? Being an intern by day and a dishwasher by night ended up really informing the way that I looked at my own class. Prior to that experience I took my upwardly mobile trajectory very lightly, but having a position that encouraged me to use my mind, and then having one that only required physical labor, forced me to recognize the differences between the two worlds I am a part of.

Carly Estrela  
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR), Denver, CO  
School: Westfield State University  
Major: Ethnic and Gender Studies  
Hometown: Grafton, MA  

What was the best part of your internship? Attending policy meetings, workshops, and rallies with my coworkers. I loved representing our organization and our community during rallies like “No Papers, No Fear” and “Let My People Vote.” I felt like I was becoming a bridge in the gap between these shared efforts by our people all over the country, and by having this experience I can always carry that sense of solidarity with me wherever I go.

What did you like about the location of your internship? Denver was an amazing city to live in! There were a lot of inexpensive things to do, like meditation in the park and free aura healings right down the block from my house! The city is rich with many cultures, and I tried new foods for the first time and saw a lot of good music.

Kate Castle  
Provide (formerly Abortion Access Project), Washington, D.C.  
School: Mount Holyoke College  
Major: Politics and Gender Studies  
Hometown: Plymouth, MI  

Why did you apply to RRASC? I have always been drawn to feminist and class politics, but never realized how intimately intertwined they are. In the past few years, as abortion has become less accessible, I have become a strong advocate of reproductive justice. This is because I believe that denying women access to abortion is really about denying women agency over their bodies and life decisions. I applied to RRASC because I wanted to join the struggle toward increasing women’s access to health care and other resources and see if working for reproductive justice was something I’d like to do after I graduate in the spring.

What did you do in your “free” time? I visited all of the national monuments and went to a lot of the museums with my roommates. I went to a couple of talks at the Center for American Progress and participated in a session of an intern summer series called “Sex in the Capital City.” I also went to a briefing on a telecommunications bill, a Choice USA Reproductive Rights 101 workshop, and other interesting talks that I heard about.

If you had it to do again, would you be a RRASC? Absolutely! I would recommend this program to any student that is passionate about reproductive justice and is willing to work hard and, in the process, see that it is possible to put ideals into existence through activism.

Morgan Drewniany  
Tewa Women United, Española, NM  
School: Hampshire College  
Major: Environmental Chemistry  
Hometown: Westfield, MA  

Why did you apply to RRASC? I wanted hands-on experience in the world of environmental justice. In my academic career in chemistry, I have made it a priority to consider this. Most internships open to science students completely neglect this important field.

What is your advice for future interns? Don’t be afraid to go to an internship away from one of the big cities! I know a lot of people want to go to New York, but northern New Mexico was perfect for me. I had a part time job working at Starbucks on nights and weekends, which allowed me to meet young people in town and I
Wilberthe Pilate
Safe Passage, Northampton, MA
School: University of Massachusetts Amherst
Major: Nursing
Hometown: Brockton, MA

Why did you apply to RRASC? I had been involved in some organizing around sexual violence the previous year, and I became interested in doing more direct service work. And I wanted to be able to apply my understanding of the reproductive justice framework in a new setting and in more challenging ways.

What was the best part of your internship? Most of my internship was based in the office doing research, but there was one week when I was recruited to make some great friends! After work we would go to community concerts, to wine tastings or to roller derby. It ended up being slightly hectic but I found time for both myself and my friends.

How do you plan to bring what you learned this summer back to campus? I collected about 80 soil samples [from the community garden] and will be analyzing them for a number of contaminants. The garden is in a unique location, downwind from Los Alamos National Labs, and I will look at how the surroundings are affecting community health through local foods.

I have made an agreement with Tewa Women United for guidance throughout my Division III (senior project). I will be in contact with my supervisor at TWU at least twice a month with my findings and the implications of those results. She will have the space to comment on my work and edit it, especially the anthropological pieces, to make sure it is a fair and accurate representation of the community and culture.

Sarah Iverson
First Nations Two Spirit Collective and PFund Foundation, Minneapolis, MN
School: Smith College
Major: Sociology
Hometown: Cerritos, CA

What was the best part of your internship? Getting to compare my experiences at two very differently situated organizations that are both working toward social justice. My work with the First Nations Two Spirit Collective dealt a lot with capacity building and stimulating future growth, as well as learning how to connect to other Indigenous folks. At PFund, I got to work more on existing projects and see how a 25-year-old non-profit operates. There were things I appreciated about both sides of the partnership, but above all, seeing how differently things worked at both places offered a unique experience that allowed me to test myself and figure out where I fit in.

Why did you apply to RRASC? During the school year I found myself approaching my studies as more of an academic than an activist, and I wanted to learn how to bridge that divide.

What is your advice for future interns? My advice is to take advantage of every opportunity you get. Go to every event your co-workers invite you to, find things to do and people to meet wherever you are, and never stay in if you can help it.

Help us continue to provide life-changing experiences to undergraduate students through our paid summer internships.

Your donations ensure that RRASC internships are accessible to all students, especially to those who could not participate without financial support.

Please use the enclosed envelope or go online and give as generously as you can.

THANK YOU!
to help out at the shelter, which was awesome! I had some client interaction through working the front desk and hotline at the office, but getting to meet the shelter residents face-to-face, chat with them, and even do some childcare was really great.

How do you plan to bring what you learned this summer back to campus? Ever since starting nursing school I’ve believed that healthcare providers should be knowledgeable about sexual and domestic violence, and the effects of trauma on survivors. I feel like interning at Safe Passage has deepened my knowledge and perspective, and I’ll be able to take that perspective with me when I start my clinical rotations this semester.

CLPP Welcomes Lucy Trainor

Lucy is CLPP’s new Assistant Director for campus programs. In this role, she manages the annual conference and student programming. She previously was program manager at the Barnard Center for Research on Women, where she organized programs bringing together feminist scholars and activists and worked with many of CLPP’s partners and allies. Lucy attended Barnard College and received a BA in Women’s and Gender Studies. She is a birth doula and is a volunteer with the Prison Birth Project, as a member of their fundraising events committee.
Cara Page (Hampshire Alum 88F, Conference Coordinator and Speaker, NLNI) is the new executive director of the Audre Lorde Project (ALP), a center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit, trans and gender non-conforming people of color in New York City. Previously, Cara founded and was a member of the Kindred Collective (a network of Southern grassroots healers and health practitioners working to transform generational trauma and violence in the South), and an active participant in Southerners on New Ground, Project South, and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. She now turns her wisdom, passion and experience to deepening, sustaining and expanding ALP’s community organizing.

Emily Ryan (Hampshire Alum 06F, Conference Coordinator, RRASC) is currently completing the post-baccalaureate premedical program at the University of Vermont. She is on the board of Vermont Access to Reproductive Freedom and volunteers at RU12?, an LGBTQ community center that is also a RRASC host site. Emily also continues to work with CLPP alum Katie Coupe and Hampshire professor Elizabeth Conlisk on a project that began as her Hampshire Division III (senior project), a portable gynecological exam table designed for use in low-resource communities. Emily says than anyone interested in the post-bac pre-med program at UVM is welcome to get in touch with her! (Contact the CLPP office for more info.)

Jessica Kincman (RRASC, Student Group): After graduating from UMass Amherst in 2009, Jessica worked in the acute treatment unit of a residential treatment facility, where she worked with females ages 12-18 who were diagnosed with a variety of mood disorders. This sparked a further interest in clinical services and access within the United States. She moved to New Orleans and is enrolled at Tulane University School of Social Work with a concentration in Disaster Mental Health. Inspired by her 2008 RRASC internship at the National Network of Abortion Funds, she recently joined with a few other women to start the New Orleans Abortion Fund. (Previously there was no fund in Louisiana or neighboring states). Follow @nolaabortionFND on Twitter or find them online at www.facebook.com/neworleansabortionfund.

Meredith Crafton (Hampshire Alum 00F, Conference Coordinator, PopDev, RRASC) recently graduated from Vermont Law School with a JD and a master’s in Environmental Law and Policy. She landed a job in Seattle as a legal intern—soon to be a staff attorney—at Hanford Challenge, a small nonprofit working to further the safe and effective cleanup of the Hanford Nuclear Site (one of the world’s largest environmental remediation projects). Along the Columbia River in eastern Washington, Hanford is contaminated with billions of gallons of radioactive waste from years of plutonium production for the U.S.’s nuclear weapons arsenal. Meredith works to ensure compliance with environmental regulations as well as to support whistle-blowers in furthering accountability and safety at the site. She also helps sick workers and community members get the compensation they deserve and to increase public awareness of the toxic legacy of nuclear waste.

Sabrina Andrus (Conference Speaker, NLNI) was recently appointed Executive Director of Law Students for Reproductive Justice after a nationwide search. Having worked at LSRJ previously as interim Executive Director, Director of Campus and Community Programs, and Board member, Sabrina brings a strong commitment to reproductive justice. “I am tremendously honored and excited to lead this organization that I love so much and to stand with the women and men who work every day to ensure that all people are able to decide when, whether, and how to have and parent children,” she says.

Yana Tallon-Hicks (Hampshire Alum 04F, RRASC): Yana’s RRASC internship at the Center for Sex and Culture in San Francisco introduced her to the world of sex-positive education. After her internship, she stayed in the city to research her Division III and work at legendary female-positive sex toy store Good Vibrations. Currently, she lives in Northampton, MA, where she teaches sex toy workshops (including one for the 2011 CLPP conference) and writes about sex and sexuality for national magazines and local newspapers. Read the Valley Advocate for her weekly sex advice column, “The V-Spot.”

Tell Us Your News
Have you participated in a CLPP program—taken a class, attended NLNI or the conference, or done a RRASC internship? We want to hear about your work, creations, or achievements. Send your news to kgood-schiff@hampshire.edu and we’ll help you spread the word via this newsletter and/or our blog!
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