This summer has been so hectic and busy in the best possible way. When I found out that I had gotten a RRASC internship, I was elated and ready to start working right away. I had never had an internship before and had mainly done customer service jobs, so working in an office setting was exciting. Originally I was supposed to work with MotherWoman in Hadley, Massachusetts. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, they ended up not needing/being able to have an intern for the summer. After a few days of panicking and wondering what was going to happen, I was then placed by CLPP at The Prison Birth Project (PBP) in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Though the beginning was chaotic, this was ultimately the best possible outcome for an internship for me. Everyone was so kind and welcoming, which made the last minute transition much easier. The relaxed environment and kind people made working on such important and emotionally difficult topics less difficult than it could have been.

I was lucky enough this summer to have been working with five other interns, which was amazing for so many reasons. I was able to chat and learn from them along with from my supervisors, which greatly enhanced my experience at PBP. Not all of them were RRASC interns, which gave me even more perspectives and things to think about. However, the interns who were not RRASCs were all from Hampshire College as well, so just based on that fact I immediately felt comfortable.

In the beginning of my internship I worked mostly on a campaign to raise money for the Prison Birth Project. This involved doing a lot of social media work, which I found to be incredibly annoying by the end of the summer. Working with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
turned out to be tedious and time consuming, even though it seems so simple and easy while writing this. After the call-a-thon and campaign ended, I began working on some more long-term projects. Because of my experience with putting together and running the CLPP childcare program, I put together a childcare program for the organization to use each year for their yearly Solidarity Supper. Childcare is one of the most important aspects of putting together conferences and meetings in the reproductive justice field. There are so many cases where there is not adequate childcare available at reproductive justice conferences, which is why I was so honored to be the one putting together The Prison Birth Project’s childcare program. While I was working on the childcare program, I was also putting together an RJ (Reproductive Justice) 101 workshop that could be used possibly as a training workshop or be put together as a packet for people working with and for The Prison Birth Project. We were originally going to present what we worked on to the rest of the group, though sadly this never panned out—but hopefully they will be able to use it for future interns and volunteers. Another long-term project that I worked on with one of the other interns was looking into laws that involve the termination of parental rights. Many of these laws are incredibly obscure, meaning that countless people do not know about them. I learned so much from this project, and I’m hoping that all of this research will eventually be used for other people’s learning, whether it is eventually put into a pamphlet/packet or even just made accessible for others’ use.

While I was working on all of these long-term projects I was constantly working on other small things. We ended up going to the Springfield Library a couple of times to do research on which grants we should apply for, which was tedious. There were so many grants to search through, and the drive to Springfield was obviously longer than the one to Holyoke, but having someone to do all of that with was great. It was confusing at times, and the process of finding
grants was not easy for me to do, but I’m glad that I was able to get that experience. We also worked on cleaning up the space every few days, and organizing some of the file cabinets.

Though it may seem trivial, having the opportunity to step away from the computer, decompress and have a chance to just think was great and definitely needed. Working so much on a computer and not really getting a chance to look up can take a toll on someone, so having the opportunity to step away and take a breath was needed and appreciated. It also made the internship into more of a community, because we all cleaned, washed dishes and organized. Though there were people who were obviously the supervisors and we were obviously interns, they were sure to have us be in an environment that was open, as safe as possible and gave us community.

The last project that I worked on I will hopefully be able to continue working on this school year. I started it with the other RRASC intern, Jasmine, and it was a gigantic research project. It included queering birth and the birthing sphere, the RJ 101 workshop that I was working on, the history of the prison system, self care practices, and so much more. The project was so massive that we obviously were not able to finish it, but starting this project jumpstarted my thinking about my Division III (thesis) at Hampshire College.

Though I knew that I wanted to do something surrounding the birthing sphere for my Division III, working with the Prison Birth Project changed my thinking drastically. Thinking about how people can (or, more accurately, cannot) access certain services when they are incarcerated got me thinking about how I want to research how people’s identities can inhibit their access to services. At this moment I am not completely sure what I want it to look like, however without my internship at The Prison Birth Project, I would not be this sure about what I want to focus on for my Division III at this point in the school year.
I loved my time at The Prison Birth Project; however, there were definitely some difficulties. They were incredibly understanding about my having a second job during my time there, but the late hours (I work at a bar in Northampton), made me very tired for a lot of the time I spent at the Prison Birth Project. I was working my normal job and was also training to be a server, so it was more like I had three jobs instead of just two. That made it difficult for me sometimes to be completely focused on what I was doing at my internship, but the environment that they had at PBP made it so I could feel comfortable talking about my other job(s) and let my emotions out.

During my time at Hampshire, though I knew about how the Prison Industrial Complex took away people’s rights, reading personal stories and talking to my supervisors made it more real to me. When people talk about prisons and jails they mainly focus on men, which is something that I never realized that I also did until working with PBP. I am so glad and grateful that I was able to work with The Prison Birth Project, and would definitely recommend keeping them on the list of organizations that is open to having RRASC interns.