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Interning at Political Research Associates

Political Research Associates’ mission is “challenging the right, advancing social justice,” and I was able to help with that mission that summer. Political Research Associates is a think tank based in Boston focused on equipping movements on the Left with research regarding movements on the Right. As threats to reproductive justice become more complex, it is helpful to take a step back and see how the Right is organized. There are specific strategies that are helpful for our communities in attempting to “push the needle” towards a more just society. However, the Right is not monolithic. Therefore, it is important to use correct terminology in regards to the religious, secular, and economic right, which is one of the most important lessons I gained from my time at Political Research Associates. Overall, this internship was rewarding, prepared me well for my future career, and helped me better understand working for social justice is inextricably bound with working for reproductive justice.

I helped with a varied of projects through my role as a research intern at Political Research Associates. My largest task was helping to fact-check articles for Political Research Associates’ quarterly magazine, *The Public Eye*. The best way to describe fact-checking is “research in reverse.” Every author is making a variety of important claims in their articles for *The Public Eye* and it is important that every detail is correct. It was immensely satisfying to find little misspelling in names or titles because I was able to help Political Research Associates maintain journalistic integrity. Political Research Associates has been sued in the past because people often do not want to the truth being told about them. Therefore, it is important that
Political Research Associates is able to back what they are claiming with solid sources. Furthermore, it would be disappointing for someone to disregard the big truths an author writes because of small errors, so it was my job to make sure the little details were all correct. As a detail-orientated person, this was nerdily pleasurable for me. It is interesting to dive into a topic and find all the sources the author used. In fact, I could see myself involved in research in my future.

However, the fact-checking process also taught me to balance taking care of myself alongside the work. While this may sound dramatic, sometimes the material I was trying to fact check was incredibly heavy. One day I spend about an hour going back at least two year on the timeline of neo-nazi twitters to confirm the exact wording of specific tweets, which was horribly disturbing to say the least. My coworkers were quick to remind me to look at photos of puppies afterwards. The job required really understanding what people on the Right were saying, which was difficult. However, this is important work. It is much easier not to understand what is going on with people who hold different views of the world. However, ultimately that would not be preparing as well as one could for the important work.

Another project I took on was digitizing the back orders of *The Public Eye* and redirecting the webpages from the old website to the old website. This required being incredibly organized and detailed in spreadsheets to keep everything straight. This work was necessary because it is important that Political Research Associate’s works is as accessible as possible. It will only be effective if it is. However, this project was also compelling because I was able to read through some of the old material from the 1980s and that was incredibly interesting. Political Research Associates has been making material for a long time and actually started in opposition to the rise of the new Right and Reagan politics in the 1980sa. People have been
doing important work for a long time and sometimes the Left does not see itself in this historical frame. However, doing so was beneficial to my overall development as an activist.

These various projects that I worked on for Political Research Associates required a range of skills. However, the most important ability was attention to detail. In order to do well with any of the editing or uploading projects, I needed to be precise. I would recommend anyone considering to work at Political Research Associates to consider this when applying here. I know that could be utterly exhausting for someone not specifically interested in engaging in this way. However, I also learned a little bit of WordPress in order to help upload webpages and I am glad I am taking that skill with me. Interning at Political Research Associate is definitely a desk job, and that required some adjusting for me and my body. Therefore, it was important that I learned to take care of myself as I worked there.

As I take what I learned at Political Research Associates with me into the professional world, I will have more confidence about my skills to contribute positively. There are skills such as editing, WordPress, ConstantContact, InDesign, and others that will tangibly help me as I search for a job. However, the intangible understandings I learned are much more important. This includes how to work with other people in a nonprofit settings, balancing multiple projects, and commit fully to the work you do when it is important.

Political Research Associates is an organization that is very intentional not to be problematic and perpetuate any injustices. While there is certainly room to grow, the intentionality here was important. During my first week as an intern, I had the opportunity to attend their Board meeting and I learned a lot about the tensions within Political Research Associates itself when I was there. Since Political Research Associates’ main role is to do research, it is living the contradiction between the elitism of academia and also recognizing the
problems with anti-intellectualism in movements that result in poor strategy. During the Board meeting they also talked a lot about how Political Research Associates should cover the election and the many tensions there as well. These conversations over places where Political Research Associates could think about in many different ways were compelling to me.

Reproductive justice is inextricably bound up with all other justice concerns. While I knew this conception intellectually, Political Research Associates helped me understand this more clearly with “the movement mentality.” The Executive Director of Political Research Associates would often ask if the work we were doing was “pushing the needle,” which is asking if we are contributing positively to the movement for justice in all of its dimensions. Political Research Associates specifically rejects the “hate frame” and attempts to compete for the hearts and minds of people. This means that all work they do is specifically done strategically. It is important to be intentional in this work and within our movements for justice.

My advice for the next Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps intern at Political Research Associates is to engage fully and never stop asking questions. Just because Political Research Associates does a lot right that does not mean it is perfect. However, it is important to invest fully where you are and try to be as helpful as you can be. You should always ask what else you can help with. Political Research Associates is a wonderful organization and everyone should become familiar with their material. It will only help with conceptualizing where movements on the right and the left are both going. I am thankful for my time at Political Research Associates and in the Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps and I will take what I learned there with me there for a long time.