

## **JANE MUGOVI**

### **INTERNSHIP REPORT: Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide**

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**NOTE:** Anything in quotes is from one of Project South's Newsletters.

My internship at Project South was the best match for me in terms of the skills I wanted to learn and improve. I had a phenomenal experience with the organization both in the office and on the road on our trips to Chicago and Florida. Instead of concentrating on one issue or department, I decided to do everything my supervisors had on their list for me because I wanted to get familiarized with the different issues that the organization promoted, as well as those it protested against. This gave me a platform to have varied experiences that made me realize that I am most interested in research work, hence confirming my decision to be a public policy research analyst.

I did a lot of projects during my internship, and one of my first was transcribing conference call conversations. From listening to these conversations I learned a lot about the project's goals moving forward, as well as its plan to increase its networking with other organizations to have "renewal of commitment to a Freedom Movement that is collective and organized." This was my first assignment so it allowed me to learn a lot about the organization and how it functions. I appreciated the organization's achievements that I learned about in the conversations, such as the People's 100 Days, which are the same as the President's

100 Days after being elected. During this period, the organization meets with people to find out what matters most to their community. Project South believes that voting gives people the power to be heard and choose someone who will listen, but the community cannot only depend on the leadership to make things right. They have to continue their support and direct the leadership towards what is best for the community by drafting ideas through the People's 100 Days. I believe that this is a great way to promote political participation in the South.

I also learned that Project South encourages more direct engagement from the community through the People's Movement Assemblies, which integrate lessons from history to the present, so as to facilitate strong movement building that demands and yields results. The People's 100 Days is part of the People's Movement Assemblies. During the assembly retreats, Project South and other partner organizations benefit "as they share political analysis, learn facilitation and organizing skills, and think about long-term transformative strategies to build racial and economic justice." To support this work, one of my assignments was to look into the processes for getting a permit to rally at each of the Southern capitals. Project South, together with other groups, organized an "Occupy the Southern capitals" instead of going to Washington, D.C. to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington. Most of the work I did was research and other interesting projects, like drawing the map of the South on a large canvas by hand.

Another project I worked on was data entry for the Student Bill of Rights. Project South is doing a lot of work on stopping the passing into law of bills that deprive the Southern community of its rights to vote, good food etc. The Student Bill

of Rights has sixteen rights that Project South had people vote on so that they can present these rights to the authorities to show them what Southern communities need to eliminate poverty and genocide.

One of my biggest projects was to research anti-choice policies and bills that have been passed due to conservatives having super majorities in most of the Southern states. So I did a lot of research on the anti-choice policies being passed in the South, and Project South used this information to understand the role it can play in stopping their passage. Most of the Southern states have similar conservative legislation being passed, not only on abortion but on issues such as immigration. These policies hinder human agency in the South and don't support the creation of an effectual engine for development. For example, these immigration bills make it difficult to hire migrant labor; this results in a great loss for farmers, estimated at around \$800 million, because they rely on migrant labor for their farms. Immigrants are denied the right to stay in Georgia, as foreign passports do not qualify as identification to have public benefits. According to farmers, these immigration bills are scaring away even legal migrant labor. Local entities that do not comply are subject to withholding of state funds or state administered federal funding. The economic boycotts stemming from the bill hinder farm productivity and tourism. It is thus evident to what extent conservative policies and bills demoralize Southern communities and perpetuate poverty.

Besides my research, I also participated in other actions with the organization. Project South promotes dialogue and conversation within the community and among youth. The organization achieves this through its summer

institute, University Sin Fronteras, where youth and others learn about liberatory education. I took a class at the university on decolonization in this century every other Wednesday. It was fun! I thought it would be boring, but I liked the classes. I also played a supportive role during the five day walk across the South that Project South and other partner organizations spearheaded. After the Trayvon Martin verdict, Project South began reaching out to other organizations in the South to plan steps for action against the unjust court decision. The verdict showed how Black and Brown life is not valued and the lack of consistency and clarity in the judicial system. Marissa Alexander for example was sentenced to twenty years in jail for shooting in the air to protect herself, but Zimmerman, who had actually shot someone, was let free. I joined the walk to cheer and chant from Jacksonville to Sanford, and helped hold the banner and with other small things. The walk had a great impact and was a success in mobilizing people to speak up peacefully against the unjust system.

I am very grateful for the support from the CLLP office and to my supervisors at Project South for such an interesting, informative, and action-packed summer. It was my first time going out of Massachusetts alone, and staying alone for almost three months. But I enjoyed myself every day and look forward to working with an organization like Project South again in the future!