The main project of the internship was the preparation and coordination of the
**Standing Our Ground: Raising Our Voices against Reproductive Oppression and Violence against Women Weekend**, which was held in Jacksonville, Florida from July 25-28. It was hosted by Sister Song in partnership with the Free Marissa Now Campaign. I worked for Sister Song two days a week and continued my work while at home. Each one of us three interns was assigned a piece to work on; I was in charge of the handling the panelist travel and transportation logistics and gathering bios/information from them for the weekend brochure. The tasks were all manageable and it was a new experience working with a large group of people with various personalities and accommodating to their needs.

We were able to get the entire panelist to Florida so their panel and all of their presentations fit well the weekend events. Our panelist came from all across the country and it was difficult to find flights, which was a new experience for me seeing that I have little experience with flying. Despite some concern with their arrival, it was a successful conference and our attendees thoroughly enjoyed the panels. In addition to that while in Jacksonville outside of the conference days, I was responsible for helping with whatever was needed during the Benefit concert, which included accommodating the performer’s needs and assisting Leah who was in charge of the production.

I split my time with the Crunk Feminist Collective, which was an unexpected delight. At first my job consisted of maintenance: updating and reblogging the Tumblr and taking each post from 2010-2014 and put them in a survey so that collective members could vote on the ones they like for an upcoming project. The skills I used most during my internship were communication skills and writing. The large majority of my job at Sister Song was emailing, texting and calling the panelist of the conference. During the conference I was on call for the panelist whenever they had questions or
assistance concerning times and travel. My work with the Crunk Feminist Collective was mainly computer usage and writing. I was able to write one quest post for the blog, which was a black feminist review of the film Maleficent.

Handling many different personalities’ during the process of making travel arrangements and gathering information from panelists was a new experience. Through the weekend I was on call for the panelist and having to be ready for any obstacle was difficult at times. The weekend was a draining experience since the entire Sister Song crew was on at all times but in the end it was all worth it knowing attendee’s needs were filled and people enjoyed their experience. In addition to that adjusting to working full time and making time for other things was a challenge. The stress was a good motivator for working. Being able to see the conference and weekend events unfold was a highlight. To put on a RJ conference with a team of around six was amazing. Also, hearing feedback from people who attended the conference, benefit concert and the march warmed my heart and truly exhibited what social justice was and is. Marching with everyone there was a strong feeling or solidarity and passion. Up until that point I hadn’t been around that much positive energy toward change and it was enlightening.

As women’s studies major I was very prepared for the subject matter of the tasks. From the beginning I was familiar with reproductive justice goals and why we were involved in the movement to free Marissa Alexander and find her justice. In the spring semester before I began my internship I learned about Loretta Ross in my Intersectional Research Methods class, so I was familiar with the founder and history of Sister Song. Coming into Sister Song with this academic background I felt like a bit of a fan girl when I meet Loretta for the first time and surprised about how casual people were around her. For me it was like being in the presence of a feminist rock star but for others it was an honored friend and colleague.

The internship was a way to learn more about how reproductive justice organizations run internally and by doing so what type of organization or involvement I would want in the future. I still have the desire to pursue a law degree and one focused in reproductive and social justice. Going to the march and being able view and participate in grassroots organizing; I now want to work on the ground in addition to practicing law. I still want to be close to the community I’d work for because I would not want to lose perspective of the needs of the people.

When in Jacksonville I was in constant interaction with people. A woman came up to me and told me her story, how she was abused and neglected by the medical system. What she needed was a lawyer, and there was nothing I could do to help her since Sister Song is only an advocacy organization. While listening to the different panelist I doubted, for the first time whether or not law was what I want to go to school for but after talking to various people and hearing their stories I saw that there is a need for attorneys who care and who are willing to directly talk to those most marginalized, experiencing the weight of injustice. This realization has aided me as I go into this semester to be more focus since I have a new sense of direction.

This summer I was able to experience firsthand activism and the detailed workings of the social justice movement. I’ve been able to see and be a part of events and an organization that can make amazing feats happen with a little. Coming into an
Reproductive Justice organization I was excited because this is where I felt I belonged and now leaving it my desire to continue to work and pursue a this path has not swayed. Sister Song has only reaffirmed my passion and belief. I feel that this internship has given me a behind the scenes look at social justice to view the preparation, planning and passion of people who make change possible. In doing so I have a greater respect for the women of color lead organizations and an understanding of the embedded racism and classism that still persists within the realm of social justice and feminist nonprofit organizations. Reproductive rights is a social justice issue and upon reflection is still difficult to present as such because of preconceived ideas about it and the narrow framework which makes it difficult to often intersect fully. While on the road back from Jacksonville to Atlanta we learned about the Planned Parenthood article that was published on the New York Times. I was shocked at first but when I thought about it shouldn’t have surprised me. It was simply a reminder of the erasure of the work done by women of color by privileged white women and the reason for the disunion within reproductive movement. It is not that people including myself do not want reproductive rights it is just hard to fight for something where there is not collaboration and solidarity.

During this journey I have had so many meaningful conversations and discussions with my coworkers that have aided in my overall growth. I feel that I am leaving Sister Song more compassionate and understanding, eager to go back to Agnes Scott, excited to learn. Sister Song led me to many firsts: my first time working at an RJ organization, first time helping to coordinate a conference and first march/rally/protest. Putting on the Standing our Ground Weekend was stressful and moving. It was gratifying to be able to meet all the panelist and attendees and see their smiling and have conversations about Southern Synergy. Everyone was so warm and welcoming and to be surrounded by people with such passion is refreshing.

To future CLPP interns I suggest coming into it with an open mind and be prepared for anything. Being flexible will make the experience more enjoyable and enable more growth. During my internship I met many people with a variety of views and you have to be professional, able to listen and to not let opinions affect me. Adjusting to working fulltime is manageable and tiresome, so it is key to devote time to self-care especially since the topics we cover in the internship can be emotionally draining.

More information on the RRASC internship program: clpp.hampshire.edu/RRASC