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RRASC: National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

Internship: June 7-August 13

1. Describe the projects you worked on and the results achieved:

   I had to write weekly blogs related to reproductive justice and Latinas, including immigration issues. At the beginning, I struggled writing blog posts because I had never written or even read a blog post. However, I significantly improved and I learned a skill through this task. It was also a great personal experience because as an immigrant I support a comprehensive immigration reform because it personally affects my relatives and me; nonetheless, I had strong reasons not to support the DREAM Act and I had not been able to publicly express my criticism against the bill. I am glad I was able to express my opinion through blogging because my opinion, with supporting arguments, was added to a national debate and is available online.

   My blog posts are:

   - The 2012 Project: Latinas, Run for Office
   - My Transnational Contraception Story
   - One in five NYC public schools ask for immigration papers before enrollment
   - Where do the LGBT and immigrant rights movements intersect?
   - DREAM Act: Just a Dream or Real Opportunity?
An international perspective on undocumented immigrants and health insurance

Highlights from President Obama’s immigration speech

Including Domestic Workers in the Reproductive Rights Struggle

2. My second major task was to create a legislative and reproductive justice profile of Wisconsin. In September, the NLIRH will train Latinas in reproductive justice through LOLA (Latinas Organizing for Leadership and Advocacy), with the goal of creating a Latina Advocacy Network (LAN) in Milwaukee. Thus, to support the LAN, I was given the task of creating Wisconsin’s reproductive rights, justice and immigration profile in order to have a written report of the state to better guide the efforts of the LAN. I produced a 43 page report that includes the following topics: Demographics and Socioeconomic indicators, Latinas’ socioeconomic status, health indicators such as HIV/AIDS, Cervical Cancer, STDs, Sex Education, Contraceptive Services, Family Planning under Medicaid, Emergency Contraception, Abortion, Abortion Coverage under Medicaid, Prenatal Care, Perinatal Services under Medicaid, Live births, Pregnant Related Mortality, Infant Mortality, Women’s Preventive Health Care, Health Insurance Status, Medicaid Wisconsin, Family Planning Waiver Plan, State Mandated Benefits in Private Insurance Plans, Community Health Centers, and LGBTQ Rights. The reports includes legislation (bills proposed or laws passes in the state) related to: Abortion Restrictions, Sterilization Laws, HPV Vaccines, Anti-Health Care Reform, Access to Health Care, Prescription Protection Act, Contraceptive Equity, the Healthy Youth Act (sex education legislation), and Domestic Partner Protections. The report also includes legislation related to immigration related bills and laws: Legal Services, Education,
Employment, Housing, Law Enforcement, and Public Assistance. The final part of the report contains information about Wisconsin lawmakers and their contact information. Through this report I became familiar with different websites and sources: The Guttmacher Institute and its reports, The Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts, Pew Hispanic Center, U.S. Census Bureau, The National Conference of State Legislators, NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin, the National Women’s Law Center and Wisconsin Legislature. Also, I learned to read and use public health statistics.

3. I produced a short research paper on the health care disparities that affect Latinas, for instance, Latinas’ teen pregnancy is disproportionally high but there is also a great percentage of Latinas without health insurance. This short paper is an overview of Latinas’ health care disparities that would be use during the LOLA training. The paper connects reproductive rights with social justice.

4. One important task I frequently did throughout my internship was translating. It was not simple translation because I had to look for language that conveyed the same message, it was not simply about translating words from English to Spanish but words and language that actually resonate with the Latino community. Sometimes, I had to translate legislative language like the names of bills or amendments, so I needed precision while translating these documents. For instance, I translated the talking points on Women’s Health Amendment for Latina networks to advocate for family planning to be included as a preventive care.

5. I produced FAQs on Emergency Contraception both in English and Spanish.

6. I created a flyer for the upcoming LOLA training in Wisconsin.
7. I came up with a list of reproductive rights books, videos, and publications in Spanish. Literature in Spanish is hard to find in the U.S., but I came up with a list of publications, books and videos related to reproductive justice and rights, not all the materials are necessarily available in the U.S.

8. I also participated in LOLA training planning meetings; I gave my opinion and my perspective on the training from logistics, to topics and how to address some topics.

9. I created a list of leading discussion questions for the movie “Aborto sin Pena” (Abortion without Shame) to have a discussion on abortion.

10. I prepared folders for meetings and presentations that my supervisors had.

11. I participated in two workshops on immigrant rights as a matter of reproductive justice.

2. What were the skills you used most often in your internship?

   - Researching, writing – both blogs and reports, and translating.

3. What difficulties did you have and how did you address these difficulties?

One difficulty at the beginning is that there was little interaction between co-workers and it was very silent, and I am a very talkative person and I need human interaction. I addressed this by listening to music and talking once in while with my intern-mates when I could. I also addressed this by attending all the brown bag lunches and by actually taking 30 min lunch break that I don’t understand why no one takes. It was also very difficult to be in front of the computer the whole day without moving, but this is part of the job, so there is no way to address it. Blogging was challenging but I just kept writing and doing my best.
4. What do you view as the highlights of the internship experience?

- I created Wisconsin’s profile and blogging I had to read bills and laws, and I actually enjoyed it, so I realized I like policy analysis. I think this internship made me realize this about my career path.

- I met Lynn Paltrow from National Advocates for Pregnant Women at one of the brown bag lunches and I got really inspired by her and her hard work.

- I met Maria Elena and Stephanie, and they were both great, cool supervisors who were never bossy, they were really supportive.

- I met cool interns, they were nice.

- I learned to blog.

- I got to have a feeling of what it is to work in NYC.

- I learned what it is to work in a non-profit and all the non-paid hard work and sacrifices that one has to do.

- One important highlight of my internship is that in order to blog and, generally speaking, work there, one has to read the newspaper (several sources from RH to NY Times), and this keeps you up to date on current events, I liked this part a lot because it personally helped me and also because it helped with my writing.
5. What do you think are the three most important skills learned?

Most of my work was based on researching, which I already knew, but I honed my skills by writing different kind of papers that have an academic component but with a public relations style. I also learned to blog. Finally, I learned to read bills and laws and interpret them as well.

6. How did your academic studies prepare you for the internship?

I think my academic studies were very important for my internship. I have learned that to analyze social problems though the lens of the intersections of race, class and gender, and this part was crucial while researching, writing, analyzing and giving opinions at my internship. I had these three components always present, so that I tried to give a more complicated opinion or perspective. Also, I have written several research papers, which made me feel more confident writing Wisconsin’s profile.

7. How did your internship contributed to your career goals?

One important highlight is that I enjoyed reading, interpreting and writing about bills/laws. Even though this task was not a major part of the internship, I realized I enjoy policy analysis and would like to work in this in the future. I enjoyed reading the laws/bills and analyzing the language to understand what the bill really says compared to what the media or even community organizers say about the impact of the bill. I also like to compare the bill with other factors such as social inequalities, socio-economic factors to see what the intention of the bill really is or the possible implications for vulnerable communities such as the already marginalized immigrant community.
8. How beneficial or relevant does your internship seem to you now as compared to your initial expectations?

Well, to be honest I was expecting a more rigorous and demanding internship because I prefer a fast pace job or one that keeps me busy the whole day. However, I don’t think it is the organization itself but it is because over the summer there is not as much to do. The organization over the spring had been working hard on health care reform and this fall it will work hard on the LOLA training in Wisconsin and NY, so it may be due to the timing of my internship and not the organization itself. I would have preferred an internship in which more challenging and more tasks would have been demanded from me because some days or hours I did not have much to do.

9. What do you think of your internship and the organization?

I think the Latina Institute is a great organization. Outside of academic work, it is difficult to find an employer with progressive views that analyzes social problems through the lens of institutionalized racism, gender inequalities and class issues, but the Latina Institute uses this lens to analyze every single topic. Also, the organization is great because it supports the Latina community in different ways: through community mobilization, it empowers women to advocate for themselves, it goes to Washington to advocate and lobby for Latinas, especially undocumented and low-income, and it also analyzes policy and produces research papers with a different perspective that challenges even reproductive rights advocates’ bias and prejudices. In addition, the organization fully supports the Latino community because it supports immigration reform. I also liked the Latina Institute because I could be me, meaning I could write or give
progressive opinions that challenge capitalism, racism and gender inequality and feel it is okay, I did not have to hide my political views, and I think that is great to have in a job.

10. Did you learn more about the intersection of reproductive rights and social justice issues?

YES. As I mentioned before, the Latina Institute does policy analysis, research, and policy advocacy taking into account other factors such as Latinas’ income, access to resources, and access to opportunities. The organization does a great job analyzing reproductive rights and its intersection with social justice, which is encouraged in interns work.


Even though I had a satisfactory internship, I recommend interns to be more open to different internships even if they are not directly related to your field or career goals. For instance, I chose the Latina Institute because my major focuses on immigration. However, when I attended one of the brown bag lunches I was inspired by the work of Lynn Paltrow from the National Advocates for Pregnant Women. Paltrow made it clear how the organization works understanding how women of color are discriminated and criminalized and how it advocates for these women in the justice system, and Paltrow’s energy and passion made me realized that I should have been a bit more open to different options where perhaps I would have had more interaction with peers, supervisors, the community and maybe a more demanding and personally fulfilling experience. Thus, even if an internship does not seem directly related I advise students to read carefully to know what kind of tasks and how dynamic the internship is going to be.