As a communications intern at Advocates for Youth this summer, my main tasks included updating and drafting fact sheets for the website, managing the 1 in 3 Campaign submissions, and assisting my supervisors in using and recruiting followers for the organization’s social media pages. While updating the Young People and HIV fact sheet, I found the most up to date statistics from reputable national and local data collection surveys and sources and replaced outdated information on the draft. I also proofread the document for any existing typos or grammatical errors, and scanned for potentially stigmatizing language. For example, I substituted words and phrases like “infections” for “people living with HIV” or “new diagnoses,” and “contracted” for “acquired.” Another task of mine was to regularly read and publish incoming abortion stories on the 1 in 3 Campaign’s website. The names and information of the storytellers were logged into an Excel spreadsheet with a link to their story on the site, all organized by state. Whenever there was a controversial piece of legislation or action taking place in a particular state regarding abortion access and restriction, I reached out to storytellers via e-mail and asked for their participation and/or story sharing privileges.

I also often handled the organization’s Snapchat and Instagram accounts. When my coworkers and I attended rallies at the Capitol or the White House, I would post videos or images for our followers with captions and hashtags promoting the movement or cause, often regarding healthcare. The communications team decided to reintroduce “#CinemaFridays” on Instagram, which are weekly posts featuring still images or GIFs from popular films with safe sex supplies, namely condoms, Photoshopped into them. This, by enthusiastic choice, became another of my weekly responsibilities. I really looked forward to creating them, and they were a big hit with our
virtual base. While at Advocates, the Instagram reached the 1,000 follower milestone and gained at least seventy-five new followers during my ten week internship. The #CinemaFriday posts were also used to promote the Great American Condom Campaign (GACC), a youth-led movement that supplies college campuses (by request) with Trojan Brand condoms in an effort to promote a sexually healthy nation.

In addition to the #CinemaFriday graphics, I edited and designed many other images used for the promotion and circulation of various conferences, campaigns, and youth councils. When the governor of Illinois wavered on his promise to protect abortion access in the state, Advocates launched a “story blitz” at Governor Rauner’s Facebook and Twitter handles as well as directly faxing abortion stories from Illinois residents to his office. After asking Illinois storytellers for permission to share their stories on a more public platform, I pulled significant quotes from each and put them onto a template graphic that followers could tag the governor in when shared on social media. Each year, Advocates hosts Urban Retreat, gathering over 120 youth activists in D.C. to learn about legislation and participate in trainings about young people’s sexual health and reproductive rights. I designed pronoun buttons for students to use throughout the retreat, using theme colors and non-gendered images with a blank line for students to write on.

Lastly, I wrote two panel proposals on behalf of Advocates for Youth with my fellow communications intern for the upcoming 2018 South by Southwest conference. The first was called “Youth Power: Activists on the Front Lines,” which seeks to explore the ways in which young people are acting as agents of change in this particular socio-political climate. The second, “Handmaid’s Tale IRL: What If Roe Were To Go?” envisions a world without legal access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare, a very plausible world in which procreative bodies are simply vessels used to secure humanity’s future. After editing and officially submitting the panel
proposals, I altered promotional graphics to post on Advocates’ social media pages. After all submissions were accepted, I read through about fifty of 200 total submissions and evaluated them for quality and allure of content and featured panelists.

My internship required research, writing, and editing skills, sufficient knowledge of computer use and social media, and, preferably, a basic understanding of graphic design. My familiarity with Microsoft Office and Adobe programs like Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign were assets to the office, especially the graphic designer on staff, Rachel. My academic background in English and Anthropology have fostered strong research and writing capabilities, and a personal interest in design and technology set the precedent for further expanding my graphics program literacy. My Five College Certificate in Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice prepared me to independently engage with the various intersectional issues and dialogues Advocates participates in. I was able to cultivate a collection of personal conversations with other staff members and young leaders and tether real lived experiences to the theories I’ve studied.

One of the first difficulties I encountered was creating a Young Muslims’ Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights fact sheet from scratch. I knew it would be a challenging endeavor, and that the document would not take on the same format and content as many of Advocates’ other fact sheets, but I thought it would be a viable project to take on and complete. However, once I began the research, I quickly realized that there was simply not enough quantitative data to draw from. Statistics about sexual health among Muslims living in the United States are simply not collected by any census bureau, and it is still a heavily stigmatized topic within the Muslim community. Though I did not leave with a final product to submit, I created an outline that will hopefully be completed in the future. The information that does exist is important to
share, even if it is more qualitative, and Advocates wants to provide young Muslims, especially with the launch of the Muslim Youth Leadership Council, with accessible, educational resources.

I absolutely loved my coworkers and the work environment at Advocates for Youth. It was a small office made up of an equally small but truly mighty staff. Hours were flexible when needed, and the workload was very manageable. It was fulfilling to work at an organization that reflected many of my own personal values and political ideologies, and it was incredibly inspiring to see myself represented among the passionate, successful women of color who worked in the office. After graduating from Mount Holyoke, I hope that I can begin the transition into a career in the non-profit sphere, particularly with an organization that does reproductive and sexual health and rights and/or justice work. Eventually, I’d like to pursue a master’s degree in Public Health, with a specialization in maternal and child health.