

Paul Blasenheim: Outreach Intern, A Better Way Foundation

Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

A Better Way Foundation (ABWF) is a grassroots, community based, anti-racist, nonprofit (501c3) organization committed to community-initiated responses to issues surrounding poverty, imprisonment, homelessness, housing, and drug policy. ABWF advocates for grassroots responses as well as legislative changes to address these issues which lie at the heart of the Hartford community. ABWF specifically targets the War on Drugs as the central theme of these social problems, and sees an approach to issues surrounding drug use and abuse as issues of public health rather than criminal justice. They advocate for a more compassionate, humanist way forward in reforming drug laws, and the reallocation of public funds from incarceration to rehabilitation. A BWF is a member group of the Drug Policy Alliance, which today stands as the largest and most sustained drug policy reform organization in this country.

I will be working on a project of ABWF's called "Restorative Justice," which is a community led, collectively formed piece of legislation which seeks to reform all issues surrounding drug policy in CT, and all the other issues surrounding these changes (greater need for housing for released inmates, job promotion programs, child care services, etc). I will be working as a coalition builder, to target marginalized groups working for change in CT (immigrant advocacy organizations, transgender rights groups, labor unions, etc) and bring them in to the circle of allies working on "Restorative Justice."

Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

I will be serving as an outreach coordinator and coalition builder for A Better Way Foundation. More specifically, I am being hired as a campaigner for a specific piece of legislation sponsored and initiated by ABWF, known as "Restorative Justice." My main task for this bill will be to reach out to different communities working for social justice in the greater Hartford area, and to build a diverse coalition of multiple issues and perspectives who come together to support the bill. This means contacting many different organizations committed to different areas of social justice, such as environmental, homelessness, and prison reform groups, and forging bonds of partnership to create a well-rounded, robust bill. I have been told already that my role in the organization will be critical to the functioning of the group for the summer, because they are going through budget problems, and are already a staff of two.

Day to day, I will be traveling throughout the area, meeting with different organizations and discussing co-sponsorships for "Restorative Justice." When I am not out interacting with the local community, I will be doing in office work, mostly to help keep things efficient and running smoothly (data entry, answering phones, filing, meeting facilitation, etc). Usually, ABWF spends much of its time near the capitol, lobbying for drug policy reform. However, because the state

legislature will be on recess for much of the summer, we will be utilizing this time to reach out to the community and build for our renewed legislative efforts, which will go into full swing in the fall. My job will also include attending board of director's meetings, searching for and applying for appropriate grant opportunities, contacting local academic institutions and seeking out researchers for budgeting and demographic analysis, and attending related conferences as a

representative of ABWF. Because of the intimate nature of the job, I will be truly embedded in the organization, and will be as active a player in the day to day operations of the facility as any paid employee.

How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

I have communicated with ABWF, and they have already accepted my application for internship. They are ecstatic to have my presence this summer, since they are a small group of folks and need all the help they can get. I have a well established working relationship with ABWF from my work in Students for Sensible Drug Policy here at Wesleyan. I recently brought LaResse Harvey here to Wesleyan to speak, and I travel to their office at least once a week, to attend meetings surrounding "Restorative Justice." We have very frequent communication, and we are on the same page about what my role will be with the organization, and where my responsibilities will lie. They are anxious to get me started as an intern, and they are looking forward to the results of this application.

How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

I consider myself to be a drug policy and prison reformer; I have been talking about progressive approaches to drug enforcement and the incredible costs of the criminal justice system since high school. The more I learn about the War on Drugs and its impact on our local communities, the more impassioned I am to begin working to change these laws, and institute harm reduction measures which care for health and safety, rather than imprisonment. ABWF is the premier drug policy reform organization currently operating in the state of Connecticut, so if I wish to learn about the process of drug policy reform as a resident of CT (which is a key personal goal of mine, as the founder of the on-campus group Students for Sensible Drug Policy), this is the absolute best place for me to work. Their incredible history, dedication to the realm of drug policy reform and progressive activism in general, will be a hugely important factor in my own development as a drug policy reformer and social justice activist.

I have very keen interests in working for grassroots social change, especially in the fields of prisons, homelessness, and drug policy. I subscribe to the philosophy that only grassroots efforts, led by the individuals most gravely impacted by harmful policies, will ever bring about true, meaningful change. ABWF satisfies all of these convictions; this is a small, nonprofit organization, where both of the leaders of the group are formerly incarcerated individuals themselves who suffer daily from the discrimination of the War on Drugs. It is located in inner city Hartford, near the North End, and interacts directly with one of Hartford's most heavily policed, and therefore poorest and most underprivileged communities. It is actively involved in local community empowerment, and sees the empowerment of the inner city, especially among at risk youth, to be as much a goal of their efforts as the passage of legislation. I am incredibly excited and moved by ABWF's approach, and I wish to enter into their world to learn about effective methods for grassroots empowerment, and the operation of small non-profit groups.

I am planning on working for sensible drug policy reform for many years to come, and I have already started down this path. When I was interning with the Washington Peace Center, I worked extensively on issues surrounding DC's homeless population, and as a part of this process I worked directly with the Marijuana Policy Project, a drug policy reform group in DC. I was introduced to the world of non-profit drug policy reform work, and have wanted to engage in this issue more fully ever since. I took this drive back to Wesleyan with me, and last semester I

founded the on-campus chapter of the organization Students for Sensible Drug Policy. Since our beginning at the end of last semester, we have built an impressive core group of people who are working on issues of drug policy reform, both here on campus and in local communities. One of the first ally groups I came into contact with, working in the great CT area, was ABWF, and they have been incredibly helpful to my efforts here at Wesleyan.

My experience gained at this internship will help me formulate my perspective on what it really means to do drug policy reform work. In the long run, I feel that this will be essential to my understanding of what it takes to work for a small non-profit, something which will benefit me at any point in my career in social justice. Drug policy reform is a highly applicable issue, with intersections in the anti-oppression, prison reform, anti-war, environmental, and immigrant rights causes, to name a few. When I get out of college, and begin to search for work in the non-profit sector, this experience will carry a lot of weight, and will give me a step up in the world of social justice advocacy.

In the short term, this internship will be essential to my on-campus activism and organizing efforts. As the founder of one of the most active student groups on campus, Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP), the experience I gain with ABWF this summer will translate over into the formulation and direction of SSDP's campaigns and events next year. We are quickly becoming a vibrant force for progressive change on campus, and I feel that my work with ABWF will positively shape the role of SSDP on campus, thereby benefiting not only myself and the other SSDP organizers, but the campus community in general. Additionally, one of the things that make coalition building with the greater CT community extremely difficult as a Wesleyan student is the constant lifestyle of leaving on breaks for extended periods. You cannot build a cohesive community when you are only here for half the year. I will be working 25 minutes away from campus, and many of the same organizations I meet with throughout the summer will remain allies as I move into the Fall 2010 semester, burgeoning the capacity of on campus organizing for drug policy reform. This will be the second organization I have interned with where the staff is comprised of only two individuals, and the small office space is embedded within the community it is trying to help (the first being the Washington Peace Center). I have found the perspectives and directions of both of these groups to be extremely enlightening and inspiring, and by embedding myself within the operational framework of ABWF, I know that I will learn an unprecedented amount about ways to effectively run small, multi-issue nonprofits.

It is truly my dream to work for an organization committed to the same radical ideals I hold, and when I find one which is geared towards diversity, coalition building, and the eradication of social inequality (like A B W F), I find I cannot help but dive into the heart of their operations. I know that this internship will provide for me an irreplaceable base, off of which I can build my own career in progressive advocacy, community engagement, and grassroots organizing. I have great hopes for the future of social justice work, and I truly believe that this internship will broaden my scope on what it truly means to be a drug policy reformer in the 21st century.

Emily Brackman Mental Health Project Intern, Urban Justice Center

Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

The Urban Justice Center is a grassroots organization that was originally founded in 1984 by Doug Lasdon under the name "Legal Action Center for the Homeless." The UJC is a non-profit organization originally designed to attend to the legal needs of homeless New Yorkers. Since its

creation, the UJC has greatly expanded its reach of influence and advocacy and now has a 6 million dollar budget and has closed 8600 legal suits in 2008. Unlike many other advocacy services, the staff of the UJC is comprised of an interdisciplinary team of lawyers, social workers, and advocates who are committed to finding solutions for the low income and vulnerable members of the New York City population. Also unique to the UJC, under the umbrella of the larger organization, nine different “projects” are operated within smaller and more specialized areas of staff expertise in order to allow for maximum flexibility to implement and carry out new ideas. The UJC believes in helping those that “no one else will help.” The organization combines direct advocacy and systemic advocacy. The staff of UJC goes out into the community and provides services and tools to clients which enable them to better advocate for themselves and exercise their (often ignored) rights. Furthermore, by interacting with clients in extremely oppressive situations, the UJC discovers systemic issues that are then addressed through lawsuits, media reports, organizing, and education. The organization partners with hundreds of other non-profits in NYC in order to reach the largest client basis, and provide education to their allies.

The internship I am applying for is under the “Mental Health” project. The program focuses its services towards the seriously and persistently mentally ill low income New York population. The UJC MHP helps people navigate the “thicket of bureaucracy” around many of the New York State services to which their clients are entitled. The clients of the MHP are often caught up in devastating cycles of homelessness, hospitalization, and incarceration as a result of their condition. The program practices direct community outreach and advocacy by going to psychiatric units, jails, and shelters and focusing on gaining essentials (such as food, housing, medical care, and disability benefits) for their clients. In the process of lending a direct hand to these individuals, the UJC MHP also looks for and finds systemic problems. The program recognizes that there is a large gap between how society lays the law and how the law actually works, but that the law can also be one of the most powerful tools of change. The MHP educates, organizes, and litigates to solve the systemic problems that arise during their direct client advocacy outreach.

Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

At the Urban Justice Center, I would be working within the “Mental Health Project.” The MHP works with severely mentally ill clients on a legal level (directly and systemically) and as an intern I would assist in many aspects of client support while learning about the legal workings of their organization. I will be able to sit-in on, and assist in research to prepare for legal hearings, essentially enacting many of the roles of a paralegal attorney. Additionally, I would be responsible for handling/directing client’s medical requests, such as researching and referring clients to organizations that can aid them in their direct needs. I would also be involved in various direct advocacy projects (in conjunction with other New York City non-profits), possibly including on-site visits to mental health clinics to provide general support. These visits would be with other members of the UJC full time staff, and I would get the opportunity to interact with mentally ill clients. My responsibilities would also include general filing of client charts, research about public policy, and letter drafting to the UJC’s affiliate organizations and public policy-makers. These experiences will heighten my knowledge of the inner-workings of mental health advocacy, and allow me to work “behind-the-scenes” of a very effective and progressive non-profit agency. Further, as I am considering law school after Wesleyan, the opportunity to

carry out many duties of a “paralegal,” work with lawyers, and contribute to cases would be highly rewarding. I truly think the internship would be an ideal combination of legal education and mental health advocacy experience

How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

I have had two forms of contact with the Urban Justice Center thus far. Firstly, a Wesleyan alumnus who works at the Urban Justice Center Mental Health Program named Emilia Sicilia came to speak about public interest law at an event organized by the Career Resource Center. After the event, we had a private conversation in which I expressed my interest in the organization and the fact that I applying to intern within her project. She gave me the name of the Project Coordinator, and told me to contact her via phone to find out more about the specific responsibilities of the internship. Additionally, she told me that the MHP makes a concerted effort to involve interns in as many “events” as possible, meaning being there as assistance during on-site client visits and sitting in on legal hearings. She explained that while there is general filing and clerical work involved, interns also work with the (approximately) fifteen employees in the MHP directly on an evolving basis, aiding with the various projects, which arise throughout the summer. Because the organization is very fluid, they do not know in advance exactly what projects an intern will be able to be involved with over the summer, but she assured me that there is great need for the assistance of the MHP intern and that many Wesleyan students have successfully worked with them before.

In addition to my conversation with Ms. Sicilia, I called the UJC and asked to speak to Maya

Leszczynski, who is the Mental Health Project Coordinator. I was transferred to her, and she clarified the tasks an intern would carry out. She explained to me that the internship is still available and that I qualify, and that the intern would carry many administrative tasks (such as filing, chart organization) as well as work with the Legal Interns on various projects. Additionally, I would process medical requests, do direct advocacy for some clients, and sit in on legal hearings. She explained that there is a strong possibility of participating in research for hearings and presenting it at the hearings, and representing my own clients much like a “paralegal” would. Further, the intern would organize files and do research for existing clients to direct them to resources in NYC, and then be in correspondence with other organizations.

How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

Somewhere between childhood and adolescence, the phrase “people person” began to register in my consciousness. Naturally a social being, my mother would constantly comment on my bordering-on-precociousness comments directed towards anyone and everyone. At the age of three, my brother (four years my senior) was complaining about homework and I looked at him and said: “Adam, life just isn’t always fair.” This innate understanding of the complexities of the social world in which we live was augmented by growing up in a very socially and politically conscious household. This, however, was often juxtaposed by my homogenous experience in an all-White upper middle class suburb. After moving from a very diverse middle class neighborhood in Queens, NY, to Westchester County, the diversity on which I was raised was completely deleted from my daily life. As my social consciousness grew beyond my household and school, I began to recognize injustices every which way. I cannot remember a time in which I was able to comprehend those who walked by the homeless on the streets of New York city (a

place I grew up frequenting often) without checking their pockets, or a time in which my stomach did not churn at the “socially acceptable” racist and ignorant slurs that so frequently speckled peer conversation throughout my adolescence. As I grew into my own, I became less concerned with “fitting in,” and more concerned with ameliorating the lives of those who struggled to fight these injustices daily.

Although I focused heavily on English and History during my high school studies, I was presented with the opportunity to take an introductory psychology course my junior year from a local college professor. Although the cognitive and developmental aspects of psychological studies interested me deeply, the textbook chapter entitled “Abnormal Psychology” peaked my already existing interest in the infinite nuances of human mental functioning. Following this course with AP Psychology, I began to form an academic connection between my innate desire to interact with and help people on a social level and the daily struggles those that suffer from Mental Illness undergo. The prospect of understanding the human mind on a scientific level in order to fight to lessen the social injustices the mentally ill encounter every single day led me to major in Psychology at Wesleyan.

My liberal arts education at Wesleyan has allowed me to tailor and refine my interest in Mental Health work. I struggled during my first few semesters as a Psychology major: I never identified myself as a “science” person, yet I found myself reading research studies and dabbling in the different psychological fields present at Wesleyan. I knew I wanted to study psychopathology and mental illness, and I also knew that I wanted it to be in the most applicable way possible. Unable to actually take a psychopathology course at Wesleyan in my first two years, I sought a professional experience that would allow me to gain insight into a field I knew little about yet thirsted to contribute to. Before this summer experience, I had plans to follow a clinical psychology path and ultimately practice individualized counseling. After talking to my class Dean, I was led to an internship at a Mental Health clinic in Harlem, NY after my sophomore year.

My work at the clinic has undoubtedly shaped and defined my knowledge of mental illness, but perhaps more importantly, it allowed me to learn and witness first-hand the grave injustices the mentally ill low income population in New York City (and the rest of the world) struggle to overcome in order to lead the most fulfilling lives possible. On my first day, I walked into a municipal building and was directed to the basement cafeteria, where I entered a room and found myself for the first time to be in the racial minority. For the rest of the summer, I spent every day at my internship directly interacting with low income, severely vulnerable clients with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and other terminal mental illnesses. The organization is heavily understaffed and under-budget, but the persistence in the face of these challenges that I witnessed from my dedicated co-workers and clients was inspirational beyond words. As a free clinic that accepts and intakes almost any client seeking membership, the client population was comprised of mostly post-hospitalization individuals seeking daily support services in order to maintain a healthy life. Due to the structural limitations of the organization (which seeks to provide care to all those who come through the door), I found myself administering and organizing group therapy sessions (sometimes with over thirty clients in a group) on various topics, including: Symptom Recognition, Mentally Ill Chemical Abusers and Reading for Daily Living. There were days that I thought I could not come back, days that presented struggles beyond what I knew I was capable of facing. However, after three months of talking to clients and helping them navigate the bureaucracies of social security, housing, and healthcare, it was

apparent to me that there could not be a more valuable line of work in which I could combine my psychological interests and my passion for the advocacy of social justice. I started out the summer telling people that this was “definitely not what I want to do,” because I was scared at the prospect of facing the disheartening realities of the lives of the mentally ill. The last day of my work at the organization, a client named Angela told me that through all the hospitals she had been committed to and all the counselors she had worked with, she had never seen the work come as “naturally” to anyone as it had to me. For the first time that summer, I saw the contribution one individual can make on the lives of so many by doing so little, and I became fully committed to helping people like Angela in any way I could.

After my time at CSS, I spent the first semester of my junior year abroad in Paris studying clinical psychology in French. Although my academic experience provided me with new clinical and scientific understandings of mental processing, the learning that occurred on my daily metro commutes proved to be more valuable. Everywhere I turned in Paris, I was confronted with strangers that reminded me so much of the clients I had grown to know as people separate from their mental illnesses the summer before. Homeless people living in the metro, men and women yelling emotionally as they walked the city streets; the mentally ill are left behind everywhere, and shockingly it seemed to be worse in Paris than in New York, which I found hard to believe. I began to come to the realization over my semester abroad that the issues the mentally ill face cannot only be combated through direct advocacy, but the systemic deficiencies in public mental health policy need to be reformed through legislation in order to provide a better future for those who will continue to suffer from these illnesses. In my return to Wesleyan this spring semester, I have begun to follow in depth coursework on the psychology of prejudice and discrimination. I see that the prejudices and stigmas attached to mental illness are the fatal blow to the struggle for equal treatment and access for those touched by psychopathological disorder. In addition, one must remember that in combination with poverty, mental illness can become lost in array of secondary problems to which it contributes (such as substance abuse, violence and theft, and illegal activity to sustain life). The mentally ill population of New York is perhaps the most highly at risk for bureaucratic mistreatment, and not only deserves better treatment but needs to work of social justice advocates to educate the public and the government to the injustices present in the system. While the field of mental health care has made enormous strides in the past few decades, the accessibility to these resources for the poor population of New York is still incredibly limited and complicated. I am eager to be able to help an enormous part of the population who struggle to navigate daily life in the city I love so much.

Through these realizations, I have come to the conclusion that there is a way in which I can enhance my scope of advocacy for mental health issues: through the law. Although previously little known to me, the field of social justice law is an incredibly powerful tool in advocating for these at-risk populations. The Urban Justice Center is committed to social advocacy through a combination of direct client service and legal advocacy. When I originally found this internship, entitled as “MENTAL HEALTH/SOCIAL JUSTICE INTERNSHIP,” I was almost in disbelief at just how perfect it was for my career interests, as if it had been tailored and posted just for me to find. Although I plan to also volunteer at my organization with the clients I grew to know and love last summer, I see this opportunity as the ideal “step further” in my desire to heighten social justice for the mentally ill. In addition to helping thousands annually through direct services, the UJC aids tens of thousands more people through legislative reform in New York State. While watching the “mission statement” videos on the UJC website, I had a

surprisingly emotional reaction to the work they do for New Yorkers. I have never felt so passionate about a potential career opportunity. After Wesleyan, I am still planning on getting an advanced degree in Psychology, and I am now also strongly considering the possibility of law school. I knew therapy could help people, but I have also always had this lingering feeling that I could somehow help

more, in a larger way. The more I learn about social injustice and prejudice towards the mentally ill, the more I want to fight it. The team of professionals at the UJC in the Mental Health Project comprised of social justice lawyers, social workers, and social advocates, would serve as an invaluable learning resource for me as I move forward in my career aspirations. Not only will I be helping the population I care about and study at Wesleyan, I will be learning about the daily life of a social activist lawyer in the most hands-on way possible.

Allana Kembabazi Mental Health Intern, Basic Needs

Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

Basic Needs is a non-profit organization based in the U.K that works in the developing world to increase awareness about mental disabilities and to advocate for the rights of those with mental disabilities. It works with partner organizations in eight countries and I would be interning at the branch in Uganda. The organization collects data about mental disabilities, which then provides information about mental health and practice in the countries. In addition it examines how external environments affect people with disabilities by carrying out surveys.

The organization aims to enable people with mental disabilities and their families to be able to work and support themselves and collaborates with communities to overcome stigmas about mental health. Using the model for Mental Health and Development, the members of the organization engage in capacity building by training community-based workers and NGOs, in mental health mobilization. It also lobbies for the provision of drugs by the government and provides field research to prove the need for these drugs thereby using its research to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

The Basic Needs branch in Uganda works in three rural communities and an urban slum called Kamwokya. They organize health camps and consultation meetings. They also work with partner organizations like the Kamwokya Christian care community. Once employed, I would be placed in one of these communities/locations. I would probably be placed in a village led team where I would be responsible for checking up on mentally ill patients and making sure they are taking their medications. I would receive training in mental illness and side effects so that I can help educate the people about mental health and identify those in the community mentally ill.

I would also be asked to collect information for research where I would go out to the field to evaluate whether or not the programs done by the center are effective. In a typical day during the first three weeks, I would go to a field location and collect evidence for the topic I have been assigned and write up the results, which would then be analyzed by the managers. Interns usually write a research paper on policy, legislation and advocacy in the field of mental health in Uganda. I would probably be asked to do a case study of the laws regarding disabilities in the U.SA and Uganda since I mentioned my interest in that. I would develop a

research thesis and I would have to do field visits for at least three weeks to support my research. At the end I would have to present my findings to my supervisor.

Finally I would do general administrative work like answering the phones and scheduling appointments, which would increase my fluency in Luganda, which is one of the most commonly spoken languages in Uganda. I would also offer logistical support to the office during workshops and seminars and assist with presentations.

How have you communicated with the sponsor and determined mutual interest?

My employer would be Ms Christine Ntulo, the director and program manager for the African branch of Basic Needs. Her office is located at the Kamwokya branch in Uganda. I have submitted an application and we have communicated by email and discussed the job expectations. Currently I have not been offered a place yet since my potential employer required letters of recommendation from me and left the country on a business trip before I could provide her with them. However she will notify me when she returns which is probably within a week's time and let me know of my placement.

How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

I have always been drawn to issues of mental health and the ignorance and stigma that surrounded them especially in my home country Uganda. As a young teenager in a boarding school in Uganda, I often awakened to screams coming from a cubicle in the dorm room in which I slept where a friend writhed on the floor saliva coming out of her mouth. I was instructed by the older girls to remain in bed unless called since they claimed that the demons that possessed my friend would attack me. I watched as the older more prayerful girls were called to pray for my friend and eventually the screams would subside and my friend would wake up with no recollection of what had happened. It was not until I came to Wesleyan and took psychology 105 that I realized it had been epilepsy and not demonic attacks that had bothered my friend throughout high school.

When an uncle that had mental illness was brought to stay with us, I was perplexed by his behavior. He would appear normal until certain times when he behaved erratically. My family took him to a traditional healer who administered what he called a "cleansing" and whipped him thrice a day and forced him to drink herbal medicine. We were assured it would get rid of the "things within him." However all it did was deplete whatever meager resources his immediate family had and yet most lived in the village and were unemployed. He seemed to get better, was back at work in no time and we thought maybe it had worked. However months later he had relapsed and my father received a call to come pick him up in a strange part of town. Rather than the usual disheveled and disoriented young man he expected after such attacks, he was asked to identify whether he knew the body of the young man. My father nodded and he was told he had jumped to his death. He had been the breadwinner in his family and had left a young child and unemployed wife.

This unfortunate event happened last summer while I was working at the Office of Disabilities Services at Wesleyan University. It strengthened my resolve to engage with issues of disabilities especially invisible ones like mental illness and epilepsy and how the community and lawmakers perceive them. As a summer intern at the office, my duties besides general

administrative work involved designing a new website, requesting copyright permission from publishers and acquiring texts in alternate format for student's coursework for the coming fall. As I researched information for the disabilities website, I not only gained skills in research but also gained a greater understanding of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990(ADA) and its Amendment Act of 2008(ADAA). I was impressed by the protection offered to American citizens with disabilities and yet at the same time it caused me to question the services offered by the law in my country. I found myself researching the United Nations recommendations for people with disabilities and analyzing the Mental Health Treatment Act in Uganda.

I also became aware of various activist groups that sought to pressure the government into nondiscriminatory policy making and learnt about the advocacy work and policy research that Basic Needs does. Having interviewed a friend who worked there, I was intrigued by the work of the organization towards supporting anti discriminatory measures and it's work in the public sector as a non-profit organization that seeks to raise awareness about mental disabilities something I had been striving to do. This past fall as a member of the Residential Life staff, I engaged in social justice training and taken sessions on "ableism": a system of exclusion that oppresses people with disabilities on individual and societal levels. I realized ignorance is often the reason why most members of society stigmatize people with disabilities and I found myself critically analyzing my misconceptions and those held by close friends and family members. During this year, I have organized programs for my residents and the broader Wesleyan community and I have strived to raise awareness and bring about critical perspective and action against stigmatization of people with disabilities.

A summer internship at Basic Needs would enable me to hone the skills I have gained and explore what a service-orientated career entails. The majority of the work I would be doing as an intern would be collecting research and evaluations about the programs Basic Needs is doing. I am currently fluent in two of Uganda's major languages, and this would be particularly helpful since the people we interview often can't speak English and I would be able to communicate with them. I would gain skills in public speech, research and advocacy, skills that would be valuable since I intend to go to law school and in the future practice international law focusing on human rights. I would also gain an introduction to policy making since the organization uses its research to influence policymaking and advocate for better treatment and care and this understanding would be helpful in my career. In addition this internship would also give me valuable insight on the effectiveness of international treaties for example I would be able to compare the Uganda Mental Health Treatment Act and whether it fulfills the standards outlined in the United Nations Human Rights Instruments and this would be helpful in the international law class I intend to take next fall.

Furthermore it is a relatively small non-profit organization so I would be able to network and work as a team with people who have dedicated their careers to advocacy of mental disabilities and learn the challenges they have faced working within a legal framework that has not done much to emphasize the rights of peoples with disabilities. I would also be better able to understand the workings of a non profit since having taken a Latin American Economic Development class last fall where I had to analyze the role grassroots movements and non profits play in development for a final project, I am interested in gaining an understanding of what makes them effective as a community based project and the challenges that non profit organizations face in their work. This internship would give me a test of what it would be like to engage in services oriented career and would help me decide if it is truly for me.

However what is most important to me is that I would be involved in raising awareness about invisible disabilities and helping promote a Uganda where everyone's rights are respected. Having grown up in the country and having had relatives with mental disabilities, it is my personal aim to decrease the stigma attached to these invisible disabilities, which oftentimes the government has failed to champion. This internship would give me the opportunity to do that and I would gain a more in depth understanding of why the social stigma exists even though I am aware of some of the social practices regarding disabilities in Uganda.

Kennedy Odede Executive Director, Shining Hope for Communities

Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

In February 2009, I co-founded Shining Hope for Communities (SHC), an organization devoted to poverty alleviation and combating gender inequality in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya where I grew up. Although 1.5 million people live in Kibera, Kenya's government does not acknowledge its existence, refusing to provide infrastructure: schools, hospitals, or sanitation. Women are devastated as men control existing resources. In Kibera, 66% of girls trade sex for food as early as 6. 1 in 5 children do not live to see their fifth birthday. My organization seeks to change these devastating realities.

Last summer, I built The Kibera School for Girls, the first entirely free school in Kibera. Adjacent to the school, we also built the Shining Hope Community Center, which aims to address severe local deficits in sanitation, nutrition, and computer/literacy training. For the past year, I have been the acting volunteer Executive Director of SHC, combining my years as a community leader in Kibera, and the academic and organizational skills I am gaining as a Wesleyan student. However, at this point, despite the early successes of the school and community center, I know that the existing these services are not enough for the community. In Kibera, there are no government clinics, and current clinics run by NGOs or private entities are either too expensive, overcrowded, or poorly managed. All lack community input and oversight. Clinics outside of Kibera are available, but difficult to travel to and usually prohibitively expensive for Kibera residents. Therefore, in Kibera, too many patients end up receiving care at expensive and less qualified dispensaries—or not at all .

A working health clinic in Kibera is desperately needed. Thus, I propose to expand the offerings of the center to include the only accessible health clinic in Kibera: the Johanna Justin-Jinich Memorial Clinic of Kibera. This clinic will be a community-driven initiative staffed by an expert Kenyan nurse five days a week in tandem with community health workers and a full time administrator. One day per week a Kenyan doctor will be in attendance to see more serious cases, triaged throughout the week. The clinic will see a maximum of 25 patients a day to ensure quality, meaning our clinic will have an initial yearly volume of around 7 - 8,000 patients. The clinic will focus on delivering effective primary care: keeping up-to-date medical records, seeing patients regularly and managing chronic problems effectively. The clinic will target the most common causes of illness and death in Kibera, including maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, pneumonia, diarrhea, and tuberculosis—all of which are easily treated and/or prevented.

The development of the clinic and continued oversight will be lead by an extremely diverse and experienced coalition of university students, international business, health, and education experts, and local health professionals in tandem with community members. SHC is also led by a local community leadership committee in Kibera and advised by a Board of Directors in the

United States composed of university professors, leading CEOs, and human rights experts. I am also certified as a community health worker, experience that I plan to utilize in building a community health worker network at this clinic. Even more importantly, however, I built deep and extensive community networks and trust in this community.

As the Executive Director of SHC, and a former Kibera resident my presence this summer in Kibera is absolutely essential. SHC, while thriving, is still an incredibly small and young NGO— and as such all funding we receive goes directly into programs, as we have no extra money. Moreover, my family remains in abject poverty in Kibera, and I have no way of supporting my travel and cost of living this summer to lead this important project without the aid of this grant.

Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

With pledged donor support from individuals and foundations, the clinic will be built this summer, but it will not become a reality without funding for its implementation and initial oversight. I request the support of the Wesleyan Summer Experience Grant to cover my living costs for this summer to set up these crucial initiatives and spread real and sustainable hope to the Kibera community. Below is my proposed schedule for the tasks I will be responsible for overseeing to ensure the clinic's successful construction and future operations.

Details and Timeline of Johanna Justin-Jinich Memorial Clinic Construction (June-August 2010):

Preparation & Planning (currently ongoing): The American Friends of Kenya (AFK) has secured **all** of the medical supplies needed to outfit the clinic. I have also established a partnership with the CDC, located just outside Kibera, who will treat any patients with illnesses that exceed our capacities, provide clinical expertise and oversight, and encourage their staff to volunteer at our clinic. I will secure the land for the clinic, as well a permit to operate a health clinic from the Kenyan government.

Weeks 1-3 Staff Training: I will hire our doctor and nurse, using my extensive networks in Nairobi. I will work with a midwife traveling with AFK to train a group of community women to be home birth attendants, using 1,000 already-donated midwife kits. I will utilize my years of experience as a HIV/AIDS community health worker and HIV/AIDS counselor in Kibera to further train the volunteer health worker team of this clinic.

Weeks 3-9 Construction: Using local community volunteers and architects, we will construct our health center. The clinic will include a waiting room, two examination rooms, a supply room, and a pharmacy. We will share existing resources at The Kibera School for Girls such as clean water and a bio-latrine center for sanitation purposes. I will coordinate this construction.

Week 9-11 Set Up: While supplies and medicines are being moved in and inventoried, the staff will convene to practice procedures. The nurse will see the 25 patients per day on a first-come first-serve basis to eliminate lines and crowding. A number of these spots will be reserved each day for follow-up appointments and emergencies. If necessary high-risk patients will be referred to the CDC or given an appointment with our doctor. I will oversee the set up.

Weeks 12 Opening and Sustainability: Currently the least expensive clinic in Kibera charges 200 shillings for a consultation (equivalent to \$2), which is prohibitively expensive for Kibera residents. Patients will pay only a token fee per consultation, significantly less than what they pay at unlicensed for-profit "clinics." To compete with lay pharmacy drug prices, we

will apply to the Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS), which provides drugs and supplies to non-profit health clinics in Kenya at half the price of market drugs. Clinic salaries will be supported by joint microfinance ventures with The Kibera School for Girls. Any future budgetary gaps to re-supply will be funded by Shining Hope for Communities and AFK. AFK has also committed to taking medical teams to the clinic every summer. I will ensure that all sustainability measures are successfully implemented.

How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

Since founding the Kibera School for Girls and the Shining Hope Community Center last summer, I have been in daily contact with the staff of Shining Hope in Kenya and community members who utilize the services of the organization. It would be an understatement to say that residents of Kibera are thrilled at the possibility of establishing a new health center that will attend to the health needs they identify as most critical at prices low enough to be actually accessible. To demonstrate the extent to which the people of Kibera are in support of the clinic, I have attached a letter from a community member, Kepha Otieno, which was translated by William Omolo. If the CRC grants me the opportunity—this summer I will work my hardest for an incredibly inspiring, if non-traditional, employer: the Kibera community itself. Everything that I have worked to build in Kibera, and everything I will do in the future, will be under the guidance, support, and supervision of my community.

How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

I lived inside Kibera—Africa’s largest slum—for twenty-three of my twenty-five years of life. To be honest, I never dreamed that I would ever get out of Kibera, let alone go to college. I am inspired to pursue a career in global human rights and poverty alleviation on a large scale because of my own personal experiences.

The oldest in a poor family of eight, I watched my three sisters fail to get an education. My father abused my mom and kept our family hungry by spending our little money on alcohol, refusing to send my sisters to school. Resisting, my mom taught me about gender equality. Starting at age seven, I sold peanuts on the road to put my siblings and myself through school. Despite my efforts, two of my sisters had to drop out after becoming teenage mothers—one impregnated as the result of a gang rape. I saw many women’s lives crushed like my mother’s and sisters’, and I dreamed of finding a way to change the position of women in my society.

After seeing the tragedies that befell one of my dear friends, Cathy Majuma, I was further prompted to take action. Cathy wanted to learn about the world, and through hard work she got a sponsor to pay her school fees. However, her mother burned Cathy’s belongings, angry that she was not doing enough housework. Cathy then moved in with her father, who abused and impregnated her. Soon after, Cathy told me that she found a lump in her breast, but that she was unable to afford medical care, as she could not even feed her infant son. Because I did not have any resources I could not find a doctor to help and I never saw Cathy again. She disappeared, and I was reminded of one of Kibera’s harshest lessons: there is such a thing as too late. I began to work as a community organizer and activist.

The first time I ever had extra money, 20 cents in 2005, I bought a soccer ball and started SHOFCO, the first youth group in Kibera founded and run by slum residents. I ran SHOFCO for 4 years with no money, but with faith in people’s abilities to change their own lives. I expanded this group into one of the largest organizations in the slum. SHOFCO worked

with 3,000+ people on AIDS education, female empowerment, microfinance, sanitation, and health. However, my work with SHOFCO was inherently limited. I did not have access to financial resources. Furthermore, without any formal education I lacked organizational skills and access to experts or mentors who could collaborate—enhancing the effectiveness of my work.

When my own dream of pursuing a college education came true, I began to work harder to use all that I am learning here to make positive change in my community. During my first year at Wesleyan I took several life changing courses, such as Introduction to Sociology, International Politics, and several writing classes, that expanded my horizons. These classes furthered my commitment to fighting global inequity—and began to give me the skills to do so. In the summer of 2009 I co-founded the Kibera School for Girls, the first free school in Kibera, and the nonprofit Shining Hope for Communities.

The Wesleyan Summer Experience will serve as the critical next step in my personal growth, and in the growth of my organization. The Kibera School for Girls is simply not enough on its own to truly make a lasting difference in my community. Through the school project I have learned a lot about education, however establishing the clinic will give me crucial skills for my future.

Global health inequality is one of the most significant issues that I will face throughout my career. I currently have a first-hand understanding of health problems, but I have never had the opportunity learn about a solution through direct application. Building the health clinic will provide me with critical understanding and practice in implementing effective community health infrastructure. This experience will enable me to engage many of the mentors and experts I have met at Wesleyan—providing an unprecedented opportunity to put the skills I have learned here to use. This project also broadens what I have done in the past. I have never before had the resources or infrastructural support to make a health center a reality. Through learning by doing, I will be able to apply this knowledge to my future career, bringing deep on-the-ground insights and experiences to my future work.

The addition of this clinic will be central the success of my organization as a whole, as our mission rests on integrated links between girls' education and accessible community services. The ultimate success of the Kibera School for Girls and the Community Center are the beginning of a movement that can and will change the lives of women living in the world's most horrific conditions. I plan to continue to run Shining Hope for Communities for to ensure its long-term success.

After I graduate from Wesleyan I will pursue a joint law degree and M BA. I want to be an international human rights lawyer, with an MBA focused on social entrepreneurship. I believe that this combination will allow me to continue to develop cutting edge solutions to the world's most devastating human problems, focused on health, education, and poverty. I will implement solutions to these problems, pursuing a high-level career at some of the world's leading humanitarian organizations.

Attending Wesleyan and being able to apply for The Wesleyan Summer Experience Grant is beyond the scope of my wildest fantasies. Because of the years I spent in Kibera, I intimately understand what suffering is like. However, my desire to pursue a career working on such issues is motivated by own recognition that I am literally *the* lucky one. I am the first person to leave Kibera and attend a four-year- accredited college. My life experiences in Kibera combined with the skills I am gaining with a Wesleyan education and through the Summer

Experience Grant will enable me to combat the circle of poverty: I was born poor, raised poor and will return to help those who are poor like me to change the world. The Wesleyan Summer Experience Grant will launch me into the rest of my life changing my own trajectory as well as the lives of countless others.