Summer 2015 Fellow Reports:

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Last semester I was studying abroad in Delhi, India, taking courses in the Hindi language, political science through a feminist lens, and psychology comparing the Indian and American context. While abroad, I learned a great deal about myself – my habits, my likes and dislikes.

This summer, I spent in New York City working with two organizations, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and Masa NY. NCLR is the nation’s largest civil rights and advocacy organization for Latinos and allied organizations. With NCLR, I worked at the Northeastern regional office under the Affiliate Member Services, which provides a platform or network for community organizations regionally as well as nationwide. I completed administration and office work, which differed greatly from my internship at Masa.

Masa NY is an organization that serves the South Bronx, which is thought to be one of the poorest districts in the country. The organization provides services to the Mexican community primarily. I worked alongside a Middlebury alum who is the executive director of the organization. With Masa, I was teaching a weekly social justice workshop to middle school students.

With the national and global events concerning migration, racism, corruption, it is dire to engage with issues of injustice and focus on how to inform and equip the younger generation with the vocabulary and awareness. While at Masa I also worked on a project called the Mexican Initiative for Deferred Action (MIDA), which supports organizations and individuals seeking
administrative immigration relief. This project was developed in partnership with the Mexican government to assist the Mexican citizens now residing in New York City. Most Mexican migrants to New York City come from the poorest region in Mexico and many only speak indigenous languages. This project is in response to President Obama’s executive action to expand opportunities to qualifying undocumented childhood arrivals and parents of citizens. Thus, I spent much of my summer doing outreach and conducting screenings for Deferred Action Childhood Arrival applications, which would provide undocumented individuals with a workers permit, a drivers license, and many opportunities, big and small. However, this is not a path to citizenship but a small way to address the broken immigration system.

This summer’s experience truly solidified my interest in immigration reform and public health. NCLR is holding a Health Summit in San Antonio this month, which I would love to attend. The community organization in which I have managed Project: BECOMING Pilsen out of is also an affiliate of NCLR. This summer Project: BECOMING Pilsen ran its third summer program, serving an entirely new group of girls ages 13 to 18. Curriculum topics that were covered included body image and representation, reproductive rights and presidential candidates, a brief history of feminism, mental illness, and introductions to meditation.