

**Amairany Fuentes, 2019, American Studies
Bridge Builders USA; Memphis, TN
Multicultural Alumni Network Program**

During this summer I had the opportunity to intern at a nonprofit based in Memphis, TN named Bridge Builders. Bridge Builders is one of the few nonprofits in the Greater Memphis Area that focuses on increasing youth voice and youth empowerment. Within BRIDGES, I was the community action intern for the summer and worked alongside a Carleton Alum on many different projects. Throughout the summer BRIDGES hosts multiple summer conferences for students of diverse backgrounds, and each conference has a community action day, where students are able to interact with their community in unique ways. As the community action intern, I was responsible for the development of each community action workshop and the logistics behind them. I already had some familiarity with some of the work I was assigned, considering that I had previously interned at BRIDGES; the previous summer, I had also been the community action intern. I decided to return once again to BRIDGES because of the way unique way the organization allowed me to do social justice work within a community. The organization and programs are continuously evolving, and every year I have interned at BRIDGES, I have learned something new. The way in which the organization functions allows for changes in their programming every year, which provided me some challenges as an intern. I had to help develop and become familiar with new community action workshops that allowed students to interact with the Memphis community in effective ways. This summer BRIDGES led three incredible community action workshops such as a Social Entrepreneur workshop, a Blight workshop, and an Educational Justice workshop. In each workshop students learned how to participate and actively do something about each issue. Through my work as a community action intern I learned how to maintain a balanced schedule and about the importance of community

partners and how to cultivate those relationships; without our community partners our community action workshops would not be as successful.



When I was not focusing on planning a community action workshop, I was part of the youth and adult equity team for a youth leadership institute that is coordinated by Bridge Builders. The leadership institute is a week long, overnight conference that serves as an initial training for the new youth fellows that will be working at BRIDGES throughout the year. The youth and adult equity team was in charge of developing the schedule and curriculum for the training of the incoming youth fellows. Considering that the leadership institute would be a 5 days long, we decided to divide into 5 different groups. I worked alongside two youth interns that would be part of the fellowship in this year. What I often found challenging was the team's goal to reach youth and adult equity because I would be considered adult but also a young person; I did not know what my positionality would be within the team. Being a college student, navigating certain spaces became something I thought of often, because my positionality changed depending who I was working with. Overall I enjoyed having the opportunity to work with other youth organizers.



Lastly I was also able to form some community partnerships that would help me with an issue I have been working on for a few years. During the summer I was connected to a local professor at Rhodes College that worked with undocumented students on her campus.

Throughout the past two years I have organized many events on Carleton's campus to bring awareness to the issues faced by undocumented students, and this summer I was able to provide a useful insight to another campus. While I met with the professor from Rhodes, we spoke about ways to provide better support for undocumented students and how to empower students to create significant change in their college. I was very excited and happy to see how my experiences at Carleton could help other people outside the campus.

I had an amazing and very busy summer. I would like to thank the Rachel Leatham for her support during this internship , the Carleton College Career Center and the MCAN Program, which funded this amazing experience. I am profoundly happy that I received the opportunity to do this work and grow in many different ways.

