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Center of Concern
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A Kellogg Internship grant: Hearing these words at Notre Dame would make one think of a summer that took me away to a foreign developing country where my mind would be stretched to its limits of understanding, and one would guess that I would have an experience where my interactions and experiences would change my life view forever. But my internship was actually in Washington DC, a city which some consider one of the most powerful and influential in the world, where I did not experience the same conditions that many of my fellow Kellogg interns probably did. However, that did not mean that it was any less influential on my life.

I applied for the Center of Concern as my first choice, because as a Political Science and Peace Studies major with a minor in Catholic Social Teaching, it seemed like an internship that was made for me. I did not know quite what to expect, but I hoped that I could use my gifts and passions for the good of the organization, and it turned out to be a truly incredible, mutually beneficial experience.

The Center of Concern is a think tank of sorts which uses its location in Washington DC to be on the cutting edge of information, and then approaches that information through a lens of Catholic Social Teaching to give and to report to their subscribers. The Education for Justice Project works particularly to create resources for teachers to use in the classroom—mainly targeting high school audiences, but also for use in college and pastoral settings. My job when I first arrived was to sift through the multitude of already-created materials to see what needed updating and what needed expansion. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the materials involving my greatest passion, peace and nonviolence, was missing some major components, as

well as those surrounding international development aid. After a conversation with Sister Katherine, these two subjects became my two big projects.

The Project's big push for the year overall was to update the format of their resources by changing them from flat handouts on paper to interactive activities and engaging pieces. So, combining these goals, I created two new resources. The first was a "mind-map" of sorts revolving around nonviolence that utilized the program called "Articulate." I compiled a large database that included interactive timelines, a flipbook, a short film, clickable aspects, drawings, pictures and posters, and other multimedia to explain the theories, history, and effectiveness of nonviolence. The second was a short film akin to Annie Leonard's "The Story of Stuff" (although not quite as professionally done) describing the process of economic development using animation and video software, narrated by a script I wrote based on a paper I had written for a class last year.

Along with these two projects, I worked on other informational background research for other resources that had either been made or were possibilities for future projects. I attended many conferences and lectures learning about child labor, sweatshops, child soldiers, workers' rights, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nuclear disarmament, and conscientious objection, along with many other topics. I believe this was truly beneficial for both the Center and myself. I was able to attend these incredible learning opportunities, and then bring back the information for them to use.

As someone who is not naturally technologically minded, using the new programs and software was both incredibly challenging and tremendously rewarding. I know how boring having to read a handout can be, so it was very exciting to have an opportunity to help change the ways that some teachers approach providing information. Sister Katherine and others

working in the center brought a lot of enthusiasm to my ideas, and seeing the general excitement over my finished nonviolence project was remarkably rewarding. Being able to envision my work being used in the classroom to help more people learn about nonviolence was truly humbling and stimulating.

Beyond just stretching my capacity to understand software, Sister Katherine sincerely tried to better us as individuals as well. We had weekly intern roundtable meetings where we discussed our projects, our personal strengths, and different methods of discernment for life. These roundtables not only helped me by enabling to bounce my ideas off other people, but also by thinking more in depth about my strengths, my abilities, and my future. Sister Katherine had no obligation to help us think about these, but it really made a large difference in my personal growth that she made the effort to encourage these discussions.

My experience at the Center of Concern definitely affected my life in more ways than I expected and, returning from it, I think I may have experienced more culture shock upon returning home than I did after spending a year in Ireland. Throughout my entire life, social justice has served as a centerpiece for my way of thinking and world understanding. As a Peace Studies and Political Science double major, I spend a lot of time thinking about the problems of the world. Most of that has been very self-initiated, as some of my closest friends are interested in similar subjects, though not as passionate about these issues as I am. But this summer I got the opportunity to be surrounded by people who are just as crazy about social justice as I am, and I learned so much from all of them. Sister Katherine provided me with innumerable opportunities to take full advantage of being in Washington, DC, and in doing so, I discovered so much about the world. Due to a movie and scintillating discussion that followed, I now am boycotting anything but Fair Trade chocolate in my life, an astounding thing due to my chocoholic nature. I

have learned how to live much more sustainably and decrease my carbon footprint and negative impact upon the world, and I have shifted my life accordingly. And being surrounded by people who were doing similar things, made it a lot easier. However, when I returned home, the culture shock of not being around people who make a conscious effort to live sustainably and justly made it almost difficult for me to fit back in. It was a very interesting and life-changing experience.