Mid-Semester Report

As this midterm is due, I have been interning at the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) for a month and a half (since September 1st). Over the course of my time at CJJ so far, I have learned a lot about the criminal justice system and the disparities that face youth as a whole as well as the disparities between white and minority youth in the system. Along with that, I have also learned of the impact that incarceration or entry into the criminal justice system has on youth in terms of their future, their education, and their interactions with members of authority, be that police officers, judges, principals, teachers, and more. CJJ is a governmental group that works with state advisory groups regarding regulation and policies regarding the juvenile justice system in our country. Thus their work focuses on the local, state and federal government levels while also in conjunction with the judicial and legislative branches specifically, although depending a lot on the funding and policy stances of the executive branch administration.

Through my work and observation in both team meetings, coalition meetings and focus groups, I have found that CJJ is both process and outcome oriented. They and members of their coalition always have their eye on the ball in terms of what they want their outcome to be, but with that comes the focus on the process that it will take to get to that outcome eventually. The purpose of the CJJ is to minimize the number of minors from entering the courts system and to provide minors with opportunities along with their families to live just, healthy and fulfilling lives without getting caught in the court and juvenile system. Their goals are to improve the conditions for those minors who are in the system currently or will be in the future.

At CJJ, I am a communications intern along with two other interns. My supervisor is Naomi Smoot-Evans. She is the executive director of CJJ who assigns us different tasks that need to be completed. In her role at CJJ, she oversees all aspects of the coalition ranging from membership to fundraising to initiatives regarding government, leadership, juvenile justice reform, communications, various trainings and more. In terms of the office power structure, Naomi is at the top, supervising everything. Under her is the senior associate, communications and training individual, LaToria, and then Kristen, the administrative and youth partnership assistant and then at the bottom of the ladder are the interns. At times, LaToria and Kristen will also email us regarding projects that need our help that they are overseeing and facilitating. However, we all report to Naomi regarding what we are doing, what needs to be done and more.

Thus far, I have been working on a variety of projects and tasks ranging from creating a spreadsheet for collecting bios for presenters at CJJ’s Annual Conference which is online this year due to covid. In this role, I have reached out directly to presenters to collect their personalized biographies to include in the program for the conference. I have also worked on my first, of hopefully many, blog posts that will be posted on CJJ’s website. The blog post I wrote discusses a new venture that the coalition has worked on during the past year with other organizations. Along with these projects, I have also personally aided my supervisor in researching data points, statistics, studies and more to incorporate into various presentations and speeches she has had to give thus far. I have also been working with my supervisor on a peer resource guide regarding racial and ethnic disparities. For this project, I have been tasked with different sections to research and write about which will be included in this published guide.

My goals coming into this internship as mentioned in my earlier reflection were, “about helping others and putting others before myself in all regards.” Since then my goals have remained steady but have also expanded. My goal is to get as much professional writing experience as possible to help me in the future in whatever industry and career I pursue after college.