

I worked as a full time intern at The After Prison Initiative at the Open Society Institute for two and a half months this summer. The After Prison Initiative grants money in four major funding categories: justice reinvestment, new leadership development, eradication of civil barriers to reintegration, and restorative reentry practices that all aid in supporting the program mission; “to work against the criminalization of race and poverty by promoting public policies and private initiatives that support successful reentry and reintegration of people returning from prison” (After Prison Initiative). When I began my internship I was unfamiliar with the prison system and those in particular who come in contact with it, so much of my initial work was focused around becoming familiar with the issues. People I worked with were very helpful in providing me with reading materials. In addition I was given the opportunity to meet with people who have spent time in prisons and jails, speak with specialists in the field, and attend discussion sessions and meetings among individuals from various organizations in order to fully grasp the depth and complexity of the prison system and the ways in which individuals come in and out of that system. I was given the opportunity to not only listen in as a bystander, but to partake in the conversations at hand.

Following are the various projects I worked on:

Publication Collection

The first three weeks of my internship were spent collecting all the important publications the grantees and The After Prison Initiative had produced since 1999. After all the publications had been collected I made a database that listed the publications by title, genre, year, organization, etc. so that documents could be easily located when needed. The database was also created with the intent to be used as a way to organize publications that would be listed on the new Criminal Justice Initiative web page that will be launched sometime this Fall.

Forum Series

July and August I intermittently worked on collecting information and generating ideas for a monthly forum series to be held throughout the next year. The forums were designed to cover key re-entry issues and were aimed at an audience that was well informed on the topics so sessions would not be simply informational but more in depth discussions tackling the issues. I was responsible for identifying topics for the forums in conjunction with The After Prison Initiative Director and Program Officer, collecting lists of people who would be potential speakers and potential invites, and drafting invitations and announcement letters.

Conferences

During my time at The After Prison Initiative I was invited to sit in on the planning of a few different conferences slated for the next year. This was a particularly interesting opportunity because these meetings consisted of a number of key individuals in the field. During these planning sessions people discussed what they believed to be the key issues, obstacles, etc. at hand and presented possible courses of action. I felt that this was a

particularly unique opportunity to have a first hand look at the latest thoughts and trends in prison re-entry practices.

Report Review

The last part of my work was spent reviewing and summarizing an extensive report being written for The After Prison Initiative. During this time I met both with the Director and the Program Officer as well as with the author of the report in order to discuss the report itself as well as the design the report was purposing.

The After Prison Initiative was a small program with only four people total (including myself). Since there were so few people working I was given a lot of freedom and responsibility to conduct my work on my own as well as being given the opportunity to work with others in the field who were connected to the program. I found the work very interesting and learned far more than I ever could have imagined from the experience. Most interestingly I found that issues of prisoner re-entry are connected to a host of other complicated issues (income, education, distribution of resources, housing, employment, etc.). Addressing issues of prisoner re-entry seems to me as though it is a way of addressing a host of social problems in unconventional ways. I encourage anyone interested in finding more out about prisoner re-entry or anything regarding prison practices to look up the Criminal Justice Initiative at the Open Society Institute or to contact members of the Bard Prison Initiative right here on the Bard Campus.