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AS A SPRING 2015 WASHINGTON FELLOW of the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement (CCDE), I was an Intern for the Americas at Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights. This organization is a living memorial to Robert F. Kennedy, with programs aiming to promote and protect human rights as well as strengthen democratic processes around the globe through strategic litigation, capacity building, and advocacy initiatives. I was able to work on a variety of litigation and advocacy projects addressing today's human rights situations in Latin America. This brought me to work towards the CCDE's mission to bring civility to public dialogue and democratic engagement in policy-making. Where much of today's politics lack both civility and democratic engagement, human rights and social justice are issues that cannot fall victim to divisions. Working to influence American foreign policy and public opinion required both civility and democratic engagement.

More specifically, I heavily researched the case of the 43 Ayotzinapa students who have been missing since September in Guerrero, Mexico. I attended several events at the Hill and the Woodrow Wilson International Center's Mexico Institute and Latin America Program where I met political figures from Mexico and participated in discussions on Ayotzinapa. Towards the end of my time in Washington, I met some of the parents of the missing students at an event at Howard University. I also closely monitored Guatemala's genocide trial against former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt and the renewal process of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). I was thus able to work on a press release and op-ed on these issues.

For my research paper, I utilized the work I was doing at my internship. In the report, titled ["Ayotzinapa and the Crossroads of Accountability Precedents: Mexico's Enforced Disappearance Crisis as a Case Study of the Human Rights Paradox,"](#) I analyzed the developments of the Ayotzinapa case in the context of recent neighboring models of accountability in human rights from the U.S. and Guatemala, and concluded with policy recommendations to Mexico, the U.S., and the international community. I even presented this report when I returned to Cal at the 2015 Berkeley Law Legal Studies Undergraduate Research Conference.

Other projects I worked on at RFK included being part of an inter-organizational steering committee to discuss strategies in the Colombian peace process. On the issue of Haitian statelessness in the Dominican Republic as a result of the redefinition of citizenship in the nation's constitution, I participated in a closed-door meeting at the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations with RFK staff and human rights defenders from the Dominican Republic and the

Bahamas. Moreover, I stayed updated on the recent normalization talks between the United States and Cuba as well as the Summit of the Americas in Panama.

The most memorable moments of my internship occurred in mid-March when the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, of the Organization of American States, held its 154th session of hearings on human rights throughout the Americas. In the hearing on the “Human Rights Situation of Child Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in the United States,” I was fortunate enough to sit in the petitioners’ seating with the RFK directors, which included Kerry Kennedy, Santiago Canton, Frank La Rue, and Angelita Baeyens, all prominent human rights lawyers. Among others, I attended the hearings of Mexico’s situation of enforced disappearance.

That same week, my executive director, Santiago Canton, testified in front of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in a hearing on the “[Deepening Political and Economic Crisis in Venezuela](#).” Watching a testimony that I worked on was assurance that I am on the right track towards achieving my goals in life of participating in the making of foreign policy.

Ultimately, what I took away from my internship at Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights was an immense interest and experience in Latin American human rights and transitional justice. Previous to D.C., my work in human rights had not included Latin America. Now, I can add that to my experience in the U.S., Southeast Asia, Europe, and Africa. After translating legal materials and news articles to and from Spanish, I have now mastered reading and writing in Spanish, one of my native languages. I am also more familiar with international and Inter-American mechanisms of human rights commitments.

I am extremely grateful to the Center on Civility & Democratic Engagement for funding my semester at the UC Washington Center and to Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights for providing me with an exciting internship that entailed a lot of responsibilities and a friendly environment that supported my academic interests. UCDC has been in my undergraduate plan since before I was a freshman at Cal Day 2012. After returning to Berkeley from this program three years later on Cal Day 2015, I am now sure I want to be a professor of history and international law engaged in decision-making in American foreign policy and in human rights advocacy.