

Learning From the Past - Interning with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast

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Catarina Vazquez newcomb@tulane.edu

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Since January, I have had the opportunity to work as an Oral History Intern with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast. As a Texas native who now lives in Louisiana, I have always admired the work that Planned Parenthood does to protect access to reproductive healthcare, offer free and low-cost services to all people, and provide comprehensive sex education. This was my first semester working as an intern with the Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health program, and I was drawn to my internship site as Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast serves both of my states, and I wanted to understand how I could better support its work. Through my internship, I

have been able to learn more about Planned Parenthood as an organization by researching the role that it has played in the state of Louisiana since its inception.

This year marks the fortieth year of Planned Parenthood in the state of Louisiana. As part of its celebration of this milestone, Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast created a new project, the Oral History Project, to document the history of the organization and remember those who have played key roles. I have spent the past semester working with those on the Oral History Project team to identify past, present, and future leaders within the organization, organize and conduct interviews with these individuals, and create visual products that tell their stories in an accessible, engaging way. To create a complete representation of the history and contextualize these interviews, it was important that we also worked with archival materials. The challenge of doing this was that we did not have a centralized database with these records and had to seek out photos, reports, and newspaper clippings from as far back as forty years. Thankfully, the Newcomb Archives and Vorhorff Library maintains a collection of Planned Parenthood files, so I was able to work with Bernadette Floresca, the archivist, to get access to these materials for our research. For weeks, I worked alongside several service learning students to search for archives detailing Planned Parenthood's involvement in Louisiana. We compiled a list of documents that were relevant to our project, and they helped scan photos and design an exhibit in which we could display all of what we had found.

On April 4th, Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast held the Baton Rouge Spring Event at Chelsea's Live. Much of the work we had done throughout the semester was in preparation for this event, as it was to be the first presentation of the Oral History Project product. I created transcripts for my interviews and pulled quotes from some of the founders to feature throughout the exhibit. One of the interviewees, Dr. Holley Galland Haymaker, shared a box of files, pins, and t-shirts with us to display as well. Finally, in our research in the Newcomb Archives, we found a letter from Holley to another founder, Terri Bartlett, about the need for an expansion to Baton Rouge. My supervisor wanted to organize the event around this letter, so I worked with Bernadette to go through the necessary procedures to use this document. I had the opportunity to travel to Baton Rouge to set up the display and work the event, and I loved partaking in the celebration and connecting with members of the Planned Parenthood community. We had a lot of engagement with the exhibit, and it was great to see that people were invested in Planned Parenthood's history!

I have truly enjoyed my internship and have learned so much from the interviews I have conducted and the people I have worked alongside. Our next steps include interviewing leaders in New Orleans, creating a video with clips from the interviews, expanding and preparing our exhibit for gallery display, and digitizing the archives. I am honored to help lead this project and am excited to continue working as the Oral History Intern over the summer!