

I Am Abortion Freedom Fighter

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This fall, I spent my fourth semester as the Public Affairs intern at Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast. After applying this past summer, I was accepted into the [Rise Up Youth Champions Initiative](#) with institutional endorsement from my organization. Rise Up partnered with the Packard Foundation to launch the Youth Champions Initiative to invest in young champions who lead projects in sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice in Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Rwanda and the U.S. South (Mississippi and Louisiana). Due to the ongoing pandemic, the intensive incubator has been occurring over Zoom since October 2021 and will continue into February

2022. Through YCI, I have been able to attend lectures and discussions from speakers around the world on various topics, including Abortion Stigma and Access, Gender-Based Violence, and Self-Care for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Advocates. The members of the YCI community are medical practitioners, abortion providers, comprehensive sexuality education advocates, entrepreneurs, and even undergraduate students like me. I never thought I would be offered the opportunity to collaborate with such a vibrant community of advocates, especially on a global scale. I have been able to cultivate a broader cultural understanding of Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and Rwanda by listening and discussing SRHR with my YCI peers. Last week, representatives from the Packard Foundation took the three Youth Champions from Louisiana to lunch in New Orleans. I was able to make great connections with the mentors from Packard and listen to the advice they could offer after decades in the SRHR field.

Additionally, my internship at Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast sent me to Jackson, Mississippi for three days to support our Southeast affiliates. On December 1, 2021, the Supreme Court was hearing oral arguments for and against Mississippi's Gestational Age Act. While many organizers headed to D.C., Planned Parenthood Southeast and [SHERo Mississippi](#) believed that they belonged in the state they called home. It was truly an honor to organize alongside all of the organizations that showed up for Mississippi, including the Louisiana Coalition for Reproductive Freedom, Planned Parenthood Texas, Frontera Fund, Lilith Fund, and more. I proudly followed the lead of the Black women that run SHERo Mississippi as they organized one of the most powerful abortion rallies I've ever been to. I was inspired by the unapologetic loyalty they offered to their cause, hence their slogan of "Abortion Freedom Fighters." As we chanted, "I am an abortion freedom fighter," I felt like I was channeling Audre Lorde's concept of the erotic. Thank you, Planned Parenthood, for trusting and believing in me enough to support my involvement in Rise Up and send me to Mississippi. This has been my favorite internship semester yet!