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Hey everyone!

I just finished my second week interning at the New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council (NOCDC) and I've already learned so much and am so excited for all that's to come during the rest of the summer. The NOCDC's mission is to promote citizen diplomacy- the notion that the ordinary citizen can help shape foreign relations- "one handshake at a time." NOCDC's mission is carried out by submitting proposals to the State Department International Visitor Leadership Program and facilitating programs for international visitors that come to New Orleans. My first week we were hosting a delegation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on the topic of ethnic conflict. I was able to sit in on a meeting between the DRC delegation and two local Mardi Gras Indian chiefs. It was amazing to witness two groups of people

from very different backgrounds connect over shared experiences. One of my favorite moments was when one of the Mardi Gras Indian chiefs talked about the importance of Congo Square to the New Orleans African American population and a DRC delegate responded that he was happy to know there was such a place in New Orleans named after Congo.

When the NOCDC isn't actively hosting a delegation, I am tasked with submitting proposal inquiries to the State Department contacts, researching potential local partnerships, and learning about the steps involved in programming from initial inquiry to the arrival of international delegates. An intern who started working before me is working on his own program so the end goal is being able to do the same. I really appreciate how much the staff trusts me and how much they want me to learn and be involved with the work that NOCDC does. My responsibilities relate back to NCI's mission in a number of ways, but the most obvious example is that I was recently researching community partners for the upcoming Cabo Verde delegation visiting to learn about combatting sexual and gender based violence against women and children. One of the things I love the most about my internship is that I'm simultaneously learning more about New Orleans organization and other countries, such as Cabo Verde.

I had never heard about the NOCDC before beginning my search for a summer internship. I loved the idea of staying in New Orleans for the summer, but there honestly aren't many organizations that apply to much focus in International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies. I did a quick Google search for international relations internships in New Orleans and found the [NOCDC website](#). After finding the website, I sent an email attached with my resume and my current supervisor emailed me back asking to set up an interview. I interviewed and was offered the position! While I had initially thought there was no way I could find a local internship that combined my interests, I couldn't be more wrong. I have already begun to learn about cultural diplomacy and later this summer the NOCDC is hosting delegations from Syria and Israel/Palestine!