

# The Barbara Harlow Internship for Human Rights & Social Justice



The University of Texas at Austin  
Bridging Disciplines Programs  
School of Undergraduate Studies



Carlos Pinon | pinoncar@utexas.edu

College of Liberal Arts | Environmental Science | BDP in Public Policy

## Academics and Environment

The Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice is dedicated to work at the crux of academics and advocacy. The main inquiry that I held upon entry to the Center was aligned with its mission of interdisciplinarity: **Under the framework of international human rights law, how are policies implemented to either uplift or suppress communities through environmental harm?**

From *quilombos* in Brazil to the *Lumad* of the Philippines, I found that an exploration of **indigenous rights** offered an avenue upon which I could cultivate my understanding of environmental justice at the Center. During my time as an intern, I led a discussion with our team on the Dakota and Lakota peoples in Standing Rock, examining how settler colonialism has informed the systemic policing of native peoples and their land.

## Archives and Research

At the Center, administrative work remained engaging as it primarily involved the perusal of archival materials and research on other human rights-related opportunities.

**The Michael Tigar Archive.** Last semester, prominent criminal defense attorney Michael Tigar donated his papers to the Center. I worked on adding photographs and court transcripts from his time as a representative for Terry Lynn Nichols of the Oklahoma City bombings to our digital registry.



**Human Rights Internship & Employment Database.** This list of human rights organizations may be found under *Student Opportunities* on the Center's website.

## Advocacy and Abolition

Throughout this year, the Rapoport Center will continue to focus its programming on the theme of **“Prison Abolition and Human Rights: From the Local to the Global.”** In question are the contradictions among human rights movements as they employ criminalization as a punitive measure despite longstanding support for improved prison conditions, due process, and the end of capital punishment.

**War Don Don.** In February, the Center hosted its first event under this theme, a screening of the film *War Don Don* (2010). Directed by Rebecca Richman Cohen, the documentary recounted the trial of RUF leader Issa Sesay from the perspective of both parties in court. After the program, we were joined by Paul Clark—a member of Sesay's defense team—for a discussion on prosecution as a means to address human rights violations.

## Barbara Harlow



Barbara Harlow (1948–2017)

Although I never knew Barbara Harlow, she had long been a fixture in the activist spaces that I frequented as an undergraduate. Even before my internship, I recognized that her work—which examines fiction produced in times of resistance—was impactful for how it centered marginal voices. I've further engaged with Barbara's lessons on liberation through my work at the Center and will carry them beyond my time here. Her tenacity and commitment to capturing the visions that many hold under oppression for self-preservation will forever inform my worldview.

## Personal Development

**Growth.** Most—if not all—assignments, meetings, events, etc. at the Center challenge you. Over the past semester, I've learned so much while becoming more assured in my work and confident that I can engage with those whom I admire for their resolve.

**Future plans.** My work at the Center has helped me aspire to a position at a non-profit or private foundation that supports projects similar to those found here. Eventually, I'd like to obtain a joint Master's degree in Global Affairs and Environmental Management.

## Acknowledgements

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