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The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy: Fellowship Reflection Paper

Over the summer I had honor to intern at the Hyams Foundation as a Sillerman Fellow. When I first heard about the Sillerman Fellowship, I was enthused and eager to apply. Prior to my studies at Heller, I served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at small, Black-led racial justice non-profit in Montana. Like many non-profits, without major grants from foundations and donors, the impact would be greatly restricted due to lack of resources. I ultimately fell in love with grantmaking and fundraising as it is essential to the maturation and prosperity of this non-profit. It was also during this time when I was introduced to *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance* by Edgar Villanueva. The author asserts that money can be medicine and more particularly in field of philanthropy, money can be the direct form to close the racial wealth gap. Between my experiences and this book, my curiosity and desire to learn about the foundation side of philanthropy came fully to fruition. The Sillerman Fellowship was the perfect opportunity to learn more about philanthropy, as well as enhance my knowledge and hone my skills.

The Hyams Foundation is private, independent foundation with a mission of increasing economic, racial and social justice and power within low-income communities in Boston and Chelsea, Massachusetts. My main project over the Summer was writing the new financial manual for the organization. This project was both exciting and mildly daunting as I have both an affinity for writing and learning yet an averseness to anything relating to math. Suffice to say, my background on finance was slim and Google became my best friend during the first couple weeks as I adjusted not only to the philanthropic lingo, but also the financial jargon. The

staff at Hyams were also beyond welcoming, understanding, and eager to help as I settled into the internship and responsibilities.

While writing the manual was not the most riveting task at times, it was a wonderful experience learning the intricacies of how various systems and procedures are run and how policies are determined. I may have entered the internship with little knowledge of finance, but I certainly left with a greater interest, understanding, comprehension, and admiration for the field. Beyond, completing the manual, I also joined the program staff in a few of their meetings to see and learn about the in-depth process of grantmaking. I also had the wonderful opportunities to attend Social Justice Funder Network meetings, Philanthropy MA webinars, and the virtual Neighborhood Funders Group Convening series.

My experience at Hyams was a welcoming introduction into this field and one that nurtured my knowledge, skills, abilities, and curiosities. I left with not just a deeper appreciation for racial and social justice philanthropy, but more importantly, for the people in the field who are committed to the work and continue to push the moral arc towards justice.