Chinese Progressive Association | www.cpasf.org

- Anna Lei (Physics, 2017)
- Eva Lowe Fellow
- Full-time, 40 hours per week
- Unpaid but receiving Career Center Internship Grant

What do you do as an intern at this organization?
It depends on what the organization is focusing on that summer and what projects are available. But every summer there’s some sort of outreaching, fundraising, and event planning. I helped make phone calls in Cantonese; created curriculum and led a queer youth program; talked to people on the streets about voting; planned activities, MC-ed, and prepped food for a picnic of 100+ people; calculated the legally promised wages of workers; participated in actions, rallies, marches, and protests; listened to inspiring people share stories and experiences (e.g., past Black Panther Party members); and had many meetings and reflection sessions with folks.

How did you find your internship?
I was a part of the organization’s youth leadership program (Youth Movement of Justice Organizing, or Youth MOJO) in high school. I knew about the internship because some of them were assigned to work with the youth.

What do you enjoy most about your internship?
The people I formed relationships with and the knowledge that I gained created real change in the world. The staff at CPA were invested in my personal growth (because "the personal is political"), so I was challenged to do what was new and uncomfortable but received support at every step. Being challenged in that way was very refreshing.

What do you find challenging?
Sometimes the ideas and concepts we talked about were very different from what I encountered at home and in high school. When I went home to sleep, I had so many thoughts in my mind that some nights I wouldn’t be able to fall asleep. But as I said before, a lot of the challenging aspects of the internship allowed me to grow. For example, I led a weekly two-hour queer youth group by myself for seven weeks, and I was doubtful about its success in the beginning. Some of the folks who attended were my peers merely a year ago, so I thought I wouldn’t be able to do well or gain their respect. But by the end I learned how to create useful agendas, speak publicly, lead icebreakers and activities, and facilitate inclusive conversations.

What advice would you offer to someone who wants to make the most of an internship like yours?
Be open to new ideas and practices. Ask questions and provide criticism when needed (but know the appropriate time to mention it).

About the Organization
Chinese Progressive Association
San Francisco, CA

Founded in 1972, the Chinese Progressive Association educates, organizes and empowers the low income and working class immigrant Chinese community in San Francisco. We encourage people to build collective power with other oppressed communities to demand better living and working conditions and justice for all people.