

## **Education Advocacy Research Assistant** *Reflection Questions*

1. What did serving migrant and refugee families teach you about trust, advocacy, and the barriers that families face when trying to access basic educational resources in Chicago? Reflect on specific moments of challenge or growth and consider how this experience shaped your understanding of educational equity.

One of the many things I was enlightened to was the sheer amount of barriers that migrant families go through. Not only do they have a harder time getting jobs but those who enter the country illegally have to constantly watch their back in fear of being deported. Many refugee families in the United States often have no access to safe shelter, food, or clean water. Additionally there are not many resources in place to help new refugee families get access to education for their kids. In the United States, even public schools can be expensive, causing many families to go without education.

2. How did your role in collecting and distributing clothing, raising funds, and organizing community support shift the way you understand mutual aid and grassroots organizing? What emotions or insights came up for you as you took on responsibility for meeting urgent needs in real time?

When I was sifting through my clothes in my room and looking for things I can give away I took on a different viewpoint to the things I own and the things I could give away. I started actually thinking about how much I use each piece of clothing and weighing if it would be better put to use being given to someone

else. I also started thinking of how fortunate I am in life and the position I was able to grow up in. After this class I do think I have a much better understanding of what it's like to come up from nothing. The importance of Mutual aid was also shown to me in that I realized that when you start from scratch you are often at the whims of others and having some external help can really help get you on your feet.

3. Of the three research studies you contributed to, which one resonated most with your personal story or the stories of people you know? How did participating in this research project impact the way you view the role of data in shaping public understanding and policy?

Donating clothing was the activity that resonated with me the most. Growing up, after my parents moved to the suburbs to try and get me and my siblings into a better school, we didn't have a lot of spare income to spend on clothes or toys. I can call back to a moment in the 5th grade when I was wearing clothing that was too small for me with holes in it, a bus driver who I had grown quite fond of took notice of this and one day handed me a large bag full of clothes and told me they were clothes that had shrunk in the wash that needed to be given away. Looking back it was obvious he wanted to help out me and my family, and I can look back on giving away some of my unneeded clothes and understanding why he did what he did. Additionally, all 3 research studies taught me to look beyond the numbers and statistics and question what is driving them rather than taking them at face value.

4. How did this experience challenge or confirm what you believed about the power of community organizations in addressing complex issues like job searching, educational access, and

technology in daily life? What do you now see as the strengths and limitations of this kind of work?

This experience confirmed my belief that community organizations are fundamentally necessary to make any amount of change in a community. Throughout our classes and topics, not once was the world changed by the opinions and actions of one single person. When people come together to achieve something they have access to more resources and more say in how things are done in the world, voices get heard, people begin to speak out, and things actually change. Although community organizations come with tons of upsides, it can be difficult to amass enough people to get a movement going which can kill some amazing movements before they get the chance to reach people or make any change.

5. Looking back at your time with ChiEAC, how do you think this experience shaped your personal goals, sense of purpose, or vision for the future? What skills or perspectives do you hope to carry forward—and how do you hope to keep supporting others?

My time with ChiEAC changed my life goals from one where I live a simple and small life to one where I can feel like others are treated as fairly as me. Originally my life goal was admittedly self centered and small minded, however since i started ChiEAC i've been exposed to many realities that i didn't ever really think about in my day to day life. These new realities, like the issues with job culture or the anger in politics make me want to have a future where people are treated fairly and with respect. I want to live in a world where employers don't mistreat their workers and one where we don't treat people based on the color of their skin. While I know I wont make any massive

difference in the world myself, I am content with the idea of spreading information and awareness on current social issues in our society in order to spark change or help enlighten others.