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.

It taught me the privilege it is to have access to not only education but proper education. Not to assume that everyone has the same opportunity just because there is an opportunity. It taught me that there are things that handicap a lot of families to access quality education and how it is important we do as much as we can to help.

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?

It showed me the power of community. When people all pitch in to help for a better cause it is possible to achieve many things. It shifted my emotions that all of my problems I am still privileged in my life and it doesn’t cost much to pitch in and help those in need. I shifted the aspect that not only is it a good thing to help, I think people should help as much as they can.

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?

The survey regarding the importance of a college degree. When you see the totality of numbers and where people line up in this study it really impacted me. I think the value of education is everything and it is important that everyone has education high on their list and understand the value of it. It impacted the way I view it by reinforcing the idea that I need to use my education to inspire others to achieve it as well.

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?

It confirmed how I viewed the community. That when people band together anything is possible. I see the strength can go very far but the only limitation is when people become too powerful together, someone tries to break it up. I see how having these conversations can force you to think about the thoughts and opinions you already have. Then challenge you to think deeper about the stuff you don’t normally discuss. Job searching and technology are not things I normally discuss but this forced me to have opinions and to think about them.

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?

I learned many skills from this class, understanding, listening, and being accepting. Not just of people but their identities and where these identities come from. It is my goal to now challenge myself to always think deeply about the people I have a chance to inspire or influence. When you have the chance to inspire that is the sense of purpose. My vision for the future is to leave the communities I enter in a better place than when I left them. I currently work with kids and there’s nothing better than influencing the people who are coming after you.