



2019 FALL RESIDENCY PROGRAM student reflections

MIAMI UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT • 1300 VINE STREET • CINCINNATI, OHIO

MIRANDA WOODS (ARC)

Living in Over-The-Rhine this semester gave me great perspective to compare to living back home in Washington, DC. DC was named the fastest-gentrifying city in the country a few months ago and having grown up in an area that has now completely flipped in demographics because gentrification, I'm already acutely aware of the problems that come with it. This experience helped provide some answers and understandings as to why things are the way they are in my neighborhood back home. I was only around 12 when it first started to gentrify and while I understand the systemic racial implications of every miniscule change in a neighborhood today at 22 years old, I was able to further revisit questions and thoughts I had growing up (that sometimes I did not even realize were locked in the back of my mind) while living in Over-The-Rhine.

In a way, my background as a Black woman from a similar inner-city neighborhood dramatically helped me with the learning curve of adjusting to living in Over-The-Rhine. My culture and upbringing had already showed me how to address people and move about the neighborhood respecting and standing with its longtime residents. I understood the uncomfortable feeling Mr. Earl gets while sitting on his stoop when a white couple comes up to him marveling that he is able to live in such

a beautiful building and was able to stand with him and address them while they gawked. I could feel the significance that Tucker's Restaurant and the corner store attached to it has to the community - the distant familiarity that 50-cent fruities, \$2 French fry trays and other affordable snacks you can't find anywhere else in the neighborhood has. I immediately recognized the dishonor that had been done to the original community by 3CDC turning St. Paul's Church into Taft's Brewery, because I grew up in a church whose building looked just like it. Situations like that allowed me to more sincerely empathize with the people here and the struggle they have gone through to just exist in a neighborhood they have always called home. It allowed me to easily make firm decisions on how I was going to live and take up space in a place that I recognized that I too was just a recently relocated visitor of - like not eating or patronizing any business in Over-The-Rhine that was not either Black-owned or employed people directly from the neighborhood.

This semester living in Over-The-Rhine gave me the opportunity to serve the community through art and design - connecting my passions for design and activism. I first got to do this by working on the BLINK project that MUCCE was putting together. The architect majors were tasked with designing and building the window art for the event, and my concept was selected to be made. Through colorful silhouette light projections, the windows told the story of the Over-The-Rhine People's Movement and its connection to a growing Sunflower. It directly

correlated with the animation projection what was being shown on the side of Buddy's Place, so people walking by would experience the neighborhood's history in two different ways. The BLINK Project was a huge success, it was amazing to get to be involved in a project that was seen by so many people and had such deep meaning to the community - unlike so many other BLINK installations that were created just for the aesthetic.

The greatest thing I got to work on while living in Over-The-Rhine was the experience-event I helped design for our Over-The-Rhine Campaign Project. Through this project I was able to use satire and design to address some of the local, direct ways gentrification had ravaged the community here. We provided commentary on the fact that there are not many community-owned businesses left in the neighborhood and highlighted the growing number of community assets that are being removed from Over-The-Rhine, such as a laundromat and basketball courts. I created bold designs calling out the differences between the Over-The-Rhine I saw being created, versus what the community would rather see created or returned to the neighborhood. We transformed the MUCCE Center into the Over-The-Rhine from 20-30 years ago, highlighting the most important thing I learned this semester: that gentrification not also displaces people and culture, but also memory. It locks away fond memories of what used to make a place feel like home. It erases any leftover remnants of the original people's history and culture and replaces it with a whitewashed narrative justifying unwanted change.

One of the stories I got to design around for the Over-the-Rhine Campaign Project was meant to honor Mr. Earl, the self-proclaimed "Mayor of Over-The-Rhine". We built a voting booth where visitors of the event could come and cast their vote for him over Jim Tarbell, seen by most as the person responsible for the gentrification in Over-The-Rhine. Mr. Earl is definitely my favorite person I have come to know in Over-The-Rhine, and getting to present him at the event with the "campaign" posters, buttons, stickers, and T-Shirt - with his face on it - that I had designed felt like a great way to honor him and all that he has brought and continues to bring to the community.

TARA RANDOLPH (EDT)

Prior to living in Over-the-Rhine, I had an idea about how impactful teacher involvement in the community is. From my time here, I have realized that it is more crucial than I previously imagined. I have always wanted to be a teacher that is involved in the community in which I teach. I do not foresee that changing. Throughout my student teaching, I have attempted to be involved in many ways. This semester I went to community council meetings, events held in the community, parent teacher conferences, and the Housing Now March. I would even say that how to be a community-based teacher is my main "takeaway" from this semester. Overall, all of these events, memories, and more impacted my ideology.

I fostered relationships with community members by being at St. Francis for one. Many of my students live in Over-the-Rhine or other surrounding communities. My students count as members of this community and have a voice. Spending almost seven hours a day with my 16 students allowed me to get to know their interests, fears, desires, home lives, and concerns very well. My students have also introduced me to their siblings and families. At the end of the school day, I frequently speak with parents and caregivers picking up their students. I also built relationships with parents by attending conferences at St. Francis. Another major way I built relationships was by going to events in the community. For example, going to Peaslee Presents and Our Beloved Community by OTRCH allowed me to talk to community members. I also spoke with community members at community council. These meetings were excellent in getting different perspectives on issues that I might not have known about otherwise. Overall, the thing I would miss most about living in Over-the-Rhine is the people. I hope I can keep some of the connections that I have made while being here.

The main shoes I had the opportunity to “walk” in were those of an urban schoolteacher. It was different than what I had come in expecting because I was placed in a private Catholic school. I had no idea what the functions of a Catholic school were like and if I would fit in. Luckily, the staff there made me feel welcome at all times. However, the discipline aspect was exactly how I expected it to be. This was a bit of a shame because I felt

as though I was expected to model this inside the classroom. I had a hard time finding the balance between being too strict and having chaos within the classroom.

I was able to “walk” in some of my students’ shoes as well. They were able to tell me stories about their lives and what challenges they were facing. I felt as though each of my 16 kids were going through something at home that affected their lives at school. Of course, I tried to feel exactly what they did, but each person experiences things differently. I was able to be sympathetic in every situation, but not usually empathetic. The truth is that I was only here experiencing these issues for a few months. This does not compare to experiencing lifelong oppression in a place. I also learned about how justice systems can be faulty. St. Francis is strict in how they deal with punishments. This experience taught me that this is not the most effective way a school can run. Five of my students were suspended sometime throughout the school year. Mainly, I was taught about myself because I know that this affects students. Being at a school that is so no nonsense made me feel as though I had to contribute to this culture at times. I think that this is one of my regrets throughout the semester.

One question I wrestled with while being here is, “Am I doing enough”? I was very busy with my student teaching placement and I always wanted to do more but fell short on time. I would have loved to volunteer at the Homeless Coalition and CCC. I also found myself trying to incorporate social justice into my classroom, but I know

that I could have done a better job. Many of my social justice lessons focused on varying perspectives and considering those when drawing conclusions. We also talked a lot about displacement of Native Americans and I think I could have related that to gentrification.

Lastly, I can foresee this experience impacting my becoming a teacher a lot. I realized the importance of getting to know students on a deeper level. I think living in the community is the best way to do so. At the very least, being an involved teacher makes a difference. I would not exchange getting to see my students around the community for anything. I have also realized how having different resources can affect education. Schools within urban environments are usually the ones that are underfunded. I hope that we are able to come up with a solution for school funding soon, but until then this will be my reality as a teacher. This experience gave me a taste of how to work with the resources that I have. No matter what, I need to incorporate social justice into my future classroom to give students the works to describe what is happening around them. From this experience, I learned that I do not want to be a strict teacher that just teaches topics straight out of the book.

JANIAH MILLER (NKU)

This experience made me think deeply about who has access to space and who can take it up. Throughout the semester it has been even clearer that Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) have never been able to take

space the same way white people have. We live in a racial caste system that have controlled the ability for BIPOC people to be able to not just exist but to live and not just to live but to be able to thrive. Black people are most impacted by the issues that we discussed throughout this semester. Although I think the program is good, I do think it's problematic that there are no BIPOC people who are on staff. This program is extremely white, and it further shows that there is even inequity with becoming a staff member even if that is not the programs intention. This happens within a lot of nonprofits that serve diverse communities.

I often thought about what it means to lead with community the community always in mind without thinking of how your career can advance. There is a major disconnect between politicians and the everyday person. Our education system doesn't require that civics are taught. In my school we were only taught basic information about the three branches of government. This made me believe that you couldn't get anything done if you weren't a Congressperson or Senator. I've learned that this is far from the truth and the power is with the people -- everything starts at the grassroots organizing and local level. It is essential to keep the community in mind when making decisions because it can have an adverse impact of so many people. This fall tax abatements and TIF districts were a major problem within the community. If we continue to give developers tax abatements, then our education system will continue to suffer, and more people will experience homelessness.

This semester my placement was at the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition. I was an education intern with the Education Director, Dr. Mark Mussman. In this experience I was able to expand educational outreach efforts through assisting in the facilitation of a Street Vibes Shadow, Alternative Fall Break and a Speakers Bureau session with local universities. My most memorable experience was participating in the *"Housing NOW!"* March on Wednesday, October 2nd. Prior to the march I was able to attend several planning meetings with community members and organizations as well as creating marketing material at the Cincinnati Public Library Makerspace. At the march, I was able to record the event. This made me nervous as I do not have any experiencing recording an event. This made me further see how important it is to record moments in time -- it's so powerful. I decided to ask people of all different ages why they wanted to participate in the march. It was a beautiful and powerful time to be in such a community and hear stories as to why making housing is accessible. We all gathered because housing is a basic human right.

The racial wealth gap is so wide because of housing inequity. The federal government spent eighty years segregating this country through redlining. This is why the average white family has six times the wealth of the average Black family. Cities across the country have prioritized maintaining neighborhoods that are predominantly white. This has led some communities to be able to thrive while creating inequity in other communities.

This semester there were two homicide victims in my family. I thought about how communities can be safe for all people. White people don't have to worry about the impact of urban gun violence in the same way as BIPOC people do. I've always known someone who has been murdered and this isn't a normal way to live. We deserve to be safe in our communities. It devastates communities and creates trauma. This is not a reality that we should settle to live in. For the neighborhood observation our group visited the Timothy Thomas Park several times throughout the semester. For a few weeks they have a memorial for people who have lost their lives. In a few community council meetings, there were huge debates on who could have memorials. A memorial could be anything from a plaque on the ground, a candle on a tree, planting a tree or whatever you want it to be. A lot of people didn't believe people should have memorials although they don't impact anyone in a negative way. When you lose someone, you lose their presence, and this can be the hardest part of grieving. As communities we should always allow people to heal because it doesn't go away after a funeral service.

There are so many negative perceptions about who lives in urban neighborhoods. At a lot of the community council meetings people often described those who lived in the neighborhood as violent, drug users and deadbeats. This is far from the truth when there is so much humanity in the people. Instead of speeding up past people or clenching your purse try to engage in dialogue to see where people are coming from.

After this experience I plan to be more involved in community council meetings. These meetings are a part of the backbone of the community. With the disconnect of politicians and citizens these meetings are crucial for engagement. I hope to come back as an Americorp Vista for the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition. The ballot initiative they are launching will help uplift a generation out of experiencing homelessness. A lot of the issues we talked about are government made problems rather than people made problems. These crises are real, and we must act, or the wealth gap will continue to increase. I want to live in a world where everybody has the ability to thrive.

EMILY MARKS (EDT)

I am who I wish for my students to be. I am a constant learner, embracing every experience as a new opportunity to grow and deepen my knowledge. I am willing to serve where needed and treat others with respect and fairness. I am an engaged and informed citizen within a democratic society. I am becoming. I am growing. I am changing. There will never be an achievable end goal in my character or my knowledge or my ability to teach. If I want my students to be continuous learners, I must practice this and model it in my own life. I see value in having an open mind that is forever being fueled by genuine curiosity.

As a student teacher, I was aware that I was a learner. I was aware that there were many things I did not know yet. Therefore, I approached every day in the classroom

with an open mind ready to embrace whatever new things came at me that day. By the end of the semester, I grew in confidence, boldness, and wisdom. I started off the year hesitant. I felt like an intruder in someone else's classroom and was afraid to speak out. I did not want to create my own ideas or jump into a lesson with new thoughts or contribute to the discipline in the classroom. For a few weeks, I could not figure out my role in the class. I realized quickly that I would not get anything out of the student teaching experience if I was not going to choose to be present and immersed in it. Despite stepping in to another teacher's classroom, I had to understand that I had to be what I have been studying and preparing to be: a teacher! My confidence and boldness as a teacher soared as I came to know who I am as a teacher and a human and a professional. Whether or not I always knew how to react or respond to various situations, I boldly faced each scenario ready to try my best, admit my mistakes, and learn from the experience. I have learned that to be the teacher I am meant to be, I must be honest with myself and with my students. I must be ready to admit when I mess up and allow for my students to correct and teach me. The classroom should be a positive and peaceful environment. Everyone, including myself as the teacher, should be comfortable trying their best whether or not they know what to do. My classroom will instill confidence in everyone who enters. It will be a center for boldness and growth.

Spending the semester in a classroom with the role of a teacher, but also a student, was highly impactful. It allowed for me to more highly relate with my students, because I was one too. They complained about classwork and homework and long days and not getting enough sleep, and I could say, “me too!” I get it, but here we all are making it through together. Reflecting on this makes me grateful for the experience. Despite it being difficult and tiring at many times, it will be the only time that I am also a student being critiqued and graded by adults older than myself.

My student teaching experience was very unique. I had the opportunity to enter into a new space and even live amongst a new community of people and surroundings. I learned to embrace being uncomfortable and let curiosity guide me into new situations and environments. Never in my life have I felt so comfortable and at peace in a space I was initially so unfamiliar with. I can walk around the neighborhood and recognize faces and stories and emotions. I can walk around and feel people’s pain and emphasize with them. I can walk around and listen to people’s stories of their lives and how they are living now to make an impact for the better. Living in community this semester has made me question how I can ever not live in community. The impact of living with like-minded individuals who help to question and challenge one another’s opinions and hold each other accountable for the things we do and say is beyond meaningful. I am leaving this semester with a stronger ability to appreciate, to listen, to accept, to emphasize, to serve, to fight, and

to see. Most importantly, I am leaving this semester more prepared than ever to do what I am meant to do.

Teaching is hard. Understanding yourself is hard. Questioning injustice is hard. Witnessing injustice is hard. Fostering new relationships is hard. Coming to a new place is hard. Doing all of these things at once is really hard. This semester has challenged me in different ways every day. I have wrestled with what makes up my identity, what I prioritize most, what is most valuable to me, and how I can make an impact in schools and communities to maintain justice in everything I do and say. Therefore, there is no doubt this experience will impact my future work and career. As I stated already, I am more prepared than ever, yet I understand and value that I still have so much to learn. This semester has helped me to realize how my mindset as a teacher must be that of a learner in order to never stop seeking new ways in which I can uphold justice wherever I go and whatever I do.

ABIGAIL KARR (ARTS ADMINISTRATION; VIOLIN PERFORMANCE)

“Love is space. It is developing our own capacity for spaciousness within ourselves to allow others to be as they are. That is love. And that doesn’t mean that we don’t have hopes or wishes that things are changed or shifted, but that to come from a space of love is to be in acceptance of what is, even in the face of moving it towards something that is more whole, more just, and more spacious for all of us.”

- Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams

Reflecting on my experience in the Residency, I keep returning to this quote that Bonnie shared with us. So much of my experience in the last fifteen weeks has been about the negotiation of and creation of space. I think about the physical space of the neighborhood that is rapidly changing; the spaces that the community fights for; the way that bodies are allowed to move through space as determined by race, gender, class, etc; what it means to create spaces for reflection and expression; the way that power and privilege influences how I move through space; the space that is inside of our own bodies.

During this semester, I worked with Facilitating Artist MC Rietz on the 2019 season of the *Storefronts* art series. *Storefronts* is an annual community and student led art series that challenges the dominant political, economic, social, and cultural narratives that attempt to define Over-

the-Rhine. This year we put on our most ambitious project yet: “Time For An UPdate?” a community generated grassroots installation that ran during the 2019 BLINK festival.

“TFAU?” included a two-story animation on the north face of *buddy’s place*, an illuminated window display designed and installed by the Design Build studio, and a live performance by members of the community and local high schoolers. “TFAU?” was inspired by and built upon the 40 year legacy of the Over-the-Rhine People’s Movement and the visual themes of the *buddy’s place* mural.

Starting in mid-July we invited community members from different backgrounds— including several who live in *buddy’s place* — to generate the concept and much of the artwork for the piece. We started simply by inviting people to come together and asking what stories and experiences they wanted to share about their home with the million plus people who flood into Over-the-Rhine for BLINK.

It was from this core group of 10 neighbors that “Time For An UPdate?” was created. “TFAU?” asked what could happen if we *update* the way that we see each other as people, as neighbors, as members of a community? How would an updated way of seeing each other change our conversations about neighborhood development? How would it change our communities?

What possibilities might blossom when we come together to uplift and support one another?

Much of the content for the animation was generated by the concept group. They also developed a live performance— a protest in the parking lot and on the street, bringing to life the *buddy's place* mural, and engaging audience members in conversations about community activism and neighborhood development.

Working alongside members of the community, with MC, and in our classes, has challenged me to think critically about my own positionality as a white person, and what it means to be an artist. Being white defines how I move through and how I occupy space— more that being a woman or a queer person ever has. I have never been so aware of how *much* space being white affords me. I am learning how to interrogate the space that I occupy, and how I can move to make room for others. I am learning how to negotiate space with intention, awareness, and empathy.

I have always been interested in the intersection of arts and social justice. I believe that the art can activate, inspire, and empower us to make change in the world that we live in. Working on *Time For An UPdate?* has challenged me to evaluate my role as an artist. What does it really mean to create a space for expression? What does it mean to amplify and uplift the voices of a marginalized community? How do we co-create spaces of expression *with* community? How can art help to

create a world that is more whole, more just, and more spacious for all of us?

MARIA KAHN (EDT)

At the beginning of this semester I was ready to make the transition from full time education student to full time student teacher. To get inside a classroom space, do my best to connect with as many of the students that I'd be working with as possible, and build positive relationships with my fellow faculty and staff. My goal was to be present in the community that I was living in for the semester, Over the Rhine, as well as present in the community across the highway, Lower Price Hill, where my school is located. Now at the end of it all as I reflect on what my goals were at the beginning of this journey I am overwhelmed when thinking of all of the ways in which my experience has far exceeded my initial expectations.

Not every day was a good day. Some days were far from it in fact. But each day there was something to be gained. A takeaway that I could muster up and take note of in the journal that I have religiously kept throughout my time at Oyler. Several of the more subdued days inevitably blended together, whereas the emotional, wild, and rather colorful days dramatically stick out in my mind. However, because there has rarely been a dull moment throughout this process, it has definitely become challenging to keep track and consciously remember all of the crazy and wonderful stories from my time working

at Oyler Community School. In general, this entire semester has felt like a bit of a blur with some weeks seeming to take forever to complete, and others that went by much too fast, especially as we are nearing the end. My feelings about how student teaching went and how I am feeling about leaving my students are all very much so at the forefront of my mind. During this upcoming transitional period in my life, graduating and all, I know that this experience will be something that I continue to unpack long after I turn in my CPS badge and move out of my apartment in Over the Rhine.

Living in community this semester has significantly impacted my student teaching experience for the better. Being surrounded by like-minded people, whether they were fellow future educators or not, allowed me to come home from whatever type of day I had gone through at school and unpack in the comfort of those who understood why what I was doing mattered. There were times where spaces of the apartment busted with big belly filled laughter. Other times, those same spaces became quite pensive and occasionally somber. Either due to a challenging thought-provoking conversation, or because of built up emotions that had far surpassed their tipping point. Regardless of what emotion was being expressed in those rooms it was done so in the safe space that we had built together as a community. This whole experience is something that I am forever grateful for having, but it has also further solidified my own fears about doing this on my own. Living amongst other individuals who have challenged, supported, laughed,

and cried with me is an experience that I will not soon forget. It is one that I will be seeking out in the future as I enter new community spaces both as an education professional and as a person.

As a student teacher I can confidently say that I brought my everything into this semester. I spent countless hours stressing over the ways in which I would present and uncover content with my students, and a few more hours daydreaming about all of the wonderful people my students are and have the potential to grow into. Making saying goodbye that much more difficult. Especially to the freshman class that I have grown severely attached to. Their high school career began with me in their corner, and the thought of leaving them in the next few days is horrifying. I want to be there to see them grow in height, to see some of their voices drop an octave, to witness their failures, to protect them from a system that seeks to diminish them, to celebrate their successes, and above all encourage them to stay true to who they are. Moreover, I stayed connected to the school and the people that work within its walls throughout this process. I became greatly overwhelmed and frustrated with the feeling of never feeling like I had done enough to call it a night on any given day. Although I would spend a majority of each and every day encouraging students, teaching, grading, planning, reflecting, seeking out new and innovative ways to do things, and the list goes on. I realized that in the near future I'd be regularly attempting to outrun that feeling, and I feared and still fear about

what happens when and if I fall behind. What happens then?

I think one of the most important things that I did was that I let myself feel all of these things fully, even if, at first, I attempted to bottle them up they inevitably and aggressively spilled out. Whether that makes me an emotional mess, or just someone who is modeling what I tell my students each and every day is up to your interpretation. “What you are feeling is perfectly normal.” When I look a student in the eyes and those words come out of my mouth, I mean every single syllable. I’ve learned through this experience that I must consistently model what I mean by this. Not only when the students are watching, but I wish to model this in every aspect of my life outside of the formal confines of school. Practicing authenticity and fighting for space for all aspects of the human condition to be explored. After all, at the root of this whole teaching thing are the people who we interact with every day. Whether they be fellow faculty and staff or the young people who every morning after breakfast walk up the two flights of stairs ahead of them in order to make their way to homeroom and start their day with us in community.

RACHEL HOLLINS (EDT)

I’m very happy I decided to join the residency program while student teaching. If I hadn’t enrolled, I wouldn’t have had an open space to reflect on individual and systemic issues within the classroom. I don’t feel that

anyone can be a great teacher without doing the work to understand the context from which their students come on an institutional level. My professors helped me find many tools to address oppression within the classroom.

My reality was very different than my expectations, as life goes, and I was left in a space where it was hard to be my full self with the young people I was supposed to be teaching. Through the readings and conversations in the American Cities course, I found many nuances that directly affected most of my students. I could talk about these small things to tease out critical thinking within preteens. I began to find spaces to just learn about the students. I built skills that helped me better serve them, but also help me build closer relationships.

I began really just listening to my students instead of trying to tell them things. I’ve criticized white saviors my whole life but didn’t think about how I could also fall into thinking I know better, although I haven’t come from the same background. Yes, my background is very similar to many of the students I serve, but, as I’ve investigated through the course, I’ve realized that being so close to obtaining a degree gives me a new level of privilege that distances me from my younger self. It’s this type of reflection that makes my experience in the residency program so valuable. While on the main campus of Miami University, it was very hard to keep myself under a critical lens because I was surrounded by people who have far more privilege and opportunity than myself.

One aspect that lead me to so much reflection were my neighbors. While it was warm outside, I saw kids from the Peaslee Kids summer camp often. This made it easier to imagine my best self. That example is very specific to me because I've had the pleasure of working at Peaslee for the last three summers. However, the neighbors living next to our apartment complex interacted with all of the cohort members. Knowing people who live and have lived in Over-the-Rhine makes it more apparent that the space is drastically changing. I feel that our cohort got very attached to the area and each other. A couple of people got very involved in going to community council meetings, and most of us attended community events together. This is all to say that I really learned how to build community alongside others who were learning the same.

Another crucial aspect of growth was journaling. I journaled with Bonnie before, so I was excited to enter that space again. It was vastly different when over half the group had thought about their own positionality and what justice looks like in nations/ states/communities.

Journaling became a place for me to vent about my teaching experiences and explore how the concepts we learned in the other class apply to my life and time in the classroom. The self-expression also led to a deep bonding.

Without the people in my cohort, I would not have felt the courage to switch school placements past the middle of the semester. I found out that I can do justice work and take care of myself at the same time. Sacrificing myself is

not the goal. The goal is simultaneous self-preservation and fighting towards a better society.

Overall, I was very engaged in the two courses and gained so much from being in the program. It was a great way to end my undergraduate career.

HALEY EDMONSON (EDS)

This program is a lot of things; trying, eye-opening, all-encompassing, but more importantly worth it. I knew I wanted to do this program when I found out about it my freshman year. I was already yearning real world experience to compliment the work I had learned in my classes at Miami and I thought this program would be the best way to assess what I wanted to do in my life going forward. I remember telling my roommate about the opportunity and without even knowing anything about the people or Peaslee Neighborhood Center for what would end up being my placement, she knew I would never want to leave and she couldn't have been more right.

Growing up in little Alaska, I wanted to live in an urban environment to know for certain what kind of atmosphere I wanted to further my career in. I was nervous it would be overwhelming, that no one would say hi to me that I passed, and that lack of friendliness would make the city feel cold. Over-the-Rhine is special for many reasons, but one of them is the ability to make the city feel like a close-knit neighborhood. My walks home were always extended by conversations from both people I knew and

didn't, wanting to hear about my day. This sense of community I wasn't anticipating to feel in such an urban environment, a friendliness that I would argue is more close-knit than the area of Anchorage I am from.

It was sad that we have to focus so heavily on what has happened to this neighborhood, as I would have loved to only be surrounded by the beloved mom and pop shops and live near every kid that I worked with at the center and Rothenberg. The demographics have changed and it's hard not to be angry at the people exiting their townhomes, when everyone you meet talks about what they miss the most.

The Over-the-Rhine residency program exceeded my expectations and gave me ample amount of real-life learning experiences. I was forced to not only look at education like I was studying within my classes, but all of the actors that ultimately affect them like affordable housing, healthcare, worker's rights, etc. We read about them, but then met with a multitude of people that had all of these actors determining their way of life, ultimately affecting other actors. You learn how closely all are connected and become really familiar with the vicious cycle plaguing lots of Americans.

It was important for me to not only learn and know, but to additionally see and hear about from those that are struggling from some of our policies in place. Since I am focusing on education public policy and inequities, I wanted to dive deep past my major to see the big picture

not always seen in more narrow-minded classroom curriculums. Additionally, without this program I would have left Miami without working with students, something that really defined and uplifted me throughout my time spent here.

I fully took advantage of this program and for that I believe I should get an A. I partook in every discussion I could and listened deeply to whatever ones I was a part of but didn't completely understand yet. I asked lots of questions. To my peers, to my professors, to my supervisors, and more importantly to the community members. I said the word 'yes' to as much as I could and gave every ounce of my energy to reflection. Yet regardless of my grade, I have been lucky enough to have found myself a little community here in Cincinnati, Ohio because of this effort which is the real win and I couldn't be more thankful.

While I have learned that this program was a perfect fit for me, it's also not for everyone. If you come to this program you better love to engage with people. You have to care about listening to other's stories and actively seeking for the lessons down here to fully utilize this program and this space. The new shiny exterior masks a lot of what has and is going on here, and it's so much easier to ignore what's going on than attempt to fully enthrall yourself in it. I would suggest this program to people who are civically engaged. The ones that want to go to the community council meeting even if they are too tired. The ones that want to hear about the systemic

problems, even if that might include yourself. Classes and readings may seem redundant, but you have to force yourself to keep adapting new lens' or else it won't be worth it. You must be able to reflect on yourself and experiences. If you can't accept others' differing perspectives and see the value in them despite your inability to understand them or agreeance with them, this program will be more trying than you will have ever anticipated.

MELISSA CONWELL (ARC)

This was an experience like no other. I did not have a huge breadth of knowledge coming into the cohort, but as I leave, I feel as if that knowledge has increased twofold. As a white woman living in now a predominantly mixed neighborhood, I feel as if I have a lot of privilege. Privilege was never something I considered growing up. Living with a roof over my head and a meal to eat three times daily, I lived without consideration. But now, as I leave the place I call home, my view of the neighborhood and myself has been forever changed.

Living so close to residents that in some cases have grown up here, has allowed my vision of the community to change for the better. Meeting individuals like Ms. June and James Brown, aka hot sauce, are not simply people, they are characters. They are a part of those few that have brought life to the community. Without individuals like them, Over-the-Rhine would not be the same.

As an outsider, one might see Over-the-Rhine as a place of opportunity and thriving businesses. But to the people that have lived here, grown up here, or experienced displacement, Over-the-Rhine has become a place of growth and understanding. Understanding and adapting to these changes have proven to be difficult to many residents, as those few cannot afford local venues, restaurants, or even the influx of rents. Participating in events like the *Housing Now* march have increased my perspective on the community. That many individuals are left without housing is something that needs talked about. It is a matter of understanding the needs of residents and members of a community. There can be development without the displacement of others.

There is an attention towards the way environments shape our worldview. Many individuals do not realize how cities impact a user on an everyday basis. Things to consider like who is the target audience, how that audience will be affected, and what is the output are all important design decisions. Developments like 3CDC (Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation) are merely designed to profit, while organizations like OTRCH (Over the Rhine Community Housing) are created to allow for an affordable and safe place for any resident. The work of the OTRCC (Over-the-Rhine Community Council) in addition to other organizations have created an example for leading businesses. There are missions established to create a need for housing, the upstanding of small businesses, and radical changes

in the neighborhood. Throughout my time here in Over-the-Rhine, I have thoroughly enjoyed learning more about community input. It is important to realize that every person has a voice to the community and world in which they live.

Living in Over-the-Rhine it is important to make connections and to have those conversations. Not just with the individuals you reside with, but also the residents who live in the community. It is about becoming familiar with your surroundings and the place that you live. I have enjoyed growing to know people like Bonnie, who I heard so much about before coming here. All good things! And residents who have made a huge impact on this semester, as previously mentioned. I have also enjoyed learning about the history of Over-the-Rhine. On our first two days, we participated in a walking tour of the neighborhood and surrounding areas. Something I was dreading the few weeks leading up turned out to be one of the things I enjoyed most about the program. Hearing and learning about why and how the neighborhood got to be in the state it's currently in has proved to be rather valuable. Without that context, it would have been harder to understand a place for the first time.

One thing I'll miss leaving Over-the-Rhine, if you can't already tell is the people. Living in a place where you feel as if you are a part of the community can be so valuable. Not only forming a trust with your neighbors, you create a sense of understanding. Seeing the value in a person can do so much to how you view a place and how it

impacts your growth in society. I was recently told that you can learn from every aged person. Whether that is someone who is younger than you, a child, your parents, adults, grandparents, and even the elderly. Every single person encompasses knowledge that is valuable in one form or other. That is one of the more prevalent lessons that I will take away from a place like Over-the-Rhine. This is an experience every person can learn from. Whether through the Street Vibes articles, class discussions, community development or even journaling with Bonnie, there is something to take away from every place you go. Finding my place has been an important part of my journey, and I believe that I feel more than welcome in a place like Over-the-Rhine.

KIARA CLARK (ARC)

Although I grew up in a city, I didn't grow up in Cincinnati. I didn't grow up with the problems Cincinnatians face. This program allowed me to take on the problems of another city and understand a bit more. Maybe even more than the problems in my own city. This program also gave me a wider amount of knowledge in a college setting. We all know that at Miami we don't learn from community members and especially in Architecture we don't focus on what people really need. This experience did, it gave me a rare view that I can't get at Miami. Hopefully this experience will allow me to become a better designer and share that with other students in the Architecture department at Miami. I would love to use this experience as a way to change curriculum on campus but the chances

of that are slim. I know however I do want to start a student organization for black architecture and interior design students. And that idea is a cumulation of all my experiences since being at Miami but has been put into action because of this program.

I think as designers our work affect communities in such a way that can't even be described. We as designers are supposed to build for people and it is something we do not do often in Oxford. This program helped me listen to others so we can design for them. The community forum we had for our "Gentrification Displaces Memory" event allowed us to listen to the community and what they wanted and design something around them. I think that was one of the most important meetings we had this semester, creating a space for people to voice their ideas and opinions. It's something that I hope I can do more of in the future. While I didn't get to foster as many relationships with the community as I like throughout the semester, I did form some relationships. I think that the Community relationships were lacking because the architecture part of the program is not really built to interact with community day in and day out. I think I would have gained more relationships if we did a more community-related projects. That being said, I can say that during studio we did form a good relationship with James Brown. I am glad that we get to see his face almost every day and laugh and listen to his stories. Living in the community really shaped how my experience in this program went. If I wasn't living in the community, I think I would be less connected than I could ever be. And honestly, I would be no better than the

gentrifiers we talk about each day. I would only be coming into the community to do schoolwork and leave back out. Learning nothing about the community and it issues. The events happening for the children or when something has drastically affected the community. I would have no place in speaking at the meetings I attend or recounting on them.

The questions I have wrestled with since being here are mainly, "How can I advocate here in a city I barely know when I have a hard time advocating in my own city and school?" That concept needs to be first to me. Being in Over-the-Rhine has helped me realize that I need to learn to advocate for my own city and school. There is no way that anyone can effectively fight for the rights of others when you can't do it for yourself first. I also wrestled with, "How do people come into this community every day and not interact with long-time residents?" If you are coming into Over-the-Rhine, you need to know that this is a neighborhood more than bars and expensive shops. There was community before those businesses were here and that there will be a community long after they leave. I want them to value the people who live here and not just shop and drink in this neighborhood. I want them to learn how to be friendly to those around them and speak without accusation. I would want newcomers to realize that you can't just plop yourself into a neighborhood without regard for the people surrounding you.

This experience will impact my career in a number of ways. One being that it will filter what kind of work I am looking for. And that doesn't necessarily mean that I am going to

change my entire career trajectory. But maybe looking a bit more into the history of the firms I am trying to work for in the future, may help me not only feel like I am doing something good, but I am not harming people in the process. I think my biggest takeaway from this program was to listen. We so often only hear people. It goes through one ear and out the other. We don't care about things unless it pertains to us. The stories are just boring and irritating things that just pile up. But this semester has given me the opportunity to listen to so many people. And each person's story is different and worth listening regardless of the narrative it tells. Maybe I need to take more time to listen to the people around me and what they have to say. I may not always like it, but the opinions matter.

CASSIE CAMPBELL (EDT)

It's easy for me to list off my identities: White, cis-gendered, female, Christian, able-bodied, straight, etc., but it's much harder to list off my identity as a teacher. Who am I right now? Is who I believe I am the same person that my students see? The honest truth is, I'm unsure about a lot of things. I've had a semester to explore different ways of teaching and try on different personalities, and yet I still am not sure who I will ultimately be as a teacher, but that's okay. You don't discover in 90 days who you are, if we did then we would know as infants who and what were we meant to be. As a student teacher, I think my main mistake was trying too hard to be a teacher AND a friend. The reality is, I

can't be both. I've started telling my students recently "We can be friendLY but we can't be friends until you graduate." I wish I had adhered to this motto at the beginning of the school year. I tried to gain their love rather than their respect, a common mistake I hear young teachers make.

This isn't a bad thing, though. In my mind I used to think that being disliked as a teacher was terrible and would reflect on my teaching more than my personality. However, after working at Oyster I noticed that one of the best teachers in the school (and widely recognized as one of the best teachers in Southern Ohio) is not well-liked by her students (past or present). Yet this woman is absolutely incredible at her job; the students both score well on tests and truly learn the material and are able to recall it later in their educational career. The way students feel about her in no way reflects her ability as a teacher, and that's what I need to keep in mind. It's hard when you're insecure to be okay with people you see every day not liking you, but I hope to eventually get to this place. To become the best teacher I can possibly be, I need to keep in mind that what is best for the students may not always be the most fun thing. Yes, it's possible to make learning fun with games and activities, but at some point teachers have to ditch the fluff and get down to business. I believe that I can make learning math engaging without the extra fluff, though it'll take a lot of work to get there.

In addition, I need to be more conscious about who I am calling on in class and who is engaged in the lesson. All students should have the opportunity to participate in class discussions, and sometimes those more introverted students just need a nudge in the right direction. Most of the time, I let students call out an answer, or don't give enough wait time for those learners who need a few extra minutes to solve. I'm doing a disservice to my students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and general students who struggle in math by letting the same few students call out answers and plowing forward because the class is "behind" in the eyes of the district.

I want to be a teacher that is inclusive in every aspect of the classroom. I want to be a teacher who focuses on social justice and the role that math plays into creating an equitable world. I want to be a teacher who cares about her students but is strict when that firm hand is needed. I want to be a teacher who is impactful, inspiring, and makes math fun. For so many students, math is a subject that terrifies them and brings them dread, I want to show my students that anyone, no matter where you come from or what challenges you face, can be a mathematician.

KYLIE BLOVITS (ARC)

Coming into this program, I remember thinking that as a Design/Builder, the most important or beneficial thing I would learn this semester would probably be how to put together a wall. While this, along with other practical elements of studio (like logistical and procedural understanding, technical communication, construction management, etc.) are incredibly valuable to me, they quite honestly pale in comparison to everything else I would experience in this Residency. In fact, the most important lessons I have learned came from taking *down* walls (mentally, emotionally, socially, and otherwise)—not putting them up.

In this space, I've recognized my privilege as a white woman, discovered and been welcomed into community, experienced the energy, kindness, and compassion of those who ought to have nothing left. I've learned about gentrification and mechanisms by which it's achieved, I've fought beside my peers for the revival of displacement memories. I've witnessed racism and systematic injustices, advocated and marched for human rights, stood up for what I believe in, asked questions, challenged the status quo. I've found my voice.

In this space, above all, I've realized more of who I am and who I want to become. Though challenging and overwhelming at times, I hope that the waves of emotion and enlightenment I've felt here never fade. I hope that I am forever contemplating the bittersweet dichotomies

present in Over-the-Rhine— the crescendo of my ‘Almanac of Last Things’ all at once: laughter, sorrow, anxiety, hopelessness, hopefulness, displacement, homelessness, wealth, poverty, replacement, rebellion, embers, community, togetherness, love, hate, longing, loss, gain, togetherness, empathy, awakening, disbelief, belief, privilege, racism, ignorance, wisdom, culture, identity, remembering, nostalgia, melancholy, hurting, healing, learning creativity, art, neighbors, “hello”s, “how you doing?”s, conversations, silence, collaboration, struggle, success, wholeness, purpose, joy, excitement, frustration, friction, fire, oppression, injustice, gentrification, activism, energy, revival, potential, and growth.

This place has showed me that I don’t want to exist in a way that means others’ problems aren’t my own, that I don’t have a responsibility to contribute to something bigger than myself. In seeing what gentrification and development-done-wrong can do to communities and culture, I know that as a budding Architect/Interior Designer I must do what I can to make sure that progress does not come at the expense of someone else. Over-the-Rhine has shown me that path.

I don’t want to— I can’t—be like 3CDC or some other corporation/firm that only cares about the bottom line and their own agenda. I want to build environments in a socially- responsible way, based on community needs and/or desires. I want to be a creator of spaces that generate social and environmental sustainability, that

foster and celebrate the people who *already* live there. I want to be a sculptor, an artist of environments that inspire and represent everyone. We got a taste of that this semester with the BLINK window display, which spoke to the People’s Movement and themes developed by community members, as well as our Design/Build project — the affordable housing unit. And I can’t wait for more.

These fifteen weeks in Over-the-Rhine have truly changed the way I see the world. There is so much that I am grateful for and if I had to choose one thing that I would miss most, I don’t think I could do it. I’m going to miss seeing Mr. Earl sitting on his stoop, hearing stories about the neighborhood 40 years ago, tales of his time at the Drop-Inn Center and memories of buddy gray. I’m going to miss seeing Reggie every day, catching up as he blasts music from his car. I’m going to miss those genuine, smiling faces. I’ll long for the always-entertaining visits from James Brown, Jerry’s check-ins, and Sunshine’s hugs. I’ll miss Bonnie, Ms. June, Ms. Dorothy, the people at OTRCH and Peaslee, the kids at the Children’s Creative Corner. I’m going to wish that I could walk past Timothy Thomas Park four times a day, and each time receive a warm “hello” and “how you doing?” from the guys who gather there. I’m going to miss how people looked out for us students as if we’d been here all along. How I was always made to feel like I was a welcomed part of the neighborhood, an ally. An ally to the cause of protecting and supporting the community.

Having grown up in places without a strong community presence, my experience here has felt like a home-coming of sorts and exposed me to the power of solidarity. Along with a drive to challenge the status quo and to live life with an open heart and mind, that inspiring sense of togetherness and unconditional support is something that I hope to carry with me always and hereafter. Though thinking about leaving deeply saddens me, I know— just as Reggie says— it’s not “goodbye”, just “see you later”.

Austin Carl and Taylor Maddox also participated in the 2019 Residency Program.