

My Experience of Being an Intern at the Runnymede Trust

Anya Makarova (Intern from 10/04 to 10/05)

Just after starting a Masters in Science program in Social Policy and Planning at the London School of Economics and Political Science I applied for an internship at the Runnymede Trust. I knew that work experience would be very beneficial for me, especially because I went into my graduate education right after completing my undergraduate programme, but this was not the only reason why I applied. Over the years I developed a deep-seated interest in social justice, with a particular passion for racial justice – this is why I chose to pursue a degree in Social Policy and how I knew that Runnymede would be an ideal place for my internship.

I expected to gain a lot from my internship: I wanted to get practical experience of working on race-related issues in the field of education; I hoped to make a valuable contribution to the Trust's work, and acquire new skills. Having been an intern for one year, devoting on average one day per week to it, I gained much more from my internship than I could possibly have imagined at the outset.

First of all, I worked with Debbie Weekes-Bernard on the Real Histories Directory – an online resource for teachers, education specialists, parents, students and community organizations that helps to identify and access multicultural resources all over the UK. As the Real Histories Directory was expanding I conducted research identifying new organizations that could be added to the Directory. When an independent evaluation of the website was carried out in the early months of 2005, my familiarity as a user and administrator assisted the evaluator in discovering the full scope of the Directory and pointing out areas where it could be improved.

After a couple of months of working on RHD I became involved in an exciting new project. In 2003 Runnymede had published, jointly with Granada Learning, *Complementing Teachers: A Practical Guide to Promoting Race Equality in Schools*. This handbook is an excellent tool for teachers, administrators and education specialists on how to promote racial equality and thereby meet the general and specific duties of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The next stage – in which I was to become actively involved – was for a team of education professionals and policy experts to create a training course for teachers in how to get the best out of using *Complementing Teachers* in the classroom environment.

'Achieving Race Equality in Schools – Professional Development Training for Teachers' is the course we came up with. It supports CT in fulfilling its agenda of promoting racial equality by providing practical support to teachers on how diversity can be incorporated into daily teaching and learning practices across the curriculum. As part of the team responsible for development of the training I had the unique experience of contributing to the formulation of training objectives, of devising activities and adapting them to the goals of the training, and of compiling the activities and instructional materials into a comprehensive, easy-to-use manual. When we piloted the training I was involved in what was a very rewarding experience, as I saw something I had worked on come alive and make a difference.

In addition to working directly on these two initiatives I helped organize the Trust's 'Preventing Racial Violence' conference, wrote an article for Runnymede's *Quarterly Bulletin* about the 'Achieving Race Equality in Schools' initiative, and conducted a lot of research on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, its impact on the education system and other developments in education policy.

As an Intern I was treated as a fully functioning member of the Runnymede team: I was directly involved in Runnymede projects, and I had duties and responsibilities which I had to successfully fulfil in order to contribute to success of these initiatives. It was an internship that allowed me to give a lot of myself, my skills and my knowledge, and that gave me much more than I ever hoped for in return.

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