



This past year, I have had the fortunate opportunity to be an intern with the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE). This internship has helped me expand my knowledge on cultural competence and humility through a diverse range of experiences, trainings, and programs.

Coming on board into the County straight from college, my skills in program planning and implementation were less than par. Photovoice, a community based participatory research project, gave me the opportunity to develop my skills in public health and help me become a stronger professional.

I worked closely with county and community members to identify important social issues that impacted their everyday lives. Several workshops we held led to important discussions and dialogue around actions that would take place to address issues ranging from stigma to health and wellness.

By exploring various social issues, I worked with the diverse ethnicities that reside in San Mateo County. I learned a wide range of cultural norms and beliefs about Asians, Pacific Islanders, Chinese, African Americans, Latinos, and people with different spiritual beliefs.

Delving into these cultural groups, I had a chance to attend specific trainings and learn more from the paramount information session on Tongan and Samoan culture, Eastern medicine and healing practices, and what is being done in the Latino community to eliminate the chain of events that lead to differences in health outcomes.

Because of my time spent at the County, I'm more drawn to ethnic and cultural diversity. I'm more than ever compelled to seek this rich knowledge with a foundation of life long learning and apply the skills learned in my professional and personal life.

*- Omar Aljundi*