

CHILDREN AND YOUTH STUDIES STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



By Loretta Chin

DEBRALEE BROWN – MAGNER CENTER INTERNSHIP STIPEND RECIPIENT – FALL 2015

Debralee Brown, 22, is a transfer student who enrolled at Brooklyn College a year ago, but her experience with the Children and Youth Studies Program has helped her make great strides in a short time. She is a double major in Speech Pathology and Children and Youth Studies, and is the recipient of a Magner Center Internship Stipend Award to support her Internship in Applied Children's Studies for Fall 2015.

Brown describes her career goals in the following excerpt from her application:

My desire is to become an educator. I have always had a passion for working with children and youth. I want to be an active member in the community by supporting and educating our youths on how to be better citizens. With my degree in Speech Language Therapy, I aspire to give children who have communication issues the self-confidence that they need in order to go out, fulfill their dreams and let their voices be heard.

In the future, it would be an honor to travel the world and be an advocate for young people. I would like to start off as a community advocate, where I could be a voice for our youths. Our children are living in poverty and their lives have been slowly subsiding. I want to be in the center, helping, supporting, encouraging and educating them. I want to let them know that despite what society may say about them, regardless of what they are influenced by every day, there is always an opportunity to become someone valuable in life.

Brown is typical of many of the Children and Youth Studies students who are struggling to make ends meet while attending school. She migrated to the United States from Jamaica when she was 13 years old with her mother and brother, and wants to make her mother proud by helping to build a better life for them, her children and society at large. She and her fellow students are members of a community of caring faculty and staff at Brooklyn College who are there to help and guide them. They receive support through the many resources provided in the program office with its five computer stations, borrowing library, Career Exploration Internship Database, Facebook pages, website resources and more. In addition, students are connected to college events, job opportunities, and resources in the surrounding community.

Like many of the Children and Youth Studies students, Brown would not have known about the opportunities around her without help. "Elise Goldberg told me about the Magner Internship Stipend Award two days before it was due," Brown said of the Children and Youth Studies program coordinator who also teaches the Children and Youth Studies Career Exploration Internship course (CHST4100). With support from the stipend, Goldberg helped place Brown in an internship with Freda Rosenfeld, a lactation consultant and childbirth educator. An article is written about Rosenfeld as "The Breast Whisperer" in *The New York Times*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/nyregion/21freda.html? r=0>

Another faculty member Irma Kramer, who teaches the Human Rights of Children course, was also instrumental in helping Brown to win the stipend in the competitive application and interview process. Kramer wrote a stellar recommendation letter for Brown praising her both as a student and as a volunteer in the Children and Youth Studies office. Kramer was impressed with Brown's work on an "overwhelming" project to compile resources and annual reports on the United Nations Convention of the Child. Brown helped arrange by topic numerous binders about the state of the human rights of children around the world in two bookcases that provide a valuable resource for other students.

Brown has goals to attend graduate school and to pursue careers in speech therapy and community development. She wants to be an educator who works with children in a non-classroom setting. Some might ask how an internship related to lactation and childbirth can have anything to do with her goals, but Brown explained that her work is very much related to speech in children and newborns. She often goes to client's homes or is present at the classes where she has seen all kinds of cases related to her field. For instance, she has seen children with a condition called tongue-tie (ankyloglossia). This is where the connecting skin under the baby's tongue (called the frenulum) is too short or extends too far, causing problems with breastfeeding and speech.

Brown's internship stipend award will help alleviate some of the difficulties of attending school while helping with her family and pursuing her dreams. She is expecting her first child in December. Undeterred, she is currently completing her Fall 2015 semester and has plans to make good use of her Children and Youth Studies education both personally and professionally. She has worked at a daycare before and plans to return to that setting after she graduates. She is an example of the many hard-working students in the program who have managed to successfully combine their academic, professional and personal goals to meet their needs and that of the larger society.