This summer, with the guidance of Helen Kauder, Ted Skowronski, and the support of Harvard Club of Southern Connecticut, I worked as a summer fellow at Artspace in New Haven, Connecticut. Artspace's broader mission is to catalyze artistic activity in the city, and to connect artists, audiences, and resources. Each summer, Artspace runs a three-week long program for New Haven public high school students, called the Summer Apprenticeship Program (SAP), in which twenty students work together with a lead artist to conceive, create and mount their very own gallery show. I served as a mentor for the 22 students who participated in the program this summer.

This year, SAP was all about analog filmmaking. Led by artists Paolo Davanzo and Lisa Marr of the Echo Park Film Center, 22 students collaborated on a 24 minute long New Haven City Symphony, shot entirely on super 8 film, with each minute of the film representing one hour of the day in New Haven. Additionally, the students made the score for the film collaboratively,
and they created a gallery exhibition about the experience, which will be up until September 14th.

My duties as a mentor changed each month. In June, I worked with Helen Kauder and Sarah Fritchey from Artspace, Paolo Davanzo and Lisa Marr from Echo Park Film Center and 2 co-mentors to: select the student roster, prepare and plan the program curriculum, and acquire analog filmmaking donations from around the city. In July, I was a mentor for the students. Since I had prior analog filmmaking experience, I helped teach the students how to use analog filmmaking tools to express their stories and visions. On a broader level, my focus was on befriending each student, and creating a positive and safe collaborative environment. In August, I edited the documentary I’d been filming throughout SAP, which will be shown at the closing reception for the exhibition in September.

The summer fellowship was an amazing experience. It was certainly intensive, but working with the young people in the program has significantly changed the shape of my goals moving forward, in terms of what I’d like to do for the rest of my time at Harvard, and after I graduate. Before this opportunity, I had never experienced activism and art in such an interconnected way. Throughout the course of the three week program, I was able to contribute to each student’s development, and I felt lucky to have witnessed them frown and gain confidence in both their skills as filmmakers and in their abilities to express their voices in the group and in the New Haven community.

This experience has given me a new drive to pursue activism and art together. In the future, I hope to continue working on collaborative film projects that empower youth and underrepresented voices, with the goal of helping these individuals gain confidence, make art, and contribute to their communities in whatever ways that they aspire to.