Hae Jin Kang

After finishing my campus requirements for both my majors during the Fall 2010 semester, I embarked on a semester at UCDC and an internship with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Caribbean Unit, Regional Office Washington, which operates as a field office representing the U.S. and the Caribbean countries. In addition to my internship, I worked on a research paper that sought to expand the discussion around the humanitarian response for Haitian refugees impacted by the earthquake, focusing on the protection of human rights for Haitian deportees. This topic remains a pressing and urgent concern, as evidenced by the recent deportations of Haitian nationals to detention centers (in January and April 2011), as well as the various Washington-based civil society initiatives around the one-year mark of Haiti’s earthquake in January 2011.

Throughout my internship in D.C., I had the opportunity to observe policy-making in progress around a variety of issues affecting refugees. For instance, I attended a congressional briefing on the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBTI) refugees, as well as a congressional hearing on the “right to water,” both sponsored by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, a bi-partisan commission within the U.S. House Committee of Foreign Affairs. For my internship, I also researched human rights conditions with respect to asylum claims of asylum-seeking individuals within the Caribbean. These activities demonstrated to me the importance of engaging a rights-based approach in developing policy solutions. I have learned a great deal from my internship at UNHCR as well as during my time in D.C. and look forward to further opportunities in a career of public service.