

By participating in the Reynolds Program, I seek to interact with a diverse and engaged community that values varied perspectives and unique ideas for social change. With my international background, multilingual skills and experience in education and online activism, I hope to make meaningful contributions to an already challenging and inspiring environment and to find potential partners for future endeavors in social entrepreneurship. My work at Avaaz.org and Human Rights Watch has exposed me to a variety of global issues and social problems. Armed with the capacity to evaluate situations from a multidisciplinary perspective, I plan to continue addressing inequality and injustice as fundamentally interrelated concerns that mandate big-picture thinking and innovative solutions. Experience has taught me that the first step to social change is raising awareness, in which media and public education play a key role. I am particularly interested in developing the power of technological innovation and social media as a means of promoting cultural dialogue, raising the visibility of issues that fall below the radar of mainstream media, and providing a voice for marginalized groups. In the words of sociologist Manuel Castells:

*There are no technological revolutions without cultural transformation. Revolutionary technologies have to be thought of. This is not an incremental process; it is a vision, an act of belief, a gesture of rebellion.*

I believe that I have the vision to be at the leading edge of such a revolution, participating in a societal movement that is at once inevitable and unpredictable. While internet technology and new media offer the exciting potential for grassroots community advocacy groups to spread their message to a global audience faster and at a lower cost than ever thought possible, there still exists a lingering digital divide which threatens to widen the gap between communities that have technological access and those that do not. Bridging this gap is one of my principal academic and professional

interests, and the Reynolds Program will equip me with the tools to bring my efforts to a new level of effectiveness.

Technological hardware and expertise have facilitated the exercise of “digital democracy,” allowing communities to communicate faster and with a broader audience by harnessing internet media and mobile telephony to advocate for social change. Conversely, those lacking the material means and skills to leverage these new paradigms risk further social and political disenfranchisement. I am interested in developing technological tools and organizational programs that have the aim of closing this digital divide, specifically through open source technologies that will allow communities to adapt innovations to their particular needs and plan for long term sustainability. After I complete my studies, I plan to offer my expertise to community groups and grassroots activists, helping to empower them with tools that will allow them to tell their own stories.