

## Alexandria Anderson: VISTA Follow-Up Article

Serving as a VISTA Member with the Office of Community Engagement for the last year and half has been a fulfilling experience that I am grateful for. I have learned so much about the Santa Rosa community and how to work closely with community members to bring about changes. Being that this is my second year as a VISTA, my perspective has changed and I have taken the time to invest in myself, my community, and find fulfillment in the work I am doing and the experiences I have had.

The main project I have been working on is the [Multicultural Roots Project: Stories from Our Black, Indigenous, People of Color](#). Through this project, our team highlight the stories, experiences, and accomplishments of community leaders who have made or are still making significant contributions to Santa Rosa. A project like this is especially needed in a place where people of color are often overlooked and silenced, and where white culture and history dominates all spaces.

Unfortunately, some stories and legacies are never told and die with those who knew the most about it. However, I have enjoyed learning about the rich history of Santa Rosa and I don't shy away from writing about the painful history that hasn't been told until now. I am working to amplify the voices and experiences of those who normally don't have a platform to do so.

Along with writing stories, I am building connections with community leaders and groups, attending community meetings, creating innovative ways to connect with the community through the pandemic, and working with our department to address institutional racism. I have a particular focus on youth engagement and their experiences around police brutality, projects we can work on together and how to get involved in local government. It's important for me to be an ally and show up for the community. As a VISTA Member, I'm always exploring what more I can do. We won't see real change without including everyone in the community.

The work that I am doing as a VISTA is what I value and plan to continue even after my service year is over. I am passionate about being an advocate for change, justice, equity, and using what I have learned from my peers and the community to work toward systemic change and a better world. I have the desire to continue learning and moving forward because activism is continuous, and we still have a long way to go.

As an AmeriCorps VISTA Member serving with the City of Santa Rosa and Sonoma State University, I have been able to build capacity at those sites and work toward creating sustainable changes. Through community building and outreach, volunteer management, event planning, and so much more, I have learned valuable skills and gained experience that I plan to take with me throughout my professional journey. This year has also been mentally challenging and has led me on a personal journey of growth through self-reflection and deep soul

searching. Although the work we do is mentally taxing and challenging, I have learned that I'm more productive when I take care of myself and create a balance and boundaries. Through my service, I have had the opportunity to experience professional and personal growth. AmeriCorps has opened the door for many great opportunities. Wherever I go next, I will continue to find what is meaningful to me and what is for the betterment of the community.