

My experience as an Aronson fellow was great, and I have grown as a scholar. I have connected my research during the fall semester with my work this semester. During the fellowship, I was able to think more critically about my project and the deliverables. Based on what I had learned during the fall semester, I wanted to focus on gardens and their access to resources. Gardens and their access to resources were one factor that stuck with me in my fall semester research. I enjoyed the biweekly meetings in my fellowship and the guest lecturers that arrived. The discussions helped me keep pace with my project, and I enjoyed giving project updates.

The project itself has to be developed. I had a general idea of what I wanted to do, but I did not have all of the project's kinks ironed out yet. The meetings that took place biweekly also helped me think about aspects of the projects I had not thought about before. I also liked the lecturers from the Tishman center and from the New School that were present, as I was able to build a network. In terms of my project development through the semester, it changed somewhat. Initially, my deliverable was going to be a paper of some kind. After the fellowship projects, I decided to change my deliverable to a zine. Another positive experience I had from the Aronson experience meeting was that I was able to be put in contact with community gardeners that Tishman center faculty and other students knew. I used the opportunities in the discussions and through support from the Tishman center to think about my methodology.

In terms of my project, My work in Aronson is focused on researching how to aid community gardens in navigating to find access to funding and resources. In New York City, there are over 500 community gardens, each of which is unique in the role they play in their communities. The city supports the gardens through GreenThumb, a city agency, but many of the parks rely on volunteer labor and are self-funded. Greens have also been threatened by being destroyed by real estate, although recently, protections have been implemented. Gardens can access funding through grants, stipends, and support from non-profits and foundations. These resources are essential because community-based urban agriculture plays a critical role in food security, climate resilience, and building social networks in New York City. The central methodology I am using is interview analysis and collaboration.

I may collaborate with the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space on creating a zine. I think I will also design a donation box or QR code system to assist in gardens getting funding from visitors. Some of the significant next steps are to continue conducting and transcribing the interviews I have conducted already. I have currently done four interviews, and I think I may lead a few more. In terms of the deliverable, I will work more with MoRUS to develop a zine, which they may help me print. The zine itself will focus on how to start a garden, find funding through different ways, what organizations provide funding, and maximize what support Green Thumb provides. The zine may also cover how gardens survive through funding and labor and what changes can be made to support gardens. The other deliverable may be the design of a donation box or an online donation system. The idea arose as some gardens have no way to gather donation money from visitors, both cash and through online means. Developing a streamlined donation system would make it easier for gardeners to focus on working in the garden beds and doing critical maintenance rather than donations. Other feedback I would give is to emphasize perhaps deliverables and what they would be at the start of the fellowship.

Overall, I think that the Aronson Fellowship was a great learning experience for me, and I am very happy to have participated in it. I think that the networks and connections I have developed will last me for the rest of my degree tenure and beyond.