

Student journalist highlights stories of underrepresented communities

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Student journalist Juan Olarte-Cortes earned an internship with CNN after he launched his own news website to tell personal stories that were left out of the mainstream media. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“I love talking to people and learning their stories,” explained graduating senior Juan Alejandro Olarte-Cortes. “Highlighting stories of underrepresented communities is not just fulfilling to me, but it creates visibility, which is integral to understanding each other.”

At the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, Olarte-Cortes created [Just News With Juan](#), a website that focuses on the personal stories often left out of mainstream media. Soon after creating his website, the major news outlet CNN recognized his important work and offered him an internship. Throughout the spring of 2021, Olarte-Cortes worked with CNN’s Atlanta News Bureau, assisting producers and correspondents with breaking news. Although his internship was remote due to the pandemic, Olarte-Cortes worked closely with colleagues to transcribe interviews, research pitches, fact-check articles, and review testimonies for an ongoing investigation. He also wrote news alerts and contributed [an article](#) on how redistricting affects certain communities across the Southeast region.

“I was also involved in the research for articles and segments on the rise in Asian American hate crimes, which was really powerful,” shared Olarte-Cortes. “Throughout the internship, I felt supported by supervisors that were invested in my growth in this profession.”

Originally from Panama City, Panama, Olarte-Cortes came to Tulane with a desire to become a journalist and to study his many interests. He soon added a second major of international relations to his communication focus, as well as the School of Liberal Arts Management Minor (SLAMM). Olarte-Cortes spent each of his four years in New Orleans involved with TU Gente, an organization dedicated to providing an on-campus family for Tulane’s Latinx students, and served as the group’s president his senior year. In addition to his studies and campus involvement, Olarte-Cortes also worked as a service-learning assistant with Tulane’s Center for Public Service for three years, where he served as a point of contact between the university and local organizations assisting immigrants in learning English.

“The education I received at Tulane has prepared me for whatever doors I end up walking through,” said Olarte-Cortes. Upon graduation, he is being honored with the Glendy Burke Medal from the [Department of Communication](#), which is awarded to the student who best combines academic performance and contributions to the community in the field of communication, and he plans to pursue employment in a

variety of fields that allow him to connect to storytelling.

From his coursework to his community involvement and dedication to leading diversity efforts across media outlets and within the university, Olarte-Cortes reflects humbly on his work: “It is so important to create space for individuals who feel like they don’t fit in, to create spaces to share a similar culture, and to create opportunities for raising visibility. I’m glad I’ve been able to contribute to my Tulane community and beyond over the past four years here.”