

Alberto Aramburo

HEP/CAMP Intern Weekly Bio

Week 1 6/7 – 6-15

15, June 2014

I arrived in Washington DC on the 7th of June at 9:30 PM. As my flight was landing I was mesmerized by the city. The lights, the monuments, and a Ferris wheel by the bay all seemed so beautiful. I have known that I have been coming for almost a month, but I don't think I truly realized the magnitude of the opportunity in front of me. It was only my second time on a plane. I had to wait for my bags and Patrick Doone. Never in my mind did I ever think I would look up to this man but was I in for a surprise. He arrived to escort me back to my dorm. He was so welcoming and caring. I found this so odd for I had barely met this man. I could tell he was tired for I was the only intern to arrive as late as I did and yet he did what he could to hide it. He helped me with my luggage and briefly showed me how to use the metro. After we reached the station, we walked a couple of blocks to meet his wife, Betsy, and one of his friends. They had pizza for me to eat. I have never had this kind of hospitality. It was a great feeling. They walked me to my dorm where my roommate Gabriel was already asleep. As I was saying goodnight to Patrick, Betsy and friend, Gabriel woke up. I introduced myself. He is a genuinely nice guy. We started talking and decided to go for a walk and explore the town.

The next day Patrick came to our dorms accompanied by his wife and friend to go to church if we wanted. That is when I met Elizabeth, Vianney, and Diana. They were also really nice and welcoming. We had an instant friendship. We went to church and then to a meeting with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) members and the other two CAMP interns Ariana and Samantha. The CHCI interns did not show on time, so we started conversing and learning about each other. After our meeting we rode the Metro to Eastern Market and then to Target where we got necessary supplies for our rooms. Patrick helped us navigate the city and the Metro. We left Patrick in the evening and we went exploring to the White House which was smaller than I expected.

Monday, we met with the CHCI interns for orientation week. We introduced ourselves. I was shocked to know that we were training with students from elite universities such as Brown, Yale, and Stanford, etc. During the orientation we met William Gil, the Vice President of Programs. This man's speech was great. It was exactly what I needed to hear to inspire me to thrive in this city. He made it clear to all of us that we are the elite of our class and that we have to be good to get where we are. Later, we met with Mr. Alejandro Perez who is the president's chief lobbyist on Capitol Hill. This was amazing for me. I had been in DC for 3 days and I was already meeting people who make a difference throughout the country. After the training was finished, we went to Union Station where we got some food and waited for Gabriel who had already started his internship in Senator Merkley's office.

Tuesday we had training with CHCI and then decided to go to Walmart by ourselves, which we semi-successfully did. We got off a stop too early and walked 10 blocks to Walmart. It wasn't that bad though. We got to see Chinatown and explore as a group. After we got to Walmart we got all kinds of food we could fit in our small fridge. We ended up buying more than we thought. We didn't really take into consideration that after few blocks grocery bags get fairly heavy. We walked to the closest metro which was about 5-6 blocks away. We still had to walk another 4 blocks to our dorms from our nearest metro stop. After that we decided we buy in smaller increments.

On Wednesday we were in for an adventure we never expected. We met with Arturo Rodriguez, President of the United Farmworkers of America. When we arrived, we walked into a room full of people who were preparing for a protest. We were asked to join them and we accepted without hesitation. They split us into 2 groups with sub-groups of 3 where we were going to go to 2 congressmen's offices to share stories related to immigration. So they did a gathering where they had several individuals share their stories on how immigration affected their families. Univision, Telemundo, and other news camera crews were there. We then walked to the congressmen's office. When we arrived, the door was locked so we left pictures of the families impacted by our current immigration policies. We also supported some of the protesters who were to be arrested when they sat down in front of the congressmen's office. We chanted, "Give us a vote!" After a few minutes we were asked to leave the hallway and those who did not were arrested, including Mr. Rodriguez. It was all very well organized. While outside waiting for those arrested to be led outside, I got a burst of courage and started to chant and shortly thereafter everyone was chanting with me. I was leading the chant! Our voices echoed through the streets of DC letting everyone know we wanted a vote! We chanted until the last individual arrested was taken away. I never in my life have felt so empowered.

Thursday we met with all of our intern hosts. All the interns were excited for our placements and couldn't wait to start. That night we had our going away dinner with Patrick and Betsy. Friday was a sad day for us for Patrick and Betsy were leaving. I never knew how close I could get to someone in just one week. We had gotten so used to their guidance, encouragement, and hospitality that when they were gone we felt like baby chicks without their mother hen. But we worked together to ensure we were ready for the weeks ahead.

Saturday we slept, went to Walmart and walked the city. On Sunday, I was invited by Lisa Ramirez for a bike ride and lunch. I met her whole family. They were all so welcoming and nice. We went for an 8 mile bike ride and afterwards ate lunch and had ice cream. She helped me realize how fortunate I am to have gotten this internship and how hard I should work during it. I knew it was important, but Lisa really drove the point home. This opportunity is a key to a better future. I never thought that I would be in Washington DC, working and getting my name out there. I am representing my college, my community, and my family. Now I'm ready. Bring on Monday.