

Ariana Rodriguez
Week 1
June 15, 2014



It is hard to wrap my mind around the idea that my first week in Washington, D.C is over. I can still remember the day before my flight how, after spending the day with my friends, I rushed home to do my last minute packing. I was so nervous, afraid of the unknown, not knowing how everything would play out. When the time came, I could not help but cry when I kissed my family good bye as I had never been that far away from them before. Walking away, all I could think about was how proud and grateful I am to represent my school California State University Long Beach, C.A.M.P and my family.

The plane ride was not as scary as I had anticipated and it wasn't until I saw the Washington Monument that I really began to get excited. As I arrived I began to meet my fellow interns who were friendly and welcoming. Sunday was mostly spend organizing and settling into our new home the George Washington University dorms, and it was not until later that night that we had our first D.C adventure. After a long day we took a walk around the neighborhood in search of the White House. Everything seemed to be going well until we arrived at the White House and it began to rain. It was great seeing the house where our presidents have lived and knowing that history was made there. Everything seemed a bit surreal as I stared at the White House in the rain. In a couple of minutes we were in the pouring rain as we walked our way back to the GW dorms. We did get a bit lost along the way but it was all part of our first adventure.

Monday we began our first week of orientation with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) which included various speakers and workshops that would help us adjust to the D.C intern life style. Our first speaker was Alejandro Perez, who is the Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. It was an honor to have the opportunity to listen and hear his advice to us. Meeting Alejandro Perez emphasized the need for more Hispanic leaders and how it is our responsibility to be those future Hispanic leaders. Through CHCI we were able to receive workshops about social media etiquette, tips on how to thrive in D.C., and listen to the Vice President of programs. It was a great way to start the week and realize what a great opportunity we received thanks to the CAMP/HEP to be able to learn first-hand our political system.

Tuesday included a second day of CHCI orientation, including various workshops and speakers. After the orientation we were able to go explore the city and we had a chance to see Capitol Hill. It was huge and a bit hard to imagine that within those building Congress members were hard at work with legislation. It was fun getting to just walk around with my fellow interns and experience the city together.

Wednesday we had the opportunity to participate in a protest for immigration reform with the United Farm Workers. We were able to meet and protest alongside the president of the UFW, Arturo S. Rodriguez. It was a great honor to meet someone that is dedicated to fighting for justice. It was a great feeling to be able to help support an issue that is truly close to my heart as when I was in middle school my father was deported from the United States and I was left without a father. Throughout the protest, we wore shirts that read "Stop Separating Families,"

which is exactly what happened to me and I was proud to protest in order to stop other people from having to live their life separated from their loved one. I felt sad as I listened to the stories of other people that like me had been separated from their loved ones.

I felt empowered when I realized that there were people fighting for this issue in order to make sure that families stayed together. I truly felt inspired when I heard that people were going to willingly get arrested in order to protest outside a Congressmen office. I was really touched when I heard a 12 year old boy was also willing to be arrested. Having the opportunity to listen to their stories see their motivation it made me proud to be able to say that I too was fighting for my family and all those that live in fear of deportation.



One of the greatest moments was when all the volunteers in the protest were holding hands speaking about what that moment meant to them, and in that moment, I felt overwhelmed with tears. As I was crying, I felt other CAMP interns grab my hand tighter. In that moment I really felt touched knowing that I had real friends that were there to support me and help me up when I was down. It was that moment, seeing everyone holding hands, I felt united, empowered, and infinite. Never had I felt as united as proud as when I marched down to Capitol Hill representing my community, my family and myself fighting for an injustice the separation of families.

I loved every moment of the protest and even as I saw the police arrest the protestors I felt so inspired by the 12 year old that stood proud to fight for this injustice. There is nothing more rewarding than standing up for something you believe in and knowing that we might have changed much that day but we made a stand to say that “Si Se Puede” and we will be fighting until we make a change.

On Thursday we had the opportunity to meet and visit all the office of placement. We had the opportunity to meet some great people that were very inviting and willing to talk with us. It was great to see where everyone would be working and to see that all our placements were great. I felt so welcomed in very office we went into; from Congressmen offices to the Department of Education offices. It was a day full of great people and great conversations that truly made me excited to start work.



We also had the chance to have a nice dinner with our wonderful director Patrick Doone. I absolutely want to thank Patrick for everything he did for us it was a pleasure meeting him and having the opportunity to have him with us. He made us feel so welcome, also making sure we had everything we needed and went out of his way to make our transition to D.C so easy. In was great getting to talk with Patrick but it was sad knowing he would be leaving us. Thank you Patrick for doing what you do

because your kindness really touches people’s hearts and has an impact in our lives do not change.

Friday was a special day for me as it was my birthday and it was great to spend the day with my fellow CAMP interns. It was a great day as the other interns



made sure that I had a great birthday. We all went to visited the Lincoln Memorial, which is a place I had been dying to see my whole life. It felt great! Even though I was not able to spend my birthday with my family, the CAMP interns really made me feel like I was at home with family. On the weekend we relaxed and had the opportunity to do some more exploring, which included visiting some of the Smithsonian Museums. Overall, it was a great first week and I cannot wait to see what is next for our D.C adventures.