

Week 4  
July 6, 2014  
Ariana Rodriguez



I thought week four would be a slow week, by the end I learned some important lessons and had lots of fun along the way. I thought my week would be slow because the House of Representatives are out of session. Monday went by fairly quick though because I was assigned a project that took me the whole day. I had to call 220 offices of Congress members to verify information. It was not a

hard task; it just took up a lot of time. I was happy because it helped me work on my phone skills and helped pass the day.

During this week at work we've been having bag lunches with various staff members. The bag lunch gives the interns a chance to be able to really talk to the staff and get to know their stories and just be able to ask questions. It's very interesting getting to see all the different paths every single staff member took but all somehow ended up in the same office.

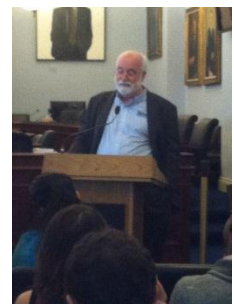
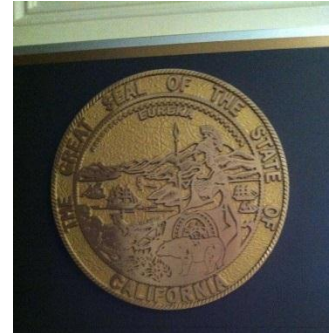
Tuesday was also interesting as I was able to attend a briefing for the Homeboy Industries, which is an organization from Los Angeles that helps formerly gang involved and previously incarcerated men and women. One of the founders of Homeboy Industries, Father Gregory Boyle, was speaking at the briefing. It is inspirational what they do for these people to help them get back on their feet. I felt like his words really impacted me as he said that "Homeboys Industries is about standing with the poor and the powerless, standing with the easily despised so that the day will come when people will stopped being thrown away".

Living in Los Angeles community I have seen my fair share of people that have simply lost their way because they have been labeled as former gang members or been incarcerated. People fear them and do not offer them a chance to change. Homeboy Industries offers a second chance to these people helping them with job training, tattoo removal, educational programs, mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services.

I feel honored to have the opportunity to meet Father Gregory Boyle and be able to hear him share some stories of the results from his work. Being in a Congressional Office has really made me realize that I want to do more community involvement and that I feel working in the local level is where I see myself at this time. I honestly cannot wait to return home and find new ways to become involved.

After work, it was nice to return to the GW dorms and have a movie night with the other CAMP interns. I love being able to just walk over to someone's room and hang out. I can honestly say that Elizabeth, Diana, Alberto, Gabriel and Samantha are some of the most inspiring people I have met. They are great people, and it is so much fun getting to know them and listening to their stories and experiences. It felt great to just have the group together and watch a movie while we made jokes and just relaxed.

After having a great evening, I woke up to a horrible morning. I woke up very sick and had to call in sick to work. As soon as I woke up I had a bad stomach ache and ended up



throwing up twice that morning; yuck! I decided to call my supervisor to ask her if it was okay to stay home to get some rest. I slept most of the day and was too scared to eat any food. Eventually I got out of bed to go to the CVS to get some medicine.



After the medicine, I was able to get up and continued reading Dr. Ramirez book; which made me admire her even more. She is such an inspiration and I would recommend that everyone should read her book Dulcified; it's both in Spanish and English. It felt a bit surreal reading all her struggles when I had just spent last weekend with her, she is such a strong and wonderful woman she is incredible. Getting to meet Dr. Ramirez and reading her book as given me so much hope, I will never forget all she has taught me in such a short amount of time. Take some time to read her book promise it will not disappoint.

After reading I took a nap. When I woke up, I went over to Elizabeth's room, then we went over to make some dinner with the guys. It was great to just talk to them after such a stressful morning. We all talked and laughed while making dinner: Gabriel even made me and Elizabeth a quesadilla it was delicious. It felt great to have such a horrible morning but be able to laugh and have fun with the CAMP interns.



Thursday at work was very slow, as mostly everyone in the office had taken a half day or was on leave. I spent most of my day checking mail and was able to go home early as the office closed early for Independence Day weekend. After coming home to a well-deserved nap Diana woke me up with the idea of meeting up with Laura and Areli (last year CAMP interns) for a sleep over. It was so much fun just staying up and really getting to know each other better. We laughed all night just talking about everything.

The next morning we had a home cooked breakfast. It was great. I had really missed cooking and being able to have home cooked food. It was fun making breakfast and preparing for the Fourth of July celebration. We did end up having a late start and missing the parade but we didn't mind much. We decided that we needed to go shopping to find some patriotic outfits. Eventually we got back to the dorms and began to get ready for the night.



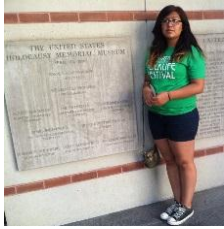
We decided to go to close by monuments to see the firework show. It was pretty exciting getting to experience the Fourth of July in the Capital surrounded by so much history. It was a great experience with great friends. I could



not help feel so proud to be in this beautiful country and be thankful for all the great opportunities the United State has to offer. During the night Diana, Samantha and I decided to go for a monument run. I love being so close to so many monuments! We saw so many of them: The World War II memorial, Martin Luther King Memorial, FDR memorial, and the Thomas Jefferson memorial.

On Sunday, I had a chance to see the Holocaust Museum. As I walked through the doors I was given a card with the name of a young girl that lived through the Holocaust, Freya was her name and we shared the same birthday. I was





told to read one page of her story as I walked through every stage of the museum. At the end, I would know if she survived. As I walked through it, it was a bit overwhelming seeing the harsh cruelty that occurred to these people; not just Jew but homosexuals, Jehovah's witnesses, and gypsies were also murdered.

One of the most intense moments for me was when I walked through a hallway full of shoes as I looked at the shoes I couldn't help but think of the stories of their owners and all they had to overcome. There was a moment when we walked through one of trailers used to move people As I walked through it, I couldn't help but imagine 100 people crammed inside and think of how scary it must have been from the children that made these trips. It was very hard to fight back tears as I went through the museum. As I came to the end of the museum I turned to the last page, and to my relief, realized Freya had survived the Holocaust. Sadly her mother had not. Freya was one of the fortunate one; not everyone was as fortunate.

As I walked out of the museum I saw a sign that read "Think about what you saw, the next time you witness hatred... next time you see injustice" and it really made me think. There were so many bystanders throughout the genocide and not many people were willing to stand and say this is not okay. For the people that were willing to help aid them, I would say thank you! As I read those words I thought to myself I will not be a bystander. It is not okay to hate or discriminate against people and even if we like to think things like this don't happen anymore it is still happening. I

In our society we witness hatred and discrimination, which is why I vow to stand for equal rights for everyone; no matter what race, sex or sexual orientation they might be. It is up to us to be able to stand up and say no it is not okay to discriminate against anyone and rather be allies for those that are discriminated. We must learn from the past and make sure history does not repeat itself.



Overall the week did seem to start off slow, but it ended great. The long weekend is officially over and I have work in the morning. The House of Representatives is back in session and it should be fun. I am officially half way through my internship and I feel like there is still so many more DC adventures waiting to happen so stay tuned.