

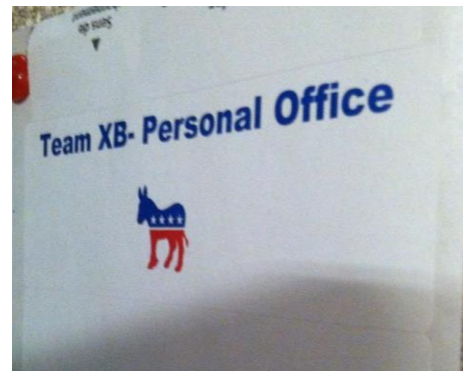
Ariana Rodriguez
Week 5



As I begin to write my journal for this week, I cannot wrap my head around the fact that I have been in Washington DC for five weeks. It is truly incredible. Being in the east coast is so different from home, and even though I really miss it sometimes, DC has been a completely different experience. Being in a congressional office has opened my eyes to countless political issues that I was completely unaware of, and it gives me a will to learn.

On Monday morning I had the opportunity to become more educated in the unemployment crisis and the actions being taken to help close the employment gap. It was a great opportunity to listen to various Congressmen and organizations speak on the issue. Being an intern really gives you a unique opportunity to be able to attend various briefings on various issues and meet people that are working to solve these issues. I feel often time people are so used to their small communities that they do not stop and think about state issues or global issues. Within the time I have been in DC I feel like I have become a much more aware person with not just issue concerning my local community but issue of various states and countries.

The week began well, but Wednesday I was very excited as I was finally able to meet with Congressman Becerra. After weeks of being in the office it was great to be able to formally sit down and talk with Congressman Becerra. He is such a great person, so humble and just so relatable. He was very interested in our stories and making sure our experience in his office would be memorable. Close to the end of the meeting, he asked what was one thing we wanted the Congressmen to know; so I shared my story with him.



I told him how important issues like immigration reform, education, migrant worker rights, and good working conditions were to me. When I shared I was the HEP/CAMP intern and the wonderful impact the program had within my first year of college, Congressman Becerra shared that in the early days of the CAMP program they were discussing canceling the program. He talked about how he really pushed to keep it; and that just touched my heart. If it wasn't for him, I would not be in DC. It felt so gratifying to be representing a Congressmen that I truly believe in, someone that has such a passion for what he does. Overall it was a great experience and something I will never forget. I walked away from the meeting proud to be part of Team Becerra ☺!

Thursday morning I wasn't felling as incredible as I had been on Wednesday and was forced to stay home. I rested most of the day, but in the afternoon when I began to feel better I decided to make the most of my afternoon and went to the American History Museum. The museum was amazing full of so many great things to see. One of my favorites was the



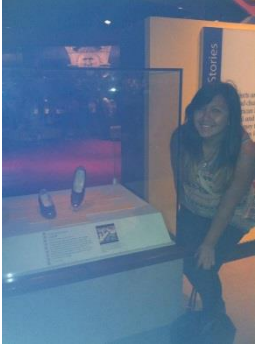


exhibit on the Star Spangled Banner, where the actual flag that inspired our national anthem was on display. I have to admit that I had to really take a moment and stare at the flag because it was beautiful. It was amazing to be able to sit there and imagine the flag waving high after the battle give the colonist hope that it was possible to win the revolutionary war and for them to never be able to imagine what great of a nation I would become. I felt so proud to be an American as I stared at the flag and sang along to our national anthem. It's these moments that make me so grateful to have the opportunity to be able to see this and experience this an opportunity my family never had.

When I have moments like these I think of my family that has struggled for years to have the American dream and it's thanks to my grandparents that brought us here. It is thanks to my inspiring mother that struggled to put her children through school and that never gave up on us. It is thanks to my aunts and uncles that kept pushing us to succeed. I just want to take the time and tell my whole family thank you and that I love you guys so much because if it wasn't for you guys I don't know where I be.

The American History Museum was full of vintage items some of my favorites were the World War II propaganda, vintage 50's cars and a little childhood favorite Wizard of Oz ruby red slippers because there really is no place like home.

Friday was another incredible day as we had CHCI seminars where we discussed discrimination within the Latino community. It was eye opening to see how much discrimination there is just within our own community and it inspired me to be the change. Our Latino community is so beautiful and diverse I would not have it any other way. We all might be from different places, speak various types of Spanish or maybe even an indigenous tongue but we are all united and that is what is important. CHCI has never made me feel more connect to my pride in being Mexican, being Latina, being a woman, and most importantly my pride in being someone that has so much to offer the world.

After the seminar the HEP/ CAMP interns had the great opportunity to receive a Pentagon tour and meet some wonderful women that work within the Pentagon. It was surreal to be in the Pentagon a building full of some of the highest ranking defense officials. As I walked around one thing I kept thinking was how I wish my little brothers, my sister and mom could be here to see this. I feel so lucky to be able to see these things and I that hope one day my family will be able to have the same opportunity.



Saturday was the Tri-Caucus BBQ which gave us an opportunity to interact with other interns. It was a day full of fun and relaxation. Then on Sunday Dr. Ramirez, Director of the



Office of Migrant Education, invited us to a BBQ at her house. It was great to watch the last game of the World Cup and meet other interns. I truly enjoy being in Dr. Ramirez house because she makes me feel like home. She opens the door to her home and she just makes me feel like family which is something I never experienced before. It was great to talk to other interns and Dr. Ramirez sister in law. It was just a great weekend and it just so much fun hanging out with all these incredible people.

The one thing I will not forget about DC is the people the amazing people that I had the opportunity to meet. Every day I meet someone knew and it's the type of people that are genuinely happy to see you succeed and that is something I feel I did not have a lot growing up. I feel so grateful to HEP/CAMP because if it was not for them I would never know that there are people that really do just want to see you succeed.

Thank you HEP/CAMP for changing my life in a matter of weeks. Also thank you to the amazing people that have been so welcoming to the HEP/CAMP interns. Thank you to Dr. Ramirez for making us feel like family. I will truly never forget these experiences. Now I only



have 3 weeks left and I plan to make the most of them. There is not a second to waste.