

Ariana Rodriguez  
Week 7

It's official I only have one week left in Washington D.C and by this time next week I will be back home in my bed. It is really starting to hit me that in a matter of day I will not be surrounded by the monuments, I will not be waking up to go to Capitol Hill and my friends will be in different states.



It is all very sad to think that I have grown so close to these people and I learned to love the city and soon it will all be far away. Yet I think of everything I been through and I have truly learned a lot from this experiences. One great experience during this week was the HEP/CAMP directors meeting. It was just great to meet the directors and to be able to see all the great things these programs are doing all over the Unites States. On Monday I actually had a chance to see my own director from CSULB and it was great to be able to see him as well as see the work he is doing to advocate for our great program. It was also great to go speak with representatives from both Senators of California and share with them the impact that CAMP has

done in my life. It felt great to have so many people truly interested in my story and want to listen to everything I experienced being with CAMP. It was a proud moment to be able to truly advocate for a program that has helped me in so many ways. After speaking with representatives all the California directors decided to go to dinner together and it was great to just sit and talk to all these amazing people. After having some time with the directors, some of the interns decided to meet up for some bowling. It was great to be able to meet other interns from various groups like Santa Monica and also from the Head Start program. It also makes me think how lucky I was to meet people from all type of



programs and share my experience with them. Tuesday was the second day of the directors meet which was full of workshops and the CAMP interns were there to assist within the workshops. I found the workshops very informative because we had a chance to see how hard our programs are working to improve in any way they can. It was like the behind the scenes look at all the hard work our programs do for us. On Wednesday it was a very important day for me because the CAMP interns had the amazing opportunity to meet with White House staff and share our experiences. We actually got a chance to go into the White House! I was so excited and just felt so extremely privileged to be able to just go in and see Roberto Rodriguez Special Assistant to President Obama for Educational issues. As we sat there waiting for Mr. Rodriguez I just had to take a minute and realize where I was sitting. I was in the White House; never in my wildest dreams did I think I





would be there. Growing up in a low income neighborhood in Los Angeles all I ever wanted was to get by and make it to the next day. My family has overcome so many struggles and most of the time getting by was the main concern. As I sat in the White House I realized just how far I had come and how extremely hard I had worked to be there. As Roberto Rodriguez entered the room and asked us to tell him about ourselves, I listened to everyone's stories but when it came to me I felt speechless. I told him of how surreal it felt sitting in the White House and how as I sat there I thought of my family. I thought of my grandma who worked in the fields for years and how proud she would have been to see me here. I thought of my mom and how all her sacrifice would pay off because I had made it. I sat there proud to say that I am living the American Dream and how thankful I was to be in the United States, a land of opportunities. I just couldn't explain to Mr. Rodriguez how

much it meant for me to be there and how far I really came. After the meeting I was trying so hard to keep strong but I must admit I did cry a little thinking of my grandma because she was inspirational and I just wish she could have lived to see how far we have all come. I felt so proud to represent my family because it's true not many people get an opportunity to do what I am doing and I am really blessed. Overall being in the White House was an incredible experience and it was great to have people that are willing to listen to our stories. I really want to thank Irene Bueno for setting up the meeting and give us this great opportunity. It was great going to the White House gift shop and just walking around. On



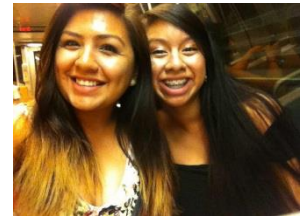
Thursday it felt a bit weird being at the office again after almost a week of not going. Yet the day seemed to pass by very fast and I even had the chance to attend a hearing for the agriculture



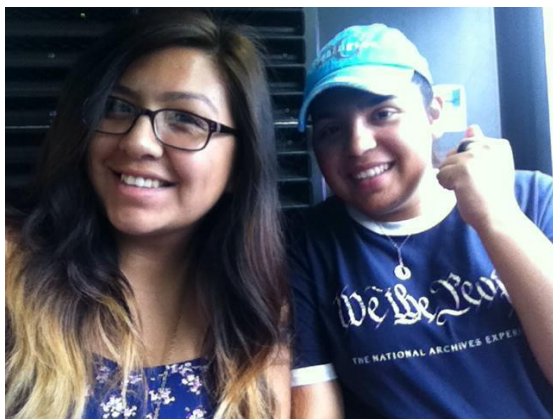
committee which was great. I love being able to attend hearing and briefings because they really give you new insight to various issues. I attended a hearing that examined the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and if it is truly necessary. I was honestly very upset listening to some of the witnesses as they accused people of abusing the benefits of SNAP and that most people that are receiving these benefits are just refusing to work. Coming from a family that basically grew up needing a lot of assistance from social welfare programs it upset me to hear people be so against these programs because I know that personally if it wasn't for these programs I would have often gone hungry. Growing up it has always been hard with a single



mother and two young daughters. My mother often did any type of work just to make sure we always had enough and even through the nights when we hardly had anything to eat these programs helped children like me and my siblings make sure we would not starve. Listening to people say all these awful things about people that received these programs upset me because it's not our families' faults that we are this poor time are

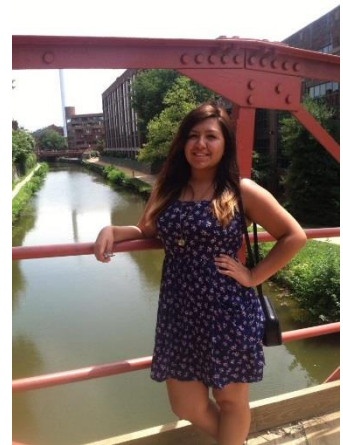


hard and we do not want to be poor. Sometimes life gets hard and that is why these programs are in places to help those in need. Of course one great thing I did see at the hearing was a couple of Representatives that argued and fought for



people like me saying that we need these type of programs especially in cities where unemployment rates are so high. It made me feel better to know there are members in Congress that understand the hardships some families go through. It made me very proud to see these members fighting for people in need. I am very proud to have the opportunity to be working in the House but I never forget where I came from. I cannot forget the struggles my family faced

and the obstacles that we overcame. I feel that it is my responsibility to advocate for my family, friends back home that do not have the same opportunities. My whole experience made me embrace who I am and where I came from yes I was born in the ghetto of Los Angeles, yes I am low income, first generation, minority, Latina, and a woman but I have been able to overcome to be where I am today. On Friday it was a day full of programing with CHCI and we had the great opportunity to meet with Congressman Ruben Hinojosa and Democratic Whip. It was just another experience that made me realize just how lucky I am to be able to meet these people of power and listen to them speak. After CHCI programing we decided to go have some fun in our last weekend in DC.



Diana and I meet up with last year interns Laura and Areli as well as some of the Head Start interns to go eat and listen to a Mariachi band. It was a really fun night eating, dancing and singing along to la *Banda*. The next morning Tim, Samantha and I decided to go to the movies in Chinatown to watch the new movie *Lucy*. It was a good day but I had stayed up very late the night before so I decided to rest of Saturday afternoon. On Sunday my roommate Samantha and I

decided to take the bus to Georgetown and just go window shopping. It was my first time at Georgetown and I really loved just walking around the busy streets and walking into the shops. Later we decided to meet up with Laura, Diana and Gina to go eat. We later ended up going to Laura's house to watch a movie and then came home later at night. Overall we had a very quiet weekend which I loved because I had the chance to spend it with my favorite people and it really made me sad knowing I won't be able to spend the same amount of time with them. Everything is coming to an end and I just know that next week is going to fly by. I am now getting sad knowing how amazing my experience has been and now I don't want to give it up. I definitely need to make my last week worth it. I want to go out with a bang and make the most of it. It is a bitter sweet feeling knowing I want to see my family the city and taste the food but I am going to miss DC.