

Ariana Rodriguez
Week 8



There has been some ups and some downs but the whole experience has definitely changed my life. For my last week of my internship I knew it was going to be chaotic and busy. At the same time it was my last week and I knew I was going to have to say good bye to a lot of my friends. I had to try not to think about the good byes because I still had whole week full of work and CHCI events to go to. On Monday it was a full and busy day at work. I was answering phones and checking email during morning. Then Monday afternoon I was asked to attend a briefings on Asian and Pacific



Islander LGBT community. It was a very informational briefing as



they shared various statistics about the LGBT community through research conducted by Williams Institute. After work we had the CHCI Latino Cabinet Member Reception which was truly amazing. We were able to see some truly influential Hispanic leaders like Mayor Julian Castro, Labor Secretary Thomas Perez, SBA administrator Maria Contreras- Sweet and OPM director Katherine Archuleta. It was incredible to listen to the speakers and then to look around and realize that were surrounded by Hispanic Congressman. It was a great night full of great conversations and

meeting great people. It was one of my favorite events. It was a chance to really network and meet people. On Tuesday I attended a hearing for the unaccompanied minors where three children actually were allowed to present their own testimony about their experience as unaccompanied minors. It was a very important hearing for me as I had been waiting to hear the side of the children and I thought it was really helpful to be able to see the issue as a humanitarian issue rather than just a border crisis. It was a very intense hearing and I think very informative. It was great watching the Congress members really react to the children's stories and see the issue as more than just words. On Tuesday after the hearing I was rushed with Congressman Xavier Becerra to the front of the Capital to take picture with all the summer interns. It felt pretty cool walking behind the Congressman and getting to ride in the members only elevator made me feel important 😊. Overall it was a great busy Tuesday then within the afternoon we had another networking event with CHCI. It was great meeting so many people. It was only Tuesday and I felt like I had done so much. When I went home I decided to hang out with Diana and Sam basically just talking but it was sad knowing that on Wednesday we were graduating from CHCI. Wednesday was also going to be my last day of work. It was sad thinking that I was really so close to the end. It's really bitter sweet as I did miss home but I also had a great experience in DC. My friends would be what I miss the most. I had become so used to talking to Sam and going over to Diana's room and just talking to her. I would be sad knowing that we would be in completely different states soon. We tried not to focus on the bad and rather just enjoy the time we had left. On Wednesday it was my last day in the office and it seemed to



go by pretty quickly. In the morning as I sat there answering call I couldn't help but think that this would be my last time in the office and I would soon be on a plane back to California. During lunch all CHCI interns would have lunch with high school students from their states and so it was great meeting some of the students from my hometown. It was great listening to their experiences, their hopes and dreams. It also felt great to have them ask us questions and be able



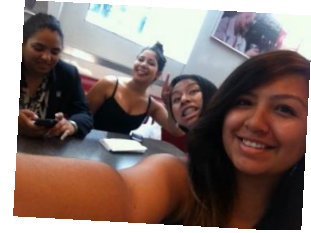
to tell them about our own experiences. I felt like their program had really encouraged them to keep going in their education and just follow their dreams. Talking to high school students was one of my favorite things as one day that is what I hope to do. I hope to inspire others that has to face similar challenges as I did growing up and just show them that anything is possible. I feel like I am proof that anything is possible as I would have never thought that a kid from South Central LA would be part of HEP/CAMP internship or part of CHCI and get to speak with Congress members. Now I feel like I am living the American dream and I am just working my way to the top. And it is my responsibility to take other people with me to the top. Others that like myself felt that our dreams were never possible because we were too poor, a minority, first generation or even undocumented. Through CAMP and CHCI I was able to meet so many people that overcame every single type of obstacle and made it. *Si se puede* and yes it is possible and as I come back to California that is one of the messages I want to pass to other students, anything is possible. So after meeting with the high school kids my office had a farewell party for the summer interns. It was great to sit down with all the staff as well as with the Congressman and discuss the good, bad and the ugly of the internship. Overall it was a great experience working with Congressman Becerra and working with his staff. Like any internship it has some great parts some more slow parts and some in between but overall I feel like it has changed my life. I could never emphasize how lucky I am to be able to have this opportunity. There are so many people that I know that have so much potential and then they just give up mid-way. There are not a lot of people like me that are able to have this opportunity and for that I am grateful. It is true that my experience has changed my view of many things and now I feel even more empowered to make a change. All this could not have been possible if Team XB were not willing to take me in and teach me the ways of the hill. My last day was sad but great to be able to share it with



all those great people. But the day was not over as we still had the CHCI graduation. During the CHCI graduation there were various Congressman and Women that came to speak with us. Yet my favorite parts was when Congress members highlighted the CHCI interns that



work within their office, it was inspiring listening to the Congress member share the stories of their interns. It was a moment full of support and motivation as just by being in their offices it allowed them to truly listen to our stories and even change their perspectives on certain issues. I thought it was great to see so many interns be highlighted by their offices. Of course it also great to be able to officially call



myself a CHCI alumni. Overall we did meet incredible people that helped make our experience even more memorable. Some people that really made my internship memorable were Laura and Diana my Oregon friends ☺ so after graduation and networking we decided to take some pictures in front of the Capital. These girls always bring me so many laughs and smiles, they are so much fun and our photo shoot really captures the fun we had.



After graduation Diana helped me dye my hair and we all decided to start packing for we only had two more days left. Thursday was an exciting day because all the CAMP interns had a White House tour early in the morning. It was great to be able to have a chance to see the inside and just see all the history. It was beautiful and so elegant. It was just an unforgettable experience. I felt truly honored to be able to experience all these things to be able to see the inside and not just the outside. After taking our last pictures in front of the White House we decided to go have some lunch. Diana, Sam, Laura and I all went to Johnny Rockets and shared a nice lunch together. It was nice to be able to eat together and just talk. Then later I had to say good bye to another amazing person Tim a head start intern that I had grown really close to. It



was sad having to say good bye after sharing some great moments with him. I also said good bye to Cynthia one of the interns for the Office of Migrant Education. Good byes are always the hardest as you get close to these people and then you are forced to say good bye. But maybe soon we will see each other again. During Thursday night Laura, Diana and I decided to go walk around the city one more time. It was really fun and I realized I would miss DC. I would miss the beauty of the city at night. I would miss how calm it was and how easy it is to walk everywhere. But what I would miss the most would be the people. Friday was our last day of programing with CHCI and it was full of reflection. Our last activity was choosing one word to describe our experience and mine was legacy/ inspired as I feel that we are the future legacy and I became inspired by every single person I met. It was great to hear everyone talk about their experience there were laughs, tears and lots of smiles. In the end we all had to say good bye but we knew that we all shared a life changing experience with each other and the memories we made would not fade away. It really did feel like a united CHCI *familia* ☺ After CHCI we knew

we had to do a lot more packing for Saturday morning. Packing took a long time but around 9:30pm I asked Sam if she wanted to go take one last trip around the monuments. I knew she had been wanting to go biking so I thought it be great to do for the last time with my awesome roommate. It was much fun. I really felt alive riding at night around the city looking at the beauty of the monuments and feeling the wind through my hair. As I was riding around I kept thinking how much I would miss the city and how one day I would be back. It was a really nice hour ride around the city. After it started raining we headed back home where we did last minutes plans for the next morning. My plane left at 9:15 am so I had to up early to get there on time. The next morning was crazy as we missed our ride to the airport and I was freaking out to rush to the airport on time. Luckily I made it right on time. I hardly had time to say bye to everyone but they knew how much they meant to me. When I finally got arrived at the airport I cried at the sight of my family. I did not realize just how much I loved home until I moved away. I love traveling but there is truly no place like home. It felt great to see my mom, siblings, aunt and cousins. Saturday was a day full of happiness. I finally got to see my family and talking about my experience made me realize just how much I had grown. When they told me I would not go back home the same person I thought it was an exaggeration but it was so true. I made lifelong friendships. I learned more about politics in those two months than I ever have before. I learned how to network and made some valuable connections. I was empowered and inspired to do more than I ever thought I could. I gained new dreams and aspirations. I just truly feel so blessed to be able to say that thanks to HEP/CAMP and CHCI I am a new better person. Now I can't wait to spend some time a home and prepare for my second year of college. After my internship I feel so motivated to just go back to CSU Long Beach and become more involved and just do even better academically. I know that this will not be my last internship and I am going on to bigger and better things. This won't be the last you hear of me, I can guarantee it. But until then farewell ☺





Thank you CHCI Family

Thank you HEP/CAMP Interns

“I shall be telling this with a sigh. Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference” -Robert Frost