

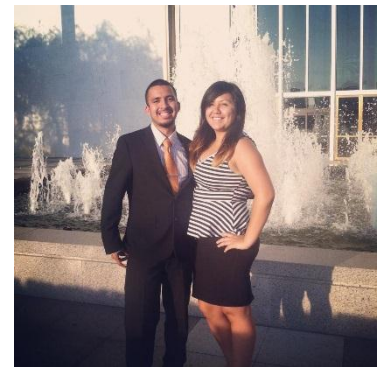
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Week 3
June 29, 2014



Week three has been the best week so far here in DC because it was full of highlights, and lows that I was able to overcome. My week began with a couple of low moments as Monday was a hard day at the office. The office was being flooded with angry constituent calls. I was unprepared for these calls and seemed to freeze and not know how to react. The staff assistant reminded me on how to deal with these calls but it was still very hard for me to become accustomed to these types of calls. I had to remain calm and take down their comments. I thought it would get easier with practice, watching what I said, and following protocol; thankfully I had a lot of practice throughout the day with phone calls.

Practice makes perfect so I just kept answering calls and reviewing my intern manual. I never realized how hard a simple thing as answering a phone call could be so stressful. I also never realized how long days could feel at the office, I have a newfound respect for people that do desk jobs because they make it look easy.

Monday afternoon we had the opportunity to attend the U.S Presidential Scholars of Art concert, which was amazing. Right before the concert we all went crazy taking pictures in front of the Kennedy Center, which was beautiful. During this time it really made me realize that we are more than just HEP/CAMP interns, we are friends. It's great to smile, laugh, and joke around with all these amazing people. We have become extremely close in two weeks! It was great to enter the Kennedy Center feeling very united with the group.



As we stepped into the concert hall I was mesmerized by the absolute beauty of the place. I had never had a chance to attend a formal concert before so it was a great first experience. As soon as the show began I was inspired by the talent of these high school students. Their voices, acting, instruments, and dancing abilities displayed how talented they all were.



It was an incredible experience that made me sad that I never had the opportunity to get involved in music when I was young. Coming from a low income family, it was difficult for my mother to raise four kids on her own. Besides, there was never enough money for my desired music lessons. I have had a passion for music for a long time, and because of my circumstances, I was never able to take vocal lessons, join the choir, or be in a school play. It is these things that motivate me to become a teacher,

promote the importance of music, and help students get the opportunity to learn music if they want to.

On Tuesday, work was a bit different as I was assigned to our Tax counsel instead of being in the front of the office answering phones. The back room is a completely different environment! It is all about policies and issues in the back office. I find it so impressive that these people are experts within their issues and some of them have about five different issues. I was asked to do some research on a certain topic related to taxes which I had never done before. As interns we are pushed to go out of our comfort zones and explore various political issues. It's amazing how much more involved in politics I am since I arrived in DC, reading the news is a must around here and being able to discuss politics is a great skill to have. It feels great to be in a city surrounded by history and government, which is completely different from any place I have ever been before.

On Tuesday, I had the opportunity to go to a briefing in the Library of Congress discussing the current drought in California and how it leads to a water shortage. During the briefing I had the opportunity to listen to Congressman John Garamendi speak regarding the impact of the drought within his district. It was very interesting listening to farmers and experts discuss the current drought, which is an issue I was unaware of. I am glad that I had the opportunity to be placed with a representative from Los Angeles, CA because it truly gives me the opportunity to listen to the issues that are directly affecting my community and state. Tuesday was a full day. It was nice to be able to feel like I was progressing, as I was trusted to do more.

Wednesday was a full day that consisted of regular office work and Capitol Tour Training. I absolutely loved the training because it gave us a chance to learn so much about Capitol Hill and its rich history. It was also my first time receiving a tour of Capitol Hill and it was amazing. It was great getting the opportunity to see the original Supreme Court room, original Senate room and House room. The Rotunda was my favorite part of the tour because of the Frieze, which is a panorama that details events of American history.

The beauty and rich history of the Capitol makes the tour breathe taking and it really made everything seem more real. Standing in the Rotunda really made me realize I am in DC and how lucky I am to have the opportunity to be working in a Congressional office. It was incredible getting to see things that I had just seen in history books and now I was standing right in front of them. We did have to pass really quickly through the tour because of the large amount of people that were waiting for tours. After the tour training I felt overwhelmed with all this information, but excited to be able to give tour to constituents and to share this information.



Thursday, the interns were invited to a breakfast where we meet some of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) staff. It was great just to meet all these people and listen to how they were able to obtain the positions. My highlight was the walk back to the office because I had the chance to talk one on one with Alberto, one of the HEP/CAMP interns, who shared some of his story. It made me realize just how great of a person he is and how hard he has worked to be where we are right now; his story is so inspiring.

Friday, we went to a CHCI workshop where we watched the short film *Inocente*, which is a documentary about a 15 year old girl struggling with being homeless. Watching this film, and listening to the other CHCI interns speak, made me understand that there are millions of people that are surrounded with poverty. There are some interns that have dealt with homelessness, others that deal with being hungry, which made me really think of all my mom does to keep that from happening to me. It also made me realize that there are people that we meet that we would never realize that are going through these problems. It just opened my mind to the fact that everyone has a story to tell and when they share their story, it can be amazing.

Saturday was the best day I spend in DC so far. Dr. Lisa Ramirez, the director of the Office of Migrant Education, invited us HEP/CAMP interns to go paddle boarding. It was amazing going to Virginia to go paddle boarding; it looked like a forest next to this great lake. It



was so much fun getting to talk to Dr. Ramirez and interact with her and her amazing family. She was sweet and welcoming.

We all went canoeing and paddle boarding, which was a great first experience; even if Gabriel, Elizabeth and I flipped over the Canoe... it was all great! Then after a great time on the water, Dr. Ramirez invited us to burgers at her house. We had the great opportunity to be welcomed into her house and meet her family. After burgers, we spent the night talking to Dr. Ramirez and her husband.

They both shared their inspiring stories and gave us great advice. It was a humbling experience, with these amazing people, that had only known us for a short amount of time. They opened their home to us talked with us as if we were family.

As the night ended, Dr. Ramirez gave us a copy of her book and signed it for us. She is such an inspiring woman. Being here in DC made me realize that I could one day be like her. For most of my life I was taught to think small, to only do the minimum. Meeting people in DC, such as Dr. Ramirez who believes that I could do big things, makes me feel like it is about time I start to believe it too. I feel completely changed and it's only been three weeks. I feel changed by the many stories I hear every day and by being able to embrace my own story. I strongly believe that everyone has a story, their own struggles and their own victories. One day I will be able to tell my story and not be afraid anymore because I did not let my past define; I will surpass everyone's expectations of me, as I go to infinity and beyond!