

Elizabeth Castro, CAMP Journal Six
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This week we went with Dr. Ramirez to a speaking event at American University. The students were engaging in a summer education program and later in the day they would visit the Department. They were all about high school age. The students asked some passionate questions that had me considering things that I had never thought about, for example, the importance of making home visits to see students and their families. This is so important because it creates a space where one builds a stronger relationship with a student when he or she sees one coming into their everyday environment and it helps a teacher understand the surroundings that a student comes home to. It was great being able to staff for the event as American University is a school I am considering for graduate school.



On Tuesday, we went to Iwo Jima to see the sunset performance by the U.S. Marines. We arrived at Arlington and were walking over when it started pouring rain like crazy. Luckily, most of us had umbrellas. First, the parade started with the Marines playing with a full band on the yard. Then, the uniformed men (I couldn't find a single female Marine) marched. It was very peaceful and inspiring. They had to stop early because of the rain, so we didn't get to have the full experience. But something about the rain seemed symbolic because many of the soldiers fighting in the wars are exposed to harsh conditions; physically, emotionally, mentally... everything.



At work, it was busy busy getting ready for the Annual Directors meeting. I did the finishing touches to the Good News PowerPoint and I had a lot of fun helping Carla in the office doing all kinds of small tasks.

Late in the week, we got ourselves ready for our trip to New York City!! WHOO! We took the Megabus departing from Union Station. We passed through Baltimore and Philadelphia and I saw them briefly when I opened my eyes. We took the midnight bus and arrived in NYC at about 5am. It was so disorienting when we arrived and got dropped off next to Madison Square Garden. We strolled around a bit, waking up at the same time. The city was sleepy and there were just a few cleaning trucks and things of the sort. The McDonalds' employees were so mean to us for not letting us use the restrooms; we had been on a bus for hours. Regardless, we started to get a taste of New York by wandering around Times Square. Someone had used Airbnb and booked an apartment for two nights in New Jersey for about 600 dollars. What was great was splitting the cost among the group because it was pretty inexpensive. We had to take the subway over to Jersey from Manhattan. It was a gorgeous apartment on the tenth floor with a view. We were so exhausted so everyone took a one hour power nap. We woke up, got ready, and headed out for three of the most amazing days I've ever had.



We had a Google image that had all the major tourist spots in New York City and we used it to plan our trip and divided our days into exploring north and south parts of the island. We figured out how to use the metro system and I learned several things about New York City. It gets so hot down in the subway tunnels, it's like we started cooking.

We began at the 9/11 memorial. The memorial itself is stunning, with huge waterfalls and the names of those deceased etched into stone. Just one week earlier, on the same weekday, we had been walking through the

Pentagon. I realized that the opportunity we were having, to see both of these sites in the span of a week, was maybe one in a thousand. I tried to bring together some of the facts and stories from my classes, but being there, where the twin towers once were, was just breath-taking. As we were taking pictures, I just felt like I couldn't smile at the camera. The names of the deceased were grouped by their relationships to other people in the building. I found a section where their names all had Latino last names. Another section where it looked like there were siblings or maybe relatives. It also suddenly occurred to me that all the guards, the chefs, the custodial staff, all the civilian employees were killed in the most unfair way and they themselves didn't know some of the inner-working of buildings. I gained a new perspective of 9/11, especially since I was so little when it first happened and I didn't understand it then.



We then found our way to Trinity Church on the intersection of Broadway and Wall St. It was a beautiful, ancient building with the little cemetery right next to it. I had never seen gravestones from the 1700 and 1800s. We then walked over through Wall Street and saw the New York Stock Exchange and the Trump Building. My favorite was Tiffany and Co., which might have been the same one from the movie!! Of course, we couldn't leave without eating New York pizza. Then it was off to the Brooklyn Bridge with a stroll across over the water. We walked

about halfway across and then some of us headed back to explore other areas. There were actually vendors up on the halfway part of the bridge. We went to Chinatown and Little Italy. I love the fuggedaboutit shirts on sale in Little Italy. Gabe loves the Godfather so he was excited to buy something. A waiter told Chive "ey wey" and he invited us to come to his restaurant. We told him we might come back. It really felt like were somewhere in Europe while we were in there. One of the highlights was finding Elizabeth Street!

Then we got a call from the Head Start interns to meet up at the Hard Rock Café in Times Square. We headed over there and while we waited, there was so much to see. Times Square had come alive since that morning and we were shocked and amused by all the activity.





We took photos with the Despicable Me minions, many superheroes, and Hello Kitty. We saw a small business world emerging in the people that came dressed up. Life is tough in New York. What I loved so much about dinner was bonding with the Head Start interns. There are four of them and many of them have the same seasonal and migrant farmworker background as us. They are maybe a couple of years older than us. They were HILARIOUS. #casosdelavidareal XD. Their director, Cleo, was so kind to us and we all had a great time eating at this restaurant that was almost like a museum. Many of my favorite rock songs came on the loudspeaker and I freaked out when I saw signed photos by the Beatles, a set list by Disturbed, Bon Jovi's guitar, on and on.



On Saturday, we quick started the day with a mission to the Statue of Liberty. We took the water taxi and had a fantastic tour guide giving us lots of information. I had never been on a boat and looking at the statue was one of the most inspiring moments of my life. I could understand the hope that my parents had when they came to this country and I felt how people from all around the world could look to this statue for liberty, social justice, and opportunity. Afterwards, the water taxi took us around the island and dropped us off closer to Central Park. The Park had some stunning views and those historic horse drawn carriages, and of course, some of the places where so many movies have been filmed. We also explored the Hershey World store. At the end, we had a late dinner in Little Italy at El Paesano.



On our final day, we had breakfast near Carlo's Bakery, from Cake Boss. Then we took all our bags, checked out, and went to find some lockers where we could store them while we finished our exploring. We paid about \$10 in New York to stow our bags, and the good thing is that I didn't leave anything valuable, I just carried important things around. We ran into White Castle Restaurant, which was funny because it was a big dream of Chive to eat there. We watched a funny movie that features the restaurant. We found tickets using Skyride to go up the Empire State Building! I can't spoil the tour they gave us, but at the end we got to see a view of the whole city. It was spectacular seeing all the places we went to. As soon as we stepped out of the Empire State, there was an amazing souvenir shop right across the street. We went all out buying our New York souvenirs we had been hoping to find.

Then, we were off to pick up our bags and found where the Megabus would pick us up again. By 11pm we were back in DC. It was an extraordinary weekend that I'll always remember. I never thought we could do so much in three days.