

Elizabeth Castro, CAMP Intern Journal
Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, 12:17AM, August 2, 2014

My last week in DC was jam-packed with many events with CHCI and a bit of an emotional rollercoaster. Monday was a huge highlight because, believe it or not, I had not visited the Capitol Building or seen the Library of Congress. Jon, who is an intern with the Santa Monica/Dale Ride crew, said I could go visit his congresswoman's office and he could give me a tour. I was in awe to see some of the giant portraits and statues that I have only ever seen in history books. I also got to go inside the Senate Gallery. At the time, it wasn't like anything I had ever expected. All the Senator's chairs were laid out but empty. There were people at the front podium, some behind a counter, typing or doing some kind of work. Interns were lined up, sitting on the steps, looking uncomfortable. Every once in a while, someone would walk in, give someone a paper and leave. Or an intern would be sent away to deliver something. What I found to be strange was a man was standing up, with a typewriter hanging from his neck, like a giant camera. Jon said that whenever anyone started talking, he would go up to them and start typing away whatever was said. It just stuck me as the most curious thing.



That evening, we had a wonderful reception in the Russell Building. Important Latino cabinet members and Congress people were there. A group of us got a picture with Julian Castro #futurepresident! It had been his first day as the secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). His brother, Joaquin Castro, was also there. I was so inspired by the stories of strength that the guests shared and how they motivated us to continue to work hard and make change. Our event even got noticed on Noticias Univision!

That night, CHCI created this speed dating type of networking for us. It was fun to rehearse my elevator speech over and over with each person and fine tune it each time. My highlight of that night was Rod Colon, he does consulting with individuals for their careers. His wisdom: Treat your career like a business. You are the CEO of your company and your family is your board of directors. He was so passionate and his advice was pretty helpful.

On Wednesday I had my last talk with Dr. Ramirez. I like asking her questions one-on-one and learn more about her experiences. If I could change anything about my internship, it would be to have more conversations during any spare time. That night was also CHCI graduation. We had several members of Congress visit. Without knowing, I met Congressman Joe Garcia while I was getting some Sprite. Later, I looked up his name and realized who he was!



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On Thursday morning, we had the unforgettable experience of visiting the White House. It was like a dream come true. In the dining room, there was a stage and instruments set up. When we asked who would be performing tonight the answer was: Katy Perry. We got some recipes from the White House kitchen, got to look at the portraits (my favorite was Kennedy's) and I got to look out the balcony into the gorgeous gardens.



Afterwards, I arrived at work in time for lunch with the Office of Migrant Education who got together and gave Cinthia and me a little ceremony. Each staff member gave us a nugget of wisdom, as in, a piece of advice that we could take home with us. And we had Hershey's nuggets to compliment the whole thing. I loved what everyone offered to us. For example, Karan said: "Whenever you meet someone, always assume they have a great story to tell. And it's your job to find that story." Then it was our turn to thank the staff. Cinthia and I created certificates with things that we liked about each and every

person in the office. We had their names, the Department of Ed logo, and the intern names signed below using our official titles. I couldn't thank them enough for everything they have done for us from day one. I ended the day by completing my final task.

That night, Chive, Gabe, and I went out. We decided to try new flavors and so Gabe picked an Indian restaurant. It was delicious! It was nice to try something new and we all went dressed fancy, bow ties and all. Afterwards, we wanted to watch a movie but since it was so late, we just watched comedy shorts. During the entire last week, I have been gradually packing my things. I have started to organize my suitcases since I am taking more things than I brought.



Friday was our final day in DC and one of the highlights of my time here. Friday programming with CHCI was mostly sharing our stories. Everyone had to come up with one word that they wanted to share and write it on the board. I got super emotional during mine as I explained some of the things I have felt during my time here. I have never bonded with CHCI like I did that day. One of my favorite stories was of one of the interns who shared that as a little boy he saw Legally Blonde and how she attended an elite university. He said, "I am going to go there one day." People would

make fun of that, but yet today, he did precisely that and is attending an elite university. Some of the interns are seeing who is going to make it to Congress first too.

Afterwards, we went to Lisa's home for Ruby's 21st Birthday. We had an amazing dinner made by Ruby's family from Texas and Mike's grilling. Then, we went downstairs and began our DJ, Karaoke, Dance club night. We even sang Ruby *Las Mañanitas*. We put on Spanish classics (of course, some Chente

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Fernandez), grabbed partners, and danced. By far, it was the perfect way to end my DC Internship experience. I am so thankful to the Ramirez family for the way they welcomed us into their home and all the advice and mentoring they have given us. We caught the last (LAST!) metro back to DC and didn't even go to sleep. From 3:00am-8:00am we cleaned, checked out, went to airport, etc. Needless to say, I slept that entire flight.



When I got off the plane, my parents thought, "*Estamos aqui, vamos aprovechar*" as in "We're in town, let's take advantage of this." So we went and bought groceries. It was like time had stood still. My family, my hometown, and everything seemed to hum to a steady, regular routine. Yet I feel wonderfully different. I feel more informed, more motivated, and more ready.

Being home for a few days now, it's been surreal. Showing my family pictures has made me fully realize that incredible, empowering, inspiring things I have had a chance to do this summer. Perhaps one day I will find my way back to DC. Maybe it'll even be next summer. If I have learned one important lesson it is this: when it comes to opportunity, always, always, APPLY! :')

If you've made it this far into my journal, I hope you have enjoyed. I'm thankful for this task because one day I hope to look back on this and remember all the things that happened this summer. Hasta pronto, see you later, au revoir!

As a side note: we have created a Facebook group for all upcoming interns selected next summer or from any year. We are using it as a resource to help incoming interns make their transition smoothly and for any tips we might have to offer. Thank you to Alberto a.k.a. Chive Aramburo for setting this up. Reach out to us! HEP/CAMP Association Summer Internship Alumni/a