

Gabriel Rojas – Week 4

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted
-Matthew 23:12

I find it truly incredible how time is able to fly at such a fast pace; it felt like it was just yesterday when we arrived into the Nation's capital, however, as you can already tell, the death of day indicates the end of the first half of the DC internship. This week has by far been one of the busiest weeks for me for the reason that I took advantage of my free time to explore as much of the city as I possibly could. On Monday, work took its usual time and pace, but after work, I decided to re-explore the west side of DC known as Georgetown. Upon arriving to my dorm after work, I invited Alberto and Elizabeth to join on my walk to Georgetown; they gladly accepted to go and we went on our way to Georgetown. As usual, the walk was pretty brutal for the reason that the Sun was hot and the air was humid; it is funny because we passed along a fountain that spit water in the air and Elizabeth was the only who walked into the fountain to cool off. Georgetown was able to exceed my expectations because it provides a variety of local stores and restaurants with an atmosphere similar to that of Leavenworth, Washington. While walking further west into Georgetown, Elizabeth pointed a place that was called Georgetown Cupcakes. I did not think much of the place at first, but upon examining the place a little further; I came to realize that the cupcake shop is the same one that is featured on TLC's DC Cupcakes. At first, I was skeptical to go the cupcake shop due to the size of the line, but luckily Elizabeth convinced us with enough persistence to wait in line for the cupcakes. I was surprised because our wait in the line was only about twenty minutes and upon walking inside of the shop, I noticed a huge display of cupcakes ranging from double chocolate cupcakes to teacup cupcakes. Upon ordering, I decided to be spontaneous and therefore ordered half dozen cupcakes in order to get a good experience over what Georgetown cupcakes is all about. Once the small group had bought the cupcakes, I asked Alberto and Elizabeth if they would like to visit the houses within the Georgetown district and with no doubt, they were happy to further explore. The houses in Georgetown were absolutely beautiful for the reason that the houses seemed to have a San Francisco type of feel to them in that the houses were colorful, slim, and tall. The two hour walk quite relaxing because we were able to enjoy each other's company while walking the sunset of the day transform into the dusk of the night. When we decided to go back to our dorms, we decided to visit Trader Joes in order for Elizabeth to purchase some produce and snacks. The time finally came for me to try out a few cupcakes in my dorm because I had been eagerly waiting to eat the cupcakes with a cup of cold milk. The most notable cupcake I ate was the chocolate cheesecake cupcake because it was composed of a chocolate cookie crumb base, white cheesecake interior, and a chocolate cake top. I was happy over the outcome of the day because I had come to realize that it was only Monday; therefore, I knew that the rest of the week was going to be quite busy.

On Tuesday, I have to say that something interesting happened at work for the reason that I met someone who I did not think I would ever meet in my life. A couple of interns from the office were conducting a scavenger hunt in which we assigned and upon the looking at the entrance of the Hart senate building, we noticed a beautiful petite girl walk through the door. We all immediately knew that she must have been a pageant princess or queen due to the clothes that she was wearing. When I saw her, I immediately took advantage and asked if she would to take a

picture with me; she said of course and I was quite happy with the outcome of the picture. After work, I returned to my dorm and saw Alberto working on his laptop, but I still asked him if he would like to go to Walmart to purchase some food in order to restock on our food ration. Within an hour, we were on our way to Walmart, but decided to wait for a few minutes for Elizabeth to meet up with us in Union Station. The three of us finally gathered together went to Walmart and then headed back to the dormitories in George Washington University. Upon arriving to the dorms, Alberto and I decided to make some quesadillas with mozzarella cheese and chicken breast and ended the night with a good meal in our bellies.

On Wednesday, I was able to leave work a couple of hours early for the reason that Senate was not in session for the week; therefore, I decided to take advantage of the extra hours in order to visit a few museums. I decided to first visit the archive building of DC in order to see the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. I was truly amazed when I saw these documents because I was literally looking at the three most critical documents that formed the United States of America. I further explored the exhibit and found a variety of signatures from prominent figures in history such as Walt Disney, Michael Jackson, Adolf Hitler, and John Wilkins Booth. I spent a good hour within the archives and once I saw all that was needed to be seen, I felt like I was able to squeeze in a visit to the Smithsonian national gallery before six O' Clock. I have never been the type of person to understand art, but I was actually impressed with the amount of artifacts and paintings that were within the gallery ranging from religion inspired paintings to French styled renaissance artifacts. The layout of the museum was huge; as a result, I decided to skim through as much of the exhibits as I possibly could in order to see a good chunk of the museum. The rotunda of the museum was incredible for the reason that the walls were of black stone and in the center of the rotunda, there appeared to be a fountain with a figure of Hermes on top of it. Once I finished with the museum, I decided to ask Elizabeth if she was willing to visit any particular museum once she got out of work. She replied in saying that she would like to visit the Smithsonian Portrait gallery; we met up in front of the Smithsonian air and space museum, took the metro to Chinatown and then came across the museum. We also skimmed through this museum for the reason that we had less than an hour before the museum closed. The museum contained a variety of paintings such as paintings of presidents and athletes, but I would have to say that my favorite exhibit revolved around prominent celebrities within the past fifty years. This exhibit provided a number of pictures regarding celebrities such as Tupac, Biggie Smalls, Clint Eastwood, and Quentin Tarantino. After the museum closed, Elizabeth and I were heading back to the metro when we noticed a candy shop in the vicinity. We decided to visit it and we saw a variety of strange candy such as a five pound gummy worm, extra-large boxes of candy, and even strange jelly beans that had flavors of grass, socks, etc.

On Thursday, we were given half of the day off in order to have an extended 4th of July weekend, but before leaving, the office decided to hold a potluck styled picnic in a nearby park. I provided a few bottles of two-liter sodas while the office staff provided some dishes that I had never even heard of. For example, one of them brought along quiche while another brought something called hummus. The food was a little strange for me, but it was a nice experience to have with the office in order to chat with one another and to enjoy the sunny DC weather. Once one O' Clock came around, I was allowed to take the rest of the day so I decided to visit a couple more Smithsonian museums; I spent about 20 minutes pondering what I should go see and I ultimately decided to visit the Botanic Garden and the museum of American History. The botanic garden was quite beautiful for the reason that there were different regions of environment

within the structure such as a rainforest, desert, and Hawaiian climate; I was even surprised to see a few pineapple plants within the garden. Once I finished with the garden, I went on to see the American History museum; the line was pretty long at first, but luckily, it was able to move on at a pretty quick pace and I was so happy when the A/C hit me because it literally felt like an oven outside. This museum was pretty interesting, but to keep it brief, the most notable sections of the museum were the currency and WWII exhibits. It was really quite interesting to see currency that prominent in many eras of history such as the early US and Roman coins. I was interested in the WWII exhibit for the reason that it is truly daunting how one single person was able to make such a huge in history. When I think about it I truly find it incredible how the terrible values of this single man were able to manipulate an entire country to do his bidding and to ultimately attempt to conquer the world for the taking.

I could not believe that this day had finally come, on Friday in July of 2014, the day the United States of America declared its independence had finally come. The day began at 9 in the morning, an early time for me; Elizabeth, Alberto, Samantha, and I decided to walk early to the location of the DC parade. When we got there after about an hour, Constitution Ave. (the street where the parade was to go through) was filled a large amount of people, but we luckily arrived in time to find a great spot with shade. I have to say that the parade had so much variety to it, I never expected to see such culture and beauty in the parade and although I've had my fair share of parades, I have to say that this one ranks at the top of my list. For example, I loved how the Asian community had a marching band of their own and I was proud to see a minority play patriotic songs with such accuracy and passion. I also loved the cultural dance that the Bolivian community presented towards the crowd; the music seemed to be a mix of cumbia and musica Salvadoreña. The dance was unique because it appeared as if the men were drunk, but I soon came to realize that the dance is supposed to look like this; the traditional clothes seemed to be a mix of Oaxaca and Peruvian clothing. This was really interesting to me for the reason that I had never much known the cultures of central and South America. After the parade, the group decided to go eat at burger joint by the name of 5 guys; for some reason, I was not hungry at the time, but I was extremely thirsty. Therefore, when the group arrived at 5 guys, I told them that I was going to get a large Slurpee at 711 so as a result, the group decided to go with me to 711 and then we finally went to eat some burgers. After a couple of hours of resting, it was time for us to go to the national mall in order to watch the night fireworks. I was in complete awe when fireworks sprang into the night sky because the realization that I was spending the 4th of July in our Nation's capital finally entered my mindset. It was this moment when I finally came to terms that I was truly on the opposite side of this country. Although the fireworks were amazing, I paid more attention towards the moon; I looked at the moon because I knew that in a few hours, my family would be looking at the very same object in the sky thus uniting us even though we are thousands of miles apart.

For me, Saturday seemed to take a strange turn of events...for example; a few interns and I went on to volunteer at the Smithsonian folk festival where the countries of China and Kenya were being shown. I never thought I would have the chance to volunteer for the Smithsonian, however, I spent about eight hours at a recycling station to make sure that visitors the festival were correctly throwing their garbage in the correct bins. The Smithsonian was generous enough to give the volunteers twelve for food in of the featured restaurants of the festival; therefore without question, I decided to try out the Kenyan food. The line was quite long, but I decided to eat the grilled beef with spinach, mashed corn paste, and pico de gallo. The food was quite delicious and I asked Alberto if he would like to eat carne dorada after volunteering. He quickly

said yes and we decided to buy supplies at Walmart to prepare for an amazing dinner. Once we arrived to our dorms, Alberto and I cooked ourselves carne dorada with tortillas and frijoles. I was so happy with the meal because in DC, it extremely tough to come across authentic Mexican food.

On Sunday, Elizabeth and I decided to tackle the day by visiting as many places as we possibly could. We began by visiting the Arlington cemetery and I have to say, while it was beautiful, the cemetery seemed to have a potpourri of emotions within it because each tomb has its own story even though they all appear the same. With each white tomb, it is crazy to think that many tears were shed, that families were hurt, and in light of it all, each sacrifice was given to ensure the success of the country of opportunities. After about an hour of walking, we went to the tallest point of the cemetery, which is, where the former house of Confederate general Robert E. Lee is located. The view of the city was breathtaking for the reason that we were able to see so much of it in such a far spot. The history within the house was amazing because all of the furniture and paintings within the home were genuine and it was just incredible to think that the house was once filled with life. Once we finished visiting the house, we took a ten minute break by a tree and I noticed that Elizabeth splitting her and wrapping a liga around her hair. I finally asked her if she would like for me to braid it for her and she replied in saying, "Are you sure? I would've have asked you, but I wasn't sure if you getting annoyed of braiding hair." I responded in saying "I don't get annoyed easily, all you have to do is ask." Therefore, I began to braid her hair and I don't why I find braiding hair relaxing, but it seems that a guy who knows how to braid has an advantage when it comes to impressing girls. After finishing with the cemetery, Elizabeth and I went to visit the Marine Corps Memorial, which is the famous memorial that has five soldiers holding the American flag. We went on to visit the National Women in the Arts museum; we luckily caught a break because it appears that every first Sunday of the month is free admission to all visitors. I was glad I did not have to pay because the museum was more strange than good. The only highlight of the museum seemed to be the self-portrait of Frida Kahlo, but besides that, there wasn't much at this museum. We then went to visit the African, Asian, and Freer galleries; there were so many artifacts to see such as gold plates, ivory horns, and jade ornaments. What really surprised me was how preserved the artifacts were for the reason that some of them have been around since the B.C. era. After a long day, it was time to return to the dorms to eat some dinner; I invited Elizabeth to eat some homemade chicken quesadillas while we watched a few episodes of family guy. Like I said before, I was quite busy this week, but it was an amazing experience that I was able to spend with some amazing friends. The quote from the Bible has a simple meaning that I live by every single day; be humble to those around you, but more importantly, be humble to yourself, never make yourself seem like you are greater than anyone because at the end of the day, we are all only human.