

Week 5

This has been by far the most exciting week working in the office. Another intern and I provided a tour to a family from New York. When giving tours, my favorite section is the Rotunda. I enjoy talking about the historic art within it, especially the Oil Paintings. My favorite Oil Paintings are the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis and General George Washington Resigning His Commission, both painted by John Trumbull. There is no artistic reason as to why these two paintings are my favorite, but it is the historic events they illustrate, that captivate me.

On Tuesday, my supervisor informed me that three other interns and I would have the opportunity to work on a “special project” for a staffer. At first, I was confused as to what the project might be. However, we were directed to attend a meeting on the House side, which was hosted by a staffer from the Speaker of The House, John Boehner’s office. When I walked in the room, I noticed that there were only Hill staffers sitting around the conference table and we were the only interns in the room. The staffers were welcoming; they pulled out chairs for us to join them around the table. When the meeting began; I very quickly understood what the project was all about.

The Congressional Gold Medal Award would be posthumously presented to Raoul Wallenberg on the following day, July 9th. This ceremony would be held in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian award the United States Congress can bestow. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand would be giving her remarks as one of the speakers for the ceremony. As the interns from Senator Gillibrand’s office, our work for this project/ceremony was to stand at the Rotunda doors and hand out brochures to the guests.

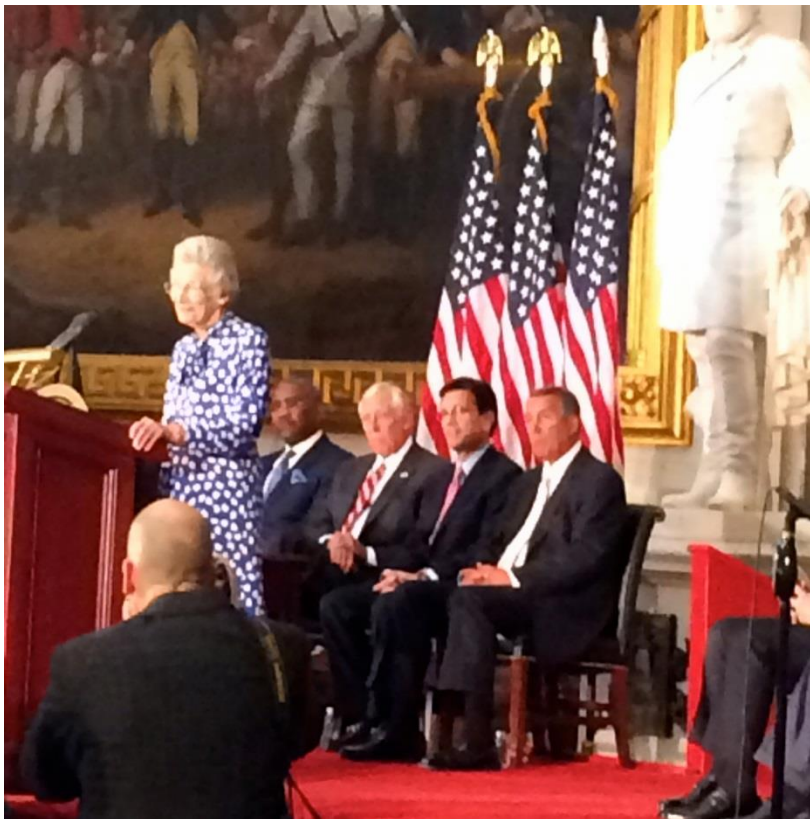
The pamphlets contained information about Raoul Wallenberg’s life and detailed how Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, saved the lives of nearly 100,000 Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust. He was detained by Soviet authorities and died while in their custody in 1947. The ceremony began at 3:00 p.m. Guests were required to present a gold ceremony ticket in order to enter the Rotunda doors. Senator Gillibrand’s staff/interns were to be stationed at all entrances to hand out the pamphlets. While I was stationed at my entrance, I met some interns from the Speaker of the House’s staff; they were in charge of checking tickets and passing out the ceremony’s programs. The first floor of the Capitol was closed for tours until the ceremony was concluded.

The Ceremony has begun!

The Speaker of the United States House of Representatives the Honorable John Boehner spoke first and welcomed everyone. The Invocation was by the Chaplain of the United States Senate, Dr. Barry Black. Then speakers provided their Remarks; the speakers were: The Honorable Gregory Meeks, Representative from the Fifth District of New York, the Honorable Kirsten

Gillibrand, United States Senator from New York; the Honorable Steny H. Hoyer, the Democratic Whip of the United States House of Representatives, the Honorable Eric Cantor, the Majority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, the Honorable Mitch McConnell, the Republican Leader of the United States Senate, the Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the United States Senate, The Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Honorable John Boehner introduced Rabbi Shemtov, who gave the Blessing. Then Ms. Nina Lagergren was presented the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of Raoul Wallenberg; she then gave her words of thanks. The ceremony then came to a conclusion.

During the entire ceremony, I listened attentively and reflected; it was unbelievable to have the opportunity to work as an intern and attend the Congressional Gold Medal Award Ceremony!



Ms. Nina Lagergren, giving her remarks.

In the back:
The Speaker of the House, the Honorable John Boehner, The Majority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, the Honorable Eric Cantor, the House Democratic Whip the Honorable Steny H. Hoyer, and United States House of Representatives, New York's 5th District, the Honorable Gregory Meeks.

During the opening portion of the CHCI Friday programming, we all received sticky notes to answer the questions that were written on the board. After that, we would place our answers under each question. The questions were along the lines of what makes someone less Latino/a? And how do you view yourself? After we looked at what everyone posted on the board we discussed some of the answers. One person wrote that someone is less Latino/a, if he/she

doesn't speak Spanish. In my opinion, not being able to speak Spanish doesn't make you any less Latino/a, because everyone was raised in a different environment; for instance, maybe their parents didn't have a choice and had to stop speaking Spanish as a form of adapting to a new culture/environment. Each situation is different and being a Latino/a is not about if someone is capable of speaking the language. Overall, we all concluded that who we want to be and how we view ourselves is what matters.

We left early after completing this portion of the CHCI programming because Dr. Lisa Ramirez coordinated a Pentagon tour for CAMP and other interns to attend. The Pentagon is the DOD (Department of Defense) headquarters. Two incredible women, Kelly and Catalina escorted us during the tour. They are both inspiring Latinas! They talked about giving back and how they do volunteering services together. Throughout the tour, Kelly talked with me about her experience and how the military was the best choice for her.

It was astounding walking through the five-story Pentagon building and how the setting changes depending on the branch of the military for that level. My favorite part was learning about the construction of The Pentagon and its completion in 1949 and the reconstruction process after the September 11th attack on the west side of The Pentagon.



On Saturday, we had the Tri-Caucus barbeque at Anniversary Park on the GWU Campus. I bonded with interns from the Black Caucus, I learned about their placements and how they are enjoying their time in D.C. The barbeque was a nice networking event. A staffer from Senator Gillibrand's office, who is also a CBCF alumna joined us. We talked for a while; it was a pleasure seeing her and having a conversation that was not office related.



On Sunday, Dr. Ramirez invited us to her home and family barbeque. Her family and friends were all so welcoming! We watched the World Cup final game, Argentina vs. Germany. I was rooting for Germany ever since Mexico lost to Netherlands and was eliminated #Noerapenal!!! I talked to interns from the head start program and learned about their placements, what they have learned, and what they are going to do back in their community; they are all inspiring individuals. Additionally, I visited with a CHCI staff, who is Dr. Ramirez' friend. Being surrounded by amazing people, was a great way to end the week!