

Carlos Vazquez
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Journal Week 1

Never would I imagine myself being an intern in Washington D.C., before this experience I had never even stepped foot onto a plane, let alone be across the country so far away from my family. It is great to be able to reflect and look back even one year ago when I was working 70 hours a week doing very difficult labor in the fields all summer, contemplating the fact whether to go through with my college plans. Even two days before coming to D.C., I was at my local schools cleaning lockers and cleaning gum off the bottom of desks. All the effort that has been put into achieving my journey to Washington D.C. is now going to pay off.

To begin my journey, my parents and I had to wake up at 3a.m to get my entire luggage sorted out and drive an hour to the closest airport. I mentioned that this was my first time on a plane so I was extremely nervous that I would do something wrong along the way and somehow miss a flight. But thanks of course to the help of my mom, the airport process was made very simple. The excitement of going past security was really starting to hit, and saying goodbye to my parents was difficult but it also gave me that extra motivation in that fact that the last two people who I would see at home were the two people who have worked the hardest for me to get here.

After two long plane rides, I arrived at Washington D.C. at about 2. I was the first intern there so I was also the first to meet Patrick Doone, our coordinator for the first week here in D.C. Since I was the first one at the airport, I ended waiting over 3 hours for all the other interns to show up. It was great to finally meet everyone, we had only communicated through Facebook so being able to meet them in person was great. After the airport, we took a shuttle to George Washington University to get all of our things settled in really quickly so that we could go out to eat since we were all starving. We went out to eat to an Italian restaurant where it was very clear that we were not yet comfortable with one another. I tried my best to break the ice by sharing that I had recently watched several movies about Washington DC before coming. After a while it worked out because we got a chance to hear some of Patrick's many stories about Washington D.C., I was very surprised to hear just how many things he knew about the city and its' history. After dinner, we took a quick visit to the White House. Standing in front of the White House I was finally presented with my first "wow" moment, it was then that it really sunk in, we were all in fact in Washington D.C, such a historic location in our country.

Sunday was a very interesting experience because it would mark the first official day that we would get to explore D.C. On this day, we were introduced to the Metro for the first time. It's funny because when Patrick was explaining the map and all the colors and routes for the metro, I really had no idea what he was saying, so I figured I would have to be a quick learner or I would get lost very quickly. We rode to Capitol South where he gave us a quick tour of the United States Capitol, the Supreme Court, and showed us where all our buildings are located for work. What really made this day difficult was adjusting to the very humid heat, before coming to D.C. everyone kept telling me how humid it would be and they were not wrong. My favorite part of the day was when we finally got back to GWU and finally had our first personal interactions within the cohort. It was really inspiring to me to hear all of the stories and all of the obstacles that the other interns have overcome to get where they are. To me, this was a moment where I

knew that I was placed in a truly special group of individuals and although I believe I will learn a lot from of work experiences, the best lessons I will learn will come from my fellow interns.

On Monday, we had our first day of training with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) and the other 23 interns. For the first day, I realized just how much there is to learn about this fast-paced city filled with a high level of networking. We had a lot of amazing speakers with some really informative presentations as well as some amazing backstories, but most of all I was extremely surprised to find out just how powerful the CHCI alumni network is. I really enjoyed the first day because I for one absolutely love to listen to other Latinx speakers and their stories of success. This is what drove me in high school to go to college and it drives me today. I hope to one day also inspire other young, farmworker, Latinx individuals.

On Friday we actually had a chance to meet all of our offices instead of going out to the Rope Course with the CHCI cohort. It was amazing to see all of the offices that all of the interns will be placed in and meet the very friendly staff along the way. I felt that this was a very long day but it was very successful because we got to meet Irene Buenos as well Giev Kashkooli, one Vice President for the United Farmworkers. I was happy about this because the UFW is an organization that I am extremely interested in. It is a rewarding opportunity to work alongside them this summer. We also finally got the chance to meet the staff in the Office of Migrant Education. I am not just saying that because I know they might be reading this in the near future, but I genuinely feel like this was such a sincere group of people who had such a great energy. It was a little scary because they told us that they have “a lot of worked planned” for us in the first week, but it also gets me excited.

Our photoshoot was on Saturday; you’d expect it to only take a couple of hours, however, being the last cohort to go we waited for over four hours. What made Saturday really special was that even though we had spent the week with the CHCI interns, I feel that this day really broke through in taking our relationship to a more personal level. I know that even though some of us are considered to be very young, it is great to see individuals who have a common interest in giving back to our communities. As interns we can grow and learn from this great opportunity, while also being able to enjoy the experience at the same time.

Overall, I am really glad that I can consider the first week to be such a memorable experience and it truly makes me excited for everything that we have in store for the rest of the summer. It has only been a week, but I have made some really close relationships with some extraordinary people. Much of what I have learned, I will carry with me in many aspects of my life.



