

Dyan Urias
Journal Week 1

Let's see where to start. This crazy adventure began Friday when my mom drove me to the airport in the next city over. The plan was for me to fly from Yuma to Phoenix, and stay the night in Phoenix at my CAMP director's house, who was so kind to have me over. Then, the next morning my CAMP director would drive me over to the Phoenix airport where I would fly directly to D.C. My mom at the time was feeling very emotional over letting me go so far away for so long, more so since she felt that she was not sending me off properly on my journey. So...when I arrived to Phoenix my CAMP director took me out for dinner, right after stepping out of the restaurant my mom called to inform me that she was on her way to Phoenix, and that she would go pick me up as soon as she got there. Long story short, my mom drove three and a half hours through the night to pick me up at my CAMP director's house. Then, we drove to a nearby town where we discovered that my mom's new husband had a relative. We stayed at their home for a couple of hours before driving back to Phoenix for my 8:30am flight.

To say the least, we slept only like two hours and a half, and we were very very tired. Honestly, I felt very bad because my CAMP director had to wait up late until my mom picked me up, but it was worth it in the end. I understood that my mom needed this. It was really hard for her to let me go, especially because my journey was not really starting Friday when she sent me off in Yuma. My journey would start Saturday, the day I would get to D.C. Also, because this would be the first year we would spend our birthdays apart. Therefore, as tired as I felt, I was happy that my mom got to send me off "properly" (haha). I wanted her to send me off how she wanted, so that she could have some peace of mind over having her feel guilty and restless.



Finally, I arrived to D.C. I was very nervous to meet the other interns. I am a very shy person (although it may not seem that way), and many times struggle to strike up conversation. Luckily, I quickly discovered how great the other interns were. All of us got along instantly. They are all very nice, intelligent, funny, and easy going. We all came from very different backgrounds, and we all have our own story to tell about the struggles that comes with our Hispanic identity. There are so many differences between us, but at our core, we all are able to connect and relate in our experiences.



I also got the chance to meet one of the most extraordinary people in the whole world, the intern HEP/CAMP Director, Patrick. Part of the reason why this first week was so great was because of him. He taught us as much as he could about life here, about places to visit, history, tips for our work as interns, life lessons, and so much more. He was very willing to take us around the city to explore and experience to our heart's content. He took us out for dinner several times, and even bought baseball tickets for us out of his own pocket. It was very sad to see him leave, I had not realize how reassuring his presence was until we walked up to the metro and realized that he was not going to be waiting there for us like he had every morning. It is scary to think that now we are basically all alone. Sure there are many people we could reach out to, but they aren't going to be there to guide us through every step of the day like Patrick had.

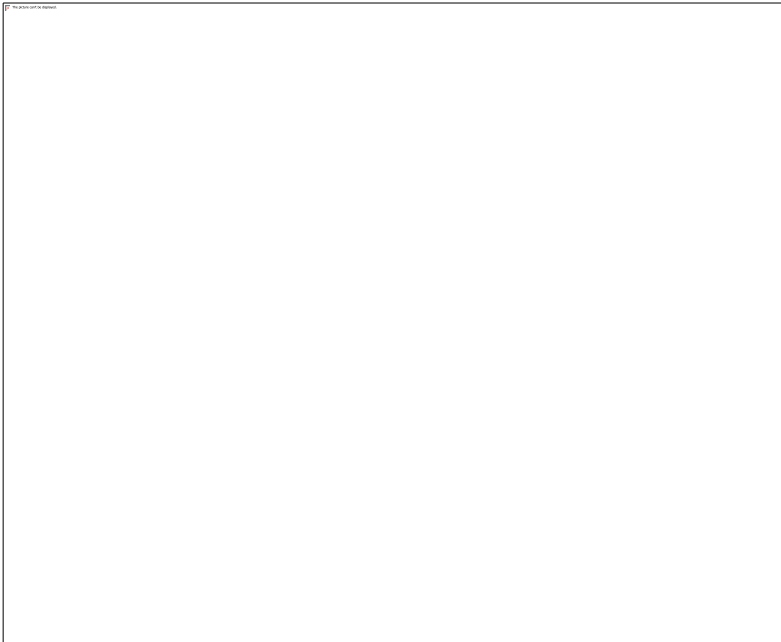


Funny story, in our attempt to try to do something thoughtful for Patrick we decided to make dinner for him. To sum it up, we almost burned the rice, the alarm went off and it would not quiet down no matter what we did. We had a mini panic attack, because we didn't know what to do; we thought we were going to get in trouble. Suddenly, we hear sirens getting closer and closer, and we completely freaked out. We thought that the whole fire department was going to descend on us just because of a little burnt rice. It was a false alarm though, and a few minutes later a GW patrol came to shut off the alarm. The first thing she said when we opened the door was, "Alright, what did you burn?" It seems that this happens very often. In any case, that didn't ruin our evening. We had a very nice dinner with Patrick, and afterwards we hunted for dessert at an ice cream shop a few blocks away.

Orientation week made me feel so very relieved. Before coming here, I was very insecure and almost felt like giving up this opportunity. I am from a small, extremely rural town next to the Mexican border. A place where most people do not speak English, and where knowledge about the government (even local) is minimal. Plus, I am a Family and Human Development and Psychology double major, career paths that are completely out of the ballpark of anything politically related. As ashamed I am to admit, I did not even know who my district representative was until a few months before applying for this internship (and now I am interning for my representative!!). Because of this, I felt extremely out of my depth. Additionally, the other CHCI interns are a couple of years older, and they are mostly politically focused.

However, I am not the only one that isn't studying anything politically related, nor am I the only one who doesn't know or understand certain processes in government. CHCI brought

many speakers, and did many workshops on skills to help us be a successful intern. We had workshops on public speaking, networking, legislative process, and a whole segment on the do's and don'ts for interns, among other subjects. It was a lot of information to absorb, but it was all very useful. One activity that I really enjoyed was an identity wheel we had to share with the four other people in my group. I learned about struggles that I was unaware of coming from such a secluded community. For example, the struggles of being an Afro or non-Spanish speaking Latino, and how many times they have been ousted by the Latino community for not fitting the mold of what is considered to be Latino. It was a very refreshing experience to interact with Latinos that are not Mexican and I got to meet a bunch of incredible people.



Friday, I visited my office as well as the other interns' work place. All the supervisors were very nice and willing to share their experiences as past interns, and their journeys to their current jobs in D.C. All of the people we met are extremely helpful, resourceful, and knowledgeable individuals, and I am proud to say that many of them are Latino (One of them was from Arizona, an ASU alumni!). People here for the most part are a lot younger than you would think them to be, and beware that when they say that D.C is run by interns, it is true. The government would be nothing without interns, (not to toot my own horn), but what I've found is that they are the ones who do all the grunt work for the most part. Many end up coming back to D.C in some government capacity.

As of now, I'm still very nervous about starting work on Monday, but at least now I don't feel like running for the hills anymore. There are still many things left for me to learn, but then again that's the whole point of me being here, and even though my major has nothing to do with policy or legislature, the knowledge I absorb here will be something that I'll be able to take and empower my community.

The offices and buildings were majestic. You don't get tired from looking around. You could almost literally throw a rock, and 4 out of 5 times the rock would land on a landmark, museum, or on a beautiful government building.



Here are some pictures of places we've seen and yummy food we've eaten:

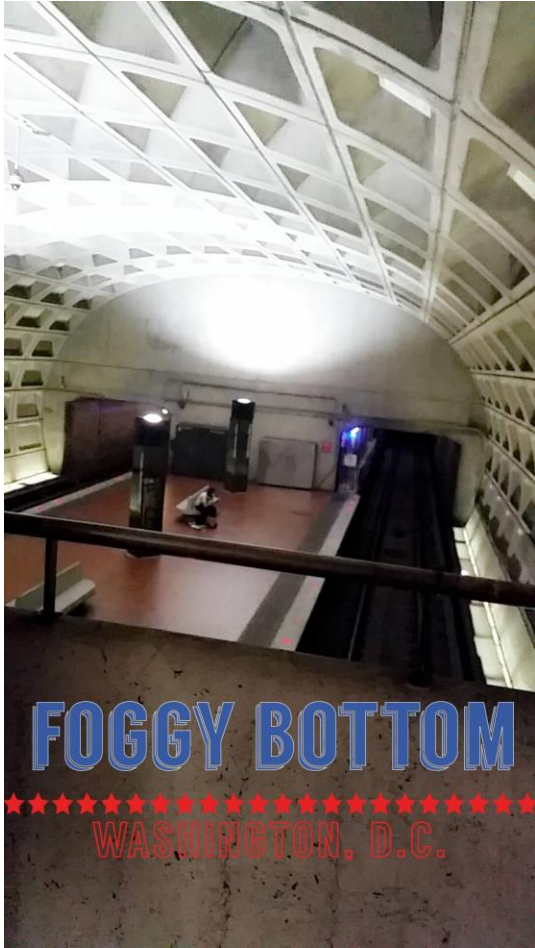
Last dinner with Patrick @
ChinaTown



Picture day with CHCI interns!



Just arrived to D.C, Patrick took us out



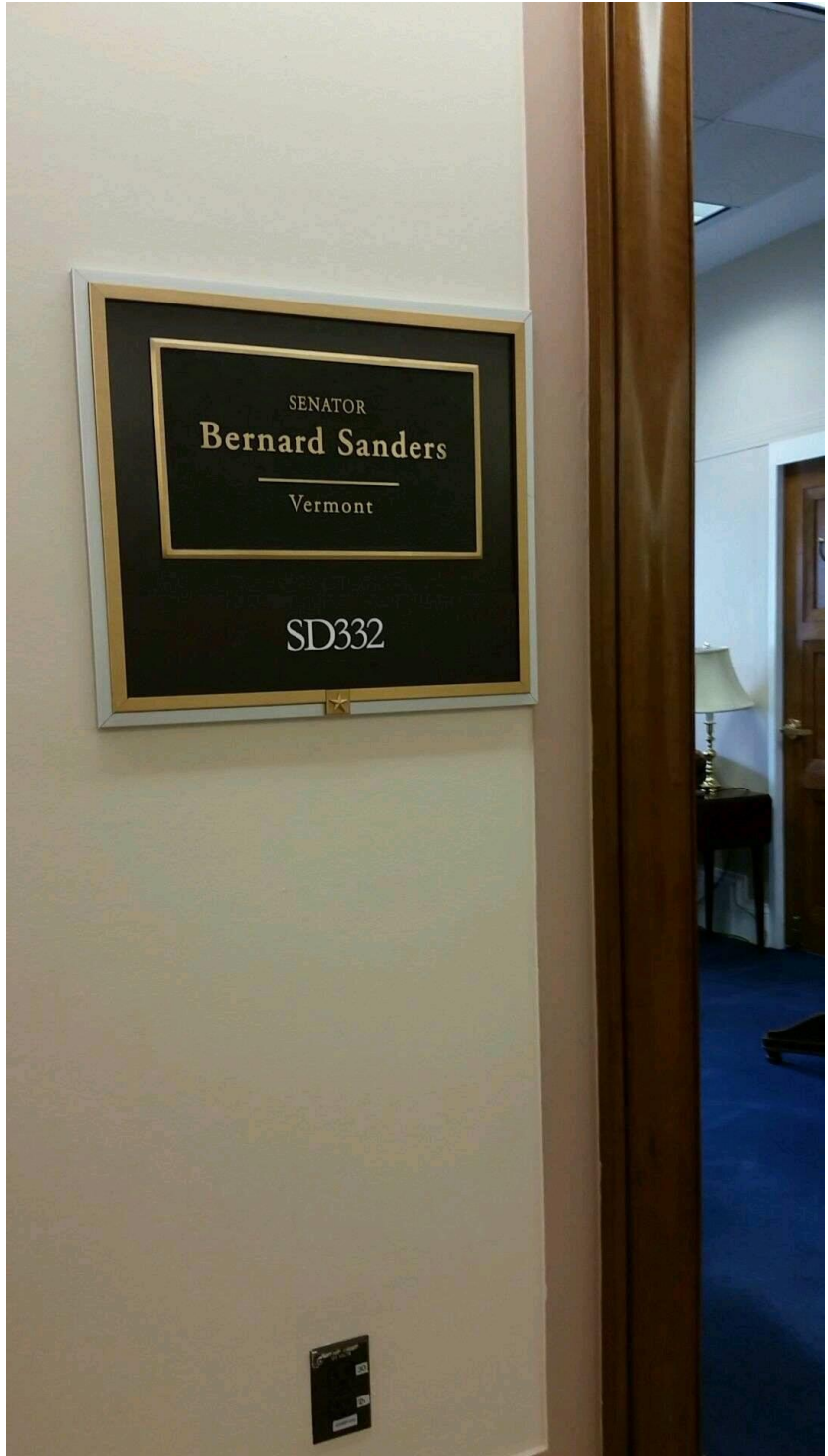
First time on the Metro.



This is my work place!!







SENATOR
Bernard Sanders

Vermont

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