

Journal 5

What to say....? What to say....? Honestly this week there isn't much to report. Things at the office were relatively the same. We also stayed in for the majority of the weekend. We did go play laser tag, but that was maybe for only two hours tops and we came back after having breakfast for dinner at IHOP. It was a very much needed break, to be honest. Since we got here there hasn't been a day we haven't been busy. So just staying in cleaning our pigsty was a very welcome change of pace.

Oh! Actually, now that I think about something did happen that left me thinking for a while afterwards. This past Tuesday I had an effective constituent correspondence training. During the training at one point we were supposed to split up in groups of two to discuss a piece of correspondence the instructor had provided us as an example. By logic, the guy to my right should have been my partner, but as soon as he saw me looking at him, he turned away to make an awkward third wheel to the group next to me. I didn't want to make assumptions, but when you are the only Hispanic in the room, and the Caucasian guy next to you quickly discards you in favor of other Caucasians, it makes you wonder if the problem is that you are brown.

Alright, so that guy didn't want to talk to me, okay I can take that. It probably won't be the last time that this happens, so I wasn't going to waste my time with someone who so blatantly ignored me. As such, I looked to my left to the Asian girl besides me. The girl was talking to another Caucasian guy. She saw me looking at them, looking for a chance to join their group. We made eye contact, so I knew she recognized what I was doing, but even then, she turned around and gave me her back. Long story short, no matter where I turned no one approached me, and no one let me approach them. Therefore, I gave up. I stared at my phone playing dumb for the rest of the discussion time.

Meanwhile, in my head all sorts of thoughts were going through my head. Was I ignored for being Hispanic? No, maybe there was something wrong with what I was wearing? Was it my piercing? No, other interns have piercings as well. Was this a taste of discrimination here at the hill?

For some time for the remainder of the session I felt really uncomfortable, but soon enough, I thankfully got over it as I began to scribble on my notepad. I wrote a poem about the whole situation. The focus of my poem was not about being ignored, or about being ignored by Caucasians. Rather, in this poem I wrote about how minorities really don't have any sense of solidarity when it comes to standing by each other. I wasn't overly surprised or hurt for being ignored by someone white, I was hurt because other minorities ignored me.

In a room of maybe 40-45 people, of those 40 maybe 7 of us were people of color. Seeing how overwhelmed we were at those odds, you would think we would have had more compassion for one another, but this wasn't the case. The other minorities still shut me out. The Asian and the African-Americans blended into the crowd, yet for some reason I stuck out like a sore thumb.

This whole situation made me reflect in a wider scope of the picture. Thinking back to it, a large population of Mexicans aren't very fond of African-Americans. African-Americans are iffy on where they stand with us. And in my experience, Asian people don't like Mexicans very much. I can recall vividly during a summer camp back when I was 13, when my newly made Korean friend suddenly told me that his mom would freak out if he she knew that he had made a Mexican friend. Apparently, his mom thought we were all drug dealers or cholos.

It saddens me, that during the tri-caucus reception at the beginning of our internship, Asian, Black, and Hispanic interns seemed to be getting along just fine. In contrast, in this situation where we were severely overwhelmed in numbers, interns of color actively distanced themselves from each other in their effort to blend in with the landscape.

I didn't mean for this week's journal to be such a downer. Hopefully, my words are not more emotional than what I meant them to be. Yes, the situation made me uncomfortable and a

little sad after some reflection time with my note pad, but the situation didn't ruin my week or even the rest of my day. I wasn't even sure if should talk about this at all because I know people are waiting to read about something exciting, not something depressing.

Still, I think it's more realistic for people to acknowledge that not everything is rose colored here in DC. There are a lot of interns who come from privilege and who got here through connections and many times aren't very fond of you. It's not a common occurrence, but there will be times where they'll discriminate against you. Curiously, many times they don't even realize that they have done so. They've never had to deal with the same issues that we have, therefore it's really hard for them to imagine why anything they say or do would offend you.

Here in DC one of the most important skills to have is the ability of distancing yourself from the situation and to not take things personally. This advice will be helpful in more than one situation here in DC, especially with this political climate.

Alright, with that I leave you with the poem I wrote and two pictures of a store we found in Virginia that truly made us feel at home. Hopefully, you can read in Spanish.





En un Cuarto Color Blanco

En un cuarto pintado de blanco,
Miro algunas caras de tez cual Chocolate.

No me hablan.
No me miran.

A mí lado se sienta la única Asiática.
Ojos jalados como su molde.

Pero ella tampoco no me habla,
Y no me mira.

Minorías son las que quedan en este cuarto color blanco.
Amarillo, café, y negro,
Son los colores incluidos en este grupo singular.
Colores que anuncian nuestra falta de poder.

Pero aún compartiendo el mismo curso,
No somos nada más que simples extraños.

Y a decir verdad,
Me doy cuenta que soy yo la que resalta.
Los demás se han logrado perder en el paisaje.

Volteo a mí derecha
Y me encuentro con un cara pálida.

El me mira,
Pero no me mira.
Sus ojos nunca conocen los míos.

El rápidamente me reemplaza
Con otros de su clase.

Volteo a mí izquierda y miró ya en
Conversación a la asiática con un cara pálida.

Ella me mira callada y aislada,
Y en sus ojos brilla el reconocimiento de mí predicamento.
Pero aún así me da la espalda.

De nuevo me volteo
No queriendo me dar por vencida.
“Hola, mucho gusto en conocerte”
Le salude al muchacho de atrás con ánimo.

Humillante vergüenza se hizo paso a mí cara
Al darme cuenta qué vía sido ignorada.
Pues el afro-americano, nunca levantó la mirada.

Resignada retorne a mí lugar.
“Eh sido rechazada”
Pensé entre mí con indiferencia.

Y así espere en decepción qué
El resto del tiempo pasara.

Al fin saliendo del cuarto reflexione
“Ese cuarto fue como un lienzo en blanco
Con poca vida o emoción.
Con colores alazar que no combinan ni conviven.”

Qué tristeza.