

**Jasmine Meraz**

**Journal - Week 5**

I have finally made it past the halfway point of my internship. Although I am excited about it, I'm trying to get in as much in as I possibly can before my time here is over for the summer. To start off the week, the interns from the office and I had the opportunity to have a breakfast with our senator and ask him any question that we had in regards to work and our personal interest. It was great to just have a deep conversation for a good hour that followed a group picture and an individual picture, which is something most offices don't do. To think of it, most offices don't do anything that our office does, but I guess that goes to show you the differences between members.

So far, I have learned about how policy making works. I had the chance to go to two briefings on topics of interest to me: Labor/Immigration and Education. Although the information may not been positive or upbeat, it was important and something I needed to know. Words can't explain how surprised I was to go to these briefing on H-2B work visas for migrant workers and For Profit Colleges and how they have hurt students trying to pursue higher education.

As a first generation student, I understand that a lot of our decisions on which school to attend is based on which school is going to give us the most financial aid, but for students who are victims of these for-profit universities, their debt becomes to great and they come to the realization that if they try and transfer to another school, their education is not accredited and they can't get their money back. As for the H-2B visa workers, it saddens me that many workers are exploited by their employers and can't do anything about it because the debt they've accumulated is more than they can bare. The mistreatment of these migrant workers is something that goes beyond just these workers. It is something undocumented workers in the U.S face on a

daily basis and as a child coming from a single parent who has worked her entire life in the field, it hurts me that people who simply want a better life for themselves and their families have to face so much discrimination and work under horrible conditions with no benefits or chance to prosper.

This week, the rest of the CAMP interns and I had the great privilege to attend Ruben Hinojosa's reception to honor him as his retirement is coming at the end of the year. It was amazing to be in the same room with someone who has fought so much to fund minorities in higher education. Without his support and many others, CAMP, SSS, TRIO, and other outreach programs wouldn't be able to have the funds to support these programs. Hearing all the great things many congressmen and congresswomen had to say about him made me grateful to have this opportunity and makes me realize that we need to keep fighting for these programs so more of us can experience the benefits of these programs.



After a long week filled with meetings and daily tasks, we enjoyed the weekend. On Saturday we went kayaking on the Potomac River early in the morning. It was one of the coolest things I've done simply because I love outdoor activities and this was something I've been wanting to do for a long time. After finishing kayaking we headed to grab a bite to eat and not just any food, but

Dominican food! It was one of the best meals I have tried and for the amount the restaurant was giving you, it was worth it all and I didn't wait or waste anytime devouring the meal. After lunch we headed towards the mall to get some souvenirs for our families and do a little bit of retail therapy that was much needed. Once we got home, we decided to make tacos that we've been putting off for about two weeks. We invited some fellow interns from CHCI and had a nice dinner with tacos and horchata. Unfortunately, although it was great night we had to go to bed early because we had another long day ahead of us and I still needed to talk to my mom.



Sunday was the most emotional day for me because we finally got to go to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. I have spent a lot of time learning about this issue, watching movies, documentaries, reading books, and even hearing real people talk about their experiences living in concentration camps during the Holocaust. This was a peaceful place, a place where I can truly put my mind, body, and soul into and really dedicate all my time into. Sure, all the museums here are great, but no museum has ever moved me and made me as emotional as this museum. Being able to see physical papers, objects, read so much more than what I thought I knew was an eye opening for me. By far made me realize that I have more to learn and the only way I believe that will happen is if I travel to places like Germany, Poland, and other countries where these camps were placed and where this form of inhuman acts were done. For me, this journey needed to be done alone and I was grateful that my fellow interns gave me the opportunity to give me my space in order to think and take in everything that was processing my head throughout the two or so hours we were there. At the end of the tour I was filled with emotions but I was very thankful that my fellow interns were present for this emotional moment and important moment in my life. This is something I will forever be grateful for and will remember for a long time.

