

Aleysa Garcia  
Week 8  
7/11/2016 – 7/17/2016

This week has been wonderful but also bittersweet. Many activities are going through the office and some that I have been involved with. Last Monday has been one of the most stressful days that I have had so far. In the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics (WHIEEH), they will be launching their Migrant Voices series. They gave me the task to do a briefing for the staffers that will be going to Oregon. A briefing consists of bios of organizations, individuals, talking points, hot topics, and any additional information that might be necessary for the staff to be best informed. This was my first briefing, and it was a long briefing. With the help of Emmanuel and Michelle, I was able to get feedback and help when I needed it.



On Wednesday, all of the interns in the WHIEEH had the opportunity to go to the Jaime Escalante event at LULAC. During the event we had the pleasure to see Dr. King, Jr. He spoke and gave a beautiful speech about his late father. Dr. King also gave a wonderful speech about the importance of teachers of color. He shared about his personal trajectory and what struck me the most was that he mentioned that when the world was against all of his odds, when he could have been one more of the statistics of an Afro-Latino in the City of New York, a teacher saw potential in him. What if that teacher would not have encouraged him to do his best? It is because of the teachers that see potential in us that we are where we are. They give us the best gift; encouragement and support. Edward James Olmos was also there. His speech was funny yet full of hope and encouragement for Latinos in this country.

Thursday was the CHCI farewell. I cannot believe that it has ended. I have met wonderful people that have influenced me one way or another. Their stories, perseverance, and encouragement will forever be engraved within me. That night, we invited the NVG office to come and celebrate with us. It was great seeing Justin, Sam, and Andrea come to our farewell. During the ceremony, Congressman Cardenas gave a wonderful speech. It resonated so much with my own personal story because he talked about how his background came from a family of farmworkers. How their struggles and sacrifices will never come close to what we are going through. Regardless, of that, we are their American Dream, and we must elevate our voices and educate ourselves to make a difference in this country.





That very same day we were able to meet Congressman Becerra. I could not believe that I would get alone time with him and have a conversation with him. It was humbling. I sometimes forget that members of Congress are normal people at the end of the day. He told us that the one thing that he has learned from his time in Congress is that one can always compromise a bill, but to never compromise your values.

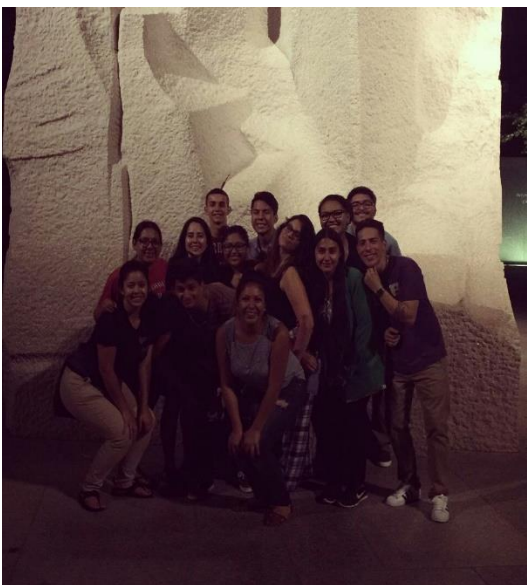
After our farewell, we had dinner with Andrea. She is so awesome! There are no words to describe how amazing she is. She does not come from a farmworking background, but one time as she was doing research in the farmworking community she realized the lack of information. Since that day, she informed herself on what struggles the community went through. Often visiting campsites and she tried to do the work that some of the workers do. To me, learning that there are allies who support our community is empowering.

It also encouraged me to be allies to other communities, to come together, and be stronger together. I had so much fun with her. She is also an avid reader and will be sending me a list of books that I should read.

On Friday was the programming with CHCI. Our final day with the cohort. It was bittersweet. All of them have amazing stories, stories that were empowering. We know that we were the youngest in the group, yet they also realized that we have a voice. That we are young but mighty. In the evening, because of Irene, I was able to attend the Presidential Dinner at LULAC. There were some rumors that President Obama was attending the dinner and I was thrilled. Unfortunately, he was not there but the authors who wrote DACA were. It was empowering to see that they were Latinas.



After attending the Presidential Dinner, I joined the CAMPees in our goodbyes to the CHCI interns. Most of them were leaving that night or the day after and we wanted to spend some time before they left. We took a last night walk with them along the monuments. As the CAMP alum from Washington State said, "It's not a goodbye; it's a see you later" because we are planning a reunion in Seattle.



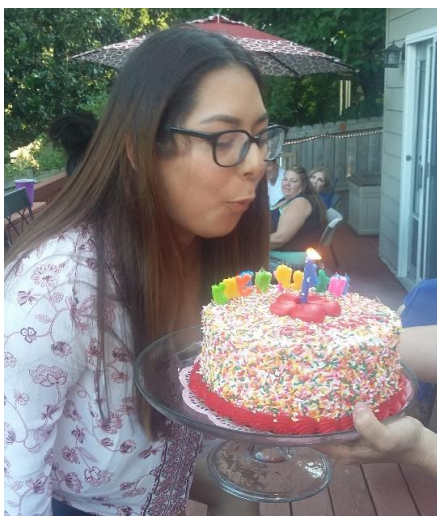


On Saturday, I met with Victor Mena and friends. He was a CHCI fellow from Oregon! It was great having conversation about how great Oregon is, he is very proud of being an Oregonian. I also met his roommate, who is an impressive Latina. One day, I want to be like her. She is such a great model and leader. We had similar interests, and it was great connecting with her. In addition, a friend of his from Boston was visiting the area. They are full of knowledge and resources as well as great leaders. I am thankful that the WHIEEH fellow connected us. After meeting with Victor, we went to LULAC's concert. We needed to get volunteer hours and we decided that LULAC would be a great way to do it. Once we got there, we were in charge of putting wristbands to the VIP attendees. At first, I was overwhelmed. They mentioned that there would be at least 500 individuals and only four volunteers! I imagined like the hunger games and everyone rushing to get a bracelet. However, it was not like that. I actually had a lot of fun doing it.



Once they let us go, we had the opportunity to attend the concert. I love dancing, so we immediately went to the dance floor. I had so much fun that night, when A.B. Quintanilla came out, Ay Dios Mio! It took me to my younger years, all the songs that they played were flashbacks of my childhood. We all sang at the top of our lungs, and swayed to the music. We were so close to them!

On Sunday, we went to Dr. Lisa's house for a farewell. We are in DC for about two months; you would think that we have the metro system figured out... Well, we got so lost! We took the blue line, and we were supposed to transfer to the yellow. We accidently skipped it, so we had to go back. We finally made it to Dr. Lisa's house. After we ate we rested for a while. In the evening, we had our "talent show", Monse did her animal calls, Crystal sang, and Jose and I tried to salsa dance. While we were there, we celebrated Monse's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, we know that she would miss home. We wanted her to feel like home, because we did become a family away from home. There were other amazing talents. I had a great night, and I cannot wait for when the directors come next week. I get to see Amas and Patrick!



AB Quintanilla, Selena's brother