

Week 8 – Consuelo Aileen Contreras

I can't believe this is my last week in Washington D.C. When I woke up this morning I woke up thinking of things I will miss about D.C. I will definitely miss waking up to the music that the artists sing or play in the mornings. I am going to miss listening to the ambulance and feeling lucky I am alive and healthy. But most importantly I will miss the man outside Foggy Bottom yelling Good Morning and giving the people the newspaper.

This week I was looking at everything with special attention because I don't know when I will have the opportunity to come back to D.C. I have got really close to everybody in the office and saying bye to them has been hard. Like I said in my last journal they spoil me too much!

This week Julio, Sarah and Pat took us to eat to a Mexican Restaurant. It was delicious, especially the Guacamole. Also, Tara took us to eat to Station five where I ordered a delicious pizza. Also, I had the opportunity to present in front of all of them about the interviews I did as well as my accomplishments during this internship. It was a very special moment because many of them took the time at the end to tell me how proud they were of me and my work. I



I really admire each and every one of them, so their kind words mean the world to me. My last day at the office was really hard for me because I didn't want to say bye. Everybody was very supportive. It's hard to say bye to something as good as this office and team. They brought a cake for me and give me many gifts. I will miss you guys very much.

There was another intern at my office as well. Araceli has been such an important key to my success during this internship. She was always willing to help me when I was struggling. But most important we grow a very special friendship.



Graduation with all the CHCI interns was very inspiring. I am glad I am part of CHCI as well as HEP/CAMP because all those interns have similar backgrounds as we do. Many of them have accomplished amazing things and they have inspired me immensely.

One of my favorite places in D.C. is Georgetown. I love that I have everything you need and the environment is amazing. This last week Magali and I decided to go to Georgetown shopping. We bought the last thing we needed before we came home.

Another of my favorite places is Chinatown. Now, when I saw Chinatown for the first time I was amazed since I've never seen anything like it. But once I saw the one in New York I realized that Chinatown in D.C. is not that big. There is one store in Chinatown I love. It's a gift shop. I love that store because they have the most unique things and everything is really cheap. I bought almost all my gifts there. I feel really blessed to have the opportunity to be exposed to so many things I didn't know. This experience definitely opened my eyes to things and places that I had no idea they existed. This has been an eye-opening experience.

My highlight of this week was getting my stolen phone back. After waiting for almost three weeks I finally got it back. The funny thing is that on my way to the police station I found a phone. It took me more than an hour to get to the last stop in the metro. After getting out of there I needed to take the bus. I decided to Uber there so it would be faster. As I was waiting for the Uber to pick me up I decided to sit on the little benches there. As I walked to the bench I saw the phone there. I took the phone with me and I gave it to the police. Then after a couple of questions I was able to get my phone back. Like I said before, anything is possible in D.C. even the unthinkable.



Of course I could not leave D.C. without having one last experience. I got to the airport and tried to check in. For some reason I didn't appear on the passenger list. Scared, I spoke with a representative and she found my reservation. There was one other problem though. The airline's policy on carry-on bags had changed, and they wanted me to check 3 bags. She told me I had to pay \$150 for the third bag and \$60 for the other two. I almost had a heart attack when she said \$150. I told her I was not going to check the third bag, so I left with my carry-on, backpack and purse and ran to the gate. At the gate, I was told the same thing so I had to squeeze everything into one carry-on bag. I am very proud of myself that I was able to not panic and figure this out. I love D.C. and all these unique experiences that I go through in this big city.

I wish I could say I am not a fan of D.C. but I would be lying. I have learned and grown so much in these eight weeks. I have so many aspirations and new dreams. I discovered that I truly am a professional. I have a lot of work to do, but I thank D.C. and its people for giving me the tools to accomplish it. Most importantly, I want to thank the HEP/CAMP Association for making this life-changing experience possible. I would never be the same. My journey started with me waiting to accomplish the American Dream. For the longest time I felt angry at America for creating such a thing that doesn't exist

and migrants like me that fall for it. But what I failed to realize was that I am the example of what the American Dream is. I will not stop until I accomplish all my goals. I will not let down the people who believe in me, but most importantly I will not fail myself.