

1st Week in D.C.
Perla Bravo

“Ladies and gentlemen we have arrived to Washington D.C.” I heard the flight attendant announce as I woke up from the plane landing. I looked out the window to find to my surprise, the Washington Monument along with what seemed to be the Jefferson Memorial in the far distance. I quickly grabbed my backpack and followed the crowd to the exit. I felt nervous, and a bit tired. Only hours before I was taking a final in Seattle, Washington followed by kind Luz, my College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) director, taking me to the Seattle airport. As I exited the terminal I began to look around for Patrick, the internship program coordinator, who was standing not too far from the exit. Patrick led me to the metro and stated that I could take the “blue or orange” to get to my internship. As of that point we were headed towards Foggy Bottom where George Washington University (GWU) is located. I had never been in such a metro station before, although we have one in Seattle, the one in D.C. is massive. Once we finally reached GWU, my fellow CAMP interns greeted me there.

While on the metro Patrick had mentioned that the whole group would be touring around D.C. with his wife. Although I was tired, I was excited to begin exploring. Our exploration for that day consisted of going to Capitol Hill, and to the Supreme Court, along with the University of Phoenix where we would be having our training the next day. Afterwards we walked to Wal-Mart and the CAMP interns were able to purchase some necessities for the trip. Later that day we went to Whole Foods and ate yummy food and had the opportunity to share our stories with Patrick and Betsy, who is Patrick’s wife. I was inspired by their stories, especially when I learned what motivated them to continue their education. I found out that afternoon that my fellow CAMP interns are truly extraordinary people. In the afternoon, us girls, including Betsy went to Georgetown and look around the stores. We soon found that most of the stores were closed, but before leaving we were able to go into the oldest house in D.C.’s backyard. It was full of greenery, and small paths that wound around the trees. The house’s exterior seemed to be in good shape, although it had been built such a long time ago. That afternoon ended with a warm hug from Betsy who had been very kind to us interns and was leaving back home that afternoon. The CAMP interns then headed back to our dorms and rested for the eventful day to come.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

I heard as I woke from my sleep. I quickly checked my phone. It was 4 am. Little had I known when I set the alarm the night prior that my phone was still in PST, so it was three hours behind of D.C. time. My first tip to future CAMP interns is to be sure to change your time setting before setting your alarm. Thankfully we were all ready on time as we headed to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) training. Our training for that day was fun and educative, we were able to meet Juan Sepulveda, VP of PBS and hear his inspiring story. CHCI provided us with useful information that was geared towards preparing us for our internship. The weekdays

were mostly like this, meeting key speakers and learning more about how we could be the best interns. I am thankful for the CHCI orientation training because I was able to learn more about how I could prepare myself for the week to come.

On Tuesday we went to the offices of the staff that we interns would be working in. It was neat to be able to see the dynamic of the different offices, and learn more about what would be the expectations of the offices. At lunch we were able to meet Irene Bueno and Kooshkooli, the 3rd Vice President to the United Farmworkers Association, and were able to pass by where he led a protest only a year earlier. It was inspiring to see his drive with helping farmworkers nationwide. After that we went to my office at the Department of Education where my roommate and I will both be working. We also had the opportunity to meet Lisa Ramirez, whose book I read in my CAMP class back in Seattle, and her staff. While at the Department of Education (DOE), I met Emmanuel Caudillo who is the special advisor to the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. It was really neat to see that there were so many projects that the office was working on, especially the promoting of post-secondary education to young adults across America. The next day after CHCI training we met with Cleo from the Head Start program and learned more about his work. We found that he also has interns in D.C. and he is also, like us, planning a trip to NYC.

The next day after CHCI training we were able to attend the Tri-Caucus reception where we met with different caucuses that also had interns. I was able to chat with at least two from each group, during this event we had the opportunity to hear from the leaders of each group as well as hear representative Ruben Hinojosa speak about how us interns were the future leaders of the world. We also had the opportunity to hear from different senators who showed support for the work we would be doing. That same afternoon I had a final to attend to and thanks to Patrick, I was able to complete the exam and get it turned in on time.

Friday afternoon after training we went out to have dinner with Patrick and Elizabeth, a fellow CAMP intern from last year's cohort. It was nice to have the opportunity to ask Elizabeth more questions regarding the internship. We had dinner that afternoon at a place called El Chalan, a Peruvian restaurant and it was very good.

Saturday morning we headed to the Head Start program event that was being coordinated not too far from where we were staying at GWU. Prior to attending the event I was not too sure what it would entail. I knew we would be working with DACA/DAPA training, which was interesting. Their work was inspiring to say the least, and we were able to learn more about the benefits of such a program. This program is one that is dear to me since I have seen the benefits that arise from such a program. We stayed around five hours that day with the organization and were able to learn more about their cause. Saturday evening I went with a fellow CAMP intern to explore the monuments and potentially see a concert by Jeremy Camp,

playing in front of the Washington Monument for free. Naturally when I heard, this I wanted to go.

Sunday morning three of us interns headed towards Wal-Mart in efforts of buying groceries for the week. When we reached the metro we stayed on the red line for about ten stops. I knew something was wrong when the train was no longer in a tunnel rather, was on a wobbly ramp passing by a stadium. I looked at one of my fellow interns with what must have been a look of surprise because she then realized that we were lost as well. When we exited the metro, we spoke with Metro staff, which explained to us that we were “very lost” and that we had “practically reached Maryland” as well as that we had passed “at least two Wal-Marts in the process.” We were a bit upset at that point but were happy that we were now on our way to the store. Once we reached Eastern Market we exited and reached the stop that read “Union Station” we waited for at least twenty minutes before noticing that there was a sign that read that “this metro stop is no longer in service”. When we read that we walked to the nearest bus station which dropped us off near the Supreme Court and from which we walked to Wal-Mart. After shopping, we were greeted by a thunderstorm and were soon soaked with water. After reaching GWU we had dinner, I made chicken tacos, and rested for our first day at work.