

The National HEP/CAMP Association DC Internship

Weekly Journal Entry

Name: Maria Flores

Date(s): 06/05/23 - 06/11/23

Monday, June 5, 2023

“Si Se Pudo”

The first day of my internship was amazing. I went into the office around 1 pm. When I arrived at the Longworth building, my supervisor, Carlos, came downstairs for me and Jamar who is also interning in the Grijalva office. When we went upstairs Carlos presented us to all the staff. The staff was really welcoming and most of them were Hispanic. I came to learn that two of the current staff were CHCI Interns. I'm happy to see that more of our people are taking these important roles on the hill.

I met Rep. Raul Grijalva not even an hour into my shift. He was the friendliest and most optimistic person. I felt as if I was with my family. I could not count how many jokes and motivational words he said to me. The nerves I had when I walked in the door vanished with Grijalva's presence. I'm really happy to have the opportunity to intern in this office.

Today was a successful day in that, even though it was not so productive and consisted of a lot of paperwork, I enjoyed being in the office and I loved the environment. Despite that at the beginning of the day I felt scared thinking I might have gotten on the wrong metro line and checked my phone every minute, I was able to make it with 20 minutes of extra time. The continuous learning sessions on the metro that Patrick and Virginia gave me finally paid off!



Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Im Official!

Today I finally got my badge which will allow me to enter different legislative buildings as a staff member. I can now enter the “Only Staff” line for the cafeteria and the entrance used by staff to enter the Longworth House Office Building. I feel like I'm slowly settling down into this fast-paced environment and I'm starting to realize that it's not as bad as I thought. I got the chance to take a picture with the one and only Rep. Grijalva. I can't stress enough how happy I am for having the opportunity to intern for this amazing congressman who cares for his people.

Jamari, another intern at Rep. Grijalva's office, and I have learned many of the basic procedures in the office. We really enjoy the atmosphere of the office and have established that we have each other's back for anything. We actually ate lunch together today at a park that was near Longworth.



After work, I got the opportunity to come back a bit early and was able to get my daily run. I ran 3 miles alongside the Potomac River. There was beautiful weather and many tourists around. I came to realize that my way of releasing stress and clearing my mind is through running or walking.

Around 6 pm we headed to the Equality Center where we met with Teresa Romero who is the president of United Farm Workers (UFW), Areli Ortega the political legislative director of UFW, and Giev Kashkooli, the second vice president of UFW. We had the opportunity to meet one on one with them and were able to share our stories and why we are interning here in D.C. They gave us information regarding what their organization does and how we as students can help in our communities. Within the hour that we were there, it felt truly as if I had known these individuals for a long time. They were really welcoming and comprehensive of our backgrounds. I found them really inspiring and it's for sure not the last meeting we have as we discussed planning activities or actions we should take once we head back home to help our farm-working community.

Friday, June 9, 2023

La Aventura Nos Aguarda

My morning started by getting ready for our Friday programming for CHCI. This week we learned about leadership and S.M.A.R.T goals. I found it really interesting that there are different types of leadership. To my surprise, we took a short quiz to



figure out what leadership style we had and all CHCI interns, including myself, were democratic leaders. This meant that we are the types of leaders to have democratic conversations. We are able to hear everyone's thoughts and combine those to work together.

I think that little by little I'm becoming more self-aware of my weaknesses and my strengths. I've been trying to work on one weakness every week until it turns into a strength. For example, one of my

weaknesses is that I tend to have less confidence in myself when I'm in big groups because I think that I am not smart enough or if I say something it might not make sense. This goes back to imposter syndrome. I'm trying to get over this imposter syndrome by encouraging myself to talk in big groups and express what I think even if others don't align with it. I convince myself every day that I belong here and that we are here to make a change.



In our George Washington seminar class, we learned more about the government including the different branches, how Congress works, and how a briefing in the House usually happens. We were able to act out a whole briefing which was about the ban on assault rifles. I was a first-term Democrat from New York City. The hearing went well. There was a lot of drama and acting going from country Republicans who love guns to democrats fighting for the children's lives.

After a long day of programming, we came back to our apartments and got some pizza. The restaurant we went to had only individual pizzas and they were more of an oval than a circle. They looked weird but were pretty good. We ended the day with a walk to the Potomac River where we got soaking wet because we forgot to check the weather. Luckily no one got sick.

Saturday, June 10, 2023

Pride is for Everyone

My first pride in D.C. was amazing. We first started the day by going to the Botanic Garden which was really beautiful. There were so many plants I had never seen before. I loved touching and smelling all the flowers and leaves. But Anna, one of the interns who I had met three months prior to our internship, commented that she would never take me to a venomous garden because she knew I wouldn't hold back from touching them (it's true lol). We actually found the desert section which had many cactuses. My friends joked about how I probably felt at home during those couple of minutes.



After that we headed to the famous pride parade which was about 3 hours long. I loved it! I had never been in such an inclusive environment. Everyone cheered as "The Queens" passed by. At one point this dancer came up to us and gave us glitter to place in our faces. I felt the LGBTQ+ community as people just came up to us and hugged us with so much love. We were exhausted once we had hit 2 hours standing and screaming but we kept going until it was almost over.



I had never had such an amazing experience. I felt like a proud mom as I cheered, screamed, and danced with all the people in the parade. There were so many little kids that were cheering as well and I found that heartwarming. This city is so inclusive and I love that.

I would recommend attending the pride parade 100%

Sunday, June 11, 2023

Run to lead

Son las cinco de la mañana! Why am I up so early you might be asking... Well, we are doing our first volunteering opportunity. Today we got the opportunity to volunteer for the CHCI Run to Lead 5k. My job was to enthusiastically motivate all the runners towards the end. No, I did not run with them; I was stationed in a park where I orientated runners to where they were supposed to keep going. After the 5k finished we were able to go back to the baseball stadium where food, shade, and great music were provided. I really enjoyed this experience as it allowed me to get closer to everyone else. Bailamos como si hubiera un mañana. Y despues... we came back to our dorms to take a long shower and a nap because, with only a couple hours of sleep, there was not much energy left.

