

This is kind of nerve-racking. I have been on a plane before but never traveled by myself. As I am saying my goodbyes to my CAMP advisor Alexandra I fasten my backpack straps and head to my gate at three in the morning. Traveling to Washington D.C. for an internship wasn't something I thought I would be doing a couple of years back. I thought traveling wasn't something I would be able to do until I was well in my career as a physical therapist. Through CAMP I have been very fortunate to be brought out of my little bubble of Eastern Oregon. As I came to meet the interns one by one this week I knew that I had been blessed with a group of individuals I could grow with. Even though we all come from migrant backgrounds, our stories are vastly different from what we have experienced. I have so much to learn from these folks and I cannot wait to see us all grow more as individuals in this new environment.

I was a bit nervous to find out that all the other HEP/CAMP interns had been paired off with each other to be roommates and I would be paired off with a different person. I have had experience with a roommate because of college but hoped for something different since my last roommate whom only talked to me when I asked her courtesy questions, like if I could turn off the light. I did not get to meet my anticipated roommate until Saturday evening due to her being scheduled to show up the next day, but my hope is that she will be kind and want to at least make conversation with me.

I must have brought Corvallis weather with me to Washington D.C. because I got drenched as soon as I walked out the door on my way to church. The Cathedral, however, was enormous and definitely made me feel more secure to be here. Knowing I could come here for a sense of normalcy in what I predict will be a chaotic schedule, lets me feel at peace. Sunday shopping was also something that I thought would seem normal to me, but it was quite the opposite. I had to constantly remind myself that I was shopping, ONLY FOR MYSELF. Coming from a family consisting of seven people I have lived in the mentality that grocery shopping must be done in bulk and to last hope for the month. This time, however, I needed to make sure that I bought things that I would be able to eat and use on the weekly and if I could monthly base. This was also the first time I had ever gone on the metro. It was confusing at first but starting to pick up on the fast-paced environment that is D.C. I learned that there is not much room for hesitation.

Throughout the rest of the scheduled week, we met with other, older, individuals that were part of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI). Like in any setting we were all a bit shy at talking to each other at first, but once we identified some factors of familiarity, such as social identities, we bonded more. I found each one of the sessions impacting and interesting. A common theme that they all voiced was to take advantage of the opportunity we all earned to be here in Washington D.C. being of Latinx descent not only set us apart, but there are particular reasons why our programs saw potential in us to be able to learn something out of this experience so now the work is left to us to make the most of it. I believe that the CHCI orientation did a very good job of compressing various elements of preparation all in one week.

At the end of each day, I found myself wondering why I was so exhausted knowing very well that the most I did was write and listen. Yet coming to realize that all the brain power I exercised shouldn't be devalued I drank some water and tried to keep my eyes peeled open for the rest of the day. That three-hour time change is no joke.

As for exploring D.C., I found moments of awe in visiting various sights. The White House visit was pretty quick and quite fascinating, I didn't have certain expectations for it, but I was surprised to realize it was so close to where we were staying for the summer. While I visited different museums, attended my first pride parade, went out dancing, and did some shopping with the interns I was happily surprised to hear a mix of languages and a sea of ethnicities that I was not accustomed to seeing. The diversity of Washington D.C was often mentioned to me before I got here but I did not expect to love it this much. Two of the biggest highlights for me was meeting the Office of Migrant Education Staff and the 2018 Farmworker Justice awardees. Being able to see first-hand people that are making an impact on issues that are close to home for me made me very emotional.

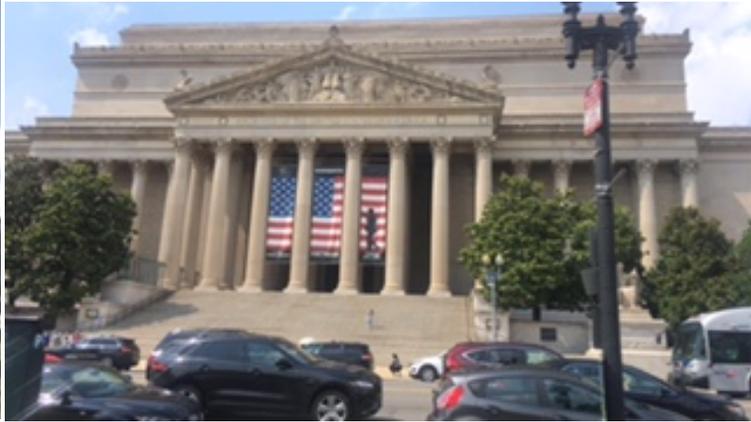
For now, what has been instilled in my mind is that throughout my internship here I must do the best that I can do for whatever task I am given. It has been repeated time and time again as I have been here, but I relate that phrase towards my parents. They have constantly reminded me to make genuine connections with people and always be proud of where I come from. With Latinx community trying to make themselves known here in the United States, we must put our best selves forward to represent the great people that have shaped us into what we are today. My community back home is what empowers me to be my best because I not only represent myself but everything and everyone that associates with me.



Meeting and conversating with John Quiñones Journalist, ABC News. Popular for his show *What Would You Do?*



Meeting with my new OME family.



Walking to the Washington monument, but also participating in discussion with the HEP/CAMP interns about what we notice in our communities and this nation, but most importantly what impact we want to have in changing it.

