

My Journal

By Karla Denise Arana

Week 4 (June 25-July 1, 2018)



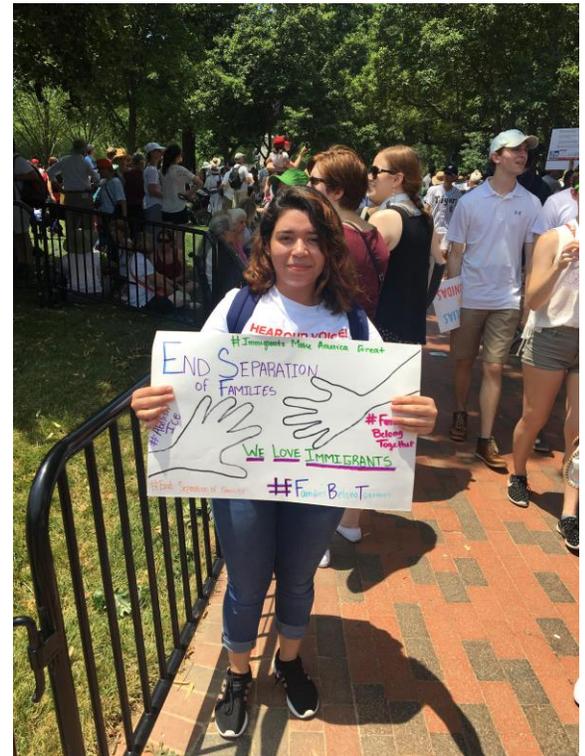
As the fourth week was approaching, I felt more confident working in a congressional office, as well as more comfortable being in DC. For me, this week was one of growth and new experiences. I experienced some events that challenged my perspective, as well as others that filled my heart with warm emotions.

On Monday, I was invited to the event held in the Kennedy Center called "A Salute to the 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars." The event was a collection of art performances by many talented young artists who were selected from all over the country. The performances were breathtaking, and the messages were inspiring and thought provoking. Overall, the performances implied that America is a "melting pot" and that it's this quality that makes America the best country in the world.

This performance was symbolic for me because, as an immigrant, I have a great appreciation for diversity and inclusion. This experience made me appreciate art on a different level by relating to and understanding the deep meaning of a performance.

On Wednesday, I had the opportunity to have lunch with Congresswoman Roybal-Allard and got to know her on a more personal level. After we had lunch, she took me to the House Floor to see, in person, the process congress members go through to vote on a certain bill. It was a great opportunity to experience the democratic process.

On Thursday, I went to a briefing on TPS aid for Somalia and Yemen. TPS stands for Temporary Protection Status and is granted to countries during national emergencies such as environmental disasters or a civil war. There are fourteen countries protected under TPS, including Somalia and Yemen. At the briefing, the speakers were trying to raise awareness of how detrimental it would be if the Trump administration decides to terminate the program in those countries. During the briefing, some people under the protection of TPS talked about their lives back in their home countries. It was very heart wrenching to hear the trauma and pain that they went through. This topic is personal to me because many Salvadoran citizens affected by the devastating earthquakes and civil war were protected under the TPS, but the Trump administration decided to end the administering of aid to Salvadorans and ten other countries.



Friday was an exciting day because I went to the White House on a tour. When I went inside the White House, I was a little disappointed because I found out that they only let you see one fourth of the entire house. I could only see the rooms from the hallway, as the entrance to the rooms was blocked off with ropes. The rooms were beautiful and I had a strong desire to go inside to take a closer look at the beautifully made furniture and the elegant decorations. Still, the tour was breathtaking and I was very thankful to take part in it. During the afternoon, I volunteered at Voto Latino which is an organization that promotes Latino leadership. I was making posters for the rally that was organized for the next day to oppose the separation of families.

On Saturday, I experienced one of the most satisfying moments in my life. I went to a protest for the first time and it was beyond amazing to be able to participate in this democratic act granted to US citizens. I felt very powerful during the protest, as I was directly helping a cause that is important to me. I also felt a reassurance, which further cemented my wishes to make a change in my community. Being surrounded by people who were fighting for the same cause as me was amazing, as well as knowing that others have good hearts and believe in human rights. As I was taking part in the protest, I felt I was united with the rest of the people protesting.

