

Wendy Cueto

Week 6 Journal

During my time in D.C., each week has been exciting and marked by memorable experiences. I have continued to fulfill my goal of exploring a new side of D.C. each week. This week was filled with many highlights including experiencing the Fourth of July at America's capital. As I had the opportunity to join in on the festivities, I reflected upon what it meant to celebrate freedom. This weekend was one that signifies independence and liberty from an overbearing ruler. I understand the patriotism behind the festivities, but I often found myself feeling guilty. In the leading days to the Fourth of July, everyone around me seemed excited and patriotic meanwhile I was left confused. I am a Latina that is in the capital of the United States and the expectation feels that I should celebrate with the rest of the country, but it is very difficult to get myself to celebrate when my people are suffering! This personal conundrum weighed heavily on my shoulders throughout this week.

I simply cannot ignore the circumstances at the border. First, I live in a border town where the detention centers are gaining national attention for the caging and mistreatment of people. Secondly, I receive calls at work each day with varied opinions regarding the immigration influx and corresponding legislation that has been passed. I have learned to deal with the strongly opinionated phone calls, but this celebration is one I approached with incertitude. This country has provided me with a great education and opportunities that I am beyond grateful for, but it is also responsible for mistreatment of helpless families. I find myself at odds surrounded by so much "Trump 2020" and "Make America Great Again" merchandise which reminds me daily of what type of environment I am in.

Despite my personal dilemmas and the unpleasant heat, I still attended the Fourth of July parade. It was an entertaining experience to watch the young students march, play, and dance through the street. Afterwards, my roommate and I headed to the A Capitol Fourth concert. I was extremely excited to see John Stamos and watch the fireworks show. We had front row seats which provided for an awesome experience. We even had a presence on the live show!

I along with the other interns enjoyed our weekend exploring D.C. We enjoyed a long day at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park. On Saturday, we visited The United States National Arboretum where we appreciated the beautiful nature and scenery. Afterwards, we explored The Wharf and relaxed by the waterfront until a storm let us know that it was time to go home. To conclude the weekend, we visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, and CityCenterDC. The visit to the museums provided an excellent closure to the weekend through reflective thought. Although it was an enjoyable week, I can say that I am ready to get back to work.

