

# Wendy Cueto

## Week 8 Journal

As the weeks progress, I continue to feel tremendously fortunate for the opportunity to work in our nation's capital. This week was no exception to the many surprises that D.C. brings.

My first highlight of this week was having the opportunity to chaperone for the second **R2L NextGen Capitol Hill Day**. My roommate Marlene and I chaperoned a group of students from Detroit Cristo Rey High School. We quickly were able to relate to the group because I had a connection to Michigan,

and I know Michigan State University students who are alumni of Cristo Rey High School. Our first meeting of the day was with Senator Debbie Stabenow. I informed the students that we should be prepared to be met by a staff member due to the busy schedules that Congress has, but we were pleasantly surprised to meet with Senator Stabenow herself! Both the staff and Senator Stabenow were very welcoming, and we all established a connection through our Spartan experience. The Detroit students had great questions for her and her staff that ranged from education to the ongoing gentrification of their city. I was very proud of them for being so well prepared to discuss the issues that are affecting their community. Our second meeting was with the office of Representative Rashida Tlaib. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet with Representative Tlaib herself, but the students were able to share their concerns with a member of her staff. Overall the students left a great impression with each of the offices we visited, and it was noted that they had clearly done their homework. We finished off the day by taking the students through a tour of the capitol. I enjoyed the opportunity to serve as a leader and to connect with such a great group of students.



On Friday, the HEP/CAMP interns and I attended the *Celebration of Farmworker DREAMers and the Dreams of Farmworkers!* We were invited by the director of the East Coast Migrant Head Start Program (ECMHSP). The Migrant Head Start Program hosted this celebration at the Mexican Cultural Institute. This celebration featured testimonies from farmworker DREAMers and a performance by the Homestead-Miami

Mariachi Conservatory.

The testimonies proved inspirational through the resilient experiences that the farmworker DREAMers overcame. The mariachi made me especially emotional because all of the children performing are from farmworking families. I became extremely moved by the fact that we all shared a farmworker background and that we are present in D.C. achieving great things. I felt so proud of them for being brave to performance so far away from home. Seeing these young talented children who fearlessly performed made me reflect about my younger self. I was once small and hardworking, but I could never imagine that I would be where I am today. I am extremely proud of myself for partaking in this opportunity and for working hard to make myself and family proud. The day following the farmworker celebration, I received a call from my mom and from my godparents. Both calls were unexpected to let me know how proud my family is of me. They expressed that this is what they had always envisioned for me. They reminded me of when working in the fields they would tell me, “work hard because you’re going to be somebody important someday”.

I now recognize my potential and the potential that the young generation in our community have. This potential is due to our families’ sacrifices and their hard work. As a result, when I saw the young mariachi performers, I could not help but be proud of them. They are making their families proud and I relate to them because I also work hard so that my family’s sacrifice can be manifested through my success.



*Side Note: I volunteered at the Colombian Festival this week. It was HOT yet fun!*