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“Challenge is the pathway to engagement and progress in our lives. But not all challenges are created equal. Some challenges make us feel alive, engaged, connected and fulfilled. Others simply overwhelm us. Knowing the difference as you set bigger and bolder challenges for yourself is critical to your sanity, success, and satisfaction.” -Brendon Burchard

The final week of my internship experience included a lot of moments in which I said goodbye to the amazing individuals who made my internship experience remarkable and memorable and moments in which I self-reflected on the personal growth I have achieved while in D.C. One of my biggest accomplishments this summer was the meaningful friendships I created both at the Department of Education and outside of it. These relationships really made my time in D.C. feel a lot more like home and I am truly grateful to have met individuals who genuinely are rooting for my success. On Monday, I was treated to lunch by an amazing soul at OME, Carla. As we ate our pizza, we talked about one of our favorite subjects which was travel. Carla has visited so many different countries and states and always has the tips and tricks to all things about travel. She really has inspired me to enjoy my youth and always take advantage of every opportunity to go out and explore the world. On Tuesday, I was treated to lunch by Lisa and we talked about my internship experience and what my plans were when I went back to my home state. Talking to her about all of my plans made me really excited because I cannot wait to bring back everything I have learned here in D.C. back home to my family and community. On Wednesday, the OME staff made a sweet going away party for Ed, who is retiring from OME, and I. Wednesday was my last day in the office since Thursday and Friday was reserved for CHCI programming. I really appreciated the debriefing we had during programming since I got to hear more about the experiences of all the other interns on the hill and the Department of Ed. On Friday night the CAMP gang and Carlo, who is a CHCI intern, decided to go to visit some of the D.C. monuments and we spent the night laughing, talking about life and making more unforgettable memories.

As I self-reflect on my experience as an intern in Washington D.C., I feel like my political and social opinions have strengthened and radicalized intensely. I have become sure of where I stand on my opinions and I am more confident in expressing and defending what I personally believe in. D.C. really allowed me to achieve personal growth that I never thought I would have achieved. I am confident, unapologetic and determined to make my voice be heard in every space that I feel is necessary. The quote above reinforces the notion that finding the challenge that will push you and allow you to grow as an individual is imperative in order to really accomplish self-growth. Although this internship in D.C. pushed me in many ways unimaginable, it is also important to keep in mind that there are many other experiences and opportunities that can push one just as much if not more. Finding the challenge that will promote personal growth is the key to progression and personal development.

I would like to end my journal with a special thank you to the HEP CAMP association for providing me access to this internship opportunity in D.C. The work that the association does is unmatched, and it gives immense hope to disadvantaged individuals across the nation.

