

Daniela Hernández | HEPCAMP DC Intern

Program: *State University of New York - Oneonta*

Placement: *Poder Latinex*

Journal Entry – Week 1

For the first week of my training, I decided to stay home before getting my placement and going back to campus. This decision led to hearing my family scream in excitement because of the soccer game while I tried to learn about Capitol Hill, having to fill my door with sticky notes with the words *Do Not Enter* written in big red letters, and the constant knocking on my door as I took notes during networking meetings.

I have had challenging experiences when it comes to public speaking. At times I felt overwhelmed while attending meetings, sharing about myself, and providing feedback. It was almost like a test of what I had learned in the past and what I can still learn now. At times I felt overwhelmed with the challenges that working virtually generated. I worried about being unprepared for the current day while thinking about what faced me in the coming days. There is a voice in my head that tells me to always improve myself, driving me to succeed. There is nothing wrong with that until a sense of improvement becomes perfection and as the cliché goes, nothing is perfect. I reminded myself of my reasons to be there, maybe not in person in Washington DC, but in front of my computer ready to meet my fellow interns and many inspiring people. It is to share my voice and expand my knowledge, it is to go out of my comfort zone, and that for me meant stepping into the professional world even when English is my second language. All these complex thoughts were in my head as I prepared to click a zoom link and start my training.

The start of my training was nothing like I expected it to be. In our meetings, we could talk about everything from the inequalities in this country and some of the fields in which the lack of

Latinx representation is notable to the new albums of Bad Bunny. It took some time to memorize all the different faces. Nonetheless, I got to learn about many of them during our cohort activities—all with different backgrounds, goals, hobbies—but I shared similar experiences with many. It feels like a family in some way. That is how I knew CHCI provided a different experience during training than I had imagined. It gave me an idea of the demands of the professional world while creating strong connections with other members of the cohort.

I am grateful about having my family near me but the thought that this experience could have created beautiful memories in Washington, DC is always in my mind. Nevertheless, I am content with the new possibilities and experiences that I have now, and the idea of being back on campus and starting my internship is exciting. In a way, my college campus has become a new home. When I went home after school ended and before returning for my internship, I kept looking at pictures from campus and looking forward to my return. I am excited to start my internship, learn more from CHCI, and get to see that campus scenery again.

