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Program: *State University of New York (SUNY) - Oneonta*

Placement: *Poder Latinx*

Journal Entry – Week 10

On Monday, I got the opportunity to present to my fellow interns an op-ed I wrote and listen to their presentations, too. We all had many main objectives for our op-eds but with no hierarchy of importance because we all pointed out issues that affect our community and the changes we want to see happen. My op-ed was about the use of plastic and possible replacements to help create a more sustainable lifestyle on campus. On Friday, I met Congressman Darren Soto. He talked about his path, political challenges, and as many did, the importance of advocating for our community. This day was the final programming and we learned about the CHCI Alumni Association and reflected on our experiences. Needless to say, these last few days were full of emotions and reflection. I kept remembering the journey I embarked on when I was 12 years old, a journey I could only describe as challenging, full of fear of change, and yet transformative. If I knew back then that in the year 2021 I would be writing my last journal after completing an internship with Poder Latinx, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, and being part of the National HEP/CAMP Organization, I wouldn't have believed it.

I find truth in the cliché saying that there are things we remember like it was yesterday. After almost 8 years I still look back at that 12-year-old girl every time I walk on campus, after any small or major achievement, and I can still see her wondering what would wait for her after moving to a new country, what would be of her essence and future. Before my arrival to the United States, I visited my family's land, or as we call it El Rancho, a place I would not see again until 2 years later. I remember thinking of all that would be left behind, the work of my family, our roots, our memories, and some of our family. My mother decided to capture that moment with her phone. I smiled at the camera, one that cannot be described as a smile of happiness but one that tried to mask the sadness of leaving the land in which I grew up.



I stand here not only because of my effort but because of my father's work, my mother's care, and both of their sacrifices. Society has come to define farm working as an undesirable job. For us, farm working is the catalyst for change, it's what helped feed those in my community. I know that 12-year-old me wouldn't have imagined making it here and overcoming various barriers. But after all, resilience is what defines us as first-generation students, as children of those daring to dream beyond borders, beyond limits that were drawn to differentiate between the wealthy and the ones society calls unlucky, between those who receive representation and those still advocating for it. We disrupt those lines, change mentalities, and become the future of a nation. For many, going from working the land and living in a small house in a rural part of Mexico and then moving to a new country, a bigger city, and making dollars is an improvement, some might even say is "coming from nothing". But that is incorrect, we come from a rich place and a rich family not in money but values, dreams, and perseverance. We farm working families come from everything.

