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Program: State University of New York (SUNY) - Oneonta
Placement: Poder Latinex

Journal Entry – Week 9

Monday-----

I started this week by presenting to the cohort on Monday. My presentation was about South Park, a community in Seattle. I familiarized myself with the demographics, the issues the people in the community face, some organizations, and the history of the region. A fellow intern and I gave an overview of the community and we then got to hear a simulation. The simulation was regarding issues of violence, lack of representation, and the constituents feeling unseen and ignored by their representatives. This activity highlighted the importance of integrating the voices of the community and being an efficient advocate/leader.

Wednesday-----

On Wednesday, we had an Early Career Management session that offered experiences from professionals on how they've navigated their career trajectory. We heard from Brenda Calderon, a Senior Director for Policy; Eliamelisa Gonzalez, a Lead Human Resources Specialist; Pabel Martinez, a Global Account Director of Tik-Tok; and Christian Williams, a Program Officer of IREX. They all offered valuable information about their experiences and how their careers have transformed. The sessions only lasted an hour because we were offered some time to prepare for graduation. Even though the graduation was virtual, I was still excited and nervous at the same time. The cohort made some jokes about how we had to pose and wave in our videos. Recording my video was fun, to say the least. I kept laughing at what this virtual world has made us do and how many videos I had to record just to submit one. Nonetheless, I got my video, submitted it, and waited for the day of our graduation.

I was excited to see myself on the screen because I knew that back home both my parents and siblings were sitting in our living room watching me graduate. Representative Ayanna Pressley shared some words with the graduating cohort and our families, something that stood out for me was when she said that *the people closest to pain should be the ones closest to power*. This phrase was able to define and connect a lot of the reflections and conversations we had in our sessions about representation, intersectionality, and having a voice. CHCI provided us with many tools to become leaders, but it also emphasized the importance of recognizing how far our

community, and we as individuals have come. As both a CHCI and HEP/CAMP member I'll always remember this experience and proudly represent my community. This week I got to reflect on my story and how it has transformed, molded me into a new person, helped me dive into new experiences, and see the change as nothing more than part of life. Completing an internship—a major opportunity I received in the middle of a pandemic—is an experience that will be engraved in my memory. Even after saying it aloud it is weird to say that I completed this internship in the middle of a pandemic, with the constant knocking on my door when I was at home and the constantly occurring thoughts that at some point someone would believe I didn't belong. After discussing impostor syndrome with the cohort and hearing the stories from various guest speakers, I quickly realized that my identity had never been an obstacle, but rather something to embrace, to proudly and happily show the world. I know that 12-year-old me would be proud.

