2019INTERN PROGRAM WEEK 5

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Write-up for week 5

Today is the day before our final presentation, and let me just say, this experience has been more than full of multiple events and opportunities that inspire a bit of reflection. Today, I would like to spend this time discussing some of the interesting events and thoughts that I have had within the past two weeks of this program. Overall, throughout the first part of the program, I felt that I was often times faced with many challenges involving self-exploration and being in a new area. A lot of times, I wished that I had more things to do and honestly felt a bit like I was wasting my time and had a lot more to offer the community than I was able to do in such a short period of 6 weeks. I felt odd coming into these special and unique areas, then leaving and going back to my normal life of pleasure and seemingly miniscule problems compared to those others are facing here. I also felt like I would have enjoyed a structure that allowed me to explore a specific non-profit or issue directly and come into contact with a ‘narrowed down’ focus on border issues. I did feel like that was lacking for me the first month or few weeks of the program, and I worry that future interns may face that same feeling of wasted time and wanting to settle in with a specific organization.

However, after confronting that feeling of wasted time, I quickly took it upon myself to discontinue sitting around in our house on Crawford Street on free days and after group activities, and explore the area on my own. Not only did I explore in a geographical sense, I also took it upon myself to meet new people that live in the area. The past two weeks I was able to meet   
Christi, Yamin, and Hugo, three people that would prove to be integral to my experience here in   
Nogales for the rest of the time. Cristi, an employee with Alma through FESAC, was able to introduce me to local life in Nogales, Sonora, allowing me to meet her high school friends and enjoy the city from an entirely new perspective. I was so thankful for her and her friend’s willingness to answer questions that I had about border life, and their eagerness to learn about the differences in my background back in Tennessee. Through Cristi, I was able to meet a new friend named Yamin who lives here in Nogales. Yamin became a close friend of mine very quickly, inviting me to sleepovers and extra experiences at her house with her family. It was super nice to have a family here on the border that basically took me in as one of their own from the start. I really loved spending my free time with Yamin and her family and learning more about growing up in the borderlands. I was also able to meet Hugo, a person that Andrew introduced me to through their friendship at BYTE. Hugo is a monolingual Spanish speaker, which initially intimidated me, however, I was able to practice and grow in my skills of speaking Spanish to him, as well as learn about what it is like to grow up and live in Nogales, Sonora. Hugo invited us to go with him on a camping trip and we met so many people from the Nogales, Sonora area. Through this, I was able to grow so much in realizing that just because people are from different areas does not mean that we are necessarily different people. I really think that if more people had this perspective and just took the time to become friends with people who are different than them, the world would be much more open to diversity and new ideas.

Other than these experiences with my new friends, I spent most of the time enjoying some amazing BCA planned group activities and trips. The most memorable for the past two weeks for me was definitely the cross planting and trip to Agua Prieta/Douglas with Sister Judy and Peg. Quite honestly, this trip held some moments that I think I will remember for the rest of my life. We met migrants who were waiting for asylum alongside the border and played games with some of the kids. We played Simon says and sung head, shoulders, knees, and toes, all in Spanish. The kids loved it and were so happy, getting to be kids for a short amount of time, without worrying about the tribulations of immigration for once. The next day we did a cross planting in Douglas for a migrant who had passed in 2001. He was only 27 years old, however, now, he was finally able to find rest and hopefully we were able to send positive hope towards his family with our recognition and respect of his passing. The ceremony was super hot, however, it was really a once in a lifetime experience to be there and listen to the different ways in which we were honoring the life of Luis. We were all blessed with sage and a feather as part of the ceremony, and we all shared our ideas and thoughts on the experience in the circle. I really thought that this was an experience that I will never forget, and I really hope interns of the future get to be part of this.

After the trip to Douglas, I think a new perspective was instilled in many of us. I think the trip showed us a final example of how life is so fragile in the desert literally, however, figuratively in the immigration debate as a whole. This experience solidified my own personal feelings about how the debate of immigration and politics, for both sides, seems to forget the humans and life’s that are being taken at the border. Without coming here and truly seeing it, I feel like it probably could be easy to forget or choose not to think about the reality of the human beings going through the experiences we hear about. I really think that this program has taught me that this issue goes beyond politics, and by keeping it two-sided and debatable, we are harming these people whose lives are impacted directly. When our friends and neighbors are crossing the desert, dying, or fighting for their lives, they are not thinking of our meddled politics that we see on the internet or the news at night. They are thinking about families, god, hope, values, and a future.   
These are the things I think that we need to remember and I am very thankful for this internship for showing me that!

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