

Last Reflection of my Internship at AJC

Tue, 08/28/2018 - 00:00

|

newcomb@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



This summer, I had the opportunity to work for the American Jewish Committee's Latino and Latin American Institute in Washington DC. Through this opportunity, I was able to really look into the type of work I have been interested in my entire life. The results were both incredibly encouraging and terrifying. While I completely believe in the mission of my organization and consider its work important and

relevant to my personal life and values, I am unsure that this is what I'd like to do. While I have achieved many of my learning goals by learning more about the history and current events of various Latin American countries, meeting with politicians and ambassadors, and engaging in Spanish in the work place, I wonder, is this what I want out of my work environment? Right now, I do not have the answers. However, I do feel that I have made the best of this experience. I worked on a Populism in Latin America project throughout my time here, have attended meetings and events alongside world leaders, and even had the chance to spend two weeks in Berlin. I could not be more thankful for this opportunity and feel that I will take its homey environment and values wherever I go next. Now that the summer is coming to an end, I look forward to beginning my thesis and starting to figure out what it is that I want to do with my life. As a senior, I feel that it is time to delve into some tough decisions I have been putting off for a while. I hope that in the future, I will have the opportunity to live in a Spanish speaking country once more and become more fluent in Spanish. While I feel comfortable speaking, this experience also proved that I have much more to learn.

What most surprised me about my time here, working as a part of a team made of three women, was how intimidated and uncomfortable I felt during my first weeks at AJC. Having always had male role models, given that my professors and greatest mentors have always been men, I felt strange working under women, something I had never considered prior to beginning this internship. Being a leader in this environment and taking charge felt uncomfortable to me and for some reason, I often felt cautious about approaching my supervisors and asking questions. I don't really know why being a part of a women's team felt so odd to me for so long. This really forced me to think about the reasons behind this discomfort and analyze my own insecurities as a woman. I believe that this feeling had to do with being so used to interacting with women that are equal to me in status; having women in charge of me, all of a sudden, felt odd and uncomfortable. Looking back, I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity to learn how to work under women. It is so essential to my development as a woman and I cannot imagine continuing my life without working under politicians and diplomats that share this crucial identity with me. This experience forced me to deal with some of my own feelings about being a woman in the workforce and showed me how successful women can be in this field, even though we are not a majority. To an incoming intern, I would advise to come in as confident in your abilities as possible. At the end of the day you are here to learn and it is okay to not know everything. This doesn't mean you are not good enough or able to do the work in front of you—you were selected for a reason and its just

about feeling comfortable enough in your environment to achieve what you've set out to achieve. I would also say that its important to be ambitious, but also patient. During the first weeks I felt that I was not doing enough work. It took me a while to realize that a job is something you have to create and that if you feel bored, it is on you to create tasks and activities. Lastly, I would advise all to make connections at your work place and outside of it. Go to happy hours. Get coffee with co-workers that look interesting to you. Meet with NCI alums that live in your city. Hearing people's stories and paths has helped me feel less overwhelmed as I approach my senior year and made me instantly more comfortable in my work place.