

The French Quarter tour

The month of September started with a tour of the French Quarter and its history. I knew a little bit of New Orleans history, but was not well versed in the topic. Our tour only gave us a glimpse into the history of the area. I was fascinated to learn about the different groups who emigrated to the area and how the cultures came together to form a city with a rich history. Shortly after the tour, we visited The Presbytère. The Presbytère, a museum, was currently showcasing an exhibition on Hurricane Katrina. I was excited to leave the heat and enter into the air conditioned museum. Katrina happened about 14 years from the date we visited the museum. As such, I was curious to learn about Katrina from a historic and scientific perspective. During the days of and following Katrina misinformation was rampant, so I was glad to uncover the facts of events. I was never quite sure what to believe about the storm when I was young. The personal stories from survivors, via videos or speakers, were raw and challenging to hear. The Katrina exhibit taxed what little energy I had left from the long walk we had through the French Quarter. Going through the exhibit made me realize the sheer impact it had and still has on the city. People are still affected by the storm. Sure the material damage might be fixed, but the emotional damage still lingers. I see and get the feeling just being in the city. By the end of the Katrina exhibit, I did not feel like exploring the rest of the museum. What I did see of their permanent exhibit on Mardi Gras seemed fascinating. If given the chance I would likely go back. Our day ended with lunch at Dat Dog.

Site Placements

My days alternate between First Grace and JOB 1. At First Grace, I am a part of the legal program, Project Ishmael. It is an pro-bono immigration legal service for migrant children. Hearing the stories about the treatment of people at the border has sickened me. I wanted to do something, but living in Iowa and speaking very little Spanish I didn't know how I could be useful. When I learned I would be working in an administrative capacity, I was hesitant. I wanted to work with immigrants, but I knew my Spanish was not up to par. After talking things through, with my site coordinator, I started to see the importance of the work. As such, I happily agreed to work at Project Ishmael. As I have been working at Project Ishmael, my duties have started to expand. At the recent legal clinic we hosted, I was tasked with making sure the visitors had access to refreshments or knowledge about the bathroom locations. I tried to communicate in Spanish when I could, but I sometimes didn't have the words to say something. If one of the visitors asked a question, I didn't always know how to respond because I couldn't always make out what was being asked. I wanted to be a good host to the visitors. In order to be a good host, I need to be more fluent in Spanish, for that will enable me to build trust and friendliness towards the visitors. Job 1 is an organization that matches youth and adults with employers. On the youth side, Youth Works, they give 16-24 year olds internships that prepare them for future career opportunities. I enjoy working with young adults and children, and enjoy having one on one experiences. I was attracted to this position because I thought I would have the opportunity to work individually with the youth. Its not entirely inaccurate. Treme hosted a job fair for youth a few weeks back, and I was able to work in a small capacity with youth. I believe I will slowly be finding myself more involved with the youth, but I am anxious because I have not gotten an idea of when that might start. I am however excited to see where this position will take me.

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