

## Rhiannon Jones – Boston, Summer 2016

This summer, I spent 2 months interning in the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren in Boston, Massachusetts. Having a personal insight into the workings of American politics during possibly the weirdest election year on record and getting to work for Elizabeth Warren, one of the feistiest and most determined women in politics, was a fascinating and highly rewarding experience.

Interning in Senator Warren's Boston Office, the bulk of the work I did focused on how the legislation and policies crafted and enacted in Washington impacted on the lives of constituents at the local level. The work in the office was varied and ranged from listening to constituents concerns about government legislation, to researching income distribution across different regions within the Massachusetts state to be used by the Senator at her upcoming talks. After the Brexit vote, I was invited, as a member of Senator Warren's team, to attend a discussion at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on the Impact of Brexit on the US/UK trade relationship and its broader global consequences. It was an incredible opportunity to discuss an important current issue with leading academics and policy experts from a completely different US perspective.

The most interesting work I did was as part of the Immigration Team led by a fascinating woman, Emily Winterson, who had been running the team for over 30 years, under 3 different Massachusetts Senators and had a great reputation for assisting people with their immigration concerns, many of whom had turned to the Senator's office as a last resort. On her team I interviewed constituents who faced numerous problems; from those whose family were facing the threat of deportation, to those who were desperate for a visa to allow them to work in the United States. I then worked with the team to investigate their casework and find out why these people had been denied visas or been stuck in the bureaucracy and administration for so long. The investigations required corresponding with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service and various US Embassies across the world, from Nepal to Haiti.

Immigration has been a very topical subject in American politics recently, with sixty percent of registered voters reporting that immigration is an important factor in how they will vote in the 2016 election. In the past year, there has been increasing pressure from the right-wing republicans to increase immigration regulations and the DACA reform was blocked by the Supreme Court thus stopping the legal recognition of over 4 million long-stay immigrants. It is interesting to witness first-hand how some of these broader political trends have been translated down to the local levels and how these pressures have directly affected citizens on the ground. Attaining citizenship is a long and rigorous process for many who are not wealthy enough to gain sufficient legal advice and support, and can take years as the different applications and waivers spend time pending with the National security services.

It was particularly rewarding when a case I had personally been working on was resolved and an individual had been granted the legal right to become a US citizen or had be granted a necessary visa. I got the chance to attend a Ceremony of Actualization in Faneuil Hall where people from countries all across the world are officially granted their citizenship. As this group of people stood in unity, proudly reciting their oath of allegiance to the United States and smiling as their family members and friends took photos of them, it was clear to me that being granted citizenship represented the end of a long, hard struggle and therefore meant so much to them.

Aside from my internship, I took time off on the weekends to explore Boston, New York and Washington D.C. In Boston, I ventured to Cambridge to see Harvard and MIT and also travelled to the beautiful east-coast beaches and tried the delicious seafood. I took the 5-hour coach journey to New York one weekend and explored Manhattan by trying to navigate the complex subway system and getting very lost, visiting the Met Museum of Art and eating bagels in Central Park.

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The long weekend I spent in Washington D.C. was also one highlight of my trip to the United States. I met up with an old school friend in the city and we tried to fit in as many touristy things as possible. One day we took a bike tour around the city and visited the Jefferson, Vietnam, Martin Luther King and Lincoln Memorials, the White House and the Washington Monument to name but a few sites! Elizabeth Warren's office were able to provide us with passes to sit in the House of Representatives and the Senate galleries and watch Congress in session in Capitol Hill.

For anyone interested in US politics and who wants to find out more about the intricacies of how their system works and fails to work on the ground, I would thoroughly recommend applying to work for a Senator or Representative in Boston, Washington or any state! I would like to thank the college and the B M Rowe trust fund for providing me with a contribution towards the 2 months I spent in the United States.