

OUR JOURNAL (Gillian Mbugua & Rosebell Wachaga).



Rosebell (left) and Gillian (right) during their visit to COSI.

MY THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES IN REGARDS TO THE CIP PROGRAM.

My name is Gillian Wangui Mbugua, I am a 4th year student at Daystar University, from Kenya. First and foremost, I count myself very lucky to have been able to be part of this program in the US. I attended it with my cousin, Rosebell, and had a very good 2 weeks in December, 2016. My host family doubled up as my real family (my uncle and aunt). This arrangement was very comfortable for me. I got my intercultural exchange experience, as I was able to learn a lot

about the business setting in the US and particularly Ohio. I also learned some things from two other friends in our group, Joshi and Nancy, who were from Nepal and Mongolia, respectively. The program was well concentrated on the business perspective, which was very helpful to me as I am pursuing my undergraduate studies in Business Administration and Management. The daily activities were well tailored to meet my needs. I can now say that I know the basics of what is needed when starting a business and some common mistakes that I must avoid. I will definitely apply the knowledge I gained when I get to the real business environment. My goal is to make a remarkable difference with how I will carry out my work in order to help those around me.

We learned about the CIP program through our uncle, who lives and works in Ohio. We did our research and learned that it was exactly what we needed in order to learn about the business

culture in America generally. Upon arriving in the US, we were to begin our first day with CIP the day after. Though jetlagged and all, CIP gave us a very warm welcome and light activities for the day. We went to the City of Dublin and met three economic developers who help entrepreneurs start up their small businesses, and also make sure to provide the most suitable conditions for them so that their businesses can be sustained. After that, we visited the SBDC (Small Business Development Center) offices, who do pretty much the same work; encouraging business startup. We learned about the documentation needed, such as licenses, financing and what the State Government of Ohio required from the entrepreneur.

The next day, the 21st of December, was the most exciting day for me (Gillian). We went to the Life Care Alliance, which is an NGO that runs a project called 'Meals on Wheels'. They deliver food to the sick and less fortunate senior citizens of Ohio. Not forgetting pet food for those who need it. How cool? They do their deliveries 365 days a year. They are very dedicated and very organized people. We were able to note this because we were taken around to almost every room and shown the stages from how the meals are prepared, to when they are loaded to the respective cars. We got the privilege of accompanying Don (a very nice guy from Life Care Alliance) on one of his deliveries, which included 20 homes. I must say that seeing the struggle of some people first hand changed my perspective of the 'glamorous American dream' and taught me that everywhere in this world, there are people who need a little bit of extra care. The experience really humbled us. On the same day, Kathy took us to the State Capitol, where we learnt about the history of the State of Ohio and its founders. We also got the chance to see the memorable paintings which were done long time ago. In the evening, it was time for some outdoor activities again! We attended the Chinese Lantern Festival at the Expo Park. It was such a chilly evening, I must say, and colorful too.

The 22nd of December. Most of the morning hours were spent at the Columbus Food Hub, which is a social enterprise that helps young restaurateurs. They incubate them by providing facilities that they need, for example renting out kitchen space, refrigerators and cooking material. Then, once they stabilize, they are able to go out and begin operating their businesses independently. We were told that Ohio is the state that is most used for testing out the restaurant business. That is, if your restaurant makes it in Ohio, it is most likely to thrive anywhere in the US. Later on in the afternoon we met the project leaders of Pack H20, who are working in conjunction with the Roosevelt Coffee House owner to raise funds to help the disadvantaged communities in Africa that do not have access to clean water or equipment to store their water.

We took a break to spend time with our family over Christmas and Boxing day. On the 27th, we visited COSI (Center of Science and Industry), which is a science museum and research center. We got to see a lot of science magic and we had a good time. Later in the afternoon, we met a representative from Columbus 2020. It serves as the economic development organization for the Columbus region, which works in partnership with the state and local partners to build capacity for economic growth.

On the 28th, we spent the better part of the day with Kim Knight, a representative of COMBA (Central Ohio Minority Business Association), which is an organization that supports the growth and sustainability of small minority-owned businesses in Ohio. She took us to several establishments that their organization has helped, and the owners got to share their success stories and some business tricks with us.

The 29th was our final day and graduation, too! We had dinner at Wycliff's Restaurant, which is a Kenyan restaurant in Ohio serving Kenyan food. It felt nice having Kenyan food in a

white man's land. We were presented with our certificates by CIP for completing the course. It was all in the midst of our family and we thank God for His goodness.

I deeply appreciate the CIP staff, who were very friendly and warm to me. Their commitment and their openness with information really amazed me. I sincerely appreciate the efforts of my family who really supported me and provided for me unendingly. I can now stand up to be counted as a CIP graduate. Thank you very much!



Rosebell (left) and Gillian (right) receiving their certificates from CIP.