Julia Lemus

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JOB SHADOW REFLECTION

On August 12th, 2016, I set out to job shadow family friend, Alma Lemus. She is a social worker at Ola Raza Inc., which was some offices in Porterville, CA. Most of her work is in an office, as it involves a lot of paper work. However, she has been a social worker for almost 13 years, so paperwork is no obstacle for her anymore. For the few hours that I was able to speak with her, I was able to look into her work life, and how she got inspired to work for her community.

The day I spent with Mrs. Lemus was pretty normal. After all, nothing much happens in an office. She had just gotten back from a vacation, which she tells me are pretty flexible, as long as she gives a notice ahead of time. Like most office jobs, the workers there were all dressed formally, as they each met with clients throughout the day. Every client of hers was Hispanic, and they all shared one common goal; to bring their family to the US. This was the part that intrigued me, as I grew up hearing my parents tell their immigration story to the US and how the trouble that their families went through to get here as well. Mrs. Lemus is no stranger to that either, so we bonded over speaking of the challenges that our families have had to face.

At lunchtime, we sat down to discuss some of the questions I had prepared for her. During this time, I learned that she started her job at Ola Raza Inc. as a secretary. This came as a surprise to me, as she had mentioned before that she had not gone to college, and had no credentials. Through her hard work and dedication, she moved up to become one of the office’s best social workers. Although she was not at liberty to discuss her cases, she explained to me that many of her clients were often unaware of the paperwork involved to get family here, so she is very familiar with the documents needed and can recite them by memory. After lunchtime, it was time for me to go home, so I wished her a good day and left feeling enlightened of one of the many ways we can give back to our community.

Being a social worker is definitely something that I would like to fall back on if I don’t find work in the psychology field. I learned that I can stay in touch with my roots by helping with Hispanic migrant cases and reuniting families. The day I spent with Mrs. Lemus became a learning opportunity into a world I didn’t know could connect me to my heritage.