

## ADL National Leadership Summit Reflections by Julia Jinishian



As I reflect on the past few days in Washington DC, I feel incredibly empowered and I feel extremely privileged to have been part of this wonderful experience. As a young leader starting out in my career sometimes it is hard to feel you have a place in the world. I feel that I have a place in my Sturm fellow class as well as in the organization of ADL as a whole and I feel blessed. The people I met this long weekend and the speeches I heard were incredible and empowering. But now I understand it is my job to be a leader and to find my voice.

Walking into the US Holocaust Museum this past weekend was a very emotional experience for me. I thought about my own Jewish and Armenian family history. The fact that the Holocaust occurred is hard to even imagine. It just starts with people judging others and others not standing up for what they know is wrong. We need to treat others with kindness and compassion. I feel blessed to surround myself with incredibly caring people but not everyone gets to experience that in their lives. I want to be that advocate for those who don't feel they have a voice. If I see or hear something that isn't right I vow to confront the situation where it starts. You have to stand up and voice what you believe. You must be your own person. When you need something you must advocate for yourself and let people in your life know what you need.

In my own life, I have experienced unfair treatment due to the fact that I have a learning disability. I had teachers and psychologists tell me I should go to a two year university because a four year university would be too challenging for me since I struggle academically. With the support of my parents, tutors and through finding my voice I got into to a great 4 year university that supported me and I thrived. My classes were small and even when I struggled there were people sitting next to me that were experiencing challenges as well. I had wonderful professors who were social workers and they motivated me to apply to grad school. I did and got in. This is how I ended up in Denver.

When I started graduate school I met wonderful people but also a professor who told me during my first quarter when I was struggling that maybe this wasn't the right path for me. I knew it was. I also wanted to help people and I knew I was not going to give up. I earned a Masters in Social Work.

I have always been interested in issues especially in the world of education and law enforcement. I am currently teaching pre-school at the JCC and I have been struggling with the tragedies that took place in Kansas City. I have been thinking and trying to process how people get through these horrific situations when there is no rationale behind what happened. This weekend taught me that this is why the ADL is around, because there are so many unanswered questions and so much everyone can learn from each other. The ADL has many leaders among its own organization as well as the connections they build with outside organizations in communities all around the world. I feel I have so much more I want to learn and the way to start is to focus on the issues that I deal with on an everyday basis and go from there.