

O.A.K. Week 2023, May 8-12
Hamtramck High School Outdoor Adventure Club



Representatives of the HHS Outdoor Adventure Club were invited by Garrett Dempsey of Detroit Outdoors, Sierra Club, to participate in a week of advocacy in Washington D.C. known as O.A.K. Week put on by the Outdoors Alliance for Kids. Teacher and head coach of the Outdoor Adventure Team, Jessica Madden, traveled with five HHS students: Kelisa, Nazma, Nora, Firas and Uday. The students rode on the B.O.A.T. (Bus for Outdoor Access and Teaching) along with Detroit Outdoors, YMCA, SOS Detroit, and Black to the Land members. The Sierra Club sponsored the cost of the trip. The group camped four nights at the Marsden Tract Campground on the Potomac River about 45 minutes from Washington D.C.



On the first day of the conference, OAK members gathered at Rock Creek Park where the group participated in ice breaking activities, listened to OAK speakers, and hiked the trails at the Park. Uday was a speaker on a Youth Panel dedicated to discussing the barriers that need to be overcome to address the

nature gap among America's underserved youth. He described some of the HHS Outdoor Adventure Club activities and the impact that being in nature has had on him. He also advocated for the need for safe green spaces, air quality, urban heat islands, and accessible transit to visit our Natural Parks and spaces. We are very proud of Uday! Afterwards we hiked through the greenery of Rock Creek Park. At the end of a fulfilling day, we were fortunate to hear a talk and take a picture with the Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland. We were so inspired by her presence and her advocacy efforts for protecting our precious environment.





Later in the evening we attended a reception on the Wilderness Society Rooftop, where Nazma was awarded the OAK Award for her work in helping establish our Outdoor Adventure Club, inviting students along on our trips, and working in Hamtramck Parks and Recreation summer programming.



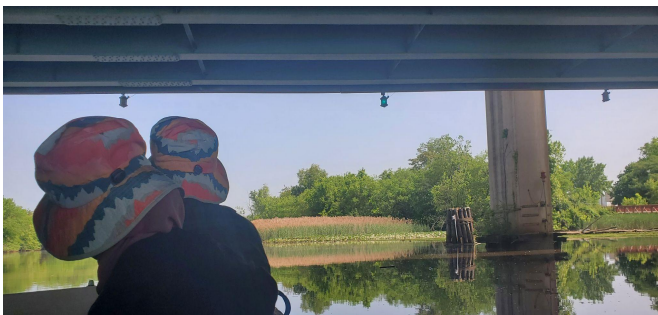
The following day, we began our morning in the Sierra Club Headquarters preparing for our advocacy day on Capitol Hill. We learned about legislation that targets the nature equity gap, mainly the Every Kid Outdoors Act and the Transit to Trails Initiative. We practiced telling our own stories that we would later share in Congressional offices. By the afternoon, we walked to the Capitol Building and met with Representative Jimmy Gomez, Representative Shri Thanedar, and a staff member of Senator Debbie Stabenow's. Our students were impressive, as they initiated conversations about how their experiences in nature that they've been able to have with our Outdoor Adventure Club have impacted them. These congressional delegates assured them that they would support legislation to ensure access to nature for America's youth.



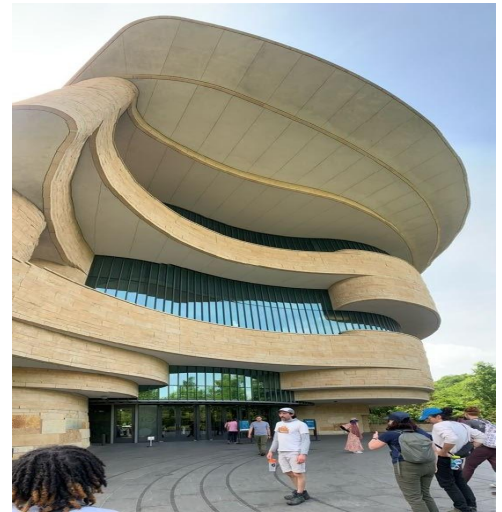
Later, we were able to do some sightseeing in Washington including sitting in on a Congressional voting session, taking a photo opportunity in front of the White House, and kicking around a hacky sack at the base of the Washington Monument.



The following morning, we were invited to a gathering hosted by the Friends of the Anacostia River at Anacostia National Park. We were able to take a boat ride on the Anacostia, where we spied river otter, heron, and several bald eagles. We were able to partake in some sport sampling of roller skating, double-dutch, and a lunch of barbecue.



We ended our afternoon in Washington D.C. with a tour at the Smithsonian National Museum of the Native American. We learned about the histories and cultures of indigenous peoples of the Americas, the impact of colonization, and the contributions of Native peoples today. We had lunch in the museum cafe of buffalo burgers and manoomin (wild rice). Students were able to pick out souvenirs in the gift shop to bring back to friends and remember their experiences.



We left D.C. inspired and exhausted. On our last night we drove through the Allegheny tunnel into Pennsylvania and camped at a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp. Most of us were too tired to even pitch tents, so we slept out under the stars. It was a beautiful view of the night sky that perfectly portrayed the Hamtramck High School Outdoor Adventure Club motto:

Explore the Cosmos!!

