

## **Michelle Manuel was placed with Senator Marie Moloney TD from February to July 2015**

A Filipino national, Michelle is a recent graduate of the BA in Journalism and Visual Media in Griffith College Dublin. Michelle has extensive experience in service industries and she has excellent people skills. She has worked for a real estate agency in the Philippines and is an experienced professional musician and singer. Michelle presented a radio show on the campus radio station at Griffith College and was a sub-editor for the student magazine. Michelle lives in Malahide, Co. Dublin.

### **Diary**

I started my internship in Leinster House in January 2015, under the wing of Senator Marie Moloney of the Labour Party. I had an awesome first day! I went to my first Seanad debate. That afternoon I sat in the gallery with Transgender Equality Network Ireland's (TENI) advocacy group and Dr. Lydia Foy. I felt like a pro, fighting for people's rights, listening to what they have to say about the Bill that's being debated on.

After the debate, Sen. Moloney took me with her to a Joint Committee meeting. As I am writing this now, I am amazed at how I can remember on which joint committee she belongs to. **First lesson: pay attention to what your politician does and where she belongs.** The day ended with a smile and with an assignment to work on. The Senator requested me to put something together that she can use for the continuation of the Gender Recognition Bill debate. I quickly researched and wrote a speech. I am proud to say that she used the first half of it in the Seanad debate.

A few weeks in, the Senator asked me to quickly research about the Mediation Bill and write down some notes on Family mediation. However, thirty minutes before her meeting the topic changed. I had to quickly research again and write a little about mediation in trade unions. I think I wasn't able to write much about it. **Lesson number 3: I should be mentally prepared for this, if not always, then when I am on duty.**

On my two first bill briefings it felt good to be asked to represent your Deputy's office. The first meeting turned out interesting, as I was able to get a grasp on what they were talking about. The second meeting, in all honesty, I didn't get it at all, but, I have the handouts and my notes to go over.

At another briefing, the day ended with an urgent statement to be written by the Senator to a foundation. She did not have time to write it, as she had to be at the chamber for the Adoption Bill, so she asked me to write a draft.

I am enjoying every moment of this internship. With some work being ad hoc, I am seeing myself more of a political analyst and aide.

## **Reflection**

One expectation I had was that of the internship was that I'd be running to and from the canteen getting a cup of coffee or tea for the politician I worked for. And another expectation was to be filing, organising the Senator's desk and all the other menial things.

At the start of the placement, I felt like I was in a familiar place where I'd be immersed right away in a job which I would be able to handle gracefully. I didn't expect that I'd be doing more than the little things. I had performed significant tasks for Ms Moloney. I did tons of research work, wrote reports, helped her with her speeches, took phone calls, attended briefings with and without her, created a booklet using my computer graphic design skills. It was overall a very good learning experience for me.

I am very proud to say that Sen. Moloney gives me very good feedback for every written report I submit. **Parts of my input were used by her for her Seanad speech, which makes me feel highly appreciated.** The fact that she trusts me with confidential information and has assigned me to work on some very important matters is very rewarding.

I am totally grateful to the OPD coordinator for being with the interns all the way until the end. It is an excellent programme for migrants interested in Irish politics to participate in. I thought that being a politician who belongs to one political party would mean having to agree all the time with what your colleagues have to say. But I was wrong. There are also proposed legislations or passed legislation by the same party where a legislator would be discreet about his/her opinions. To other prospective migrants/new Irish thinking about applying for the scheme I would say even if it is unpaid, nothing could substitute the experience. I am one happy person to have achieved this!