

April 19, 2020

Dear Chinatown-International District,

I first visited the Wing Luke Museum in 2015. I was immediately impressed by its commitment to the community, and its devotion to telling the stories of marginalized people. I immediately liked the neighborhood as well, and enjoyed a delicious lunch at Harbor City Restaurant. At the time I was a student in a museum studies program, and I applied to work as an intern in Wing Luke Museum that summer. I was ecstatic when my application was accepted, and eagerly looked forward to my summer in Seattle.

When I arrived in June, I immediately fell in love with the Chinatown-International District. Its brick buildings, small but beautiful parks and gardens, and its historical atmosphere drew me in, and I spent many hours walking around the neighborhood. As I learned more about the history of the area, I became fascinated by the stories of community building, friendship, family, tragedy, and resilience in every building, sign, and street corner.

I read the wonderful novel *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, and visited the locations of many important scenes in the book. I tagged along on neighborhood tours conducted by the amazing guides at the museum, and learned even more about the character of the people who call this neighborhood home. I spent my lunch hour checking out every restaurant within walking distance, and when my wallet was empty, I packed a lunch and ate it while sitting in Hing Hay Park. I brought my mom, sister, and nephews to the area and insisted they go on a neighborhood tour, eat at Harbor City, and look at every exhibit in the museum.

My work at the museum involved revising a school curriculum about Japanese-Americans in Seattle, and I was lucky enough to work with the diaries of Chiyo Murakami, reading about the details of her daily life. It was amazing to get a glimpse of her life, then to walk down to the location of the Higo Ten Cent Store and see the place where the events in her diary took place.

Another part of my job was to help with the museum's summer camps, and it was so much fun to meet, hang out with, and to work with the young people of the community. One girl in

particular sticks in my mind; she designed a superhero costume and proclaimed herself “Asian Activist Girl.” I asked her what villain she was fighting against, and she promptly answered “Gentrification!”

When I left Seattle at the end of the summer, I brought back part of the Chinatown-International District with me, in the form of cherished memories and photographs, and also in the many bags of fortune cookies from the Tsue Chong factory.

I will never forget the few months I was able to spend in the Chinatown-International District. Whenever someone asks me for advice about where to go and what to do in Seattle, the C-ID is my first recommendation. This amazing neighborhood will always be in my heart, and I hope to return soon. When I do, my first stop will be to get a bubble tea at Young Tea.

Stay strong, Chinatown-International District. I love you, and I know you can make it through this.

-Emily Koehler-Platten