Observation 1 Essay- Katherine Buchholz

Today, I went to the Strip District and North Shore with a little bit of Downtown. Everything was pretty cool, peaceful, and interesting. The Strip District was a very interesting and diverse place. It reminded me of Hells’ Kitchen in New York City with the stores having all these hand-made trinkets. The only difference was all the Pittsburgh sports merchandise that was in all these shops. They don’t have that sort of thing in Hells’ Kitchen, at least that I know of. Many of the people shopping appeared to be tourists. I think that is because of how there are so many places for them to go and get Pittsburgh sports merchandise and Pittsburgh merchandise in general. If they were not tourists, they were locals who were either showing friends around who were not from the area or just there because they wanted to be. I think that many of the people selling these things have been around for some time or were local. My group did not figure this out by talking to someone though. One of the stores we did go into was a Mexican grocery store called Reyna’s Store. We talked to the lady at the register and she told us that she is from California and has been in Pittsburgh for two years. We asked her about what the big deal with pickles is here. She didn’t know, but she did tell us that she thinks that it might have something to do with Italian culture and that we should ask a native. She also mentioned a pickle festival that happened a few months ago. The price range of the items in the Strip District was not bad. It was anywhere between $5 to about $35. We also encountered a nice lady who let us pet her dog. Then, we talked to the wood phone case guy and he told us that the cases can wirelessly charge and the designs were laser-printed on to the wood. I noticed that some of the people appeared to be regulars in some of the stores. They interacted pretty nicely with the vendors.

Then, my group moved on to our exploration of North Shore. North Shore is a very different place than the Strip District. When we were walking across the bridge, we couldn’t help but wonder if the steel the bridges were made out of was made in Pittsburgh. On the bridge, we talked to a nice older lady and asked her the best way to get to PNC Park. She told us to go down to the right and on to the trail down there. We did this and we went right on the trail. It was nice and peaceful being on a trail by one of the rivers. The trail was the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. There were a few people walking on it and a few bikers, but it was pretty quiet otherwise. We noticed some efforts to revitalize the green space of the area because there were newly planted trees. I thought that was pretty cool. There were also things like boat tours and some nice apartments in the area. I felt that most of the stores in North Shore cater to PNC Park and Heinz Field because there was quite a bit of food wherever we went that was not near these sports complexes. The architecture was pretty modern too and I think the purpose of that is to make people coming to the games feel more welcome when the games are in Pittsburgh. It just reminds everyone of the city because that is how I feel many people picture any city. I did not talk to anyone about this, but I am still curious about why the architecture is the way it is. Something my group noticed from our exploration was how there was music everywhere we went. It was never the same music too. I feel like this showed me how diverse in music taste the people of Pittsburgh and are, which shows me how diverse the people of Pittsburgh are themselves.

We did not really see much litter either. I think this is because they try to keep the area clean because it is the where both sports complexes are and it gets crazy on game day. I do wish that we could have seen what it was like if one of the teams had a home game, but we couldn’t do that. We talked to a lady directing tours into the field about the game and where she thought the best place to eat for lunch was. She told us that it was an away game. Then, she told us that there were a few good restaurants that were relatively cheap for college students to eat. She also recommended that we go to the Andy Warhol Museum and the Carnegie Science Center. It was also pretty cool because she was from Fredericksburg and recognized Longwood because it is where Kappa Delta was founded and she rushed Kappa Delta. She was a fun lady to talk to. Before we talked to her, we actually went into the science center gift shop and asked the guy at the checkout if the game was here or not. He told us that it was not in Pittsburgh too. We didn’t bother him more than that because he needed to check out more people. There were quite a few people just around the trails and the water just taking everything in. It was a very nice area to be in and I can imagine how busy it gets when baseball or football games are actually at the park and stadium.

When my group was done in North Shore, we went downtown a little bit and we saw the theatre district. We didn’t go into any of the theaters, but there were quite a few. It would be cool to know a little more about the history of the theaters and what they put on there. We did find a cool art playground that was called Los Trompos. It was a fun little pit stop where others were having fun spinning around in the creations too. Something general I noticed was that there are some double decker bus tours for these areas. I wonder where you start and how you find out about them. When we went were going back to the hotel, we walked through the Strip District a little more before catching the bus back. We went into one Pittsburgh only store called Pittsburgh popcorn. There were many people there and it seemed like it got a lot of business. The last person we talked to was the guy who was working at Sam’s Ice Cream in the Strip. We asked him how well he does and he told us that he thinks that he does pretty well, especially with all the foot traffic that comes through when he is open. He did say he would be closing shop for a little bit though because the Pittsburgh winter gets too cold for ice cream. I was glad we managed to talk to as many people as we did. I like to know about these places from the people who are there and not just completely wander around. There were so many different generations in these areas that were all doing different things. The younger generations were the ones walking around a lot with parents or even friends, and the older generations were the ones in the stores or just around somewhere. These were three completely different places my group I explored and I loved the feel of all these places.

Something else I noticed is how crucial the buses are for many natives and even the university students to get places. It is pretty busy most of the time and I don’t consider it to be too hard to figure out. You just have to find the right bus stop by looking online or asking the bus driver. They will help you out. When we went back to the hotel, the first bus driver we had took us to the best place to go for us to get back to Oakton and that was downtown. It really isn’t that bad. Also, there is so much diversity and culture everywhere you go in Pittsburgh. I didn’t just notice that today, though it was more prominent today. Some of the area I explored yesterday was pretty diverse with a lot of different food options too from pizza to Japanese. That was definitely also present in the Strip with the Mexican grocery, Polish places, Italian places, and so many more cultures. It was not really too present in North Shore that I noticed. I think it is because they are catering more towards the sports fans who like things like burgers or going to bars. There were even a few restaurants I knew like Bar Louie in the area. Basically, it was more American themed food than anything else. Overall, the day was very fun and I definitely have a better sense of what Pittsburgh is all about as compared to yesterday.