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Reflection Essay

On Saturday, March 6 I got on a plane. A week later on Saturday, March 13 I was on a return flight. On the return flight I was far more tired and the people around me were subjugated to the sight of me asleep on a plane, mouth ajar and everything. The biggest difference, however, was not in the flight itself, but in the young man who got back on the plane. I left Grand Junction with the unfounded paradigms presented on my nightly news stations: that there was no hope in American politics and that the endless bickering between each party would tear our nation apart. I left Washington D.C. with a renewed optimism characterized by my faith in America's leaders and a trust in the future leaders of this country.

Looking back on Washington Week, I have to say that the one thing I will remember is that my senators were not present at the Senate Reception. I will remember it not because I was disappointed but because the rest of the week more than made up for it. Specifically, being able to experience Washington in an almost indescribable way, spending a week with 103 of the most amazing youth in the nation, eating some of the best food I have ever had, and opening my mind to new ideas and new places.

I still have a profound reference for the Jefferson memorial and for the hallowed grounds of Arlington. Every time that I see the President I cannot help but think, "He's *the* man!" I believe there is more to be learned from the leaders of our past than many people acknowledge. But what astounds me is how often I am left wordless in describing my experience in Washington. How existential I feel when I explain what I did in Washington without transferring what I felt, what I thought, and how big of an impact it has had on me.

Now I am getting ready for college and "the real world". If anything Washington has confirmed in me that I will make a difference some day: watching normal people that make world changing decisions every day has inspired me. I will be the change that I want to see in the world.