

## Michael Zachau Walker – USSYP 2010 (MD – DoDEA)

When thinking about what to write for this delegate essay, my mind overloaded and pretty much crashed. So now, 2 weeks later, I'm revisiting it. USSYP 2010 was filled with speakers, sights, mentors, food, friends, and memories that will last a lifetime.

Washington Week 2010 was packed with speakers who are some of the most impressive people that I have ever met and probably will ever meet. Meeting the President of the United States, regardless of who he (or someday, she) may be is an experience of lifetime that is not often repeated. Not only did we get to meet the President, but we got to meet President Obama. To many people, me included, he is not only the President but the embodiment of hope and the future. When he walked into the room, there was a presence about him that I, and other delegates, could feel from the moment we saw him. Regardless of whatever President Obama is doing, I think that he should speak to USSYP delegates after he leaves the Oval Office; that aura about him is something that cannot be replaced.

Justice Sotomayor, too, has a presence that, to me, is indescribable. Her ability to relate to her audience and her down-to-earth responses to our questions made me feel that she truly is what is meant by the term, "government for the people, by the people." She is not a politician; she even said herself, "I am Sonia" and tries to stay that way. Having mentioned those two outstanding and charismatic speakers, I also enjoyed a few others in particular. The Ambassador of India gave us the chance to view government, the United States, and governmental service in a different way. Having a representative of a foreign government was a brilliant idea and I hope that continues. I enjoyed all the Senators for different reasons because they came from both sides of the aisle and discussed different sets of issues and ideas. Being a kid who grew up in Washington, the monuments were nothing new but the time it gave us to learn more about and make friends with the other delegates could not have been replaced by a better activity. Seeing history like that is irreplaceable and the conversations that I, and other delegates, had at the memorials of country's revered leaders will remain in my mind for many, many years.

On the last day of the program, after meeting some of the most inspirational leaders of our great country and seeing the great sights of Washington, DC, I really liked how we saw Arlington National Cemetery. By walking the grounds where the fallen lay, we gained a new sense of appreciation for those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Walking the grounds and seeing the ceremony at the cemetery was a truly moving experience for me.

March 6-13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 is a week that I will never forget. I learned, I grew, and I met incredible speakers, mentors, organizers, and delegates. Having the opportunity to spend a week with the future leaders of America is an experience that cannot be replaced by any other. Not only were we able to spend time together, but we were able to listen to the leaders of today, learn about the leaders of the past, and see the foundations of our government. As a result of this conference, I know I have learned more about the processes of government, about the diversity of our country (from the delegates,) the potential of our country, the importance of serving others, and how to best serve my country and help others serve their own.

Thank you to DoDEA for selecting me as a delegate, the Hearst Foundation for its support, and the incredible organizing team who put together Washington Week 2010.