

**Rejerio Burton
Delegate-Florida**

**USSYP 2010 Essay
“The best week of our lives”**

It was a nice, beautiful, surprisingly mild Saturday afternoon. I was just waking up from my long train ride, so I decided to look out the window and see where I was at. What I saw was an amazing array of buildings and skyscrapers that I never get to see on a regular basis, a bustling commute running to and fro from their jobs and homes, and the tall, omnipotent, and dynamic Washington Monument which stirred in me emotions about the week and how one day I'll be here getting things done for the people. My train attendant, Allen, knocked on my door and told me we had ten minutes until it was time for us to arrive at Union Station on D.C. I gave him a very exuberant “ok” even though I was already dressed and ready for what was going to be an amazing, inspirational, unforgettable, and powerful week.

From the alumni reception that evening to the farewell festivities this was one of the most influential weeks I have ever had in my life. It galvanized ideas, debates, and friendships with some of the most amazing people that I have, and ever will, meet. Having the opportunity to meet with some of the most powerful and important people in America was a thing in itself and something that I thought I would never get to do. Instead of watching it on C-SPAN, I was able to sit in the United States Senate chamber and view a session of the senate. I was able to sit in one of the greatest centers of law in the world, the United States Supreme Court, learn about its history, and ask Justice Sotomayor a question. Despite some letdowns, I was able to see the Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States Barack Obama, an event that was life changing and filled with awe.

My most memorable and favorite moments and speakers of the week were the Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the President, visiting the memorials with Mr. Cox, cracking jokes with my group, having fun with military officers, of which I hope to be, and having the opportunity to do it all with 103 inspirational people. These events had the most impact on me because they changed my life. Mr. Cox did something for me during a time of adversity which I will forever be eternally grateful. No words, no events, and no deeds can sum up what I experienced during the week.

Hailing from a town like Ocala, with fifteen percent unemployment and very few opportunities, one would think that doing something like this would be a farfetched venture. That for a week I would be treated like an elite member of society, guarded by some of the best military officers in the nation, and living in a five star hotel, was something that I myself thought would never happen. I proved myself wrong and showed America what can come from nothing.

In my opinion nothing can sum up the value of Washington Week. The experience, the awe, the power, the worth, of such an event can never be put into simple words on paper or recordings on blackberries or videos on skype. Only we, the 104 student delegates, can truly measure the value and worth which unanimously would be insurmountable. It was life changing and every one of us, in our own way, has a story that was life changing to them and those around them. A personal story of triumph, of joy, of mistake, that has changed their course of thinking and the path that their life was taking. The week has enabled us to have a new outlook on others of different beliefs, walks of life, experiences, looks, and opened our minds to new heights and to truly believe in our own abilities and what we can do.

President Obama told us to “focus on what we want to do and not focus on what we want to be.” Our mission is to help our fellow man in whatever capacity through some type of public service. This week has taught us that this country wasn’t built off of an idea but off of the belief that those who were being persecuted for what they believe in could have a place to go and be free to do what they want, when they want, and how they want. That it takes all of us, as one unified body, to achieve the ultimate goal of helping our fellow man.

I believe I can voice the sentiments of the other student delegates in saying thanks to the staff and Mrs. Guilford for all you have done in providing for such an amazing week. Thank you student delegates for allowing me to be apart of your lives and for allowing me to express myself freely without rebuke. I hope for the best in all of your future endeavors and maybe we’ll be at the same college or at an alumni meeting but in some form or fashion we will be Washington, D.C doing the work of the people the way they want it to be done. Thank you and God bless.