

Washington
By Adam Swigost

Politics, journalism, debate, compromise, and life are all a part of the microcosm that is Washington D.C. Of course, aside from being home to the world's most influential and powerful people, this metropolis represents the histories, controversies, and dreams of millions and millions of Americans. Therefore, Washington is in itself an indescribable entity that has propelled some to success, others to question, and countless more to their demise. For those within the United States Senate Youth Program, we have witnessed Washington D.C. from a once in a lifetime perspective, and this experience certainly has caused each of us to take pause in discerning what the future of this nation holds for us. Nevertheless, our exposure to the great monuments, leaders, journalists, and participants within the national government has also given us hope and profound wisdom in the process that is democracy.

No matter one's political affiliation, every speaker at the USSYP summit reiterated the importance of participation in the American process. Sonia Sotomayor, in particular, discussed the significance of determination, passion, and being true to one's self, no matter the adversities one faces. She was an inspiration and testament to the power of the American Dream, which holds that every person should be given the ability to fulfill his or her potential in every capacity. Of course, no person represented the optimistic future of the United States of America better than President Barack Obama. I will never forget the emotional rush that immediately accompanied seeing the Leader of the Free World. For a moment, all 104 delegates dismissed political differences and rhetoric to simply admire the benevolent and imposing man who does his absolute best every day to make our nation and world a better place. Obama also imparted prudent guidance to his invigorated audience: do not concentrate so much on what you want to be but on what you want to do. Perhaps, as a nation, we have been blinded to the true needs of our world. We may be republicans, democrats, doctors, lawyers, construction workers, students, or adults, but we must be able to look past the labels and do what is both prudent and pragmatic. However, we cannot hope for any change in the way we view one another without communication and understanding between all sectors of society. Garrett Graff of *The Washingtonian*, Brian Lamb of C-SPAN, and many others spoke about the importance and influence of media in the 21st century. Our free society is dependent upon honest journalism as it informs citizens about the decisions being made throughout our nation. Our speakers brilliantly illustrated the interconnected nature of our technological society, and the 104 delegates of this program will play intricate roles in the future development of this country and world. These experiences are only a miniscule part of a far more complex nation. It will be the responsibility of our generation and the United States Senate Youth Program Class of 2010 to continue in protecting the dignities and liberties promised to every American and global citizen.

Washington D.C. and our country as a whole are the manifestations of the thoughts, words, and ideals found within our Constitution and peoples. However, these words are worth absolutely nothing as words alone; rather, it is through the citizens and protectors of America that this nation has become the land of infinite opportunity. After this program, each of us has been rejuvenated with a desire to work even harder in order to achieve our goals, which for many may include working in the United States Senate as this program entails. The delegates from the USSYP Class of 2010 have been given the opportunities necessary for success, but this success is not determined by money, power, or prestige. The true goal for every American citizen is to find happiness in the knowledge that his or her life has made a difference in this world, and this is exactly what the United States Senate Youth Program has inspired us to do.