

I will forever remember Washington Week 2010 as one of the most memorable experiences of my life. The access to the city, the speakers, the other delegates, and the environment created by the Hearst Foundation—not to forget the spectacular food—all formed salient and emotional components of my experience, times that I will never completely let go. Things like sitting across the table from the Indian Ambassador to the United States, Meera Shankar, having light banter with William Randolph Hearst III, and asking questions of the Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg were powerful, singular moments of my life that I doubt I will ever again experience. My personal astonishment at being able to stand a few feet in front of the President, to be able to hear the most powerful world leader speak to us on such a personal basis, was frankly unfathomable.

Perhaps it was the shock of all these events converging on a single week; perhaps it was simply sensory overload, but the forewarning of previous alumni that we met on our first night in the Mayflower Colonial Ballroom, that the weight of our experiences would really begin to sink in only weeks after we had left, is starting to become significant. What I will take away from my time in Washington with the rest of the United States Senate Youth family, past the magnificent opportunities to access and observe the puissant underpinnings of D.C. as others rarely do, will be precisely that—the sense of family. Of course the speakers, the events, and the visits were all some of the most amazing times of my life, but what brought the entire week to life was the vivaciousness of those surrounding me.

From the lighthearted yet paternal military mentors, who sought to offer what knowledge and experience they had in their service for the country, to those other delegates who were all chosen to attend the week's program on the basis of the forcefulness of their respective personalities, the individuals who I grew to know and respect comprised the most moving part of

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my entire experience in D.C. I cherish those connections I made with my roommate, the laughter I shared on our several coach rides throughout the city, and the invested political debates and riposting of jokes at the end of each day. What will ultimately remain for me from my time in D.C. will be the exposure to the human and mechanical components of what move this country forward, all through the prism of the friendships and deep personal connections I made with my companions on the journey.