

Abbee Cox – OK

USSYP Washington Week 2010 was unquestionably the best week of my life thus far. While this statement seems cliché and predictable, I can think of no other appropriate way to begin to recount my experiences. All week, D.C. locals we encountered would enviously extol the amazing insider access afforded to us by the program. In my experience, most high school trips to our nation's capitol are essentially extended monument tours mixed with lectures on patriotism and citizenship. While we did get our fill of monuments, we also got to visit exclusive locations and hear from tremendously significant leaders. How many high school students can say they have walked up the front steps of the White House to meet with the President of the United States? I can think of 104 off the top of my head.

The most unique and exceptional thing about this week, however, was indubitably the bond formed between the delegates. When chosen for the program, I was expecting lots of "Hi, I'm Abbee from Oklahoma!" and not much more. While it is true that I essentially never want to introduce myself again, overall, my prediction could not have been less accurate. As someone who has been to countless leadership conferences, I know that conversations at such events are typically confined to endlessly discussing personal accomplishments. Instead of looking at the delegation and seeing individuals, most see networking opportunities. At USSYP, however, I found myself having genuine conversations far more than I heard any self-important small talk. I have absolutely no doubt that the members of the USSYP Class of 2010 will certainly be tremendously influential and successful, but we were not interacting for the possible future value of our connections. We were interacting because we truly enjoyed each other's company. Never in my life have I felt so engaged by those around me. To be honest, there are few things I love more in life than hearing myself talk, but I was so fascinated by my fellow delegates that I was utterly content to sit back and listen to them for as long as they were willing to speak.

During Washington Week, we had tremendously entertaining conversations about everything from Southern accents to Hawaiian slang to the universal difficulties of being really, really good-looking. However, the truly exceptional nature of our delegation was revealed by the innumerable discussions on current events that unsurprisingly took place during the week. On Saturday evening, entering a room containing 103 other politically inclined students with incredibly differing opinions, I was lingering near the exits, certain that a riot would break out at any moment. I could not have been more wrong. Justice Sotomayor spoke to us about the difference between passion and anger in debate, and our class truly embodied the former. Though our class contained every belief on the political spectrum, I never once heard a personal attack or a disrespectful comment. In short,

though we will never agree on healthcare reform or campaign finance, we are united by our political activism and dedication to public service, not to mention the countless incredible memories we now share.

Speaking of memories, we did somehow manage to find a few points on which all 104 of us can agree. Mr. Cox is a not-so-well-concealed super spy. Future USSYP delegates should be sent a manual before they arrive in D.C.: How to Ask Awesome Questions by Zhan Okuda-Lim. If you somehow manage to be half as cool as Jakub Mosur, you have succeeded in life. A woman with an Uzi is hot. Justin Bieber is no more than a cheap Canadian knock-off of Paul Elish. Last, but certainly not least, the USSYP Class of 2010 is an outstanding, inspiring, hilarious, accomplished, intelligent, exceptional group that is going to change the world!