

Davis, Grant – TN

Too often in life we find ourselves looking back to yesterday, instead of looking forward to the future. I myself found myself guilty of this as I cruised west at 30,000 feet, away from D.C, and towards Tennessee. But who couldn't? USSYP was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and the access and experiences that we went through are unique among our generations. I was so blessed to be among a 104 of our nation's best and brightest, but I also realize that the 104 of us are out of millions our age. Most of what each and every delegate experienced cannot possible be summed up in words. The whole week, no matter how big or small the experience, will stick with me for the rest of my life, and I hope that it will linger in the minds of all who attended.

I am daily taken aback by the things that I learned in D.C. I have several epiphanies of USSYP throughout each and every day. I thought that I was well versed in politics both domestic and foreign before the program, but through conversing and learning from major policy makers and fellow delegates, I have been able to shape and redefine my views on the issues. I believe that each and every one of us has refined our outlooks on certain areas, not that they were wrong, because we were able to educate one another and provide a new prospective. We are all separated geographically and in many different political landscapes, and it was a wonderful and rewarding experience to hear the opinions and knowledge from other parts of the country besides my own. We as delegates melded our ideas and experiences into one, and we shed the title of Tennessean, Alaskan, and Californian, and we took on the title of American. It was a unique and wonderful progression to witness, a group of people that were willing to speak respectfully and as equals to one another no matter how different our points of views were. It was absolutely refreshing to meet others who care about the issues of today and tomorrow, because I have been searching for others like this for a while. I sincerely wish that everyone in the world could channel that ability, for I believe that it would help to solve most of our issues. Every day at my school, I hear sharp and unverified rhetoric on national and world issues, not only from students, but from teachers. These are the instances where I am taken aback by what USSYP has given me. I can call on the ideas of 103 others that I met to help me sort through and explain the issues, and I can use what I learned from listening and questioning our once in a lifetime speakers to help formulate a more concise argument. What I have learned at USSYP has placed me in a position to help my fellow students to understand the issues, and hopefully help them to become more active in their community.

I reflect daily on D.C., and I continually wish that it had never ended. We have been given so much by this program in way of experiences, people, and financial support. However, each and every one of us has been given a charge through this program. Our charge is to make sure that America's light burns bright under our guidance. The 104 of us must look forward into the future and lead America into the wild blue yonder of the 21st Century. Our task as USSYP alumni is not a task for the faint of heart, but we have each other, and we have no choice. So long as we remember what we were given in this program, and where we came from, we will be successful. From my prospective, America has little to worry about in a lack of leadership, because I spent a week with the next great leaders of our age.