

Christopher Kim, HI - 2015

My week in Washington D.C. as a member of the United States Senate Youth Program's Class of 2015 has been, without a doubt, the single most thought-provoking and life-changing experience I have ever had the privilege of participating in. Listening to some of our nation's most renowned individuals in matters of politics and government as well as being able to partake in the most meaningful of discussions with such influential figures including senators, cabinet members, heads of federal agencies, a Supreme Court justice, and the President of the United States challenged me to think more critically and deeply about not only the future of our nation but also about how our world will be shaped in the years to come. With key international issues that are creating a more divisive society, I came to recognize the importance of unity and compromise. It is imperative that we learn how to accomplish our individual goals while supporting and collaborating with each other to shape a brighter future for our society. Beyond a new perspective of thinking, Washington Week also embedded in me a fiery passion for public service and honing my talents to make the world a better place. The abstract notion that a small individual such as I could change the world seemed so cliché but I now know and believe in my potential to make a positive change beyond my local community.

Washington Week was such an exceptionally unique experience for me because we, as delegates, were not limited to simply viewing the political structures that make our government function but were given the opportunity to experience it and delve into it. Being surrounded by such inspirational, intellectual, passionate students genuinely interested in the future direction of our nation inspired me to be more open-minded, curious, and voracious, never being satisfied with what I know. One of the biggest realizations I had following Washington Week is the importance of being aware. I wish to be well-learned about current events as well as both domestic and global events. It is our responsibility as citizens of this nation to keep up-to-date with local, state, national, and international happenings. The more we know about what is going on in the world around us, the more compelled we are to take action.

All of the notable speakers uniquely delivered the same core message: be humble, be personable, get involved, and give back. It is such a fundamental message but one that cannot be stated often enough. I reflected on where I came from, my background and my culture. I then reflected on the diversity of America and how each individual contributes a unique identity, making the U.S. the world superpower we recognize it to be today. Shaking President Obama's hand was a tremendous honor and one of the biggest highlights of my week. However, the biggest take-away is truly basking in the knowledge, opinions, and wisdom of the other 103 tremendously bright delegates. While we all arrived with our individual opinions and views, immersing ourselves in meaningful dialogue allowed us to leave more open-minded, collaborative, and accepting of others' ideals and views.

Through your investment in me, I am walking away with a broader perspective of the world around me and a sincere passion for serving others. Washington Week has given me the courage to perceive the world beyond my comfort zone. I know that I am empowered and capable of making a difference in the world, and I am not afraid to challenge myself to do so.