

Walter Jackson, NC – 2016

The time spent in our nation's capital during the 2016 United States Senate Youth Program was very enjoyable. The Hearst Foundations offered me an opportunity of a lifetime that I will forever be grateful for. Throughout the week long program, I had the chance to hear from several prominent figures, including Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Senator Cory Gardner, and President Barack Obama.

While I did enjoy each of the speakers, the most memorable one would have to be President Obama. I remember it very clearly, we (the delegates) were standing in the East Room of the White House quietly chattering, when all of a sudden, the doors on the opposite end of the hall opened and the president appeared. The best part of the experience was not the actual speaking from the president, but rather watching him approach us on the red carpet. The piece of advice from the president that I found most useful was when he told us "Worry less about what you want to be, and think more about what you want to do." Every person who is a part of or considering public service should keep this quote in mind.

While hearing from the president was my favorite, I also enjoyed Senator Gardner. There was a certain connection between the senator and the delegates which I attribute to him being a USSYP alum himself. While he was speaking to us, I remember looking around the room and thinking, several of the delegates sitting in this room today could be in his shoes tomorrow. One only had to interact with the delegates for a couple of minutes to realize that these students are highly intelligent, opinionated, and talented. I am sure that all of us one day will have positive (both small and large) impacts on our country and the world.