

Greer Sullivan, NV - 2015

It is not often in life that we are assured of what the future may hold. However, my experiences at the United States Senate Youth Program have granted me with an assurance of auspicious nature. Through the company of my amazing fellow delegates, the expertise of the Military Mentors, and the axioms provided by some of the most prominent public figures, I have the confidence to say that the future will hold innovations and betterments that currently seem inconceivable.

Dr. Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank, delivered a particularly riveting speech, to which I was granted front row seating. Dr. Kim enlightened the other delegates and me of the World Bank's current plan to end poverty. I found it very intriguing that one of the main points was the issuing of micro-loans because I have learned of the success that a small amount of smartly invested money can attain. Another inspirational point that Dr. Kim discussed was his emphasis on the importance of gender equality in the lesser developed regions of the world in order to break the poverty cycle. Dr. Kim thoroughly convinced me of the conceivability of the end of extreme poverty in the near future.

One of our first speakers, Senator Joe Manchin, provided insight that has changed my outlook on life. He emphasized how public service is intended to serve the public not act as a conduit for self-service. It is easy to let power inflate one head and the overt humble nature of Senator Manchin was thoroughly refreshing. Additionally, Senator Manchin noted that "if you're here [USSYP] to give something, then you are here for the right reason." As I looked around the room, I noticed the young people around me were here for the right reason. I believe the piece of advice that resonates with me most strongly would be, "if your heart is in the right place, then the rest of you will follow." At the many crossroads I will encounter in life, I hope to remember Senator Manchin's words and keep a good heart so that one day the all of me will be in a position where I can help others and "leave meat on the bone for the next dog."

I have always known that President Barack Obama was a fantastic public speaker, but his eloquence in such close quarters was exemplified immensely. The content and delivery of his speech could bring even the most conservative right winger to tears. During the question and answer session, President Obama advised us to "not worry about what you want to be, [rather] worry about what you want to do." This particular piece of advice was especially impactful because the deciding of which institution and which major to declare is utterly terrifying, but I find solace in the president's words and approach this process with a more open mind.

The awe-inspiring presentations from all of the speakers were just that. Reminiscing, I have discovered that even though they were fantastic, I garnered the most inspiration from my fellow delegates. The most common inquiry of the week, beside your state origin, was "where are you going to school?" At first I was intimidated walking about in the presence of delegates that were going to attend the Ivy League schools or Stanford, but soon I came to realize that rather than intimidation I felt pride and hope. All of these delegates who were already so accomplished and had plans that would benefit the world, they were going to one day run this country. I relish in the knowledge that I was fortunate enough to spend time with the future. Senator Joe Manchin emphasized that "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" and I can confidently say that this group of people cares for this country more than I thought possible.

The subsequent steps I take into the future may be unknown but my experiences at USSYP have made me surefooted. No matter the direction I take, no matter the degree I get, I will always stay committed to my civic duties and take comfort in knowing that my fellow delegates will one day run the world. Even though I may not be able to predict the future, I am positive that the state of the union will improve because of the stellar people that are in the government and those that one day will be. Washington Week supplied me with enough hope that I could pass for a presidential campaign motto.