

Katherine Krolicki, NV – 2016

"Washington Week will be the best week of your life," said my alumnus friend at the alumni welcome party. At first I was skeptical. I have had some amazing opportunities to do a lot of really cool things. Would this really be the BEST week of my life? It felt like an overstatement. I mean, shouldn't there be something else I should look forward to in my life after USSYP? Wouldn't it be a bummer if I peaked at seventeen years old?

As it turns out Washington Week was one of the best weeks of my life, hands down. We met with incredible leaders and thinkers throughout the week. Our first two days held the most impressive and well-known speakers. On Monday we met with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. On Tuesday we went to the White House and met with the president of the United States. After we left the White House, I kept thinking to myself, "Today had to be the highlight. We met the president for goodness' sake. Now the rest of the week is going to be a letdown." This was the opposite of the truth. The speakers that truly resonated with me, and made me feel as if I could make a difference in the future, were some of the people one would have never heard of.

On Wednesday (the day after meeting the president) we boarded the coaches to head to a place called the Anderson House. How can one get excited about going to the Anderson House when we were headed to the White House less than 24 hours before? What was this house and why were we going there? I had no clue. We were handed a piece of paper with a brief description about the Anderson House and the Society of Cincinnati. This place had something to do with George Washington and a military society. It wasn't something I learned about in AP U.S. History, and it wasn't a society I had heard about from the news, but when I got there I realized I had been brought to a place exuberating with nationalism and pride. The Anderson House was truly beautiful. It was a sight to see. It might have been even more beautiful than the White House! Not only was the house astounding, so was the lesson I learned there.

The executive director of the Society of Cincinnati was our speaker. His name was Jack Warren - again, not a well-known name or someone I was looking forward to hear speak. When he began his speech I was immediately captivated. This man had a true love for service and his country. I was inspired by his words, and he even made me cry at some points during his speech. He reminded all of us that we need to be thankful to the Founding Fathers for what they have done for us, our country, and even the world. The United States of America is without a doubt the greatest nation this world has ever seen, and in this day and age it is often forgotten. That is when I realized that America is run by the people like myself, fellow delegates, and military mentors who are passionate about serving this great country.

Throughout the week I started to become more touched by the moments similar to the one in the Anderson House. It was no longer about meeting the big names; it was about thanking the smaller people who have given everything for our freedoms and liberties. We ended the week at Arlington Cemetery, and seeing a physical representation of the men and women who have lost everything in their fight for this nation was more powerful than anything a famous speaker had to say. Washington Week showed me the importance of every kind of service, whether or not the common U.S. citizen is aware of the sacrifices a person made. This is an important life lesson, and one that shouldn't be forgotten. Washington Week really did change me, and it was the best week of my life (so far).