

Joshua Calvert, WY – 2016

When I came home from Washington week I felt, different. I had never been in a place with so many people that I shared goals, dreams, aspirations, opinions, and beliefs with. When I got back to school, I, for the first time in my life realized that I was not the same as the people around me. Before Washington week I believed that I was an average individual who would probably live an average life, but being with so many like-minded individuals opened my eyes to the fact that I do not have average interests, or average dreams, or average aspirations like my high school peers. I will be forever grateful to USSYP and The Hearst Foundations for this incredible experience.

The event that had the most profound impact on me was the speaking event with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She has long been a role model of mine and getting to see her in person was an unforgettable experience.

Of course we did also get to meet the president and standing 10 feet away from the most powerful man in the world and listening to him casually talk about how he was interested in the same things that I am when he was my age, was extremely powerful. I think the most influential and my favorite experience of Washington week was the people I met. I was fortunate enough to find friends at USSYP that I will have for the rest of my life. Although I didn't get a chance to talk as much as I would have wanted to with some people, I got pretty close with a small group of delegates and may have laughed more during Washington Week than the rest of my life combined. We discussed almost every topic that is politically or socially relevant today. Although I did not always share the opinions of my friends, it was always great to hear the ideas of those who think differently than I do.

I would also like to extend my most sincere gratitude to the military mentors, to the distinguished members of The Hearst Foundations, to the Hearst family, to The Mayflower Hotel, to all of the officials, leaders, and distinguished speakers who took time out of their days to meet with us, and to my fellow delegates for giving me an experience that I couldn't replicate in 100 years.