

Shreya Majagi, AR – 2017

How do I describe the best week of my life? Do I start with a famous quote hoping the words of Gandhi or Mother Teresa can accurately depict the impact Washington Week had on me? Maybe I need to use *Webster's Dictionary* to define how much March 4th, 2017 to March 11th, 2017 meant to me? Or maybe the United States Senate Youth Program can never actually be described in words?

I think it says something really special about Washington Week if I can confidently say that going to the White House and Supreme Court were not as cool as the other things I experienced throughout the week. The sheer amount of things that we did throughout the week was absurd. Every day during Washington Week I was fulfilling lifelong dreams. Political ideologies aside, I think most kids also dream of meeting the president. But to think that I have met the president, Chief Justice Roberts, and the majority of senators in the United States Senate is something I could have never even dreamed of.

Although it is agonizing to choose what I loved the most during Washington Week, it ultimately was the other delegates. To be surrounded by so many other teenagers who want to have a voice in our country and provide for the greater good was an experience like no other. The caliber of individuals that I had the pleasure of becoming friends with was extremely high, not only in an intellectual sense-but, in the genuine quality of human beings as well.

During Washington Week, I grew as an individual. I was honored to be chosen as the female farewell speaker at the end of the week, along with my fellow Arkansas delegate. It felt really good to represent The Natural State for what it means to me, and I never felt prouder to be an Arkansan and American.

Maybe I'll never find the perfect words to explain the United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP). Maybe it's something you only understand if you've actually experienced it. Regardless of this fact, I know I can describe the way this program made me feel: unstoppable. I will forever be thankful for my USSYP family and the experience of a lifetime that The Hearst Foundations gave me.

During my farewell speech I said a quote from J.K. Rowling that I believe summed up a valuable life lesson Washington Week taught me. Rowling said: "It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all - in which case, you fail by default." Washington Week taught me that I should dream, fail, explore, and take risks, because one day, I just might be living in D.C. myself.