

Kaitlyn Yoo, AZ – 2018

I'll admit it. My Moleskine journal is in pretty bad shape. The ribbon bookmark is fraying around the edges. The inside cover still smells slightly like Bus #2, where it was wedged between seats during our many tours. Taped onto the last page is lint from the cushion-seat I sat on as I watched Senator Sanders and Warren speak on the Senate chamber floor with my own two eyes. And if you shook the whole book hard enough? My Mount Vernon entry pass and a Mayflower gift shop receipt would probably fall out. The handwriting that riddles its lines is scribbly, illegible at times. Yet whether a month or twenty years go by, these pages will unfailingly remind me of a lifechanging week.

Despite being exhausted from my early morning flight and propped up on plush hotel pillows practically lulling me to sleep, the soft buzz of excitement I felt upon my first night at the Mayflower was just enough to keep my pen scrawling words across the crisp first page. Hearing Mr. Cox utter "Ladies and Gentlemen, dinner is served" for the first time of what would become many, receiving a personally signed book from an Arizona USSYP alumna who had been in my shoes decades ago, and playing too many rowdy rounds of Cards Against Humanity in a circle of fresh faces, I knew the next few days would change the way I looked at the future and my place within it. And so I jotted down every detail. I wanted to remember everything. Four pages and a sore wrist later, my concluding sentence: *"Today was chaotic, hectic, overwhelming...And I can't wait for tomorrow."*

As I asked Former Chief Judge Henry — in a voice that I could only hope was steady enough — to elaborate on the differences between law and politics that influenced him in his own career path, I couldn't fathom that he, a leading figure in the justice system, had his full attention currently fixated on *me*. As the first keynote speaker to address us, Judge Henry's powerful messages on timeless civility resonated with all of us as we continued through our week. Civility resonated, albeit in deafening silence, as Justice Gorsuch stood before us in the Supreme Courtroom. It resonated across our dinner tables where opinions from opposite sides of the nation came together in bipartisan coffee sips and unanimous bread bites. Civility resonated in each step we took through the halls of the White House. Packing itself into 104 different suitcases and flying home to 104 different communities, it continues to resonate through the campaigns we volunteer for, the peaceful marches we organize, and the examples we lead. As Judge Henry became the first speaker to sign my notebook, Justice Gorsuch's words *"disagree[ing] does not mean being disagreeable"* became the first of the week's many that I would not forget.

During my seven days on the Hill, my perspective was constantly evolving. Whether it was discussing hypothetical scale-backs in the current nuclear arms race with Military Mentors to prying for the legitimate effects of climate change at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, I saw my world through the perspectives of frontrunners on every career path. Whether wearing black to commemorate International Women's Day or wearing a pin of potent message, I witnessed perspective's ability to pierce beyond words yet simultaneously still defy silence. As I watched our vibrant student body disperse into Hispanic, black, and Asian delegations, I found solace in our shared struggles and mutual understanding. Through my exposure to the countless personas who varied in career, belief, and ethnicity, I underwent the personal realization of how fundamentally our perspectives can be influenced at all times. As Canadian Ambassador MacNaughton asserted *"We should have public service that looks like the public,"* I came to understand the bedrock of public service: diversity.

Washington Week was one of the most eye-opening, intense, and inspiring moments of my life. To see President Trump, the First Lady, Justice Gorsuch, and my senators right before me, unpixelated and clear, lending me their open ears and full attention, was surreal. Respect, poise, and intelligence saturated every second I spent there, even down to the very food that was served to us. My journal is my time capsule of this life-altering moment. Its dog-eared pages are filled with warm handshakes and difficult questions, with bus rides between landmarks and strolls through memorials, with standing ovations and immaculate quotes, with delegates' autographs that'll cost a fortune one day and blurry polaroids that I will forever cherish. My journal is a kaleidoscope of memories I refuse to let fade. The late nights and writer's hand cramps were worth it.

Thank you, USSYP.