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As I gazed out the window of the slowly descending plane above Washington, D.C., I contemplated the numerous possibilities of the upcoming week — Washington Week. Prior to departing from Ohio, I had researched previous program schedules to understand the sheer caliber of speakers and activities available during Washington Week. I knew the experience of Washington Week would be absolutely remarkable before stepping foot out of the plane; however, I hoped to discover something deeper, a universal truth of sorts. After experiencing the sights and thrills of Washington Week, I can confidently state that I now possess a more comprehensive understanding of myself and the human race in general.

Before delving into the moral lessons I learned during Washington Week, I must illustrate the degree of speakers and activities I was able to observe during this unforgettable week. In essence, never again could I or possibly any other American citizen acquire the same amount of access as we were able to experience. Our remarkable speakers included Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, Civil Rights icon John Lewis, the president and vice president, Senators Scott and King, *Washington Post* editor Martin Baron, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats (coupled with a surprise visit by Defense Secretary Mattis himself), Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, and so many more.

Each one of these speakers possessed abundant amounts of wisdom and experience that they were so gracious to instill upon us. Every time one of these high-level speakers began orating, I would attempt to grasp the totality of what we were experiencing right before our eyes — history, trailblazers, and icons. Although I can unequivocally announce that there was never a dull moment during Washington Week, there are two moments, a speaker and an activity, that, for me at least, encapsulate the true essence of the magnitude of Washington Week. My favorite activity from Washington Week was fabulous evening my fellow delegates and I spent at the National Archives. At the National Archives, we were able to explore America’s founding documents and artifacts; however, the catch is that we were the only ones in the building— it was closed to the rest of the public! Absorbing America’s most intimate documents in solidarity with my fellow delegates was profound, not to mention the tremendous dinner mere yards away from the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, topped with a speech by Senator King.

Furthermore, my favorite speaker during Washington Week was by far Civil Rights icon and Congressman, John Lewis. Before attending Washington Week, I had listened to a podcast from current United States Senator Cory Booker called Lift Every Voice. Congressman Lewis was featured on the inaugural episode of Lift Every Voice, and the experiences and teachings he shared transformed my mindset about how we should treat each other and carry ourselves in society. Consequently, I possessed a significant amount of excitement and glee for being able to hear Congressman Lewis speak. However, my expectations were blown away. I have never witnessed more respect garnered by a single man than the respect I observed Congressman Lewis receive. There was an indescribable silence in the room — a silence perpetuated by intense respect and the realization that history was before us. We clung on to every word uttered by Congressman Lewis, listening in awe to his stories of persecution, struggle, and triumph. By the end of his oration, I was crying tears of admiration and so were many of my fellow delegates. I will forever cherish the wisdom and teachings bestowed by Congressman Lewis -- they were truly transformational.

As mentioned previously, I also acquired a deeper understanding of numerous moral lessons throughout Washington Week; however, there were two lessons in that were particularly distinct. One important moral lesson I learned is that human decency rests within every individual. During Washington Week, we listened to myriad influential speakers from both parties with varying views on the world. Although I may have not completely agreed with the views of each speaker, I did recognize that every orator desired only the best for the people of America. Today, where partisan politics runs rampant, there

is a lack of understanding that Americans, especially those in public service, simply want what is best for one another — the only difference being in the path to achieve a more prosperous state. Consequently, in the speakers and my fellow delegates, I saw human decency — a thirst to assist one another for a brighter future. Another important lesson I learned during Washington Week is the importance of perseverance and commitment. As I listened to some of the most powerful and influential individuals in the world, I realized that they were once where I am now— about to enter the real world. Everyone has humble beginnings and is a “kid from somewhere.” I now understand that the road to my aspirations will not be easy or straightforward. I will face challenges, twists and turns, and steps backwards, but if I am committed and persevere I will eventually make progress and move forward. As the speakers lectured, as long as you put yourself out there and continue to take risk, eventually results will be seen.

All in all, I am extremely grateful and humbled to have been able to experience Washington Week and all that it offers. I will cherish the lessons and relationships I formed and move on with a determination to help others. My desire to enter public service has been ardently reaffirmed and I am ready to get to work.