

James Michael Bond, OK -- 2018

I have found myself at a loss for words regarding my experience in the United States Senate Youth Program for over a month now; this essay is no exception. When the speaker list was finally released, I was ecstatic. I was excited to meet my senators and Justice Gorsuch. I wanted to listen to the words of wisdom from names that belonged to history like Congressman John Lewis. I was excited to witness news incarnate.

And this anticipation was indeed warranted. I was certainly comforted by Justice Gorsuch as he embodied the persona of a stoic, yet engaging grandfather. I was absolutely appreciative of my senator as he spent over an hour discussing policy issues important to us and inquiring about our personal lives. I was undeniably motivated by the words of Congressman Lewis. The people who were most impactful and influential to me during this week, however, were not even on the speaker list. These individuals amazed me through the numerous accomplishments they had achieved from a very early age. Their aspirations and powerful personalities coupled with their passionate political pursuits exhilarated me. The discussions and inquiries cut deep into the night. These influential individuals were the 103 delegates from diverse backgrounds with varying opinions and perspectives.

Because of the deep connections and friendships made with the delegates, it is yet to be determined how impactful my experience in the United States Senate Youth Program will be. I am certain, however, that I was blessed to have experienced these interactions as they give me great hope for the future of American and keep me hungry to be a part of the conversation that will shape my generation.