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It's Not Too ~~Late~~ Soon

A common phrase during our time at the 64th annual US Senate Youth Program was "imposter syndrome," or the idea that we didn't belong or earn our place like everyone else in the room. Personally, I never felt this sensation. I understand that no amount of leadership experience could have made me less surprised by the people I was going to meet. In fact, it was incredibly important that I had that experience. There is something exhilarating about meeting a girl who started an international nonprofit, a guy who interned at NASA, and a top student journalist. Upon meeting these amazing delegates, they saw the same thing in me: a delegate who had done clean energy research. In a world where we may feel like no one cares enough to create change for our future generations, my co-delegates struck down this very idea.

Senator Ed Markey told us that "young people are right, but usually too soon."

I have a strong belief that we will be the generation that doesn't wait for someone else to initiate change thirty years down the line. My favorite speaker proved that to me. The Thai Ambassador to the United States, Suriya Chindawongse, knew he was interested in diplomacy from a young age, and he pursued his international ambitions early. I had seen the financial toll of United Nations internships and felt discouraged from getting involved as a graduating senior. However, he reassured me about opportunities, redirecting me toward NGO positions with UN affiliations. This lit a new fire under me—I have so many options to make an impact, and half of them fit into my interdisciplinary policy-engineering path.

When learning how to operate in politics, it's important to consider your identity and your environment. Without requiring it of me, my Military Mentors taught me another level of discipline. They all had their own ideas, aspirations, and specific occupations they followed within service. Despite their distinct backgrounds, personalities, and stories, they all had a uniform sense of respect as highly skilled officers. In leadership, this translates to how we respond to others. I know that given my identity as a Trinidadian-American female, I am expected to give more respect than I may receive; I also know that eventually the respect I give to others on the world stage—whether I agree with them or not—has the power to change how all Black women are regarded, so I choose to present myself with poise, kindness, and humility.

Lastly, acknowledging the polarity in our country and emphasizing bipartisanship does not mean you have to sacrifice what you believe in. Historically, the law has not always given people rights. This only happens when the oppressive group begins to change and abide by the law. We can make fast, lasting political change, but it doesn't mean much in the moment if no one knows why they are following it. This is why despite our commitment to progress domestically and globally, we must:

1. Understand and empathize with differing mindsets.
2. Elaborate and demonstrate why our version of change is good.
3. Allow time to heal the wounds that positive and negative change will inevitably leave.

I could've never anticipated the value of meeting people from all states and all walks of life who genuinely care—whether it's about conservation, immigration, or protecting veterans. It is refreshing to be able to trade ideas and be pushed to strive for a better version of myself by such outstanding delegates, speakers, and mentors. I have not only left Washington, D.C. with a lifelong network, but also with a promise. I am positive that my generation will build on the first pioneers, abolitionists, suffragists, and activists that chose freedom; I am positive my generation will be greater than the last and will set a platform so that the next generation will be greater than we were; most importantly, I am positive that we will undefine the time limits of innovation, so no one will ever have to tell us again that our empathy and ambition came a little too soon.