

Maura Goss, RI – 2017

Planting Seeds

On one of the first few days of Washington Week, I was particularly struck by a quote recited by my fellow delegate Drew Hill from Oklahoma. While giving his acknowledgements to Judge Robert Henry, he said that a legacy is planting seeds in a garden that you never get to see. I am pretty sure that this quote is from the play *Hamilton* but its meaning ties perfectly with the United States Senate Youth Program.

Over the course of the week, I had the pleasure of listening to so many incredible public servants speak that it became one big blur of excellence. But as I sit here, reflecting on the week, flipping through the notes of my Moleskine journal, the excellence once again becomes individualized within the bindings of each speaker, and I can feel myself in the Grand Ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel, ferociously taking notes, trying to absorb every ounce of wisdom I can.

Because you see, approximately one hundred and four seeds were planted by every public servant who spoke to us. They told of their victories and also their struggles. They compacted a lifetime of learned experience into a thirty minute speech with a question and answer period and planted it within us. They taught and inspired the minds of future public servants, with us now being a shining part of the legacy that they will never get to see.

Senator Cory Booker touched upon this message as he elucidated the importance of utilizing the knowledge and opportunity you have acquired to incite change for the betterment of the world around you. He stated, "We drink deeply from wells of liberty and opportunity that we did not dig. We owe a debt that we can't pay back but must pay forward." Senator Booker creates his legacy through his acts of "paying it forward," he takes his time to plant seeds, showing us all how he is a construct of his experiences, passing on the knowledge he gained so we do not have to experience his hardships for ourselves in order to understand.

In the spirit of planting seeds and paying it forward, I have promised myself that I will follow in the footsteps of the speakers I heard from throughout the week, to not only dedicate my life to public service, but to continue to share the knowledge and experiences I have acquired throughout Washington Week to anyone willing to listen.