

Sean Callahan, HI – 2018

Just a few months ago, Supreme Court justices seemed to live on a different plane of existence than a mere student like me. As I sat in the courtroom of the United States Supreme Court, I was dumbstruck by the majesty of the room and the knowledge that I was sitting in one of the most important and storied places on earth.

However, when Justice Neil Gorsuch entered the room, his calm and amiable demeanor transformed the room and his position from something that was bigger than me into something that was understandable and human. While I thought meeting an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States would be terrifying, from the moment Justice Gorsuch entered the room, I realized that he is in many ways no different from me.

In America, we often idolize prominent political and governmental figures to an extent which makes them seem of a different breed than the rest of Americans, but throughout Washington Week, I found that many of the most venerated public servants in America are also some of the most down to earth. Senator Tim Scott's stand-up comedy routine reminded me that even those who have the weight of thousands on their shoulders love to smile. Senator Angus King's heartfelt speech taught me that those who worry about forging deals to protect the prosperity of the American people also worry about the well-being of young people like me. NOAA Director Tim Galluadet's reading of every delegate and Military Mentor biography showed that those who find ways to combat one of the greatest threats to mankind also find ways to connect with people they have just met. Secretary Mattis' quiet entrance into our room established the fact that a man who strikes fear into the hearts of nations around the world can also put a smile on the faces of everyone in his presence.

Meeting some of the most prominent government officials in America made me realize that they are not, but rather, they are a few of my fellow Americans striving to make our country the best that she can be.

Although the speakers I had the privilege of meeting during Washington Week are some of the most prominent government officials in our country, I was struck by the fact that in many ways they are just like every other citizen of the United States, striving for the best for their families and their country.