

Robert Nishimwe, IA – 2018

Being a part of United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is a manifestation of the dream my parents had for me. I would have never dreamed that a kid born in Tanzania, would be stepping into the white house to meet with the president of the United States, while they're still a senior in High School. I have been blessed with the opportunity to meet Justice Neil Gorsuch of the Supreme Court of the United States and sit in the same room where segregation in public schools was declared unconstitutional by the courts, giving way for the integration of public schools. Oh and of course, James Madison's head is spinning in his grave. On top of that, where else in the world could a 17-year-old (Aaron) imply to a Supreme Court justice that they are illegitimate!

I also embark upon the emotions of gratitude and the withdrawal of reality that came with meeting an elder of our nation, Representative John Lewis. I felt like I had literally met history. I was living in a moment of history that was encompassed in one man. This is a man who helped organized sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, having a determination driven by the ideal of doing all that it took in a peaceful manner to break down the barriers and thorns of institutional racism. He served our nation in a way that some would not be able to in today's era. He put his life on the line and held himself to the true virtue that sometimes one must sacrifice all that's valuable to them, to carry out a greater purpose that exceeds personal gain. I learned from the Representative that we must always speak truth to power, while we walk the talk.

A group of students decided to sign a letter basically talking about how much of fans we are of Bernie Sanders, and we signed this letter in hopes of meeting him. To our surprise the senator took time out of his busy schedule, to meet with those students who had signed the letter. Well I guess it is true that dreams really do happen, you just must trust the fact that reality always begins as a thought-process. Senator Sanders has galvanized the spirit and cry for change, in the hearts of many young people. He has given young people like each and every one of us, the desire to be politically and civilly active. Not only was I able to meet Bernie Sanders, but I also got to say "Wakanda Forever!" to Senator Kamala Harris. Getting to say that to her will probably be my highlight of the Senate reception.

Above everything, I got to meet wonderful and brilliant future leaders of our nation and world. The friendships that I got to form with my fellow delegates are ones that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I was at times challenged by them, but it was a challenge to being more involved within politics and to continue having faith in the next generation. Having said all of this, I want to thank the USSYP staff, the amazing Military Mentors who gave me a new perspective into military life, and all the speakers I was fortunate enough to hear for having left an experience of a lifetime in my heart. Oh and thank you Lynn for putting up with me turning in this essay at the last minute, and of course thank you to Erin and Jakub for the amazing photos. Wait, I can't forget about Mr. Cox for all the great wisdom, and captivating voice that led us into the indulgence of *il cibo*, that's food in Italian for you!