

Alexander Billups, DC – 2019

It's a sad truth to know that I go to school ten minutes from the Capitol Building, Supreme Court, and U.S. Library of Congress and never been able to see the inside of these buildings, and many other influential buildings, so close to me and very important in the world. Thus, when I think of my favorite moments from Washington Week, the first to come to mind is being able to see my city in depth. For the first time in my life, I was the annoying tourist that I hated seeing every day when I went to school or home. Washington Week allowed me to see the city I lived in my whole life, in a different perspective that makes people from outside of D.C. ooze with joy and awe.

Everyday waking up at 6am was a difficult endeavor, but to know that I was going to explore a new place within D.C. made that difficulty become nonexistent. Subsequently, the place that I liked the most that we visited was the White House. To be inside the White House was an honor in of itself knowing the history and the great presidents that have resided there. Furthermore, I was stunned and amazed by the china that was collected from past presidents, the paintings of previous presidents and scenes of America, and the decor of the blue, green, and red rooms (and meeting the president was pretty amazing too). I visited the White House in person for the first time five months before Washington Week, and I never thought that within that time I would go from a behind-the-gates look at the White House, to looking at the people outside from within the White House.

Furthermore, another thing that comes to mind when I think of Washington Week is the people. The other 103 delegates were the most fascinating and intelligent people that I've ever met in my life. I never thought that I would be able to sit in a room and conversate with people from all walks of life across the U.S. My favorite moments were riding on the bus and talking to people like Nathan from Oklahoma and Kudzai from Oregon and talking about the big things like politics and beliefs, to small things like the differences in the places we live and our favorite genres for music.

Another moment that sticks out was when I was in the National Archives having a debate with Audrey from Nebraska, Aden from Tennessee, and Kevin from Virginia. The scene was amazing being able to sit and have dinner in front of the Constitution and Bill of rights, but the debate was even better; being able to talk about our differences coming from different backgrounds and lifestyles, and then being able to find common ground made me smile. Furthermore, it made me think that I never would have had a conversation with someone from Nebraska or Tennessee if it wasn't for Washington Week, and that revelation right there made the week special and so beneficial because the fact that I was connected with people who were very smart and lived in places I'd never visited; it made the week special and informative.