

Title: My One Wild, Precious Life

In a speech to the delegates selected for the U.S. Senate Youth Program, Deloitte Managing Director and U.S. Senate Youth program alum Brian Kamoie said, "What is it that you plan to do with your one wild, precious life?"

It was the morning of September 29th, and I woke up with a 102-degree fever. Amidst my delirium, a sudden realization jolted me awake: my U.S. Senate Youth Program application was due at 4 P.M. that day. With determination fueled by Tylenol, cough drops, and cooled water, I dove into writing my essays.

"There's no way I'll even pass the first stage," I thought as I clicked 'submit.'

To my surprise, my fever-induced essays propelled me to become a finalist for one of the two Iowa delegates. Despite my doubts, I attended the interview in Des Moines, Iowa, with my father waiting anxiously in the lobby.

"There's no way they'll pick me as the delegate. I'm not even a senior," I whispered to myself.

On December 5th, as I sat in my first-period class, three interviewers and my principal walked in, holding a certificate with my name etched on it. A dream I had cherished since freshman year was coming true: attending The William Randolph Hearst Foundations' U.S. Senate Youth Program.

The USSYP was a transformative experience. It provided me with a platform to integrate myself into the world of public service, meet individuals with diverse perspectives, and expand my viewpoint beyond Iowa. While my passion projects deepened my understanding of Iowa's political landscape, this program broadened my horizons, enhancing my awareness of the challenges average Americans face.

During Washington Week, I had the incredible opportunity to visit iconic institutions like the White House, the Pentagon, the Department of Justice, and the Supreme Court. I was inspired by Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg's emphasis on connecting rather than dividing and his focus on climate change. Senate Parliamentarian Elizabeth MacDonough highlighted the importance of rules as a leveling agent in the Senate's adversarial system, while Senate Historian Katherine Scott shared powerful stories of hidden heroes of history.

In a dinner presentation, Senator Cortez Masto reminded us that we represent our communities and Americans. She emphasized the importance of deep listening and courage in seeking opportunities. Kamoie encouraged us to think big, take bold, ethical action, and confidently express our views without "wilting."

My "one wild, precious life," as emphasized by Kamoie. I realized I wanted to dedicate myself to bettering my community, and that commitment led me to Washington, D.C., alongside 103 other delegates. My "one wild, precious life." At first, I doubted myself, questioning my worthiness of such an honor. But then, I embraced the opportunity to dedicate one week of my life to my country, recognizing that such an opportunity validated all of my hard work. It was no coincidence that each of the 104 delegates were selected to attend. My "one wild, precious life." The USSYP showed me that my fellow delegates and I are the future; we have always been the future, and we will establish our one wild, precious life together, with the U.S. Senate Youth Program experience as our foundation for our public service acts.

So, to answer Kamoie's question, with our one wild, precious life, we should all strive to make a difference—big or small—pursue our passions wholeheartedly and contribute to creating a better world for ourselves and future generations.