

USSYP Delegate Essay
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Upon my arrival in D.C., I gazed at all of the buildings and monuments that form the iconic Washington skyline. While passing by the Jefferson Memorial, Capitol Building, Washington Monument, White House, and Lincoln Memorial, I reflected on the history these buildings possess and represent. These structures have stood in our capital city through the good times and the bad. Through times of war and times of peace, economic flourishes and depressions, and they all embody America's history. Although very different from one another by style or structure, the one thing they all have in common is a good, solid foundation that has allowed them to withstand years filled with trials and tribulations. Throughout the United States Senate Youth Program's Washington Week, I realized that the same strong foundations that support these buildings must also be present in our legislative, judicial, and executive branches in order for America to remain the greatest nation in the world.

According to the cycle of generations theory (*Generations*, Strauss and Howe), my generation belongs to the hero generation. A hero generation is born during an era of relative peace and prosperity (I was born in 1994) and spends its rising adult years during a decisive era of secular upheaval (2010 elections). Heroic leaders are considered to have been vigorous and rational institution-builders, busy and competent in old age. All of them entering midlife were aggressive advocates of technological progress, economic prosperity, social harmony, and public optimism (Examples: JFK, MLK) Does that timeline sound familiar to the times we have and are currently experiencing?

When asked where he saw America in 20 years, President Obama stated that he saw it in good hands, but the three major issues that will face the hero generation include healthcare for all and the care of the elderly due to the increasing age of our population; energy options due to increasing demand from our country, as well as developing nations; and the economic stress of a population with an increasing age involving programs such as Social Security.

After reflecting on my experience as a delegate to Washington Week, I realize that America's three branches of government have a strong foundation to come in the future. While I enjoyed the many speakers, I was more impressed with my fellow delegates. Out of 104 student delegates at the United States Senate Youth Program's Washington Week, there is not one person I would not trust the future of our country with. Although I may not agree with all of them, they are all incredible leaders, dedicated to public service, and are all willing to listen to opposing opinions and calmly and rationally discuss many issues. (Maybe Congress should take a lesson from us!) In a group consisting of Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and many more; Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Libertarians, etc; there was not a single time that a voice was raised in frustration or anger. Which considering our Congress comprised of supposedly "mature" adults cannot do the same, leaves a great impression on anyone able to participate in or observe these discussions.

Today in America things such as the economy, healthcare, and international involvement have caused cracks to form in our government's foundation, but America will not crumble because reinforcements are coming to our local, state, and national government as the hero generation nears an age in which they can become the public servants and leaders for whom America has long desired.