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William Randolph Hearst Foundation

United States Senate Youth Program Essay

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Openness

“The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently” – Friedrich Nietzsche

Actively involved in governmental workings, I had the perception that only one party was of value – mine. Early on, Republicans were the “others” – their policies were not people friendly and their character formed by wealth. However, in March of 2011, I participated in the United States Senate Youth Program’s Washington Week, where I met the youth intellectuals and government oriented elite of my generation. That week in Washington D.C., I learned that diversity is a part of both parties and that we have common goals for improving our America. Throughout the week, the delegates and I heard a consistent message from the speakers that stressed civility, strength, and humility. Loudest for me was the call for a life dedicated to public service. As my focus is Law with emphasis on International Studies post-graduation, it is to no surprise that the most impassioned speeches I heard during Washington Week, were those given by Former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals of the Tenth Circuit Robert H. Henry and current Turkish Ambassador to the United States Namik Tan. Judge Henry’s message of honesty and justice resonated with my mission of ensuring that all people in the United States have an equal opportunity to succeed and to live decently. During our personal conversation, I appreciated Judge Henry’s advice on the steps to begin and to pursue my legal career. He reassured my hopes that adults do care about the opinions of youth. Ambassador Tan’s bold and blunt attitude towards... well, all that needs to be said, draws much respect from me as I see my own attitude in the same light. I was thrilled and a little taken back, about his straightforward comments regarding 9/11, Americans’ lack of worldly knowledge, and the prestige of living in the greatest democracy on the planet – which he made sure, we understood “is not an instant coffee”.

The United States Senate Youth Program’s Washington Week changed my life. *Never* before have I been so sure of what I need to do with my life – help others. From Washington Week, I picked four “steps” as keys to success: Take risks: defend principles, make a difference, and be kind. To have gained the insight, to have experienced the tip of the iceberg of the power machine that is Washington D.C., and to have established the connections with one hundred and three other young adults from across this country was a priceless opportunity. The knowledge gained has whetted my appetite for more.

In addition to knowledge, Washington Week has provided resources, confidence, and openness towards each delegate. Each delegate is intelligent, passionate, respectful, and diverse. I respect each of them. Had the critics dashed our Founding Fathers dream of a free nation, I would not be living the life I am today. Today, I am one who urges my friends, family, colleagues, and all those around me to public service: a credit to the United States Senate Youth Program’s Washington Week 2011.

The USSYP Washington Week carries on the flawless message our Founders adopted, E Pluribus Unum – Out of Many, One. Diversity is to be embraced. The nobility of the society in which we live is rooted in the traditional American cornerstone of kindness and tolerance towards those with whom we disagree: A message that the United States Senate Youth Program embraces.

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color” – Maya Angelou