

Jenny Choi - NY - 2011

Under Secretary of State Maria Otero's words probably rang within many delegate's hearts when she said: "See yourself as part of the world. You are one of the most privileged people around the world. You were given high school education as a given. It is a wonderful position to be in." And whether that ringing came with a sense of gratitude, thankfulness, indebtedness, or even guilt, the United States Senate Youth Program was certainly one of those privileges, and yes, for seven days it was indeed a wonderful position to be in.

I do not say that only for the reasons that people exclaimed about the most when I arrived: the number of stars the Mayflower had, the three-course meals, and the luxury of the hotel rooms. I say it because we were given the special privilege to meet 103 of future senators, congressmen, cabinet members, and maybe several Presidents. We were given the special privilege to meet 103 student leaders who were just as interested as ourselves in public service, something that kids across the country these days dismiss as dull and unprofitable. Together, we stayed up until the curfew discussing budget problems, the Middle East upheaval, and the most profound problems of life (A train is running out of control and soon it's bound to hit five people who are tied to the tracks. You can prevent this by turning on a switch, but you would end up killing one person tied to the other track. Would you flip the switch?).

And what's more, we were also given the opportunity to meet dozens of other people who had already committed their lives to public service. We were taken through the deepest alleys of politics and given the chance to participate in a schedule of speakers that any political science major student in college would have died for. We were given the special privilege of being in the presence of the first African-American president of this country, having a Q&A with Justice Thomas, and taking pictures with the mastermind behind the conventional USSYP-er's favorite channel, C-SPAN.

So it was a wonderful position to be in and as a former delegate armed with all the wisdom and knowledge that USSYP presented to me, I still am in a wonderful position. And it is my hope that someday, all 104 of us would meet again on the stage of public service to share that wisdom and privilege with others, to use it to fight for the underprivileged, and to work towards making the nation that we live in a more perfect Union.