

GIV: A Renewal of the Mind, Body, and Soul
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The beauty of this world lies in the unknown, for it ensures educational promise.

I was granted the opportunity to partake in the Governor's Institute of Vermont for Current Issues and Youth Activism (GICIYA). It was more than an experiment; it was an experience. Young minds, ignited with the desire to enact change in the modern world, participated in a two-week excursion that aimed to tackle global issues through advocacy. I acquired exceptional lessons throughout this time period, which extend beyond scholastic lectures and presentations.

Despite the rigidity that was caused by the compactly-organized schedule, we were granted the freedom to choose among several issue groups that would be offered for six days. I was divided between three choices: Politics, World Religion & Conflict, and Leadership. I reflected upon the issues that are highlighted by social media, acknowledging that I did not want to contribute to the discussion; I wanted to lead many to take instant action. Within these two-hour lectures, I was nurtured by the resources that were provided by our instructor, Ken. He was an attentive man with an inspirational life story that was painted upon his passionate presence. His lectures were interactive, as he began to question our personal beliefs with probing remarks

that left many in the search for words. He believed that a knowledge of self was truly important in the path towards effective leadership. He supplied us with video clips, literature references, and mentorship that assessed the impact of gender, birth order, and personality on the ability to properly guide others. In these workshops, I bonded with others that desired to impact their communities. We attempted to debunk the impossible through activities that involved releasing an egg from the ceiling without allowing it to crack and using sheets of paper to create a stand that would not flatten if someone was to stand on it. These tasks, though tedious, taught us the value of creativity, which is losing its appeal in today's society.

As an active member of MUN at my school, I was expecting a structured rendition of past conventions, with passionate representatives and a strict parliamentary procedure. The UN simulation at GIV was a sharp, pleasant contrast. Though it resembled the orderly structure, there was a great ambience amongst the crowd, for many felt comfortable in the relaxed atmosphere. The topic discussed was climate change and its effects on global populations. I represented Indonesia, a nation afflicted by droughts and a declining biodiversity. Every country and NGO spoke on behalf of their needs while tackling the issue from both a short-term and long-term perspective. The nations appeared to verbally attack the United States, since it failed to show demonstrated interest towards the preservation of fossil fuels, witnessed after a history of failed agreements. The representatives in my group managed to negotiate with the U.S.

through the use of lions and diamonds, eventually achieving a settlement. In the Mock Congress, we were faced with the task of either passing, amending, or killing a bill. In this simulation, I was active in terms of proposing new ideas to amend the laws that were already in place. Prepared to portray my ideas, I volunteered to record the changes on an official document for display. When lobbyists came around to rally against each side, we weighed in on their key points to collaborate on our final thoughts.

In this program, I conversed with international students from Iraq, Ireland, Spain, and Germany. I was intrigued by their traditions, including their cultural and linguistic customs. The Irish spoke in regards to housing problems, which have significantly increased the homeless population. The Iraqis discussed the societal impacts caused by misinterpretations towards Muslim culture, a threat that rivals the impact of religious radicals. The Spanish discussed the inescapable history of their nation, which has led to a diminishing display of the national flag.

One of my Spanish friends was strongly against this demonstration, since she did not see the display in terms of its dictatorship past, but as an outlet for her nationalism. Layers of history could not conceal her sentiments towards her birth nation. Apart from these conversations concerning culture, we began to host tea parties in the Gamble building, a dorm that was accessible by all, especially since it had a downstairs lounge area with an ample amount of space.

Our Irish friends brought tea from Ireland and wanted to share their use of milk to make a savory final product. As the week progressed, talented participants began to play the ukulele, as the entire audience sang along to catchy tunes. The topical sessions and various guest speakers were also very impactful. As I reflect upon these moments, I am thankful for the informative sessions that aimed to reach intrinsic peace for all. I retained the habit of meditation and expression through poetry, which I had discarded throughout the academic year.

Although I experienced an unwanted desire to leave Vermont during the first few days, it rapidly diminished with the forthcoming activities. Before attending this program, I was more reserved within my thoughts, confident in the idea that writing was enough to conquer the faults in today's existence. Apart from this, I considerably pushed my INTJ personality to seek friendships, for I have always appreciated the value of interconnection. Though I was reluctant at times, the practice became effortless, as I saw the slightest reflection of myself in the ambitions of others. Subconsciously, I began to raise my hand when proposed with a question, anticipating the echoes of my ideas. I began to acknowledge that seldom question their conservative values until they are fronted with a life-changing experience, an impact that cannot be unseen or unheard. Also, as a Floridian, I was never accustomed to the sight of mountains, which I continuously admired throughout my time at the program. By the end of 14 days, I reached the zenith of my

journey, and I now stand in awe at the world that sits in motionless commotion.