

My week at the LSJI was very enlightening. In the Holy Land, when we hear about the United States we always look at the tall buildings and the pretty lights, but we never talk about the poverty problems and all the issues that come with it. LSJI made me see things through a different light, that even the land of the free has its fair share of problems. Just because a country is politically and economically strong, doesn't necessarily mean everybody's happy and living like royalty. LSJI showed me the environmental and economic issues some people face in their day-to-day life and the struggles they go through to get what most of us simply take for granted. This may seem like a bad experience, but through the trips, talks and reflections that were done during my time at LSJI, I was actually inspired! After the gathering was over, not only did I have a newfound appreciation to what I have and my life, but I also felt empowered and inspired because the program also showed me what's being done to help the people who are long forgotten. I was made aware of all the hard work people put in, in order to help those who have lost everything and are looking to get a new lease on life. Most importantly of all though, I was shown the effect those people have on the homeless population and on their community as a whole. I was shown how the mural arts projects are good ways to bring the community together and beautify the city, how the Aquinas Center is taking care of families, how DePaul and Hopeworks 'n Camden are helping teach the homeless and the youth technical skills in order for them to get a job and support themselves. All these were projects that started small and are now far-reaching with phenomenal results. It made me realize that I too can do all this, I can also make a difference.

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