



**girls
inc.®**

**Girls Inc. trip 2015
Washington, D.C.**

The day arrives!

Today I woke up, took and shower, and was ready to go. - Amari

Today we left our parents and our loved ones to star our journey to Washington, D.C. Everybody seems excited. I sure am. - Aariona

All I know is I am going to have a good time. - Lamyjah

I am so excited to go on this trip. I'm so happy that I get this opportunity. I'm only fourteen years old and I get to do something that half of grown Americans don't get to do – I get to go to the capital and learn my nation's history firsthand...I've decided to turn this trip into a project. I'm going to make a scrapbook with all my pictures and information I learn. - Sara

South Center girls slept at Ms. Tess' house [the night before]. When we got there we ate ravioli and tuna and watched Netflix. We didn't sleep until about 1 in the morning. Then I had to wake up at 4 and didn't leave until 5. After leaving Tess' house we arrived at the North Center and checked in and ate breakfast. After breakfast we got our luggage ready and headed to the side where the giant bus was picking us up...Our driver...is named Mr. Franklin. He's pretty cool. He helped us load up everything. All the suitcases and big bags went on these racks on the side of the bus. After getting our luggage in place we loaded up all of our food, drinks, and coolers. We did so by lining up and sending things down the line and onto the bus. Call that teamwork and we did a great job of it. – JaRaya

I woke up at 4:15 and double checked my bag and I was ready to go. I was very excited to go somewhere I have never been before and have a different experience. – Tasheonna

Even though this year is my first year on the trip, it's awesome. – Keray

This day is always the hardest part for me. I'm a mama's girl – she's the only one who raised me. I'll get over it eventually. - Nicoletta

As soon as we got to Girls Inc. we had to make sure we had everything. We also got to eat breakfast before we loaded the bus. After our breakfast we carried our bags outside. Before long it was tie to say a prayer. After we finished praying it was time to say goodbye. It was pretty hard but I knew it would be okay. Sometimes you just have to let go. - Jada

It is 7:00 Saturday morning and we just left North Girls Inc. To be honest, I will miss my friends and family but I am grateful for being on this trip – enjoying the great food and meeting even more North



Center girls. This year there are more younger girls and I really hope they enjoy the trip as much as I am. – Hinde

So when I hear, “The Bus is here!” I was excited to leave. I couldn’t wait to get out of the state. When I walk outside I see this huge bus, bigger than a school bus. I was scared to get next to it. I thought it was going to transform into a monster. I got onto the bus and saw it was alright and stopped worrying about it. - Destiney

When we left Girls Inc. I was very nervous. I have never been out of state without adult family. – Ajanea

I have to admit it was a little sad seeing everyone leave their loved ones. - Devonna

Today we began our journey of independence. We said our farewells to our parents and we were off. – Elijahiana



Traveling



Truck Stop. – Desy

We spent most of our time on the bus today but I did my best to have fun. – Tati

It was fun watching movies on the bus and making new friends the first day. - Holly

When we got on the beautiful bus Ms. CT talked to us about rules. And I prayed to myself that everyone will follow those rules. – Jada

Today was a learning day for me. I learned about the rules and regulations on the bus, in the hotel, and any other public places. - Lela

The first chance I got I decided to fall asleep. The bus seats are very comfortable. - Hawa

The bus had something wrong...it was something with the oil. We had to stop at Iowa 80. – Tasheonna

With the bus being low on oil, we got to know the World's Largest

Ms. CT announced that a new bus won't come for three hours. I felt like I was going to faint. - Jada

I was grateful we were somewhere with food, A.C., and a restroom... - Ajanea

To me personally, when we went to the truck stop I had fun because at the table my friends and I were making jokes and just laughing away. - Lela

We're on a new bus because something happened to the other bus. We moved all the stuff to the new bus. – Lamyjah

It was a lot of hard working when we had to move supplies to a different bus. - Asnina

Gosh Iowa is long. It's not even a big state looking at t geography-wise but while you're on the road passing through you'd almost start to think you're on your way to Europe instead. - JaRaya

Despite sitting in a gas truck stop for over two hours, I had a lot of fun. I spoke with many of the girls, making them laugh, and we played games. We toured the truck stop which was known to be the world's largest truck stop...Even though some people might consider waiting a misery, I actually enjoyed bonding with the girls...It helped me connect. – Elijahiana

We did a lot of talking, sleeping, and watching movies. – Taylor

We've been on the bus for a very long time. I slept like five or eight times. – Asnina

I can't wait to get in the nice hotel bed and fall into a deep sleep so that I wake up to a whole new day and more adventure. - Jazzmine

Up from the hotel everyone is groggy. All of us girls are tired and when we get on the bus half of us drop dead with our tired selves. – Destiney

This morning the alarm went off at 6:30 but we didn't get up until 6:40. I got my shower last night so all I had to do was get dressed and make sure my room was clean. - Tasheonna

Day 2 – woke up with a smile on my face. - Amari

I can't wait to get off the bus to walk around and give my body some circulation. – JaRaya

We'll be on the bus for a long time but I can handle it. – Lamyjah

Today I slept like a baby on the bus and it was wonderful. - Ajanea

Thank you Ms. Tess and Amina for letting my sisters and I play on their tablets. And obviously I beat all of them. #Winner – Hinde (editorial comment: #Liar☺ - Ms. Tess)

Yesterday when we got to the hotel we had under an hour to have fun at the waterpark. It was so fun that that "under an hour" felt like ten minutes because time flew when you are enjoying yourself...I have never seen, heard of, or been inside a hotel that has a waterpark so to me it was a new and outstanding experience. - JaRaya

After lugging our luggage out of the hotel and onto the bus, most of us passed out. – Elijahiana





We finally got to swim last night! I had a blast. The pool water was warm and comfy. Hawa was skeptical about coming in the water due to past experience from almost drowning. I told her it's OK, you can just stay in the four feet where you can reach. She let me teach her how to stay above water and how to float. I had never done that before but it was a neat experience and important, too. Now, the next hotel we got to, she'll know how to keep from drowning and she won't be scared. It feels good to help people and now when I am not around and she goes swimming, she'll always remember me. I think it is important to make an impact some way, somehow, on someone else's life. Not only does it benefit you by

feeling honored, but it also benefits the other person because whatever you taught them will stay with them for a lifetime. She didn't get the skill of floating down pat but she sure can keep herself above the water. Things I told Hawa while teaching her to swim:

Trust Yourself

Believe in Yourself

Can't isn't in your vocabulary

You never know what you can do until you try - JaRaya

I was talking to the tour guide and he was telling me all the cities he's been to and if he liked his job and just a bunch of different questions...He's an interesting person. - Amari

The Girls

Today we got to see the people we knew from last year's trip. And now it's time for me to meet new girls. - Habiba

My roommates were nice and we got along great. - Elijahiana

Today at lunch I got to sit with girls I wouldn't usually sit with. The result of the switch-it-up – the girls I sat with I mostly knew from Eureka! and from the bus. – Amina

I have to say my roommates are very friendly. We got along and we agreed on everything. We made our decisions as teammates. We were very polite to one another. - Devonna

My friends told me that I need to work on being nicer. – Tati



The people in my room...they're some pretty cool people. – Amari

Jazmine and I exchanged poems because we both have an interest in poetry! Jazzmine's poem that she shared was called "Just Walk in My Shoes." I found her poem very inspiring and powerful. You can't assume anything about anyone until you have spent time in their shoes. I can really relate to Jazzmine's poem because I have been judged [by people] without [them] knowing anything about me. - Amina

The girls are quite nice. - Habiba

The girls are doing very well mixing it up, like Ajanea is learning all of our names and Jada, Taylor, Ariyah, and Lamyjah are being very nice and are doing better than us older girls. – Hinde

I just want to say that every time we have to split u or mix it up, I think it's a great idea because you can learn different things [about girls]...I get to connect more. So I want to shout out to Ms. Tess and Ms. CT for letting us have that opportunity. – Asnina

I learned so much about new girls like Aariona. In never knew that she goes to Burke High School and that she knows my brother, Abdi. She told me that he doesn't get in trouble and I told her, "That's not what the school says when they call home." She said, "Well he is good." Also, I learned that Elijahiana wants to be a pediatrician. She told me she only remembers my name because in second grade she had a girl named Habiba but she was quieter and shy, not like me – loud and talks a lot. - Habiba

I enjoyed everyone's company. Of course we weren't going to get along every second. We're 31 teenage girls. – JaRaya



Taylor is going to be a 7th grader and she told me she is going to play basketball, track, and soccer. Ashay said that she is good at math, reading, and I believe that because she looks like a smart girl to me. Nicoletta, she is a smart teen. She told me she was almost born in African but her mom brought her here to America. I thought she was a mean teen but if you get to know her she is a nice teen... - Habiba

I got to meet with new girls and we said 2 new things about each other. We also played a game about our lives and what we've never done:

Hawa – She has never flown on a plane before. This is her 2nd time on this trip.

Lamyjah – She has only been to Georgia before. She's ridden in a plane ever in her life.

Sherry – This is her first trip ever. She's never been to Steak and Shake.

I'm so glad that I got to meet these girls with different attitudes and personalities. I really do love my Girls Inc. family - Jada

I got to know some things about the North girls. Like Sherry has never been out of Omaha and Ne' and Jada have been playing basketball for three years (since second grade). I enjoy learning about North girls. - Hawa

My partner was Destiney. I learned some new things about her. She loves swimming and chicken fingers. - Keray

I got to know Ossie today. She is very nice and she has a bubbly personality. - Sara

I want to learn more about Hawa, Hinde, and everybody from the South Center because they aren't like the girls at Girls Inc. North. - Destiney

The girls from the South Center are nice and cool. My first impression was that they were going to be conceited and mean but I started talking to them and they were really nice. - Destiney

I didn't know that Jada's dad is Mr. Joe. That's why Jada is always so good at basketball. - Lamyjah

My roommates were very organized. We kept the room cleaned. We never argued about the shower. - Devonna

Something I noticed is that the South girls are very high spirited and you can tell they are very grateful unlike many others. - Sakira

I learned that one of the girls came from Kenya when she was a baby. This is what I love most about the trips. I get a chance to meet and learn about people I normally don't associate with. - Desy



I've been having a good time withal the girls on the trip. Everybody is being real nice and friendly. - Tasheonna

I was grouped with Elijahiana and Devonna. They are girls I've always seen at Girls Inc. but never had a one-on-one conversation with. They are beautiful and nice. We got to know each other. We chit-chatted, laughed, and watched Law and Order together. I felt like we kind of bonded. When our show was over, we slept. - JaRaya

I thought about how Girls Inc. gives girls so much empowerment and courage to be themselves. Many of the girls aren't being themselves because the people around them or their "friends" act one way and they choose to act the same. Many girls don't open up about their personal life and hide behind the shadows of fear and lies because they are fearful someone will judge them. And that's what's wrong with our society...- Sakira

Me and my roommates laughed and joked around most of the time last night. - Tati

I love all of Girls Inc. girls, especially my teens. To me they aren't just "Girls Inc. members." They're my sisters. Girls I want to grow with until we outgrow Girls Inc. I can't wait to see what we'll all turn out to be. I know each and every one of us will be successful because we've all had Girls Inc. in our corner teaching us to be strong, smart, and bold. I love Girls Inc. - JaRaya

Even though there were younger girls we made them feel like part of the family and we helped them with things. – Hinde

I am happy I got to get closer with the staff and my peers. I got to learn more about them. I remember when I first started Girls Inc. I didn't have any associates. Now I do. I am really happy I got closer to my peers. - Kaylonda

[At lunch] we were assigned to sit with someone different. I was assigned to sit with Ossie and we talked. We had so many things in common to talk about. After talking for a long time we became the best of friends. – Elijahiana

We were seated with combined girls because they wanted us to get to know each other. I sat by Habiba, Ashay, and Nicoletta. I learned new things, like they're going to high school and that they have a different culture. - Taylor

The staff grouped us four to a table and we weren't allowed to sit with our familiar friends. Ms. CT grouped us with girls we don't talk to a lot. I got seated with Amina from the South Center and Aariona and Kaylonda from the North Center...I learned that Aariona and I will both be juniors next year and so will Amina. Kaylonda is a year behind us. - JaRaya

Scenery

I love all the trees and all the nice land out here. I would love to have a house out here where it's so quiet...I like the mountains I see. – Tasheonna

We drove on a bridge on top of the Mississippi. It was beautiful. – Taylor

I enjoy looking at the different landmarks I don't see on a day to day basis. - Devonna

I am not a scenery person but I really enjoyed seeing the hills and Appalachian Mountains. - Sakira

I love watching out the window and admiring the beauty of different landscapes. I notice as we get closer to Washington, D.C., the trees are getting taller. I've seen many farm buildings that look like they haven't been touched in years. Sometimes, when I see an old building, I try to come up with a back story for it. - Desy



While driving I see many unfamiliar views. I see hills upon hills upon mist of hills. The abandoned trucks and busses remind me of a couple of scary movies I have seen such as “Wrong Turn” or when girls are hiking in the middle of nowhere and get snatched up by men in scary cars like that...Throughout this trip I’ve been seeing houses out in the middle of nowhere and I just can’t wrap my head around why you would want to live all by yourself with no neighbors or stores around. Imagine if something happened to you. The police would take forever to come unless they were already nearby. Some people would prefer to live in the country, isolated, but not I. I’d be way too scared. That shows how diverse and different we all are. - JaRaya

9/11 – Flight 93 Memorial



Since today is Memorial Day, I remember my grandfather. He was always there for me. He suffered PTSD for 40 years after the Vietnam War. He was a strong man and I love and miss him so much. - Sara

It’s Memorial Day today and today we went to see a memorial. – Tati

Today is Memorial Day. It’s a little emotional for me because there are a lot of deaths in my family. For example, my brother died in the military and my grandpa died on 9/11. He was on one of the planes. – Nicoletta

The heroic passengers of Flight 93 attempted to seize control of the plane from the terrorist hijackers heading for a target in Washington, D.C....All those who died, died with pride and a purpose. - Lela

[I thought] it would be inside like a museum but everything was outside, which was pretty cool...The ranger from the site put a brief video in about Flight 93. I almost dropped a tear when I heard the woman’s voicemail to her husband and kids. Her voice started to get shaky as if she was about to cry and that touched my heart. I can’t even imagine how her husband felt when he heard that voicemail. How did he tell his children? I can’t imagine that pain. I wonder how many times a year their families come out to visit their graves. I wonder if the lady that left a voicemail for her husband, I wonder if her children are grown. If they were little when she passed away, I wonder if they remember her face, voice, smell, etc... - JaRaya

It was just sad to see. - Holly

A lot of people lost their lives on the day of that crash so I really want to take the time to thank God for letting me stay alive and be on this marvelous trip. – Jada



The girls, when I looked at their faces, they looked shocked about what happened... - Habiba

I can't imagine how hard it must be to make that call or leave a message for your loved ones saying you're not going to make it home or you don't know what's going to happen. My heart goes out to everyone's family who lost a loved one. - Devonna

Hearing all of this makes me appreciate more and more that I have both of my parents still alive and that I'm still alive. - Amari

We watched a video first. The video briefly discussed what happened with Flight 93. There was also a recording that made me a bit emotional. A flight attendant, Cece Ross Lyles, left a heart-wrenching message. She left a message stating how she was on a hijacked plane and how she loved her husband and children so much. As I listened to the audio, I started to get emotional because I couldn't imagine the pain she went through leaving her family that message. - Elijahiana



The Flight 93 Memorial made me sad. They knew they were going to die either way, but they chose to stop the plane from hitting the nation's capital, which took huge bravery... - Sara

I think that the Flight 93 video was good and I learned something new. - Tasheonna

If I was in that plane I would be so scared cause I'm not planning to die on a plane...We went to the place where the plane landed and got to see all of the names on a wall. - Keray

The video made me really emotional...I think all of them were brave when they made the choice to take down the terrorists. - Aariona

It made me feel good to know people have courage. - Ajanea

A most tragic event. I learned that it was a group of terrorists on a suicide mission. The target was Washington, D.C. but crashed in Pennsylvania. The plane was going 536 mph into the ground so there was nothing left but the bones, ashes, and [black] box. Those poor people didn't deserve that so I would like to pay my respect. - Fatuma

I never thought I would be so touched by something that has nothing to do with me...God bless that crew, passengers, and their families. - Desy

I learned a lot today. I didn't even know there was a fourth plane...I took a lot of... pictures. - Taylor



I learned even more about the terrorist attack. I am glad they have pictures, names, and DNA. Feel really sorry for the people on the plane. – Hinde

They are heroes because they saved the White House from being blown up. – Lamyjah

The Flight 93 National Monument is beautiful. What happened to those innocent people was not fair at all... - Destiney

It was sad because none of those people should have died. – Ossie

There were a lot of people that died. One that stood out to me was the woman with the unborn baby. - Tati

9/11 has left a huge impact on many people's lives in the U.S. To see the courageous passengers of Flight 93 fight, not for themselves but for many other lives that day, is purely inspiring and amazing. 9/11 impacted American lives differently from how it impacted Muslim Americans. Through my school years, I've learned that I have become a target for 30 pairs of laser eyes in my classes. Because my classmates believe they are "Muslims," and I am as well, that I should now be at fault. Even though I wasn't even in the country at the time. I am at fault because some idiotic "non-Muslims" believe it's OK to take lives, and also as easy as taking candy from a baby. My sophomore year of high school I joined the Poetry Club at my school, and I wanted to emphasize and write [about] how I feel about terrorists and their actions – how their actions have impacted and destroyed the Islamic image...Now all Muslims are believed to be terrorists. I wrote a poem called "Dear Terrorists" and it was a huge success. I won my bout with this poem, scoring scores of 9.3, 9.6, 9.8, 8.4, and 9.0! This poem I wrote because it not only captured my feelings and disgust towards terrorists from a Muslim perspective, but for all 15 million Muslim voices around the world. By winning my bout, I got my team to qualify for the semi-finals. My poem was very powerful and many people have come up to me to comment on it. They really weren't expecting or ever heard a terrorist poem, or any type of Muslim girl rejecting fellow members of her religion. My poem...:

Dear Terrorist,
I'm tired.
I'm tired of others hearing Islam and assuming terrorism, Muslim and assuming terrorist,
Of feeling guilty on the anniversary of 9/11 – your celebration!
Every year I dread this day, wanting to disappear from history.
Two or three pairs of eyes shooting beams through my hijab,
A shield I use to protect myself from their judgments and questions.
As if people don't stare at me every day.
Expressions mixed with resentment and dancing all over my classmates' faces.
Saying your people did this.

Disgust simmering from below their skin, ready to explode because they think I am proud of the actions of a few individuals who've lost their way but still claim to be Muslim.
My head spins with the 9/11 pictures flying up on the smartboard.
Jumpers frozen in time.
30 pairs of accusing eyes condemning me to a person I am NOT.
The teacher's voice fades.
Then anger, helplessness, and misunderstandings boil up my blood like a volcano ready to explode.
Representing 15 million Muslim voices around the world, I want to yell
MUSLIMS ARE NOT TERRORISTS and
TERRORISTS ARE NOT MUSLIMS.
But the world won't listen.
The world can't judge Islam based on non-Muslims, non-Muslims who've fallen so far from the glorious tree of Islam that they have become food for the decomposers and shelter for the insects.
Islamophobes created Islamophobia and terrorists reinforced it.
Both motivated by hatred and ignorance, while trying to spread their distorted ideologies and fears at knife point.
How can I practice my religion when major parts of my identity as a Muslim were effaced?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
You've snatched 15 million of our religion and you call yourself one of us?
You've taken innocent lives.
9/11 2001, nearly 3,000 people died.
2 planes swooping down like vultures who've spotted their prey.
LITTLE MUSLIM KIDS CAN'T EVEN PLAY WITH PAPER AIRPLANES because they are seen as TERRORISTS IN TRAINING.
History repeating.
Boston Marathon, 2 bombs, 3 dead, and 264 injured.
Runners went from running in a marathon to limping in amputations for the rest of their lives.
And YOU call yourself a Muslim.
MUSLIMS are PROHIBITED to take their own lives let alone take others!
How many lives did Islam tell you to take?
Zero.

- Amina

Gettysburg

Our tour guide, "Sir Gar Phullip," did a great job of guiding us and explaining everything. - JaRaya

The Gettysburg battle was the bloodiest in U.S. history... Our tour guide told us about General Lee's tactics to close in on the Union. We were also able to view the entire battlefield from a beautiful point...Overall the day was memorable and I was proud to pay my respects to the honorable people who served this country. – Elijahiana



When it comes to the topic of 9/11 I get really emotional because of the fact that the horrible people who took away the lives of innocent people were claiming to be Muslim. That gives all of us Muslims a bad image and sets us to look like bad people. - Hawa

The black canons were made of iron. – Tasheonna

We got to see the monuments of the battle instead of just learning facts. – Sara

It was so cool to stand on a battlefield where soldiers died or were hurt. The only battlefield that I've been on was on the video game Call of Duty...I think [the tour guide] did a very good job. - Jada



The stairs in the building we went in just about killed me. I'm scared of heights so looking down made my legs tingle. There were rocks upon rocks, hills upon hills. Our tour guide made a joke and said, "I always tell people this park rocks." LOL. It was low key funny...Today was very adventurous...Despite all of the walking and burning heat, it was all interesting. I've learned so much today. I already knew a lot of what we were talking about it but it was so much better to match a real life experience to what you see in the books in school. It was quite magnificent, as Ms. Tess put it. - JaRaya

When we stopped where the battle was, to know we were standing right where soldiers died...It was weird but amazing at the same time. I love having these kinds of opportunities. - Amari

Mount Vernon



Today we had an amazing tour guide show us around Mount Vernon – where the father of our country, first president, and guy on the \$1 bill, George Washington, lived. - Hinde

I learned that Washington's house was built in 1775. - Lela

We learned a lot about George Washington's life, family, and how he felt about slavery. – Amina

[George Washington] died in his bed. – Lamyjah

Martha was in charge of the home. - Desy

George Washington often had travelers stay at his house. Washington's mansion had ten bedrooms. The beds would be filled with straw. – Tati

Some facts about George Washington: He wore false teeth...He was the richest president. We did a hike around his plantation and his house. His house is a mansion and it was beautiful. There are so many things I would love to have in my house. – Jada

We saw the bed and bedroom George Washington died in...We saw George and Martha Washington's tombs – Kaylonda

George had a huge farm on his land and used to plant tobacco but then he changed to wheat. – Fatuma



Our tour guide was very polite. He gave us good facts to take back home. - Devonna

Mount Vernon was really an education....We learned a lot of different things about George Washington. He served to terms and he adopted two of his wife's grandkids whose parents died. He was a business man and owned a lot of land. He had 4 farms and had a slave cemetery.... I learned what his favorite ice cream was. Chocolate. – Tasheonna

I learned that George Washington owned slaves and was for slavery, but changed his mind after they fought behind him...I learned that George Washington's grandson and his wife were the last people to own Mt. Vernon.

We went to the slave quarters and saw some of the crops that were grown. Also we went to the slave memorial where all of the slaves were buried. We had a moment of silence to remember them. – Elijahiana

You know kids expect more from their parents and I can't lie, I do that, too. Like we kids nowadays want new things but we don't know that kids back then used to be slaves at the age of 11. That means they had to work all day. They don't even get paid for all of the work they have done. - Habiba

I felt disgusted when the tour guide told us about how they just buried the slaves that died and didn't give them respectful burials. - Desy

We went to the slaves' home, where they lived. It is sad to see your kind living in a small, cramped cabin...We went into the beautiful mansion with nice chairs, colors, and supplies. We went to every room...the garage, horse cabin, slave cabin, meat smoker, kitchen, bedrooms, closes, and any more...When you walked outside you could see the beautiful river...There was a beautiful garden with vegetables still growing. - Taylor

I thought about how it was for people back then compared to how it is now. If someone wants something nowadays they can just go to the store but back then it wasn't that easy. They had to hunt. - Devonna

White House

It has been my dream to see things like this. - Jada

The heat of all the walking was worth the education. - Nicoletta

Before we went to the White House, we stopped at the White House visitor center. We watched a video about living in the White House. Many first ladies and presidents spoke...Many of them said that the house was majestic and that the events held at the White House [held them in] awe...There were many people crowded around the gates of the White House and there were also protesters against starvation, etc...The White House symbolizes our nation. - Elijahiana

I love learning about presidents and presidential history. - Sakira

Today was just a little heartbreaking because of my older brother...When I visit these places it makes me feel better because I know he is in a better place and that he fought for our freedom and for our rights...I talked to my mom about going into the military but she was afraid of losing someone she loves again. - Nicoletta

Sometimes I have to stop and make myself remember that the President is just like we are. When his term is over, he will return to civilian life just like all of us. - Sara



The White House looks much prettier in real life. – JaRaya

I was glad I got to see it in person. - Keray

As an African American woman, I enjoyed the view of the White House – seeing the place where the first black president lives. - Devonna

It was a lot smaller than I thought [it would be]. - Desy

The house was beautiful. [It was surrounded by] red roses and green grass. - Taylor

It looked so different in real life than it does in pictures...We went to the White House even though Barak didn't want to come out and see me, his best friend, it was still an amazing site to see. - Hinde

I learned that the White House is more than just where the President lives. – Tasheonna

Memorials and D.C.

We are going to see the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, Lincoln's Memorial, the Korean War Veterans' Memorial, MLK National Memorial, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, and Jefferson Memorial. - Lela

We started with the Lincoln Memorial and I was elated to go on the steps to see a giant marble statue of Lincoln. It was bigger than I thought it would be. And I never knew the words of the Gettysburg Address were written on the walls inside the memorial. I also never knew where Martin Luther King stood to give his "I Have a Dream" speech...I felt inspired by all of the memorials. – Elijahiana

My...favorite memorial is the Lincoln because he was so big in stature and was good looking as in handsome. – Fatuma

My favorite was Lincoln's because of how big his statue is...I felt very little. - Hawa



My favorite monument was the MLK monument...it's way bigger in person. – Aariona

They were all cool. - Keray

We visited many memorials...I learned a lot of information about our presidents and important documents. Some of the important structures that have seen in videos in story class and pictures? I finally got to see them in real life! I sometimes couldn't believe I was actually there. I thought I was dreaming. Thanks to Mr. Raffin I learned many things about the presidents and our country! Although it was a lot of walking, it was worth it! – Amina

It is fantastic, the history behind our country. -
Ajanea

I loved all of the monuments and sights we saw but my favorite was Martin Luther King's because of his powerful speeches and the difference his non-violent marches made. He was important back then and he is still important today. - JaRaya

What I enjoyed most about today was the Martin Luther King Memorial. I thought it was very well made and I loved the displayed quotes. This reminds me of when we went to Memphis last year to visit the place [where] MLK [was assassinated]. I really enjoy learning about African American history. - Sakira



We took the time to stop and pay our respects to a few very important people in history. - Ossie

I like the quote, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." - Asnina

My favorites were the Lincoln Memorial and the Martin Luther King Memorial...because they had a lot to do with civil rights and our freedom. - Devonna

The Washington monument was the tallest building in the world for 5 years until the Eiffel Tower [was built]. - Desy

Our tour guide told us it's a law in Washington that you can't build a building taller or wider than the street it's on. - JaRaya

Our tour guide said if you were black you couldn't stay in the hotels downtown. I think that's really mean and very, very crazy because I think if you are paying, you should be able to stay there. - Tasheonna

Our tour guide told us a story about him and his friends going out to eat and the server said, "We don't serve Negroes." This touched my heart and made me think how badly my people were treated. I will never be able to understand slavery. - JaRaya

Our tour guide, Mr. Ruffin, taught us so much and took us through all of the important things in D.C. He did a great job...I appreciate his time...Mr. Ruffin was amazing. Hopefully he stays in touch with us. - JaRaya

We also went to the building of the National Archives. I saw the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights...I wasn't able to read the documents but when I get back to the hotel I'm going to look up the full things and I'm going to try to get a better understanding of my rights.
– Sara

It was crowded and very loud. We had to wait our turn...I saw the founding documents of our nation...The Constitution, you could barely make out the words...It was very cool. - Holly

I really like that every block you would turn there would be somebody doing something – maybe it's singing, dancing, playing an instrument...It really didn't matter but they were just doing it for a cause. – Jada

Today in Washington, D.C. I walked without complaining even though I have a bad leg... - Jazzmine

Arlington National Cemetery



When we first got to the cemetery the head stones reminded me of my grandpa's headstone. He served in the Vietnam War. There was a big boom we heard when we first got to the cemetery. I heard those when my grandpa died. It kind of brought back memories but it was still nice. – Tasheonna

Famous people such as John F. Kennedy and his family are buried here. We also saw the Changing of the Guard and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. – Elijahiana

We watched the old guard be relieved of his duty; then they got a new guard. – Tati

It was interesting how stiff and straight they walked and didn't mess up once! - Amari

The guard change was interesting and quiet...It takes a lot of practice and some people don't even get to do the change. It is an honor so you are really lucky if they choose you. – Fatuma

The African American Civil War Museum

The museum had incredible artifacts and documents. – Elijahiana

People should visit the African American Civil War Museum...The heroes should be remembered and appreciated. - Devonna

In the museum, a man showed us a video and then let us look at the boards of history...What I read that disgusted me was that they had auctions that auctioned off black slaves. We are humans, not cars or any other objects. How do you "sell" a human? We are not property...To know such acts went on actually disgusts me. – JaRaya



There were thousands of colored men and boys that fought. Out of all of those thousands, there were only four women that fought. - Destiney

I think it is amazing that there were black soldiers and Navy members. I think that is very brave of them...I think it is very, very good to have...black people who fought for our country even though we were discriminated against...Kansas was the first northern state to organize a regiment of African descent...This is significant to me because this is close to home and I think it is cool. – Tasheonna

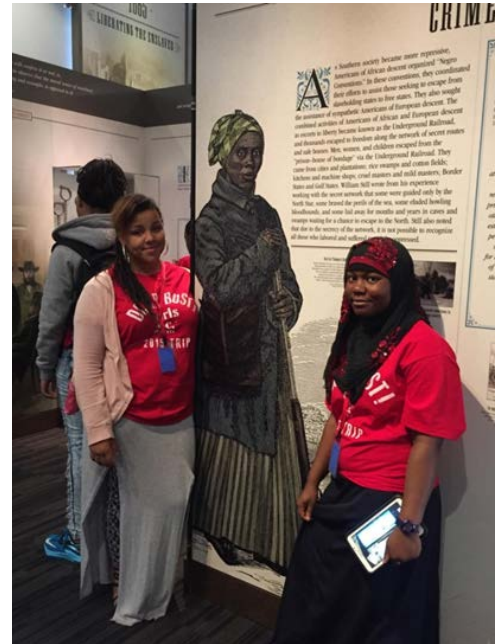
I am thankful for the people who actually helped us try to end slavery. - Fatuma

One thing that I did realize was that a quote on the wall said, “Assault of the Second [First] Louisiana (Colored) Regiment of the Confederate

Work on Fort Hudson, May 27th 1863,” which just happens to be the anniversary today. - Sakira

I got some post cards for my mom and dad. They had African Americans before us on them. I know that my mom and dad will love them. – Tati

I am just full of thank you's and love for those slavery fighters and say “thank you.” - Hinde



The United States Capitol

Another symbolic building to represent our country. The building had many marble and bronze statues in the hall – one given by each state. One of the people from Nebraska invented Arbor Day to celebrate the love of trees. I loved the elegance of the hall called The Crypt. - Elijahiana

It was very nice...I loved the inside. I liked all of the statues of the people from different states. I do not know who William Jennings Bryan is. I am going to look into him. – Tasheonna

I really enjoyed being on the tour and learning about the symbolic meaning of the statues. Our guide at the Capitol building did a good job explaining the meaning of



everything. – Sakira

It was very interesting history, like the fact that it was burnt during the War of 1812, the same time they burnt the White House. – Hawa

I enjoyed going to the Capitol and learning about the branches [of government]. – Devonna

Outside there was a lady that was doing freedom of speech and she was talking about they shouldn't allow gay marriage... - Habiba

If I had a statue, my history would be, "The lady who had courage and followed her dreams and was a leader at Girls Inc." - Asnina

The Library of Congress



The Library of Congress was beautiful. I love to read and write. – Elijahiana

The inside of the Library of Congress was breathtaking. – Desy

To check out books you had to be 16 or older. – Aariona

It was very beautiful and had the first Bible made of lambskin. - Hawa

Girls Inc. of Washington, D.C. (on Howard University Campus)

I loved going to see the Girls Inc. I thought the girls were really nice and I got an idea. Someone asked if they took trips and they've been on trips around D.C. So I am going to talk to Ms. Roberta about raising money to send them on a trip. I just want to give my Girls Inc. sisters the chance to get out and live a little. - Desy

I am thankful that our Girls Inc. center is big and we have multiple rooms to do our activities. – Tasheonna



[We met] the other girls at Girls Inc. D.C. and they were telling us what time they got out of school. I was just amazed and thankful for the time I get out of school. - Amari

I was very interested in learning about what they do. Today they had 10 girls. That's shocking because I'm used to being around 100 for the most part. The girls were very friendly. - Devonna

We went to the other Girls Inc. We are all different. - Taylor

The D.C. Girls Inc. girls seem really shy compared to our girls. We are really jumpy and very energetic...Their Girls Inc. is really nice and colorful. - Asnina

I got to tell [the girls] about the South Center and introduce myself...We have some similarities like we visited some of the same places. I was impressed. Hopefully their construction gets built so more girls have the opportunity to go because I want every girl to be strong, smart, and bold. - Fatuma

Howard University has a beautiful campus. - Sara

It was very interesting to know there's a school mainly for blacks which is high in the PhD category. I put it to consideration to go there. - Hawa



Ben's Chili Bowl



Today I was very inspired by our historian at Ben's Chili Bowl. He spoke very well and was very informative. - Amina

People from all over the world come to Ben's Chili Bowl. - Jazzmine

Even though we are all different, we all had fun there and we all sang and talked. - Ossie

It was way beyond what I expected...Here at the Chili Bowl you are welcomed in and there's cups and bowls already set up on the tables. They first serve you with

fries, chili, & cheese and then you choose what you eat, order it, and receive your meal in no time...The food I ordered was absolutely delicious. - JaRaya

Lots of famous people eat there. I am not surprised - the place has great food. - Nicoletta

I had the jumbo dog with chili and cheese. It was really good. - Ajanea

It was kind of spicy. – Taylor

It was yummy. I got a beef dog. It's just chili cheese with a hot dog. - Jada

I was a little hesitant at first but it is always good to try new things. - Devonna

Was happy to get a picture with the manager. - Hawa

We learned a little history about the Chili Bowl and the famous people that went there. One of the famous people was Barack Obama and he gets to eat there free! - Fatuma

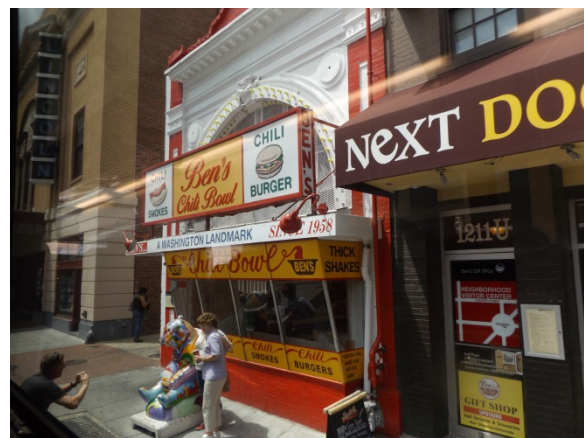
Ms. CT bought us all t-shirts and post cards. - Tati

Ben's Chili bowl has been in existence for more than 50 years. Ben and his wife opened a little shop in what used to be a silent movie theater. I am most definitely in awe of how many celebrities have been to the place. Even the President came to eat there! In 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The assassination of the peace leader brought many riots throughout the nation. All businesses were made to close but the President at that time allowed Ben's Chili Bowl to be open and it was the only restaurant that was open. – Elijahiana

They had an amazing chili. – Hinde

I was excited when I realized I got a Ben's Half Smoke, the same thing Barak Obama got!!! - Aariona

I really enjoyed the guy who spoke to us on the street. It's cool how he took time out of his day to stop and talk to us when it was clear he had somewhere to be... I feel he is a present day black male who has made something of himself and is an example that blacks can do it – be someone and a better example for guys whose focus isn't on the right things. - Sakira



Ms. Symone



We were reunited with Symone Sanders. She was a fellow Girls Inc. member starting at the age of 10. She has now graduated school and college. Even though Symone was the talkative one, she still believed in herself like everyone else should. Ms. Sanders now lives in Virginia near Washington, D.C....One thing I liked about Symone was that she was very beautiful and had a big smile on her face... - Hinde

I'm thankful for meeting Ms. Symone. – Devonna

I think that talking to Ms. Symone was very empowering. It shows that women of color can get there and be involved with things in the government...For her to have made it this far in her life is really great. It really makes me want to strive more, strive harder. She's truly a role model and someone I will look up to forever. I am very thankful for her speaking to us. – Sakira

She is working two jobs because Washington is expensive. She went to college at Creighton...She is beautiful. When she first came to see us I thought she was just a random pretty lady but I hope to see her again. Maybe at Omaha Girls Inc. - Habiba

She's very nice and very beautiful. She encouraged us not to give up and to try hard. If she can do it, we can do it. She also gave me the bravery to have more than one job. So love you and thank you, Symone. - Fatuma

We met Ms. Symone Sanders. She was very nice. She talked about how it was hard coming to D.C. She talked about college and how she has to handle all of these jobs. She took a picture and that was very nice of her. – Taylor

I hope I become just like her. - Keray

Symone's story was very inspiring...I actually look up to her. - Hawa

I was excited to see Ms. Symone today. She is always sharing inspiring stories that affect my future choices. – Desy

I learned today that Symone went to Girls Inc. and she is very smart, tireless, confident, and intelligent. - Asnina

Symone inspired me...She talked about her daily life and her come up. Symone used to live in Omaha and recently moved to D.C. for work and



school. Symone has no family here in D.C. and she hasn't been home in months. Symone has an extremely busy life. She has two jobs, helps in the community, gives back to the community, works with youth and goes to school on top of that and everything else. Something interesting she told us is that many people don't live in D.C. they just work there. Symone made me realize any and everything is possible. She's an inspiration to Girls Inc. Someone to look up to. I hope to see her again one day. – JaRaya

When someone started tearing up, it made me tear up a little. - Nicoletta

The Holocaust Museum

We stopped at the Sculpture Garden on the way to the Holocaust Museum. I thought that the sculptures were amazing and I hope that I can become that talented in my artwork...There was a baby duckling that came up so close to us and it was so cute. - Sara



Today we went to the Holocaust Museum and it was very life-changing. In front of the building there was a poster that said, "NEVER AGAIN." These words were repeated by many historical leaders in various countries that have had a genocide of a race! When the Holocaust was going on, and later on ended, leaders said, "NEVER AGAIN" but the Rwandan genocide was happening right under their nose, and many more have come after that. History repeats itself and no one is noticing or doing anything about it. I want to change history so it does not repeat itself. Some people are too busy with their own lives to care to change the world. Through Girls Inc.,

I will change the perspective of women in the STEM field with Eureka! I will change the perspective of the Islamic image. I will change the perspective of a Bantu girl; I intend to make a difference: change or BUST! (Thanks to Ms. Tess for explaining the meaning of "or BUST" on the Girls Inc. t-shirt!) – Amina

Today we learned about the Holocaust. My [great] grandma was alive when it happened...On June 12 she'll be turning 98 years old. – Nicoletta



It was emotional but it reminded me how good we have it. - Jazzmine

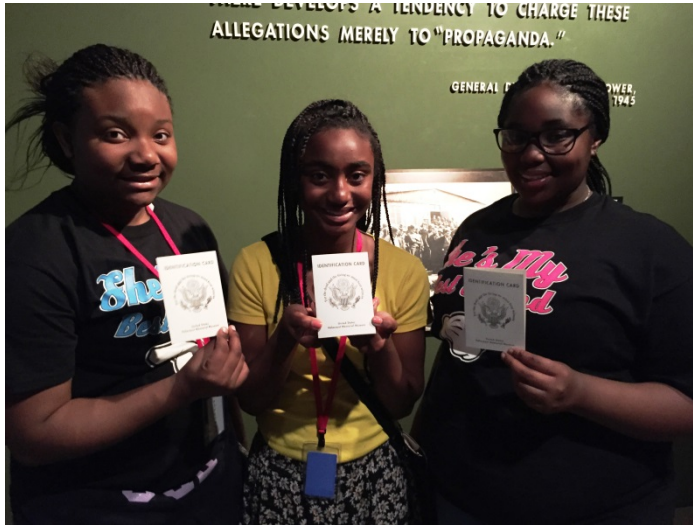
The museum was very somber...I had lots of questions but this one book helped me. I read what the survivors wrote...My buddy was Ms. Tess. She helped me with everything and she answered all my questions. - Fatuma

What happened to these unfortunate souls was very sad. It breaks my heart just to hear the name Holocaust. – Destiney

This got me in my feelings. - Lela

I was deeply affected by the stories of Holocaust survivors. It made me realize how good I have it and how blessed I am. Sometimes I lose sight of how blessed I am and how hard my parents work so I have clothes, shelter, food, water, and things I want but don't need. - Desy

"Evil happens when good people do nothing." That goes for bullying, bystanders, anything. I really liked that quote. - Hinde



I learned that during the time of the Holocaust the United States did not allow any Jews, Germans, and any immigrants from the general area [into the U.S.] because they were scared that Germans would send secret agents. Finally in 1936 the U.S. started allowing immigration from the area to enter. 580,000 immigrants entered but a very small percentage of them were from the controlled Nazi concentration camps. - Sakira

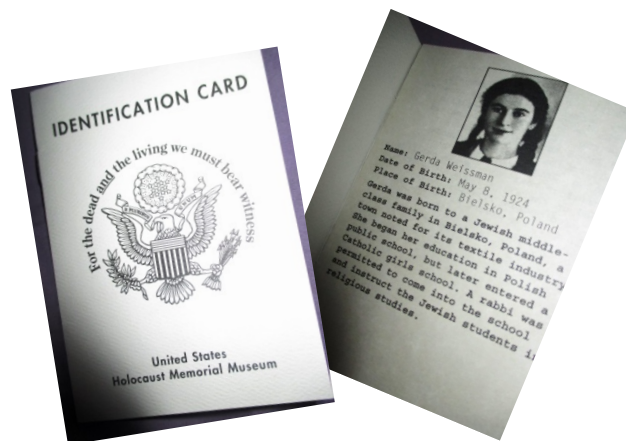
I spent more time in the speaking room because hearing the stories of some of the victims that survived was emotional and brutal...Now that I have actually been to the

Museum, I have a much better perspective of...the Holocaust. - Elijahiana

This museum put me in my feelings. To think someone can think and do such things disgusts me. Poor Jews. They didn't deserve that kind of inhumanness. - JaRaya

Something that I learned was that the women and girls stopped menstruating because of the lack of nourishment they were getting. - Aariona

At the Holocaust Museum, many people threw away their identification and I thought that everyone should have kept theirs. This is a very historic place that I don't want to forget. I want to keep my identification card to remember this time. - Sakira



Food



It's almost time for lunch that Ms. Donna has so kindly prepared for us. - Aariona

Our first stop was supposed to be the mall. Instead we decided to picnic outside so that we'd have more swim time...The picnic went very well. We ate chicken and fruit and potato salad, pickles, and water to wash it all down. – JaRaya

For lunch we went to a park to eat. It was full of Cottonwood trees. The cotton was everywhere. We ate fried chicken and potato salad. A lot of us attempted to hide from the bugs! I really loathe them. - Ajanea

The food was good but there was one problem – the bugs that got into our food. One bug went into Hawa's nose and I was just laughing really hard because her eyes went big... - Habiba

We had a really good breakfast. We had eggs, sausage, donuts, and more. – Tati

I've been eating the same breakfast for days: eggs, jelly, and toast or biscuits. My favorite. – Aariona

Breakfast was delicious. – Hawa

I had a waffle. It was great! - Amari

We just got back from Steak and Shake. The food was good. – Tasheonna





delicious. - Hawa

For dinner I had sushi. – Aariona

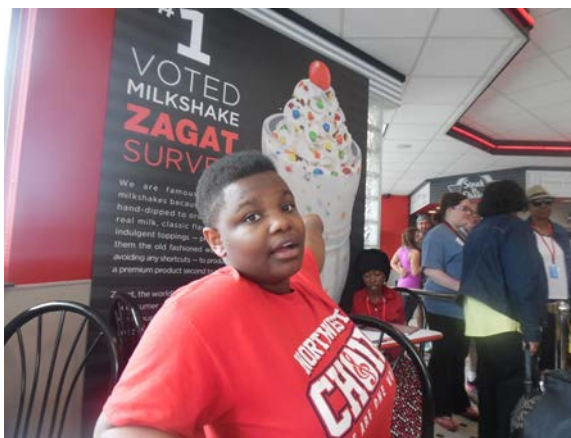
Dinner was my favorite part of the day. I was so hungry I could eat a cow. It feels so good to be full and still have LEFTOVERS! – Ajanea

Dinner was great. Everybody was laughing, having conversations with people they usually don't! Trying food I've never tried before. - Amari

Amina ordered a spicy BBQ burger which she could barely eat because it was so hot. It was so hot her eyes were watering. - JaRaya

Today for breakfast I had waffles, scrambled eggs, and ham. - Tati

Now I know that the person who keeps farting is Steak and Shake's fault. - Hinde



This was the first time I ever drank a shake... - Habiba

We just ate at Steak and Shake. It was the bomb. I wish Nebraska had it but they don't. - Lamyjah

After we were eating we all got in front of Steak and Shake and took pictures. It was funny watching all my friends try to get the little paper hats on. - Tati

I am thankful for the meals we've had. – Elijahiana

Lunch today was great. I ordered something new, the taco salad. It was

The Water Park and Six Flags

The grey clouds forever more around us, mocking us with rainfall...As I desperately want to go to Six Flags that option seems to get further away from us because of the weather. As I see the clouds start to break, I hope more and more we can attend Six Flags today! – Sakira

This weather is like our mood swings. It would rain one minutes and the sun would peek out five minutes later. - Nicoletta

Six Flags was amazing. I had a good time. The first ride I got on was Batman. I don't scream, I laugh on the rides. – Tasheonna

We went on many rides, scary rides. My favorite one was the Batman. It's an extremely fast ride that goes around and upside down. Your seatbelt is between you and there's another metal seatbelt on your shoulders. Your feet hang and when your feet go down it feels like your heart goes in your stomach. – JaRaya

I was so terrified because of the big drops on the roller coasters. But it was an amazing day. - Lela

At first I didn't want to go in because I am scared of slides that the bottom but then my great friends (shout out to them!) convinced me to go with them. Hinde and I got floats and went around the pool. OMG it was so fun. Raya and Asnina were chasing us. I missed my family so much but I'd rather miss them than this opportunity. – Hawa

The water park was my favorite. - Jada

I was so happy. My friends and I rode all by ourselves several times in the front, back, and middle. I had lots of fun today. – Ajanea

My face was jiggling on the roller coaster and I almost cried. – Keray

I was on a roller coaster for the very first time in my life. It was amazing. - Holly

I rode almost all the rides that were open. It was so much fun. – Tati

We got on some different rides. Some made me sick. - Jada

I had an amazing time. I finally faced my fear of heights. We had the choice of either go to the hotel or continue to Six Flags because of the rain. Facing my fear was a big achievement for me. - Devonna

I went on all most all of the roller coasters and it's funny because two years ago I wouldn't have even gone near one. I'm so glad I faced my fear last year because I had so much fun at Six Flags. – Sara

I had a great time at Six Flags even though Amina and I just walked around. I learned a lot more about her... - Jazzmine

I went on a Thunder ride. It was fun. I got wet but it was the time of my life...Overall, I had a magnificent time. - Fatuma

It was so fun. We went to the Batman, Screaming Eagle, and many more. - Taylor

I had a lot of fun. I didn't want to go at first because I wasn't feeling the excitement and when I got on the first ride I was scared. Then it went up and I started to get hyped. We had the best time...I had fun walking with Kaylonda and going on rides with her. We went to the Arcade and we won 583 tickets. I got a tiara and more. - Destiney

...It was exciting. I'm proud of myself. I rode my first roller coaster and I helped Destiny face her fears of roller coasters. She told me she had fun...- Kaylonda

Obviously I rode a lot of roller coasters. I also got a picture drawn of me and I looked beautiful. – Hinde

I honestly didn't want to go but I did and I had so much fun. My favorite thing was the water boat ride. We got so wet and soaked but it was worth it. It felt like we were taking a shower in a boat. - Hawa

I had a blast with my friends. We all tried different rides that we often try to avoid. - Desy

I got on almost all the rides and I was happy because I had fun on this trip. – Ossie

Six Flags was extraordinary. We made an attempt to get on all of the rides. The lines were short – that was cool. It was fun bonding and screaming our heads off. It was fun. I want to thank Ms. CT for allowing us to go because many of us didn't deserve it. - Sakira

It was so fun. My favorite roller coaster was the Screaming Eagle. Then it was Batman. Then Six Flags. Then the Joker. Then the Ninja. The reason why Ninja is last is because the seats were uncomfortable, like my head was shaking back and forth and I had a headache. - Lamyjah

Learning

When I was younger, I was the shy kid. I always was glued to family and didn't really like talking to people. Now I have set a goal – my goal is to meet at least 2 new people wherever I go. My dad always tells me it's not what you know, it's who you know. – Desy

The thing I like most of all is gaining respect, friendship, and a bond between me, the staff, and girls I knew and girls I just met. - Lela

This trip has given me and Ossie both the opportunity to read



more than we usually do. We're both reading awesome books and this will also help me with my summer project for AP English as a junior. – Sakira

I love history. – Sara

How can we say we don't like something if we never try it? It's like Ms. CT always says, "Try something new and you might like it." – Jazzmine

When I go back to school (at North) there won't be a lot of kids who can say they went to Washington, D.C. to visit the White House or see John F. Kennedy's grave...I realize how much I've learned and the chances I'm getting being able to do all the things I'm doing...There's always something new to learn. – Hawa

This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see everything and everyone who contributed to making America the powerful country it is today...and [to learn] about America, and the people who sacrificed themselves for the brighter future of this country. I have realized that America has its own life! America is a place and a land, but could've easily been a person. A person who had a lot of support from his family – presidents and its people – to get to where it is now. It would've never gone far if it had no support. The Constitution by which American functions is a quote, or a long phrase, which it lives by. For me, I love quotes, especially the ones that inspire me the most. I have a quote I always remind myself of when I'm going through something hard or complicated. Most of the time, I ask myself, "Why is this happening to me?" and the quote always answers me, "Allah will not give you challenges if he knows you couldn't handle them, and also to better yourself, and learn as you grow!" Another quote I live by is "Never look down on someone unless you're helping them up." I don't know who the author of this quote is, but he/she has inspired me in an unimaginable way! Like the Constitution is a way the U.S. functions and acts, and lives by it – I live on these two quotes and many



more. If I had a book of quotes that inspired me, it would probably be as long as the Constitution! America also has soldiers to fight off the enemy. I have enemies, like anyone who's doing something RIGHT does, and my family are soldiers. – Amina



This trip opened my eyes to realize that my life isn't so bad. This trip helped me by educating me more; toughening me up; made my legs stronger...- Nicoletta

One day I want to go to Greece to study Greek mythology. – Holly

What I learned on this trip is life is too

short to be mean to each other. – Kaylonda

I'm a writer. I express my feelings through words, through the ink of my pen, and the lead of my pencil. Instead of the feelings streaming out of my eyes, I let it flow out of the palm of my hand. - Sara

I say you don't have to dress up to impress somebody...You have to know yourself and know what you're worth to somebody. And if they don't accept you for who you are, then they don't know what kind of diamond they are dropping for no reason. - Destiney

Get out of Omaha and go somewhere...Begin your journey. – Lamyjah

I feel many relationships grew and some were severed but everything happens for a reason. I learned many things about the friends I already had before the trip as well as girls I didn't know. - Sakira

I didn't know that if you stay with so many people at once, even if you do know them, they can make you mad. – Ossie

Even though this was my first trip, I got to see and experience a lot of great things...I really learned a lot on this trip, like how to make new friends. I also learned we work better together than apart. - Jazzmine

My mentor, Ms. Crystal, always tells me to introduce myself to as many people as I can. She says not only is it nice but you'll never know when that person might need you or introduce you to someone important. It's a business skill. It's also very important for life to get your name out there and be known. – JaRaya

Advice for a new traveler: Have fun! Respect your tour guide. Be nice to your roommates. Make sure not to leave items. And also be nice to your staff. – Ajanea



breakfast. I felt hungry but I deserved it. - Fatuma

Advice for a trip: behave and have fun. - Hawa

Going on this trip has benefitted me in many ways. Not only was it fun and taught me a lot, but it proved to me there's a lot more out there than just what I am used to in Nebraska. - JaRaya

Like Mr. Ruffin said, "I am always a student. Forever learning." – Elijahiana

I am really happy I went on the trip because if I didn't I wouldn't have been able to explore and learn brand new things. – Kaylonda

Today was the first day I came late to

Because these trips are so fun and important, I brought it up to the other girls that when we get older, wiser, and wealthier we should donate money to Girls Inc. teens for their trip. We should keep this tradition going. Just like the seasons it should change places every year. – JaRaya

I love how we problem solved, “mixed it up,” shared stories, learned A LOT of history, and laughed...It’s something I’ll remember. Am I glad that it’s almost over? Yes. Do I regret coming? No. Personally I feel the trip has changed me. I can see how the staff only get on me to see me succeed in life. They’re showing me that there is so much more to life than my phone and Omaha. That I should be grateful for what I have and what I get to do. I’m so glad that you guys put up with me and haven’t given up. All I have to say is I am so thankful and I don’t know where I would be if I didn’t have you four and other adults guiding me. Much love - Desy

Staff

I think all of the staff have been acting pretty fair with all of us. I know I haven’t been the best kid here but I know I wasn’t the worst. – Tasheonna

Ms. CT talked to us about our attitude. It made me think about how hard I was making it for her and the rest of the trip to enjoy the staff to enjoy the trip. Being able to go on this trip was a blessing. I wish I would have shown more thankfulness to the staff...for taking time out of their summer to take us on this trip. – Anonymous

I want to thank all of the staff for keeping us safe and loving us, not judging us. – Hinde

Today Ms. CT talked for two hours about attitude, getting along, and disrespect. She did give us room for input, though. Later we had a party for Jada. I had a blast. – Ajanea

The staff and the girls had a conversation about how we felt about everything...But hopefully the conversation didn’t go through one ear and out the other. - Lela

The one person that stood out was Ms. Tess. I see her dancing and making a duck face and it’s just funny. Thank god we were not in public because that would have been some show. – Hinde

I’m having an amazing time here with Girls Inc. and most of all having the most strong, independent women here to help us and guide us in the right direction for our future. That goes out to Ms. CT, Ms. Bev, Ms. Minnie, and Ms. Tess. - Lela

The teachers are quite nice. That’s the good thing about them so you don’t have mean teachers on the trip... - Habiba



PS: Ms. Tess needs to learn how to whip, nae nae, and back up my lies but thank you for letting me listen to your “cool” music. – Hinde

Ms. Tess, when she dances, she doesn’t even notice what she is doing. - Asnina

...the girls called Ms. Tess embarrassing because she was being silly and dancing to “Watch Me Whip.” She was having fun but the girls thought it was dorky! I thought it was fun to see her dance. LOL. I love Ms. Tess. – JaRaya

Ms. CT gave us a speech that was two hours long. I’m happy she did that because everyone got to express their feelings. – Fatuma

Last night I was so glad that Ms. CT trusted me and Amina to be on the 3rd floor by ourselves...I want you to know I didn’t let you down. - Jazzmine

There’s gonna be some yelling from Ms. CT but I like to call it tough love. – Nicoletta

When it was time to leave Lela and I were trying to take a selfie. It wouldn’t work for us so we made Ms. Tess do it for us and I think it came out perfect. I have to say we were beautiful and she is a nice friend to me... - Habiba

Gratitude

I want to thank Ms. Stephanie for always, always being there for me when I need her! I don’t know what I would do without her. She has provided me with a tutor, a job, raised money for us South girls to go on the trip, and also for being a super AWESOME Center Director. – Amina

I want to give a special thanks to Ms. CT for allowing me to have the experience of a lifetime. I am thankful. - Jazzmine

Thank you teachers for being such great people! – Habiba

I want to thank Mr. David Ruffin for taking his time touring even if the girls were whining about their legs were tired, it was too hot, they need water...So thank you. - Habiba

I wanted to thank my mom for paying for the trip. My mom is such a strong woman no matter what she is going through she doesn’t let it affect what my brother or I want or need.

I know it was hard for my mother to pay for the trip because my older brother graduated high school and she had to pay for a lot of stuff that had to go towards that. And I am glad she was able to do this for me. – Aariona

I want to thank my grandmother. She got me here and paid and pushed me to be here. Even when I had doubts, she still kept it going...My mother really wanted me to be here. She wanted me to experience this and I thank her for that. – Sakira



I give a shout out to everyone: Ms. Minnie, Ms. Tess, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Ruffin, Ms. CT, Ms. Bev, my mom. The reason I want to give a shout out to the staff is because they took the time away from their loved



ones to be with a bunch of girls who have terrible mood swings...Bing called Benissan and being known by the name Benissan at Girls Inc., to me is a privilege and I'll do anything to keep it...No matter what Girls Inc. has had the biggest impact on my life and thank Ms. CT because she has been the main one since day one. - Nicoletta

Thank you so much everyone who helped make this happen, especially Ms. CT. We do appreciate you and I actually started getting used to this little family. Thanks for the amazing 9 days but I think it's time to return to our real families nice and safe just the way we left. — Hawa

I love going to Girls Inc. and this trip us something new for me...As I sit here writing in my journal and seeing Washington, D.C., I feel like this is a dream and it's not real...It feels like a dream but it's a good dream...It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see what I have seen on this trip. Not many kids are able to do this and you have to take advantage of what you've got and make the best of it... - Holly

I want to thank my mom for trusting me to go on my 3rd trip. You know, the 1st trip was to California and she didn't want me to go because she was scared I would get hurt and that I would get homesick. I also want to thank the people who pad the [money] for the South girls to go on the trip...I would say thank you to Ms. Tess for spending her time to pick up all the girls to sleep at her house. And her friend that helped us get to Ms. Tess's house because her car is bigger. And for letting us stay up until we went to the North Center. I want to thank Asnina's mentor for buying me supplies that I needed for the trip since my mentor was out of town... Coming on this trip took Ms. CT lots of her time off to raise money for girls and even me. I couldn't thank her this much and maybe someday I could pay back for the good times the teachers gave us on the trip. - Habiba

I'd like to thank all of the wonderful staff. Thank you to Ms. CT for guiding the way for me to steer clear away from the wrong. Thank you to Ms. Minnie for coming on this trip even though you are retired. Thank you to Ms. Tess for making the bad days better. Thank you to Friends of Foster Care, without you I wouldn't be on this trip. — Sara

I want to give a special shout out to the wonderful staff — Ms. CT, Ms. Bev, Ms. Tess, and I can't forget about Ms. Minnie. I just wanted you all to know that I appreciate you for allowing me to have a [life changing experience].

I thank Girls Inc. for bringing me on this trip...Shout out to everybody that made the trip possible. — Keray



I want to give a shout out to my mom for giving me this opportunity to go on this trip...I really appreciate all the staff on this bus for tolerating all of our...attitude and all. - Amari



I want to say thank you to my mom and Girls Inc. I also want to say thank you to the bus driver. I know he's tired but he's hangin' in ☺...Our tour guide, he was very smart and helpful. He helped me know more as an African American woman. Thank you Girls Inc. for making my first trip so nice. - Devonna

I want to give a shout out to my Grandpa, Grandma, Uncle, Aunt, Mom, and Ramsey Williams...They were the ones who helped make it possible for me to go on the trip. They helped pay off the money. They also helped convince me to go on the trip because I didn't want to go when I first heard about it...then my Grandma told me about what we were going

to see and I changed my mind. - Destiney

I love the fact that I could learn things that I would never have known without coming here. I am thankful that my mom and dad made me come in the first place. My foster mom for helping me pack and giving me money to spend...I also thanks Friends of Foster Care for paying for the trip...I will remember these days for the rest of my lives. - Tati

I first want to thank the Timmerman's because they helped us fund-raise. I want to thank Ms. Tess for being a good best friend and giving us a ride. I want to thank all the chaperones for being nice,



courteous, and for fund-raising to get us to be here. I want to thank Ms. Tess' friend. She also gave us money to be here and she gave us some spending money. I want to thank my family for letting me come and buying me what I needed. - Fatuma

My dad made this trip happen for me and my little sister in 3 weeks... I appreciate my mom a lot because she works so hard to please me and my little sister and to do that she has to work two jobs. -

Tasheonna

I would like to thank all the staff and especially Ms. CT for continuing these trips with us...Thank you. - Sakira

Shout out to "Friends of Fosters" for making this all possible for me. I am very grateful. - JaRaya



All my life my family didn't have much money so be able to stay a night in a hotel means a lot to me. – Anonymous

I want to thank Aariona because when I was having doubts she reminded me that this would be a great experience and she really thought I should go because of the once in a lifetime opportunity it was. - Sakira

I am glad that I am not in Omaha because something always happens, like a shooting, accidents, or a drive by... I am happy that Ms. CT., Ms. Tess, Ms. Minnie, and Ms. Bev planned this trip for us so I can get out of Omaha. Trust me, I have never been on a trip for nine days. – Lamyjah

I am happy I got out of the neighborhood I live in because this is the time where they do gang violence. – Fatuma

I want to thank Mr. Ruffin for EVERYTHING! I want to thank all the teachers for everything and for helping us come on this trip. - Asnina

I just want to say thank you to Betsy and Bridget for helping us fund-raise money for the trip. We baked cookies and made spa things for your eyes. We even had Girls Nite Out which was really fun and I saw my mentor there and she looked pretty like always. I really want to thank the wife and husband that paid [the balance] for us. I just hope they know that they didn't waste their money...I learned a lot more



history on this bus trip and it was worth it...Thank you sisters for being on this trip with me and always being by my side. I do really miss my family, mom, and dad – and I'm really glad they let me come on this trip. I'm really grateful to be going to Girls Inc. and knowing so many cool people in my life. * Ms. CT.* Ms. Tess * Ms. Roberta * Ms. Beverly * Ms. Minnie * Mr. Franklin (bus driver)* and [all the girls]! Thank you! - Hinde

My parents are the core of my being! Although they didn't want me to go at first, they have grown to trust me! That know that as I grow into a young adult that I will become more curious about the world around me and what other

opportunities I could open doors with. They know that there are many opportunities, and that I am capable of catching them! I want to thank my parents for trusting me on my own on a trip. I also appreciate the fact that they want me to go out and be successful. – Amina

I want to thank the staff for coming to take care of us and making this trip possible. Thank you for making sure we were safe and responsible. I want to thank Ms. CT the most for letting me be able to come on the trip with all these strong, smart, and bold individual females that are beautiful in their own ways. – Destiney

My great grandma is a Jewish survivor. She is 97. So this trip has been emotional for me because I think about how grateful I need to be and just live life and don't let anyone take me down. I have troubles going to Westside over the fact that I am black and I have a white mom...- Nicoletta

Shout out to all the staff that came and provided and protected all 31 of us. I appreciate each and every one of you because without you there wouldn't have been a trip to D.C. - JaRaya

I am so happy I got to be a part of this trip...I am very grateful because this is a once in a lifetime trip for me. – Ossie

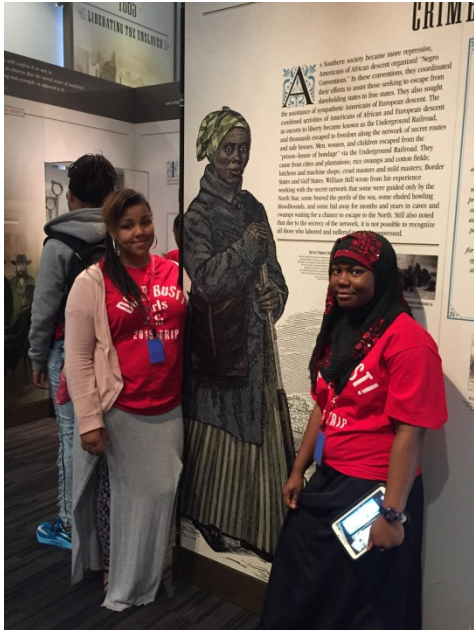
I would like to thank all the staff for putting up with all our attitudes and needs and keeping things going. And not taking things from us when many of us deserved it. - Sakira

My mentor Dede is the best mentor ever! No offense to other mentors! She has provided me with endless possibilities, stretched out my thinking process, has inspired me to further my education and follow my dreams, taught me to look further onto the horizon, and helped me face my fears. She's the reason why I joined the Poetry Club, wrote my breathtaking poem, and am also not so jumpy around dogs! I was terrified of dogs and my mentor helped me overcome this fear. She has 2 dogs so I had to learn how to be around dogs. She has been a good pain in the butt about my grades, assignments, projects, and scholarships! I love my mentor to death because she has gone through exceptional lengths of bravery to take me places and teach me things. She is one of a kind and I wouldn't trade her for anything! Thank you Dede. I don't know how to repay you, you are an exceptional person and mentor! – Amina

I want to thank Mr. Franklin for helping us on our big journey to Washington, D.C. I know for him it must suck to be on a bus with 35 females. I want to thank him for loading and unloading our luggage and for driving us more than 7 hours a day. - Destiney

I would like to thank my mom. My mom managed to pay some money towards this trip. She had an accident with her falling due to ice and on top of that she went to the hospital with pneumonia. She was in the hospital for 2 weeks and a few days. She couldn't work for a while which made money hard. She managed to make

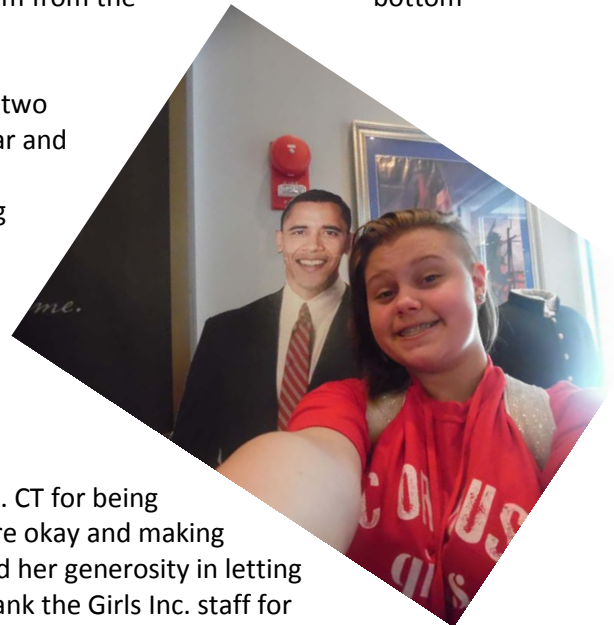




money and was determined to get me on this trip. My mom is truly my hero I thank God for her. I would also like to thank my mentor, Emily, who is amazing, terrific, astounding, caring, and compassionate. She helped contribute to me going on the trip. She fund-raised money for me also. I love Emily! I couldn't have a better mentor and I thank God and Ms. Ashley for pairing me with her! I hope Emily will be my mentor forever! I would also like to thank Emily's mother for helping me go on this trip. I would also like to thank Emily's dad for contributing as well. Without my mom, Emily, and Emily's parents, I would not have been able to attend this trip...I thank them from the bottom of my heart. – Elijahiana

...Two shout outs go to our two outstanding tour guides, Gar and Mr. Ruffin. They did a phenomenal job at showing us around and explaining thoroughly what

everything was, its purpose, etc... Let me not forget to shout out Mr. Franklin, our bus driver. He's super nice, joking, and very careful. Thank you for getting us there and back safely. - JaRaya



I would like to thank the Girls Inc. staff who came on this trip. Ms. CT for being amusing and keeping us safe. Ms. Minnie for making sure we were okay and making sure we did not lag behind to get lost. Ms. Tess for her humor and her generosity in letting me use the phone. Ms. Bev for her humor also. I would like to thank the Girls Inc. staff for feeding and supervising us because I know it was hard...I thank the staff for pushing us to try new things...I would like to thank the staff at Girls Inc. such as Ms. Donna and Ms. Philice. I appreciate them making breakfast to start the first day. I also thank them for food preparation for the trip. – Elijahiana

I would like to thank the tour guide for showing us around and telling us about the city. I would also like to thank him for his compliment on us being intelligent and telling us we will be something great! I would also like to thank the bus driver for driving us to our designated stops and getting us there safely. I would also like to thank Mr. Franklin for unloading and re-loading our heavy luggage on and off the bus. I thank him for his humor and for him being nice to us...I would like to thank the donors and staff for fund-raising the money and donating it towards the trip. I am thankful for the opportunity that was given to me. - Elijahiana