

I am proof that the Telluride Association does an impeccable job at fulfilling their mission by instilling the values of intellectual inquiry, democratic self-government, and meaningful work in program participants. My participation in the Telluride Association Sophomore Seminar (TASS) impacted my life immensely by providing me with the opportunity to create meaningful relationships, build my critical thinking skills and confidence, increase my academic inquiry, practice self-government and participate in meaningful work.

TASS connected me to a network of fantastic and brilliant young people committed to impacting the world. As an African American student from a non-diverse school in rural Appalachia, interacting with young African Americans and people of color was very important to me. The opportunity to live in a community of eighteen students where the majority of the students were African American was unimaginable prior to TASS. In my community I often find myself being the only African American person and even the only person of color in an entire classroom. Not only were the TASS students primarily African American, the faculty and professors were African American as well. The diversity of TASS provided me with an alternate view of academia and classroom experiences. For the first time I saw African Americans as professors at a prestigious university and realized I could aspire to this role. More importantly, having African American professors allowed a deep connection through culture, art and literature to form between me and my teacher that I had never experienced. This connection helped me learn and grow as a student and an artist. The sense of racial community that was found when interacting and forming lasting relationships with the young people, the

factota and professors was amazing, and I can say there was nothing like it. This experience solidified my identity as an African American.

The relationships, skills, and confidence I built at TASS are so profound, that I cannot imagine what my development would be like without the experience. The truth is, the kind of experiences that the Telluride Association provides should be common to all those seeking education, especially African American students, but sadly they are not. The Telluride Association has a very important role to play in revolutionizing the education of young people, and instilling self-governing values in them.

The stimulation of intellectual inquiry that occurred for me at TASS has done more for me than any of my mainstream educational experiences. It has improved my ability to discover information, assisted me in understanding people with more accuracy, and increased my ability to be more observant in general. My experience with TASS taught me not to take things for granted. I now inquire, and inquiry seems to be life's greatest gift. I am confident that my ability to inquire and use intellectual inquiry has changed my life for the better, and I owe that to the Telluride Association.

In my opinion, the practice of self-government is the most influential and long lasting aspect of life taught by the Telluride Association. The mentality gained by regularly participating in self-governing activities has allowed me to excel in debating, contemplating, and understanding the complex ideas and viewpoints of others. This experience has allowed me to boost the effectiveness of my decision making, and advocate for others in a governmental environment such as my high school student council.

The Association's emphasis on meaningful work has helped me understand the importance of doing things such as building communities, sharing stories, and speaking for those without agency. My experience at TASS was instrumental in my understanding of the importance of meaningful work. From my experience, I learned that not only is it important to build and foster understanding communities, it is just as important to participate in communities outside of your own, through things such as community service and volunteerism.

The fact that I had to be selected for and attend TASS to experience this type of educational experience is a testament to the need for the existence of the Telluride Association. The deep educational growth provided by the Telluride Association programs should be the norm in this country and available for all. From educational outreach programs to creating communities on college campuses, the Telluride Association is a true advocate for students, especially disenfranchised students of color. The fact that the Association has branched out and evolved from what it was in its founding, and has become a true system of advocacy for people like myself is beautiful to me and I will do all I can to support the Telluride Association as it continues to stay true to and, improve upon, its policies and plans.