Editors Column

The State Times at California Boys and Girls State

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The Co-Editor-in-Chiefs of The State Times with California Capitol Correspondent Ashley Zavala. [Source: Author, Sean Kim]

This summer, I had the privilege of attending California Boys and Girls State, a selective program organized by the American Legion for rising high school seniors aiming to simulate American politics. The program ran for one week at Sacramento State University and brought together one thousand delegates from across California.

First, delegates were sorted into one of five counties, divided further into one of five cities, and assigned to a political party. To outline a day at Boys and Girls State, each morning, delegates would wake up at seven-thirty and eat breakfast in preparation for the daily city meeting an hour later. Every meeting would include a morning flag raise and a patriotic rendition of the national anthem. After meetings, delegates would have time to prepare campaigns, give speeches, and conduct elections until lunch at noon. The afternoon, or recreational period, was an open time for delegates to attend position-specific meetings and optional presentations, or play sports and other activities with friends. After dinner at six, there would be another city meeting and closing ceremonies to end off the night, abiding by the 11:00 curfew. A couple of specific activities would meet after curfew for another hour. One of those activities was the media.

At Boys and Girls State, I acted as Co-Editor-in-Chief of The State Times, as head of the program's media department. The State Times was the program's official newspaper, which we used to release advertisements of political candidates and cover opinion, features, arts and entertainment, and satire articles from delegate staff writers. Each issue we published was a result of hard work and determination from a team of around thirty editors and staff writers.

As part of my responsibilities as Editor-in-Chief, I was in charge of moderating the Lieutenant Governor and Governor -- the second most and most difficult office -- debates live on stage, addressing over one thousand delegates. I remember staying up until three in the morning designing debate questions related to California's key issues. I included questions about the future of sustainable energy and California's 2045 carbon zero plan, the veteran homelessness problem in Los Angeles, and youth mental health support following the COVID-19 pandemic. Unsurprisingly, the final candidates for Lieutenant Governor and Governor were prepared for everything I threw at them, answering each question with poise and expertise.

Overall, more than anything else, I am incredibly grateful that I was able to lead the Boys and Girls State newspaper. Working with the top students from high schools across California was truly wonderful and eye-opening. I knew that every single delegate associated with the paper was dedicated to its success, willing to stay up in their dorms past curfew, just as I was, to perfect the Opinion essay, double-check the advertisement designs, and publish the best issue possible. Acting as Co-Editor-in-Chief was an unforgettable experience! The leadership skills I learned from working with The State Times will stay with me forever.

Student Reporter

My Visit To The National Mall

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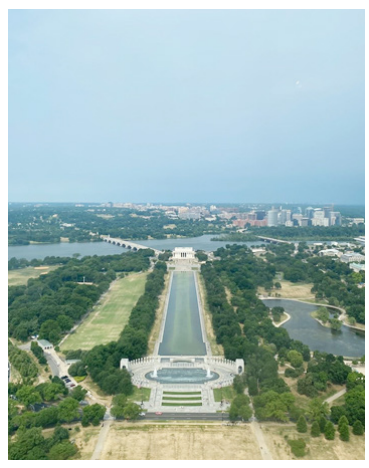
The National Mall is located in Washington, DC, and houses the most important monuments and museums. Seeing all the famous buildings and places I had only seen in movies and read about in books for the first time felt almost surreal.

The first place I visited was the Washington Monument. Outside were park rangers answering questions about the monument and helping guide me and my family into the building. Inside, we went to the top and saw the amazing view of the capital and other famous museums and monuments. Not only was there a view, but the inside had lots of interesting information about the Washington Monument. I learned that the monument was built to show the importance of national heritage and independence.



The National Mall from the top of the Washington Monument. [Source: Author, Olivia Shin]

In Washington, I also got to visit the National Gallery of Art. Inside the museum, there were many artworks, including European paintings and sculptures, as well as American and more modern art; however, these are not the only genres of art in the museum. The artist who I was the most excited to see was Vincent van Gogh. His artwork is truly one of the best, and I was able to see his famous self-portrait of him as well. Another artist I found interesting was Philip Guston. His works were mainly in the East Building, where modern art is showcased. My favorite from his collection was a painting called "Smoking, Painting, Eating." It is one of his many oil paintings, and I think it really shows the style of art Philip Guston makes.

One of the many memorials at the National Mall was the Korean War Veterans Memorial. It was for the 5.8 million Americans who served during the three-year period of the Korean War. At the memorial, I saw the statues of the soldiers who served in the U.S. armed services during the war and the wall filled with the names of those who served. Another famous memorial I saw in the National Mall was the Lincoln Memorial. The Lincoln Memorial was created to honor the 16th president of the United States and the work he did. Inside is the statue of the late president and the two speeches given by Lincoln; the Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address. These two speeches best showed his character and accomplishments during his presidency.

These were the few monuments and museums that I got to visit at the National Mall. They have taught me a lot about the history behind each of them and furthered my knowledge about our country's independence, art, and veterans.

Student Reporter

The Most Popular Transportation System in Korea: Subway

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Korea is well-known for its easy and affordable transportation systems. There are several ways to get around, such as buses, taxis, electric scooters, and bikes. But the most popular transportation system is the subway, which many people favor for its affordability and speed. It is widely recognized around the world, as numerous individuals use them every day.

The subway is always jam-packed with people fighting for room in order to get to where they're going. It is usually because everyone is going or coming home from work at the same time. The subway is packed from 7 to 9 in the morning and 6 to 8 in the evening. However, Korea has a well-organized and advanced subway system, which is beneficial. According to Google, the Seoul subway system is known as one of the best in the world! With around 22 lines total, the subways operate from 4 am until 1 pm. Although it can get very crowded, especially during hours when people are going to and from work, it is a quick way to get to your location.

The base fare is 1,250 won, approximately 1 to 2 US dollars, which will get you a distance of 10 kilometers. You will then be charged an extra 100 won for each additional 5 kilometers. It is popular for how widely available, affordable, and reliable it is to get across the city. To ride the subway, you would first need to obtain a T-money card or a single or multiple journey ticket. T-money cards are rechargeable, which is very convenient, while tickets are used only one time. T-money cards or subway ticket vending machines are found near the entrance of the subway station. These machines provide different translations, such as English, Chinese, and Japanese. Then payment for the ticket, based on one's age and destination, is needed. And lastly, the card will drop, and you are free to go! Once you arrive at your destination, a Deposit Refund device is located right next to the ticket vending machine. If someone used a one-time card, this would be where they would return the single journey pass or card and receive a 500 won deposit.

Cash, coins, or credit cards are all accepted forms of payment at this subway ticket machine! [Source: Author, Erin Lee]

There are several simple guidelines that tourists should keep in mind when riding the subway in Korea. The first is to wait for passengers to exit the train car before entering the train car. This often prevents collisions and results in a more organized system. Also, keep in mind not to occupy seats that are designated for those with disabilities, pregnant women, or older citizens. These seats are often found in pink or yellow. And lastly, try to avoid making noise inside the subway, especially eating or talking.

Korea's subway station is a great method of transportation. Despite being packed with people, it is air-conditioned and quieter than what most people would expect. Passengers are typically on their phones or minding their own business. All in all, traveling by subway in Korea is a pleasing, affordable, clean, and reliable choice for transportation!

Editors Column

The K-Dramas Were Wrong. Sort of…

Alexis Choi
Grade 11
South High School

Competition is generally much higher for South Korean high schoolers than for American high schoolers.
[Source: Author, Alexis Choi]

A gorgeous campus with friendly classmates, benevolent teachers who offer nothing but gentle encouragement, and fateful opportunities to meet your soulmate wherever you go. That, or a living hell where every student tries to drag each other down, ostracizes based on looks and wealth, and considers murder a viable method to maintain high grades. Many people's perceptions of South Korean high schools are heavily based on K-dramas, movies, and other forms of media that attempt to portray the experiences of students. However, this is often done in an overly positive manner that romanticizes school life to the point of foolishness, or in a completely negative light that only exaggerates the appalling elements. Nevertheless, there are various truths about Korean high schools, along with significant contrasts to public American high schools, that are worth noting.

As widely portrayed in dramas and movies from both cultures, there are several fundamental differences between school life in both countries. The Korean school year itself follows a distinctly different schedule from America; beginning in March, the first semester ends in mid-July. Following a month of summer break, the second semester begins in August and ends in mid-February, with one and a half months of winter break. During the year, nearly 100% of students are required to wear uniforms, and they generally have less freedom over their hairstyles and makeup than in America. Additionally, rather than having to move from classroom to classroom, teachers rotate throughout the day to teach various subjects while students are given a "homeroom" that they stay in throughout the entire year.

Of the many realities of the Korean education system that the popular 2018 K-drama Sky Castle nailed on the head, one is the intense competition that exists between students. Though it isn't to the extent that is depicted in the drama, most Korean students are very focused on their studies, much more than in America. Many students attending American public high schools go home after school, perhaps after an hour or two of sports or extracurriculars. In Korea, however, students are at school for over twelve hours, every day of the week. Aside from regular school hours, which typically end around 5 P.M., there are night self-studies that last until 11 P.M. Nearly every Korean high school student also attends hagwons, or academic institutes, where they learn future material to get ahead. Even after attending hagwons, most students stay up studying for several more hours. The "party culture" that is so prevalent in America is practically nonexistent in Korea, and students are constantly reminded to study hard so that they can go to a prestigious university—especially Seoul University.

Despite the various flaws of the Korean education system, this shows how much education is prioritized in the country overall. There is a collective zeal for education in the students and teachers that is not so commonly seen in America. The American school system, despite being less focused on general academic ambition, has its own benefits in encouraging creativity and critical thinking in students. Neither school system is perfect, but both can learn and gain from the other.

Student Reporter

Heritage Farmers Market

Kaylyn Wee
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What makes farmers markets a good idea? Why should people go? And what's so special about the Heritage Farmers Market? The Heritage Farmers Market, located in Chino Hills, California, is an amazing opportunity for farmers and small business owners to sell their goods. Additionally, musicians and artists are also able to showcase their talents to the community. This event is held every Wednesday, year-round, from 3:30 to 7:00 PM and during the summer from 3:30 to 8:00 PM at The Shoppes in Chino Hills. There are many advantages to attending the Heritage Farmers Market.

At the entrance, there are a lot of different kinds of delicious cuisine. There are stands for Chinese food, Hispanic food, and more. One can get pizza, BBQ, and baked goods, like muffins, bread, and cookies. Also, there are drink stands that sell tea, coffee, and other sweet beverages that help with cooling down in the hot weather. No matter what your taste buds are craving, anything and everything will be appetizing.

Some of the fresh produce sold at the Heritage Farmers Market.
[Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

The Heritage Farmers Market is an excellent spot to purchase high-quality produce. There are many different kinds of fruit and vegetables that are farm-fresh, which makes eating healthy even better and easier because of the spectacular taste. There are also beautiful flowers that last longer, are diverse, and have better quality than the options at any grocery store. There are different plants available that are easy to take care of and are great to put into spaces that need something to spruce it up.

Not only is the Heritage Farmers Market an amazing event because of the produce, but it is also a brilliant way for small business owners to sell their products. Throughout the market, there are stands that sell jewelry, ointments, crystals, and other dandy items. The Heritage Farmers Market also allows musicians or small bands to perform their music for the shoppers. This gives musicians the experience to be able to improve their performance in front of people.

The Heritage Farmers Market is an amazing community event to attend because of its benefits. This event welcomes family and friends of all ages. At the market, there is great produce, plants, jewelry, skincare, music, and food, and it gives a peaceful and happy atmosphere that can enlighten anyone's mood. Therefore, I believe the Heritage Farmers Market is definitely a market to visit and a great place to spend a day at.

Student Reporter

The Century Old Flower Garden

Jaden Kim
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On the largest of the more than 200 islands that make up the Hochelaga Archipelago, Canada's city of Montreal is a bustling metropolis that has been built over centuries. The city's European and ornate architecture reflects the age of the city, which was established back in 1642. The long history inevitably led to many significant events throughout time, and as a result, many locations can now be considered tourist attractions. The Montreal Botanical Gardens is one of these locations. Although I spent only a few hours in the area, the various floral species and views left a lasting impact on me and made me want to learn more about the massive estate.

The gardens first opened in June of 1931, at the peak of the Great Depression, oddly enough. The place was meant to educate the public about horticulture, as well as conserving endangered plant species. In addition to its many thematic gardens created over the years, the botanical gardens are also now home to a botanical research institution, the Montreal Insectarium, and the Société d'astronomie de Montréal.

Currently, the gardens are comprised of 75 hectares of themed gardens and greenhouses. It was named a National Historic Site of Canada in 2008 due to the large extent of the floral collections and facilities.

The gardens all revolve around different themes. The Alpine garden consists of a rocky terrain covered with fragile yet exquisite plants, and covers species found in the tundra. The Chinese garden reflects the flora and fauna of a Ming dynasty-era garden. It has an artificial waterfall and an old imperial-style riverboat that overlooks a large body of water. It even has a rare bonsai collection! The Japanese Gardens also has a bonsai collection, mainly sponsored by the Nippon Foundation. These are just three of the many various thematic gardens that make up the botanical garden of Montreal.

One of the rivers in the Alpine Garden at the Montreal Botanical Gardens. [Source: Author, Jaden Kim]

Eric Zhu, a fellow member of the NYO-USA, the National Youth Orchestra of the USA, describes his feelings about the garden when he got there. "I felt really at peace with myself among all the beautiful nature, and in the process, I found myself reflecting on my NYO experience because whenever I'm on stage with everyone, I feel the same way."

Although it was humid and hot in Montreal, the beautiful scenery of the garden made it all worthwhile. I highly recommend stopping by if you are ever in Montreal; the gardens are worth your while.