

The President's Own: Diplomacy One Note at a Time

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“Debate and Diplomacy” was a challenging topic for me to tackle at first. Yes, there were many events in history that pertained to diplomacy, both nationally and internationally, but I wanted to take on this topic in a unique way. I was able to gather a list of potential topics as early as summer, but none of them really stood out to me. I started stressing about it for a bit, so I decided to take a break and figure out a different approach.

Since the National Marine Corps Museum was just 15 minutes away from where I live, I asked my parents to take me there so I could look for new topics. As we were walking along the hallway of the second deck, I came across a wall exhibit about the President’s Own. Simply seeing it initially as just a wall of photos, I almost walked past it. However, the words “Music as Diplomacy” caught my eye. I stopped and started reading it; I knew right then that I found my topic.

I started my research with these questions: What specifically about diplomacy did the President’s Own contribute to? What was their purpose? How did they impact the foreign relationships of the United States? I used the basic information about the band that I got from the Marine Corps Museum exhibit as my starting point, then continued doing more in-depth research in my free time. I consider the archives of newspapers (which contained quotes from foreign guests), the White House History, and the Marines websites as my most valuable resources.

I decided to create a website to showcase my research so I could show both my artistic and writing skills. Also, I tremendously enjoyed doing my website project for

National History Day last year, so it just makes sense for me to do it again this year. NHD is not just about researching and making a project; it encourages fun while learning that is why it offers different media to present one's research. Also, learning is more effective, and information stays in your long-term memory if you associate happy thoughts with it.

One challenge that I encountered in my project was the 1200-word limitation for websites. I had to cut down the list of events/performances to include, so I selected the top four that I believe had major impact to diplomacy.

The President's Own's work relates to this year's theme of Debate and Diplomacy in a very unique way: music. Music diplomacy is a particular form of cultural diplomacy. The President's Own conducts cultural diplomacy by sharing America's ideals, traditions, and hospitality through their impressive performances. Since 1874, the band helped the United States create, seal, and maintain diplomatic relationships with various foreign countries. These relationships are necessary as no country can stand alone on its own. As the President's Own remains to provide music for the President and the United States, the more international relations will be fostered, one note at a time.