



Austin Goodenough

HOW MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE **GOT TRUMPED**

Cover illustrations by Stefanie Hudspeth



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Pictured: Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States, speaking at a United Nations general assembly (Diamond, 2018)



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A portrait of Austin Goodenough, a young man with curly brown hair and glasses, wearing a grey t-shirt with an orange 'RIT SAB' logo. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a plain, light grey.

BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

I am Austin Goodenough, a third-year (on a 5-year plan) Journalism major at the Rochester Institute of Technology. I was diagnosed on the autism spectrum at the age of three, with the doctor claiming that I would never speak nor take care of myself. Over time, however, I have gladly broken just about every stereotype of low-functioning autistic people.

ABOUT THE ZINE

This zine is the result of a term assignment for my News Editing course, taught by Hinda Mandell from R.I.T.'s School of Communication. Although my classmates and I were free to select any topic to write about, Prof. Mandell requested that our topics should be related to the 2018 midterm elections.

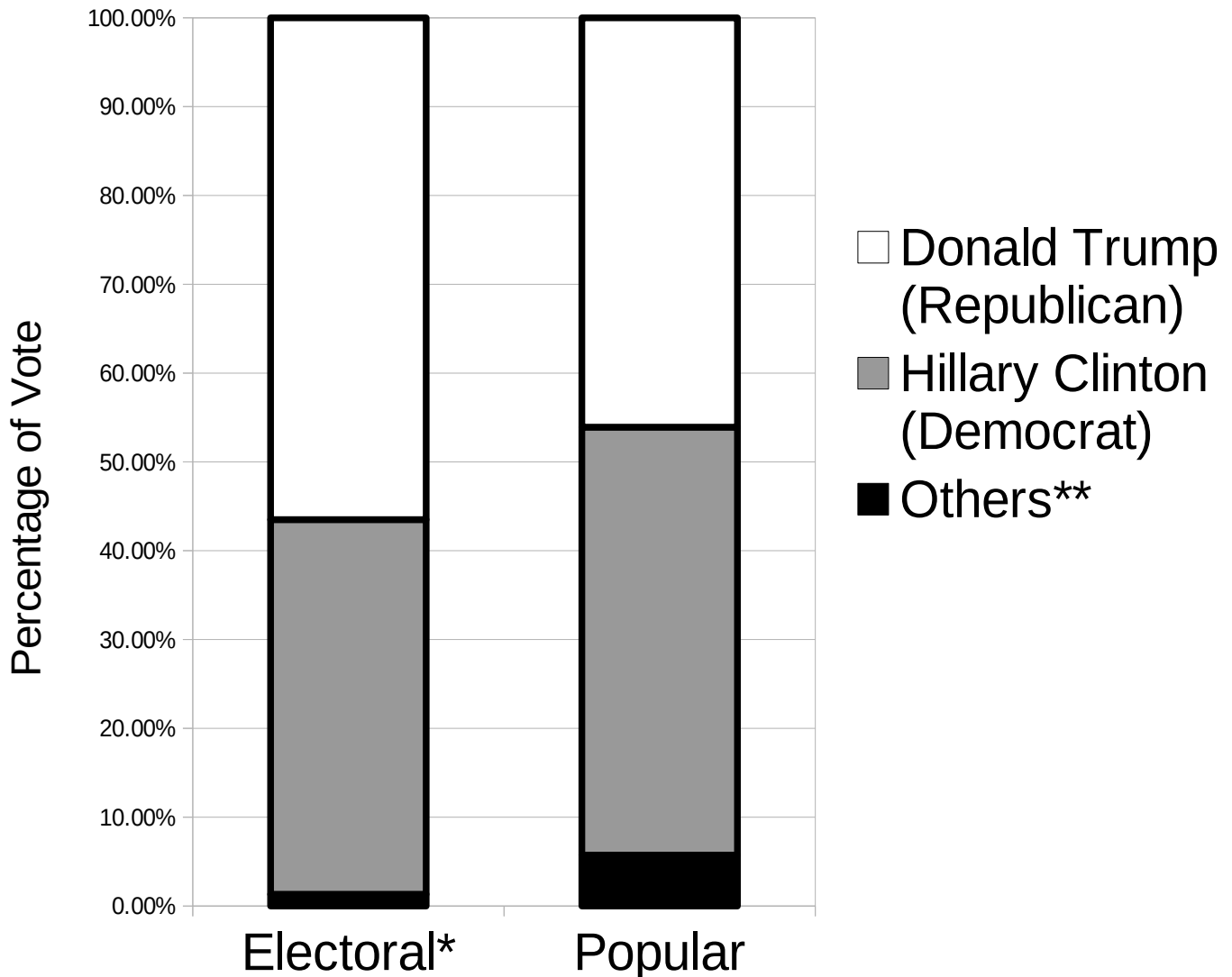
Thus, my topic of choice was none other than President Trump for two main reasons. The first was because Trump's questionable action affected not just myself in terms of emotions and coursework, but also the R.I.T. community as a whole.

My second reason for covering Trump is in response to how he got elected. Trump was elected because he had more electoral votes than Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, though Clinton had nearly 3 million more voters than Trump (270towin.com, 2016).

My mission for this zine is to use the inverted pyramid model to first give context to some of Trump's questionable actions, and end with how they were detrimental to my college experience. My vision for this zine is to not only give my readers a sense of how Trump is a horrible president, but also persuade them into hopefully voting against Trump or any of his supporters in any future local and/or federal elections.

2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Source: https://www.270towin.com/2016_Election/



*Electoral votes came from 538 electors representing all 50 states and Washington, D.C. The minimum amount of electoral votes required to win is 270.

**Two of Trump's electors and five of Clinton's later voted against their selected candidates.

A close-up photograph of Donald Trump speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a red tie. His mouth is wide open in a shout or exclamation, and his eyes are wide. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

TRUMP AND

ABLEISM

“Now the poor guy, you gotta see this guy. ‘I don’t know what I said. I don’t remember!’ He’s going on like ‘I don’t remember, maybe that’s what I said.’ This is 14 years go, he’s still—they didn’t do a retraction.” - Donald Trump (Spayd, 2017).



Pictured: Serge Kovalski, the disabled New York Times reporter reportedly mocked by President Trump (“Donald Trump Criticized for Mocking Disabled Reporter,” 2017).

What you have seen on the previous page is Trump, on stage during his South Carolina campaign rally, flailing his arms around in a reported act of mockery against Serge Kovalski, a disabled New York Times reporter (“Donald Trump Criticized for Mocking Disabled Reporter,” 2017; Haberman, 2015; Spayd, 2017). Kovalski suffers from arthrogryposis, a condition that limits the movement and function of his joints, particularly in his right hand (“Donald Trump Criticized for Mocking Disabled Reporter”, 2017;

Haberman, 2015; Spayd, 2017).

TRUMP'S RELATIONSHIP WITH KOVALESKI

Trump has initially denied knowing who Kovaleski was nor that Kovaleski had a disability. Instead, he insisted that he was mimicking what he thought was “a flustered reporter trying to get out of a statement he made long ago (“Donald Trump Criticized for Mocking Disabled Reporter,” 2017; Haberman, 2015; Spayd, 2017).” In response, Kovaleski disproved Trump’s claims due to his extensive coverage on, and numerous interviews with Trump on a first-name basis, when he was working for the Daily News from 1987 to 1993 (“Donald Trump Criticized for Mocking Disabled Reporter,” 2017; Haberman, 2015; Spayd, 2017).

HOW I WAS EMOTIONALLY AFFECTED

I honestly had mixed feelings towards what Trump had done,. I primarily felt disappointed with what I saw due to similar experiences I had, not with Trump, but with my biological father. Last I remember seeing him in person, he labelled me as mentally retarded, despite the fact that I have made honor roll and the Dean’s list numerous times.

But despite what transpired, I now have a sense of pride knowing that that I will do well in the field of journalism even if it means causing harm to Trump’s credibility. Though these effects are minimal, it does tie into a more pressing issue that will be discussed in the next section.

TRUMP AND **FAKE NEWS**



“I just want to finish by saying that your reputation’s amazing. I will not let you down, you will be very, very impressed, I hope. And I think we’ll be speaking a lot.”
- Donald Trump (right) closing his interview with Alex Jones (left) on InfoWars. (Griffing, 2018)

CHANGING THE DEFINITION

The term “fake news” was originally used to describe untrue journalistic works often spread online and having the appearance of credible journalistic reports. (Holan, 2016; Lind, 2018). This definition later changed under Trump since his 2016 Presidential campaign. To this very day, Trump not only uses, but also popularized the term “fake news” as factual stories he simply does not like due to how critical they are of the actions made by not only himself, but the Trump administration as a whole. (Bump, 2018; Holan, 2016; Lind, 2018).

PIZZAGATE AND ALEX JONES

Consequently, Trump’s definition of “fake news” has resulted in false articles becoming more viral on social media than factual articles from sources, like CNN or the New York Times, during the last three month’s of Trump’s campaign (Holan, 2016; Silverman, 2016). A good example of which was the “PizzaGate” conspiracy theory (Gillin, 2016; Holan, 2016). The theory claimed that Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, along with her campaign chairman John Podesta, ran a child sex ring out of a D.C. pizzeria’s nonexistent basement (Gillin, 2016; Jolan, 2016).

One of “Pizzagate’s” largest promoters Alex Jones, the founder of one of the the leading purveyors of false news stories and hateful and/or violent conspiracy theories, InfoWars. (Coaston, 2018; Griffing, 2018; Lopez, 2016; “Sandy Hook families v. Alex Jones,” 2018). To make

matters worse, Trump is the only American president to have ever appeared live on InfoWars to this very day, not only by giving high praise to, but also being in regular, personal contact with Jones prior to his campaign (Griffing, 2018).

HOW MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE WAS AFFECTED

The very concept of fake news never branched out to me until I was introduced to the concept of “yellow journalism” midway through my History of Journalism course. But I did learn about the concept of fake news much further when I took Computer-Assisted Reporting exactly one year after.

Around the very start of the semester, the professor gave us the assignment of summarizing an article on fake news by Craig Silverman (2017), while also preparing two interview questions for which he answered in a Skype call a week or two later. We were also given the assignment of going to Twitter and locating three false news articles under the “Pizzagate” hash tag.

Since I have obtained a fair amount of knowledge on fake news from my previous courses, I decided to write an op-ed article for my News Editing course on a pressing issue related to Alex Jones, who was purged from four of his top platforms, not for spreading fake news, but for promoting violence and using hate speech. While I am glad seeing that he is banned, many have argued that the decision violated Jones’ first amendment rights.

OP-ED: WHY PURGING ALEX JONES DID NOT VIOLATE THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Alex Jones and his company, InfoWars, are notorious for being the largest purveyors of fake news and conspiracy theories throughout numerous digital media platforms nationwide.

Though I have never initially heard of Jones and his company two years ago, I immediately grew distasteful of him when I watched John Oliver talking about him in general. The primary thing that made me grow distasteful of Jones was when current President Donald Trump gave praise to both Jones and his company during Trump's 2016 campaign.

I was initially pleased when I found out that most of Jones' content was purged from Apple, Facebook, Spotify, and YouTube on August 6. The reasons for the purge, to my dismay, aren't due to spreading fake news. Instead, Jones was banned for promoting violence and using hate speech to, in Facebook's terms, "describe people who are transgender, Muslims, and immigrants."

However, no decision this large would come without controversy. According to an article published by Vox (Coaston, 2018), many of Jones' supporters and employees,

and even current Senator Ted Cruz, R-Texas, have argued that purging Jones from these platforms for hate speech violates his rights to free speech. Though I am reluctant to explain it, I find their arguments to be reasonable, but only to a certain extent.

My reasoning starts with an NPR interview with Nadine Strossen, a former president of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), on June 5 (“Free Speech vs. Hate Speech,” 2018). Though the Supreme Court has never identified nor excluded hate speech from the First Amendment, Strossen argued that “speech with a hateful message may be punished, if in a particular context it directly causes certain, specific, imminent, serious harm.”

There have been numerous examples of Jones’ words causing harm to others. For instance, according to the BBC (“Sandy Hook families v Alex Jones,” 2018), Jones uploaded a video this past April titled “Sandy Hook Vampires Exposed.” In the video, Jones claimed that the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school shooting was “staged by the government in order to promote its agenda for nationwide gun control,” and implied that Veronique De La Rosa, the mother of a boy killed in said shooting, was an actor. This resulted in the family receiving death threats from a Florida woman who believed Jones’ claims and a subsequent, ongoing defamation lawsuit against Jones.

One last point I would like to make regarding Jones' right to free speech on digital platforms comes from a 2016 article in the San Francisco Chronicle where reporter Marissa Lang (2016) wrote that "as private companies, social networks are not required to adhere to the First Amendment." Instead, rules are set by said companies, thereby giving them the right to moderate and routinely screen their content for any terms of service violations. Thus, individuals signing up to use social platforms voluntarily give up their first amendment rights and thereby agree to the companies' set terms of service.

So, where do I stand on the issue surrounding Alex Jones being purged from numerous social media platforms despite the arguments that Jones' First Amendment rights were violated? Though I fully understand and reluctantly agree with these arguments to a certain extent, they are invalid as many of Jones' theories and accusations are deemed as too harmful to be considered free and that the platforms Jones was banned from are owned by private companies and, therefore, are not required to adhere to the First Amendment.

Coming from an individual who uses social media on a daily basis, there are two things I am specifically concerned about regarding the entire situation. First, though Jones nor his company will be able to share their stories and theories directly, there are still others (including President Trump)

who will often share them on their personal accounts. Thus, the companies have not completely put an end to the spreading of Jones' hateful, bogus statements.

My second concern has to do with how we, as individuals, share information with their friends and family. Though I have never received any punishment, my mother's boyfriend, Dave, has been banned from Facebook once. So, if you are planning to share information with others through social media, I encourage that you all do so responsibly, or else you may face immeasurable amounts of punishment.



TRUMP AND

ISLAMOPHOBIA

“I am still not sure if it is worth it to study in U.S. by paying for not visiting your family, what do you think? My friends who are studying in Canada and Europe go home every single semester and the best I can do is facetime with my parents.” - Mehdi Dehghani, one of the 45 R.I.T. students affected by Trump’s travel ban.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS 13769 AND 13780

On January 27, 2017, Trump signed Executive Order 13769, effectively barring immigration from Syria for an indefinite amount of time, and from the Muslim-majority nations of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen for 90 days (“Full text of Trump’s executive order on 7-nation ban, refugee suspension,” 2017; “Trump’s executive order,” 2017). Only 50,000 refugees were accepted in 2017, with priority given to religious minorities (“Full text of Trump’s executive order on 7-nation ban, refugee suspension,” 2017; “Trump’s executive order,” 2017).

The ban was lifted by several courts later that same year after handling numerous cases against the executive order, such as the case of *Darweesh v. Trump* (Buncombe, 2017). In response, Trump signed Executive Order 13780, a revised iteration of the original ban that omitted Iraq from the list of banned countries (“US ADMITS LOWEST NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN MORE THAN 40 YEARS,” 2017).

HOW R.I.T. WAS AFFECTED

When the original executive order was signed by Trump, I was initially disgusted by how it was specifically against the immigration of Muslims from the seven nations where they are the majority population (“Full text of Trump’s executive order on 7-nation ban, refugee suspension,” 2017; “Trump’s executive order,” 2017). Despite my disgust, I just let it slide because I initially thought that it wouldn’t have

any sort of effect on the R.I.T. community... until it was later revealed that 45 students on the Rochester campus were affected (Fischer, 2017).

But the 45 students weren't the only members of the R.I.T. community affected by the ban, as researcher Ahmed Hadar was left stranded in Saudi Arabia because to his Yemeni citizenship (Orr, 2017). Orr and his family were able to return to Rochester on February 5, 2017 by boarding onto an airplane headed to Boston, Massachusetts because of the order being blocked by a federal judge (Orr, 2017).

Despite these hardships, I have decided to use this for a project for my Reporting and Writing II course. The project had me reporting on how the travel ban affected the R.I.T. community while also interviewing at least five people, two of which being experts.

As a result of my interviews, I have built lasting connections with a few of the Muslim members of the R.I.T. community and strengthened existing friendships with several campus staff members. I even took some time during the semester to learn more about the moderate Muslims in not just the R.I.T. community, but America as a whole through a film screening of Mara Ahmed's *The Muslims I Know* on March 20, 2016.

ARTICLE: PRESIDENT TRUMP'S TRAVEL BAN CAUSES SPRING SEMESTER SCARE ON THE R.I.T. CAMPUS

Published on April 11, 2017

On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed Executive Order 13769 which bars emigration from Muslim-majority countries such as Iran, Somalia and Yemen for around 90 days. This ban came as a scare to many members of the RIT community, as it was said to affect approximately 45 members of our student population.

“We’re working very hard to try to educate everybody so they know what the restrictions are, what the rules are,” RIT President Bill Destler explained. “For example, we’ve told our international students that this is not a good time to go home, because you might have trouble getting back in. These kinds of things we’re trying to make sure they understand what the situation is.”

Those affected include Mehdi Dehghani, a freshman who came from Iran to try to get his PhD, who might have to miss his family for the rest of his college career.

“So, as you might know, most of students visa are single entry type which means if you travel outside of United States like back home to visit your family, for coming back to U.S. you have to apply for a new visa and this process is so risky,” Dehghani explains. “We usually do not travel back home to visit our family, the only remaining option would be asking my parents to come here and visit me, but with this ban, this is not gonna happen. This means for getting my PhD, it is not possible for me to see my family in 5 years which is unbelievable.”

Students, however, were not the only ones concerned about the travel ban. Jefferey Cox, the director of International Student Services at RIT, states the following in regards to those affected:

“I was extremely concerned for our students and researchers (one of whom was travelling and was stuck outside the US for about a week) when the initial executive order was rolled out on a Friday night, causing chaos all weekend” Cox explained. “I was extremely disappointed in both the spirit of the travel ban and the way in which it was implemented—which was unlike anything I have seen in my 25 years of working with immigration relations.”

Federal courts are fighting against Trump’s ban and are doing so quite effectively, especially in the state of New York, through the case of Darweesh v. Trump. The case

resulted in a stay order, prohibiting enforcement of the executive order until February 28th. However, we are still enforcing the same travel ban again as we initially were, as Trump has signed Executive Order 13780, which extends the ban from each country (minus Iraq) until June 16, 2017.

“I was relieved when it was appropriately put on hold by the courts on February 3rd,” Cox explained. “The newly revised ban signed on Monday, March 6th and taking effect on March 16th, is only slightly different in a few particulars, but the spirit of it is the same. As has been widely reported, the singling out of incoming visitors based solely on nationality is not a valuable tool to increase safety.”

With the ban extended and the removal of Iraq from the list of countries with barred emigration into the United States, the ban will still affect roughly 75% of those affected whilst having the same effect on the campus in general.

“RIT had 45 students, plus one researcher who were affected by the initial travel ban. With the removal of Iraq and some other records updating, we have now determined that we have 32 students, plus one researcher, who will continue to be impacted under the revised travel ban,” Cox explained. “The students are allowed to stay and continue studying, but if their visas have expired or are single-entry visas, we are advising them not to travel outside the U.S. because we are concerned that they would not be allowed to re-enter.”

The 32 students and researcher affected by this situation may have to assess the situation they are currently in and plan ahead through this tough time.

“There is nothing I can do except staying calm and not thinking about this situation, and hoping everything will get better soon,” Dehghani explained. “I am still not sure if it is worth it to study in U.S. by paying for not visiting your family, what do you think? My friends who are studying in Canada and Europe go home every single semester and the best I can do is facetime with my parents.”

While this small group of students and one researcher will still be affected by Trump’s ban, the officials over at RIT wants to reassure that everyone, no matter where they come from or how they got here, is always welcome throughout the campus.

“from wherever they come,” President Destler explains,” I think they add richly to the diversity to our community. We don’t want them to feel like they’re not welcome here.”

Various events throughout the campus made the former clearly evident. On March 30, 2017, RIT’s Center for Religious Live, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Modern Languages and Cultures and Muslim Student Association presented a screening of the film *The Muslims I Know*.

“The purpose of the screening in 2017, much like a previous screening in 2008, is to try and have a conversation between Muslims and non-Muslims on this situation,” Mara Ahmed, director of the film, explains. “In terms of what’s happening with the travel ban, it’s something that’s very worrisome, every Muslim that I know was talking about it. This is a very terrifying time for Muslims.”

“I helped bring her here, but I have never seen the film,” Paulette Schwartzfager, lecturer and event attendee, explains. “I am really inspired by the film and I learned. I thought I knew a lot, but I learned more and I especially liked all the questions the people asked. I liked that she stayed for a long time to do that and I also liked that the Muslim students also answered the questions. It’s hard for me to imagine that I would have to answer questions for all Christians everywhere.”

The ban remains in effect until June 16, 2017, 24 days after the 2016-2017 spring semester ends at RIT, but it will only be a temporary amount of time after the semester before the ban is lifted.

“I believe nothing would last forever,” Dehghani says, “this situation will change and the sky will be sunny again. Do not give up on your dreams, be positive and remember, it always tastes better when you earn something in a hard way, you can just sit and enjoy that.”

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