

TechNews

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Students watched presidential debate with mounting fear for democracy

Andrew Adams
TECHNEWS WRITER

The presidential debates wrapped up on Wednesday, October 19, with a debate at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, Nevada. The debate featured Democratic nominee Secretary Hillary Clinton and Republican nominee Donald Trump. It featured Chris Wallace, a Fox News anchor, as the moderator. Clinton, according to Politico, won the first two debates. Going into the third debate, opinions were divided as to who would win.

The Office of Campus Life hosted a viewing of the debate in Center Court. People went in and out throughout the event, with attendance floating around 50 people. The crowd featured people from virtually all social groups and a representative racial and gender makeup. Among the crowd was a Jill Stein canvasser who passed out flyers advertising the Green party candidate’s positions.

The crowd in Center Court was respectful and quiet for most of the debate, at times seeming disengaged. There were exceptions to that, though. At a few moments throughout the debate, the crowd erupted into cheers, boos, and most of all laughter. The lines that spurred these reactions were almost all personal jabs at the candidates.

The debate had an ostentatious start since both candidates continued their psychological manipulation. Trump invited the mother of a victim of the Benghazi embassy attacks and the Kenyan born half-brother of Barack Obama. Clinton invited two billionaire critics of her opponent.

Another constant from the last debate were the interruptions. According to Time, Trump interrupted Clinton 48 times, with Clinton only interrupting nine times. These interruptions mostly consisted of fleeting comments such as the now infamous “Wrong!” comments from Trump. There were some substantive interruptions—though only from Trump. These interruptions focused mostly Clinton’s emails and her character. Clinton responded to these claims with calm denials and accusations of her own regarding Trump’s history with women.

This debate also brought up two specific points that are significant within the presidential campaign—and the history of democracy—as a whole. The first moment was when Trump was asked by Wallace directly “Do you make the same commitment that you’ll absolutely accept the result of the election?” Trump immediately responded by saying “I will look at it at the time. I’m not looking at anything now, I’ll look at it at the time.” This reasonably scared a large portion of the media

and the electorate, since America has enjoyed over 200 years of peaceful transitions of power between presidents, with losing candidates respecting the outcome of the election.

The other highly talked about moment within the debate came at the end when Trump interrupted Clinton, saying simply “Such a nasty woman.” This statement made many deeply uncomfortable, some saying that it had deeply misogynistic tones. Some media sources such as Vox and the New York Times published pieces that made it clear this was an unprofessional and unnecessary thing to say, going as far as to use it as further proof that Trump mistreats women. Others leaned into it and used it, particularly in conjunction with Janet Jackson’s 1986 hit “Nasty,” as evidence that the system of politics is biased against women and that Clinton is doing all she can to break through the proverbial glass ceiling.

This debate was marred with insults, interruptions, and an air of tension that has been unseen in recent election cycles. That said, Clinton, a symbol of the political machine’s workings in Washington D.C., has demonstrably beaten Trump, for a third debate in a row, as shown in scientific polls such as the CNN/ORC poll.

International Students Feature: Africa

Alexandra Detweiler
TECHNEWS WRITER

Africa is a big continent, and therefore readers might see “Africa” as the bold headline of this article and feel irritated or confused: don’t frown and move on just yet. Yes, there are a lot of viewpoints to cover when considering a continent like Africa—and it should be noted that because the interview process was volunteer-based, TechNews did not even come close to interviewing all of these voices—however, when four of the six interviewed students were interviewed as a group, Irewole Akande, Wofai Ewa, Joris Ekpangbo, and Marc Sednaoui remarked upon many of the same things and tended to nod their heads and murmur agreements when one another spoke. For this reason, this article is not separated into individual segments by country, but rather under a large, continental umbrella.

Four of the international students interviewed for this article came from Nigeria: Akande, a fourth year student studying engineering management, Ewa, a first year student studying mechanical engineering, Raji, a first year student studying mechanical engineering, and Ayantoye, a fourth year student studying biochemistry and biophysics. Ekpangbo, a second year graduate student studying data management, is from Benin, and Sednaoui, a fourth year student studying mechanical engineering, is from Egypt.

Firstly, these six international students mentioned that the weather here was very different from where they were from. According to Raji, “it gets a little colder [in Nigeria], but it doesn’t compare to Chicago.” Ekpangbo mentioned how unfamiliar he was with needing to wear sweatshirts and scarves. Akande agreed with Ekpangbo, relaying a vivid memory of his arrival in the United States in the winter of 2013. “I came in January and I’d never seen snow before. I remember it like it was yesterday. I got to Chicago, and in the airport the A/C [was on] so it’s cold; I had on a sweatshirt. And then I walked out of the door, and the next thing I did was [say], ‘What’s going on?’ I just like rushed back,... I go to a pay phone, I call my uncle and I’m like, ‘I’m not walking out of this place.’” However, while these particular students may be unused to Illinois’ snow, the rain in Nigeria is apparently a force to be reckoned with. According to Ayantoye, in Nigeria, it can rain for a whole week straight during the rainy season. Because of this, he says, “I’m not bothered by rain. I don’t freak out by the rain, only when it snows.”

When asked about differences in food between Illinois Tech and his home country, Akande answered, “I feel like the food is a sore topic.” Apparently, Akande stated that the food in the Commons is “ten times” better

than it was four years ago when he first started to attend school at Illinois Tech. When he first arrived, he claimed that he was very confused about the amount of rice served with a meal. “You serve rice, not rice as a side dish,” he claimed. “I was so confused, like, ‘what’s going on?’ How can you give someone just a spoonful of rice? ... That was, like, scarring for me.” According to Akande, dishes back home are more wholesome, and rice is served with meat on the side instead of the other way around. According to him, when he first found out that steak could be an entree, he was shocked: he didn’t realize that was something people did. “Back home, I didn’t eat a lot of meat,” Akande noted. “Here, protein is the main dish, while carbohydrates are the side dish.” Ewa, Ekpangbo, and Sednaoui all seemed to agree with Akande. “It took me two weeks to find something I liked,” Ewa admitted. “I didn’t like 90% of [the options]. I tried a new thing every day. Now, I eat about half of the things they serve in the cafeteria.” Ayantoye also missed the food back home, saying, “personally, I miss Nigerian food, especially my mom’s food. But I like the other options I have here too: Mexican food, Indian food, Chinese food, from other cultures too.” Ekpangbo agreed that the variety of cuisine in the United States was something that he liked. “There is this melting pot of people and countries and you can try a lot of tastes,” Ekpangbo said. “I don’t like pizza that much, but I’ll try it sometimes, and I’ll try some not-American food like Colombian food, Chinese food, Japanese food... That’s what is beautiful about food in America. Back in my country, there’s no Colombian food I don’t think.” Raji also had an opinion on American food. In his words, “the food is okay here. It’s just in Nigeria, you get it fresh, but here it’s chemically processed and full of all this bad stuff for you. But honestly, other than that, it’s good here too. It’s way faster.” Akande also mentioned that the time that Americans usually took to prepare their food differed substantially from what he was used to. “Eating is not, like, work. Back home, you just take your time. You sit down, you have conversation, you talk with your friends.” According to him, eating meals was much social back home than it is here in America, and less rushed. Sednaoui agreed with him, saying, “Egyptian food requires time to make. Here, it’s so fast. Eating is a social thing. Even if you’re eating in a restaurant, you sit with strangers.”

There are also many differences in general culture, according to these six students. Akande mentioned that he thought life back in Nigeria had much more emphasis on community and the group. “I come from a satellite town. Everyone knows each other; you all know your neighbors. You can leave your keys at home and your neighbors will

take care of them. But here, it’s like, everyone is just on their own.” Additionally, Akande thought that even the process of raising a child was more about the whole community than an independent family, saying that he thought it was strange when someone complained about not being able to stop another person’s child from acting up. People don’t say, “Oh, someone’s child is doing this but I don’t stop them.” That’s not what it’s like where I’m from.” According to Ewa, “every adult raises one child” Raji elaborated upon the same topic, saying, “you could go to a neighbor’s house and ask them for almost anything.” Raji thought that life back in Nigeria was more “family oriented” and “tight-knit.” Raji also thought that people were friendlier back in Nigeria. “If you walk up to a stranger in Nigeria,” Raji said, “they will say hello, but if you walk up to a stranger here they will be like, ‘go away.’” Ayantoye thought that it was “more individualized here” as a whole.

Academically, according to Ewa, professors in America are much more willing to assist students. “I think here, the teachers here are more willing to help. [School is] more lenient here, less strict.” Others seemed to agree with this. In Ekpangbo’s words, “teachers really care about you; they’ll talk to you.” Back home, Ekpangbo noted, “teachers will look at you, but they don’t see you.” Additionally, Sednaoui commented that he liked the flexibility of being able to choose your own courses. “In Egypt, everyone is in the same classroom, and everyone is taking the same classes, so you get this connection you grew up with. Instead of switching classes, every core subject [is the same]. You get this connection with people you grew up with for all your years.” In Egypt, Sednaoui was used to those in the same major taking many of the same classes, and that was a strange transition. According to Raji, in his opinion “people don’t value education as much as they should here.” Perhaps this is due to the fact that American students take the resources that are available to them for granted. Ayantoye commented on the fact that he had a lot more resources here than he did in Nigeria. Things such as professors’ office hours or even an internet connections are luxuries he didn’t have before. “The resources I’ve received [as a] student to use are way more than in Nigeria. You can easily go online and look up stuff, which I did not have access to when I was in Nigeria. In Nigeria, all I did was sit in class and take notes.”

While life for these international students changed drastically in some ways, they also stayed the same in others: we are all still human, after all. In Raji’s words, “the people are different, but honestly they are just the same.” Next week, look for an international students feature on your peers from Syria!