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2-2-2016

Reflections from a First Time Voter

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Recommended Citation

Tazelaar, Carlye, "Reflections from a First Time Voter" (2016). *Student Work*. Paper 19.
http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/student_work/19

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Reflections From a First Time Voter

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Carlye Tazelaar

This is the first presidential election I get to vote in. Which is a pretty cool opportunity and duty that Americans carry. I haven't been the best at following the campaign trail or the views of the politicians, other than the one I know caucused for on February 1, because, according to isidewith.com, we view 91% of issues the same.

But despite my ignorance, there is one thing I have been good at this election season: mudslinging.

I'm a big fan of satire and a big fan of a good joke, admittedly even when they go "too far." I love memes more than any 20-year-old-aspiring-ministry-professional should, and I'd like to think I'm pretty good at using the internet to stay up to date on the latest joke.

And then last week, January 29, my roommates were gone. So I went to attend the last ten minutes of the Jeb Bush rally hosted at my college, because...I don't even know. After the event ended, I made my way down the stairs and through the crowd to take a selfie with him, to the scoffs of "grown-ups" who thought a selfie with someone from the Bush family was silly and unprofessional and juvenile. Whatever. They clearly haven't met me.

So then I'm walking back to my apartment in the cold, re-living the experience of shaking his hand and saying "could we take a selfie?" and trying to think of a great caption for Instagram, and it hit me.

He's a real person. Jeb Bush is a real person. And so is Donald Trump, and Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders, and Ben Carson, and Marco Rubio, and a bunch of other people whose names I truthfully cannot think of this quickly.

Profound thought, right?

But then I thought, if I, as a Reformed Christian, seek to honor stories of real people through storytelling; if I seek to honor humanness, brokenness, and overcoming odds in my own life as well as in the lives of those I love, I think I can honor it in the candidates too. Perhaps I could even celebrate lives, even the lives of the candidates I don't agree with politically.

What I'm saying is this: we've all messed up something bad in this life. We hurt people and we disappoint and we don't play fair. We're all humans and we all have stories that we share and stories we hide. We have pictures we post on Facebook and images hidden in our browser history. We have possessions we set out on the dining room table and knives we hide under our pillows; we have pills we take for illness and we have pills we take to numb our memories.

Our teachers tell us not to bully basically from the instant we walk into school as kindergarteners clutching our backpacks and wondering if this building or our teachers literally will eat us alive. Surely you remember the first day of high school, and how afraid you were to put yourself out there back then? I do, I cried while waiting for the bus. What about interviewing for your current job, or the job before that?

Our presidential candidates put themselves out there in the most bold and vulnerable of ways, and I think

more times than not they see more hate than any human should know. And they are humans; susceptible to depression and anxiety just like any of us. They overthink passive comments and stay up late wondering what they're even doing, anyway. It ought to go without saying, but they deserve the same love we do, they deserve to know they are forever and unconditionally loved and they deserve measures of grace poured out from cups that have no bottom. To us much grace has been given, may we turn and pour it out generously.

So look, I **know** you have that constitutional right to say whatever you want and fear no jail time, but I also know that Jesus said it best when He declared us all loved forever, amen.

Even Donald Trump, even Jeb Bush, even Bernie Sanders, even Hillary Clinton.

Even the people who vote for the people we don't think should be president.

In a campaign fueled by hate, let's slam on the brakes with love.