

Andrew Friedman

Finalist

Creative Nonfiction Category

2019-2020 Emerging Writers Contest

Mr. President

During my freshman year of high school, I vividly remember seeing the senior class president running the school for his class. I envied him because I believed that it was unachievable for anyone like me to get elected into his position. After all, pop culture has taught the majority of us that student government elections are a popularity contest rather than a competition of accountability. When it was my senior year, I took a step back and asked myself, "Why shouldn't I run for class president? Why should I let society tell me what I'm capable of?" At that moment, I decided I was going to run for senior class president.

I was by no means the popular kid. I was semi-known to the general public, but there were plenty of mixed attitudes towards me. If I were going to convince my peers that I was the candidate for them, I would have to change the public attitude towards me. I knew that going into the race that my campaign would ultimately decide the outcome. The night before the campaign week started, I researched what makes a strong public message.

After researching, I learned a lot about what makes a compelling message to the public. My strategy was to be as memorable and distinct as possible. If I wanted anyone to remember who I was, I would need to get my name shown to them as much as possible. I started by designing a poster that displayed my name thirteen times, followed by the slogan "North Atlanta Needs Change" with black ink on white paper. It was transparent and minimalistic. It was

entirely unlike anything anyone else was doing. Another poster I created that night took a comedic approach.

On the first day of the election week, people arrived at school, seeing a poster above all the water fountains that read "Free drinks on me. Vote Andrew Friedman for senior class president." The rest of the hallways covered with my name announcing that the school needs change. People took notice, and chatter rose amongst the general public. The strategy was working! The only downside was, I knew my opponents would retaliate.

The following night, I enlisted the help of some friends that were savvy in the art of graphic design. I knew they could make posters that were far out of my capabilities. I told them my ideas, and with their polish, I had a whole new wave of media to release to the school.

On Tuesday, my competitors had covered the halls with their same posters to overwhelm my message in comparison. Luckily, I came prepared and surrounded their works on a 4:1 ratio with my newly devised tools of persuasion. I believe that my fellow students were starting to get impressed by my efforts. I knew that if I were going to have a chance at winning, I would have to keep up this effort. My rivals would push back, and I needed to show the people I was taking this seriously.

The next night involved brainstorming new ways to run my election. My past work had demonstrated that I was a prime believer in myself. I needed to get the backing of more people than just myself. I enlisted another friend to make a professional-looking image that seemed like a magazine cover showing me in a suit with my name repeated in the background. It was intended for the digital form since the physical was already covered. I wanted to reveal the face of the campaign in a presidential stature.

During Wednesday in the first period, I got everyone in my math class to post the image to their Snapchat stories. After those people, I messaged every single person in my Snapchat contacts to display that image onto their account. After a couple of minutes of begging, I had around 50 people from the senior class advertising my image. One of those people was an opponent's boyfriend, who just added that much more towards my credibility. It made people think, "If this guy is so good that he can recruit the most loyal people on the other side, then he must be talented." In reality, it was just a stroke of luck, but it seemed like it helped convince people that I was the rightful heir to the throne. I developed the nickname "Mr. President" as a result.

Thursday was the final day of campaigning. I knew I needed to have one last bang to finish off the race in an attempt to solidify my standings. I decided the best investment of my time and resources was to design and purchase a temporary Snapchat geofilter on the school grounds for Thursday and Friday. Whenever someone used Snapchat and tried to place a filter on their image, they would see "Andrew Friedman for senior class president" in simplistic white as an option.

Thursday and Friday were spent mainly on observation. My grade was surprised by my idea as it was something new. My opponents, seemingly flustered, tried to put up as many posters as possible. I posted on my story reminding people to vote no matter which person it would be. Also, I texted my opponents that no matter who won, it was a good race for all of us and that there should be no hard feelings. Despite people saying that they voted for me, I had a fear in me that if I put in a little bit more work, I could have swung the election.

Monday rolled around painfully slow. I woke up to the result that I had won the election. After a bit of dancing around in ecstasy, I realized that I had done what my freshman self thought I could never do. I had learned that the only thing stopping me was myself, and with a bit of hard work, anything is possible. The last thing left to do was hope I left a mark for the next freshman who tells themselves they can't do it.