

Great Debate

Makes Presidential Impression

After the third presidential debate on October 19 (and the cringeworthy Al Smith dinner that took place the following evening), 300 million Americans breathed a collective sigh of relief. Yes, the election was still a few weeks away, but the country had cleared a significant hurdle: the two candidates would no longer share a stage and interact with each other ever again.

Except when they did. With less than two weeks before Election Day, Clinton and Trump took to the podium in NJCU's Gilligan Student Union to cross swords one last time.

The Donald sported his defiant lower lip and aggressive comb-over. Hillary rocked her iconic power pantsuit. They punched their familiar

talking points, traded familiar barbs, and interrupted each other with familiar rigor.

But neither candidate looked quite like his or her campaign poster.

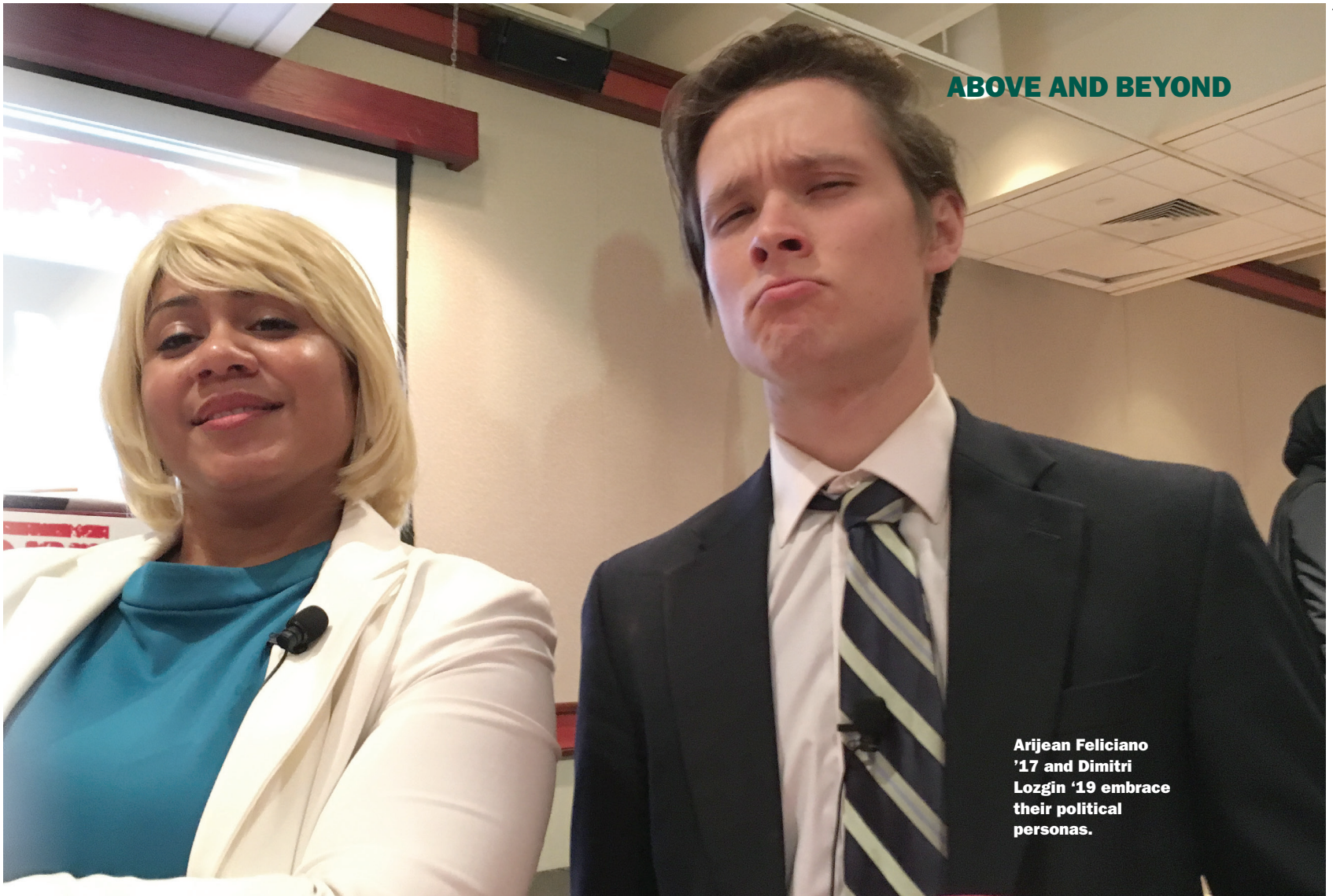
It was NJCU's Great Debate, in which a pair of students—in this case Arijean Feliciano '17, a senior marketing major as Hillary, and Dimitri Lozgin '19, a sophomore business major as Donald—made their best effort to channel the views and mannerisms of each candidate before a large—and very partisan—crowd of University students, faculty, and staff.

Sponsored by the Office of Campus Life, The Great Debate has been a once-every-four-year tradition at NJCU since 2004 when John Kerry challenged George W. Bush. While the event predictably leaves plenty

of room for raucous laughter, the showmanship can obscure the months of study each “candidate” endured to prepare for what was essentially a 90-minute improvisation.

“Remember,” Assistant Director of Campus Life Robert Quinones '00 noted before introducing the candidates, “The views and opinions expressed here are the views and opinions of *the candidates*, not necessarily the views and opinions of the students.”

Very true. After the debate, Quinones confided that Trump was a particularly tough role to cast. As the real Donald Trump's campaign grew more divisive, a couple of student pseudo Trumps begged off, citing their discomfort with the candidate's talking points. Lozgin wasn't crazy about some of Trump's positions



Arijean Feliciano '17 and Dimitri Lozgin '19 embrace their political personas.

either, but *The Show Must Go On*. He took on the role with enthusiasm, creating a Trump that was at once familiar, but not cartoonish. Feliciano, on the other hand, had no such disconnect between the words she spoke and her personal beliefs; over the summer she was a DNC volunteer as well as an attendee at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

Both Logzin and Feliciano were aided by a faculty “campaign manager,” to help them stay on message. Associate Professor of Business Wanda Rutledge served the Clinton camp and Sports Information Director Ira Thor advised Trump. Also, to add that extra layer of authenticity to the proceedings, both Clinton and Trump were escorted to the debate

stage by a squad of officious student Secret Service agents.

The debate was moderated by Jersey City Councilman at Large Daniel Rivera—whose introduction by Quinones was dismissed by Lozgin/Trump (“Wrong!”)—and covered a wide spectrum of national and international topics such as immigration reform, ISIS, gun control, and prescription drug costs.

In addition to well-trod policy positions, the candidates also managed a few zingers. When Lozgin/Trump tried to throw some shade on Feliciano/Clinton’s marriage, for example, she shot back, “I didn’t give up [on my marriage] when things got tough—or when I got bored.”

Lozgin/Trump similarly never shied away from his doppelganger’s showboating instincts. In response

to a boisterous crowd member, he nodded with satisfaction. “Always feel free to applaud whenever I speak.”

After the debate concluded, all in attendance filled out ballots to determine the winner. The vote fell decisively in Clinton’s favor.

Quinones was pleased with the whole experience. “The Great Debate is a fantastic way for the students to assess the candidates and see what they stand for,” he noted. “I wish we could do it more often than every four years.”

In fact, the Office of Campus Life is planning to do just that. New Jersey will have its gubernatorial election in 2017; as soon as the Democratic and Republican candidates are announced, NJCU will be ready. **NJCU**