

One year later: Penn State Democratic students reflect on the 2016 presidential election

BY ALEXIS COLLINS ON NOVEMBER 9, 2017

Around one year ago, the United States elected Donald J. Trump as President of the United States. The decision was shocking for many, specifically Democratic voters around the country. We spoke to students at Penn State who were involved with the campaign, and who voted for the Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election.

Seun Babalola, a junior majoring in political science, was an intern at Hillary Clinton's campaign headquarters in Brooklyn, New York over the summer of 2016.

"It was a rewarding experience," he said. "I really enjoyed campaigning for her over the summer and just interning and doing things with her. It was such a great atmosphere. It was just awesome representing her and representing that campaign and what we stood for."

During his internship, Babalola campaigned for Clinton and helped people with their voting registration. He said that while the experience was positive, it also put things in perspective for him when he went back to Penn State Erie, the Commonwealth Campus he attended for two years before transferring to University Park.

"When I got to Erie, it was a completely different climate," he said. "Everybody's Republican, everyone wants Trump. It was those kinds of people that I was dealing with."

Babalola said that due to the highly conservative area he was in, he was very careful with his language when discussing politics.

"Whenever I was talking to somebody who was a Trump supporter, I made sure that I would use enough facts as possible," he said. "A lot of people won't change their ideology and I can't do anything about that. All I can do is educate, you can listen [but], it's cool if you don't."

However, Babalola said he was in shock when Donald Trump was elected to serve as the 45th President of the United States, saying that American citizens revealed their true feelings by voting for him.

"America chose this white supremacist ideology over democracy," he said. "People were yelling the n-word in the name of the election."

Babalola said that despite the election results, he felt that his hard work wasn't in vain.

“I was good. A lot of people were good,” he said. “I think a lot of people were just angry at the fact that America literally chose this guy who is against everything that we stand for as a country, and people were okay with it. I sense a lot of people’s frustration because people put in a lot of work and a lot of effort and he still got elected.”

However, Babalola said he’s confident that Trump will not get reelected for a second term and that he’s banking on the 2018 midterm elections for Congress.

“[The results] were disappointing, but at the same time optimistic,” he said. “[For] the 2018 midterms and 2020 when we go vote, we’ll come back stronger.”

Besides Babalola, friends Sarah Files and Dori Puzycki also voted for Clinton.

Files said that she remembered being in the HUB-Robeson Center studying for an exam on Election Day.

“I ended up not going to that class because I was stuck here crying at the results,” the junior Spanish and music major said. “I was here until past midnight.”

Puzycki said that she was in her bedroom on the night of the election and that a friend later picked her up and drove her to IHOP to take her mind off the results.

“We went to one of the parking decks to see the sunrise,” the sophomore said. “The sun didn’t rise that day because it was rainy all day. That was a bad day. I was really upset too. I didn’t want to miss class [but], I just stayed at home and cried.”

After Trump won the election, Files said that her family was happy because they are strongly conservative.

“A lot of them said to give him a chance and to support him,” she said. “Ever since the election, I’ve lost touch with a lot of my family, which is sad.”

Puzycki said that she also lost touch with friends.

“It made me feel like our country had now become a reality TV show, which is ridiculous,” she said. “It’s annoying how they thought we were upset because a woman didn’t win. I would’ve been happy if a man that wasn’t him would’ve won.”

Students check their phones during an election night watch party.

Both Files and Puzycki, who are Bellefonte natives, said that Trump's performance as president has been disappointing. They said that it seems as if he's running the country by "trial and error."

"He's letting everyone down, even the people who voted for him," Files said. "The fact that if I want to know what happened and I have to look on his Twitter is ridiculous."

Puzycki also said that as a member of the LGBTQ community, she's surprised that the Trump administration didn't try to appeal the Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex marriage.

"I've kind of become immune to it, it just sucks to know that you live in a country that hates you," she said. "It's been a year, but in my mind, it's been four. It sucks that people still are behind him."

However, Files said that she remains optimistic for the future of the Democratic Party, even though it currently has the minority seat in Congress.

"We know what's what's good for us as a country," she said. "I think if we just continue pushing that, it'll hopefully spread into the majority."