

## The Third Seat

*Written by Margot French and Candilla Park, Groton School Panel Members  
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There seems to be an accepted balance between hating on Trump and using him as a comedic device. Often when one mentions Trump, it's assumed that all parties in the conversation are against him, and that therefore they can all joke about how ridiculous his campaign is. It's absurd; it's entertaining. In fact, my dorm considered getting MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN t-shirts for \*Awkward Dance. I myself gifted a friend with a Donald Trump coloring book, which highly amused her.

The humor that accompanies Trump's name is only natural, but I can't help but wonder if this is part of the reason that Donald Trump is so popular in many other places—because he is entertaining. Whether he is popular because he doesn't seem to take politics too seriously, or because politics doesn't seem to take him too seriously, no one is winning here. Despite the almost comical claims made by both candidates and the mass amounts of media attention each has received, the 2016 Presidential Election is actually knee deep in trouble, more so than any onlooker may perceive.

I've heard the term "lesser evil" used time and time when referring to either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. It's become the go-to explanation used by many Clinton supporters; frankly, it's more of an excuse. Late into a Sunday night, as many of us do when we would rather be doing anything but our homework due the next day, a few friends and I procrastinated through light-hearted debating. Trump's infamous locker room talk surfaced. Some argued that Trump would make a terrible president, misrepresenting athletes everywhere by associating his own foul statements with "locker room talk." Some argued that Hillary was in fact worse. She could have potentially handed top-secret information right into dangerous hands by carelessly handling government emails and endangering all our lives. Trump simply offended a few people.

The final verdict found Hillary a better candidate because—and only because—she was the lesser evil. While I certainly do not condone Trump's outlandish remarks, the use of "lesser evil" to support Clinton over Trump is seriously lacking. How could our founding fathers have put so much thought into writing the Constitution, only to leave us scrambling when neither candidate is particularly impressive? Why should we have to choose between two "evils"? The answer is that we shouldn't.

2016 is the first election since 1968 that a third party/independent candidate has carried a state, leading in at least one opinion poll—Evan McMullin over Utah. Not only has he made history, but Libertarian Gary Johnson has ballot access in all 50 states, and Green Party's Jill Stein has ballot access in enough states to theoretically win the electoral college. Third party/independent

candidates have been especially significant this year, considering the general dissatisfaction with both the Democratic and Republican candidates.

Unfortunately, the current system has prevented third party/independent candidates from receiving the attention they deserve. Even though Johnson and Stein have respectively received 4 and 8 percent of the national polls—which is a noteworthy achievement for third party candidates—they need to receive 15 percent to even gain a spot in the presidential debates. This is more or less impossible, considering that third party/independent candidates barely get any media spotlight compared to the Democratic and Republican candidates. They may have received more attention if they were allowed to participate in the Presidential Debates, but regardless, they simply cannot reach that percentage threshold: it becomes a vicious cycle. 15% is an unfair, unnecessarily high, arbitrary, and inconvenient threshold, especially in the present day.

2016 has made it clear: the US shouldn't limit itself to only two parties, two ideologies, and two candidate options. We should feel free to seriously consider third party candidates as well. Our politically binary mindset need be modified.

\*Awkward Dance: Groton School's first dance of the year—everyone dresses up awkwardly and dances with friends they had just met a week ago.