



Department of Communication

April 2, 2017

Congratulations to Rutgers on winning the 2017 National Debate Tournament AND for uniting the crowns as both CEDA and NDT Champions for only the second time in history! The 2017 Rutgers championship is even sweeter as Nic is the first black woman to win the NDT and Devane is only the second black person to win top speaker at the NDT! What a phenomenal tournament and historic moment for the debate community!

Congratulations to Georgetown on a phenomenal season and their second place finish! I had the honor of judging Jonathan Paul as a debater in route to winning the NDT. I also judged his first team to reach the finals and win the NDT and this last final round of his coaching career. Ezra had an amazing career with numerous victories at major national college tournaments and no one will be surprised when Natalie is back in the final round of the NDT next year.

It is always an honor to judge the final round and I appreciate the opportunity.

RFD: I vote for Rutgers for an interpretation of debate that requires the AFF to embody their restriction on private GHC emissions. The central controversy of the debate was whether or not Georgetown should have been required to defend how they would achieve the policy put forward in the 1AC. The NEG argument was that this additional requirement represents a good model for debate for three reasons:

a- It is more ethical. The Campbell card says that allowing people to simply present potential actions by the government without having to take a public commitment towards a strategy for actually achieving the policy based on their social location enables advocates to make empty promises to the populations with the least power. In the context of advocacy, allowing a disembodied version of debate rewards people that systematically mislead audiences under the guise of focusing on the plan now with a promise to worry about implementing it later. Here are some of the powerful lines in the Campbell evidence, "in a Privileged speaking position... {the speaker} has a political/ethical responsibility to interrogate his/her relationship to subordinated and disadvantaged peoples and declare their interest... Refusing to declare one's speaking position constitutes not only a flagrant denial of the privileging effect of speech, but must be considered as an act of complicity to systematically mislead." I do not think that Georgetown ever engaged the Campbell evidence directly in the debate.

Part of the reason that this was so essential in my decision is that much of Georgetown's offense rested on an implied assumption that the research that people do to develop their policy AFF's motivates them to do something outside the debate space. From Georgetown's perspective, the process of debate is important because it is a way of refining policies, learning our relationships to institutions, and determining which course of action should be pursued as a result. Georgetown was very good at explaining the need for legal education and to learn how to navigate the global institutions that are inevitable for any discussion of global climate change. The central question of the debate, however, was whether or not we should continue assuming that the endpoint of that iterative process is actual action.

There are, of course, lots of examples that Georgetown could have pointed to (including some of their own alumni) to demonstrate that plenty of traditional policy debaters have gone on to become active in efforts to change the world. That being said, there really was not much of a defense of this assumption in the debate. The Campbell evd became especially important as Rutgers consistently argued for a different conception of presumption. They argued that the traditional conception of presumption which simply requires the Affirmative to

demonstrate the plan is a risk worth taking compared to the status quo is too low of a burden. They argued that the Affirmative must demonstrate that their advocacy actually sets in motion some action that produces change. I think that Georgetown needed to invest way more time in both explaining how the research used to prepare and develop an affirmative translates into action to both meet that interpretation while also defending the traditional interpretation of presumption.

b- The Doubling DA: Rutgers argued that allowing the affirmative to simply read a plan and then focus the debate on the process of refinement of that plan makes it possible for debaters to deny or ignore any relation to the subject matter on a personal level which reinforces the notion that we can separate the personal from the political. This argument gained persuasiveness as Rutgers explained that for many people there is no option to disconnect their personhood from their politics with tangible examples of politicians who have been silenced on the floor of Congress for attempting to speak for or against a policy.

c-The Marginalized Voices DA: Rutgers argued that a plan focused debate that centers on the USFG or institutions risks devaluing or ignoring marginalized voices as the plans and the subsequent discussions of how to refine them inevitably focus on the institutions involved which risks marginalizing the voices of the people who are directly affected by the controversy at hand but do not have the power to intervene, center, or perhaps even participate in the discussion of the institution.

By the 2AR, Georgetown's primary response to all three of these arguments was that it was POSSIBLE to resolve all of these DA's through a plan focused debate while gaining the advantages associated with legal and institutional education. They argued that it was possible to have a plan that did not focus on the USFG which may resolve the Doubling & Marginalized voices DA. They argued that it was possible to focus on how to refine the policy which would then motivate people to take their activism to the EPA to confront the very real prospect of global climate change.

There are three central problems with this type of permutation argument:

1- The AFF didn't do any of these things in this debate. Georgetown could have read an aff that proposed a plan without the USFG that included marginalized voices and an in-depth discussion of the activist path forward to achieve a transnational legal strategy for resolving the Arctic. That activist strategy could end up talking about the state without making the jump to simply imagine the world where the USFG acts. The early CX's were crucial on this point and I'm not sure that Georgetown walked away from those interactions with the same response I did. I thought Rutgers was arguing clearly and consistently that this was a framework interpretation and that the AFF didn't have a "we meet" argument after the CX of the 1AC established that Georgetown had no component of their AFF that was designed to embody a strategy for achieving the action described in the plan.

I think that Georgetown interpreted those interactions as a "role of the ballot" type of question where I was supposed to vote for the team that BEST embodied their arguments in relation to activism. The clearest example of this was when Georgetown asked what the Negative's plan was for accomplishing their AFF. Rutgers reply was that this was a framework interpretation and that the plan didn't meet so it wasn't about whether or not the NEG could do it for Georgetown. This, in my opinion, should have lead Georgetown to start engaging the framework interpretation as they have done in other debates including their negative win on framework against Rutgers earlier in the tournament.



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2- The perm \*could\* be possible but the central question of the debate was whether or not it would be beneficial to \*require\* that the AFF embody their restriction. The difference is critical because the central way that Rutgers answered Georgetown's offense about the benefits of plan focused debate (research, legal education, refinement, institutional focus, etc...) was to say that their interpretation did not say that a team couldn't start with a plan, but that the burden of the AFF would be to do more. The AFF had to go a step further to describe how they would make their change a reality. In doing so, the community would get the benefits of the research with the added benefit of a new set of neg strategies revolving around the activist strategies that every team would have to be prepared to defend (e.g. the activist tradeoff DA).

3- The potential combination of the frameworks did more to support the Topical Version of the AFF. Rutgers gave tangible examples of affirmatives wherein the 1AC offered a proposal for change and then described an activist strategy for achieving that change. Most of Georgetown's offense revolved around the need for the iterative process of debate which required a proposal that would serve as the focus of the debate. Rutgers demonstrated that the affirmative could offer a proposal and defend the best strategy for achieving it which would bolster the negative's opportunity for testing the entire affirmative position by using that iterative process to also refine *how* one might go about trying to achieve change.

In the end I decided that the offense put forward for traditional plan focused debate was outweighed by the three disads and that there was a substantial risk that the Neg's interpretation would also incentivize research and refinement.

#### On Black Humor & the Discussion of Rhetorical Violence

In my opinion, the strongest norm in current academic debate is that judges try their hardest to evaluate the arguments based on the debate as it happens rather than from their personal perspective on the arguments. From the perspective of the arguments in the debate, if Georgetown wanted to win the debate on the on rhetorical violence from the roasting then they needed to better engage three arguments. First, the uniqueness claim that black people in the community experience that rhetorical violence all the time. Second, that black humor is a key strategy for dealing with antiblack spaces. Third, that the parts of the roast that were objected to as the most personal (the comments about personal appearances) were really rooted in the white beauty standards so it is beneficial for white people to experience being uncomfortable to confront those standards. I think that it was smart for Rutgers to de-emphasize the black humor argument in the 2NR since the rhetorical violence re-raise by Natalie in the 1AR was one of the more passionate parts of Georgetown's debating. That being said, if Georgetown wanted me to ignore the framework debate all together and to vote on the rhetorical violence arguments then they would have needed to engage the specifics of Rutgers arguments and weigh them against the impacts to framework rather than relying on the vivid descriptions of the real and potential problems with the roast.

Thank you again for the opportunity to judge the final round.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jarrod Atchison'.

R. Jarrod Atchison, PhD  
Director of Debate & Associate Professor  
Wake Forest University