

**NDT Final Round 2017**  
**Marquis Ard**

I want to take a second before I get into my decision to thank the University of Kansas for hosting a wonderful NDT. Getting a chance to enjoy amazing food, even better hospitality and a ton of other accommodations makes—what is otherwise a pretty stressful weekend—a great time. I would also like to thank the program that brought me to this year’s National Debate Tournament: Cal Berkeley. In particular, the 3 seniors that came to this tournament: John Spurlock, Srinidhi Muppalla and Michael Wimsatt. Y’all are legends and thank you for your time, hard work and love for the game.

I would like to also thank the two teams from finals. Rutgers MN—I will be honest, I wasn’t always a fan. I thought y’all had tremendous potential but weren’t reaching it due to a host of factors but, in particular, not really going all in and investing time into your craft. But at this tournament, I was blown away. I saw really good speeches, high energy and a purpose and drive that propelled you to the end. It was a pleasure to watch.

This has to be due in part to the amazing coaching staff you have assembled—Director Christopher Kozak and assistant coaches Ryan Wash, Willie Johnson, Carlos and others I might be forgetting—congratulations on an amazing run. Ryan—we are all chasing your competitive model.

To Georgetown, I was also a bit unsure about y'all—having seen some early exits throughout the year, I didn't know if y'all had the sustainability to really make a run toward the end. Jesus, y'all defiantly proved me wrong. Ezra, all weekend you brought it at a high level including this debate and for that I hope you can rest knowing that at the end of the day you left it all on the table and congratulations on an amazing career. Natalie, you gave the best speech in the final round of the NDT and you're not done yet! Scary! Congratulations to the coaching staff at Georgetown – Director Jonathan Paul, Assistant Director Melanie Campbell alongside assistant coaches Andrew Markoff and Seth Gannon! This was an incredible run! JP, hope post-debate life is treating you well and know that you represent what it means to bring it at the highest level consistently. Thank you for setting the bar.

Before I move into my decision, I want it to be known that this debate, in a lot of ways, represents the culmination of efforts from a lot of people over the years to combat problematic norms in this activity that have locked out educational and institutional access to a variety of students. This debate, also, represents that, despite breaking some ceilings, we still have a long way to go in making sure students are receiving the best benefits from this activity and, at a baseline, forwarding respect and compassion to one another. To allow ideology to reign supreme in a tired clash of civilization debate is surely a missed opportunity to see this debate as innovative and rigorous while also, in some instances, deserving of a conversation regarding how we treat one another on both sides—

inside and outside of debates. We all are reading this right now because we all have a tremendous love and care for this activity. Let that mutuality carry us forward.

Seniors of 2017 — Congrats on graduating soon! Thank you for your time and energy to this activity. Very few spaces in this world can create the euphoria of the timer in hand with time winding down while going for a huge 2AR/2NR piece of offense or the relationships formed between coaches, debaters and teammates that serve as lifelong mentors and friends. I think it's important to note that the end of your debate career is really just the beginning of a whole new set of accomplishments ahead. Remember, once a debater always a debater.

**Now the debate**

## **I voted Negative for Rutgers MN**

This debate was hard to decide because there are floating pieces of offense everywhere. To begin, before I even analyze the offense presented, I ask myself about some framing issues. So, I begin with the interpretation debate. I have the affirmative forwarding the interpretation that plan focus is key and the negative forwarding that the best method is one that uses a plan mechanism that is embodied.

I think the Aff's permutation make sense here, but there are two arguments that problematizes this for me: First, the negative has a huge disadvantage to the way the perm is manifested given the overall hostility of the community. They are winning a structural uniqueness claim about the community which is shown through the experiences Rutgers has had in debate as well as accounts from other people of color.

The second argument Rutgers is winning is that the plan is part and parcel of the current hegemony of debate that will always regulate and create a surplus of plans that have no real orientation to oneself—which is the doubling argument.

This means that “plan focus only” becomes a ruse which allows further political inaction interpersonally and politically.

Ultimately, I consider the interpretation debate slightly in Rutgers’ favor. There is not much of a push back by Georgetown regarding the climate of the activity and how the way the plan has been constructed is not representative of Rutgers’ model nor can it redress a lot of the harms outlined by Rutgers.

I really think the advantage to the affirmative is really underdeveloped by the affirmative. In particular, how debate and research is able to spill out from this space and actually affect the legislative process that can redress climate and Indigenous struggles.

I do think Georgetown is winning the need to move beyond one’s proximate relation and engage institutions. However, I just think Rutgers is winning that institutional engagement will be done in bad faith. This bad faith leads to the creation of what Rutgers identifies as political figures such as Karl Rove and Mike Pence while simultaneously actively suppressing folks like Barbara Lee and Bobby Rush and other people of color politically. This is alongside arguments about how do you solve for Indigenous populations that you have no relationship to in the artic – which is problematic and not embodied. This is important outside of the interpretation debate because embodied politics is important even if plan focus should be preferred and so it becomes a question of what type of plans we should be committed to.

For me presumption is a likely the tie breaker given that I think the dis-embodied method of the aff is a substantial DA to the affirmatives overall advocacy and I don't know how that can be reconciled even if I give you the permutation. The permutation doesn't resolve the inability to actualize one's politics and can't just be reduce to a question of testing since it is a question about what you'll actually do in relationship to violence.

The closest argument I am close to leaning aff on is the problematic nature of the soul session – however this is hard to weigh. I need this impacted more and impacted in a way that is exclusive to the rest of the round. I think the 1AR is the closest for me to making this move but it's not carried into the 2AR well. If this was extended more robustly and impacted out I would be hard pressed to vote for Rutgers.

I do think Georgetown needs to handle the impact turn to uncomfortably more robustly. The tools to do this are there but it doesn't come out. Winning this claim means that the soul session, no matter how confrontational it might be, is net better than status quo modes of engagement that make black people docile objects of white libidinal aggression.

I do like how the argument that their method could induce a community antagonism but I think they are winning that already exists and that your politic only papers over this reality.

Georgetown needed more on the violence of the soul session and a counter-method relationality and counter-research that comes about through your process of debate. This comes out earlier but the 2AR is flat on how your model of debate has real time value for folks that have and continued to be marginalized in this space. While Rutgers method isn't perfect, it does, through confrontation, reveal the issues in relation to anti-blackness—which is going un-contested—this community conceals, provides a voice to those who didn't and don't have any means to express themselves, and builds a praxis that is localized and empowering.

Speaking of which, I think the method debating on the Affirmative side was lackluster. It would have been nice to see more forwarding of the research praxis of the Affirmative and why that model is net preferable over a politic that ultimately sees debate as the final referendum on advocacy skills/potential instead of a launching pad for advocacy skill development and praxis to ultimately spill up to foster change. As Scott Deathrage would say, I think the nexus question of this debate was lost by Georgetown and it became two ships passing in the night for large portions of the debate that ended up helping Rutgers quite a bit.

In short, I think the negative is winning a substantial DA to the affirmative's method making their interpretation of debate net-preferable and the Affirmative interpretation a non-starter.

There is not enough of a solvency deficit to the counter methodology produced by the negative to remedy the most proximate and immediate impacts in the debate and therefore results in a ballot for Rutgers MN (Devane Murphy and Nick Nave).

Thanks for reading,

Marquis Ard