

Ten Minute T(ea) with Mr. Joshua Emmott

*Interview conducted by Chloe Kim, Editor-in-Chief
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Q) What are your thoughts on how the election's been progressing so far?

A) Well, it's been progressing in the direction in which I'd like it to progress. So I'm not a Trump supporter. This entire election cycle has not progressed in a way that I thought it would—I didn't think Bernie Sanders was going to receive the Democratic nomination, so my assumption was that the DNC would prefer Hillary over Bernie. So that didn't surprise me. What did surprise me was that, out of a field of 16 people, encompassing former governors and senators, people with a lot of experience with a range of ideas, Donald Trump could emerge as the candidate. I found that surprising and disturbing.

Q) Then why do you think he was able to become the nominee?

A) I think there are a couple reasons. For one, I think that the field of candidates the Republican Party picked was weak. To have people like Ben Carson, who is as far removed from reality as one can get.... If Cruz and Rubio were the best senators the Party could put forth as candidates, then the party has a really serious problem, since one has virtually no experience, and the other's only achievement was shutting down the federal government. So I don't think those are credible politicians, given that there are a lot of republican politicians who have in fact achieved a lot. But I think the other problem is that the Republican Party, starting with Ronald Reagan, has convinced Americans—or tried to convince Americans—that the government is the source of all problems. If you say anything long enough, people start to believe it.

Q) To what extent do you think Donald Trump disrupted the unity of the Republican Party?

A) I think in a major way, and I think this is just beginning. I think that what he's doing and what's he's going to do, regardless of whether or not he wins this election, will profoundly impact the Republican Party for the next decade. I think he's another Barry Goldwater.

Q) Off that, how negative would the effects actually be if Trump actually won the election?

A) I'm going to say very negative. So a lot of his ideas about deploying troops, downsizing the federal government, redoing trading treaty negotiations—a lot of that is actually impossible. So you say, for example, that we're going to call up China and tell them we're going to redo trade, or South Korea and tell them they're going to have to pay more for our defense. I mean you could say that, but the way the world works is that treaties are structured so, actually, a president can't. So on one level, I think what he would be able to actually achieve would be minimal, but I

think that the danger is that the United States presidents aren't like other presidents in that what they say is sometimes more important than what they do. People around the world listen very closely to what the United States president says. But the president of Paraguay—nobody knows who he is. So I think that is more dangerous, the damage that could be done there would be long term.

Q) That's very interesting. Let's kind of step aside from politics for a moment though—if Trump were to win, how do you think his presidency would American *culture*?

A) There used to be a consensus that race, poverty, and nativism were tensions within our society that we needed to improve upon, but that there still was a dark side to our society. As I understood it, the political consensus was that that dark side was never to be brought into the spotlight. There was an understanding that there was a race problem, and that race had to be talked about in America in a political way, but to empower people who belong to the Klan and neo-Nazi groups: that has never been done since the 1920s. And that is incredibly dangerous. I think that empowering those kind of ideas and movements are legitimized, and that's dangerous.

Q) So obviously Trump has made many very politically incorrect statements during this election season. Do you think this political incorrectness in any way reflects the values of American society today?

A) I think it reflects the values of a subset of Americans. His views on women might be more universally held than his views held on say immigrants, China. We've never had a female president—I think we actually are going to have a female president—so there has been a lot of shift in gender roles in the last decade, which has been making a lot of men uncomfortable. So I think that though his rhetoric has alienated a lot of women, it has also alienated a lot of men who can't really identify with the groping and sexual assault aspect of his campaign.

Q) Have you heard at all about #repealthe19th?

A) I have not, no.

Q) So there were some statistics showing that, if no women voted, then Trump would win this election by a landslide. Since then, many Trump supporters have been using the hashtag #repealthe19th in social media and so on. What's your immediate reaction to this?

A) Well besides the fact that that's problematic and disheartening, you've got to remember that people like Scott Brown, who was running for senate, opposed the equal pay amendments. So we have had an equal rights amendment, which has been defeated twice in this country in the last couple decades, and the equal pay concept is slightly flawed in that women's unequal pay is not solely the result of pay discrimination—it also has to do with childbearing, day care costs, and

that kind of thing, so it's a little more complicated. Eight years ago and four years ago, people opposed it because it was bad for business. That kind of anti-female attitude has always been out there, Trump has just legitimized it and caused it to take a life of its own.

Q) Do you think the fact that the sheer fact that many people, especially millennials, have been using that hashtag kind of points America in an ominous direction? Or do you think it's just foolish teenage behavior?

A) No, I think it's deeply disturbing. There are ideas that people have in any society, and I think one of the responsibilities of political leaders, whether that be school administrators or politicians, is to create clear boundaries of what's acceptable. There are certain ideas that are just simply not acceptable in modern society, and I think that when leaders appeal to people's fears as a way to get votes, that has long-term negative consequences.

Q) Not that anyone has, but say that a student from Milton Academy used that hashtag. Do you think that's enough of an offense for that student to be DC-ed?

A) I'd say that's tricky. Well, it would depend on the context, but I would think that the school would be on firm ground in articulating that the values expressed in that hashtag are incompatible with the values of the Academy. And I don't think that would be any different than if you were espousing views on racial groups. There are clear rules and laws about sexual discrimination and harassment, and I think that could fall into that category.

Q) As a closing question, if Trump in fact won, do you think he could, in any way, in fact make America "great again"?

A) I think that he could in the way that he defines it—which is a very 1920s, nativist definition. So in the 1960s, when my father was in college, it was a world in which white people were dominant, and you could use language in an everyday conversation that was discriminatory and misogynistic, and that was normal.

Q) So you're saying that his definition of "great" is not applicable to the 21st century?

A) Yes, I don't think so. I think that the United States is actually greatest when it holds up examples where it achieves the values it espouses. So I agree with what Hillary said in her last debate, which to paraphrase is: "America is greatest when we exemplify the city upon a hill." I think that's powerful. I think when the rest of the world looks at us and sees, you see, if India looks at us and says: "Oh. We have a huge rape problem in our country and you have a candidate who does the same thing?" I think when they see those commonalities, it diminishes our power in the world. Which I think is bad. You know, a war in Iraq is a diminishment which I think we can debate, but when it's on core values, now that's disturbing.

A faculty member of Milton Academy's History Department, Mr. Joshua Emmott is notorious for his penchant for bowties and his habit of instilling a love for history in every student he meets. Incredibly informed about, well, everything, Mr. Emmott has dedicated much of his life to educating and inspiring students in and out of his classroom. Also a long-standing dorm parent of Wolcott House, Mr. Emmott is an integral member to not only the inner workings of the History Department, but also to maintaining a warm and welcoming home for a dorm family.