

These Kids Refuse To Be Silenced: The Death of Debate - Pt 6

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SUMMARY

In the final episode of "Dad Saves America," John Papola reflects on the Incubate Debate National Championship, highlighting the innovative approach to debate that encourages critical thinking and civil discourse among young participants. The episode showcases the intense competition and personal growth of the debaters as they tackle pressing societal issues such as climate change and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

- *The Incubate Debate National Championship featured 5,000 participants, with 90 competing in the finals.*
- *Debaters tackled complex topics, including whether there is a climate emergency and the role of DEI in colleges.*
- *The format encouraged civil discourse, allowing students to engage with opposing viewpoints respectfully.*
- *Participants expressed personal growth in confidence and argumentation skills through their debate experiences.*
- *The importance of free speech and open debate was emphasized as foundational to democracy and societal progress.*
- *The episode concluded with reflections on the future of debate in America, advocating for a revival of civil discourse and understanding.*
- *Papola highlighted the necessity of understanding opposing views to enrich one's own perspective.*

Hey there friends, fans and foes of Dad Saves America. John Papola here. Welcome back to this, our final episode, our grand finale of the death of debate. And this one is sort of like the life after the death of debate. I'm really excited about this one because I had the opportunity to judge at the Incubate Debate National Championship. James Fishbach, who kicked this all off by writing those articles in the free press, had invited me to see firsthand what he had put together with incubate debate, this debate alternative. And whatever you think about James Fishbach, who is a political animal to the core, I think you will see that the experience he's put together for these kids is really something special. It's also a deep dive into a lot of hard subjects and you get to see some of these young people tackle some of the hardest questions we have in our politics and our society. And as we sit here in the holiday season, I think this is a great chance to explore something positive, something uplifting as we head into the new year. Uh a new face for debate in America. So without further ado, here is the final episode, an independent film about the new life for debate.

[music] Ladies and gentlemen, please raise your right hand and repeat after me. >> I pledge to serve >> I pledge to serve >> as an unbiased and fair judge. >> as an unbiased and fair judge. I will judge solely on the clarity >> I will judge solely on the clarity >> relevance and strength >> relevance and strength >> of the arguments before me >> of the arguments before me. I will uphold the integrity [music] >> I will uphold the integrity >> and spirit of excellence >> and spirit of excellence >> of the incubate debate national [music] championship >> of of the incubate debate national championship [applause] >> 5,000 kids [music] competed in incubate debate this year

90 are here today at the national championship so we've got the top 2% [music] of students represented here 90 will then go on to 30 for the semi-final which will go on to 8 which you'll be moderating there on climate and DEI.

>> Ladies and gentlemen, come hither. Everyone here, welcome to the 2024 [music] Incubate Debate National Championship. >> At this tournament, everybody's amazing. [music] It's hard to tell if you're going to qualify or not. So that really made me nervous, but also made me excited because I'm debating with people who are going to teach me so much that I don't know. >> To come into a room with the 90 of the top competitors and incubate [music] and to discuss these controversial ideas was just absolutely amazing.

>> I don't go by Mr. Ker, but Mr. Champion, and I feel like you're all not giving me the sufficient respect that I deserve. >> We have three topics. Uh we have the DEI topic, we have climate change, and we have should incubate assigned [music] sides. I value objectivity and I value the fact that these young people are putting their time and energy into the kind of thing I'd like to see more and more young people do. So, I'm going to constantly say to myself, you know, get up to 30,000 ft and listen to the big arguments and try really hard to be objective even though I have very strong views on all these issues. And I want to say who made the best case.

That's how I'm going to judge it. [music] >> All right, guys. It's really, really simple. It's an open discussion. The question is, is there a climate emergency? You've been assigned your sides. Our judges are ready to go. When you're ready, Mr. Henson is going to start that timer. 20 minutes each of you, from left to right. So whenever judges are ready, I'll turn it over to them now.

>> Everybody ready? >> Wonderful. And go. >> So the first debate was also the last debate. It was the question on is there a climate emergency? >> And the catch with this topic was it was assigned sides. So each of us were assigned a side based off of the student selection process, based off of our numbers. And it was the round table format. Round table is when you're at a Thanksgiving dinner and you bring up politics and your whole family talks about it and that's the simplest way to describe round table. It's supposed to be a really civil discussion. We have not been calling it a climate crisis for three decades. Three. No, that's not as necessarily true.

>> Let me finish my response and then you're more than [music] welcome to finish it. Often times it is. And you just talk about the subject at hand and you talk when it's your turn. let other people talk and you know it's it's [music] really simple format. >> Is climate change an emergency? And the answer to that question is no. >> In Sri Lanka 6.3 million people are dying of acute starvation according to the UN. Why >> is there a climate emergency or not?

Because it seems like your issue is with the term and not with the actual facts that there is an emergency. Definitely my weakest debate out of all of them. But I think I really got my point across. I was a lot calmer than I usually am and I [music] just kept on focusing on the fact that we need to do something about climate change. So an emergency is something that calls for immediate action [music] and I believe that this climate emergency calls for immediate action.

>> Let me just clarify this debate right now. I've heard discourse back and forth on why environmental policies are good. That is not today's debate. As I walked into the bait room, my biggest goal was to use high impact statements and words [music] to win myself rounds. But I started to notice how intense these conversations were from the get- go. >> No, I said it was report the the study wasn't conducted by CNN. Where >> can I can I explain how he said how?

>> There was a lot of uh deferring viewpoints and a little bit of speaking over each other. And so I tried to take a little bit more of a laid-back position. let others speak before me and then try to interject myself. But I don't think I made my position clear enough. I want to know where they disagree with my logic that fossil fuels are increasing, that those increase emissions, that carbon is harmful to the atmosphere, that it rises our sea levels, and as Miss Hernandez uh spoke on, it affects our acidification and our wildlife. Where is the response to that?

Because I've yet to hear it. >> There is an emergency that is ongoing now. And the idea that we should respond to climate change by burning more fossil fuels so that we can adapt to the environment is ridiculous. We have to address it as [music] what it is, an emergency. Thank you. >> It was like listening to a actual presidential debate. [music] Like it was so well done, so well organized, so polished, and I felt like I [music] really shouldn't be in that room.

What debate teaches is critical thinking, reasoned analysis, the ability to differentiate our emotional state from the facts and the evidence. It creates opportunities for students to make an argument, structure an argument and then actually engage with a point of view and another side that they disagree with. And in order to do that, they really have to learn and empathize with that other side. Debate is the essential precondition for democratic rule and for free societies. The whole idea of free speech is that we want the bad ideas to be articulated precisely so that we can argue against them. If you allow the bad ideas to go underground and to fester, then there's no chance to debunk them or air them openly. Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

>> [music] >> What more could I say about Elijah? Someone recently said that Elijah was like the main character in our show. >> He is not the teenager that goes and hides in his room and avoids mom and dad or the family. He likes to hash out ideas. He likes to play devil's advocate a lot just to see what someone else would come up with. >> It's his favorite pastime [laughter] playing devil's advocate. your point. >> Ever since I was born, you know, with my parents, I [music] would just go back and forth with them on a daily basis, right? And everyone around me saw, you know, he's good at arguing. He's good at all that kind of stuff. So, my headmaster goes and say, "Hey, look, I found this debate program. I signed [music] you up for the next tournament.

You can't say no. Uh, you're already in it. You have to go do it." I'm like, "Perfect." So, I went there and I enjoyed it so much. Being the oldest of four is definitely a blessing. My sister Rachel is probably one of my favorite [music] people in my family. I was two when she was born and I don't remember much of the early years [music] except that, you know, she was in and that hospital uh very frequently.

She was born with congenital brain malfforms. They didn't [music] expect her to live beyond two and um she is almost 16. [music] We had a really amazing pediatrician who said it's the brain you never know. Don't give up

hope. Seeing another person's struggles really and being so closely connected to that [music] has really made me like hyper aware of other people's situations and how to respond to that. She has definitely been an influential person in my life even [music] though she may not talk much.

>> Faith is kind of how we [music] survive. It is our foundation. That's what holds us all together. >> That is how I base my life. That is how I base my views and that is how I base my opinions on everything is through the lens of faith and family. I would say that without faith [music] and family, I would be pretty much lost. >> [music] >> So the next topic was should incubate [music] assign sides for students or allow students to choose >> after hearing my judges [music] uh advice.

>> I think in this format you just have to put yourself out there and and and speak up because if you wait to for your turn your turn doesn't come. Yeah, very good. Keep up the good work. >> I was able to assert myself more and force myself into the argument. >> I do actually because I was >> I believe if Incubate assigns sides to students, [music] if the students don't get the side that they want, they might prepare even more than [music] they would if they get the side they wanted.

>> If Incubate was to assign sides, don't you think that some people would only research that one side that they are assigned? >> Whether or not you're assigned a side, you have to research into both. And if we're just going to simply assign students aside, we're going to lose out on so many different viewpoints that can be heard and have a meaningful discussion. That first round, little jittery, little more nervous than the second. And so in the second, I think I was more relaxed and able to tune into the conversation more and focus less on my nerves. Is incubate gives you skills you need for the real world. And assigning size causes this very important thing being comfortable with the uncomfortable. I did very well. Both of my judges said I was very prepared.

So I felt very confident when they told me that that I was very prepared and I had good statistics and I was able to stand my ground. So that kind of like helped my confidence stay at a good level to be prepared for the next day. >> I was blown away by the fact that it was very different from debate when I was a kid. And so it was much more structured and you know they had what seven or eight chairs and the kids had to navigate it themselves to figure out who spoke. So you had to impose a kind of civility on yourself and I found it to be absolutely fascinating.

>> 16 17 18 19 20 >> If you do things that are scary you get used to it. Then you can do that thing over and over again. You have to go on the world's most scarce roller coaster. When you do it once, you feel confident in yourself like I just did it. I like debate because it doesn't involve any violence. Like you don't have to like fight it out. You just have to speak. You just talk and then you solve it out with other people.

>> Earlier I would say he was not that confident being in debate. I mean he talks assertive. He's very positive and [music] he's not afraid to I mean put his opinions down. I mean it has changed [music] a lot. I mean his confidence has increased significantly. >> So I got this one for being qualified for champs. I got this one at the SDI qualifier. And this one was from from my first round in preliminaries.

I took the judges feedback and I improved that much in the second round. I'm confident in myself. I know I can do it, but I I still get scared [music] knowing that there's so many people looking at me and seeing how I [music] debate. >> It get better and better and better and we saw the amount of confidence he had and it grew. That's why I believe it. >> If somebody puts a point on the table [music] that I know I have evidence and I can really put that point into its grave, I feel like I've increased my chances of going into the next round.

[music] So, I feel happy and confident in myself. I actually showed up a bit late, so [music] I had to run to my room, but I got there right on the dot, right before they started. It started with a bang, and everybody was very pumped and excited for it. [music] And I was very passionate about it as well. And I think that round was actually my [music] favorite. Our first town hall debate on Saturday was, should we abolish DEI in colleges? So the way we set it up was you gave a 3minut speech [music] and then two students could go back and forth on your questions for 45 seconds.

>> I believe that DEI should be evolved. We know that DEI is inherently discriminatory because it prioritizes certain races over others. >> What happens is especially in those first 5 minutes of the round table, people get settled into, okay, this is what we're actually debating today. All right. Now, I got to be thinking about how do how do I prove that my argument is superior to this debate. So, you mentioned arguments about white supremacy in some colleges. [music] Do you have any numbers on how many colleges teach white supremacy within their DEI programs?

>> So, wouldn't you say that the number of 44% of ethnic minorities and universities suggest that we already have diversity? >> Do you think it's a fair assessment to generalize when there are some DEI programs that [music] don't do that? High school debate actually changed me. Debate is a skill, something that you are good at or not good at, and it is a tool. It is useful to accomplish a goal. A student in the process of participating in high school debate is refining the skill. And that's a good thing for them to do. It is good for you to be able to marshall an argument that is persuasive. We've got to have vibrant debate that brings in, you know, pretty different perspectives that are based in reason, that are based in sound arguments, that are based in the ability to often to persuade people, but also rooted on as much evidence as you can bring to bear to make your case. And that process is common sense. [music] The next [music] bit after that was, is Trump guilty in the January 6th case?

So, at first [music] I just thought it was like cut out, you know, he's guilty or not guilty, but um the inc team said it's with a twist. We're giving you different charges he has and we are going to choose which charges is he guilty for or which [music] charges is he not? There is evidence showing how on any of these counts, Trump was not guilty. [music] >> So, we asked the question today, is he guilty? and I say he is undeniably guilty of count one.

>> It was kind of funny cuz someone asked me said, "Miss Martinez, since you seem like a Trump supporter, would you have invaded the capital?" And I was like, "If Trump told me peacefully and patriotically, I would have stood my ground, but I would have not stepped foot in the capital." >> So then, if Donald Trump would have said, "Don't attack the police. Leave the capital peacefully." Did you say he was innocent? Cuz that's what he said in his tweet at 2:39 p.m. He sent out a tweet to a supporter saying, "Protest peacefully. Don't attack the police officers." Is that >> okay? But still they went in and even he said a protest.

>> He didn't say that and in fact he actually offered 10,000 federal troops to be at the capital that day. So his intention was not violent protest. It was a peaceful protest. >> It was still actions over intention. >> Thank you. [applause] >> We live in a world uh of bad faith debate. And when you're in a debate uh where people have to show up and actually argue openly and honestly about what they believe, you get to have a sense of what public discourse could be like in America and what it should be like in America where people believe something and lay it on the line, show their math and then you know you see the strengths and weaknesses of both sides.

Debate is messy. Debate disagreement can be unpleasant. Allowing information out there that is wrong, it it can be very bad. It can be dangerous. But how do we know who gets to decide what is harmful and what is wrong and and what is dangerous? How can we decide without engaging these perspectives or discussing them or talking it out or consuming it? [music] >> Briana, she's my first child, so she got most of the attention. I would [music] say >> Briana, she's I can say she's similar to me in a way like she's [music] open-minded.

>> I would say, you know, I learned from my parents [music] how to listen because we'll have conversations where, you know, maybe my mom doesn't have all the facts, but her opinion [music] is completely valid because of her own personal experience, right? And so I learned to just listen. I've tried out many different hobbies. In sixth grade, I was in the band, but then um I realized I didn't want to do band long term. I put her in cheerleading. I don't want to go. Okay, fine. I put her in ballet. Mom, I don't like it. Okay, fine. So then 8th grade is when I actually started taking debate as an [music] elective. And when I got to compete, that's when I realized that's what I wanted to stick with.

>> In the beginning, I see her get a little nervous for [music] not being properly prepared. >> She would make herself so full of nerves that she would throw up. James called me [music] one day. She didn't show up for this. What's going on? And I said, "Briana doesn't want to be a part of the debate team anymore." And he goes, "Make sure she attends the next debate tournament." best decision ever. From then on, she became the debate beast that she is today.

When I debate, I am a different person. I get this confidence that helps me push through the round. My voice sounds different. [music] The way I present myself, the way I'm thinking, everything changes during the round. >> By humans, >> I'm excited. My daughter's a senior and she's gonna begin a new chapter in her life. You know, the college life. >> I'll give you >> I'm a little scared of when I leave home because I know I'm going to be homesick.

You know, I love my family. I love being around them. But I'm excited for that next chapter [music] in my life. >> Oh, that was a good one. And when I heard I made it to semi-finals, I felt extremely proud because I know [music] how hard I worked for it. Sadly, I did not get into semi-finals. But I believe that I did a really good job at Champs and getting into Champs was a really big thing for me because I was the only middle schooler in the northeast region of Florida get to get in. So I was really happy for myself and for my fellow peers for getting into champs itself. I want to continue doing debate for six more years in incubate itself and then maybe move on and do it in college too.

>> I did not get a semi-finals. The thing that I learned the most especially from watching uh debaters like Brianna Watley, William Ker was I learned how to structure my arguments in a way that was concise, logical, and that people actually understood [music] them. And I also learned how to be like how to sound polished. >> The semi-finals were definitely the most interesting round out of all of them. >> [music] >> The reason for this is because I've never been in such a competitive round table. We were debating if [music] Taiwan were to be invaded by China tomorrow, should the United States [music] defend Taiwan militarily? Taiwan produces 92% of the semiconductors that we use, as she stated, in the hospitals, in our phones, [music] in anything that we use. And when t China goes, whether it's violent [music] military or they're just forcing the Taiwanese people to surrender, when they have that control, China has the power to push us out of the trading.

>> You know, in the semi-final round, we had eight highly intellectual, very passionate individuals, myself included. And what happens when you put [music] so many brilliant minds in one setting is that sometimes they tend to talk over each other. But it's not the end of the world because we have other access >> that our allies and our country is reliant on needs Taiwan. If I may add, I would just like to add really quickly especially because >> we have to engage militarily. [music] Can we take other options such as economically?

>> What is the probability of China taking extreme measures in an act of war against Taiwan? And how should the United States inspire their own military defense within it? When the United States starts to dwell in non-territorial interests, which Taiwan is a non- territorial interest, we often times see our military overengaging and leading to aggressive action. I think I was the person who actually spoke the most. But I think the judges agreed that even though I spoke the most, majority of the questions that I asked were serious and important and a lot of the arguments that I made ended up being the most valuable to the round. So that was the main learning was that really the word efficiency. Even if you say a lot, make sure every single word is important to the round. If it's not, then don't say it.

>> Semi-finals, that was probably the most intense debate of that day. You're absolutely [music] right. But the cause that we had a lack of access to microchips was because of the pandemic, not because China [music] had access to Taiwan. >> I'd like to speak. school is meant to help you explore ideas. Um, and the only way you can do a proper exploration is if you're hearing all sides of the argument. Um, school is not meant to be for uh brainwashing kids to think a particular political point of view. People will say, "Oh, we don't like, you know, we we like what you've achieved educationally, but we don't like uh your politics." My politics are not about brainwashing kids. And that's when people say they don't like my politics, what they're saying is we don't like the fact that you're not brainwashing your kids.

>> Free speech and open debate are so important because of just how I live my life. Not only how I make a living, but also just the way that my brain works. And I think a lot of uh humor and some of the best jokes come from uh kind of exploring uh controversial issues or things that you might not necessarily be allowed to say. Anytime somebody's trying to shut down debate from the start, uh I think everybody's warning uh Spidey senses should go off and be like, why don't they want to talk about this?

[music] >> 2048, vote for me, Gabriella Rothberg. Something I don't see a lot of United States presidents have is

the [music] want to actually help the country. That's the main reason someone should really become president. They want to do better. And while some people say my dream is far-fetched, I say, well, at least I have a plan. I don't want to be a hypocritical president who says that they're open-minded and they want to do so many things and then [music] not do it. I'll get there eventually. There's obviously a plan. I want to be a lawyer first. I want to study [music] political science or politics, philosophy, and economics.

My mom is great at politics, but at the end of the day, she's a science [music] kind of woman, >> but my dad was really immersed in it at a young age. He was always in activism. [music] I just wanted to know what his opinions were. When he died, it took time. I think it took us like 2 years to just find balance. [music] >> I always judged him for watching the news. When I was 5 years old, I was like, "Why aren't you watching Barbie?"

Like, there's so many better things you can watch. And now, like, I catch me and my brother's like, "Why are you watching the news?" And I just understand. And I just wish I could talk to him about that. And I also think he would love what I'm doing. Like he would definitely help out. So it's definitely hard because I miss him. [music] >> My family, we love to debate. Like in the dinner table, no one says let's not talk about politics. No, that's not a thing in my household.

>> You have to prove the other [music] person is wrong and then you are right. And you have to show legit evidence, not just because you feel. >> I'm willing and help. As much as I love debating, my family will always come first. I already got my brother teaching him how to debate. My cousin, they think it's so cool when they see like a YouTube video of me debating and they're like, I want to do that too. You're on YouTube. When Gabriella start middle school, that's when she started say that she may like law be a lawyer. I spoke with the principal and he said, "Oh, we have a great debate team here." And then since the first day, she love it. The first time I did a practice round, it [music] was incredible. Like, I loved it. There was something in me that just wanted to do it forever. [music] I won my first tournament, I was so excited. And just knowing that I was good at something and that I loved it, too. My path of the future I wanted just became clear from there. I never want to stop. I I wanted to bake for the rest of my life. [music] >> [music] >> Ladies and gentlemen, we have our finalists. We're going to have clipboards and ballots, round table first, then town hall. I'm going to make the announcement now.

[cheering] [applause] >> Ladies and gentlemen, a lot of deliberation. 20 judges, 30 semi- finalist contestants. When your name is called, please come to this step. Mr. Christian Bailey, [cheering] [applause] >> Gabriella Rothberg. [cheering and applause] >> Okay, get up there.

>> I'm speechless, which is kind of ironic cuz that's how I got here. >> I felt absolutely ecstatic when my name was called to be in the finals. I did not expect this at all. I thought it could it could have been an eight-way [music] tie in my semiinal round. Last year at the championships rank, I made it to semiis. I just want to prove to myself that I just made it one place higher [music] and I was just super elated that I completed that goal.

>> Miss Brianna Wantley. >> So when they were announcing who had broke to the final round, I [music] was kind of nervous because I wasn't sure if I made it or not. And so when they were announcing those [music]

finalists, I was kind of, you know, crossing my fingers hoping I had made it. But when they announced that I did, I was I was ecstatic. >> Miss Alexandra Howie, [cheering] [applause] >> Mr. Steven Abraham. [cheering] [applause] [music] >> So this is my fourth year in incubate and it's my third year making it to the final round.

And every year the announcement of the final round is a lot more pressurizing as it as it as it should be because I have the previous experience [music] from debate tournaments but I what I realiz is in the moment the ranks that you had from last year just don't matter. >> Mr. Owen Gibberman, [cheering] [applause] Miss Rachel Ball. [cheering] [applause] >> I honestly had no idea who was making it to finals from my room because everyone had done so good in that debate and I was I was not sure what was going to happen. And I was the seventh to be called, I believe. And when they called me, it was just absolutely insane. Um, I was like, I'm going to finals. Like, I'm going to finals. And it was just a rush of disbelief and adrenaline really.

>> We are missing [music] just one incredible, incredible student up there. >> Mr. Marcos Ortega. [cheering] [applause] >> I'm very happy of how today went. Last year at nationals, I did not make it to semi-finals. And I haven't made it a semi-finals for nationals all four years of me debating. And I'm proud to say even though it was my last debate tournament, I made it a semi-finals. I made that progress from that shy 14-year-old girl that James kept on hyping up Incubate 2, to now who I am today. I've become a better public speaker, a better advocate, and you see that with the work I've done in my community.

>> So, unfortunately, I didn't move to the next step, but I'm sure I'll learn from my mistakes, and I will do much better for it. There's a reason I didn't make it. And I'm sure that's because I had to learn some sort of lesson. [applause] I found it a little intimidating just to see this next generation of leaders come up that is going to be so equipped and so prepared and that's distinct uh from any other group of students that I've seen in that setting before and any other debate environment that I've worked with. So I guess in by intimidating um I mean inspired >> has kind of like the Elvis rasp on it too. So well where do we start?

>> He is a miracle child. That's how he starts. [music] Uh he was not supposed to be in this world. He almost died during birth. [music] There was a cyst that was growing as big as him. They operated on me when I was 18 weeks pregnant and they told me if you go into labor we are not going to do anything to [music] resuscitate the baby. That's how we started with him. You know, [music] I guess that's the reason why I've always been easy on him. [laughter] >> When I was a kid, I was really curious and sometimes that curiosity [music] wouldn't translate to public settings.

And so >> he would talk and talk and [music] talk and be like, "Mom, guess what? Mom, did you know that there's he knew all the dinosaurs from 8 through I think there was no Z, it was just Y. [music] Just to keep him occupied, I had to go with the flow." Yeah. Okay. What happened? Just ask him facts [music] and he would start spewing facts. You know, when I was in elementary and middle school, I was like a big mumbler. Like I didn't really like being overconfident or anything like that. Um, I was really shy and nervous all the time.

>> When you were in the house, you were loud and clear and [music] you wouldn't shut up. Like, we couldn't get you to shut up. You had so much to say. But the moment you leave the house, everyone's like, "What' you

[music] just say?" >> And your dad would always say, "You know, I wish Stephen would just speak clearly." >> I didn't have [music] confidence. I I was really >> You were just so the the the the tone and the volume of your [music] speaking >> would suddenly come down.

>> Yeah. >> I'm like, what happened to the skitt? He speaks [music] so clearly when he's home. >> I honestly think debate kind of opened me up to be more open and confident with my voice and [music] the things that I say. >> And the first tournament that you did for Incubate, it was online and you were like, "Yeah, mom, if you have time, you can [music] watch we were watching and you came on and you spoke. I was [music] like, is that my kid? Is that my kid who's speaking?

>> I really think that debate didn't necessarily teach me how to speak like only. It taught me how to listen and to really put emphasis into what I was saying. So to get to the confidence [music] that I had to speak in public settings and large audiences, I needed a sense of purpose to the words that I was saying. And I felt that debate brought a lot of purpose to my life and the way that I was doing things. And [music] now it's kind of setting up my career and what I want to do after that.

[music] I'm optimistic that this is going to sort itself out, right? That the assault on this culture of debate that I think was at our country's founding. We're going through a little bit of a adolescent period where we're rebelling against that with this sensorious culture. But there's something native about us as human beings that resists that, right? It's in our very nature to want to express [music] ourselves. And I think that is part of what's going to bring us together as a country again. I actually think it would be great to have a generation of young people come up debating the issues more free form, all viewpoints heard, all viewpoints respected. Uh, and if someone wants to say, you know, I disagree with the thesis of this debate because I [snorts] think there's a structural problem with it, great. That's fine. But let all voices be heard.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the final round of the Incubate Debate National Championship. >> The finals. I thought we were going to have a bit of a break to like study, look back at our points, but now I'm realizing there's so many people that are going to be in front of us, and I'm very excited. >> Let's get a countdown. 10 >> 9 8 7 >> It was a bit nerve-racking like getting all the mics on. Everybody's like reading to themselves. Everybody's like in the corner just with their with their books and notes. [music] We're all running in and out of the dressing room trying to tuck our shirts back in. I'm trying to get a sip of my water bottle.

>> Six 5. >> So at the time I was confident, but I was still incredibly nervous. >> We line up and Mr. Fishbach calls us out one by one. Miss Gabriela Rothberg >> and I see all the people I've competed with [music] that day and I see my mom there and everybody's just clapping and cheering. It's so supportive. I love the stage. I can't wait to [music] be in front of all these people in debate. 3, two, one.

>> Hello, I am Gabriella Rossberg and today we are here to discuss a topic that is so important to all of especially those who are going into college now. Should DEI programs be abolished? Now, I believe that they should not be abolished and I want to set some ground of something that we may be speaking about in the future. whether DEI has gone too far, has gone has failed too much to be saved or whether reform is possible. I believe that's

going to be a big point in the debate. I would like to pass it off to somebody else.

>> Mr. Abraham. >> Yeah. Just real quick, I want to see if we can get some consensus [music] here. I started out taking a quick poll of everybody and asking whether we agree that diversity, equity, and inclusion are good values. I want to make sure that we all have the same premises here. And everybody answered yes. So I was like, "All right, so we're just going to talk about not whether DEI are great things, but whether they are implemented correctly within colleges." So now I've already reduced the burden that I have to defend [music] on my side. So do we all agree that there are certain DEI programs out there that are either antithetical to their goal or [music] cause hate in some form?

>> Absolutely. >> All right. >> Yes. >> And do we all agree that the background of a student is important to their outcomes? >> Yes. >> Okay. All right. So, we know that there are certain DEI programs that don't achieve their goals, but DEI as values could be beneficial. >> All right. So, is there any reason to disagree with the values of DEI, diversity, equity, and inclusion? >> No. >> No. >> With that question, [music] it's a good strategy to try to get everybody to agree on something, right? By doing so, you put everybody in a situation where, [music] well, you agreed with me on this, so you'll agree with me on this as well, right? to push this kind of argument, right? And I think it was a good strategy on his end. [music] Stephen Abraham is a very smart man and he knows where he's going with that. Um, he's trying to [music] make his point with it. We are the finals. We all knew where he was going and we could go along with him or we could not go along with this tactic.

>> At its core, no. But the problem is in its implementation. I'll bring up the example of Stanford. This is from the Lewis Brandis Center on Human Rights Under Law. uh Sanford University's DEI program actually for their staff would separate white and Jewish staff and any white passing staff and put them in a a a room or a group called a white accountability group where they would inform them about how they were spreading white supremacy. And if this was done to any other group, that would be called discrimination.

>> There was this one student, [music] Christian Bailey. I've never had the opportunity to compete with him before, but I've heard about him for a long time now. and seeing him perform was incredible. >> We could all agree that there are some DEI programs that have gone a little too far in their [music] search for equality. But I think for the most part, the intent and the foundation that these programs are built on is something we should definitely be working to preserve. And if there are things that are negative about the program, we should work to correct them instead of above.

>> Yes, absolutely. Miss B. What did you have something to say? >> Yes. So, I think there's an important quote that we all must remember. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. The DEI program started out as a way to help students, but it's not working. And I'd like to examine the phenomenon known as cluster hiring. The University of California requires all business [music] professors to state how they are dedicated to fostering creative enterprises with an emphasis on diversity equity. [music] If they don't know how, that can make or break their application. They're putting their diverse ability [music] to satisfy diversity over whether or not they can actually teach business. I think it's very important that [music] we know Incubate doesn't have a DEI program and we can look across the board that we have a very diverse panel here [music] of students. We don't

need DEI to have diverse programs in in schools. I thought that it was a strong argument because when I was researching DEI, I was looking at the ways in which colleges were trying to create diversity. And I thought to myself, well, you don't exactly have to do this outreach to get a diverse group of people. You simply just have you need to have a platform where you can allow for that diversity to happen. [music] And so I thought of incubate where we allow all people to come and share their viewpoints [music] and I thought well where's the DEI program? We don't need one. And it's also important to note that DEI is not just about race but it's also about viewpoints. We see that as campuses across the nation are banning certain guest speakers such as Ben Shapiro for instance. He was banned from around three or four universities on the grounds of DEI claims that his speech could possibly threaten students. And I believe we were very close to a compromise which is something that in round table sometimes doesn't happen because everybody really wants to get their point across. But we all acknowledged that we agreed on many things. We agreed that the topic was diversity, equity, and inclusion. We agreed that many things about this about DEI is really bad. For example, how it excludes certain religions or races such as Judaism or a Asians. And we all knew that it was horrible. And then we all focused on one question. Is it possible for DEI to be reformed?

>> I would like to ask a general question to everyone. Do we think that it would be possible for us to come to a general consensus on this? Because we've noted that there are some issues with DEI programs fundamentally are these issues big enough to omit it or are these issues able to be fixed and changed in the very pro in the very uh the very issue that DEI programs tend to address can be addressed in a more efficient way. So, like you were posing the question, can it be fixed?

>> Yes. >> I would say no. >> That was a great way to end it. >> The final town hall debate was, "Is there a climate change, a climate emergency?" >> So, the way we set it up was you gave a 3-minut speech [music] and then two students could go back and forth on your questions for 45 seconds. Don't tell my statistics teacher, but I really don't like her class. However, a few weeks ago, she finally mentioned something interesting. Statistical significance [music] versus practical significance.

What will it take? As we continue this debate, I'd like to ask you, what will it take for you to realize that we are in a climate emergency? A mother spent 16 hours searching in the water for her daughter who had sadly died from a flood. >> Living in Florida, I've had firsthand experience with climate change, whether it be high humidity or high temperatures. But the reason why I don't think this is a significant problem, [music] an emergency, is because we've adapted. The 100% real and totally not a madeup character from the newsroom, Will Mackoy once said, "The first step in solving a problem is realizing [music] there is one." And while many may question the validity of this quote, I think it speaks to the state of our climate. Our surface temperature is higher than ever before is what Mr.

Bailey would like you to think. But here's the issue. We've generalized the last 100,000 years of human history, specialized the previous 100, and radicalized the next 25. I >> I was a theater kid when I was little, so it's kind of hearkening back to those bright [music] stage lights. And I and I was when I was five, I'm a ballet dancer. So, it's like being able to give that speech um and talking in front of all those people. But it wasn't just me acting out a play anymore. It was me acting out what I thought. You know, I I think I was able to, you know, make my points

heard, make [music] my statistics heard, and it's just very fun. I love speaking in public.

>> Can you tell me what you found when you researched the climate models? >> I found that a lot of times the climate models do not hold up in their specifics. >> Can you further explain this, please? >> Yes. So, as I stated, the trends with the Eastern Pacific were incorrectly um calculated. Also the the idea that warming has increased by threefold is not true. The rate of warming has is a lot lower. >> But climate models have also found that they cannot replicate today's climate without the without the carbon without adding the carbon dioxide caused by human activity. [music] >> All right. So sometimes climate models are right, sometimes they're wrong. The thing is we can't use something that uncertain to to declare such a hefty label. [music] >> But isn't every model different done by different institutes? going to be the institutes that are that should be reliable instead of the model. Sorry, answer that.

>> And when they're all wrong, at least partially, we know there's an issue. Thank you. >> Thank you. [applause] [cheering] >> I really like my speech. I wish I did have more evidence, but I think I did a good job at refuting the point. And since I was going almost last or around in the middle, I didn't want to repeat the point. So, I just brought up one [music] new point that we have a climate change emergency because corporations won't do anything. And I spent the rest of my time refuting and I thought that was a pretty good strategy. [applause] >> The goal here is to keep deaths to a minimum. Right.

>> I would believe so. >> Why do you think that switching by calling climate an emergency is the best way to do that if we've been dependent on fossil fuels and we've seen a 98% reduction in deaths? [music] Because if we don't call climate the this climate change an emergency, then governments are not going to take the immediate action that constitutes an emergency. Now, why is this bad? That was proof that that climate change is actually going to cause more deaths. [music] >> Yes, because if we don't reduce our carbon emissions by 2050, we are going to experience [music] mass immigration, the loss of fish.

>> Can you give me numbers? You're saying mass immigration, loss of fish. I need numbers because I'm giving you numbers. I cannot give you an exact number of the people that will die but we know what the effects of mass immigration political. >> So you're not sure how many people will die but we've [music] seen that with fossil fuels >> but we have >> we've reduced it. >> Okay. Thank you. [applause and music] So the second round of finals we were debating is there a climate emergency and I decided to actually stick with the side that I was assigned earlier on just to challenge myself further right to play devil's advocate.

>> [applause] [music] >> All right. So, what's the link chain from increased temperatures to increased natural disasters? >> When increased temperatures occur within the global atmosphere, it intensifies natural disasters. >> Okay. But like how did we get there? What did it just temperatures going up and now we have hurricanes occur? >> We saw we saw that increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere led to rising temperatures which then intensified natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes. You earlier you said temperatures led to natural disasters.

Now you're saying carbon leads to temperatures which >> it's all interconnected. But what is your overarching

question? >> Can you explain how we got >> I just explained when there are higher temperatures natural disasters are worsened. That's just basic science. >> Okay. So over the course of a year we have let's say 10° Fahrenheit temperatures we're going to expect more floods and hurricanes. >> I'm not sure what your question is. >> Okay. All right. Thank you.

>> I think I defended climate emergency pretty well. It was important that after that first round on diversity, equity, and inclusion, I didn't just say, "Wow, that was great. Okay, we got this in the bag." It was I had to do a mental reset after that and say, "All right, we performed well. Now the DEI program debate goes in the back of my head. It's time to talk about climate emergency." >> You do realize that the current temperature isn't the issue. It is the rapidity as Miss Howie was explaining, >> right? But we only know that the rapidity is a problem based on our context of previous temperatures in the past.

>> That's simply not true because through the use of ice caps, we can see that in the past millennium, there hasn't been this fast of a rate of global warming. >> How do we know that information? >> We know that at the car looking at the carbon levels within ice caps for millennium >> and those show general trends. They do not show specific temperatures. >> They show the amount of carbon, therefore they show the they show the amount of carbon, therefore they show the amount of warming at that set time.

You're comparing specific temperatures to generalized trends and they simply don't match up as well. >> But that's simply not true because we [music] can see since 1850 that there has been >> again another generalized trend. We didn't have technology to measure not true. You're ignoring the fact of how useful ice caps have been. Thank you. >> Thank you all. [applause] >> That was an incredible round. That was an incredible round. But if our judges will just please rise and make their way back. Our great Incubate alum, Jazz Ruiz Gonzalez, will take you back there as you deliberate on a tough round.

>> Awesome. So, um, if each of you fill out your ranking card from 1 to 8, all 1 through 8. Um, and you have 5 minutes to do that. And once you're done, if you could raise your hand and say done and I will come and get that ballot from you. Any questions? So after the debate [music] finals had ended, I was kind of exhausted. Everything is over, right? I didn't have to debate [music] anymore. And so I kind of allowed myself to just sit and collect myself. Uh after [music] that all of the students we were together talking about how the round went and it was really just a moment of all of us [music] debriefing together.

>> Only I have seen the results and I'm blown away. Can I please welcome the finalists to the stage. The finalist to the stage. [cheering] [applause] So, when we're out on stage after the final round, you know, waiting to hear the results, I was kind of telling myself, you know, don't be upset about whatever the result is, right? Because I'm already proud that I made it to finals because that was my goal. I kept Yeah. my heart was racing and I didn't know what to expect [music] really.

It's the nationals. It's last time I'll be 16 debating these topics. And when we get called up there, I'm just thinking, I'm so happy to make it to finals. >> In fifth place, Miss Gabriella Rothberg. [applause] Great job. Now there are four. In [music] fourth place, Mr. Christian Bailey. [applause] There we go. >> Good job, man. Say hi

to Cla.

>> Congratulations. As I started to hear the rankings being called out, I centered myself back to the quote that Incubate talks about just that true nobility is not being superior to your fellow man, but it's actually being superior to your former self. It's a Ernest Hemingway quote. And so I stepped out of my head for a second. I said, "Okay, if I was ranked eighth place, how would I view myself or would that change how I view myself?" I said, "No, because at the end of the day, I was part of this round. I performed and gave the best speech that I've ever given. I gave the most cohesive roundt performance that I've ever given. And so that's how I think about rankings.

They're an indicator that you did great, but they're not the definition. The definition is you because you're in control of your own thoughts. >> In third place at the 2024 Incubate Debate National Championship, Miss Rachel Ball. >> Great job. So those last couple announcements of placements, I was kind of in a state of disbelief. Is this really happening? I couldn't believe I had made it to the top three. And then when I had made it to the top two and it was between me and Steven, I couldn't believe that I was even in that position [music] to be able to possibly win the tournament. The runner up, the 2024 Incubate [music] Debate National Championship is Mr. Steven Abraham.

[applause] Ladies and gentlemen, please rise and join me in congratulating the 2024 Incubate Debate National Champion, Brianna Watley. >> [applause] >> WHEN I got second place, I didn't sit thinking, man, I got second place last year. If only I got first place this year. I sat thinking that was the [music] best performance I've ever given. And this will lead me into further great avenues of my life because I've given my full effort into this round and I'm definitely better as I walked out of here. when they had announced that Steven was runner up and I had won, I I didn't believe it, right? And you could probably tell tell by my facial expression that I was [music] happy, but I was also shocked that it was actually happening. And even after, I was still in this feeling of just shock. I don't know what to say except thank [music] you because Incubate has changed my life in so many different ways and I've made lifelong friends and the experiences the knowledge I've gained from the judges the students everybody who is a part of incubate has changed my life and I don't know what else I can say but thank you [music] thank you all of you.

[applause] [music] >> The foundational values of this country are the greatest in the world. First, free speech, [music] which allows us to not only talk right now, but film this [music] documentary and have conversations and be at debate tournaments. That being a foundational value is what makes the country great [music] in the first place. But all the other freedoms that we gain are also important. And even if we struggle [music] to achieve those freedoms, even if we struggle to reach those places, we all have agreed that we [music] like those values.

>> I believe free speech is so important cuz we look back to when we were the 13 colonies. The Declaration of Independence was [music] our first act of us using our voice stating we want to declare our independence from Britain. We want to do this. We want to form our own country. the [music] Federalist Papers, all of that was a form of free speech. That's how America was founded. It's about being able to bring awareness no matter if you're on the left or you're on the right or you're in the middle. It's [music] just so ensuring that everyone, no

matter who you are, it's we the people, not we the certain people. We the people can have a simple [music] conversation with speaking what we believe no matter what. No more [music] cancel culture. We need to get better at listening to each other. Cuz if we keep going in the way we're going in opposite directions, polarized, we're going to end up ripping apart the United States. [music] And that's going to be bad for us. It's going to be bad for the countries that rely on us. And democracy could just go away without us. We have the right to express [music] ourselves freely in this country. And I'm grateful for that. But we aren't able to do it properly. And I think what America needs right [music] now is to be able to have those difficult conversations with each other [music] and come out of it with a resolution. And at the end of the day, we all want what's best for our country.

And through having those civil conversations, we can realize those similarities rather than our differences. [music] All right, [music] there you have it. This is the end of our journey, our sixpart exploration of the death and hopefully the fledgling rebirth of debate in college, high school, and America. I want to say thank you to James Fishbach for inviting me to participate and and thank you to everyone involved. And I I will say this, it's hard to judge these things.

It's hard to disentangle your feelings about the argument from whether or not they delivered it well or whether or not they were responding in a good way. This was a really interesting challenge and it gave me a lot more empathy for everyone involved in this activity, including the folks over at the NSDA, many of whom I know are trying to do the best they can. And that is I think at the core of debate. We all have the ability to pursue truth and it starts by understanding the landscape. If you only understand your opinions and not those that oppose you, you barely understand your own. This is a little paraphrase of John Stewart Mill, but it's one that's very close to my heart and it's why this project was so important to me and everybody here at Dad Saves America. So, I hope you enjoyed this film. I hope you enjoyed the whole series. Please don't forget to hit the like button and subscribe to the channel. We're going to be doing more specials like this as we head into 2026. And if you want to debate with me, of course, you know, I show up in the comments, but if you want the spicier version of me, the more unhinged one, you can head over to Twitter at John Papola, where uh you can find me being um not the best version of myself, [laughter] but I'm going to try to do better. That's going to be one of my New Year's resolutions. And of course, happy new year and have a great weekend.