

Meet 3 Teen Delegates at DNC 2016

Find out how three teens got elected to be delegates for their state at DNC 2016, and how they're going to help officially nominate Hillary Clinton for the presidency this week.

When Rachel Gonzalez first met Hillary Clinton, she had a fairly unusual question. The 17-year-old already knew from her own research that Clinton was the candidate who best aligned with her values, so Rachel didn't inquire about plans for college affordability or national security, as some future voters might.

"Can I hug you?" Rachel blurted out.

The response was immediate: "Sure, you can," Clinton said, before reaching out for a hug.

"The day I met Hillary Clinton is one I certainly won't forget," Rachel tells *Teen Vogue*. Another moment the teen isn't likely to forget? This week, as she heads to Philadelphia as the youngest delegate at the Democratic National Convention. Rachel was inspired to run for a delegate position in her home state of Missouri because she wants politicians to understand that her generation is passionate about voting and deserves representation on issues that matter most to them.

"It's a way for young voices to be brought to the table and heard," Rachel says. "This election cycle, young voters have really influenced the party's platform, and they are proving that they come out to vote."



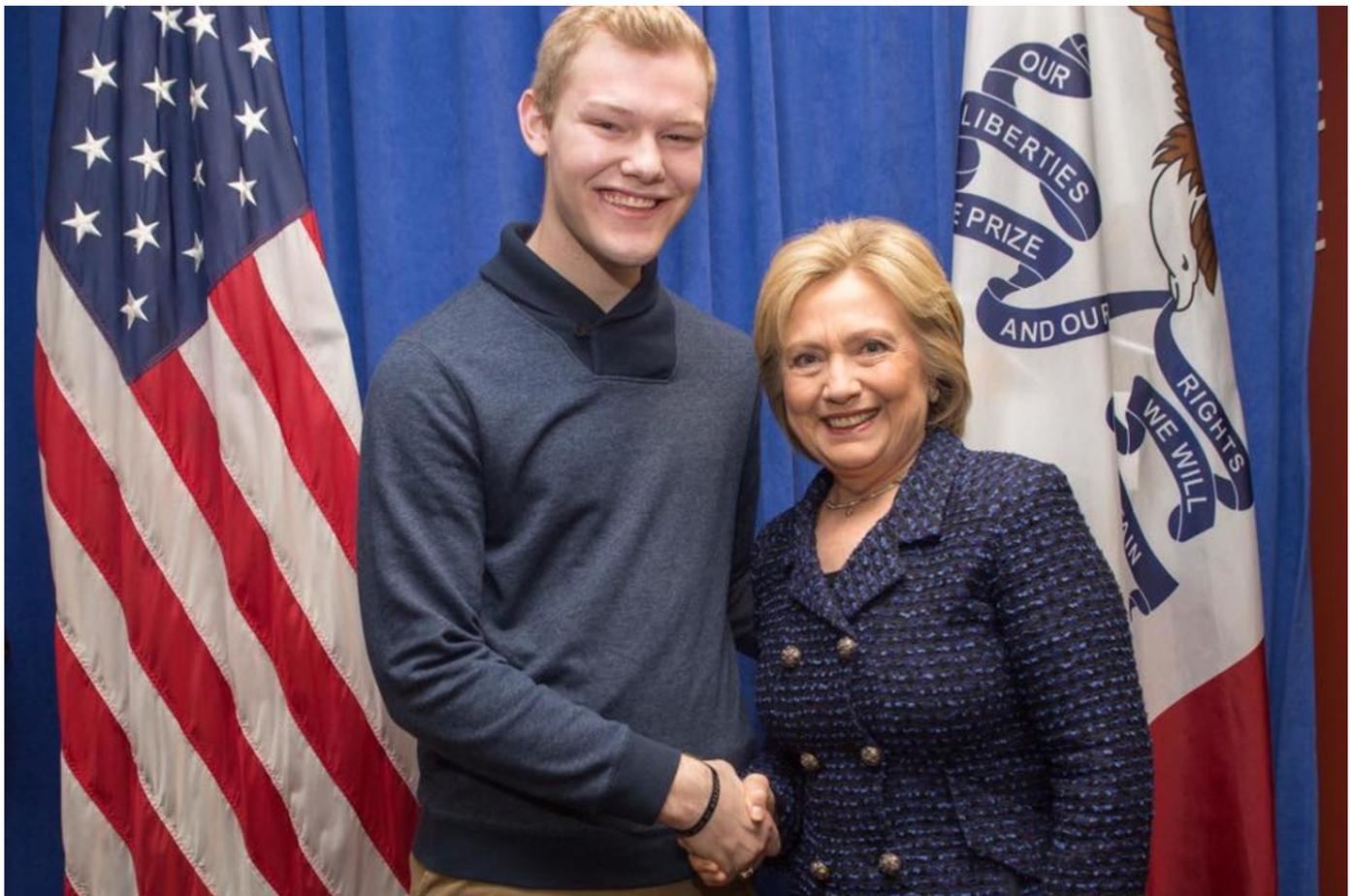
Courtesy of Rachel Gonzalez

And Rachel isn't the only delegate representing Generation Z at the DNC this week. Eighteen-year-old Josh Hughes began working for the Clinton campaign in Iowa over a year ago, where he assisted in kicking off the [Iowa caucuses](#). Josh met Clinton in January, where he shared with the candidate how she inspired him to run for the school board in his district.

“I said this, and her eyes literally lit up,” Josh tells *Teen Vogue*. “I had shaken her hand for a picture, and when I told her she inspired me, she gripped my hand tighter, and would not let go. Like, I literally tried to let go, and she held my hand there because she wanted to hear me.”

Josh said when Hillary speaks with you, it becomes incredibly disarming. “I really just can’t emphasize how intent and engaged she was in listening,” he says. “When you talk to her, it feels like it’s just you and Hillary in the room, and there’s nothing more she wants to do than hear what you have to say.”

After Josh shared that he won his school board election, Hillary looked at him and told him how proud she was. The only way Josh can put that moment into words: “I was utterly defenseless. I walked away, and it felt like after you get off a roller coaster and you can’t feel your legs. It was one of the happiest moments of my life.”



Frederick Bell, 18, a delegate from Louisiana tells *Teen Vogue* that being surrounded by other young delegates this week gives him hope for the future — especially when he sees how many people in his generation want to get

involved in the political process. “It is important that young people are represented at the DNC because eventually the Democratic Party will be our Party, and it is crucial that we play a role in the shaping of it,” he says.

Frederick met Clinton last year at a rally in Baton Rouge. “Before I walked out, I grabbed her hand, she looked at me, then smiled and winked,” he tells *Teen Vogue*. “Hillary has always been an advocate for the enduring values of America and for people like me. This makes me proud to throw my support behind her.”





Beyond the personal connection the young delegates feel with the candidate, each speaks eloquently about specific policies they support. It's more than just a party identity or historical significance for these teens.

Rachel appreciates Clinton's experience in office, as well as her stance on social issues like LGBTQ equality, access to healthcare, and fixing economic inequality. For Josh, he looks at Clinton as a truly bipartisan candidate, and cites her specific bills sponsored and passed alongside former Republican lawmakers Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi and Representative Tom DeLay of Texas as proof. As for Frederick, he sees Hillary as someone who delivers

on the promises she makes her constituents.

On Thursday, the three delegates will stand on the floor of the DNC as Clinton becomes the first woman in American history to accept the presidential nomination from a major political party. The significance of this moment certainly isn't lost on Rachel, who hopes to one day follow in Clinton's footsteps and run for local office.

“Knowing that a woman is one election day away from the most important job in the world gives me an exciting and hopeful feeling,” Rachel says. “Hillary Clinton is the most qualified candidate regardless of her gender, but she's living proof that with hard work and dedication young women around the world can grow up and be anything they desire to be.”

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