

# Student Voices

## Below the Line Players: Playing a Weak Hand in the 2016 Election?

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This presidential election has been one for the history books, perhaps most notably for bringing underdogs to center stage. Voters have watched with a mixture of awe and frustration as Secretary Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump clinched their parties' nominations despite [record-breaking disapproval](#). That dissatisfaction has heightened the appeal of protest votes for “outsiders” Jill Stein and Gary Johnson. But even before third parties came into millennial vogue, there was no more successful underdog than the feather-haired Senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders.

You may question my use of the word “success,” given that the Bernie revolution failed to unseat Clinton in the primaries. However, it is undeniable that Senator Sanders impacted the rhetoric, promises, and prospects of the campaign. The Sanders phenomena provided a prime example of how atypical, less-resourced “below the line” players

can change the game in negotiations or in American elections. Sander’s focus on income inequality and money in politics pushed both parties to address the interests of the working and middle class. As the bastion of progressive liberalism, he re-energized the youth for the Democrats; and by raising the issues of marginalized populations, he ignited a populist and anti-globalization sentiment that is now unavoidable in American politics.

It remains to be seen how much influence Senator Sanders continues to have as an individual after conceding. He ended his candidacy and endorsement to Secretary Clinton, and perhaps with it, all leverage as a “below the line” player. Indeed, the same revolution he began may no longer be taking cues from their champion. The anger concerning income inequality is still roiling among those who feel left out of the American dream—and that frustration has the potential to sweep Trump to victory. Now that the “Gini” in the bottle has been unleashed, it seems unlikely that Sanders or anyone else can put it back. Will the vision espoused by Senator Sanders come to even partial fruition under his Democrat counter-part Hillary Clinton? Or has the power he exerted as an underdog strengthened the populist wave that is now backing Trump? Certainly, the Sanders campaign will impact the final results of the election. But how that will play out, and who will emerge on top, is anyone’s guess.