

Good afternoon. My name is Francesco Aimale. First of all, I want to say thank you for having picked me as the winner of this year's award and scholarship. I am content that you think there is substance in what I have done and the words I will say today. I would also like to thank my parents and sister (mom present). They have guided and encouraged me to become who I am today.

When I received the request to write this speech, I genuinely had no idea what to say. I was given the sentence: "Explain what drew you to a conservative way of thinking and what are the challenges of being politically conservative in our society at this time" as a guide and I was left to my thoughts. My first idea was regarding my age. In my opinion, it is much easier to have set political views as an adult, rather than a child. People often disregard your points and ideas, simply based on age (though in my experience, this only happens to republican kids...). Being a conservative youth is not easy in our day and age. The modern political spectrum has devolved into a social war, if you are not on the one team you are immediately the enemy. I always tell my parents that I would have appreciated being born at an earlier time, in a simpler America.

Political debate used to be exactly that, debates. They were civilized arguments where both sides presented their points and discussed the pros and cons of their ideas. In modern times, those structured debates no longer exist. People now will work as hard as possible to destroy others over disagreements. Cancel-culture and social media eradicate any attempts to bring back humane politics. Overall, my conservative way of thinking comes from the desire to re-enter a more peaceful and understanding culture. I believe (and have seen) that a lot of youth on the Left will completely isolate you if they find out about your beliefs. I also wholeheartedly agree with more Republican points than Democratic ones, since I am a devout Catholic, which heavily plays into my political beliefs.

I think the major challenge of being a Conservative in today's culture, especially here in Santa Fe, is that the Right is the modern political minority. Currently, one of the most endorsed points by Human Rights Activists is diversity and inclusion, which by itself is not at all a bad idea.

Strictly speaking, not limiting the opportunities of others based solely on physical appearance is a perfect example of the culture that America should have. The United States is advertised as the land of the free, and opportunities for all. My parents are both Italian immigrants, having made a place for themselves among the native New Mexicans. Without all of the opportunities they were provided, they might have never made it to where they are now. However, it is almost laughable how the political minority of Republicans is completely isolated from the rest of the population. This seemingly goes against all of the ideas of Inclusion, judging others solely on premonition and excluding them from any opportunities. This challenge is what has allowed me to understand my beliefs as a Conservative. I would never willingly separate myself from a party I disagreed with, rather I would wish to discuss and perhaps come to a conclusion or mutual agreement about a topic of disagreement.

I want to thank you all again, and I hope this has been a good introduction to my character and beliefs as a Conservative young man.