

ELECTIONS 2016 MARCH 9, 2016 9:57 PM

Sporting tattoos for Sanders, wigs for Clinton — crowd loves debate

HIGHLIGHTS

Said one college student: “My generation is taking over.”

For a Port St. Lucie teacher, immigration was the key issue.

A giant banner outside the hall read: “Get dirty money out of politics.”



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BY MONIQUE O. MADAN
mmadan@MiamiHerald.com

For Carolina Florez, the Democratic primary debate Wednesday night between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders brought her American federal government college class to life.

“It’s really exciting to see it all come together in person,” said first-time voter Florez, a sophomore at Miami Dade College, which hosted the debate between the two Democratic presidential candidates at its Kendall campus.

Florez said Sanders was her die-hard choice; she temporarily tattooed a picture of his face to her left bicep. Near her were three students wearing blonde wigs to support Clinton.

“More young voters are becoming more interested in politics; my generation is taking over,” Florez said. “We kind of have to take old politics out of here because if we continue to do things the same way, things will never change.”

Wednesday’s debate drew hundreds of students of all ages to see Clinton and Sanders face off before Florida’s primary on Tuesday.

Vicki Rodriguez of Port St. Lucie said she made the two-hour drive from Port St. Lucie because she wanted to listen to the candidates in person.

“You can get more of a sense of what’s really going on when you’re physically here,” Rodriguez said. “It’s my first debate so I’m actually really geeking out.”

Rodriguez, a Clinton supporter and president of the St. Lucie Classroom Teachers’ Association, said a politician’s stance on immigration will make or break her vote.

“I’ve been a teacher for 26 years in a community where we have lots of student immigrants,” she said. “We have students who don’t have the ability to go to college. It’s really important that we have someone in the presidency who understands the value and importance of what they’re going to bring.”



Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders supporters gather before Miami debate

Jose A. Iglesias - jiglesias@elnuevoherald.com

Cynthia Hernandez of Miami said bringing her 10-year-old son Khalil to the debate will have “a huge impact on his future.”

“It’s important that he’s aware of who the candidates are, what they represent and what they stand for because they will have an immediate impact on his life and his future,” she said.

Replied a rosy-cheeked Khalil: “If I could vote, I would vote for Bernie. What would be better, people dying or free education and free healthcare?”

Meanwhile, crowds of protesters congregated on Southwest 104th Street, where the campus is located. Among the props and placards: A giant banner that read, “Get dirty money out of politics.”

Some protesters called on Clinton to refuse campaign contributions from fossil fuel companies. Others disparaged Sanders for being a “Socialist.”

Some demonstrators called on candidates to discuss climate change, sea-level rise and Social Security.

“Candidates don’t want to get into substantive discussions,” said Stephen Malagodi, 63, of Boca Raton. “We need serious debate, serious action.”

Some, however, merely meandered through the masses and hoped to gain a clearer picture on whom they should vote for in Tuesday’s primary, and in November.

“My mind is open,” said Phamina Metayer with a wide smile. The 19-year-old Miami Dade College student, who lives in Miami, said she wants “to get to know Hillary and Bernie. I want to get to know them really, really well. I think this debate will help me do that. I just want the best for me, my family and the entire country. So, yes, I’m willing to listen. My vote is still up for grabs.”