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Daniel Truog

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Sphere and Voting in Las Vegas

Daniel Truog, Sports & Opinion Editor

People will tell you a lot of things about Las Vegas. The casinos smell awful, the house always wins and there are rather aggressive solicitors of very specific services everywhere on the Strip.

But there are a lot of things no one will tell you about because they can only be experienced. You can't explain with words alone the feeling of your eyes stinging the moment you set foot on a casino floor. When you book your hotel, they don't mention on the website that it sits at the intersection of Flamingo Road and Hugh Hefner Drive. And of course, there's no heads up that every meal you'll purchase and consume in Vegas is a choice between brown or expensive.

It's only fitting that our nation's next election could have been decided in a place like that.

Someone else had been working down in the desert long before I purchased a cramped Frontier Airlines ticket to our country's weirdest city. Ronan Houston, an organizer for the Harris campaign (and my roommate's friend), invited us to come and visit.

If only two things could define me, they would be my love for the 2001 film *Ocean's Eleven* and my jealousy over the proximity of Minnesotans on The Spectator editorial board to Tim Walz. Naturally, a visit to Las Vegas seemed the perfect way to feed two birds with one stone.

The day we arrived, I got the pleasure of viewing one of the most expensive political ads of all time. I missed the chance to see Kamala's Sphere ad up close but Las Vegas' overbearing orb of ostentatiousness hosted not one but two election-themed ads over the weekend. A yellow emoji with a little "I Voted" sticker gazed up at the heavens with wonder and awe. I had both of those once.



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Light-polluting architectural monstrosity "The Sphere" looms over Las Vegas' F1 racecourse.

Ahead of our trip, a number of articles announced that both Tim Walz and JD Vance would be in Vegas that weekend. While the Trump campaign had a handy sign-up link to see Vance, the Harris campaign was extremely light on information such as where or at what time Walz would speak.

I signed up for passes to see Vance thinking it could be at the very least interesting. ("Know thy enemy," I texted my father when I told him). This would prove to be a mistake as desperate, borderline thirsty texts poured into my phone at a rate of around five per hour. Low for a car, high for text messages.

My favorite: "Trump: Daniel, PLEASE? Will you PLEASE endorse me before I take the rally stage?"

I never went to see JD Vance. I never even got to see Tim Walz, though not for lack of trying. We learned that he would speak at a local campaign office just 30 minutes before he took the makeshift stage. The only thing I saw happen with this stage was a crew loading it into a truck, presumably to drive away to another engagement. We missed Walz by about five minutes.

Walz did speak to a crowd of people who must have dropped everything to rush over to the campaign office. Spurred on by campaign volunteers riding the Walz high, I felt like I would actually be able to make a difference. Maybe talking to people about a candidate I strongly believe in would get a message across. Maybe if they just got to know me...

In reality, we were vultures, roaming the desert for undecided voters who never came to the door. The neighborhood we canvassed in southwest Las Vegas, had been visited many times before. Their doormats were covered in literature from Harris and down-ballot Democrats and their doors had weathered "NO SOLICITING" signs, clearly installed before this election cycle.

From the dozens of doors we knocked on, there were some high-fives from enthusiastic people. Volunteers for the Harris campaign in Vegas knocked on over 100,000 doors on the Saturday before election day. That is not for nothing; in that staggering figure, I am sure some hearts and minds were changed.

The previous day, we spoke to students at UNLV on the last day to early vote in Nevada. This felt more impactful; there was a polling place at the library on campus. Over the course of a few hours in the hot sun, I directed some students over to the library and signed a couple of folks up to volunteer on the weekend.

I now know that the six electoral votes everyone I met worked so hard for carried little meaning. I can only imagine the conversations being had now in Vegas.