

Academic Integrity and You

Video Transcript

When Melania Trump spoke at the Republican National Convention in 2016, she delivered a carefully practiced and inspiring speech to an enormous crowd who watched in person and at home. Before she took the stage, she told reporters that she had written the speech herself, which was surprising, considering that most public figures would use a speechwriter for a speech of that magnitude.

In today's age of social media, however, it only took a few hours for someone to notice that the speech sounded surprisingly... familiar. Two paragraphs from the speech bore a striking resemblance to a speech delivered by Michelle Obama to the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in 2008. In fact, several phrases matched word-for-word. Since Trump had claimed that she wrote her own speech, the immediate conclusion was that she plagiarized word for word from Obama's DNC speech.

Quickly, however, it was revealed that Trump had, indeed, used a speech writer. In a phone conversation, Trump shared her inspirations. Confusion ensued, and large swaths of Obama's speech were included in the Republican National Convention speech delivered by Trump. Two mistakes happened here that damaged Melania Trump's credibility and the credibility of her speech writer:

1. Melania Trump took credit for words she did not write, which meant she also had to take credit for the plagiarism.
2. Melania Trump and her speech writer did not take good enough notes to prevent accidental plagiarism.

It's safe to assume that Melania Trump's speech writer did not intentionally lift passages from Michelle Obama's speech, as a speech delivered to that much publicity would surely be found out as an uncited source. However, Meredith McIver, speech writer for the Trump campaign later admitted to unintentional plagiarism to *The New Yorker*.¹

This story is, of course, far from being the only example of plagiarism committed by major media figures in the past few years. As you begin to write essays that pull in information from outside sources, you need to be sure to familiarize yourself with the practices of academic integrity, so you can uphold your work to an ethical standard worthy of the university education you are paying for.

Do you have any friends who have committed plagiarism, whether intentionally or unintentionally? What consequences did they face? Do you think those consequences were fair?

About this transcript:

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