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Post Event Press Release

The Kennedy Political Union's Conversation with Public Speaker, Writer, and Producer Monica Lewinsky

WASHINGTON - On Thursday night, February 10th, American University's Kennedy Political Union (KPU) and the Women's Initiative (WI) hosted a virtual discussion with writer and mental health advocate Monica Lewinsky, moderated by Professor Molly O'Rourke of American University's School of Communication. This conversation allowed guests to gain a greater understanding of the importance of creating a safe environment within the digital media field through the perspective of Lewinsky's personal experiences with mental health and cyberbullying.

Ms. Lewinsky began the conversation by highlighting the importance of human connection and interactions amongst people. "So much of what we do is based on human connection," Lewinsky shared as she discussed the value that people hold on the conversations and relationships that they create. Lewinsky transitioned the conversation into the details and difficulties of maintaining these types of connections during the COVID-19 pandemic. This brought Lewinsky to her next point, which was the lack of emphasis on mental health awareness throughout the ongoing global pandemic.

Lewinsky claimed "we have focused so much in the past two years on the physical health crisis that we have forgotten about the mental health crisis," which encapsulated her focus on self care through a very difficult time in the lives of many people across the country. She discussed methods of self care that she uses as well as how she advocates for the mental health of others. After acknowledging the lack of attention given to mental health during the pandemic, Lewinsky shifted her focus to the growing digital media field.

This conversation began with a reference to her TED Talk as she asked, "who hasn't made a mistake at the age of twenty-two?" This question allowed guests to reflect on their own experiences and emphasized self evaluation toward the judgment of others' mistakes. Lewinsky then discussed judgment on social media, stating that "we are all part of creating the algorithm that is out there." Lewinsky emphasized the importance of avoiding judgemental language and posts on social media in order to create a more inclusive and safe digital environment.

Throughout the Question and Answer portion of the night, Lewinsky talked about the double-edged sword of the media's evolution throughout recent decades. "What is happening today isn't the same as what

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happened twenty years ago,” Lewinsky said as she mentioned the way that people can easily connect and show support through different social media platforms. She also touched on her ability to use the modern methods of social media to finally take back her personal narrative.

Ms. Lewinsky was open and vulnerable with her responses to provide a more community-oriented approach to the very important and difficult topics of mental health advocacy and awareness. Her authentic and compassionate tone created a welcoming environment in which guests could be vulnerable with her, and this was reflected in the questions that were asked during the Q&A. This conversation with KPU and WI gave students, staff, and alumni watching new perspective of the impacts of our media usage, as well as the importance of self care and resilience.

To read more about the event, please visit [this link](#) to an opinion piece written by a staff member on our conversation with Monica Lewinsky.

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