

First White House Intern With Autism Advocates for Others on the Spectrum

Hearing the word “retarded” hurled at you.

Receiving discipline for behavior that didn’t fit the norm.

Facing exclusion and bullying from fellow students.

These were only some of the challenges Xavier DeGroat faced while growing up as someone on the autism spectrum. And those challenges, he tells Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of the *Greenelines* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network, have moved him into a life and ministry of advocacy for others on the spectrum—one that has taken him to a White House internship and beyond.

“I’m not going to let anyone stop me,” DeGroat says. “My parents told my teachers and principals way back in the beginning that one day, you’re going to find out our son is going to become quite the astonishing leader ... with laws and policies and helping benefit those with autism.”

A connection with former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani led to him becoming the first White House intern with autism in 2020, DeGroat explains. Before that, he had a 2019 meeting with President Donald Trump. “It was only supposed to be a five-minute meeting, but it turned out to be a half-hour meeting, because the president was inspired by me,” DeGroat says.

That meeting also led to some changes in the Transportation Security Administration’s policy that directly impacted those on the spectrum, he explains. “It changed their way of operating the screening process ... Because that can bring about heavy tantrum behaviors in those with autism when they

are very anxious about getting past the density of the crowd and the loudness and bright lights,” DeGroat said.

Now finished with his internship and back at home in Lansing, Michigan, DeGroat continues his efforts on behalf of those on the autism spectrum through his Xavier DeGroat Autism Foundation. During his time in the White House, he spoke with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about a possible position as global ambassador or special envoy for autism, and he says he plans to work with the Biden administration on this idea as well.

For more about Xavier DeGroat and how God is using him to bless others with autism, listen to the entire episode of *Greenelines* at this link. Subscribe to *Greenelines* on your favorite podcast for more inspiring stories like this one! {eoa}

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