

VERBATIM

# FREE SPEECH

*POST asks four Rochesterians to discuss a single topic: Trust*



I used to own a sealed copy of the Elvis Costello record ‘Trust.’ I bought it for a couple bucks at one of the Browncroft Neighborhood garage sales. I sold the album last year for next to nothing following a rigorous, week-long house cleaning binge. The record never saw the light of day, and I spent the money on a quarter tank of gas. I was raised to do the right thing, treat other people the way I want to be treated, and judge people by their actions not their words. Somewhere down the line, I learned to believe in a power greater than myself. Today, I trust the power of the Universe. I trust everything is exactly the way it’s supposed to be in this exact moment. I sold my sealed copy of ‘Trust’ for a few gallons of regular unleaded. I don’t regret it. I Trust myself to make the right decisions.

—Roger Kuhn, blues musician, University of Rochester Medical Center

From a personal perspective as a skydiver, there’s a little bit of a difference from how I trust the systems of skydiving and how a new person would. A new person has a belief. I have more of what you might call faith. I have a little boy and he watched me turn a light on. When he flipped the switch himself, he was so excited because he believed it would turn on and, of course, it did. Now he has faith in flipping that switch knowing what will happen. When someone is new to skydiving, they have a belief that they will be fine because they witness others do it. It wasn’t until I made that first jump that belief turned to faith. After that, it becomes really easy, as simple as turning on a light. The people who come to jump with us, some know everything there is to know before their skydive. Others just show up and ask for the cheapest package without a single question. Now that’s trust.

—Rick Bray, skydiving instructor, RushCube

I like to think about trust as the glue that holds a society together. Our everyday interactions are premised on trust. We may not have a medical degree, so we trust a doctor’s diagnosis. We may not be able to repair our own car, so we (hopefully) trust the mechanic. Money, credit cards, and banks all require that we place our trust, to a certain degree, in complex, impersonal institutions. Sometimes it seems like trust is becoming a scarce resource. The mainstream media, big corporations, our food system, the government, are perhaps not as trusted as they once were. I sometimes worry about how the Internet fills in this trust vacuum. Individuals search for answers that fit their pre-existing beliefs, without placing any trust in experts or institutions.

—Daniel Reichman, professor of anthropology, University of Rochester

Trust is an important aspect of my job. I work at the plant on a daily basis—removed from the NRC regional office in King of Prussia, PA. NRC management therefore, must trust that I will carry out the NRC’s mission with impartiality and integrity to ensure the plant operates safely. Since I have full access to all aspects of the power plant’s operation, the plant’s owner-operator needs to trust that I will inspect their facility fairly, objectively and consistently. Most importantly, I must have the public’s trust. Nuclear power plants must be operated safely, in conformance with NRC rules and regulations. The public must trust me, the independent regulator, to work openly and credibly to protect people and the environment.

—Neil Perry, Nuclear Regulatory Commission senior resident inspector, Ginna Nuclear Power Plant