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Mike Huckabee hails an Uber, and other takeaways before the RNC begins



SAM JANESCH | Staff Writer Jul 18, 2016



A storefront in downtown Cleveland with Republican National Convention merchandise on July 17.

Sam Janesch

CLEVELAND -- Mike Huckabee stands alone on a bustling street corner on a sunny afternoon in downtown Cleveland. Hidden behind sunglasses and wearing a blue-tinted suit, he's waiting a little longer than he prefers for his Uber in a city packed for the Republican National Convention.

Seven months earlier, Huckabee -- the former Arkansas governor and two-time GOP presidential hopeful -- was preparing for the primaries with his own eyes on the nomination.

But on Sunday, the eve of the convention that will likely put billionaire outsider candidate Donald Trump on top of the 2016 ticket, Huckabee waited for his ride as passersby paid more attention to the "Make America Great Again" merchandise lining the streets than a former Republican heavyweight a few feet away.



This isn't where the political world thought things were going seven months ago.

“I think it's going to be a great convention, and I think the party's going to unify around Donald Trump and Mike Pence as the ticket,” Huckabee said. “I was happy to see that the ridiculously petulant ‘Never Trump’ movement finally met its bitter end last week.”

(Story continues below video)



That “bitter end” may be the last GOP-imposed challenge to Trump's historic nomination, but if Sunday in Cleveland is any indication, it's not his final hurdle even this week.

In the afternoon, protesters stormed the streets, marching around the city in what is sure to be a week of unrest for those opposed to Trump.

Calling him a racist and fascist with signs and chants, they rallied for the RNC to shut down. Black Lives Matter members held posters and called attention to the recent police shootings.

But as dozens of police and a horde of reporters followed the protesters, the dichotomy in the city was also clear.

Nearby, Trump enthusiasts asked how much it cost for the street vendors' shirts that read “Obama, You're Fired!” -- or the posters comparing the political outsider to Ronald Reagan.

In the city's newly renovated Public Square, Julian Raven displayed a smaller copy of his original 8-ft by 16-ft painting that -- equipped fully with Trump and a bald eagle saving a fallen American flag -- depicts Trump's mantra and vision for the country.

Raven calls it "prophetic."



"I was caught up in a two-month intensity that I've never experienced before in my life," he said of his response when Trump launched his campaign last year.

Raven, of Elmira, New York will be in the city for the rest of the week, campaigning just as hard as he did with his painting for the whole month of January in Iowa.

And in the two days he's already spent in Cleveland ahead of the convention, even the "anti-Trump people" have been kind to him, he said.

So far, so good.

The convention, the pinnacle of the GOP presidential race thus far, officially kicks off Monday.

And for the the influx of 50,000 people in the city this week, all eyes will remain on whether that pro-Trump and anti-Trump dichotomy remains peaceful.

Stay tuned.

Follow political reporter Sam Janesch in Cleveland this week on LancasterOnline.com, [LancasterOnline](https://www.lancasteronline.com) on Snapchat, and [@samjanLNP](https://twitter.com/samjanLNP) on Twitter.