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To: Interested Parties

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## **Some white working class women outside metros now say, enough Trump!**

### **Summary of June focus groups with white working class outside metro areas**

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President Donald Trump has dramatically escalated his attack on immigrants, the squad of female Congresswomen of color, two Muslim, calling on them to go back and clean up the failed countries they came from, and warning of the “socialist nightmare” they support. For a moment, he paused after the crowd at his rally in NC chanted, “send her back.” But then, he reaffirmed their patriotism.

Commentators warned, Democrats are taking the bait and joining the battle on his terms. Others said, that is crazy, he has the best economy in living memory, he would benefit from talking about the great economy. And across the board, people were unsure whether his attack on the Democrats for being “socialists” would work. Would the attack on Sanders and the squad tarnish the Democrats as big, out of control spenders who will raise your taxes?

Just this weekend Nate Cohn wrote in the NY Times that Trump could lose by 5 million nationally and still be elected by winning the key battleground states that got him there in 2016. That is certainly not true if you listen to the voters who gave Trump these states now.

We are confident those worries are misplaced, because it does not factor in how swing, Trump voters are reacting to the president in the very areas he drove up his vote in 2016. With support for the American Federation of Teachers, we conducted focus groups in early June with white working class voters outside metropolitan areas - in Bangor in Maine’s 2<sup>nd</sup> congressional district, in Oak Creek in Wisconsin, and in rural communities in Clark County outside of Las Vegas. The participants were weak Republicans and independents, two-thirds of whom had voted for Trump in 2016.

They watched and read nearly all Donald Trump content — him on TV at impromptu press conferences and rallies about trade, tariffs, immigration, the economy, and the Democrats, as well as a host of his tweets — without rebuttal, except for a short list of attacks and Democratic messages at the very end.

Well, many of the women in particular are already off of the president, and his campaigning hurts, rather than helps him. Trump's own in-your-face style and partisan divisiveness is pushing them away. In fact, Trump's negative brand now dominates the positive with these key voters.

These voters had supported Trump by two-to-one in 2016, but at the end of the groups only half said they would support the president. Trump largely consolidated the men, though a few had already opted not to vote in 2018. But one third of the white working class women 2016 Trump voters said they were now considering voting for someone else.

They pulled off because his ego makes him impulsive and a bully, health care remains unaffordable, he's dividing the country, he doesn't care about the working class, only the 1 percent, he's corrupt and out for himself and he doesn't respect women.

### Democrats as socialist nightmare

One of the most revealing findings in this research was their reaction to the attacks on Democrats as socialists. Trump and the Republicans think this is creating potential worry about big government spending, taxes and regulation — and literally, nobody mentions that. This is a very different time than when the Tea Party GOP attacked President Obama as a socialist and fueled support for austerity and opposition to “Obamacare.” Today, they shake their heads on reading it. They view it as partisan name-calling to create as much division as possible. It is calling your school yard enemy the worst name you can think of.



The women reacted particularly negatively and view Trump as mainly responsible for the division, which several called a “war.” They see his tweet as strong representation of the division he is creating.<sup>1</sup>

I also think this is just embarrassing, because I would say I'd side with Republicans more than Democrat, but I would never be so disrespectful and it blows my mind that the person leading our country is so disrespectful because even - a lot of Republicans have some Democratic views, and so I feel like this would hurt Republicans (Clark County woman)

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for full list of Trump tweets shown in the groups

He totally divides this country, like no one has ever done in history. On the planet earth. (Clark County woman)

I think we are just so concerned about Republicans and Democrats, just what you said earlier [...] That mainly most Americans are in the middle. They've got to stop this Republican-Democratic war and start being concerned about the American people (Bangor woman)

I think it's just, again, you're getting more people mad. I mean you're not going to get the Democrats to work with you because you just threw them under the bus, and you're not going to work with the Democrats because you're Republican. It's just the political party difference. (Oak Creek woman)

I feel like whenever he starts hating on Democrats, because he does this often, it really does make him sound ignorant. (Oak Creek woman)

I feel like he's yelling to make a point instead of having conversations. Wow. (Oak Creek woman)

The men mostly saw it as “campaign stuff” for a “very targeted audience,” as one Oak Creek man put it. The men who had voted for Trump considered it a “scare tactic” and “don't think it needed to be in there.” It is just politics and when done by Trump “in the way he does it, he comes across as a bully, he comes across as a bigot. He says it in not the greatest of ways.” (Clark County man)

Absolutely. It's Republicans or Democrats, it's the middle of the road that makes things happen. It's the people with a solid head on their shoulder. Socialist is just as bad. (Oak Creek man)

He's just putting in one group that gets the other. You say this group is better than this one. (Clark County man)

Does he present it well? That's his downfall, because I can't disagree with you. Sometimes you wish that, I think he would benefit if he had someone to possibly help him out with some of his speeches, and the way he presents it would be different. (Clark County man)

In the groups, we asked them to complete, “I'm feeling BLANK about the way things are going in the country, “ and the group of women in Las Vegas uttered, “exhausted, exhausted, shocked, shocked, disappointed, shocked and disappointed, overwhelmed, overwhelmed, pissed, stressed.” And you can't help think President Trump's constant attacks are turning off the swing working class voters he got in the rural and non-metropolitan areas.

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### Greatest economy ever

We should not lose track that President Trump over performed with white working class voters outside the metro areas, and they were and are on the edge financially. Once again, pundits and presidential candidates living in the booming metros, just miss how hard it remains for working people post the financial crisis.

In Maine, half reported incomes under \$40,000. They made more in Nevada and Wisconsin, but all talked about problems, like their schools shaming their kids when the school lunch fund was in arrears, having to ask their bank for relief from making mortgage payments, seeing seniors splitting their pills in half to make prescriptions last, and foregoing health insurance to pay for a family member's cancer treatments. They were very conscious that the manufacturing jobs were now 2-tier so, the jobs mostly are far below union levels. And some were working minimum wage for their kids and wanted it to be raised to a "living wage."

When asked to associate "wages keeping up with costs," they went ballistic. They nearly shouted down the moderator. They went right to health care costs, insurance premiums and prescription drug prices. And they also go right to pharmaceutical companies and opioids. Many of them shared personal stories about their experiences with out of control health care costs or being uninsured and the financial struggles that precede or follow. Two in the groups had someone close to them who had died.

I think employers are justifying it that way, in that, "Look it, you're making so much more than you were." But back then, you couldn't survive either. (Bangor woman)

Usually when we get a raise, all of a sudden, here comes along, your insurance premium is going up two or three percent. You feel like, "Yay" for about two seconds and then it's now I'm worse off. (Oak Creek woman)

I lost my dad to the opioid crisis so I mean if that's a subject, shit I can definitely say a lot on that. I'm so glad that I can't remember the CEO's name, but he just recently lost like a huge lawsuit. (Clark County woman)

We tested a video of Trump saying how well the economy is doing and a tweet saying he and Republicans have created the best economy in history, and it did not go well for the president. It is Trump's praise of the economy in the videos and tweets they see that pushes them away further, without our having to say much. Several say this is not happening where they live—"maybe in New York city" and "maybe in big cities," "but not here." (Bangor woman, Oak Creek women) Some of them are pushed away by his style of speaking, finding it divisive and skeptical of his facts. Many see it as inaccurate and out of touch when think about what is really happening in their own lives. They brought up other examples of Trump "not thinking about the little people"—particularly during the shutdown where he said those impacted could "just go get another job" and "they can just go babysit other peoples kids." (Bangor woman, Oak Creek women)

I think he has brought work back into the country like manufacturing. He's bringing that back into the country but as far as people making enough money to live off, no, that's not happening. Blue collar work, that's not happening, not here anyway. (Bangor woman)

There are more jobs, but there aren't jobs with higher wages that are going to make it easier to live. (Bangor woman)

I think he believes if he tells us stuff often enough we will believe him (Clark County woman)

Just like what she was saying, the government shutdown. "Just go and get another job." Well, you can't just go and get another job. You can't just go and get another job because you work full-time at the job you should be getting paid at and aren't. You have a family that you should be going home to. (Oak Creek woman)

Not surprisingly, the strongest attack by far was the attack that "he promised better and cheaper health care for everyone — but insurance rates have increased for everyone, including a 50 percent increase in premiums in the individual market." They write about wanting "affordable health insurance" and he owns the biggest cost killing them.

The promises that were made Obamacare and then what actually happened. Was I able to see the doctor? No, but I can tell you why my credit's fucked up. Because of all the debt I have from the time I had to go. (Clark County woman)

He [Trump] forgot about the forgotten Americans. Because if he was a voice he'd be doing something about the drug epidemic, he'd be doing something about healthcare. Because those are the forgotten Americans. (Bangor woman)

I thought he'd act quicker on the healthcare thing, he really ran on that when he was going in the campaign. And I really thought there would be some, no more fees, no more this, we'll hammer this down because it's obviously not working. (Bangor woman)

So when commentators say, the president would benefit by talking about "the economy, stupid!" the answer is no, among his own voters who turn away when he takes their advice.

### **Corrupt just like Hillary**

Part of the reason they are "disappointed" and "sad" is that Trump turned out to be just as corrupt, and there really isn't much difference from the other politicians who they think are in it for the money.

To me, both sides are so crooked. If you're a politician, you're crooked. Period. That's my opinion. I don't care if it's Republican, Democrat. They're both into it monetarily benefiting their own party. (Oak Creek man)

I would say they should wear suits like Nascar drivers do so we can see...who's sponsoring them. (Oak Creek man)

It isn't about the voice and we the people anymore. It's who's got the most money. (Oak Creek man)

They're all corrupt! Tell me one- I mean, honestly. I don't think Trump was voted in, but guess how much money he has! (Clark County woman)

That's politics. Friends of friends get taken care of, the other ones get lumped out. Nothing new. (Clark County man)

While many Trump voters go on the defensive by saying corruption and the influence of money on elected officials is commonplace and “politics as usual,” others who voted for Trump expressed regret or even surprise that he is the same as they perceived Clinton—whom they thought corrupt—or said that he had not kept his promises or delivered on the issues where he won their vote.

All these people! We got Hillary and we got Trump? That's our choice? How does that even happen? I can't even get your head around that! Money. And that's what - money, control, oil - guess what? They're friends. They are at the end of the day going home and smoking a joint together, okay? They are not against each other. They are friends. (Clark County woman)

[...] made a whole big problem with Hillary's emails but when his own daughter has a problem with that you didn't go off to her. It only matters to him. (Clark County man)

I mean, when he was running, it was all about the little people, the farmers, the veterans. Whether or not – I don't know if he is or is not really doing much for them. (Clark County man)

He [Trump] doesn't think of the little people. Just like in big corporations, the CEOs don't think of the little people who run the company. (Oak Creek woman)

### **Disrespect for women**

Women in these groups raised President Trump's disrespect of women in their negative attributes, and that makes it uncertain when that will filter their reaction to his attacks on the squad, the four women members of Congress.

In each state the women brought up examples of a climate that is increasingly against women and some directly said Trump is “only worried about the men” and that he is “not worried about the women in the country.” (Oak Creek woman) One young mother in Clark County said she

had always wanted a girl, and was upset at first when she had found out she was having a boy. She went on to say that after giving it some more thought she was “so happy” she was not pregnant with a girl “because raising a girl in this world is just not an option.” She said the reason for this is she knows her boys will “be able strive for themselves and be successful,” “protect themselves” and “know their rights.”

My thing, I just feel like it goes back to the sexist thing. Whether it was a female soldier or a male soldier, or whatever. He's only worried about the men. He's not worried about the women in the country. (Clark County woman)

Look at the background of every single one of these commercials. Do you see a minority amongst them. They're all white. [...] Did you see a woman? (Clark County woman)

We also heard, unprompted by any question in the moderator’s guide, strong reactions to states like Alabama barring any kind of abortion. Regardless of their personal views on abortion or for whom they voted in 2016, the women had deep concerns about new state restrictions on abortions as an attack on women’s rights and a step backward for the country.

I see a lot about the abortion laws going on in different states, so I guess I’ve been paying more attention to that. That’s been drawing my attention. (Oak Creek woman)

Yeah with his history and the comments he's made about women before becoming president, he should be stepping up for women right now. Whether he is pro-choice, or I'm sorry pro-life, be pro-life that's fine, but don't completely take away our rights. (Clark County woman)

How could he ever be a voice for the forgotten Americans when there are forgotten women all over United States without a voice right now? In certain states and they're making it a felony to cross state lines to get something like an abortion and whether you're pro-choice or pro-life I could care less, but you're just going way too far. (Clark County woman)

I am surprised that he hasn't done anything yet on that, on the healthcare. And I'm really disappointed about the abortions. We're going back to the 1920s. (Bangor woman)

And we’re putting women's lives, kids, my kids age. It's a personal choice. And you're going back to where they're gonna start using the coat hangers again and doctors are gonna get prosecuted. And it's awful. It's awful we're taking four steps backwards on that one. (Bangor woman)

## **Immigration**

Immigration is the area where President Trump gets the most traction and probably accounts for why the men were consolidated.

It is brought up in the good things about him - and many react to his TV appearances, agreeing with him on there being a crisis at the southern border and that some bring problems such as crime and drugs.

The women are more likely to say they are for “legal immigration” and the country is “not full.” Many view the wall as an obsession, and think it is ineffective and makes no sense. As one Las Vegas woman put it, “this all sounds great except this part right here—now under construction [the wall].” Trump’s campaign rally video on the immigrant crisis didn’t resonate, but more because they thought his rhetoric too harsh and made him sound “racist” or “ignorant,” but many do feel there is a crisis at the Southern border. They also see illegal immigration as an economic issue. They say the problem is that illegal immigrants are “willing to work for peanuts,” it “costs a lot of money to send them back home,” and because of “the unemployment that goes along with an undocumented worker.”

Well I work for the Department of Homeland Security, so I do see that it is a state of emergency. I don’t think a wall is going to fix it. They build tunnels. They use drones. They use submarines to bring stuff through. It needs to be some kind of more of a complete – . (Oak Creek woman)

What about the people that go through the process legally and become a citizen? As opposed to you jumping a wall and you want to be a citizen too. These people have worked years to get to that. (Clark County woman)

I think he has the idea but it comes across as very racist. We’re full. You are not welcome. And it’s not that you’re not welcome, just come legally in my opinion. (Oak Creek woman)

I don't agree with the country is full. If you want to come here legally, there are avenues to take and then we will let you in gladly. (Bangor woman)

For the women, apparently, the immigration issue is not strong enough to undermine the other dynamics that are pulling them back.

The men were far more likely to agree with Trump on what they read and heard, and unlike the women, they almost all thought the wall was a good idea or at least a net positive. They were more likely to agree with Trump on illegal immigrants bringing drugs and crime across the border, and they accept that Trump’s immigration policies would impact the types of immigrants that some of them express more sympathy for, such as young people and those simply looking for a better life.

You can't get into Canada if you've got a DWI but, yet you can come here and sell drugs and traffic women and whatever and nobody cares. (Oak Creek man)



I feel it's a good thing [the wall], because then we just funnel them in a certain area so it'd be easier for them to catch them. (Bangor man)

Ongoing problem for a number of years. [...] Closing the door. It should've been done a long time ago. (Bangor man)

Unfortunately, regardless of how you try to handle that, some of the good people are going to get affected, and some of the bad people are still going to make [crosstalk]. I do think he's trying to do the right thing, but in the way he presents things, the message is totally off (Clark County man)

There're walls everywhere. There're gated communities that the super-rich live in. A lot of the super-rich are the people that are saying that they don't want a wall. Well how about we tear down your walls? You only build walls that are protecting your property and family (Oak Creek man)

Every country has the right to protect their borders. You go to any other country. It's hard to get into any other country. Especially in Europe. You can't just walk in there and be like, oh, you know. (Oak Creek man)

### **Tariffs, Trade and China**

What the president is doing on tariffs and China and renegotiating trade agreements gets an audience with the men. They see him finally taking on China, after no leader has tried in the past.

He's talking about business optics right there. A whole lot of corrupt politicians before him were sellouts. Chinese always benefited on that. He's in there to clean up that mess with his business background. (Clark County man)

I understand why he's doing it, because I realized that China is not ... The deal between China is not fair. Right now that it's not balanced. There has to be a change. There has to be changed to bring back fairness in the game. (Clark County man)

I can see his point but it can be a good thing and a bad thing. Good-a bad thing that we will pay more at the counter. But the good thing is hopefully more companies will invest here instead of -. (Bangor man)

Reactions to Trump's 'patriotic farmers' tweet are negative, however. Tariffs are seen to be hurting farmers, particularly by those who know farmers personally.

We yes, we pay, we're paying for it 100%. We're going without because of that, look at the farmers, what's going on with them and it's us. We're the ones that, we're not going to

have the food, we're not going to be able to put heat in our homes come next winter because of what's going on right now. (Bangor woman)

But what I just heard a couple of days ago was the ones that are really getting the benefits, are not – and this was by talking to these lower end farmers that're actually pretty big deal ones but they're not your huge companies. And they are not getting the subsidies. But that those great big huge farming ones are. And they don't need it. (Bangor woman)

But many of the women basically do not understand the tariffs and trade agreements, and many do say, they leave it to their husband to work though how this affects them.

I just think of Mexico. That's because my husband and I were talking about it earlier today. (Oak Creek woman)

I think that was illegal. I don't know. Just from what you hear. [...] My dad watches it so he kind of updates me. I just can't. I can't watch any of that stuff (Oak Creek woman)

I don't even know what that is. (Clark Countywoman)

I don't really know a whole lot about it. (Bangor woman)

So, the president's campaign on his tariff and trade policies may be working for the men, but not so much for the women.

### **Trump's locked in brand**

These are the swing voters that allowed Donald Trump to win the presidency and push rural and non-metropolitan areas to the Republicans in 2016, but Trump's negative brand is stronger than the positive. Remember, two thirds of these participants voted for Trump, but in the written exercise at the outset on good and bad things about Trump, they write 15 percent more words on the negative.<sup>2</sup>

His positive brand is real. He takes action, won't be bullied. Plays hardball. Digs in and fights for his beliefs. He pushes against the system. He's an outsider. He is dealing with immigration. He backs the military and veterans and cares about America.

But Trump's negative brand has more intensity and scope and is top of mind when they see him speak. In the past, they chided him for tweeting so much, but it has gravitated to shape his brand.

He is all about himself, his ego, "an ego trip," which means he is explosive and impulsive and not willing to bend. He might be a bully. He is dividing the country and can't bring it together.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for written responses from Wisconsin Trump voters on his positive traits. See Appendix C for written responses from Wisconsin Trump voters about his positive traits.

He doesn't care about the working class and is only for the 1 percent. He's only looking out for the rich. He is out for himself, maybe corrupt. He does not respect women. Maybe he gets us into war. And for some, the wall, really?

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President Trump has emerged with at best ambivalent brand with the swing, weak Republican and independent voters who supported him in counties outside America's metropolitan areas. He is seen as ego-centric and divisive and failing to deliver for working people, particularly the women and particularly on health care.

But exposure to him and his arguments, with virtually no rebuttal, pushes these voters away, particularly when he targets women and when accused Democrats of being socialist.

APPENDIX A: Trump tweets

HANDOUT #2-5

Here is a Tweet from President Trump on the same subject


 **Donald J. Trump** ✓  
@realDonaldTrump

Our great Patriot Farmers will be one of the biggest beneficiaries of what is happening now. Hopefully China will do us the honor of continuing to buy our great farm product, the best, but if not your Country will be making up the difference based on a very high China buy.....

7:29 AM · May 14, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)


 **Donald J. Trump** ✓ [Follow](#)  
@realDonaldTrump

Republicans have created the best economy in the HISTORY of our Country – and the hottest jobs market on planet earth. The Democrat Agenda is a Socialist Nightmare. The Republican Agenda is the AMERICAN DREAM! [Vote.GOP](#)

 **Donald J. Trump** ✓ [Follow](#)  
@realDonaldTrump

Thanks to REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP, America is WINNING AGAIN - and America is being RESPECTED again all over the world. Because we are finally putting AMERICA FIRST!

6:06 PM - 5 Jul 2018

 **Donald J. Trump** ✓ [Follow](#)  
@realDonaldTrump

We have a State of Emergency at our Southern Border. Border Patrol, our Military and local Law Enforcement are doing a great job, but without the Wall, which is now under major construction, you cannot have Border Security. Drugs, Gangs and Human Trafficking must be stopped!

3:32 AM - 25 Feb 2019

**APPENDIX B: Trump positives – written responses from Trump voters**

In the first space below, please write some of the good things that come to mind when you think about Donald Trump.

**Oak Creek, WI: Women - 2016 Trump voters**

Response
Money, Willing to push, Not always political correct
Taking action, getting some things done
Growing Economy
Economy/jobs
Rising Economy, Good Business mind –not a politician, Won’t be bullied by other countries, Wants the best for America
Job opportunities
Cares about America + the economy, Tell it like it is, Wants the US to be like it used to be (self-sufficient), Patriotic

**Oak Creek, WI: Men - 2016 Trump voters**

Response
Not a politician, Understands Business, Believe in putting worker back to work, Loves the country
Economy, Pushing against political system, Blunt, Does what he says, Immigration
Outsider, Business man, He puts congress’ business out to the public
Economy, Does what he says
Economy, Military spending, Jobs, Plays hardball, Stature of the US, Immigration reform/wall, Big mouth, Doing what he said he would do
Speaks his mind, Not afraid
He has our economy growing again

**APPENDIX C: Trump negatives – written responses from Trump voters**

Use the space below to write down all your doubts about President Trump.

**Oak Creek, WI: Women - 2016 Trump voters**

Response
Lies, ego, not nice to people
Impulsive, but not guilty
Immigration, Ego
If he'll create a war, wall
Ego- has his mind set about most things – not willing to bend, Is dividing the country more than bringing together, out of touch w/ the “common” people
Affordable healthcare for all groups/ages, relations with other countries, The wall- Is it necessary? Can he make the country better?
none

**Oak Creek, WI: Men - 2016 Trump voters**

Response
Social media, Ego, Issues/fights with media
Fly's off the handle, Easily Offended, Causes Issues where they aren't necessary
Can he really bring parties together no
Over play his hand (trade). North Korea, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment
Big mouth, Present a poor image of a silly US president, lying to the public/US Congress
Tweeter, way he speaks to leaders calling them losers
His methods of getting things done the way he wants sometimes are not very professional