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TDS STRATEGY MEMO:

**DEMOCRATS:  
IT'S TIME TO CONSIDER TARGETED STRATEGIES  
TO UNDERMINE TRUMP'S  
WHITE WORKING CLASS SUPPORT**

BY  
ANDREW LEVISON

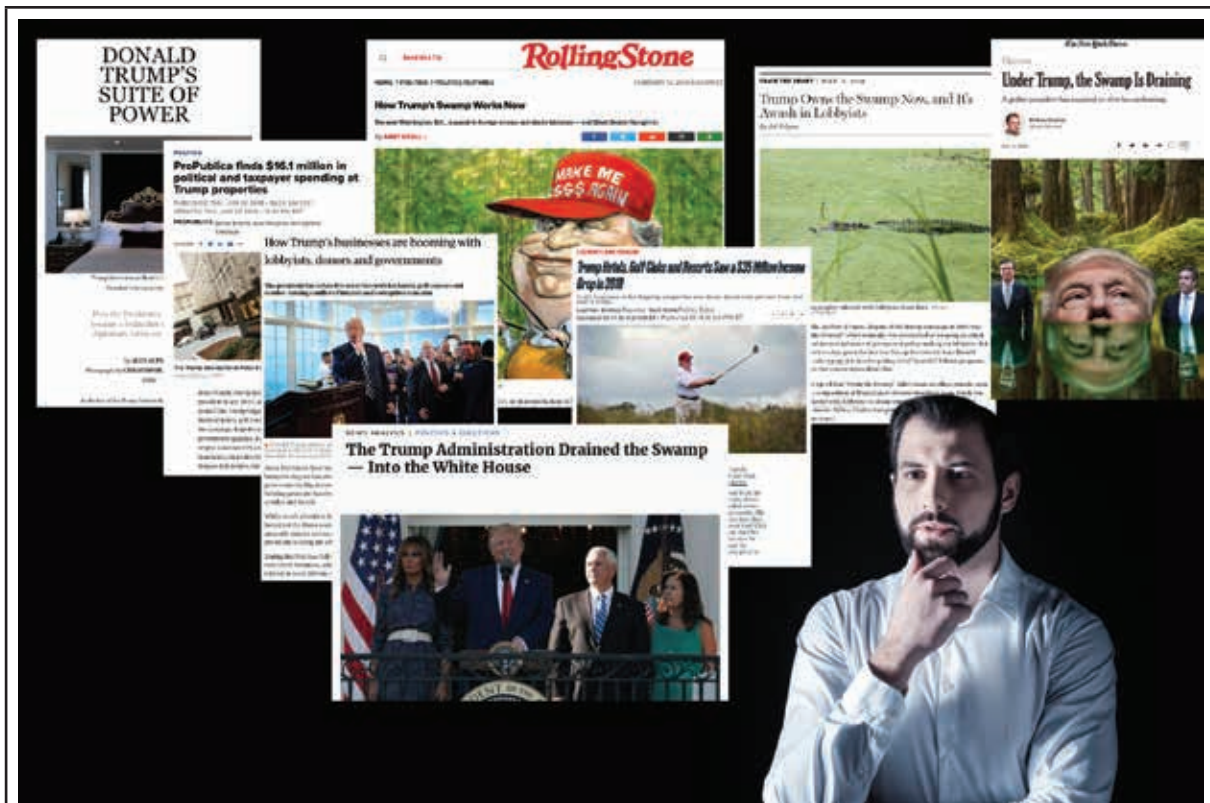


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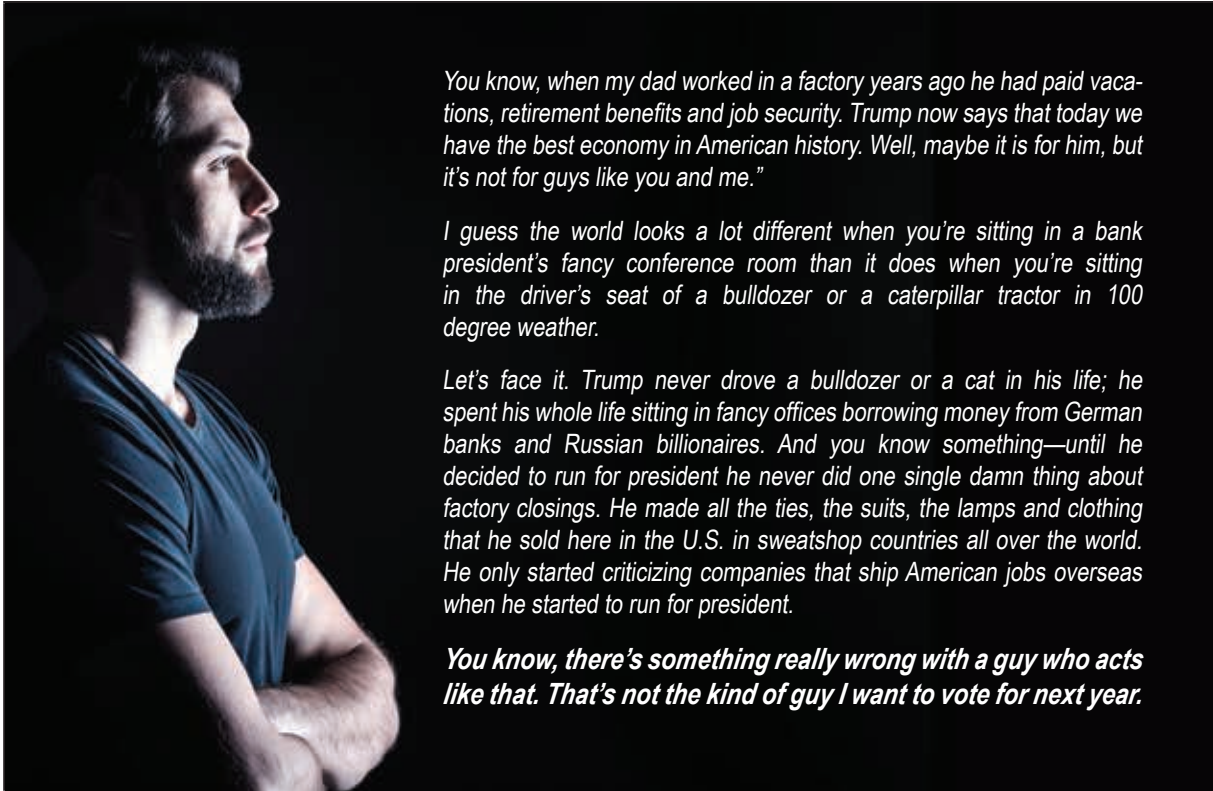
Imagine that sometime early this coming fall a series of ads like the following begin to appear specifically aimed at white working class voters in the Rust Belt.



*Remember back in 2016 when Trump said he was going to “drain the swamp.” Well, the only thing he’s draining now is millions of dollars from back room lobbyists and influence peddlers and laundering the money through his hotels and golf courses,*

*Come on, you can see it happening every day. Money is still running the show in Trump’s Washington. The only difference is that Trump is now the guy who is selling the tickets and raking all the money out of the till.”*

***You know, there’s something really wrong with someone who thinks that’s OK. That’s not the kind of guy I want to vote for next year.***



*You know, when my dad worked in a factory years ago he had paid vacations, retirement benefits and job security. Trump now says that today we have the best economy in American history. Well, maybe it is for him, but it's not for guys like you and me."*

*I guess the world looks a lot different when you're sitting in a bank president's fancy conference room than it does when you're sitting in the driver's seat of a bulldozer or a caterpillar tractor in 100 degree weather.*

*Let's face it. Trump never drove a bulldozer or a cat in his life; he spent his whole life sitting in fancy offices borrowing money from German banks and Russian billionaires. And you know something—until he decided to run for president he never did one single damn thing about factory closings. He made all the ties, the suits, the lamps and clothing that he sold here in the U.S. in sweatshop countries all over the world. He only started criticizing companies that ship American jobs overseas when he started to run for president.*

***You know, there's something really wrong with a guy who acts like that. That's not the kind of guy I want to vote for next year.***



*You know, in 2008 Donald Trump's son said about the Trump family business that "most of our money comes from Russia" and even as he was running for president Donald Trump said "what's wrong with making money by doing business deals with Russia?"*

*My God. He's actually asking what's wrong with an American president trying to make personal business deals with a hostile foreign power that has armed and supported America's enemies again and again over the years? What's wrong with treating a brutal dictator like Vladimir Putin as your business partner? Does Donald Trump seriously not know the answer to that question? Is making money for himself more important to him than the United States of America?*

***You know, there something really wrong with a guy who thinks that way. That's not the kind of guy I want to vote for next year.***

It's interesting to wonder how effective ads like these might be—especially if they were carefully targeted to white working class voters.

But the fact is that there is not much chance that we'll ever find out. Within the Democratic coalition there are a whole series of arguments for why a campaign like this isn't even worth considering.

- Deep down all white workers are hopeless racists so trying to persuade them is a waste of time.
- All campaign resources should be dedicated to increasing “Democratic base” turnout.
- Democratic advertising should target educated white voters, not white workers.
- Democratic appeals to white workers should be focused on offering them progressive economic policies and programs.
- Democratic candidates should stay positive and not “get down in the mud” with Trump.

It is true that since the 2018 elections a number of commentaries have appeared that recommend trying to win back some of Donald Trump's white working class support. But the problem is that most of these commentaries just rehash the same internal debate that Democrats have repeatedly conducted since the early 1970's. On the one hand some argue that Democrats should carefully avoid unpopular social issues and focus on “bread and butter” economic themes. Others hold instead that, to excite and inspire these voters, Democrats must offer visionary, radical alternatives to the conservative policies of the GOP.

The problem with both these approaches is that they are far too broad and general to identify the specific audiences and specific vulnerabilities that could be targeted to successfully attack Trump's political appeal. They rely on a simplistic, essentially stereotyped image of all white working class voters as homogeneous group with common characteristics and attitudes. As a result, they assume that useful generalizations can be made about what “*they*” all basically think—as if “*they*” all think alike.

**In contrast, any serious political strategy for detaching some of Trump's white working class supporters must begin by identifying which very specific subgroups of white workers are actually open to persuasion and then defining what equally specific kinds of messages can influence their decisions on election day.**

### What kinds of white workers are open to persuasion?

A serious strategy needs to begin by creating a profile of the target audience. What kind of white workers would potentially be open to an anti-Trump appeal? The answer, drawn from dozens of focus groups and thousands of front door canvass interviews since Trump's election points to four key characteristics:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Much of this material is not publically available. The best that is available can be found at [www.democracycorps.com](http://www.democracycorps.com) and [www.workingamerica.org](http://www.workingamerica.org)

## 1. They are not primarily motivated by racism

There is, of course, a very substantial group of white working class voters who are primarily attracted to Trump because of his racism and Democratic strategists are entirely correct in writing these voters off as entirely unreachable. As Trump has fanned the flames of racial prejudice in recent weeks the vision of all Trump supporters as vicious bigots who shout “send her back” at Trump’s rallies becomes difficult to resist.

But there are other white working people who voted for Trump in 2016 and yet who do not actually share his deep and bitter racial animosity. They do not think about race and prejudice in the same “liberal” way that Democrats and progressives do, for example by supporting Black Lives Matter or demanding the abolition of ICE. Instead they are more accurately visualized as practical, common-sense “live and let live” people who simply do not feel any strong, visceral antagonism toward minorities as a “front burner” political issue. They will, for example, generally agree that the Mexican border and illegal immigration should be controlled and that criminals should be severely punished but they do not consider race by itself to be a deeply emotional, vote-deciding issue.<sup>2</sup>

This is the subgroup of voters that Democratic strategy can realistically target. They are the kinds of white working class voters who voted for Trump in 2016 but for Democratic candidates last November. According to some estimates they represented around 7 percent of Trump’s 2016 supporters.<sup>3</sup> They are not passionately and irrevocably committed to voting for Trump next year although they did choose him in 2016. And—critically—there are enough of these voters to flip several rust belt states in the 2020 presidential race and also critically influence a number of important senate races.<sup>4</sup>

But these relatively non-racist white working class Trump voters also have three other important characteristics that will shape their political choice in 2020.

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<sup>2</sup>A substantial number of progressives will reject any descriptions of this kind with the simple statement that “Anyone who voted for Trump is a racist – end of story.” On an emotional level, this seems very compelling until one considers that 28% of Latinos and 10% of African-Americans voted for Trump in 2016. Clearly these were people who did not consider supporting Trump’s anti-minority bigotry the most important reason for their vote.

To see an extended discussion of this and the following three propositions, see the following:

<https://prospect.org/article/winning-some-middle-road-working-class-whites>

<https://washingtonmonthly.com/2018/08/07/what-democrats-still-dont-get-about-winning-back-the-white-working-class/>  
[http://thedemocraticstrategist.org/\\_memos/tds\\_SM\\_Andrew\\_Levison\\_Class\\_Consciousness.pdf](http://thedemocraticstrategist.org/_memos/tds_SM_Andrew_Levison_Class_Consciousness.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/27/opinion/is-trump-good-for-trump.html?fbclid=IwAR3gN-DAyTEWQO39AJx6sldr9C-nBT6-aqo8-ebBur50zea48-acnbdkOrgw>

<sup>4</sup>There are those who disagree with this view and believe that simply by massively increasing the turnout of the “Obama coalition” of minorities, college educated whites, youth and women Democrats can win the presidency (although none seriously argue that it could be sufficient to also regain the senate). These analyses generally rely on the hypothetical argument that if virtually every eligible Obama coalition voter not on artificial life support would run to the polls and vote Democratic on Election Day this would be possible. More realistic projections about the potential of “Obama coalition” voter turnout in 2020 indicate that completely abandoning white working class voters would be, at the very best, an incredibly high-risk gamble at the presidential level and certain to fail in many house and senate races. Future turnout levels can be debated endlessly but if the work of the most serious political-demographic analysts like Ruy Teixeira, Ronald Brownstein and Nate Cohn are insufficient to convince the advocates of this view that persuasion remains important, nothing anyone else can say is likely to change their minds.

This is a recent analysis by Nate Cohn: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/15/upshot/2020-election-turnout-analysis.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=The%20Upshot>

## 2. They are cultural traditionalists

Cultural traditionalism is often confused with conservatism because people who are ideological conservatives very often uphold traditional cultural ideas. But cultural traditionalism is a distinct concept from conservatism, one that refers to a set of basic social values that exist in working-class life and not to specific social or political views. Within this set of basic traditional social values, various perspectives can exist, perspectives that can range from firmly conservative to strongly progressive.

There are three major traditional values in white working-class culture: respect for religious faith, respect for military service, and respect for the character traits encouraged by small business, honest labor, and hard work. Many workers with this set of values have nonetheless voted for Democrats in the past and can be convinced to do so again in the future.

## 3. They feel a profound class antagonism toward the “liberal” elite

Donald Trump, vile and dishonest as he may be, very successfully tapped into a deep mental and emotional perspective in white working-class life—a distinct kind of modern class consciousness, class resentment, and class antagonism that is almost entirely unacknowledged in current discussions regarding how to reach these voters, but which plays a critical role in their political thinking.

From the point of view of many white working-class Americans, society is indeed sharply divided between, on the one hand, “people like them,” and on the other hand three distinct and separate elites who in different ways are “screwing them over.”

The first group is the “political class”—a completely distinct, utterly corrupt, and entirely parasitic class that lives in total isolation from ordinary people in a rarified environment of fancy ballrooms and expensive restaurants, big money contributions and backroom deals that invariably end up screwing ordinary Americans.

The second group is the Wall Street financial elite that make decisions in faraway office towers that destroy local community jobs and mom-and-pop businesses.

But the third group is the “liberal” elite—the heterogeneous group of college professors and students, Hollywood actors and producers, music and fashion producers, and TV, newspaper, and magazine columnists and commentators. They are not seen as a financial ruling class but rather a social group that dominates and controls the culture—what one sees on TV and in the movies, what is taught in colleges and universities, and what is written in editorial page commentaries. They are perceived as affluent urban dwellers who live in expensive, gentrified urban communities or charming college towns, who look down on ordinary working people and who exercise substantial political power, using the Democratic Party as their vehicle. This ability to impose their “liberal” agenda on ordinary Americans is obtained through a cynical alliance with minorities who are bribed to vote for Democrats by various kinds of “handouts,” special government programs, or preferential treatment.

Working people have quite distinct feelings about these three different groups but see the members of all three as living in worlds that are economically and sociologically high “above” them and who resemble each other in their indifference to the needs of ordinary people and their contempt for them as human beings. All three groups are emphatically perceived sociologically as “them” and not as “us”.

**4. They are convinced that Democrats don’t give a damn about them while Trump sincerely identifies with them and cares about them.**

Surveys have revealed that a major element of Trump’s appeal to white working-class voters was his basic assertion that “I’m your guy”—that he was running to represent them and not anyone else. The following quotes indicate how central this narrative was to his 2016 campaign:

For one thing, he expressed a more strongly progressive view of workers economic discontents than most Democrats. He said:

Right now our economy isn’t growing practically at all... Many workers are earning less today than they were 18 years ago. They’re working harder, they’re working longer, but they’re making less and in some cases, they’re working two and three jobs, but still taking home less money. It’s ridiculous.

[The economy is] the worst since the Great Depression. ‘This is not a rising tide that lifts all boats. This is a wave of globalization that wipes out our middle class and our jobs.

We need to reform our economic system so that, once again, we can all succeed together, and America can become rich again.’

In Trump’s narrative, however, the loss of jobs was not directly caused by the Wall Street Billionaire class shipping jobs overseas in search of lower wages but was rather the fault of the political class. He said:

‘The political class in Washington has betrayed you. They have uprooted your jobs, your communities, and [t]hey put up new skyscrapers in Beijing while your factories in Michigan were crumbling... They flee to Mexico, China and other countries all around the world. [Politicians] stripped away these towns bare, and raided the wealth for themselves.’

In this revisionist narrative liberals were major villains as well:

We are living through the greatest jobs theft in the history of the world... Ohio has lost one in four manufacturing jobs since NAFTA – a deal signed by Bill Clinton and supported strongly by Hillary. Remember, every time you see a closed factory or wiped out community in Ohio, it was essentially caused by the Clintons... We’ve lost 70,000 factories since China entered the World Trade Organization. Another Bill- and Hillary-backed disaster.

Trump thus presented himself as an independent gadfly and the only real champion of the ignored working class in their struggle against all three of the interlocking social elites.

[My election] is going to be a victory for the people, a victory for the wage-earner, the factory worker. Remember this, a big, big victory for the factory worker. They haven't had those victories for a long time. A victory for every citizen and for all of the people whose voices have not been heard for many, many years. They're going to be heard again.

While my opponent slanders you as deplorable and irredeemable, I call you hard-working American patriots who love your country and want a better future for all of our people. You are mothers and fathers, soldiers and sailors, carpenters and welders.

He explicitly identified himself with the working class rather than the wealthy.

'I've spent my professional life among construction workers, bricklayers, electricians, and plumbers. I feel more comfortable around blue collar workers than Wall Street executives ...And that's why the steelworkers are with me, that's why the miners are with me, that's why the working people, electricians, the plumbers, the sheet-rockers, the concrete guys and gals, they're all—they're with us. And I like them better than the rich people that I know. I know a lot of rich people. It's true. [But the working people] are better. I like them better.

The result was that white workers heard Trump reaffirming their own basic social perspective in a way that they had not heard from Democrats: *"None of the three elites give a damn about you"* Trump was saying *"and all of them hold you in contempt."* For a huge number of white working Americans this was tremendously exciting and indeed profoundly cathartic. For the first time they were hearing someone in the political system saying what they had felt and thought very deeply for a long time but had never heard any major political figure clearly express. It produced an enormous sense of vindication and relief.

**This was a compelling narrative for many non-racist white workers in 2016 and it presents several critical challenges for Democratic strategy.**

First, the nature of Trump's appeal to white working class voters suggests that Democratic appeals that are exclusively based on proposing ambitious pro-working class economic policies and proposals will not be sufficient to win their support.

Democrats have, of course, traditionally believed that offering social and economic policies and programs that objectively serve white workers' real interests ought to be sufficient to convince them to support Democratic candidates. But, in fact, it has been largely forgotten that in the 1950's and 1960's, when white workers did indeed vote for Democrats, their support was not won because Democratic candidates presented them with detailed policy papers. On the contrary, white working class support for Democrats in the post-World War Two era was obtained because there were a series of important community and neighborhood organizations that workers trusted and whose recommendations they followed. It was conversations with union leaders in the local union hall, endorsements by precinct captains of the local Democratic organization and Sunday sermons by progressive urban catholic priests that "sold" Democratic policies to white workers.



In contrast, when Democratic candidates today present detailed policy papers prepared by progressive think-tanks, this appears to many white workers as just another example of isolated “ivory tower” experts telling them “what is good for them” rather than being proposals that have been examined and endorsed by people they trust.

And, in addition, the modern tendency of Democrats to rely on plans and proposals to win support ignores the profound importance that not just white working-class voters but all voters place on having a candidate who genuinely *represents* them, one who emotionally identifies with them and shares their values; one who seems like “their kind of guy.”

There are some Democrats who have been able to do this with white working class voters at the state level—Senator Jon Tester and Governor Steve Bullock in Montana and Sherrod Brown in Ohio, for example. At present, however, the dynamics of the Democratic coalition makes it extremely difficult for a candidate like these to win the Democratic nomination. Despite virtually all Democrats intense loathing for Trump, it is not sufficient to convince them of the necessity to rally around a candidate in significant measure because he or she would be the most effective at challenging Trump’s hold on the non-racist sector of the white working class.

A second critical challenge Trump’s strategy in 2016 presents Democrats is that the alternative Democratic strategy of focusing their appeal on educated voters very easily ends up increasing and reinforcing white working people’s sense of class antagonism against Democrats and liberals.

Hillary Clinton’s advertising strategy in 2016 provides a perfect example of how this works. Her first major ad projected an attitude that sounded to working people like an expression of elitist disdain. It showed clips of Trump imitating a disabled reporter during a televised rally and telling critics to “go f\*\*k themselves” while innocent looking children watched him on TV as the narrator says, in effect, “Oh my goodness, those poor little children”. The rather sanctimonious message of the ad was that Trump is appallingly vulgar and lacks the proper dignity and decency that a president should display. Subsequent ads in the Clinton campaign continued this same basic theme.

**Note:**

*In considering the following strategy there are two practical considerations that need to be kept in mind:*

*First, a Democratic political strategy does not necessarily need to convince these voters to vote for the Democratic candidate. An alternate objective can be to simply convince these voters that Trump does not deserve their vote – that they should essentially just stay home. Although it is always preferable to try and win a voter to one’s own candidate, simply reducing the number of votes an opponent receives can still make a very substantial contribution to a Democratic victory.*

*Second, an advertising and communications strategy does not have to be executed by the candidates’ campaign organization itself. In the modern political environment where independent campaign committees play a major role, certain strategies can more effectively be executed by such independent groups rather than directly by the candidate.*

This represented a gamble that Trump could be beaten by winning the support of educated middle class Republican voters who would be repulsed by Trump's crudeness, ignorance and vulgarity. In contrast, despite appeals from various advisors, including Bill Clinton himself, none of Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign messaging presented any serious attempt to show sincere identification with the problems and feelings of the white working class.

Trump did indeed deeply disgust millions of college educated Americans who had previously voted Republican but at the same time the condescending tone of Hillary's campaign reinforced Trump's ability to project himself as an authentic, "no bullshit" champion of the white working class against the smug liberal elite. Hillary's use of the word "deplorables" to describe many Trump supporters became a viral watchword among white working class voters because it seemed to so perfectly reflect the campaign's implicit, and indeed at times explicitly condescending attitude toward white working class Americans.

In the view of many observers the intense desire of many white working class voters to "send a message" repudiating this kind of attitude played a major role in Trump's victory in 2016. As Joan Williams vividly expressed the sentiment: "[white workers] voted with their middle finger."

**Given these obstacles, what strategies can Democrats reasonably consider for reducing Trump's support among the nonracist sector of the white working class? The answer is a frontal, 'No holds barred' attack on the specific aspects of Trump's character that offend the decent and admirable moral values of white workers.**

## Trump's character

It is remarkable how long Trump has been able to coast on an entirely illusory and fabricated self-image and biography. As anyone who has studied his history knows, Trump's facade as a self-made man and "working class millionaire" is a complete artifice of media manipulation. In reality he is a spoiled brat who grew up with a silver spoon in his mouth.<sup>5</sup> In fact, for most of his life, Trump carefully cultivated (and paid for) the very different image of being a fabulously wealthy and sophisticated "man about town" surrounded by opulent yachts and limousines rather than a working class hero.

The place where Trump first learned and then perfected his bogus, pseudo-working class tough guy image was during the years when he was personally and financially involved with the world of professional wrestling and the World Wrestling Federation. Anyone who has watched the

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<sup>5</sup>The facts behind this statement are quite clear. "Daddy" Trump got Donald an exemption from military service from a doctor who rented his office in a building that "Daddy" owned and "Daddy" actually went with Trump to the college interview at the Wharton business School in order to apply pressure for Donald's admission. Years later, Trump had millionaire friends of "Daddy" and Trump's older brother put pressure on the military academy he attended before college to bury his presumably embarrassing scholastic records. And, of course, "Daddy" bankrolled Donald with millions of dollars to start his career.

See for example;

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-who-often-boasts-of-his-wharton-degree-says-he-was-admitted-to-the-hardest-school-to-get-into-the-college-official-who-reviewed-his-application-recalls-it-differently/2019/07/08/0a4eb414-977a-11e9-830a-21b9b36b64ad\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.39abcc3fc54b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-who-often-boasts-of-his-wharton-degree-says-he-was-admitted-to-the-hardest-school-to-get-into-the-college-official-who-reviewed-his-application-recalls-it-differently/2019/07/08/0a4eb414-977a-11e9-830a-21b9b36b64ad_story.html?utm_term=.39abcc3fc54b)

<https://www.recordonline.com/news/20190305/nyma-buried-trumps-academic-records>

absurd theatrics and macho posturing of professional wrestlers is aware that the key to their performance is absolutely shameless and transparently outrageous lying and the projection of a flamboyant, “over-the-top” bellowing show of macho dominance. This was where Trump learned and perfected his current media style. Anyone familiar with the theatrics of professional wrestling TV shows—the wrestlers swaggering entrance into the arena to the accompaniment of loud rock music, fireworks, and blazing spotlights—will instantly recognize the trappings of Trump’s political rallies.

But in fact, the key reality about “professional” wrestling that Trump grasped but liberals did not is that the working class audience is not composed of gullible fools. They know perfectly well that the macho posturing and flamboyant acrobatics of the wrestlers are absurd, entirely theatrical artifice. They dismiss Trump’s flagrant lies and disreputable antics in exactly the same way that they do the antics of professional wrestlers—as a performance—in Trump’s case one designed to provoke and annoy liberal elitists but which his supporters understand as political theater.

Trump grasped that he could use this to his advantage. White working people would “get the joke” while the opposing Republican candidates during the primaries and then the Democratic candidate in the general election would be bewildered and not know how to respond.

**But, critically, at the same time, Trump’s approach also does something very different – it deeply violates traditional—and entirely admirable—elements of the moral code of the working class.**

**Values like sincere patriotism, concern for the genuinely needy, respect for hard work, a rejection of greed and selfishness, a respect for honesty in dealing with others and a deep dislike for the con-man who takes advantage of the weak and gullible and are the kinds of “old fashioned” moral values that white working class people call “character” and consider profoundly important.<sup>6</sup>**

**These concerns were laid aside by white workers in 2016 in favor of “voting with their middle finger” but bringing up these issues in 2020 can raise fundamental doubts about Trump’s character in a way that Democratic objections to his vulgarity, incompetence and ignorance do not.**

A perfect example of this was the white working class reaction to Trump’s sneering disrespect for John McCain, even after his death. While many of Trump’s insults to his other political “enemies” were dismissed as trivial by his supporters, many white working class people—and particularly veterans of the Vietnam War—viewed Trump’s attitude toward McCain as profoundly vile. It was spitting on the grave of a genuine military hero. It revealed the truth about Trump—that he was basically a spoiled brat who had sacrificed nothing and did not even have the character to understand that he owed respect to a man who had bravely suffered and sacrificed in the way that McCain had done.

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<sup>6</sup>Religious values represent a special case with Trump. Many honest evangelical Christians have rejected him because of his breathtaking personal immorality but others who are more strongly influenced by the organized religious right have rationalized continuing support because he is promoting key elements of the religious right’s theocratic political agenda.

Public opinion polls revealed that this particular display of Trump's true character deeply repulsed even his own supporters. A recent U-Gov survey showed that **45% of Trump's own voters** who were aware of the issue clearly objected to his attitude and rejected his behavior.<sup>7</sup>

This is a stunning repudiation of Trump by his own supporters, one that suggests a very specific, communications strategy for the 2020 elections – **Trump's opponents should make a direct, utterly uncompromising assault on the aspects of his character that deeply offend the decent core moral values of white working class Americans.**

Several examples that were suggested by the ads at the beginning of this memo are:

- Corruption – failing to “drain the swamp”
- Placing greed above country in dealing with Russia
- Indifference to the problems workers face in the modern economy

There are a substantial number of specific areas where Trump is similarly vulnerable:

- **Screwing veterans** – scandals in the VA, vets being denied benefits, corruption among Trump appointees.
- **Screwing working class students** stuck with bad student loans – rollbacks of protections against fraudulent for-profit schools, reduction or elimination of programs to modify onerous terms of student loans.
- **Screwing industrial workers** – doing theatric “job saving” events and photo ops and then abandoning the workers when layoffs come anyway (e.g. Lordstown, Ohio. Carrier in Wisconsin)
- **Choosing corrupt officials for top government posts** – because they would be loyal yes-men and hide corruption rather than act as honorable public servants.

All of these issues, and many others that could be added, reinforce a basic core message. Trump is a profoundly greedy, self-centered and selfish man who cares only about himself and not the country or the white working class he claims to represent. In fact, he sees his working class supporters as gullible rubes and suckers who can easily be manipulated and “conned” by his performance. After all, in his view he could “shoot someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue” and his supporters would still vote for him.

It is vital to note the critical difference between this kind of critique of Trump's character and the kind of critique that a great deal of media commentary has emphasized. Along with entirely correct denunciations of Trump's racism and corruption, a great deal of commentary focuses on the fact that Trump is basically “stupid,” “ignorant” and “infantile” – that he is a “clown” or “buffoon” who bases his decisions on clips from Fox News and simplistic stereotypes.

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<sup>7</sup>[https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/6ujvi5p8z1/econTabReport.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/6ujvi5p8z1/econTabReport.pdf)

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These latter characterizations are extremely similar to the kinds of insults that are commonly directed at ordinary working people by snobbish intellectuals. They not only fail to shake working people's faith in Trump but paradoxically increase it and heighten their hostility to the educated.

In contrast a critique that carefully aims at Trump's greed, selfishness, willingness to "con" his supporters and contempt for anyone he can dominate avoids triggering class antagonism and places the challenge where it should be – on Trump's violation of traditional—and entirely admirable—elements of the moral code of the working class.

Trump's racist supporters will not be deterred by advertisements that highlight these characteristics but some of the more decent, nonracist members of Trump's 2016 coalition will be troubled by this and may decide that they will not "vote with their middle finger" again in 2020. If a sufficient number simply withhold their vote, it will profoundly weaken Trump's chances of winning a second term.

**A Final Note:** There is one other potential benefit of this strategy that is worth mentioning. Trump apparently has some advisors who recognize the need for him to act in a more conventional way to expand his coalition as the 2020 election approaches. His 4th of July speech, for example, was not one of his typical campaign rally speeches but instead a more conventional salute to the five branches of the military. He has also recently (and very unconvincingly) tried to suggest a serious concern with lowering drug prices and the environment.

The strategy outlined above of directly targeting Trump's character, if it receives coverage by the media, will be likely to provoke Trump into furious (and transparently inept) attempts at refutation. To the extent that this draws him into debate about his character—his greed, selfishness and so on—it will focus attention and discussion on exactly those issues where he is most vulnerable. (Debate professionals know that there is no way to come out ahead when arguing that, "No, I am not a selfish, spoiled brat.")