



## TDS STRATEGY MEMO:

IN A NEW REPUBLIC ARTICLE  
THE AUTHORS OF *WHITE RURAL RAGE* DESCRIBE  
THE BOOK THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE WRITTEN.

BY  
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**IN A NEW REPUBLIC ARTICLE THE AUTHORS OF *WHITE RURAL RAGE* DESCRIBE THE BOOK THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE WRITTEN.**

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In a recent New Republic article<sup>1</sup> Tom Shaller and Paul Waldman respond to criticism of their recent book *White Rural Rage*. Unfortunately what their defense actually describes is the book that they should have written and not the one that they actually wrote.

In the TNR article they describe their book's perspective as follows:

*In recent years, research from political scientists showing some disturbing patterns of opinion among rural voters, especially rural whites, has begun to accumulate.*

*Our critics also say we "misrepresent" their work. We do not; we're guilty only of assembling in one place a composite picture of rural white politics that shows worrying strains of opinion.*

*The positively obsessive attention our critics have given to one chapter in our book has located a few errors, which we're happy to correct in future editions. Unfortunately, their legitimate criticisms are buried in a pile of personal insults, factual inaccuracies, and apologetics for rural whites.*

OK, so the authors' note "worrying strains" or "disturbing patterns" of opinion in rural America. In fact, it would be hard to find a Democrat or progressive who would not firmly agree with that opinion and many who would also fully agree that on a wide range of issues rural voters are very significantly more conservative than urban or suburban voters.

If one actually looks at the book itself, on the other hand, Shaller and Waldman's views are a little more, shall we say, "colorful" than just this:

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<sup>1</sup>[https://newrepublic.com/article/180570/trump-rural-white-resentment-honest-assessment?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=tnr\\_daily](https://newrepublic.com/article/180570/trump-rural-white-resentment-honest-assessment?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tnr_daily)

Consider:

The full book title itself is *White Rural Rage – The Threat to American Democracy*.

The book jacket proclaims *“Their [white rural] rage—stoked daily by republican politicians and the conservative media—now **poses an existential threat to the United States.**”*

Whoa, hold on a minute. That’s a bit more strident than *“worrying strains”* or *“disturbing patterns.”*

And then, in the second chapter and sixth chapter of the book the authors really come out swinging:

Section headings in the book state that rural voters are:

*...the least likely to accept notions of pluralism and inclusion,*

*...Uniquely hostile toward racial and religious minorities, recent immigrants and urban residents*

*...the most conspiratorial cohort in the nation.*

Other section headings say that rural voters express:

*...a refusal to accept basic facts or scientific knowledge.*

*...the lowest level of support for long standing and essential democratic principles*

*...the highest level of support for, or justification of [political] violence,*

Section headings categorize rural voters noxious views in four categories as follows:

*1. Racism, xenophobia, anti-urban disdain and anti-immigrant sentiment*

*2. Acceptance of conspiracies as facts*

*3. Undemocratic and anti-democratic beliefs*

*4. Justification of violence*

Shaller and Waldman conclude:

*...These impulses have caused millions of rural whites to embrace radical and revanchist ideas... the fourfold threat rural whites pose to American democracy is serious and growing.*

Oddly enough none of this flamboyant prose is reproduced in the New Republic article; instead, there are only *“worrying strains”* or *“disturbing patterns”* of opinion in rural America.

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If Shaller and Waldman intend to issue a revised version of their book that presents the less lurid and sensationalistic description of rural Americans' opinion that they now present in their New Republic article this is indeed most excellent news. Unfortunately, that is not the book that is now on sale across America.

Of course, as a temporary fix, Shaller and Waldman can recommend that readers simply tear off the cover of the book, throw away the book jacket, tear out chapter 2 and 6, burn them and bury the ashes, and then scotch tape the New Republic article in their place. This would roughly produce the book that they now say is the one that they authored.