



# DEMOCRACY CORPS

C A R V I L L E ♦ G R E E N B E R G

Date: August 13, 2018

To: Friends of Democracy Corps

From: James Carville & Stanley Greenberg

## **Tea Party Trump Loyalists** *Report from Trump-GOP project focus groups*

---

*Democracy Corps* recently conducted a series of focus groups with the various factions of the Republican Party, including a group of Tea Party men. Tea Party supporting Republicans are 21 percent of the GOP base and they are President Donald Trump's most ardent supporters.<sup>1</sup> These are the voters that Trump is speaking to in his campaign rallies, and they were the only group of Republicans who responded to videos of his rallies with enthusiasm. The Tea Party GOP are sick of the "PC-police" and love that Trump is speaking his mind and driving liberals crazy. They are glad someone isn't scared of liberal name calling and will roll up their sleeves and get tough on issues like immigration, the Second Amendment, and taxes. The Tea Party GOP are motivated to stop Democrats and defend Donald Trump by voting for Republicans in 2018 and supporting Trump in 2020.

### **Their conservative agenda:**

***The economy.*** The Tea Party men said America's greatest strength today is the strong economy: "Well, I think that it's pretty much a fact in my mind that the economy is turning around in a direction that I have not seen in 30 years."

More specifically, "What's going well is Trump" because he "got the economy moving." One of the best things about President Trump, according to the Tea Party GOP, is that he is a "successful businessman." They are also happy that Donald Trump achieved a major tax cut. They explained they support the Tea Party because they are "Taxed Enough Already."

I said, a successful businessman, loves America, hates burdensome regulation, great negotiator, and loves his family.

The efforts for tax reform. I appreciate it in my paycheck. And his plan for a new medical insurance even though it hasn't gotten anywhere yet.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Democracy Corps* conducted a focus group among white Republican and Republican-leaning independent men who are very favorable towards the Tea Party and are not Evangelical conservatives in Raleigh, North Carolina on August 10, 2018. All these men voted for Donald Trump in 2016.



The economy is perhaps the biggest validator for them to push back against the criticism of Trump, and of their support for him.

***Immigration & multiculturalism.*** Immigration was the first issue mentioned when we asked these Tea Party GOP what were the “hot topics” with their families and friends. These groups were held in the weeks following President Trump’s reversal of the child-separation policy and their social media feeds were still dominated by conservative headlines that defended the hard-line on immigration.

When asked what comes to mind when they think of immigrants to the US, they went straight to illegal immigration, the border, and the need to get tough on enforcement.

And if you don't do it [the legal] way, then I think you should be kicked out of the country. I think you should be deported. And that goes back to the children, and I really was kind of in the middle on that one, cause I really didn't know- cause you see it, kind of like what we were talking about, you see these children, and you see your own, you think oh gosh. But then I thought to myself, If I was standing at the border with my ten year old kid, and they said you can come in but he can't, I'd say forget it, we're not coming.

What I got real annoyed about is you turn on T. V. R. A. L., turn it on to see what the local news is, and stuff like that. And they have a picture of people walking with the little hobo things, with the family, with the picture of the American flag in the back of it. They're not Americans. They're people crossing the border illegally.

With this kids getting separated and stuff. It was like, when they're breaking the law, that's what happens. They separate families.

One of the good things about Donald Trump is “his views on immigration. Especially since it made everyone on the left decide that they were against [border security] suddenly.”

***Race & multiculturalism.*** The Tea Party GOP are the bloc of the base most uncomfortable with the country’s growing diversity. Portrayals of a multicultural America were reminders of demographic changes and they took them personally. They felt Black Lives Matter was out of control.

A *Coca-Cola* Super Bowl ad featuring “America the Beautiful” sung in several languages was played in each group for this project. The reactions to this celebration of a multicultural America were mixed or positive with each GOP bloc except for the Tea Party GOP. They called it “political propaganda” and, instead of bringing Americans together, “it just causes more conflict.”

I get offended by it. What it's telling me is that as Americans, we don't include people. Whereas if something goes wrong in the rest of the world, where do they come? The United States of America to help them out. It just seems rather tacky.



It's every commercial these days, whether it's – it's always in the sporting event, or some huge event where people are trying to have fun and then it's political ads showing in our face.

I feel like inclusion of culture in American is a great thing. But it's showing that ad produces conflict on both sides. Because the left is saying the right is not inclusive, and then the right is saying the left thinks we're not inclusive.

The Tea Party GOP were very bothered that the song was not sung in English and complained, “those lyrics were written in English. They were not written in – whatever the hell they were – Spanish, or Indian, or any other language.”

The Tea Party GOP also did not have much patience for Black Lives Matter. They talked about this issue through the lens of the media who had their preferred PC narrative, highlighting the pressure to rally to the side of the protestors and the failure to defend the police officers being killed. These men resented being forced to deal with it here in North Carolina and complained that even music gets politicized against conservatives now.

The last song for the encore was this song was a poem composition by somebody that named all of the people, the Freddie Gray and the Michael Brown all of that. And they are all on stage and they are trying to get the whole crowd, 5000 people to say, “Michael Brown, Michael Brown, say his name, say his name.” And this is in Durham, North Carolina and I'm sitting there looking like holy crap this is driving me crazy. And it's like I didn't hear one – they went through about 15 different names of either black men or black women that had been killed by police officers recently. I did not hear them say one name of one police officer that had had gotten killed.

How many times does something happen at Waffle House in a week or two where some drunk girl wanders into Waffle House spits in somebody's face, I'm making this up, but there was something similar. And then someone starts taping as they are asking her to leave and then news picks it up on it and they go, “They rushed some girl out because she was Black.” And everybody is up in arms and there is protests and there is all these stuff. And oh it turns out she was drunk and belligerent, threw something at somebody and they called the cops and they asked her to leave, and she refused and punched someone. But by then it's too late. The first thing comes out everybody reads it, nobody is reading the reduction or correction or hearing any actual events because it doesn't matter, they don't care. It fits the storyline and if it's something that doesn't fit the narrative then it's not interesting and they're not going to put any kind of emphasis on it.

***Making America tough again.*** Part of the notion of ‘America being America’ that these Tea Party GOP men appreciated involved projecting toughness on the world stage. Like the Evangelical conservatives, the Tea Party GOP thought that Obama was weak and other countries did not respect us, while Donald Trump was commanding respect on the world stage.



Well, past eight years, I feel like other countries were put before America because of political correctness, and we want everybody to be accepting of America, when it hurt America more than it helped everybody. And now, I feel like Donald Trump put's America's values in security before the opinions of other countries.

Back in the Obama era, where, let's sit and drink a beer, we'll talk it over and you're all worked out. Where I think we need somebody like that, that is going to make somebody mad, like over at NATO, you're not paying your fair share, you need to pay your fair share, cause we're not footing the bill for everybody. And I think we need somebody like that to tell them that. And they're not going to like it because they don't want to pay any money, they want United States to pick up the bill.

He demonstrates strength for our country. And I also think he demonstrates patriotism, more so than a lot of politicians that you see. And even to where, frankly- and I had no problem with Barak Obama either, but I think, a little bit to what Daniel was saying, we were so worried about what everybody else thought of us, that we weren't being us, right?

They have a very macho view about leadership domestically as well, as we could tell by the way they reacted when we played a video of Trump's disparaging remarks towards women during the presidential campaign. "You want equal everything, well, here's equal," said one man. "It's just dirty. Politics are dirty in general. I mean we used to duel over it."

***The Supreme Court.*** We spoke to these Tea Party GOP the day after Brett Kavanaugh's nomination, so they reported "90 percent of the people on Facebook, that's what they're posting about." For many it was a reminder of one of the most important reasons for voting for Donald Trump. They stressed it was "very important" for this nomination to succeed "because the Supreme Court, really, in the last 20 years has become so much more politicized than it used to be" and they "realize that the major successes from the left have come from activist judges." The Tea Party wants to see "more constitutional conservatives" and Kavanaugh is their chance to appoint "someone who interprets the laws" and "not someone who thinks they can make the laws."

The Supreme Court appointment was also important because of their views on conservative social issues like abortion and the Second Amendment.

***Gay marriage & abortion.*** Like the Evangelical Conservative GOP women in Raleigh, the Tea Party GOP were split on gay marriage. Some said it was an "abomination" and complained it "turns to propagating the acts, the sexual acts and leniency in our communities," while others said they "changed my mind about that" and "that's fine it that's what makes them, those two people happy."

When it comes to abortion, however, they are very socially conservative. When we asked them what words or phrases came to mind when they thought of Planned Parenthood, they said they were "terrible" and "murderers." "They advertise that they do a lot of good stuff," said one man, "but there's been a lot of information that came out that they make money off body parts and do



all kinds of crazy stuff.” Another one said that if more white women were having abortions, then society would call it genocide.

**Guns.** Across all of the GOP, support for gun rights and the N.R.A. was the greatest among the Tea Party GOP. They feel that with all of the school shootings, their gun rights are more at risk than ever. “One thing I’ve seen a lot I feel like it really is under threat. Every time there is a school shooting now – kids got shot, that’s terrible and now we’ve got to rid of all,” said one Tea Party man.

Another believed that it was important to protect gun rights because he held politically incorrect opinions: “Another thing I’ve seen a lot and I believe is one of the reasons the second amendment the second is to protect the first [...] People will walk all over you if you are not PC, if you are not politically correct.”

### **Under siege by the PC police and President Trump fighting back**

The Tea Party GOP are sick and tired of being told they are not politically correct. For them, it is the PC liberals and the media, not people like them, who are responsible for all the division in America. They are thankful that President Trump has the backbone to say what they are all thinking, unlike typical politicians. When Donald Trump is on the campaign trail pumping up the audience at his rallies, these are the Republicans that are cheering him on.

***The thought-police and the double-standard for conservatives.*** The Tea Party men in Raleigh felt under siege for their “politically incorrect” views. They complained that liberals were constantly changing the goalposts on them.

“Socialists attack the conservative viewpoints and find any area they can to say that conservatives are...put your special word in that spot, anything. And they can change their views any which way they want,” one man complained. Many of them felt that on issues like race and sex, liberals had taken things so far that they defied commonsense. “Ten years ago people were bisexuals, now its six genders,” said one Tea Party man. They were especially sensitive to being called racist. At the time of these groups, for example, they accused liberals of calling “all conservatives are racists for supporting the separation of the immigration stuff.”

These Tea Party men complained that they were the victims of a double-standard: It was OK for liberals who are “so worried about people’s feelings” to harass people who disagree with them:

It seems like we have very intolerant people in our society right now. People that consider themselves to be the most tolerant people, but yet, if you're anything conservative, anything on the right, they don't want to hear it.



I think that the left or the Democrats are always are talking about being acceptance to transgender acceptance. But they're only accepting if you believe what they believe. If you don't believe what they believe, then they don't want to hear that. They've always been the party that's talking about acceptance, and when you get somebody that's a conservative going to college campus and then you see a riot by the people in the college campus, it just goes crazy.

Being a student at NC State, I don't post any political stuff on social media. My family doesn't either because of a lot of the hardcore or liberals will make you feel ashamed to be conservative because of all the crazy things they say conservatives do.

I would say it's a cultural thing that's being promulgated by our leadership, whether it's in schools and government. Yeah. When you've got a sitting representative telling people to go and harass political opponents that you disagree with -

The *NFL* protests were another example of this double-standard: "It's like, hey, you're paid millions of dollars every year to play a game. That's what you're here for. It's not to make a political demonstration out of our country's symbol. I mean so if an owner wanted to [...] say, 'Get off my field,' then that's it. [...] If any of us went in there, like you said, if you wanted to say something about Trump, people would be all over you."

In fact, they had expressed how fearful they were of being punished for their political views many times by the time we asked them about the *NFL* protests. We were surprised by how much they felt they had to walk on eggshells and how honestly worried they were that they could lose their jobs or leadership roles for their views, even in North Carolina.

We've now got the thought police in the word police out there. If you say the wrong thing, if someone looks on my Facebook account and sees that I post a view, that for some reason, irritates somebody, I can lose my livelihood. My daughter doesn't get fed. My wife doesn't get fed. That's just not right.

I'm in a student organization so I have a leadership position at school. So when somebody in my organization sees it and is not really fond of what I'm saying, they don't agree with it then of course they can go to somebody in the office or whoever and say, "This guy is being racist because he is posting conservative viewpoints on Facebook."

Working at NC State, I mean, a lot of people I work with, most of the people I work with are very, very liberal and I'm very, very conservative and I have to really be careful what I say around the office. It's like in the office if I said, "Man Trump is doing great." I can guarantee you I'd have three or four people on me. Not physically on me but verbally just coming after me.

It led many to censor themselves on social media. This self-censorship also explains why they prefaced what were the hot topics people were talking about by labeling who in a certain group of friends or family members was conservative and who was liberal.



You could also tell that they were filtering out non-conservative news outlets where their opinions might be challenged. Of all of the GOP blocs, they were the biggest fans of *Fox News*. They said it was the “only option, right now, really” because “they at least give the [conservative] guy a chance to talk.”

**“Trump derangement syndrome.”** Maybe the single most appealing thing about President Trump to the Trump-GOP was the way he is unapologetically expressing what they all think but are too afraid to say. They enjoyed watching moments where he was giving the media and liberals what they called, “Trump derangement syndrome.” The liberals are losing their heads on social media, spreading disinformation, and “calling him a Nazi.” “He could literally cure cancer and they’d scream about it,” but Trump has the backbone to take it.

“I finally since Ronald Reagan feel that there is somebody in there that is not going to take any crap and he’s willing to take all the crap and have everybody left be all over him and every media outlet be all over him,” said one man. Now “there is a large population of people that feel like their views are valid again. I mean people who have views that have been deemed unpopular,” and it all started “the day Donald Trump went down that escalator.”

### Trump’s Tea Party tactics

President Trump is using his campaign rallies to execute his base strategy, and these are the Republicans that respond to that tactic. Though some were more forgiving than others, every group included Republican participants who were uncomfortable watching a video of Trump on the campaign trail, *except* for these Tea Party GOP who “love that.”

Well he's uplifting. He's definitely selling his brand to his base, and he's backing it up. Proof is in the pudding.

You can see that he actually believes what he's saying. He's not- it doesn't come off like he's saying something that he thinks he's supposed to say. Especially like it could be a little bit of his style, but he'll come off and he'll actually say something that obviously wasn't written on the paper, right? That kind of thing, and he'll continue, and he's almost, he almost blusters a little bit too much, just to make you feel like it's real, he really cares. And that makes him trustworthy, or he appears- and you believe it, and then he backs it up and actually does what he says, it's hard to get around those kind of speeches, right? That kind of discussion.

I mean, he is egotistical, but it's to an advantage. I mean, I feel like that's one of the main reasons he won the elections. Is because of his confidence. That goes back to the rhetoric in his tweets. That side of the aisle, but that's the only downfall I see in that speech.



We found that President Trump’s base strategy and his use of campaign rallies produced mixed results in most of the groups, but this is precisely what the Tea Party GOP said they loved most about Trump: “He speaks his mind, [is] not afraid of criticism, and drives liberals crazy.” It reinforced their feeling that he is more trustworthy than other politicians. “He can afford to go out there and say exactly what he thinks and if it makes people mad, it just kind of bounces off of him,” because “he’s not so worried about, am I going to get re-elected,” because he is already so wealthy that he is not trying to “stay in politics to get a ton of money and get all the benefits of a retired politician.”

Another part of Trump’s strategy is to rile up his base by bringing up culture war issues, like criticizing NFL athletes for kneeling during the national anthem. These are precisely the voters that respond to that messaging.

### **The stakes in November**

The Tea Party GOP are desperate to keep Democrats out of power. They say the Democratic Party has become socialist and too extreme and they can’t imagine anything positive will happen if they were to regain power.

Well, if you want socialism and all of us other Americans to be equal while he lives in his big nice mansion. At least one.

[Nancy Pelosi] represents what's wrong, generally, with the Democratic Party and between her and Maxine Waters, it's just everything is no. If you like it, I don't. It doesn't matter what it is. If I liked it before, and you like it now? I don't like it anymore.

Maxine Waters was a focus for many of these Tea Party GOP, surely because she is African American and perhaps because she is the most vocal advocate for impeaching President Trump. When it comes to the Special Counsel’s investigation, these are the Republicans that most have Trump’s back (though they wish he would stop tweeting about it so the media covers it less).

In 2018, the Tea Party GOP are motivated to turnout and to vote for Republicans, not because they support the Republican Party or the GOP congressional leaders, but because they want to defend Donald Trump. They say it is more important than ever to vote this year because they need “to maintain the momentum” of Donald Trump’s election:

Because for one, to maintain the momentum. Because I feel like that last election was an eye opener for a lot of people. Because a lot of people that probably would not have normally gone out and voted, voted because they were motivated to do so by Trump and by Hillary Clinton. And so if this same group of people aren't motivated equally to go out and do that same thing this year, then we lose all momentum and then it doesn't matter nearly as much what happens in 2020.





The Tea Party GOP also rejected the idea of supporting anyone other than Trump in 2020. They will be with him in any re-election, and if Trump's base tactics are any clue, Trump knows it.

#### Post-session postcards to Donald Trump

Keep pushing for illegal immigration enforcement, tax reform, and an improved healthcare system. Always be yourself but maybe tone it down a bit

Mr. Trump, Continue the good work. Keep your eye on the ball and please run for re-election in 2020. You will have Carl's vote

Keep putting America's well being in front of the opinions of the other countries. Keep our border secure but also be accepting to other cultures.

President Trump, thank you for bringing real hope back to America. Obama sold us a false "hope" based on socialism. You have brought us a hope based on capitalism and love of country. Thank you for standing up for America.

President Trump, I would like you to know that Middle America really appreciates what you have done and are say to do for all of us

Continue the good job., focus on jobs, trade, improve infrastructure, threat less and keep the majority in the Congress

Thanks for helping our country get back to being America. Thanks for helping the vets.

Stay the course, we have your back.