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**Intelligence Squared U.S.****Blame the elites for the Trump phenomenon**

For the Motion: Timothy Carney, Ben Domenech  
Against the Motion: Jennifer Rubin, Bret Stephens  
Moderator: John Donovan

**AUDIENCE RESULTS****Before the debate:****32% FOR****27% AGAINST****41% UNDECIDED****After the debate:****58% FOR****33% AGAINST****9% UNDECIDED**

Start Time: (00:00:00)

John Donovan:

Hello. I'm John Donovan, host and moderator of the Intelligence Squared Debates.

[applause]

We're sure to have an energetic evening to launch our fall season out of New York. Thanks so much for coming. I want to just have a brief chat with people who are new to our debates to talk about a couple of things which are actually critical about the part you play in the evening. The most important thing is that you act as the judges of the debate. We ask you to vote your view on the arguments being made tonight and I'll explain very briefly. The way we have you vote is you go to the keypad that's attached to your seat and when the time comes I'll ask you to look at the motion: Blame Trump -- Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomena\_and if you agree with the motion you push number one and if you disagree with that motion push number two and if you're undecided, which is a perfectly reasonable position to hold, push number three. You can ignore the other keypads -- the other buttons on the keypad and if you for some reason incorrectly push the wrong button just correct yourself and the system will lock in your last vote.

00:01:05

So, again, you are the judges of the winners of the debate. The other way in which your role is critical is that in the middle of the debate things get a little bit more freeform and the debaters take questions from me, but they also take questions from you in the audience and the way that will work is just merely raise your hand, a microphone will be brought to you. It's critical that you wait for the microphone. I'll explain why in a minute. You should rise, tell us your name, if you're -- if you have a public audience, if you're a blogger or a journalist, we would really appreciate it if you would let us know who your audience is or who you're working for, and then ask a question in about -- really asking for discipline on this--, in about 30 seconds or less. I'm fine if you want to state a premise to your question in a sentence or a sentence and a half or three-quarters, but I really -- I really then want you to -- I don't want you to be debating with the debaters, but really getting them to debate better.

00:02:04

So, think up a question that gets them to move further along on the motion. And, again, the motion relates to this issue of those who we will be calling the elite tonight, a term to be defined to some extent by the debaters, so it's not broadly speaking a debate about the Trump campaign, it's about this issue -- I'll have to pass on questions that take too long and I'll have to pass on questions that don't really go to this topic, because these debaters are trying to persuade you to vote with them on that particular motion. So the reason the microphones are important, for those of you who don't know, we're being recorded and livestreamed right now through our website, iq2us.org and for FORA.tv. We also ultimately become a radio program heard on NPR stations across the country and a podcast. You can download the podcast with an app available at the Apple Store or iGoogle. If you applaud loudly and distinctively enough months from now you can hear your own clapping if you download.

00:03:07

[laughter]

And to that point we are fine. Unlike the so-called presidential debates, --

[laughter]

-- we encourage you giving voice to your sense of how the debate is going, but basically what I mean is if you like the point it's great to clap for it because it tells the podcast audience that you are here as judges. It tells the debaters how they're doing, and it just adds some liveliness to the whole enterprise. So, you're here, so people should know. We, however, it's not in the spirit of what Intelligence Squared is trying to do for you to boo and hiss. So, we would discourage that. You know, if you want to register disapproval I would think at most a sardonic groan --

[laughter]

-- or a right chortle of some sort, but we want to keep it positive, so focus on the positive, but let these guys know how they're doing. We're delighted to have everybody here launching this debate season, in which we're trying to track the presidential election campaign with various topics and we begin every debate by bringing to the stage the chairman of Intelligence Squared U.S. who brought this program to New York and to the United States.

00:04:20

We're now at debate number 120 and something. We've been doing it for quite awhile and that's because Bob Rosenkranz had the vision to do that. One hundred twenty-four. I have a thing in my ear where people tell me what to say and somebody just said 124. Normally what they're saying is "say smarter stuff, John. Get smarter."

[laughter]

This time I just heard 124. I want to bring to the stage then Bob Rosenkranz. What we usually do is chat about why we've picked the particular topics we have. Please welcome, ladies and gentlemen, Robert Rosenkranz.

[applause]

John Donovan:  
Hi, Bob. Hey, Bob.

Robert Rosenkranz:  
John, good to be here and particularly tonight. You know, this is our 10th anniversary.

00:05:03

John Donovan:  
Wow. I didn't know that.

[applause]

Robert Rosenkranz:  
And Dana Wolfe has been the executive producer for that entire period.

[applause]

John Donovan:  
Wow. Where is she?

Robert Rosenkranz:

So, -- and it is debate indeed number 124.

John Donovan:

I've been told. So I've been told. Sometimes what we say in the beginning is why now with our debate. Why do we pick this topic now? That's less of a question.

Robert Rosenkranz:

I think so.

John Donovan:

So, -- take it on. Why now?

Robert Rosenkranz:

Wow. I mean, it's really kind of amazing that Hillary Clinton is -- has handed us the line for today's debate by describing the Trump voters as --

John Donovan:

Deplorables.

Robert Rosenkranz:

Deplorables. I was going to say despicable. But anyway, and characterizing them as racist and sexist and xenophobic and, you know, all manner of hostile adjectives.

00:06:04

And so it sort of raises the question is -- are the elites responsible for this phenomenon? Or are the voters responsible?

John Donovan:

Did you personally see Trump's success coming if we go back to last year?

Robert Rosenkranz:

You know, actually I did. I would consider myself a member of a Republican elite and I was quite early among people that I knew and seeing him as a very serious phenomenon. I felt he had -- he was a natural sort of star of reality television and his program was interesting because the punchline is "you're fired." So he's holding somebody accountable for screw up, and most people feel like government needs more accountability and more people fired for screwing up. So, that's -- struck me as quite interesting.

00:07:01

The other thing is he had a kind of an aura of authenticity, maybe not truth telling exactly, but you --

[laughter]

-- you had the idea that what you saw was what you get and that's not something you feel about most politicians. And the final point that struck me about him is he was kind of I guess I would say the poor man's rich man. He was sort of the kind of -- he was spending money in ways that I think people who are driving taxis or blue collar people might imagine themselves spending money if they had a couple of billion dollars. And whereas most people who actually do have a couple of billion dollars spend their money in ways that tend to alienate them from most ordinary working people.

John Donovan:

You would know something about that?

Robert Rosenkranz:

I know a little bit about that.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

So, we're using the word blame. It's pejorative, sort of making an assumption built in that the Trump phenomenon is a good thing or a bad thing, but what do we really mean by that?

00:08:08

Robert Rosenkranz:

Well, I think blame is maybe an unfortunate term in the resolution. What we're really trying to do is explain what the Trump phenomenon is about and to try to see whether it's more a function of the elite's failure to respond to the real needs and real issues of working class Americans or whether the groups that are putting Trump forward do indeed represent a defect in our system of folks, of an electorate that simply isn't as informed and thoughtful as it ought to be.

John Donovan:

So it's easier to put blame the elites on a poster than blame the voters on a poster in a sense?

Robert Rosenkranz:

Well, one of our -- the original language was blame the voters and then we changed it.

00:09:03

John Donovan:

We changed it. And now you know why we're here. Thanks very much, Bob Rosenkranz, and let's please welcome our debaters to the stage.

[applause]

Robert Rosenkranz:

Thank you.

John Donovan:

Throughout the evening, again because of our creating this as a broadcast and podcast, there will be a number of times when you'll sort of see the sausage being made. I will say, for example, I'll be right back and you'll notice that I haven't gone anywhere.

[laughter]

And I will say my name over and over again and that's because we come back from breaks. It's not because I forget what my name is, and I will on occasion ask you to applaud spontaneously, and I think those moments will be sort of obvious as when I introduce the debaters individually, but I'll sort of do one of these as the applause signal. And what I'd love to do to launch things now is have that happen. So, thank you.

00:10:05

[applause]

Who laughed when Donald Trump set out to win the White House? Lots of people. But who got the last laugh and the Republican nomination? And who got it, in part, by bashing those who had laughed at him, dismissing them as "elites who had rigged the system against the little guy?" The academic elite, the media elite, the Wall Street elite, the Washington elite. And by proving wrong all of those who laughed at him, did Donald Trump merely prove that populism works, or did he expose something about his list of elitist targets that, in fact, they had missed something important going on in America -- and by doing so, had left an opening in campaign 2016 that this builder of skyscrapers drove through like a bulldozer?

00:11:02

Well, that sounds like the makings of a debate, so let's have it. Yes or no to this statement, "Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon," a debate from Intelligence Squared U.S. I'm John Donovan. We are at the Kaufman Music Center in New York City. We have four superbly qualified debaters who will argue, two against two, for and against the motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. As always, our debate goes in three rounds, and then the audience votes to choose the winner, and only one

side wins. We are going to have you vote right now -- your opinion, as you come in off the street. If you'll go to the keypads at your seat -- again, the motion is "Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon." If you agree with this motion at this point, press number 1. If you disagree, press number 2. And if you're undecided, number 3. You can ignore the other keys. They are not live or relevant. And I'll give it about another 10 seconds until everyone in the room is making eye contact with me again -- which has just about happened.

00:12:07

Okay. Let's resume. Let's meet our debaters. Again, the motion, Blame the elites for the Trump phenomenon. The team arguing for the motion -- let's please welcome, ladies and gentlemen, Ben Domenech. You know what? I did that in reverse. Rewind, pretend that didn't happen, because we're going to have Tim Carney go first. So, pretend nothing happened. Be spontaneous as I say to you -- [laughter] -- our motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. The team arguing for the motion, please welcome first Tim Carney.

[applause]

Tim, welcome to Intelligence Squared.

Timothy Carney:  
Thank you.

John Donvan:  
You are, Tim, a senior political columnist for the *Washington Examiner*.

00:13:01

You are visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. And in the column that you write for the *Examiner*, you noted a recent poll showing that young Washington insiders nevertheless feel not so attached to their political parties anymore. So, does this mean, in your opinion, that we're going to be seeing more outsider candidates getting successful in the future?

Timothy Carney:  
Well, this is a question every politician and business is asking today, right? How do we appeal to the millennials? I think the answer probably has something to do with participation trophies or something along those lines, but the fact is that you will see more third-party candidates, I think, like Gary Johnson. But so far, in this election of all elections, where you think they'd see -- do really well, the polls aren't showing it yet, so --

John Donovan:  
Okay.

Timothy Carney:  
-- maybe the two parties still have a link -- a grasp on it.

John Donovan:  
All right. And please tell us who your partner is, Tim.

Timothy Carney:  
And my partner is Ben Domenech.

John Donovan:  
Ladies and gentlemen, Ben Domenech.

[applause]

Ben, welcome. Another first-time debater with us.

Ben Domenech:  
Good to be with you.

John Donovan:  
And you are founder and publisher of the *Federalist* -- that is an online magazine focusing on politics and policy and culture.

00:14:07

And it actually welcomes different points of view. For example, two points of view on Trump. You had one headline that said, "Donald Trump Can't Make America Great Again Because That Would Require Greatness."

[laughter]

But you also had one that said, "Seven Reasons This Black Man Supports Donald Trump." So, sounding kind of across the board, but does the magazine take an official position on his candidacy?

Ben Domenech:  
As a personal matter, I signed on to the *National Review* Against Trump cover, but as a publication, we welcome views from all across the political spectrum. And just to suggest to Tim, I think that the answer to your question about appealing to millennials just involves Harambe in some way or another.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

All right. Ladies and gentlemen, the team arguing for the motion.

[applause]

Now, let's meet the team arguing against the -- there are two on that side as well. Please, ladies and gentlemen, welcome Jennifer Rubin.

00:15:01

[applause]

Hi, Jennifer.

Jennifer Rubin:

Hi.

John Donovan:

You are author of the "Right Turn" blog at the *Washington Post*. And you recently came up with a list of questions that you think debate moderators should be asking Trump. They're serious questions. But what, in your opinion, is the most important question to put to candidate Trump in a debate?

Jennifer Rubin:

Well, when I thought about this question, I wasn't quite sure. And then, sure enough today and yesterday, I got confirmation -- and that is to ask Mr. Trump if he still believes that the president of the United States was not born here. That, after all, goes directly to what we need to know about his perspective, his character, but also about his supporters, and whether they are actively supporting someone who embraces a racist, scurrilous lie about our first African-American president. So, I think that's where I'd begin.

John Donovan:

Okay. Interesting filter on it. And can you tell us, please, Jennifer, who is your partner?

00:16:02

Jennifer Rubin:

My partner from the *Wall Street Journal*, Bret Stephens.

John Donovan:

Ladies and gentlemen, Bret Stephens.

[applause]

Bret, welcome back to Intelligence Squared. You actually have been on our stage before. You are Foreign Affairs columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* and deputy editorial page editor -- a member of the editorial board. Now, back in August, the board published an editorial that said, "If the GOP can't get Mr. Trump to change its act by Labor Day, the GOP will have no choice but to write off the nominee as hopeless." So, Labor Day is long past. Is it hopeless?

Bret Stephens:

Well, hopeless in the sense that he can't win. I think I'd rate his chances at about 20 percent. Hopeless in the sense that he isn't going to change, or learn, or improve as a human being and as a leader --

[laughter]

-- more so than ever.

John Donovan:

Ladies and gentlemen, the team arguing against the motion.

[applause]

Now, this is a debate. It's a contest. It's a contest of fact, and logic, and wit, and persuasion. These debaters are trying to get you to vote for their side. I want to point out that we've already had you vote your opinion on this motion when you came in off the street -- Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. After you heard the arguments, we will have you vote a second time. And what we do is we look at the difference between the two votes. And it's the vote -- it's the team whose numbers have moved up the most in percentage points who will be declared our winner. So, it is the difference between the first and the second vote that determines victory in an Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. Our motion is, Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. We go in three rounds. Let's begin with Round 1, opening statements from each debater in turn. They will be six minutes each. And here to speak first -- and Ben, you can make your way to the lectern -- speaking first in support of the motion, Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, Ben Domenech, publisher of the *Federalist* and host of the Federalist Radio Hour, and media fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ben Domenech.

00:18:09

[applause]

Ben Domenech:

Thank you, John. So, why does the Republican Party choose to nominate Donald Trump, a man who, as John Mulaney tells us, begins every day by asking himself, "What would a cartoon rich person do?"

[laughter]

The key to understanding the Donald Trump phenomenon is to recognize that he is neither a disease nor a symptom. He is a beta test for a cure. Americans are turning to him because he represents the breakdown of the post-Cold War left/right politics of the nation, a breakdown that has been happening in slow motion for the past two decades, fueled by a dramatic decline of trust in America's elites. The percentage of Americans today with a great deal of trust in the presidency, the courts, the public schools, and the banks are in the teens. Trust for unions, the justice system, big business, Congress, and the media are in single digits.

00:19:07

This decline didn't happen overnight. It began with Watergate and Vietnam, and continued through the financial crisis and the Iraq War. Real failures undermined confidence in the capacity of elite institutions to do good and in their capability to represent the interests of the people. Now, working and middle class Americans are re-asserting themselves against the bipartisan political and cultural establishment, utterly discredited due to their record of failure. The list is familiar to you all by now: 9/11, Iraq, Katrina, Congressional corruption, financial meltdown, bank bailouts, failed stimulus, a healthcare mess, stagnant wages, rising distrust, diminished hopes. 16 years of bipartisan failures by Republicans and Democrats alike to live up to what the people wanted. This distrust was earned. Through it all the elites were looking out for the interest of people other than those they were elected to serve.

00:20:05

It's no accident that Donald Trump broke with the Republican party's orthodoxies on the issues of immigration, trade, and foreign policy, because those are the bipartisan elite consensus views favored by the donor class, by big business, and by party leadership to the exclusion of others. Rather than responding to the populous tendencies that we all saw rising up from this electorate with real changes, the elites over-promised and under-delivered. They thought they could get by holding a musket over their head in election years and prioritizing what lobbyists want in all other years. They were comfortable in a bubble of economic success, a world away from the areas that never saw any recovery. Elite indifference to populous opinion and the economic pain many Americans continue to experience created a vacuum that Donald Trump was happy to fill. A number of smart commentators on the right and the left have delved into the

question of America's lost greatness, and they've discovered what would lead voters to find Donald Trump's message so appealing.

00:21:07

It's the same phenomenon identified by Chris Hayes on the left in *Twilight of the Elites*, and on the right by Charles Murray and Yuval Levin in *Coming Apart* and *The Fractured Republic*. It's a dramatic failure of the institutions run by America's elites and nostalgia for a time when such mediating institutions could be trusted. Imagine you are one of the millions of middle-aged, unemployed, white Americans with a high school degree. There are today seven million men in prime working age who have dropped out of the labor force. That's 15 percent. That's higher than ever -- than since the end of the Great Depression. There are millions more who know people personally experiencing this kind of pain as a brother, as an uncle, as a son. Moved from unemployment to disability, you will receive sufficient benefits to subsist, around \$1,200 a month, which is enough to pay for the alcohol and the drugs that help you self-medicate.

00:22:02

Your life is essentially one marked by hopelessness, desperation and anxiety. You are statistically unlikely to ever re-enter the workforce and alone among all demographics the likelihood of suicide is rising for you. The things that make life not only endurable but happy are religious faith now lost to you, family which is fractured, community which is disintegrated, and work which you find hard to come by. The TV screen flickers with images of people living lives you could never hope to emulate. Your situation is bleak and while our soma today is better it is still not a replacement for the pursuit of happiness. Your tomorrows look dark, but the past, even the grimy parts of it, look like gold. And when a golden-haired man comes on TV, a man who represents a vision of what you might hope your life could be like, a man who is a traitor to his class, who defies the elites, who is rich and successful, who comes from the world of the elites but is strong enough to reject them and their lives and he tells you it's not your fault.

00:23:07

It's not your fault that your life is the way it is. He tells you it's the fault of immigrants and bad trade deals and wasteful, pointless wars based on lies. He tells you the problem with the elites is not that they are too conservative or that they are too liberal, but that they are stupid and don't care about you. He tells you with confidence that he alone can make everything great again and you listen. In the absence of the failures of the elites, could Donald Trump succeed? The answer is no. Our elite leadership class sowed the wind and Donald Trump is the whirlwind they've reaped. Vote for the motion.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Ben Domenech. And that motion is: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. Here to make his opening statement against the motion, Bret Stephens. He is foreign affairs columnist and deputy editorial page editor at the *Wall Street Journal* where he is also a member of the editorial board. Ladies and gentlemen, Bret Stephens.

00:24:10

[applause]

Bret Stephens:

I want to begin my opening remarks by asking you in the audience a few questions. First question. How many of you in this audience have been to Europe in the last five years? Raise your hand. Okay.

John Donovan:

And, Bret, you need to tell our listeners what they're not seeing.

[laughter]

Bret Stephens:

Excuse me?

John Donovan:

You need to tell our listeners what they're not seeing. Think radio.

Bret Stephens:

Oh. Everyone raised their hands.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

Everyone raised their hand.

Bret Stephens:

Yes. All right. How many people in this audience live in Manhattan or let's just say New York City or a New York City-like suburb like Westchester. Raise your hands. Okay. Thank you.

John Donovan:

Your report?

00:25:07

Bret Stephens:

Most hands go up. I didn't see the people up in the nosebleed seats.

[laughter]

Bret Stephens:

How many people in this audience have graduate degrees? Once again, I would say most hands went up, right? One more question. I'm very curious. Generally speaking, Sancerre is white or red wine?

[laughter]

White. White seems to be the consensus. You are correct. Thank you very much.

[laughter]

Why am I asking these questions? It's very simple. I hate to break it to you, but you are the elite.

[laughter]

You live in the most expensive city in America. You travel voluntarily across the ocean to look at paintings you could find on Google.

00:26:04

[laughter]

You drink wine that never costs less than \$20 a bottle. You're the elite and so this proposition is very simple. Do you blame yourselves --

[laughter]

-- for the rise of Donald Trump? Now, my friends on the opposite side would like to imagine the elite is someone else. All right? It's the billionaire class that you sometimes hear about. It's those corrupt politicians, Democrats or Republicans in Washington. It's some idea of an elite and yet it's you. And so here's the question that we have to confront tonight, and it's an important question and it's going to be a very telling question, I think, psychologically speaking. Do you indict yourselves tonight for the rise of Donald Trump?

00:27:03

Are you yourself to blame for this immigrant bashing? For this American firsting? For this Putin man-crushing? For this woman-hating? For this charity short-changing? For this genitalia boasting? For this Chapter 11 indulging? For this Mussolini admiring disgrace of a Republican candidate for the presidency of the United States? That is the question.

[applause]

Now what you've just heard from Ben was an astonishingly condescending portrait of who the Trump voter is, and you're going to hear from my friend, Jennifer, about just who a little -- a few more specifics about who that is, not the guy nodding off in a heroin induced coma because he's been thrown out of his job, okay?

00:28:02

[laughter]

There are, I am sure, even in this highly elite audience that just cheered wildly when I offered a fairly precise description of this joke of a candidate, there are some -- probably some Trump supporters in this audience. Let me ask those Trump supporters, don't raise your hands, because --

[laughter]

-- I don't want to put you in jeopardy, okay? Did you recognize yourself in that caricature? Are you going to walk out of here and go to the bathroom and shoot up just after this?

[laughter]

I don't think so. We live in a democracy and people think democracy is about freedom. It's not. It's about accountability. It's about we the people being responsible for the choices we make in our lives and at the voting booth. Who do you blame for the Trump phenomenon? Well, Bob Rosenkranz I think put it well. He blames, or one could blame, the Trump voter.

00:29:02

One could blame the people who are responding to this message of intolerance, bigotry, and fake victimization. They're the ones who are primarily accountable. If you want to find another culprit, I would offer you the parade of demagogues who have emerged in

the ether on certain cable news shows, on certain radio shows, some of them have first names that are like Sean, for example, or Rush, for example. I'm not mentioning last names. There are lots of Sean's and Rush's out there.

[laughter]

And this is a pattern that in history we know very well. It is the pattern of the demagogue, demagoguing to a public or to a part of a public that wants easy answers and people to blame. They are accountable for those choices. Do not feel guilty for standing apart from them and do not condescend to them by saying that they have no moral agency, no personal agency in the disastrous political choice they may be about to make. Thank you.

00:30:19

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Bret Stephens. And a reminder if you're -- a reminder of what's going on. We are halfway through the opening round of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. I'm John Donovan. We have four debaters, two teams of two, fighting it out over this motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. You have heard the first two debaters, and now onto the third. Debating for the motion Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, Tim Carney. He is a senior political columnist for the *Washington Examiner* and visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Ladies and gentlemen, Tim Carney.

00:31:00

[applause]

Timothy Carney:

Thank you. And not to talk outside of school, but Jen Rubin did say onstage before this all began that any one of us would do better than Donald Trump on the debate stage, and I think that Bret Stephens just recently showed that his debating and sophistry skills far exceed Donald Trump.

[laughter]

The argument -- if we're going to take it seriously -- is that this audience, which means my mom, a retired stay-at-home mom, and the almost out of work actor I met in the reception back there -- that they are the elites, but that Sean Hannity is not. He's trying to exculpate Sean Hannity and -- or trying to say Sean Hannity is to blame, and is not part of the elites, and this crowd is. I think we need to get more specific. I think we need to define who the elites are that we're talking about. And I'm happy to name very

specific names. They are the men and women -- mostly the men -- who were in charge over the past decades, who led our country to the point it is now.

00:32:04

They are George W. Bush. They are Mitt Romney. These are the people who were elected, nominated officials, put in charge of the public good. They're Mitch McConnell and John Boehner and their predecessors. And it's telling to talk about their predecessors -- Tom Delay, who invited a lobbyist, Jack Abramoff, into not just the Republican Party, but in to make Washington D.C. be a favor factory for the well-connected. Bill Frist, a Senate Majority Leader who now runs Frist Capital -- that invests in healthcare companies. So, he lobbies for Obamacare that enriches the hospitals he's investing in, both driving up the prices and taking away the options for everybody else. Former Senator Majority Leader Bob Dole, also an Obamacare lobbyist living very well by lobbying to take away the -- lobbying for drug companies that want to keep generics off the market. Eric Cantor supposedly representing Virginia's 7th District as a House Majority Leader, really representing Wall Street. Eric, are you here tonight?

[laughter]

Because he retired to a job here. These men enrich themselves while supposedly in the public trust.

00:33:04

Currently, five of the six richest counties in America are within commuting distance of the U.S. capital. That is not the sign of a healthy republic. That is a sign of insiders who rigged a game in their favor. So, they are extracting wealth from the rest of the society. This is the Hunger Games, ladies and gentlemen. Again, five of the six richest counties in America are within commuting distance. And that's why you got a Tea Party. That's why 2009, 2010 -- this wasn't a pro-Republican uprising, simply, or, you know, a fix-the-debt uprising, simply. It was a populist uprising. It was anger at bailouts. It was anger at a stimulus that was just handouts to the Chamber of Commerce. It was anger at an Obamacare that was just handouts to the drug companies and the hospitals. And Republican leaders, these elites, the men and women in power, gave lip service. Democratic leaders did too. And then, what did they do? They squelched that populist uprising. In public, they would say, "Yes, we need to get rid of crony capitalism," and then they would go behind closed doors with the crony capitalist donors and say, "Well, yes, that bottom 47 percent, well, they just won't take responsibility for their lives."

00:34:08

That was Mitt Romney's description. If you were in the bottom 47 percent, it is literally your fault, and you don't belong in the Republican Party. "You may not join our country

club." That was the message from the Republican elites. And after they lost, they issued an autopsy, as they called it. Item number one was, "Well, we need more low-skilled immigrants in." A laser-guided program aimed at lowering the wages of the low-skilled. So, populism rose. The party elites tried to quell it. They rigged the system. They enriched themselves. That's a systematic problem Ben and I have laid out. That's the system that they rigged. But I want to conclude with a very specific way, immediate way, in which the elites bear the blame. On that stage last year was Jeb Bush, backed by \$100 million of donor money. He was the man in the arena. He was literally the man on the stage, and he failed to rise to the occasion. He was the one who could have beaten Donald Trump.

00:35:03

Whom do we blame for Donald Trump being the nominee? The people who could have beaten him. Jeb Bush was number one. Chris Christie, probably the pick of a lot of you here, he disappointed me as well. He didn't rise to the occasion. He thought more important than attacking Donald Trump was attacking Marco Rubio. And then, when Christie lost, he scampered over to become the valet for Donald Trump.

[laughter]

There's that saying of "No man is -- no matter how great -- is thought great by his valet." I think the only exception is Trump and Christie.

[laughter]

The backup of the elites was Marco Rubio. And he couldn't rise to the occasion either. He proved unable to move beyond his canned lines. And so -- and what did most of the elites do when it boiled down, when they had an alternative, when they had Ted Cruz, who may not be the favorite of here -- but is somebody other than Donald Trump. And remember, the question on the table is "Whom do we blame for Donald Trump?" Well, we know what Christie did. House Speaker John Boehner in the spring, during the debate, called Ted Cruz "Lucifer in the flesh," literally. And he called Donald Trump his buddy.

00:36:06

Bob Dole, the majority leader turned lobbyist, said of Trump, "He's got the right personality. He's kind of a deal-maker." You had mayor-turned presidential candidate turned-lobbyist Rudy Giuliani -- said, if it came down to Trump or Cruz, quote, "There is no question I'd vote for Trump." Majority leader-turned lobbyist Trent Lott told a reporter that he'd take Trump over Cruz if he had to choose. And then, of course, there was Hillary. She's the nominee. Any normal, decent candidate would be mopping the floor with this thrice-married, philandering, con-man, liberal candidate trying to run as a

Republican. She can't do it. Why not? Because she chooses opacity at all occasions, that the "deplorable" public doesn't deserve to know her business. These are the elites. These were the people who set the stage for Trump. These were the people who could have beaten Trump, who could have made him run away. They all failed.

00:37:03

It's clear that we need to blame the elites for the Trump Phenomenon.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Tim Carney. And that is the motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. And here making her opening statement against the motion, Jennifer Rubin, who covers domestic and foreign policy issues in the Right Turn blog for the *Washington Post*. Ladies and gentlemen, Jennifer Rubin.

[applause]

Jennifer Rubin:

Like Donald Trump himself, our distinguished opponents suffer from a lack of factual support for their motion. They paint a picture not unlike Donald Trump does -- of a dystopia of heroin addicts, of despair, of poverty, of people sold short. Now, none of us should minimize the suffering, the social and economic dislocation that occurred in the wake of the 2008 crash.

00:38:12

But let's get real here. Let's not play in Donald Trump's made up America. Just today, it comes out that 2015, we had record income growth in America. 5.2 percent. It comes out that that poverty is on the decline. It comes out that homeownership is rising. And this wasteland of manufacturing -- that doesn't exist either. In fact, we've picked up about 900,000 manufacturing jobs in recent years. And we have a record high number of open manufacturing jobs. So, if any of your children would like to forego an expensive elite college and instead become workers in manufacturing firms, I would strongly encourage them to do so.

00:39:15

It's bizarre, frankly, that we should concoct an economic argument that not only does not exist, but that is contrary to just about every conservative economic principles. Conservatives, you see, do not believe that immigration causes unemployment. That's a zero-sum thinking that we usually attribute to our friends on the left. It's factually not true, and philosophically, it's abhorrent to conservatives who do not believe that "if I

win, you lose." Conservatives do not believe that millions of jobs were lost because of free trade. That's nonsense.

00:40:03

We know that there has been a shuffling of the workforce. We know that more automated, more sophisticated workplace requires different skills, but we have not lost millions and millions of jobs to Mexico. China did not steal our jobs. This is the sort of economic fallacy that Donald Trump peddles. It's also a little bit bizarre, as my esteemed colleagues were talking, to think that Bob Dole, who's about as elitist as possible, could support Donald Trump. I thought he was a populist, and suddenly you have someone who is not a populist who is one of these elites who failed responsible for Donald Trump? That seems peculiar. It also seems frightfully unfair to blame the losers of 2016, Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio.

00:41:10

They may have not been the most competent politicians, but they offered an optimistic message of growth, of an American century, of a confident America in the world. And to blame them for Donald Trump seems awfully scurrilous. When I think of the causes of Donald Trump, and we'll have plenty of time to discuss this later on, in addition to the voters themselves, I think how is it that so many people got these wrong ideas about the economy? I don't mean politically incorrect ideas, I mean wrong, factually wrong. Where could they have heard this? Where could they have gotten the notion that America doesn't win anymore?

00:42:04

Where could they have gotten the notion that immigrants are to blame? Where could they have gotten the notion that trade steals our jobs? Ah, those were the folks that Bret Stephens mentioned. This is, and there really is one, a vast right-wing conspiracy. This is the toxic brew of right-wing media, right-wing politicians, charlatans out to make a buck, and for years they have dumped this dribble into the laps of voters who, as Bret says, it would be nice to blame immigrants. It would be nice to blame foreigners. But where do we get these wrong-headed ideas? It's the Sean's, the Rush's, and many others who have told you a story not unlike the ones our opponents did, which has no bearing in reality.

00:43:06

Now if Donald Trump were really the result of an economic down boom or economic collapse, you'd think that they'd be poor, right? You know what the average salary, the average income of a Trump voter is? \$72,000. These are not people down on their luck. These are people looking to blame others. Thank you.

[applause] John Donovan:

Hello. I'm John Donovan, host and moderator of the Intelligence Squared Debates.

[applause]

We're sure to have an energetic evening to launch our fall season out of New York. Thanks so much for coming. I want to just have a brief chat with people who are new to our debates to talk about a couple of things which are actually critical about the part you play in the evening. The most important thing is that you act as the judges of the debate. We ask you to vote your view on the arguments being made tonight and I'll explain very briefly. The way we have you vote is you go to the keypad that's attached to your seat and when the time comes I'll ask you to look at the motion: Blame Trump -- Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomena\_and if you agree with the motion you push number one and if you disagree with that motion push number two and if you're undecided, which is a perfectly reasonable position to hold, push number three. You can ignore the other keypads -- the other buttons on the keypad and if you for some reason incorrectly push the wrong button just correct yourself and the system will lock in your last vote.

00:01:05

So, again, you are the judges of the winners of the debate. The other way in which your role is critical is that in the middle of the debate things get a little bit more freeform and the debaters take questions from me, but they also take questions from you in the audience and the way that will work is just merely raise your hand, a microphone will be brought to you. It's critical that you wait for the microphone. I'll explain why in a minute. You should rise, tell us your name, if you're -- if you have a public audience, if you're a blogger or a journalist, we would really appreciate it if you would let us know who your audience is or who you're working for, and then ask a question in about -- really asking for discipline on this--, in about 30 seconds or less. I'm fine if you want to state a premise to your question in a sentence or a sentence and a half or three-quarters, but I really -- I really then want you to -- I don't want you to be debating with the debaters, but really getting them to debate better.

00:02:04

So, think up a question that gets them to move further along on the motion. And, again, the motion relates to this issue of those who we will be calling the elite tonight, a term to be defined to some extent by the debaters, so it's not broadly speaking a debate about the Trump campaign, it's about this issue -- I'll have to pass on questions that take too long and I'll have to pass on questions that don't really go to this topic, because these debaters are trying to persuade you to vote with them on that particular motion. So the reason the microphones are important, for those of you who don't

know, we're being recorded and livestreamed right now through our website, iq2us.org and for FORA.tv. We also ultimately become a radio program heard on NPR stations across the country and a podcast. You can download the podcast with an app available at the Apple Store or iGoogle. If you applaud loudly and distinctively enough months from now you can hear your own clapping if you download.

00:03:07

[laughter]

And to that point we are fine. Unlike the so-called presidential debates, --

[laughter]

-- we encourage you giving voice to your sense of how the debate is going, but basically what I mean is if you like the point it's great to clap for it because it tells the podcast audience that you are here as judges. It tells the debaters how they're doing, and it just adds some liveliness to the whole enterprise. So, you're here, so people should know. We, however, it's not in the spirit of what Intelligence Squared is trying to do for you to boo and hiss. So, we would discourage that. You know, if you want to register disapproval I would think at most a sardonic groan --

[laughter]

-- or a right chortle of some sort, but we want to keep it positive, so focus on the positive, but let these guys know how they're doing. We're delighted to have everybody here launching this debate season, in which we're trying to track the presidential election campaign with various topics and we begin every debate by bringing to the stage the chairman of Intelligence Squared U.S. who brought this program to New York and to the United States.

00:04:20

We're now at debate number 120 and something. We've been doing it for quite awhile and that's because Bob Rosenkranz had the vision to do that. One hundred twenty-four. I have a thing in my ear where people tell me what to say and somebody just said 124. Normally what they're saying is "say smarter stuff, John. Get smarter."

[laughter]

This time I just heard 124. I want to bring to the stage then Bob Rosenkranz. What we usually do is chat about why we've picked the particular topics we have. Please welcome, ladies and gentlemen, Robert Rosenkranz.

[applause]

John Donovan:  
Hi, Bob. Hey, Bob.

Robert Rosenkranz:  
John, good to be here and particularly tonight. You know, this is our 10th anniversary.

00:05:03

John Donovan:  
Wow. I didn't know that.

[applause]

Robert Rosenkranz:  
And Dana Wolfe has been the executive producer for that entire period.

[applause]

John Donovan:  
Wow. Where is she?

Robert Rosenkranz:  
So, -- and it is debate indeed number 124.

John Donovan:  
I've been told. So I've been told. Sometimes what we say in the beginning is why now with our debate. Why do we pick this topic now? That's less of a question.

Robert Rosenkranz:  
I think so.

John Donovan:  
So, -- take it on. Why now?

Robert Rosenkranz:  
Wow. I mean, it's really kind of amazing that Hillary Clinton is -- has handed us the line for today's debate by describing the Trump voters as --

John Donovan:  
Deplorables.

Robert Rosenkranz:

Deplorables. I was going to say despicable. But anyway, and characterizing them as racist and sexist and xenophobic and, you know, all manner of hostile adjectives.

00:06:04

And so it sort of raises the question is -- are the elites responsible for this phenomenon? Or are the voters responsible?

John Donovan:

Did you personally see Trump's success coming if we go back to last year?

Robert Rosenkranz:

You know, actually I did. I would consider myself a member of a Republican elite and I was quite early among people that I knew and seeing him as a very serious phenomenon. I felt he had -- he was a natural sort of star of reality television and his program was interesting because the punchline is "you're fired." So he's holding somebody accountable for screw up, and most people feel like government needs more accountability and more people fired for screwing up. So, that's -- struck me as quite interesting.

00:07:01

The other thing is he had a kind of an aura of authenticity, maybe not truth telling exactly, but you --

[laughter]

-- you had the idea that what you saw was what you get and that's not something you feel about most politicians. And the final point that struck me about him is he was kind of I guess I would say the poor man's rich man. He was sort of the kind of -- he was spending money in ways that I think people who are driving taxis or blue collar people might imagine themselves spending money if they had a couple of billion dollars. And whereas most people who actually do have a couple of billion dollars spend their money in ways that tend to alienate them from most ordinary working people.

John Donovan:

You would know something about that?

Robert Rosenkranz:

I know a little bit about that.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

So, we're using the word blame. It's pejorative, sort of making an assumption built in that the Trump phenomenon is a good thing or a bad thing, but what do we really mean by that?

00:08:08

Robert Rosenkranz:

Well, I think blame is maybe an unfortunate term in the resolution. What we're really trying to do is explain what the Trump phenomenon is about and to try to see whether it's more a function of the elite's failure to respond to the real needs and real issues of working class Americans or whether the groups that are putting Trump forward do indeed represent a defect in our system of folks, of an electorate that simply isn't as informed and thoughtful as it ought to be.

John Donovan:

So it's easier to put blame the elites on a poster than blame the voters on a poster in a sense?

Robert Rosenkranz:

Well, one of our -- the original language was blame the voters and then we changed it.

00:09:03

John Donovan:

We changed it. And now you know why we're here. Thanks very much, Bob Rosenkranz, and let's please welcome our debaters to the stage.

[applause]

Robert Rosenkranz:

Thank you.

John Donovan:

Throughout the evening, again because of our creating this as a broadcast and podcast, there will be a number of times when you'll sort of see the sausage being made. I will say, for example, I'll be right back and you'll notice that I haven't gone anywhere.

[laughter]

And I will say my name over and over again and that's because we come back from breaks. It's not because I forget what my name is, and I will on occasion ask you to applaud spontaneously, and I think those moments will be sort of obvious as when I introduce the debaters individually, but I'll sort of do one of these as the applause signal. And what I'd love to do to launch things now is have that happen. So, thank you.

00:10:05

[applause]

Who laughed when Donald Trump set out to win the White House? Lots of people. But who got the last laugh and the Republican nomination? And who got it, in part, by bashing those who had laughed at him, dismissing them as "elites who had rigged the system against the little guy?" The academic elite, the media elite, the Wall Street elite, the Washington elite. And by proving wrong all of those who laughed at him, did Donald Trump merely prove that populism works, or did he expose something about his list of elitist targets that, in fact, they had missed something important going on in America -- and by doing so, had left an opening in campaign 2016 that this builder of skyscrapers drove through like a bulldozer?

00:11:02

Well, that sounds like the makings of a debate, so let's have it. Yes or no to this statement, "Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon," a debate from Intelligence Squared U.S. I'm John Donvan. We are at the Kaufman Music Center in New York City. We have four superbly qualified debaters who will argue, two against two, for and against the motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. As always, our debate goes in three rounds, and then the audience votes to choose the winner, and only one side wins. We are going to have you vote right now -- your opinion, as you come in off the street. If you'll go to the keypads at your seat -- again, the motion is "Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon." If you agree with this motion at this point, press number 1. If you disagree, press number 2. And if you're undecided, number 3. You can ignore the other keys. They are not live or relevant. And I'll give it about another 10 seconds until everyone in the room is making eye contact with me again -- which has just about happened.

00:12:07

Okay. Let's resume. Let's meet our debaters. Again, the motion, Blame the elites for the Trump phenomenon. The team arguing for the motion -- let's please welcome, ladies and gentlemen, Ben Domenech. You know what? I did that in reverse. Rewind, pretend that didn't happen, because we're going to have Tim Carney go first. So, pretend nothing happened. Be spontaneous as I say to you -- [laughter] -- our motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. The team arguing for the motion, please welcome first Tim Carney.

[applause]

Tim, welcome to Intelligence Squared.

Timothy Carney:  
Thank you.

John Donovan:  
You are, Tim, a senior political columnist for the *Washington Examiner*.

00:13:01

You are visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. And in the column that you write for the *Examiner*, you noted a recent poll showing that young Washington insiders nevertheless feel not so attached to their political parties anymore. So, does this mean, in your opinion, that we're going to be seeing more outsider candidates getting successful in the future?

Timothy Carney:  
Well, this is a question every politician and business is asking today, right? How do we appeal to the millennials? I think the answer probably has something to do with participation trophies or something along those lines, but the fact is that you will see more third-party candidates, I think, like Gary Johnson. But so far, in this election of all elections, where you think they'd see -- do really well, the polls aren't showing it yet, so --

John Donovan:  
Okay.

Timothy Carney:  
-- maybe the two parties still have a link -- a grasp on it.

John Donovan:  
All right. And please tell us who your partner is, Tim.

Timothy Carney:  
And my partner is Ben Domenech.

John Donovan:  
Ladies and gentlemen, Ben Domenech.

[applause]

Ben, welcome. Another first-time debater with us.

Ben Domenech:  
Good to be with you.

John Donovan:

And you are founder and publisher of the *Federalist* -- that is an online magazine focusing on politics and policy and culture.

00:14:07

And it actually welcomes different points of view. For example, two points of view on Trump. You had one headline that said, "Donald Trump Can't Make America Great Again Because That Would Require Greatness."

[laughter]

But you also had one that said, "Seven Reasons This Black Man Supports Donald Trump." So, sounding kind of across the board, but does the magazine take an official position on his candidacy?

Ben Domenech:

As a personal matter, I signed on to the *National Review* Against Trump cover, but as a publication, we welcome views from all across the political spectrum. And just to suggest to Tim, I think that the answer to your question about appealing to millennials just involves Harambe in some way or another.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

All right. Ladies and gentlemen, the team arguing for the motion.

[applause]

Now, let's meet the team arguing against the -- there are two on that side as well. Please, ladies and gentlemen, welcome Jennifer Rubin.

00:15:01

[applause]

Hi, Jennifer.

Jennifer Rubin:

Hi.

John Donovan:

You are author of the "Right Turn" blog at the *Washington Post*. And you recently came up with a list of questions that you think debate moderators should be asking Trump. They're serious questions. But what, in your opinion, is the most important question to put to candidate Trump in a debate?

Jennifer Rubin:

Well, when I thought about this question, I wasn't quite sure. And then, sure enough today and yesterday, I got confirmation -- and that is to ask Mr. Trump if he still believes that the president of the United States was not born here. That, after all, goes directly to what we need to know about his perspective, his character, but also about his supporters, and whether they are actively supporting someone who embraces a racist, scurrilous lie about our first African-American president. So, I think that's where I'd begin.

John Donovan:

Okay. Interesting filter on it. And can you tell us, please, Jennifer, who is your partner?

00:16:02

Jennifer Rubin:

My partner from the *Wall Street Journal*, Bret Stephens.

John Donovan:

Ladies and gentlemen, Bret Stephens.

[applause]

Bret, welcome back to Intelligence Squared. You actually have been on our stage before. You are Foreign Affairs columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* and deputy editorial page editor -- a member of the editorial board. Now, back in August, the board published an editorial that said, "If the GOP can't get Mr. Trump to change its act by Labor Day, the GOP will have no choice but to write off the nominee as hopeless." So, Labor Day is long past. Is it hopeless?

Bret Stephens:

Well, hopeless in the sense that he can't win. I think I'd rate his chances at about 20 percent. Hopeless in the sense that he isn't going to change, or learn, or improve as a human being and as a leader --

[laughter]

-- more so than ever.

John Donovan:

Ladies and gentlemen, the team arguing against the motion.

[applause]

Now, this is a debate. It's a contest. It's a contest of fact, and logic, and wit, and persuasion. These debaters are trying to get you to vote for their side. I want to point out that we've already had you vote your opinion on this motion when you came in off the street -- Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. After you heard the arguments, we will have you vote a second time. And what we do is we look at the difference between the two votes. And it's the vote -- it's the team whose numbers have moved up the most in percentage points who will be declared our winner. So, it is the difference between the first and the second vote that determines victory in an Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. Our motion is, Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. We go in three rounds. Let's begin with Round 1, opening statements from each debater in turn. They will be six minutes each. And here to speak first -- and Ben, you can make your way to the lectern -- speaking first in support of the motion, Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, Ben Domenech, publisher of the *Federalist* and host of the Federalist Radio Hour, and media fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ben Domenech.

00:18:09

[applause]

Ben Domenech:

Thank you, John. So, why does the Republican Party choose to nominate Donald Trump, a man who, as John Mulaney tells us, begins every day by asking himself, "What would a cartoon rich person do?"

[laughter]

The key to understanding the Donald Trump phenomenon is to recognize that he is neither a disease nor a symptom. He is a beta test for a cure. Americans are turning to him because he represents the breakdown of the post-Cold War left/right politics of the nation, a breakdown that has been happening in slow motion for the past two decades, fueled by a dramatic decline of trust in America's elites. The percentage of Americans today with a great deal of trust in the presidency, the courts, the public schools, and the banks are in the teens. Trust for unions, the justice system, big business, Congress, and the media are in single digits.

00:19:07

This decline didn't happen overnight. It began with Watergate and Vietnam, and continued through the financial crisis and the Iraq War. Real failures undermined

confidence in the capacity of elite institutions to do good and in their capability to represent the interests of the people. Now, working and middle class Americans are re-asserting themselves against the bipartisan political and cultural establishment, utterly discredited due to their record of failure. The list is familiar to you all by now: 9/11, Iraq, Katrina, Congressional corruption, financial meltdown, bank bailouts, failed stimulus, a healthcare mess, stagnant wages, rising distrust, diminished hopes. 16 years of bipartisan failures by Republicans and Democrats alike to live up to what the people wanted. This distrust was earned. Through it all the elites were looking out for the interest of people other than those they were elected to serve.

00:20:05

It's no accident that Donald Trump broke with the Republican party's orthodoxies on the issues of immigration, trade, and foreign policy, because those are the bipartisan elite consensus views favored by the donor class, by big business, and by party leadership to the exclusion of others. Rather than responding to the populous tendencies that we all saw rising up from this electorate with real changes, the elites over-promised and under-delivered. They thought they could get by holding a musket over their head in election years and prioritizing what lobbyists want in all other years. They were comfortable in a bubble of economic success, a world away from the areas that never saw any recovery. Elite indifference to populous opinion and the economic pain many Americans continue to experience created a vacuum that Donald Trump was happy to fill. A number of smart commentators on the right and the left have delved into the question of America's lost greatness, and they've discovered what would lead voters to find Donald Trump's message so appealing.

00:21:07

It's the same phenomenon identified by Chris Hayes on the left in *Twilight of the Elites*, and on the right by Charles Murray and Yuval Levin in *Coming Apart* and *The Fractured Republic*. It's a dramatic failure of the institutions run by America's elites and nostalgia for a time when such mediating institutions could be trusted. Imagine you are one of the millions of middle-aged, unemployed, white Americans with a high school degree. There are today seven million men in prime working age who have dropped out of the labor force. That's 15 percent. That's higher than ever -- than since the end of the Great Depression. There are millions more who know people personally experiencing this kind of pain as a brother, as an uncle, as a son. Moved from unemployment to disability, you will receive sufficient benefits to subsist, around \$1,200 a month, which is enough to pay for the alcohol and the drugs that help you self-medicate.

00:22:02

Your life is essentially one marked by hopelessness, desperation and anxiety. You are statistically unlikely to ever re-enter the workforce and alone among all demographics the likelihood of suicide is rising for you. The things that make life not only endurable but happy are religious faith now lost to you, family which is fractured, community which is disintegrated, and work which you find hard to come by. The TV screen flickers with images of people living lives you could never hope to emulate. Your situation is bleak and while our soma today is better it is still not a replacement for the pursuit of happiness. Your tomorrows look dark, but the past, even the grimy parts of it, look like gold. And when a golden-haired man comes on TV, a man who represents a vision of what you might hope your life could be like, a man who is a traitor to his class, who defies the elites, who is rich and successful, who comes from the world of the elites but is strong enough to reject them and their lives and he tells you it's not your fault.

00:23:07

It's not your fault that your life is the way it is. He tells you it's the fault of immigrants and bad trade deals and wasteful, pointless wars based on lies. He tells you the problem with the elites is not that they are too conservative or that they are too liberal, but that they are stupid and don't care about you. He tells you with confidence that he alone can make everything great again and you listen. In the absence of the failures of the elites, could Donald Trump succeed? The answer is no. Our elite leadership class sowed the wind and Donald Trump is the whirlwind they've reaped. Vote for the motion.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Ben Domenech. And that motion is: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. Here to make his opening statement against the motion, Bret Stephens. He is foreign affairs columnist and deputy editorial page editor at the *Wall Street Journal* where he is also a member of the editorial board. Ladies and gentlemen, Bret Stephens.

00:24:10

[applause]

Bret Stephens:

I want to begin my opening remarks by asking you in the audience a few questions. First question. How many of you in this audience have been to Europe in the last five years? Raise your hand. Okay.

John Donovan:

And, Bret, you need to tell our listeners what they're not seeing.

[laughter]

Bret Stephens:  
Excuse me?

John Donovan:  
You need to tell our listeners what they're not seeing. Think radio.

Bret Stephens:  
Oh. Everyone raised their hands.

[laughter]

John Donovan:  
Everyone raised their hand.

Bret Stephens:  
Yes. All right. How many people in this audience live in Manhattan or let's just say New York City or a New York City-like suburb like Westchester. Raise your hands. Okay. Thank you.

John Donovan:  
Your report?

00:25:07

Bret Stephens:  
Most hands go up. I didn't see the people up in the nosebleed seats.

[laughter]

Bret Stephens:  
How many people in this audience have graduate degrees? Once again, I would say most hands went up, right? One more question. I'm very curious. Generally speaking, Sancerre is white or red wine?

[laughter]

White. White seems to be the consensus. You are correct. Thank you very much.

[laughter]

Why am I asking these questions? It's very simple. I hate to break it to you, but you are the elite.

[laughter]

You live in the most expensive city in America. You travel voluntarily across the ocean to look at paintings you could find on Google.

00:26:04

[laughter]

You drink wine that never costs less than \$20 a bottle. You're the elite and so this proposition is very simple. Do you blame yourselves --

[laughter]

-- for the rise of Donald Trump? Now, my friends on the opposite side would like to imagine the elite is someone else. All right? It's the billionaire class that you sometimes hear about. It's those corrupt politicians, Democrats or Republicans in Washington. It's some idea of an elite and yet it's you. And so here's the question that we have to confront tonight, and it's an important question and it's going to be a very telling question, I think, psychologically speaking. Do you indict yourselves tonight for the rise of Donald Trump?

00:27:03

Are you yourself to blame for this immigrant bashing? For this American firsting? For this Putin man-crushing? For this woman-hating? For this charity short-changing? For this genitalia boasting? For this Chapter 11 indulging? For this Mussolini admiring disgrace of a Republican candidate for the presidency of the United States? That is the question.

[applause]

Now what you've just heard from Ben was an astonishingly condescending portrait of who the Trump voter is, and you're going to hear from my friend, Jennifer, about just who a little -- a few more specifics about who that is, not the guy nodding off in a heroin induced coma because he's been thrown out of his job, okay?

00:28:02

[laughter]

There are, I am sure, even in this highly elite audience that just cheered wildly when I offered a fairly precise description of this joke of a candidate, there are some -- probably some Trump supporters in this audience. Let me ask those Trump supporters, don't raise your hands, because --

[laughter]

-- I don't want to put you in jeopardy, okay? Did you recognize yourself in that caricature? Are you going to walk out of here and go to the bathroom and shoot up just after this?

[laughter]

I don't think so. We live in a democracy and people think democracy is about freedom. It's not. It's about accountability. It's about we the people being responsible for the choices we make in our lives and at the voting booth. Who do you blame for the Trump phenomenon? Well, Bob Rosenkranz I think put it well. He blames, or one could blame, the Trump voter.

00:29:02

One could blame the people who are responding to this message of intolerance, bigotry, and fake victimization. They're the ones who are primarily accountable. If you want to find another culprit, I would offer you the parade of demagogues who have emerged in the ether on certain cable news shows, on certain radio shows, some of them have first names that are like Sean, for example, or Rush, for example. I'm not mentioning last names. There are lots of Sean's and Rush's out there.

[laughter]

And this is a pattern that in history we know very well. It is the pattern of the demagogue, demagoguing to a public or to a part of a public that wants easy answers and people to blame. They are accountable for those choices. Do not feel guilty for standing apart from them and do not condescend to them by saying that they have no moral agency, no personal agency in the disastrous political choice they may be about to make. Thank you.

00:30:19

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Bret Stephens. And a reminder if you're -- a reminder of what's going on. We are halfway through the opening round of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. I'm John Donovan. We have four debaters, two teams of two, fighting it out over this motion:

Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. You have heard the first two debaters, and now onto the third. Debating for the motion Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, Tim Carney. He is a senior political columnist for the *Washington Examiner* and visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Ladies and gentlemen, Tim Carney.

00:31:00

[applause]

Timothy Carney:

Thank you. And not to talk outside of school, but Jen Rubin did say onstage before this all began that any one of us would do better than Donald Trump on the debate stage, and I think that Bret Stephens just recently showed that his debating and sophistry skills far exceed Donald Trump.

[laughter]

The argument -- if we're going to take it seriously -- is that this audience, which means my mom, a retired stay-at-home mom, and the almost out of work actor I met in the reception back there -- that they are the elites, but that Sean Hannity is not. He's trying to exculpate Sean Hannity and -- or trying to say Sean Hannity is to blame, and is not part of the elites, and this crowd is. I think we need to get more specific. I think we need to define who the elites are that we're talking about. And I'm happy to name very specific names. They are the men and women -- mostly the men -- who were in charge over the past decades, who led our country to the point it is now.

00:32:04

They are George W. Bush. They are Mitt Romney. These are the people who were elected, nominated officials, put in charge of the public good. They're Mitch McConnell and John Boehner and their predecessors. And it's telling to talk about their predecessors -- Tom Delay, who invited a lobbyist, Jack Abramoff, into not just the Republican Party, but in to make Washington D.C. be a favor factory for the well-connected. Bill Frist, a Senate Majority Leader who now runs Frist Capital -- that invests in healthcare companies. So, he lobbies for Obamacare that enriches the hospitals he's investing in, both driving up the prices and taking away the options for everybody else. Former Senator Majority Leader Bob Dole, also an Obamacare lobbyist living very well by lobbying to take away the -- lobbying for drug companies that want to keep generics off the market. Eric Cantor supposedly representing Virginia's 7th District as a House Majority Leader, really representing Wall Street. Eric, are you here tonight?

[laughter]

Because he retired to a job here. These men enrich themselves while supposedly in the public trust.

00:33:04

Currently, five of the six richest counties in America are within commuting distance of the U.S. capital. That is not the sign of a healthy republic. That is a sign of insiders who rigged a game in their favor. So, they are extracting wealth from the rest of the society. This is the Hunger Games, ladies and gentlemen. Again, five of the six richest counties in America are within commuting distance. And that's why you got a Tea Party. That's why 2009, 2010 -- this wasn't a pro-Republican uprising, simply, or, you know, a fix-the-debt uprising, simply. It was a populist uprising. It was anger at bailouts. It was anger at a stimulus that was just handouts to the Chamber of Commerce. It was anger at an Obamacare that was just handouts to the drug companies and the hospitals. And Republican leaders, these elites, the men and women in power, gave lip service. Democratic leaders did too. And then, what did they do? They squelched that populist uprising. In public, they would say, "Yes, we need to get rid of crony capitalism," and then they would go behind closed doors with the crony capitalist donors and say, "Well, yes, that bottom 47 percent, well, they just won't take responsibility for their lives."

00:34:08

That was Mitt Romney's description. If you were in the bottom 47 percent, it is literally your fault, and you don't belong in the Republican Party. "You may not join our country club." That was the message from the Republican elites. And after they lost, they issued an autopsy, as they called it. Item number one was, "Well, we need more low-skilled immigrants in." A laser-guided program aimed at lowering the wages of the low-skilled. So, populism rose. The party elites tried to quell it. They rigged the system. They enriched themselves. That's a systematic problem Ben and I have laid out. That's the system that they rigged. But I want to conclude with a very specific way, immediate way, in which the elites bear the blame. On that stage last year was Jeb Bush, backed by \$100 million of donor money. He was the man in the arena. He was literally the man on the stage, and he failed to rise to the occasion. He was the one who could have beaten Donald Trump.

00:35:03

Whom do we blame for Donald Trump being the nominee? The people who could have beaten him. Jeb Bush was number one. Chris Christie, probably the pick of a lot of you here, he disappointed me as well. He didn't rise to the occasion. He thought more important than attacking Donald Trump was attacking Marco Rubio. And then, when Christie lost, he scampered over to become the valet for Donald Trump.

[laughter]

There's that saying of "No man is -- no matter how great -- is thought great by his valet." I think the only exception is Trump and Christie.

[laughter]

The backup of the elites was Marco Rubio. And he couldn't rise to the occasion either. He proved unable to move beyond his canned lines. And so -- and what did most of the elites do when it boiled down, when they had an alternative, when they had Ted Cruz, who may not be the favorite of here -- but is somebody other than Donald Trump. And remember, the question on the table is "Whom do we blame for Donald Trump?" Well, we know what Christie did. House Speaker John Boehner in the spring, during the debate, called Ted Cruz "Lucifer in the flesh," literally. And he called Donald Trump his buddy.

00:36:06

Bob Dole, the majority leader turned lobbyist, said of Trump, "He's got the right personality. He's kind of a deal-maker." You had mayor-turned presidential candidate turned-lobbyist Rudy Giuliani -- said, if it came down to Trump or Cruz, quote, "There is no question I'd vote for Trump." Majority leader-turned lobbyist Trent Lott told a reporter that he'd take Trump over Cruz if he had to choose. And then, of course, there was Hillary. She's the nominee. Any normal, decent candidate would be mopping the floor with this thrice-married, philandering, con-man, liberal candidate trying to run as a Republican. She can't do it. Why not? Because she chooses opacity at all occasions, that the "deplorable" public doesn't deserve to know her business. These are the elites. These were the people who set the stage for Trump. These were the people who could have beaten Trump, who could have made him run away. They all failed.

00:37:03

It's clear that we need to blame the elites for the Trump Phenomenon.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Tim Carney. And that is the motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. And here making her opening statement against the motion, Jennifer Rubin, who covers domestic and foreign policy issues in the Right Turn blog for the *Washington Post*. Ladies and gentlemen, Jennifer Rubin.

[applause]

Jennifer Rubin:

Like Donald Trump himself, our distinguished opponents suffer from a lack of factual support for their motion. They paint a picture not unlike Donald Trump does -- of a dystopia of heroin addicts, of despair, of poverty, of people sold short. Now, none of us should minimize the suffering, the social and economic dislocation that occurred in the wake of the 2008 crash.

00:38:12

But let's get real here. Let's not play in Donald Trump's made up America. Just today, it comes out that 2015, we had record income growth in America. 5.2 percent. It comes out that that poverty is on the decline. It comes out that homeownership is rising. And this wasteland of manufacturing -- that doesn't exist either. In fact, we've picked up about 900,000 manufacturing jobs in recent years. And we have a record high number of open manufacturing jobs. So, if any of your children would like to forego an expensive elite college and instead become workers in manufacturing firms, I would strongly encourage them to do so.

00:39:15

It's bizarre, frankly, that we should concoct an economic argument that not only does not exist, but that is contrary to just about every conservative economic principles. Conservatives, you see, do not believe that immigration causes unemployment. That's a zero-sum thinking that we usually attribute to our friends on the left. It's factually not true, and philosophically, it's abhorrent to conservatives who do not believe that "if I win, you lose." Conservatives do not believe that millions of jobs were lost because of free trade. That's nonsense.

00:40:03

We know that there has been a shuffling of the workforce. We know that more automatized, more sophisticated workplace requires different skills, but we have not lost millions and millions of jobs to Mexico. China did not steal our jobs. This is the sort of economic fallacy that Donald Trump peddles. It's also a little bit bizarre, as my esteemed colleagues were talking, to think that Bob Dole, who's about as elitist as possible, could support Donald Trump. I thought he was a populist, and suddenly you have someone who is not a populist who is one of these elites who failed responsible for Donald Trump? That seems peculiar. It also seems frightfully unfair to blame the losers of 2016, Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio.

00:41:10

They may have not been the most competent politicians, but they offered an optimistic message of growth, of an American century, of a confident America in the world. And to blame them for Donald Trump seems awfully scurrilous. When I think of the causes of

Donald Trump, and we'll have plenty of time to discuss this later on, in addition to the voters themselves, I think how is it that so many people got these wrong ideas about the economy? I don't mean politically incorrect ideas, I mean wrong, factually wrong. Where could they have heard this? Where could they have gotten the notion that America doesn't win anymore?

00:42:04

Where could they have gotten the notion that immigrants are to blame? Where could they have gotten the notion that trade steals our jobs? Ah, those were the folks that Bret Stephens mentioned. This is, and there really is one, a vast right-wing conspiracy. This is the toxic brew of right-wing media, right-wing politicians, charlatans out to make a buck, and for years they have dumped this dribble into the laps of voters who, as Bret says, it would be nice to blame immigrants. It would be nice to blame foreigners. But where do we get these wrong-headed ideas? It's the Sean's, the Rush's, and many others who have told you a story not unlike the ones our opponents did, which has no bearing in reality.

00:43:06

Now if Donald Trump were really the result of an economic down boom or economic collapse, you'd think that they'd be poor, right? You know what the average salary, the average income of a Trump voter is? \$72,000. These are not people down on their luck. These are people looking to blame others. Thank you.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Jennifer Rubin. And that concludes round one of this Intelligence Squared U.S. Debate where our motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. Okay. Please remember again how you voted at the beginning of the debate. I want to remind you that after you've heard all of the arguments we're going to have you vote a second time and reminding you that it's the difference between the first and the second vote that will determine our winner. Which team's numbers go up the most in percentage point terms. Now we move on to round two and in round two the debaters address one another directly and they take questions from me and from you in our live audience.

00:44:07

Our motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. We have heard the team arguing for the motion, Ben Domenech and Tim Carney argued that what we are seeing in Trump's success as a candidate is ordinary people reasserting themselves against a list

of leaders who have produced only failure in their lives and failures for their country. They described a system of cronyism and self-serving among a long list of people. They identified the elites specifically in their argument as the men and women who have been in charge over the last 10 to 20 years in the major institutions in the United States, political and otherwise. They make the argument that the distrust that the elites have experienced is earned due to the failure of institutions run by those elites. The team arguing against the motion, Bret Stephens and Jennifer Rubin, well they did a bold thing by pointing out that the Intelligence Squared audience itself is comprised largely of elites causing consternation among many who were not sure whether to take that as a compliment or an insult.

00:45:12

[laughter]

But they argue more broadly that the notion that the elites need to be blamed for the decision that people are making and full responsibility is condescending to the Trump voters themselves. They believe that there is a fake victimization card being played by Trump and exploited by Trump. They talk about, in fact, the country being better off than -- far better off than their opponents depicted. They reject this notion of a dystopian United States and they believe that conservatives do not argue that immigration causes unemployment. They say that the decline in America that Trump blames on elites is a fiction. I want to go to the team that's arguing against the motion, Jennifer Rubin and Ben Domenech [sic], and see if I can ask you to resolve something that is confusing me a little bit about your argument. On the one hand you are saying that Trump supporters have been fed a line of misrepresentation of the state of things in America through, for example, you named the Sean's and the Rush's telling a pretty negative story and making people feel bad about themselves so that Trump can swoop in and make them feel better.

00:46:19

At the same time you're saying it's condescending to voters -- to those voters to say that they don't know what they're doing? That they're responsible for their votes and I'm not sure if those two things go together. So, I wanted to see maybe if start with Bret if you could take that on.

Bret Stephens:  
Do you want to start?

Jennifer Rubin:  
Sure.

John Donovan:

Okay. Jennifer Rubin.

Jennifer Rubin:

Thank you. It's not internally inconsistent at all. Voters are ultimately responsible for what they do with this information. They're ultimately responsible for educating themselves. They're ultimately responsible for picking up a real newspaper or listening to some real news to inform themselves. They cannot hide behind the Sean's and the Rush's.

00:47:02

That, however, does not minimize the damage that the Sean's and the Rush's and the blogs and the rest have done. They have poisoned the body politic. They have made, as we have seen in history so many times, the outsider, the other -- the source of these people's hardship. It's not unusual, I think, that media and social media should be such a fixation with Donald Trump. What's his favorite medium? Twitter. There the so-called alt-right, the right-wing and the white nationalists congregate and there his message is spread in all of social media's glory. And what is it? It's not a message of economic revival or renewal, it's a message of anti-Semitism, of racism, of misogyny.

00:48:11

So, yes, I do hold the voters responsible, but they've had some help along the way.

John Donovan:

I want to let Ben Domenech respond.

Ben Domenech:

I'm -- I have to welcome Jennifer for agreeing with us. I mean, if you don't think that Sean Hannity, who is flying Newt Gingrich around in his personal jet to try to get him to be Donald Trump's vice president isn't elitist I don't know what you're thinking. I mean, --

Jennifer Rubin:

He doesn't think he's elitist.

Ben Domenech:

He's the definition of a media elite.

Jennifer Rubin:

He doesn't think he is.

Ben Domenech:

Sean Hannity thinks about himself is his business, but I mean, just definitively you're talking about multi-millionaire media elites with gigantic megaphones who've been saying things for a long time. Whether you agree with the level of responsibility they have or not, when you say that they were responsible for this you're saying an elite person was responsible.

Jennifer Rubin:

No. You're not listening. What I said --

[laughter]

-- was that voters are ultimately responsible and Sean Hannity doesn't think he's an elitist. He's the champion of the anti-elitist and, by the way, he's a college dropout.

00:49:10

So, it's not as if these are sophisticated people. Part of the problem is that an elitist is everyone and anyone --

John Donovan:

Tim Carney.

Jennifer Rubin:

Why don't we --

John Donovan:

Jennifer. Jennifer, let me let Tim come in, please. Tim, jump on in.

Timothy Carney:

Yeah, so I would just add that Jennifer's phrase shuffling of the workforce, that was -- that would be quite a phrase to bring to the places I went out on the campaign trail.

Jennifer Rubin:

Perhaps --

John Donovan:

Jennifer, -- Jennifer. Hang on. Hang on. I just want to set a little bit of a ground rule. I'm okay with the occasional spontaneous break-in, but I need you to let him get his argument out and then we can return to you, to your side. Okay. Thanks.

Timothy Carney:

Come out to West Allis, Wisconsin, outside of Milwaukee, see Jay LaRoc [spelled phonetically] suffering. You know, he's a Gulf War, he's had a quadruple bypass

surgery. He's unable to find a job. Gary Lemay [spelled phonetically], who is out there, two tours in the Persian Gulf, disabled, can't find a job.

00:50:09

Was promised by his Congressman, Paul Ryan, that he was going to get help. Didn't get it. Jeff Mason, the factory worker, the son of a factory worker who is now driving a truck for half the wages of that. And you tell them that there's simply shuffling of the workforce. Yes. The markets have winners and losers when they do it. The Republican leadership explicitly promised that they were going to fight for these people, and they repeatedly delivered -- not just free trade, but subsidized trade. Not just open borders, but again, bringing in guest workers, importing -- not allowing low-skilled workers to come over, but importing workers who have -- who are totally unfree to leave their jobs, because that's an immediate deportation. This was rigging of the game.

John Donovan:  
Okay.

Timothy Carney:  
This was not free enterprise.

John Donovan:  
Bret Stephens.

Bret Stephens:  
Are there black people in the working class? Are there Hispanics? Are there Catholics? I think so.

00:51:06

Are they suffering from the shuffling of the workforce or creative destruction? Probably. Why aren't they responding to Trump's message? They're making a very Marxist argument, which is amusing, coming from someone from the American Enterprise Institute --

[laughter]

-- which is that this is all about class. This is about how the elite class -- and by the way, Sean Hannity and I disagree about everything, but the one thing we do agree about is he is not a member of the elite, okay? However much money he may have. All right? Back to the point. So, all of these people who are making -- you know, I don't know, third, fourth quintile of income, they're affected by the same forces. And yet, they see Trump for who he is, and they're refusing to respond to his message. Who is responding to the message, and why? It's not because of class.

00:52:04

It's not because of globalization. It's not because of the threat of immigrant workers. It's because of an appeal to demagogic, race-baiting, and immigrant bashing.

John Donovan:

Let's get Ben Domenech's response.

Ben Domenech:

So, I want to make --

[applause]

-- I want to make two points about this. The first is, one of the most telltale signs of whether you're going to be a Trump voter or not was actually not your own economic success -- it was your proximity to economic anxiety. There have been multiple looks at this. We have a great deal of data on this. NBC News did a fantastic report by Benjy Sarlin, and I encourage you to look it up, that looked at Trump's America. And what they found was the people who were most actively in favor of Donald Trump was not the person suffering from the opioid crisis; it's the person who knows that person. It's their father. It's their mom. It's the person who thinks that we need dramatic change in this country. And that, to me, is a telltale sign of why this rejection is one of the elites. It is a rejection of the people who have been in charge.

00:53:03

They want a dramatic change agent. That change agent is not a good vehicle for the change that they actually want to achieve, in my view. But it is an element of change, an instant where they're -- they feel that they have to do something dramatically different in order to get something different from our government. If that isn't a rejection of the political elite, I don't know what is.

John Donovan:

Let me put it in our -- a question again to the side arguing against the motion. All right. So, you're making the claim that certain people -- Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh -- are such a small cadre that they don't represent the broad elite, okay? And your opponents disagree with that. But I want to move on to another part of their argument, which is there's a larger systemic cronyism involved in Washington. They described Washington as a favor factory. I'm doubting you're going to dispute that. And part of their argument is that the have-nots look at the haves, and think not only do they have stuff, but they have stuff because they're cheating and the game is rigged -- that the elites are, as your opponents said, living in an economic bubble of protection. They get to drink the white wine and go to Europe --

Bret Stephens:  
Sure.

John Donovan:  
-- as you just pointed out.

Bret Stephens:  
There's a lot of cronyism.

John Donovan:  
So what --

Bret Stephens:  
There's been cronyism since the dawn of time.

00:54:04

John Donovan:  
And the last -- I'll just nail the last part of their point is that this -- the resentment that's come -- that's arisen from that, has led to a breakdown in trust, which has enabled Trump.

Bret Stephens:  
No. I mean, look, there's been cronyism since some kind of deal was struck to put Washington D.C. in the swamp that it's in. And ever since -- this is not a new phenomenon. People have been mad about cronyism for a long time. And various politicians of all kinds of stripes -- Jimmy Carter would be an example of one, Ronald Reagan might be an example of a Republican -- have tried to do something about it. It's been part of our system. That's what -- that's not what's new here, okay? You can go back to the 1970s to look at books written against crony capitalism and so on. The Wall Street Journal was writing those editorials at the time. What's new is the appearance of a demagogue on the scene who has been fueled by social media and his little helpers in the non-elite media to spread a message appealing to the basest instincts. Let me tell you something.

00:55:11

Why did --

John Donovan:  
I -- see -- I want to stop you there, because you had the floor for a while. Let Tim Carney respond. You can come back. Tim Carney.

Timothy Carney:

So, rather than try to follow Bret on his navigation of which Fox News hosts are elite and which Fox News hosts aren't elite -- because if you've seen Bret Baier and the way he dresses, I think he counts as elite, but I'm not sure about Hannity, because he wears jeans under the table on the air. But the cronyism --

[laughter]

-- the cronyism, a, is reaching new heights. I mean, again, you look at this. You look at the bailouts of Wall Street. You look at Obamacare, where you had -- again, these are Republican leaders, the people who were put in power, Bob Dole, and Bill Frist, and Billy Tauzin -- all enriching themselves off of this corrupt law that then takes away choice from consumers. What's new is that when the government power reaches these heights and the Republicans ran against it, and then they showed that they said, "This is a cesspool," and then they got there, and it felt more like a hot tub to them, and they stayed.

00:56:07

[laughter]

And that's --

[applause]

-- that's what's new, is that the Republican voters -- the populist voters saw that they were consistently being lied to by everybody inside the Beltway. So, they turned to the guy who at least admits he's a crony capitalist and says he alone can fix it because he knows how the game is played. So, it was the guys who rigged the game who set the stage for Donald Trump.

John Donovan:

Jennifer Rubin.

Jennifer Rubin:

Cronyism is a problem, but Donald Trump rarely talks about it, except to boast of his own efforts at cronyism. What does he talk about 90 percent of the time? Immigrants, trade. It is, as Bret says, about something much more sinister than economics and cronyism. And our opponents still haven't answered the question. Why is it that African Americans aren't upset about cronyism? Don't they count? Virtually none of them are supporting Donald Trump. What about Hispanics? He's doing worse than Mitt Romney, which is not easy.

00:57:11

[laughter]

Don't they care about cronyism? What about women? Women overwhelmingly don't like Donald Trump.

John Donovan:

But Jennifer, in that case, doesn't the race-baiting and the sexism negate the appeal that Trump would have to those populations you're talking about?

Jennifer Rubin:

Of course it does. But they're arguing that the Trump phenomenon arose because of this populist uprising, because of this disgust with Washington. Well, Catholics are just as disgusted with Washington, and they're not responsible for Donald Trump. Hispanics are just as upset about cronyism as Donald Trump, and they're running in the other direction in droves. And women as well.

John Donovan:

But if you --

Jennifer Rubin:

They're trying, every which way they can, but to hold Donald Trump responsible for what he is, a racist, a bigot, a misogynist.

00:58:06

And he has touched on something that many of us are horrified to see. But the longer we ignore it, and the more we make excuses for it, the more we let him and the people who support him off the hook.

John Donovan:

Ben Domenech.

Ben Domenech:

The problem with Jennifer's argument is that she's basically agreeing with Hillary Clinton about the "basket of deplorables" and all that stuff, which, from my perspective, is really unfair to Trump's voters, because, you know, frankly -- I mean, if you're saying that the reason that he's had success is racism and misogyny, I think you're ignoring the fact that for years, polls have told Republicans in Washington that a significant portion of the country, 35 percent according to one survey, believed that it was important to enforce our immigration laws and to deport people who were here illegally. There are a lot of people who shared that opinion, but the elite consensus in Washington, the bipartisan consensus, was that "you're not allowed to want that thing."

00:59:00

And that was being told to the base of the Republican Party for years. It's not racist to want to actually enforce our immigration laws. That's something that's an opinion held by a lot of people who are not racist or misogynist, and voted for Donald Trump not because they thought that he was going to say racist things, and misogynist things, and that they enjoyed that -- but because they thought that he would stand up to the existing elite consensus in Washington and turn it on its head.

Timothy Carney:

And to point out that racism and misogyny that Donald Trump peddles appeals to racists and misogynists is simply deflecting. Yes, Donald Trump bears blame for the Donald Trump phenomenon, but the fact is the elites have helped set up the system in which that kind of stuff has purchase. It's like when people -- when liberals said that greed was responsible for the Wall Street collapse in 2008. That's like saying airplanes -- gravity is responsible for an airplane crash. Racism and misogyny are always there. Why is it happening now? It's because the elites have failed, and a lot of the working class, a lot of the out of power -- the people who don't live in those five of the six richest counties within the Beltway, they feel the game is rigged against them and the demagogue now is able to grab them because the elites failed them.

01:00:12

John Donovan:

Bret Stephens, are you seeing --

[applause]

Male Speaker:

Can I -- can I --

John Donovan:

No, yeah, yeah. Please respond. Go ahead, Bret Stephens.

Bret Stephens:

[inaudible] very point, because it's important. So you guys are to blame for the racism and misogyny just let's not forget you're the elite, you're to blame. You know, for a long time I think most of us in this room kept thinking well, one day Donald Trump is going to say something that's so bad that the bubble will burst, right? And at first it was the McCain comment. Then it was the Megyn Kelly comment. Then maybe the Mussolini comment. Then maybe that horrendous comment about Judge Curiel, Gonzalo Curiel, then Mexicans as racists. No, that was before. Anyway, a whole succession of things. And I want to say at one point he's going to say something and it's just -- it's

going to end it and it never happened and I kept wondering why -- why does this not happen? And I thought, you know why? I'll tell you why.

01:01:06

Because this is like a strip club and every time he says something dirty it turns out people want more of it.

[laughter]

And so what he was doing, what he was doing they're like take it off, take more off, take more off.

[laughter]

He was appealing to the pornographic instinct of a part of the American population. What was happening was the species of political pornography. Now, Mrs. Clinton just said this terrible thing, the "basket of deplorables" and we're all saying oh, it was bad politics, but you know what? It wasn't untrue. It wasn't untrue. Okay. YouGov, which is a polling agency, does a poll. There was a story in the *Economist* about this, which you know, last I checked was not a terrible source of media, looks like 58 percent of the respondents who said they backed Mr. Trump resided in the polls highest quartile for combined racial resentment scores and we all know that this is about right.

01:02:15

John Donovan:

All right. Let's let your opponents respond. I just want to let you know, you have a two-fer coming, because they appropriated two in a row, so you have that to hold in reserve. Who would like to respond to what your opponents are saying?

[laughter]

John Donovan:

Tim Carney.

Timothy Carney:

I disagree with Bret Stephens and with Hillary Clinton that a quarter of the population is unredeemable and my bias on the table is I'm a Christian and I think everyone is redeemable and that I think it is at the heart of the opposition's argument to paint a huge portion of the country, and not a small portion. I grant -- I deal with these people on Twitter as badly as you do, Jen. I mean, they -- some of these Trump people on Twitter are literally the worst people in the world and I agree --

[laughter]

-- they're deplorable. I think they're redeemable, but the --

[laughter]

That Hillary was right that 24 percent of the country is deplorable and irredeemable, that really is one of the arguments they have to make and to do it their -- you know, the -- they have to say that there is no working class.

01:03:14

There is no legitimate working class grievance and that's an easy thing to say when you're in this auditorium when everybody's been to Europe in the last five years, I don't know what that wine is, Bret, but if any of you have it, I'd like to taste it.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

And Tim Carney, what do you make of your opponent's use of the notion that the victimization is fake? That it's mocked up?

Timothy Carney:

So, the fact is I agree -- the way I've put it is that there has long been sort of a subsidy propping up low-skilled white guys and to some extent this disappeared, that we have restrictions on trade, restrictions on immigration and low-skilled white guys had higher wages than they long did. And so you could say things are becoming more fair. I agree, but the fact is that the white working class has seen their wages fall while Hispanics, while women, while black women, not black men, but every other group has seen their wages go up since 1999.

01:04:07

So, these people who didn't rig the game in their favor, the working class whites that did not rig the game in their favor in the 1990s, it became unrigged and now they see things going against them. And the fact is, the Republicans told them, if the Republicans hadn't over-promised, the Republican elites over-promised. They said we're going to repeal your Obamacare, we're going to restore your wages, that they constantly made those promises and never delivered. So, the victimization, some of it's real, some of it's fake, but the fact is the Republican elites were the ones getting up the hopes.

John Donovan:

Okay. Jennifer Rubin.

Jennifer Rubin:

Well, we were talking about deplorable, not irredeemable and we Jews just believe in good and evil. We don't think everyone is redeemable.

[laughter]

Be that as it may, --

Male Speaker:

According to David Duke.

Jennifer Rubin:

Yeah. Be that as it may, there is something disturbing. In one poll we saw earlier in the year, 59 percent of Trump voters believe President Obama was born in Kenya. That, I'm sorry, you can call it whatever you want, but you're not responsible for it and that is racism.

01:05:18

And there have always been in history, whether it was the Jews, whether it was the blacks, whether it was the immigrants, whether it was the communists, whether it was the gays, there's a long list of culprits that are dragged out to explain why people aren't responsible for their own lives.

John Donovan:

Bret Stephens, let me ask you this and this will be part of your two-fer, I guess. On the whole do you feel the elites are doing a pretty good job?

[laughter]

Bret Stephens:

As Israeli friends of mine like to say "it's depend."

[laughter]

I bet everyone in this room is doing a pretty good job of whatever it is they're doing, doctors, educators, lawyers, whatever.

01:06:13

That's part of the elite. Is the Washington elite doing a pretty good job? No. The Washington elite is not doing such a pretty good job. Okay? That's -- I don't think that's

particularly controversial, okay? But the real question is then are they doing such a horrendous job that they've created this utter dystopia where we walk out into a kind of war zone that we hardly recognize. You know, you watch certain cable news shows that I won't mention here and you would think that this country is utterly falling apart. How parochial is this? Go someplace, people, and look at the way the world is and feel blessed with all of our problems here in America to be in the United States today.

John Donovan:

I want to let --

[applause]

I want to let Ben Domenech have the microphone to reply and after that I want to start going to audience questions, so please get your questions ready.

01:07:10

Remember I'll call on you. Please wait for the microphone and stand up, tell us who you are, especially if you are writing or sharing the story publicly. Let us know who you're with and Ben Domenech.

Ben Domenech:

The issue here, I think, really is a lack of appreciation for the level of dramatic change that the American people want to see. When I started out I talked about the number of people who have a significant amount of faith in various institutions and I mentioned Congress. Congress actually has zero percent in that, okay? Zero. The level of dramatic change people want to see, I think, is a lot bigger than just the people that Bret is talking about. The -- Fox News just had its best quarter that it's ever had, but the average viewership on each day was 1.3 million people. You would have to have a situation where all of those people were going out and getting nine of their friends to vote for Donald Trump to get the totals that he got.

01:08:04

I just think that this is a lot more about the dramatic change that people want to see within this country feeling that the system is rigged against them, feeling the dramatic changes necessary, and looking to this man as a vehicle for that change. I don't think it's simply a number of Americans who want to see more racism and misogyny in our public square as if it's a strip club.

John Donovan:

Okay. Thank you. Let's go to some audience questions now. Right down in the aisle, sir. If you could stand up, a mic's coming down behind you over your right shoulder. Yeah.

Male Speaker:

I hate to --

John Donovan:

Would you mind telling us your name?

Male Speaker:

Yes. My name is David Bronchvy [spelled phonetically]. I hate to address a question to neither side, but to you, sir. I'm surprised that this question has morphed into another question, which is which of the two sides is most stridently anti-Trump? Because right now I have the impression that one is.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Well, I take that as their right to be anti-Trump, sir.

01:09:08

Male Speaker:

My name is Vibuty Char [spelled phonetically]. I'm very delighted that I came from Long Island to attend the first-ever debate here, because I frequently participate in the Indian television channels. Bret Stephens, I'm delighted to meet you today, because I read your articles in *Wall Street Journal* --

John Donovan:

Sir, I -- you can chat with him afterwards. I need your question.

Male Speaker:

The question is here the elites have failed, with coming from India as I do and if I didn't tell you I was a Hindu then you would think I was a Muslim, but my impression is that America is going down the wrong path. Everything that made America great is not happening anymore.

John Donovan:

Sir, I need you to get to your question, please.

Male Speaker:

The question is, are you drifting to a society of freebies or people are going to --

John Donovan:

Okay. I'm going to pass on that question, because it doesn't help us get to a new place on the motion itself.

01:10:04

So, with respect I'm going to pass on it, but you are also welcome to chat -- everybody is, by the way. You can rush the stage afterwards.

[laughter]

Right down in front here. And again, the microphone is going to come down on your left side.

Female Speaker:

Hello. Sorry, my name is Palmer [spelled phonetically]. My question is basically, could you please define for me who you think the elite are? You pointed out in your opening --

John Donovan:

Okay. You got it.

Female Speaker:

-- statement.

John Donovan:

You nailed it -- no, but let's -- go ahead. That was a perfect question.

Jennifer Rubin:

All right.

John Donovan:

Jennifer Rubin.

Jennifer Rubin:

Well, that's one of the problems with the motion, is that an elite can be anything you say it is. It's this amorphous, nothing word that people toss around to explain who other people are that they don't particularly like. But that's a problem for the motion. We're against the motion, so we don't think that blaming amorphous, indescribable segments of society that can mean anything --

John Donovan:

Okay.

Jennifer Rubin:

-- you want them to.

01:11:12

John Donovan:

So, we have a problem with the motion and we have a problem with the moderator. I'm

—

[laughter]

-- I'm sorry.

Jennifer Rubin:

Okay --

John Donovan:

But I do think your opponents actually came up with a very specific definition of their notion of elites. I want to know what your response to it is. Can you recite it in one sentence, what you said before in your opening statement, Tim Carney?

Timothy Carney:

The people in power and in elected office who have been in charge of this country for the last couple of decades.

John Donovan:

Do you buy that? Does that work for you?

Bret Stephens:

No.

John Donovan:

Why not, Bret Stephens?

Bret Stephens:

Not at all. Well, first of all, some of them -- I mean, is Obama, George W. Bush? Is -- I mean, we're talking about still a huge collection of people with widely different ideas. And the idea is you just lump them all together as the elite in some kind of weird, Marxist way -- like this -- the upper classes, the bourgeoisie -- sticking it to the proletariat.

01:12:06

And that's simply not the case. The people to blame for the Trump phenomenon first and foremost are the Trump voters who have been bamboozled into a low appeal -- not to the better angels of their nature, as Abraham Lincoln said in his first inaugural address, but to their very worst and basest political views and prejudices.

John Donovan:  
Ben Domenech.

Ben Domenech:  
But why were they bamboozled? Why were they vulnerable to that message? The message really does say a lot more than just racism and misogyny. It's rejection of Republican orthodoxy that's been around for a long time when it comes to the economy. It's rejection of Republican foreign policy, explicitly over and over again. What I keep hearing from Bret and from Jennifer is that nothing really needs to change, that things were actually going pretty much okay, and that Trump just came along and put together this witches brew of racism and misogyny that was able to somehow, you know, bamboozle all these different people. The reason that they were willing -- that they were open to being pulled along these lines is because of real things that were going on in their lives, not just because they wanted more craziness in their media life.

01:13:12

John Donovan:  
Thank you for that question. Sir, right there.

[applause]

And I do want to emphasize -- in the last question -- like, really just getting to the question often -- no, but it often turns out to be your best moment. So, go for it.

Male Speaker:  
Hello. David Dorie [spelled phonetically], first time listener -- or long-time listener, first time question asker. So, this question is for both sides. Do you think -- and so far, there are -- as there are elites in the media, do you think that some of these media elites, particularly on the left side, have given Trump more of a megaphone and have sort of enjoyed, like, some sort of self-righteous condemnation of him now for a long time? You know, the Huffington Post, for example, et cetera. Do you think, to some degree, they are to blame --

John Donovan:  
Okay.

Male Speaker:  
-- for giving him a megaphone?

John Donovan:  
And you -- so you're taking it out of that Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh -- actually looking at the left. And you're asking, do the media elites on the left have some responsibility

for the Trump phenomenon? I want to take that to -- Ben Domenech, you want to take it?

01:14:12

Ben Domenech:

Absolutely. The media elites, at least on the left, made this possible, in part, by over criticizing people who didn't deserve it. If -- the things that were printed about Mitt Romney in 2012 in the *New York Times* by Paul Krugman called him a "charlatan," "pathologically dishonest," "untrustworthy." He said he didn't even pretend to care about poor people, that he wants people to die so that rich people get richer. "He's completely amoral, a dangerous fool, ignorant as well as uncaring."

Male Speaker:

Sounds familiar.

Ben Domenech:

If you cry wolf long enough, sometimes the beast actually shows up, okay?

[laughter]

And when that happens -

[applause]

And when that happens, they no longer had a vocabulary that could be used, because everyone tunes them out and says, "Well, you were saying that about this nice Mormon businessman, you know, four years ago."

[laughter]

John Donovan:

Response from the other side?

Bret Stephens:

Well, I mean, to your question, sure, the media participated, to some extent, in the rise of this guy. But they weren't pushing him.

01:15:14

And they certainly weren't electing him, okay? So, you can look at aspects of what you might call "elite media," whether it's Joe Scarborough or someone like that -- or Mika Brzezinski and find -- to give this character some airtime, thinking, "He can't possibly go anywhere." But we're talking about -- what is the phenomenon really all about? So, you

will find little points in the media where you'll say, "This guy is definitely an elitist and this guy bears some kind of blame for Trump's rise." We're talking about where the blame truly -- where the weight of the blame truly lies. And again, I insist -- and by the way, there's some elite people who support Trump. I don't know. Peter Thiel, I guess you could say, is definitely a member of the elite. But no one seriously --

John Donovan:

Or possibly people who don't like the moderator.

[laughter]

I'm just not sure.

Bret Stephens:

Especially.

John Donovan:

I'm just not sure.

Bret Stephens:

Especially. But none of that is particularly -- it doesn't dispose of the argument.

01:16:09

The real question is, how was Donald Trump -- how was it that we had this moment where a demagogue was able to use tools of social media at his disposal to speak directly to millions of people? Now, you might then say, "Blame Twitter or blame a new information economy that disintermediates a guy like Trump from -- or disintermediates the media from, you know, between Trump and his audience," right? Those are sort of broad phenomenon. It's an interesting discussion. But where does the weight of the blame lie? Is it really the fact that the people who worked hardest to oppose Trump -- so, if I'm elite media, the *Wall Street Journal* deputy editor, okay? I've done everything in my power to stop this guy. I have done everything under my power to scream from the rooftop that this is a form of demagoguery that we saw in the 1930s in Europe and in the 1970s in Latin America -- we're seeing today in the Philippines.

01:17:11

You can blame me for not having a big enough megaphone or for not being an articulate enough columnist, right? And I accept that. But don't blame me -- okay -- or you, or anyone else in this audience, for this phenomenon of hatred, bigotry, nativism, and an angry turn at people who should not be blamed -- whether it's -- quote --

John Donovan:

Okay.

Bret Stephens:

-- elite or --

John Donovan:

Bret, I --

Bret Stephens:

-- whether it's Hispanics or Muslims.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Bret. I want to remind our audience that we are in the question-and-answer section of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. I'm John Donovan, your moderator. We have four debaters -- two teams of two -- arguing it out over this motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. I want to let Tim Carney respond to what you just said.

Timothy Carney:

I will disagree with Bret's implications that his columnist skills are limited. I think they're excellent, and I don't blame him for anything he's done.

01:18:04

He's performed valiantly during this campaign. What I do blame him for -- or his publication for -- is what they did before. I've agreed with the *Wall Street Journal* 80 percent of the time. But when they were -- and when Bret was advocating for the Iraq War, that was creating this system where the Republicans and where the elites were promising we will be greeted as liberators, and you created a war that helped destroy the Republican Party, made Nancy Pelosi the Speaker of the House, and that created this total distrust of the government. The support for the Wall Street bailout, which then we saw stock market rally to record highs, and median wages stay totally flat -- until the data we got today. So, yes, the -- Bret Stephens has performed very well this election, but a lot of the elite media there too, by advocating stuff like the disastrous Iraq War, helped set the table for somebody like Trump to say, "These people are stupid. They don't know what they're doing."

John Donovan:

And Bret Stephens, I want to point out, is the only person on this stage who has won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary.

01:19:01

[laughter]

And I --

[applause]

-- I want to congratulate you for being wise enough not to pull that out yourself. So, one more question. Then we're going to move on. I have been favoring the back, but ma'am, right down in front. Yeah. Yeah, and you're pointing to yourself just now. I apologize to the people upstairs. I can't bring you into the conversation. But right down in the fifth row. And if you can stand up, they'll find you. Yes. Coming down the left side. Thanks.

Female Speaker:

All right. Thank you. My name is Tina Hastings. So, if I'm understanding you correctly, you're saying basically that the Republican elite is responsible for the Trump phenomenon? Will you say that they are also responsible for the Bernie Sanders phenomenon, another populist candidate who made --

John Donovan:

Well, that's not directly on point. I find it an interesting enough question, because the issue of distrust in institutions remains relevant. I want to see what the opponents -- what you have to say about that. Tim Carney.

Timothy Carney:

Yeah. I would definitely say both parties are responsible for the Bernie Sanders phenomenon.

01:20:02

And when I went -- I camped out at Occupy Wall Street. And what I saw there was just a deep dissatisfaction, this idea that people no longer had the ability to control the world around them. Sort of politics, in the Greek sense of the word of being an active member, being a citizen, that that was evaporated, that the concentration of power in Washington, the concentration of wealth, that those were two sides of the same coin and that we had been -- we had been stripped of our power as citizens and that was what drove a huge part of Occupy Wall Street, a huge part of Bernie Sanders, and I do think it was a bipartisan thing to suck power into Washington, D.C. that subsequently sucked wealth into Washington, D.C., left the rest of the country not just poor, but more powerless.

John Donovan:

Okay. Another question. Ma'am, right -- yep. And there's a mic coming up the aisle, up the stairs to you.

Female Speaker:

Hi there. My name is Jane Gordon. One of the propellants of the Trump Movement is this notion that there should be a return to a Christian nation and I would like to ask the proponents what role they believe that has played in Mr. Trump's rise?

01:21:13

John Donovan:

I'm going to pass on that, because I feel that this side actually made that argument strongly -- or touched on that argument, not strongly, and it doesn't really get to the issue of the elite. It's a second factor. There are other factors as well and we're trying to stick on the elite one. Sir, and the mic's coming down on your left-hand side.

Male Speaker:

My name is Jeremy Senderowitz [spelled phonetically] and I have a question for the proponents of the motion. Do you think that the Trump voters are accurately assessing the failures of the elites and how those failures real or not have affected their lives?

John Donovan:

Tim Carney.

Timothy Carney:

Yeah, I go to -- again, I go to these Trump rallies.

01:22:01

I've been to a dozen Trump rallies in 10 states and I've talked to them and I wouldn't say that these are the people who are the sharpest policy analysts in the world, but that's not to their discredit. Most normal people don't spend their time doing what we spend our time doing, an analysis on it. They blame it on immigrants and I think that that is inaccurate. They blame it on free trade and I think that that is inaccurate. But the reason that they are blaming it on them -- the reason that -- the fact that they are suffering economically is inarguable. Manufacturing jobs, we've lost millions of them over the last decade and the fact that working class wages is falling is also inarguable. Mostly their solutions, protectionism and closing the borders. I find those both counterproductive and dumb, but their assessment that their own economic and the economic -- as Ben said the economic well-being of their neighbors has gone down, that aspect I see as accurate.

John Donovan:

Jennifer Rubin. Response.

01:23:02

Jennifer Rubin:

My is that condescending. Kind of elitist, actually, to assume that voters don't know what they're talking about or don't know what they think. They're voting for someone who's views are very well known. Whether you and I agree with them is beside the point. We should stop infantilizing. These people are responsible. They know what Donald Trump is selling and they like it. And let's not say well, they're not the sharpest knife in the drawers. My, isn't that condescending.

John Donovan:

We're going to now go to conclude this round to what we call the volley round and the volley round is a very, very tightly timed round and each team, one member of each team will have 30 seconds to point out the supreme weakness in their opponent's argument as they've heard it presented tonight and then the other team will have 45 seconds that they can one or both speakers can respond to rebut the attack on their argument and then we will reverse the trend.

01:24:06

So, there will be a clock behind them. When their time is up I'll ring this bell. They have to stop talking and the voice goes to the other side. So, which of the two of you would like to be going first with the for side, you have 30 seconds then. Ben Domenech, the supreme weakness in your opponent's argument starting now.

Ben Domenech:

I think the weakest aspect of their argument is really basically that nothing needs to change. It's basically whistling past the graveyard of all of these signs that we have that show that people want dramatic change. They want a dramatic shift away from the direction that policy was going. I think the weakest part of their argument is basically claiming things were going okay and then this black swan event happened and now we don't need to re-evaluate any of the policy critiques, any of the criticisms that he made or that voters who supported him seem to be making.

John Donovan:

Okay. You came in under time. A response, 45 seconds, from the opponents.

Bret Stephens:

It's an absurd charge. Plenty of things need to change in this country. There are plenty of ways we can make this country a lot better.

01:25:02

The question is, how do you go about changing it? Who is responsible for the problems that this country faces today and what is some kind of recipe? Now, the Trump message is the people who are responsible are other people, the Chinese and the Mexicans who beat us in trade deals, or Latin American labor that comes in and steals

your jobs or Muslims who want to destroy your community. I don't think the question is whether there needs to be change. The question is why is it that they are responding to this message of hatred of others and self-exculpation.

John Donovan:

All right. Now this team. One of you has the opportunity to point -- I'm sorry, this team. One of you has the opportunity to point out the supreme weakness in your opponents. Thirty seconds starts now. Jennifer Rubin.

Jennifer Rubin:

No matter how hard we try they've never answered the question as to why Hispanics who have suffered and African Americans who have suffered and women who have not -- who have suffered are not buying this. What's their response? Are we saying only white people in America have suffered?

01:26:09

John Donovan:

Response.

Timothy Carney:

I'm perfectly happy to grant that Donald Trump deals in racism and misogyny and that that is a part of his appeal, and I would say that that in no way exculpates the elites. That -- in fact, it makes the blame even worse that they've paved the road for this man who could deal with this stuff. What happened was the game was rigged and there was a very conservative way to say this game is rigged, we're going to unrig it, and that was by railing against crony capitalism. That was by going and arguing for a fair freer market and the Republicans instead squelched it. They pushed away the 47 percent and they engaged even more in the crony capitalism. So when they could point at -- when the Republicans could have pointed at the actual perpetrators they didn't, so a guy could come in and he could point at the innocent supposed perpetrators, the immigrants, the blacks, the women, he ran away with it.

01:27:03

John Donovan:

And that concludes round two of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate.

[applause]

Where our motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. And now we move on to round three. Round three will be brief closing statements by each debater in turn. Those statements will be two minutes each. Here making his closing statement in

support of the motion Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, Ben Domenech, publisher of the Federalist and host of the Federalist radio hour.

[applause]

Ben Domenech:

I had the luxury of spending a lot of time over the past year and a half in a lot of green rooms with a lot of media elites and one of the things that I would always ask when I was in these green rooms is if they were close to anybody, family or friend, who was voting from Donald Trump and asked them why. And what was amazing was the sheer degree to which so many of them knew no one, knew no one in their lives who was voting for Donald Trump.

01:28:05

It's no question here to me that the elites bear the responsibility for the rise of Trump in part by the thickness of the bubble they have insulated around themselves where they couldn't understand why this phenomenon was happening. From my perspective what we've heard tonight from Jen and from Bret, respectfully, is that the overall agenda was not the problem, that war, that immigration policy, that trade policy, that all of these other critiques that Donald Trump was alleging were not the problem, that it wasn't a problem that we can't run a VA or keep track of a terrorist's wife for 24 hours. None of those things were really the big problem in the country and instead I hear them saying I don't know, I mean, it kind of reminds me of saying you'll be back, time will tell, you'll remember that I served you well. And to me that's just whistling past the point of understanding what was really going on here, which is the American people looked at the agenda that the elites were offering them. They became disgusted with that failure and in their desperation they turned to a man they didn't fully understand because he offered them something different from the failures they knew. Vote for the motion.

01:29:16

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you. Ben Domenech.

[applause]

And that motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon and here to summarize his position against that motion, Bret Stephens, deputy editorial page editor and author of the global view column for the Wall Street Journal.

Bret Stephens:

Well, today I received a Tweet, the kind of Tweet I get all the time in response to my column and I brought it. I'll read it to you. It's by someone who calls himself Deplorable Nizzly.

[laughter]

He's one of the deplorables. He writes, "How oven worthy are WSJ editorial staff? #very. I get this stuff all the time. Now, the question before you is are you prepared to blame yourselves for this? Are you? What I would offer -- what I would say to you is do not condescend to the people who are proud of putting that Tweet on Twitter, by saying they know not what they do, that they're not accountable for their political choices.

01:30:32

Do not -- I beg you -- do not accord the status of "victim" to people like this, or people who say slightly less deplorable things. They are not victims. They are looking to victimize somebody else. And finally, I would say, do not indict yourself for the choices, and mistakes, and the bigotries of other voters. This is a free country.

01:31:06

At Trump rallies, people wave American flags. They believe in the American creed. And when you speak to them, they'll say, "It's time people take some personal responsibility for their bad choices." Maybe it's time that they should take some personal responsibility for their choices. The blame for the Trump phenomenon ultimately lies with them, not with you. Vote against this motion.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Bret Stephens.

[applause]

Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon is the motion. And here making his closing statement in support of the motion, Tim Carney, senior political columnist for the Washington Examiner.

Timothy Carney:

A large part of what the opposition has engaged in tonight was an exercise in deflection, that when the camera was pointed at the elites, they said, "No. It was this other guy who -- you know, he's a millionaire, but we won't count him as an elite."

01:32:02

Or when the camera was pointed at the elites, they said, "Well, the actual dagger was driven home by Trump, or the actual vote is being cast by the voters." And this is an

attempt to shift the burden. The burden is not whether Trump voters -- the question is not whether Trump voters are responsible for Trump winning. The question is not whether Trump is responsible for Trump winning, and the question isn't even whether Sean Hannity is responsible for Trump getting the nomination and being at 44 percent in the polls. The question is whether the elites bear blame for this man rising up here, for a party -- a once great party. They used to call themselves "Grand" -- whether they're responsible for that party crumbling, whether the elites are responsible for Trump being within striking distance of winning this election. That's the question. You can't let them deflect from it by pointing out that other people are to blame. Of course the blame goes wide. But ultimately, what do we do in this society? What do we, as journalists, try to do? We try to hold the powerful people accountable. You have four journalists on this stage. And we all spend our days doing this. Bret did not win a Pulitzer Prize for nothing.

01:33:07

Jen has not been at one of the most widely-respected publications in the country, the *Washington Post*, for nothing. We hold the powerful people accountable. So, to say that the elites don't deserve the blame -- which is implicit in their motion -- is to say that the people failed their elites. That's what you're saying if you're voting against the motion. If you vote for the motion, you're saying that the American people have been let down. Did the elites fail the people, or did the people fail the elites? Thank you.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Tim Carney.

[applause]

Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon is the motion. And here making her closing statement against the motion, Jennifer Rubin, author of the *Right Turn* blog for the *Washington Post*.

Jennifer Rubin:

Thank you all for coming. Thank you to my opponents, my esteemed colleagues, the moderator. I must say, when I first got this topic, I thought I would find on the other table Bernie Sanders, or maybe Noam Chomsky.

01:34:09

It's after all the province of the unhinged left to assume that there is a vast conspiracy to make the world rotten for the little guy. We live in the greatest time in human history. It's the time where people live longer. Fewer are in poverty. The average person has encyclopedic access to the world's knowledge. Imagine my surprise when I saw that there were two conservatives on the other side. Conservatives believe in Adam Smith, and Reagan, and Milton Friedman. They know about comparative advantage in trade,

that both sides benefit. They know the lump of labor fallacy -- that there are only a fixed number of jobs. It's nonsense.

01:35:01

At least they used to know that. They don't believe in victimology. They don't believe in blame casting. They don't believe in any of those things. So, it's peculiar in the extreme that we should be facing the arguments of luddite leftists and nativist knuckle-draggers from our opponents. I assume they took this in good faith, but I would like to cling to my belief that they really don't believe this. I would like them -- I would like to believe that conservatives, good conservatives of high principles, still believe that what is known as the liberal international order has brought freedom, prosperity, and happiness to millions. It's lifted billions of people out of poverty. Like democracy, it's not perfect, but it's the best economic system the planet has always known. And it's, at heart, conservative.

John Donvan:

Thank you. Jennifer Rubin, your time is up.

01:36:03

And that concludes Round 3 of this U.S. Intelligence Squared U.S. debate --

[applause]

-- where the motion is Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. And now it's time to learn which side you feel has argued the best. We want to go -- ask you to go again to the keypads at your seat and vote a second time. It's the same system as before. Take a look at the motion: Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. Push number 1 if you agree with the motion, with this side. Push number 2 if you're against -- you're with this side. Push number 3 if you remain or became undecided. We'll lock out the vote shortly and have the results in about a minute, a minute-and-a-half. Okay.

01:37:06

While that's happening, while we're having the tally voted, I want to just say a couple of things. The first thing I want to say is, boy, did we have a great kick-off to our New York season. The debaters made this interesting, intelligent. They respected each other, which is part of what we're trying to get across here. But they were -- argued very, very robustly at the same time. It shows that you can disagree without having to sling nastiness at each other. I want to congratulate them for the way that they conducted this debate.

[applause]

And I want to thank everybody who got up and asked a question. Even if we didn't take the question -- I know it takes guts to get up in front of everybody. And I think all of the questions were -- had something in them that's worth considering. I only pass when it doesn't work within the timeframe and the motion. But I want to congratulate everybody who got up and did that, and everybody else who wanted to.

01:38:00

[applause]

For those of you who are new to Intelligence Squared, I want to point out that we are non-profit organization. We are a philanthropy. We create this program and we put it out to the world for free. It's being used now in many, many schools across the nation -- and we think, around the world as well. The podcasts that I've been referring to -- as they are for you free, we would love it if you go and download at any point the 124 debates. This makes 124 tonight. We also have -- we also exist as a radio show that can be heard on stations across the country. Just check your local listings on public radio stations. But all of that takes money, and to be honest, the ticket price doesn't come close to paying for the cost of putting this on. We have supporters, but we need more. And what I want to say is that the size of the donation is not irrelevant -- I wouldn't say exactly -- but it's not the deciding factor. We would love it if all of you would be willing to contribute at some point. Don't worry. Nobody is going to hit you at the door on the way out, but you can go to our website and make a donation.

01:39:05

It would mean a great deal to us and we have plans to get bigger. But to get bigger, we need that kind of support. Our next debate is going to be here on October 26th -- I'm sorry. Our next debate here will be on October 26th. The motion will be "Give undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship." But our actual next debate will be downtown at NYU. That's on October 13th. And on that night, we are going to be debating at NYU's Skirball Center the motion "Blame Big Pharma for Out of Control Health Care Costs," and we have a really great panel for that one. We have the oncologist and ethicist, and former National Institutes of Health official Zeke Emmanuel, along with Neera Tanden, who is president of the Center for American Progress. And she worked on the Obama health care reform team. And against them on that motion, Paul Howard, who is director of health policy at the Manhattan Institute, and Laurie Riley, executive vice-president at Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

01:40:06

So, that one is going to be lively and quite robust. Again, that one is on the 13th of October, downtown at NYU. And you can get tickets from our website and see the rest

of our season lineup. And I've already mentioned that our app is available on Apple -- at the Apple store and the Google store at Google Play and we have a Roku app now for those of you who know what that is.

[laughter]

So, the results are in. The motion was Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. You've heard the arguments for and against and as always we've had you vote twice and as always victory will go to the team whose numbers have moved up the most in percentage points from the first vote to the second. So let's look at the preliminary vote. In the preliminary vote Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, 32 percent agreed, 27 percent were against, and 41 percent were undecided. That's very high for us. Those are the first results. Let's look at the second results. The team arguing for the motion Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon, their first vote was 32 percent, their second vote was 58 percent. They pulled up 26 percentage points.

01:41:13

That is the number to beat. Let's look at the team arguing against the motion. Their first vote was 27 percent, their second vote was 33 percent. They only pulled up 6 percentage points. It means the team arguing for the motion has carried this debate Blame the Elites for the Trump Phenomenon. Our congratulations to them.

[applause]

Thank you from me, John Donovan, and Intelligence Squared U.S. We'll see you next time.

01:41:36

[end of transcript]