

Their focus – the police, racism and reform

Key focus group findings with Obama surge voters

Presented by Cornell Belcher
August 2016

*“What am I supposed to do if I don’t like him and I don’t trust her?
Choose between being shot and being stabbed. No way!”*
(Millennial woman Obama surge voter, Cleveland, OH)

*“I see why they (Hispanics) are scared of him because he is attacking
their family. But I don’t understand why I should be more scared than
anybody else.”*
(Millennial male Obama surge voter, Jacksonville, FL)

Methodology

Focus groups were conducted in Cleveland, OH and Jacksonville, FL to explore African American surge voters attitudes toward this election cycle.

Cleveland, OH – August 3, 2016

Group 1: Non-college grad millennial (21-35 y/o) men, Obama surge voters

Group 2: College grad mixed gender millennials, Obama surge voters

Jacksonville, FL – August 4, 2016

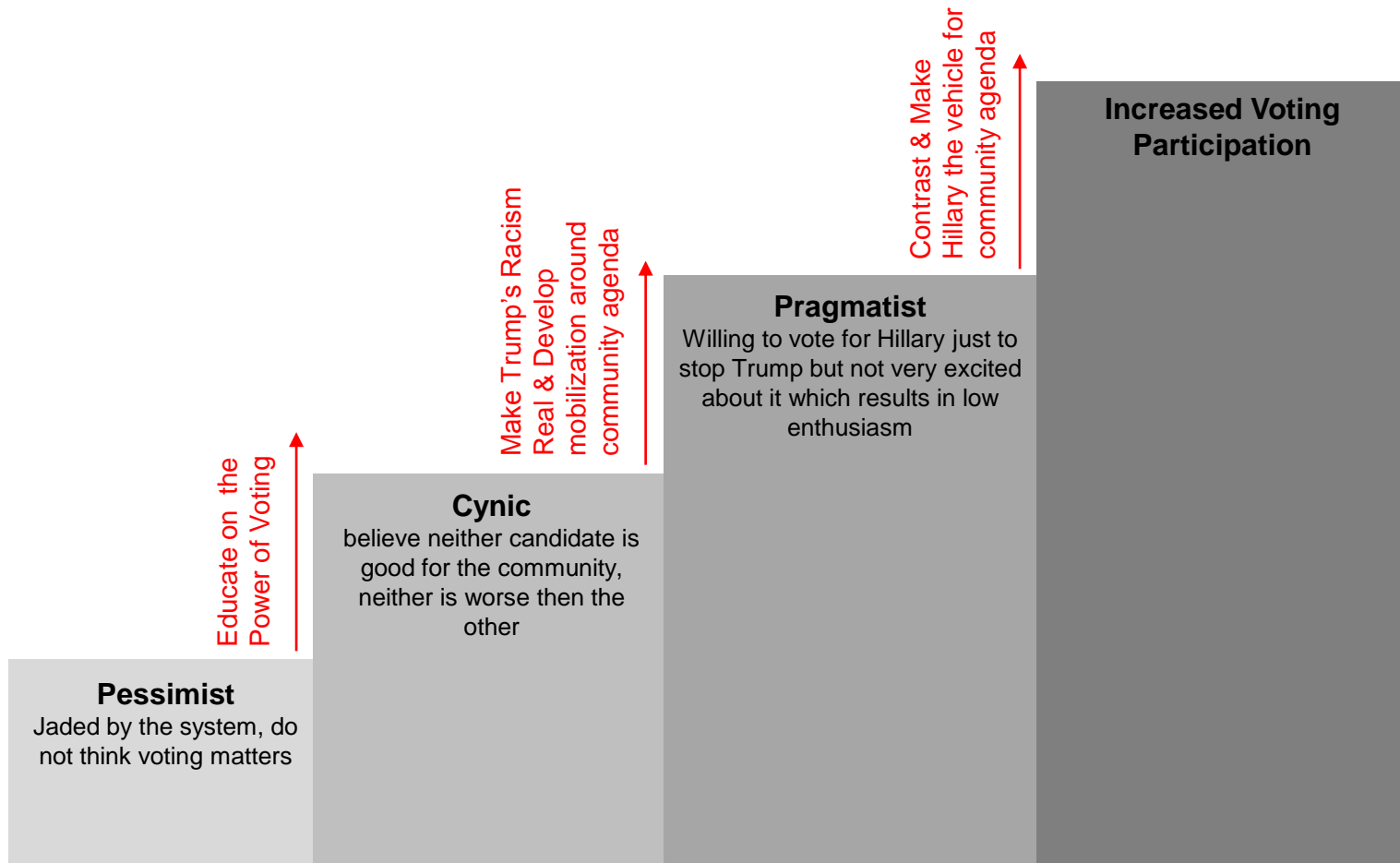
Group 3: College grad millennial women, Obama surge voters

Group 4: Non-college grad older (45-60 y/o) men, Obama surge voters

Key Findings

Levels of Engagement

Obama-surge voters are starting at different places in this cycle



The individual and collective power of voting inoculates some of the pessimism

Pessimist

- Jaded by the system, do not think voting matters
- References to disenfranchisement, voting irregularities, particularly Florida recount
- Bernie supporters/sympathizers that believe the deck was stacked against him in the primary

Educate on the Power of Voting

Educating voters on the power of their vote in an aspirational way will help them overcome the barriers of pessimism. They must be convinced that their vote has real world impacts.

- Electing Obama in '08 & '12 despite the doubts of man critics
- "You Did That!"- description of how the lives of regular people have changed since '08 & '12
- The disproportionate concentration of power in places like Cleveland, Jacksonville, Richmond

"So what is really the point in voting if its all rigged. I read about them being able to change the votes to control who even wins."

(Non-college Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

"Once they pick who they want it doesn't really matter who we vote for. Just like they picked Hillary over Bernie, even though I voted for Bernie, I knew Hillary was already going to win because they already picked her."

(College-grad Obama-surge man, Jacksonville, FL)

"You see what they did with Gore and Bush. The entire recount. In Florida we always have a recount because somebody is always cheating."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Jacksonville, FL)

"But I do believe when enough of us come together loud enough, there's no amount of rigging that you can do."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Jacksonville, FL)

"Why don't you put what you just said in a commercial. Nobody has ever explained how much votes in Jacksonville really matter. If they did people would probably take it more seriously."

(College grad woman Obama surge voter, Jacksonville, FL)

Trump is bad, but not yet bad enough to make voting (for Hillary) an urgent necessity

Cynic

- Believes both candidates are bad for the Black community, neither is worse than the other
- Reluctant to vote for the better of two evils
- Prepared to not vote at all

Make Trump's Racism Real

Exposing voters to the severe consequences of a Trump presidency would have on the Black community creates clear contrast between Trump and Hillary and enforces the urgency to vote.

- Consequences of Trump Presidency: perpetuate police/white violence against blacks, neglect poor people, repeal Obama-care
- Tying Trump to violence against Black bodies (this language is important) is also very compelling.

"He's a racist and she is a liar, so really what's the difference in choosing both or choosing neither."

(Non-college Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

"For the fact they got Hilary against Donald Trump. It's to tell you that it's just the lesser of two evils either way you go. If you choose Hilary, she was part of the whole problem that started sending blacks to jail."

(Non-college Obama surge man, Cleveland, OH)

"He might be the devil but she has been in bed with the devil, why vote for any of them."

(College grad Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

I gave them both a 5. I mean I wouldn't actually vote for either one of them but at least I know what I am getting with him. She will say anything to get elected."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Jacksonville, FL)

"Honestly, that video scared the hell out of me. I actually think they should just play that all day if they want to see Black folks voting more."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Jacksonville, FL)

Cannot just give them something to vote against but nothing to for, make Hillary their vehicle

Pragmatist

- Willing to vote for Hillary just to stop Trump
- Not excited about voting, lack of enthusiasm could suppress their turnout

Make Hillary the vehicle for community centric agenda

There are a celestial of issues that move Black voters toward higher turnout, positioning HRC as the means by which they achieve their issue objectives is the final stage to increase voter participation.

- Criminal Justice is a compelling issue, HRC has strong policy prescriptions but they are not well communicated
- Other issues include economic justice and family social values issues

"Since somebody is going to make me vote, probably my mom or aunt, then I am prepared to vote for Hillary. I cannot even believe I just said that but I guess I am going to have to. "

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Cleveland, OH)

"I supported Bernie Sanders because he addressed issues that were important to me. These two never talk about the stuff that is important to me. It's like they don't even care if I vote for them or not, like I don't even matter.

(College Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

"I honestly had no idea that Hillary said any of this stuff. If she really plans on doing half of this stuff I guarantee you I am voting for her.

(College grad Obama surge woman, Jacksonville, FL)

"I gave Trump zero and Hillary seven because she has a lot of room for improvement. I don't trust her but I trust that she can get the job done."

(College Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

State of the Race

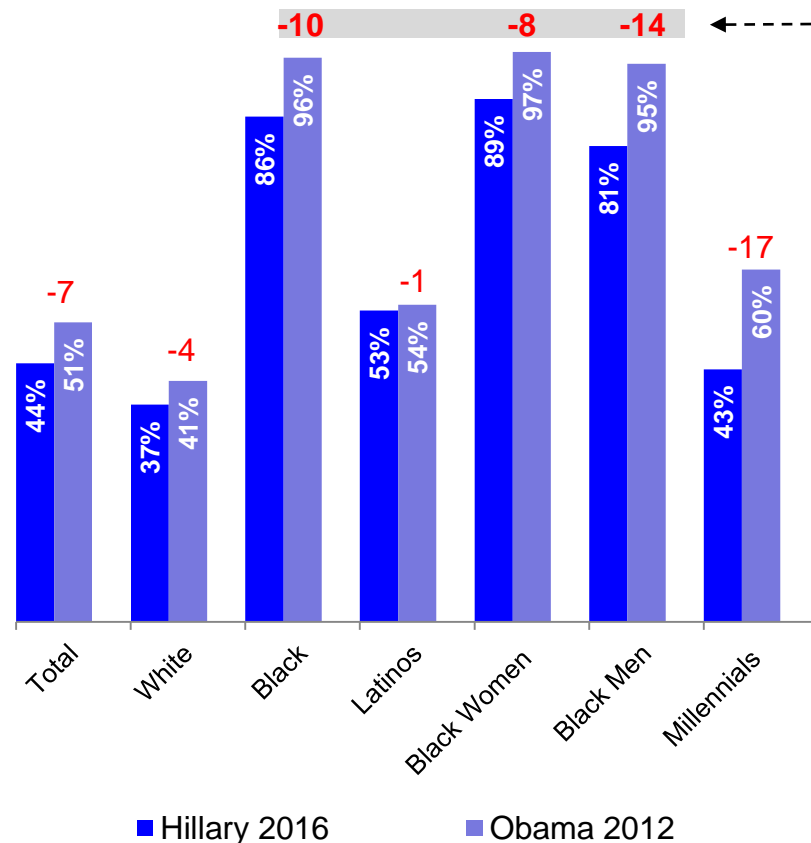
HRC is underperforming with target audiences in battleground states - Ohio

Ohio Focus Group Horse Race (Scale 1-10)

	Mean
Hillary Clinton	5.1
Donald Trump	1.2
HRC Advantage	+3.9

Rate how strong your support is for the presidential candidates. For each one, please rate using a scale of 1-10, where 10 means you are a very strong supporter and 1 means you don't support that candidate at all, **and 5 means you are neutral or undecided.**

Ohio Democratic Performance, 2016 vs. 2012



Big performance gap with black voters

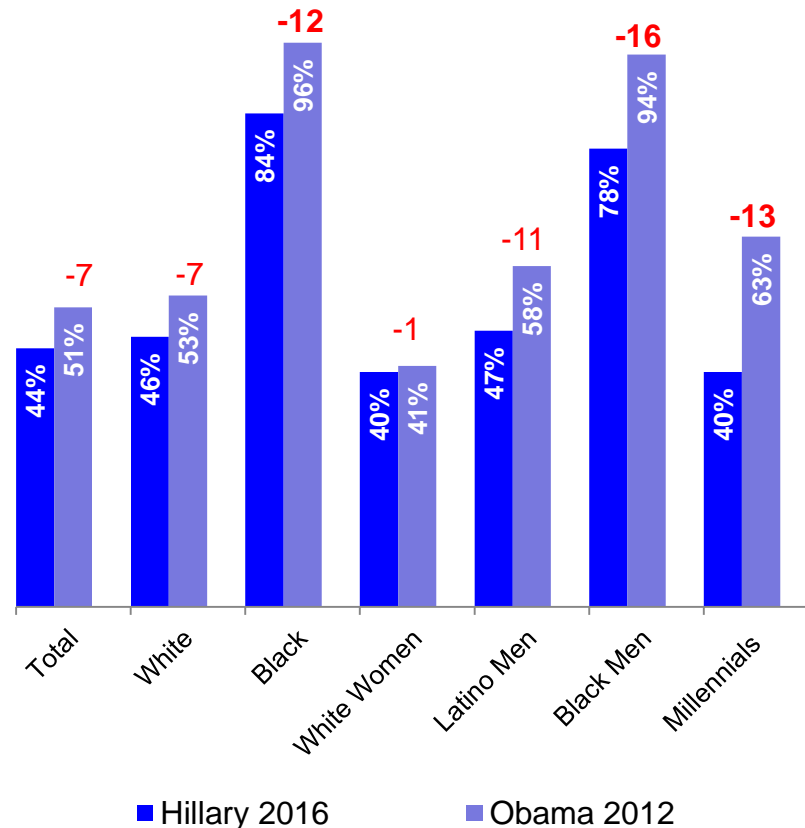
HRC is underperforming with target audiences in battleground states – Florida

Florida Focus Group Horse Race
(Scale 1-10)

	Group 1	Group 2	Mean
Hillary Clinton	6.7	9.6	8.1
Donald Trump	1.5	1.1	1.3
HRC Advantage	+5.2	+8.5	+6.9

Rate how strong your support is for the presidential candidates. For each one, please rate using a scale of 1-10, where 10 means you are a very strong supporter and 1 means you don't support that candidate at all, **and 5 means you are neutral or undecided.**

Florida Democratic Performance,
2016 vs. 2012



Voting is still seen as a good way to affect change in the community

Best Ways to Affect Change in Your Community	Total	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Voting In Elections	8.3	8.6	7	8.9	8.6
Boycotts	7.9	9	7.4	7.8	7.4
Volunteering	7.3	7	6.7	7.6	7.8
Lobbying elected officials	7	8	6.7	8	5.4
Sharing ideas and information on social media	6.9	7.4	7	6.3	7
Physical protests/marches	6.9	7.6	5.4	7	7.5
Running for office	6.9	7.7	6.1	7.5	6.3
Signing a petition	6.5	7.3	6.1	6.3	6.5

Criminal Justice Reform Focused

Reactions to Criminal Justice Policies and Message Arguments

Criminal Justice Policies

The criminal Justice policies presented reflect the desires of the community and are a very compelling reason for these voters to participate in the election...but there is a disconnect.

- Policy proposals that stood out focus on community involvement, community policing, alternatives to incarceration, as well as training programs for de-escalation and use of force
- Policies are not associated with Hillary Clinton, despite being her specific proposals.

“Listen, if Hillary Clinton says she would even do half of this stuff then I guarantee you I’m voting for her.”

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Cleveland, OH)

Message Arguments

The most compelling arguments to increase participation amongst these Obama-surge voters revolves around criminal justice, police reform, and collective power.

- Arguments that included a call to community action, holding elected officials accountable, using the vote to reform the criminal justice system, and describing how the power of voting helps solve problems of the community were the most compelling
- Racial profiling was a buzzword that generated the most interest and conversation

“I circled everything that said GO VOTE because if you are just pointing out the problem but not telling them how to fix it by voting then why even send this out.”

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Cleveland, OH)

Criminal Justice Reform is a compelling issue but policies are not being communicated well

Select the 3 options that represent the best criminal justice solutions	Total Selected	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Bringing law enforcement and communities together to develop national guidelines on the use of force by police officers	16	4	8	4
Commit \$1 billion to support state-of-the-art law enforcement training programs at every level on issues like use of force, de-escalation, community policing and problem solving and alternatives to incarceration.	11	2	4	5
Supporting legislation to end racial profiling by federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.	8	6	1	1
Ending the privatization of prisons.	7	1	3	3
Investing \$5 billion in re-entry job programs for formerly incarcerated individuals	7	2	5	0
Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline by providing \$2 billion in support to schools to reform overly punitive disciplinary policies.	7	3	1	3
Strengthening the U.S. Department of Justice's unit that monitors civil rights violations and increase resources, secure subpoena power, and improving data collection for pattern or practice investigations.	6	2	4	0

Criminal Justice Reform is a compelling issue but policies are not being communicated well

Select the 3 options that represent the best criminal justice solutions	Total Selected	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Cutting mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenses in half.	5	0	0	5
Collecting and reporting national data on crime, officer-involved shootings, and deaths in custody.	4	0	3	1
Eliminating the sentencing disparity for crack and powder cocaine and applying this change retroactively.	2	0	1	1
Providing federal matching funds to make body cameras available to every police department in America.	1	1	0	0
Allowing current nonviolent prisoners to seek fairer sentences	1	0	0	1
Limiting the transfer of military equipment to local law enforcement from the federal government.	0	0	0	0
Taking executive action to “ban the box” for federal employers and contractors.	0	0	0	0

Arguments

Select the 3 options that represent the best criminal justice solutions	Total Mean	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
[RESPONSIBILITY] If we don't vote, we can't expect political leaders to address the issues impacting our community. More than 2 million Americans incarcerated today are nonviolent offenders. African American men are far more likely to be stopped and searched by police, charged with crimes, and sentenced to longer prison terms than white men found guilty of the same offenses. If we want to reform our criminal justice system, we must work to strengthen the bonds of trust between our communities and our police and end the era of mass incarceration.	8.8	9.2	9.1	8.12
[BLACK LIVES MATTER] Elected officials have stood by as young men and women in our communities are subjected to racial profiling and discrimination and have watched on as our youth continue to die at the hands of the police. It's time to vote against elected officials who don't value Black lives, and hold our elected officials more accountable to the communities they serve.	8.4	9.1	7.8	8.4
[CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM 2] Too many families are being torn apart by excessive incarceration. Young people are being threatened and humiliated by racial profiling. Children are growing up in homes shattered by prison and poverty and being shoved into the school-to-prison pipeline at an alarming rate. They are taking to the streets in protest in hopes someone will listen. Voting is how we demand elected officials make our issues their priority.	7.9	7.7	7.4	8.6

Arguments

Select the 3 options that represent the best criminal justice solutions	Total Mean	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
[MASS INCARCERATION] We must put an end to the era of mass incarceration. Today in America, more than one out of every 100 adults is behind bars. The mass incarceration epidemic has an explicit racial bias, as one in three black men can expect to go to prison in their lifetime. A significant number of those incarcerated are held for low-level, nonviolent offenses. Voting is how we hold elected officials accountable for allowing this situation to get out of control and failing to find solutions.	7.8	8.4	7.5	7.6
[CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM 1] Taking to the streets to protest the mistreatment of our community by the criminal justice system can add a sense of urgency to the reform debate. However, if we want resources invested in retraining police to respect our dignity and prevent our young people from being threatened and humiliated by racial profiling and to avoid families from being torn apart by excessive incarceration, we must use our votes to hold elected officials accountable for their inaction.	7.5	6.7	7.8	8.1
[PRISON PRIVATIZATION] If we don't vote we are not in a position to demand our elected officials put an end to the privatization of prisons. We must move away from contracting out this core responsibility of government to private corporations and stop creating incentives that sacrifice poor and communities of color for corporate profit.	7.15	7.3	7	

Material Testing

*"I like this one that says they are protesting but we must vote cus sometimes protesting is not enough."
(College grad Obama surge woman, Jacksonville, FL)*

Top Rated Print Materials

13. Their Children Can't vote



12. Girl In Dress



17. Black Votes Matter



22. Say their names



Top rated materials include themes in the continuum of Black Lives Matter including police brutality, militarized policing, and racial justice.

"I really like this one with the pretty girl in the dress. I have seen this image on social media before so when I saw it just now it made me stop and read the entire thing. I didn't read any of the others."

(College grad Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

"This one here with the strong black woman, it says Black Votes Matter and that's like a call to action. Its like a reminder that we gotta get it done."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Cleveland, OH)

"Their children can't vote is like a wake up call. Its like a reminder that we not just doing this for us but we are also doing it for them."

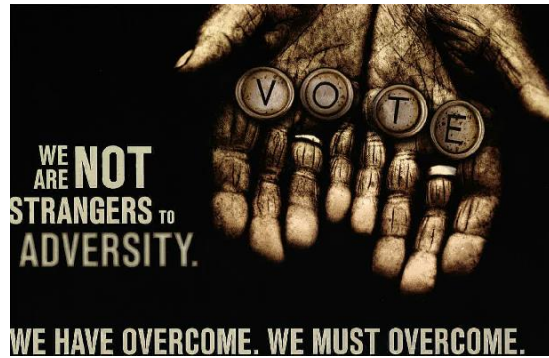
(College grad Obama surge woman, Jacksonville, FL)

Reactions to Print Material

Piece Name	Total Mean	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
22 Say their names	8.7		8.6	8.8	8.6
13 Their Children Can't vote	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.6	8
12 Girl In Dress	8.4	7.57	7.8	8.5	9.2
17 Black Votes Matter	8.2	8.7	7	8.3	9
18 War Torn Hands	7.7	8.4	6.6	7.4	8.4
25 No Ceilings Child	7.7				7.7
19 Our Voices Will Be Heard	7.3	7.4	5.6	8.3	8
23 #IguessImWithHer	6.9			6.2	7.5
2 Trump Fat Pig	6.8	8	6.2	6.1	7
21 What will you tell your kids?	6.4	5.28	6.14	6.6	7.6
1 No ceilings (POTUS)	5.9	6.4	5.5	5.9	

Print Materials

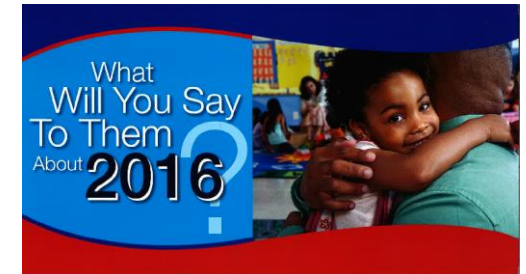
18. War Torn Hands



19. Our Voices Will Be Heard



21. What will you tell your kids?



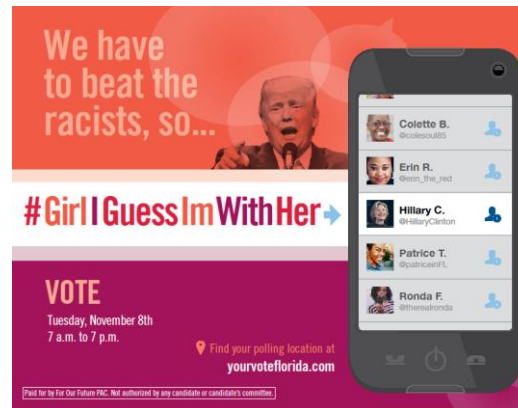
1. No ceilings (POTUS)



25. No Ceilings (Child)



23. #IGuessImWithHer



2. Trump Fat Pig



Reactions to Video Materials

Mother Jones Video [Click to Play]

"I think if you want folks to get pissed off enough about Trump you just have to show this video. I mean you just can't make this stuff up."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Cleveland, OH)

"I can't believe he actually said all this stuff. It scared the hell out of me and I already knew he was racist."

(College grad Obama surge woman, Cleveland, OH)

"The images folks just being beat up and attacked with his hateful words in the back, It really does make you think what would it be like if he was actually president."

(College grad Obama surge woman, Jacksonville, FL)

Video Editing Suggestions

- Looping in actual violence from his rallies along with images from the "60s so that it represents not only what we could devolve to but in many ways what we already have.

Hillary + Mothers of the Movement [Click to Play]

"This was good. It was genuine and shows how much she really cares about Black Lives Matter instead of just saying it."

(College grad Obama surge woman, Jacksonville, FL)

"I love this video because it seems like she is empowering them. They asked her for help and she said come together and fight together. It was like she was heling them to help her."

(Non-college grad Obama surge man, Jacksonville, FL)

Video Editing Suggestions

- Respondents did not like the prayer scene. Multiple reactions said it felt less genuine or forced. Cutting that scene could make it more believable

Next Steps

Next Steps:

- Explore and quantify the most powerful narrative around the issues of criminal justice and fighting racism
- Explore language that reinforce the individual and collective power of voting
- Explore language that describe explicit consequences for the Black community if Donald Trump becomes president
- Who are the best messengers to carry these messages to target audiences

brilliant corners