

Hillary Clinton takes her 'deplorables' argument for another spin

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By [Aaron Blake](#)

Senior political reporter, writing for The Fix

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Hillary Clinton said after the 2016 election that her decision to label many Trump supporters “deplorables” was a “political gift” to President Trump.

Apparently, it's the gift that keeps on giving.

Clinton offered some rather unvarnished remarks in India this weekend that sound a lot like her “deplorables” commentary from September 2016. She played up the states that supported her as more economically advanced than the states that voted for Trump, calling them “dynamic” and “moving forward.” Then she again suggested Trump supporters were motivated by animosity toward women and people of color.

“If you look at the map of the United States, there's all that red in the middle where Trump won,” Clinton said. “I win the coast. I win, you know, Illinois and Minnesota — places like that.”

She went on: “But what the map doesn't show you is that I won the places that represent two-thirds of America's gross domestic product. So I won the places that are optimistic, diverse, dynamic, moving forward.”

Then she turned to Trump's voters: “And his whole campaign — 'Make America Great Again' — was looking backward. You know, you didn't like black people getting rights; you don't like women, you know, getting jobs; you don't want to, you know, see that Indian American succeeding more than you are — you know, whatever your problem is, I'm gonna solve it.”

It's difficult not to read Clinton's comments as an argument that her votes were more valuable — or at least more productive — than were Trump's. Why bring up gross domestic product? Some have suggested Clinton was saying wealthy people's votes should have counted for more. Whether you see it that way or not, she does seem to suggest Trump subsisted on voters who were simply, well, less sophisticated or advanced.

The final part of her comments above might be the most incendiary, though, and it most closely resembles her “deplorables” critique. Here she is again suggesting Trump's support was, at least in significant part, about racism, misogyny and hatred of immigrants. She seems to say Trump was providing an outlet for these people.

Clinton also jabbed at white women voters, saying some caved to “ongoing pressure to vote the way that your husband, your boss, your son, whoever, believes you should.”

But even the way she describes Trump's supporters alleged racism and sexism is pretty remarkable. It's one thing to suggest they were perhaps prejudiced, but Clinton says they didn't even want black people *to have civil rights* or women *to work outside the home*. Whatever you think of the modern-day GOP, there simply aren't a whole lot of Republicans arguing black people shouldn't have rights — or even telling pollsters this privately. Yet this is the picture Clinton painted of Trump's support.

Some of Clinton's defenders will surely defend that picture, but this is not a mainstream argument in the Democratic Party — nor is it a productive one politically. A Washington Post-ABC News poll after her “deplorables” comments found that more than two-thirds of Americans felt it was unfair “to describe a large portion of Trump's supporters as prejudiced against women and minorities.” Even 47 percent of Democrats said it wasn't fair.

Exactly what portion of Trump supporters Clinton lumps into the categories she described is unclear. In her initial “deplorables” comments, perhaps her biggest faux pas was appearing to suggest that as much as half of Trump supporters fit into the “baskets of deplorables” — either because they were racist, sexist, homophobic, Islamophobic and/or xenophobic. She later backed off the “half” part but stood by her general sentiment.

Apparently it persists today. She still seems to regard Trump's base of support as largely consisting of the same “deplorables” she described in 2016.