

# [***Trump was forced to listen silently as potential jurors offered their unvarnished assessments of him***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV8-01H1-DYMD-63FG-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

April 20, 2024 Saturday 12:52 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** DOMESTIC NEWS; POLITICAL NEWS; STATE AND REGIONAL

**Length:** 1339 words

**Byline:** JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

**Dateline:** NEW YORK

**Body**

NEW YORK — He seems "selfish and self-serving,” said one woman.

The way he carries himself in public "leaves something to be desired," said another.

His “negative rhetoric and bias," said another man, is what is “most harmful."

Over the past week, [*Donald Trump*](https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump) has been forced to sit inside a frigid New York courtroom and listen to a parade of potential jurors in his [*criminal hush money trial*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-trial-hush-money-jury-selection-24147c3774c8a411044c530cafcab292) share their unvarnished assessments of him.

It’s been a dramatic departure for the former president and presumptive 2024 GOP nominee, who is accustomed to spending his days in a cocoon of cheering crowds and constant adulation. Now a criminal defendant, Trump will instead spend the next several weeks subjected to strict rules that strip him of control over everything from what he is permitted to say to the temperature of the room.

“He’s the object of derision. It's his nightmare. He can't control the script. He can't control the cinematography. He can't control what's being said about him. And the outcome could go in a direction he really doesn't want," said Tim O'Brien, a Trump biographer and critic.

While Trump is occasionally confronted by protesters, generally he lives a life sheltered from criticism. After leaving the White House, Trump moved to his Mar-a-Lago waterfront club in Palm Beach, Florida, where he is surrounded by doting paid staff and dues-paying members who have shelled out tens of thousands of dollars to be near him.

Many days, Trump heads to his nearby golf course, where he is "swarmed by people wanting to shake his hand, take pictures of him, and tell him how amazing he is,” said Stephanie Grisham, a longtime aide who broke with Trump after the storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

When he returns to Mar-a-Lago in the afternoon, members lunching on the patio often stand and applaud. He receives the same standing ovation at dinner, which often ends with Trump playing DJ on his iPad, blasting favorites like “It’s a Man’s Man’s Man’s World” by James Brown.

Grisham, who spent long stretches traveling with Trump and at Mar-a-Lago during his 2016 campaign and as White House press secretary, described staff constantly serving as cheerleaders and telling Trump what he wanted to hear. To avoid angry outbursts, they requested motorcade routes that avoided protests and they left a stack of positive press clips every morning on the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

Now, Trump faces a trial that could result in felony convictions and possible prison time. And he will have to listen to more critics, without being able to punch back verbally — something he revels in doing.

Among the expected witnesses in the trial are his [*former lawyer and fixer, Michael Cohen, and the porn actor who alleged she had sex with him, Stormy Daniels*](https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-michael-cohen-stormy-daniels-e40532d3bce7768e296fdaf9591ef05b). Both have savaged him in interviews and books as well as on social media.

Trump campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said Trump proved during his first week in court that “he will remain defiant in the face of this unprecedented political lawfare” and said, “It is clear that his support from the American people will only grow as they watch Joe Biden, Alvin Bragg and the Democrats putting on this bogus show trial six months before the election.” Bragg is the Manhattan district attorney.

New Yorkers who said they couldn't approach the case fairly were excused during jury selection. But one of the women with the harshest assessments of him will be among those who will determine his fate on 34 counts of falsifying business records.

“I don’t like his persona, how he presents himself in public," said the woman, who has lived in upper Manhattan for the last 15 years. The woman said she didn't agree with some of Trump's ***politics***, which she called “outrageous."

“He just seems very selfish and self-serving, so I don’t really appreciate that in any public servant,” she said, adding that while she doesn't “know him as a person,” how he "portrays himself in public, it just seems to me it is not my cup of tea.”

Trump’s legal team took issue with her responses, but they were out of challenges by the time she was up for consideration.

[*Judge Juan Manuel Merchan*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-hush-money-criminal-trial-judge-merchan-c227f5eab200cccffb19ed931b4dac92) has withheld the names of prospective jurors for safety concerns.

On Friday, one prospective juror, who said she had attended the 2017 Women’s March protesting Trump’s inauguration, complained of the influence he has over his base.

“I think his rhetoric at times enables people to feel as if they have permission to discriminate or act on their negative impulses,” she said, citing people she has heard make homophobic or racist comments. Still, she said she didn’t have strong feelings about the former president and wasn’t sure of his current policy positions.

Another man said he’d grown up admiring the former president and business mogul's real estate portfolio and even thinking he might someday live in Trump Tower. But he had come to oppose Trump's “negative rhetoric and bias against people that he speaks about."

At other times, lawyers read aloud social media posts from prospective jurors mocking Trump and celebrating his defeats.

One prospective juror, an older white woman, was struck from the jury pool by the judge after Trump's legal team uncovered years-old social media posts that described Trump as a “racist, sexist” narcissist.

One of Trump's attorneys called the posts "vitriolic.”

“She harbors a deep hatred for him,” said the lawyer, Susan Necheles. “She said that ’I wouldn’t believe Donald Trump if his tongue were notarized'” and that he was “anathema” to everything she was taught about love.

Confronted with the posts inside the courtroom, the juror said she understood why they’d be concerning to the defense, but her views had evolved. “Election policies can get pretty spicy and Mr. Trump can get pretty spicy,” she said.

Merchan, the judge, also dismissed a man who in 2017 had shared a Facebook post celebrating the defeat of one of Trump's policies in court. “Get him out and lock him up!” it read in part.

Court rules require Trump to be present throughout the trial. He can't storm out of the courtroom like he did during a recent defamation trial. He is also barred by a gag order from attacking any of the jurors, including on his Truth Social platform.

He has already been admonished by Merchan for audibly uttering something and gesturing while one juror was answering questions.

"I will not tolerate any jurors being intimidated in this courtroom,” said Merchan, who previously warned Trump he could be sent to jail for engaging in disruptive behavior in court.

Trump's assessments in the courthouse weren't all bad, however, with a perhaps surprising number of potential jurors saying they had no strong opinions about one of the best known and most divisive men on the planet.

In fact, the process seemed to reveal more supporters than might be expected in a borough where President Joe Biden captured 87% of the vote in 2020.

One potential juror Thursday who spoke of Trump in glowing terms said he was “impressed” with Trump's career as a successful businessman.

“I mean he was our president, pretty amazing. He is a businessman in New York. He has forged his way, you know, he made kind of history in terms of like where he started and where he has become," said the man, who said he saw his own story similarly.

On Tuesday, another man expressed regret that he couldn’t juggle the trial with his job.

“Your Honor, as much as I would love to serve for New York and one of our great presidents, I could not give up my job for six-plus weeks,” he said.

Many said they had read his book “The Art of the Deal.”

Even the woman who criticized his persona and ended up on the jury anyway acknowledged his appeal to voters.

“Sometimes the way he may carry himself in public leaves something to be desired. At the same time, I can relate to sometimes being a bit unfiltered,” she said. “I see him speak to a lot of people in America. I think there is something to be said about that.”

\_\_\_ Associated Press writers Michael R. Sisak, Jennifer Peltz and Jake Offenhartz contributed to this report.

**Load-Date:** April 20, 2024

**End of Document**