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**Clinton regrets calling Trump supporters 'deplorable'**

US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has apologised (1) **for** calling half (2) **of** Donald Trump's supporters "deplorable" people. But the Democrat launched a furious attack (3) **on** her Republican opponent and promised to keep fighting "bigotry and racist rhetoric". Mr Trump had responded by saying the comment was "insulting" (4) **to** "millions of amazing, hard-working people". Opinion polls suggest Mr Trump is gaining (5) **on** Mrs Clinton. The rivals are neck and neck (6) **in** the key battleground states of Ohio and Florida.

Hillary Clinton's "basket of deplorables" comments have drawn immediate comparisons (7) **to** Mitt Romney's 2012 speech (8) **about** 47% of Americans (9) **on** government dole supporting Barack Obama and Mr Obama's 2008 characterisation (10) **of** downtrodden Pennsylvanians as clinging to guns and religion.

Unlike those noted gaffes, however, it is not clear how Mrs Clinton's public remarks will directly damage her. She is certainly unlikely to peel off any of Donald Trump's supporters by calling some of them racists or homophobes, but they have stuck (11) **by** their man (12) **through** thick and thin. Mrs Clinton's own backers likely agree (13) **with** her description.

The only question is how the sizable chunk of undecided voters view the controversy. They had started to move (14) **toward** Mrs Clinton after the Democratic convention but are recently back up (15) **in** the air or aligning (16) **with** a third party. They may take exception (17) **to** Mrs Clinton's calling half of all Trump supporters - millions of Americans - deplorable, which is why she has taken back this portion of her comments. If the debate shows how many of Mr Trump's backers are overtly racist or bigoted, however, that is political terrain the Democrat will gladly fight (18) **on**.

Speaking (19) **at** a fundraiser in New York, Mrs Clinton said: "To just be grossly generalistic, you can put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the 'basket of deplorables'. Unfortunately there are people like that. And he has lifted them (20) **up**." They were, she told the LGBT event, "racist, sexist, xenophobic, Islamophobic - you name it". The rest of the Republican nominee's supporters, according (21) **to** Mrs Clinton, were "just desperate for change".

In his [tweeted](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/774590070355529728) response, Mr Trump said, "I think it will cost her at the polls!" Mr Trump's running mate, Mike Pence, said: "They are not a basket of anything. They are Americans & they deserve your respect." Reince Priebus, head of the Republican National Committee, said Mrs Clinton had shown "her outright contempt (22) **for** ordinary people". Millions of Americans, he said, supported the Republican nominee because they were "sick of corrupt career politicians like Hillary Clinton".

Apologising, Mrs Clinton said: "Last night I was 'grossly generalistic' and that's never a good idea. I regret saying 'half' - that was wrong." "As I said," she added, "many of Trump's supporters are hard-working Americans who just don't feel like the economy or our political system are working (23) **for** them."

http://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37330420