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Chris Matthews, Robert Costa, Andrea Mitchell, Chuck Todd, Eugene Robinson, Katy Tur, Howard Fineman, James Peterson

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CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Good evening, and welcome back to this special edition of HARDBALL, live from Philadelphia.

Tonight, Hillary Clinton`s campaign holds its big finale in the cradle of liberty, right here, the city where she accepted her party`s nomination just over two months ago, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In a final push to get out the vote before tomorrow, Clinton will hold a rally at the historic Independence Hall right here in downtown Philadelphia, and will be joined by her husband, the former president, Bill Clinton, her daughter Chelsea, and President and Michelle Obama. All five of them are going to be here, all on stage together. Rock stars Bruce Springsteen and Bon Jovi will perform and join both families on stage tonight here in the City of Brotherly Love. It`s all happening.

I`ve said a long time, my home state of Pennsylvania is Hillary`s firewall. It has proven once again to be ground zero for another presidential contest. Once again, and Pennsylvania could decide this thing.

The latest poll out of Pennsylvania shows Clinton with a 4-point lead over Trump. It`s Clinton at 44 percent, Trump at 40. Anyway, that`s 4 points. Both candidates are targeting PA. Donald Trump campaigned in the northeast corner, up in Scranton today. He`s up there right now.

As I said, Clinton will end her day here in Philly, but she started her day on the western side of the state, the commonwealth, at the campus of the University of Pittsburgh. We call it Pitt. And here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: And tomorrow, each and every one of you gets to make a decision as to whether or not, first, you will vote because in Pennsylvania, it`s all about election day.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: Other places around the country have been voting for weeks.

I see this man standing here with a sign, "Coal miners for Hillary." And I`ll tell you, sir...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: I know how hard times are. And as I have said -- and you can take it to the bank -- I will not forget you and I will do everything I can to help people who have given so much, worked so hard throughout their lives for generations to build this country! We are not going to forget any American!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: A massive Democratic city, of course, Philadelphia`s long played a key role in electing Democrats to the White House. The iconic example, which I`ll never forget, 1960, when John Kennedy carried Philadelphia by roughly 330,000 votes, swamping the rest of the state and putting Pennsylvania`s then 32 electoral votes in the Kennedy column.

In recent years, the city has delivered Democrats pluralities up to a half a million votes, keeping Pennsylvania in Democratic hands. There he is. The chairman of the City Committee will be joining us. They`re going to do it tomorrow for Hillary Clinton, led by Bob Brady, the head of the country`s last big city political machine.

Joining me right now is Congressman Bob Brady, a Democrat from Pennsylvania and the leader of the Democrats in Philadelphia. Also Democratic U.S. senator Bob Casey from Scranton, the senior senator from Pennsylvania. Also with us is political analyst Robert Costa who`s from Bucks County, political reporter with "The Washington Post." Thank you, all, especially Robert Costa, coming in here.

Mr. Brady, I saw you put together the organization on Friday. You`re going to get 450,000 votes out of the city? What do you think?

REP. BOB BRADY (D) PENNSYLVANIA: We`re going to get 460,000-plus majority out of the city, be able to carry the rest of the state to make Pennsylvania in Hillary`s column.

MATTHEWS: Senator Casey, explain to me the Scranton thing because I bet you know exactly why guys like us -- well, are for Hillary, but also other guys like us are for Trump. Explain the Trump phenomenon. He`s in Scranton tonight for a reason. Why? He think he`s getting a boost there.

SEN. BOB CASEY (D), PENNSYLVANIA: Well, it`s a difficult region, Chris. You have Lackawanna County, where I live. That`s Scranton. Then you have Luzerne County next door. And then you`re surrounded by Republican counties.

I think regionally, it`s more difficult than in some of the cities, Wilkes- Barre and Scranton in particular. I think she`ll win Lackawanna County. Hillary will. Her economic message is very strong. I think that`s going to be a powerful message.

But a lot of what we`ve seen across the state -- one of the reasons why you see some of that vote by some Democrats is that if you look at last 40 years, wages are only up in 40 years by 11 percent, by -- according to the Economic Policy Institute. So there`s an economic anxiety that sometimes he benefits from. He has no plans to deal with it...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

CASEY: ... has really not addressed it. She`s put forth a very specific plan for Pennsylvania on manufacturing, making sure that we`re creating the jobs of the future, and I think that`s going to be one of the main reasons why she carries the state.

MATTHEWS: Robert Costa, you come out of Bucks County. That`s a swing county. It`s probably going to go for Hillary. But tell me why this state is divided. When you go around the state, a lot of driving around the state, what do you see in terms of the split between the angry -- in many cases, angry Trump voter and the regular Democratic voter?

ROBERT COSTA, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST Well, Chris, Secretary Clinton`s in Philly tonight, and Congressman Brady, his machine there is crucial. The suburban voters in Bucks County who listen to Bruce Springsteen on the way to a soccer game, they`re very important.

But it`s not just the east. It`s the west. She`s speaking to those coal miners and the steel towns out in the west who may be tempted by Trump`s populism. These are traditional Democratic voters, but in this time of tumult in the economy, she`s being strategic by making an overture to them.

MATTHEWS: Let me -- let me ask you, Congressman -- you have an organization, the last big organization with a big city. What do Republicans have like that? What does Trump have starting tomorrow morning at 6:00 in the morning. What does he do to get people to the polls?

BRADY: He`s not going to have anything to get anybody to the polls. The Republican organization is not geared up. They`re not ready. They don`t know -- they don`t know how to do this. If they get anybody, it`ll be their first time. So it`ll be first-time starters, and we`ve been there for many, many years. We`re the vets, and we`ll take -- we`ll carry the city big-time.

MATTHEWS: Senator, let me ask you about the culture of this state. Pennsylvania`s a real place, all right? Describe it to somebody -- I know Philly`s unique, too, but describe Pennsylvania and why Trump would put his heart in winning here. You said the other night, Congressman, it`s just propaganda. He`s talked himself into thinking -- why to Republicans always think they can carry Pennsylvania and never do?

CASEY: Well, Chris, I think one of the keys now is in suburban Philadelphia. Those four counties will comprise 22 percent of the vote. The president`s margin four years ago in the four counties combined was 123,000. Hillary`s going to exceed that. I don`t know exactly how much, but she`ll exceed it, I think substantially, which I think will more than compensate for areas where Democrats haven`t done as well.

Give you an example, almost every county outside of Allegheny County in western Pennsylvania has trended Republican not just for this election. This has happened over the last 15 years. The good news is I think the votes in the eastern corner of the state, especially the suburbs, will be able to make up for that. That`s why I think she`s going to win.

MATTHEWS: So you`re talking about the suburbs being enough to win. Robert, you come from the suburbs. Tell me about how the suburbs have moved towards the Democrats. Is it demographics? Is it highly educated people moving into places like Bucks and Chester? I mean, I`ve seen these stats. It`s, like, 43 percent of the people or something, the most highest percentage of people to finish college is in Chester, for example.

COSTA: You`re right. And the senator`s spot (ph) -- this is a crucial area, a lot of highly educated women, highly educated men. They went for President Obama. They liked his temperament. They`ve been moving toward the Democratic Party in many of these formerly moderate Republican circles because they didn`t see in the new version of the Republican Party something they could identify with.

But they did go Republican -- if you think back in 2004, during a wartime, (INAUDIBLE) voters who were motivated not just by being with someone who was a different kind of temperament, a more moderate temperament. They`re driven in part by fear, and so it`s going to be interesting tonight -- can Secretary Clinton speak to those suburban voters, the skittish ones in Bucks and Montgomery and elsewhere and try to reassure them that Trump, even if he`s change, he`s not the right kind of change.

MATTHEWS: I got a sense, Congressman, that a lot of Democrats, Reagan Democrats, grew up Democrat in the rest of the state, maybe some in the city. They feel the Democratic Party`s gotten too elite, too globaloney (ph), too much trading, too many wars. They think the **immigration** hasn`t been put under control, and they lean conservative now. How do the Democrats get them back?

BRADY: They`re back. They have been back. You know, we do this 365 days a year. This is just one election. We do this all the time. Our committee people, our ward leaders are in the neighborhoods. They service people. We have a Democratic organization with mainly Democratic elected officials that service people.

And people recognize service. They want to get things done. They want to vote for the president of the United States, but they want a pothole fixed, too, and they want their kids to go to school and they want decent schools. And we do that. We do that 365 days a year for every election, not just one time because it`s a special election when the president runs.

MATTHEWS: Trump`s used -- Trump has hit every pressure point he can. You angry about **immigration**, vote for me. You`re angry about your loss of manufacturing jobs, vote for me. If you like coal, vote for me. If you like guns, vote for me. He`s solving everybody`s problem, right?

CASEY: But I wish he`d put it -- I wish he`d put some plans on paper.

MATTHEWS: I know!

CASEY: Be nice to have him do it.

MATTHEWS: But he has -- he has got -- anybody got a grief (ph), he says, I got your answer. He`s going keep digging coal mines. We`re going back to coal.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Is this really -- do people buy that?

CASEY: I don`t think the buy it, and one of the reasons they don`t buy it is because there`s only one candidate in the race who actually has a specific plan for folks...

MATTHEWS: But Hillary`s very careful, saying, I`m not going to forget the coal miners. But she`s not going back into coal as a way of producing energy in this country.

CASEY: But she has very specific ideas about how to help people transition. And I don`t know what Donald Trump is talking about when he talks about, you know, he`s helping people in coal country. He hasn`t told them what he`ll do.

BRADY: He`s going to take care of everything, but he just isn`t telling anybody how he`s going to do it or how he`s going to pay for it.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you about the -- the strike we had here the last few days, the TWA (ph). Usually -- when I`m growing up, it was Michael Quail. (ph) He would strike here on year, strike New York the next year, back and forth. Was that going to affect the vote here or not? It`s settled now.

BRADY: It`s over. The buses are running tonight, and we`ve got a lock (ph) guarantee there`ll be 100 percent service tomorrow morning, so we`re fine.

MATTHEWS: So everybody`s going to vote.

BRADY: Everybody`s going to vote.

MATTHEWS: And the first call for the committeemen will be at what time tomorrow morning?

BRADY: Oh, they`ll be up by 5:30, 6:00 o`clock.

MATTHEWS: We have a very proud organization here in the city of Philadelphia. Robert Costa, you suburbanites, don`t fully appreciate the concern that the committeeman has to make sure you damn well vote.

Anyway, thank you, Robert Costa, Senator Bob Casey, U.S. Congressman Robert Brady.

When we come back, the state of this race with just hours to go before voting actually begins tomorrow morning.

This is HARDBALL from Philadelphia, live, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: This is the last day of our campaign. Who would have believed this?

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: Who would have believed it? Been some campaign, too. This is it. Good luck! Get out there. I did my thing! I mean, I worked!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL, live from Philadelphia tonight, where Hillary, Bill and Chelsea Clinton are going to hold a big rally with President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama, and of course, we`re going to have Bruce Springsteen here and Jon Bon Jovi, of course.

Donald Trump is at a five-state blitz right now. And you see him there. He`s getting tired, of course, the final day of campaigning in 2016. The candidates always get tired the last day.

Earlier today, across this state, in Pittsburgh, Secretary Clinton took a final swing at Trump, she called -- who she called divisive and unfit to be commander-in-chief. Let`s watch that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: We don`t have to accept a dark and divisive vision for America. Tomorrow, you can vote for a hopeful, inclusive, big-hearted America. Tomorrow, we face the test of our time. Will we be coming together as a nation or splitting further apart?

I think we do need some more love and kindness, all right?

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: We have got to rise above all of this hate-filled rhetoric, all of these insults and scapegoating and finger pointing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, you can say that again.

Let`s bring in NBC News correspondent Andrea Mitchell, who got her start here as a reporter with KWY radio here in Philadelphia. She used to cover exciting campaigns back in `74. I can remember those campaigns.

She`s at the rally -- look at this. She`s right there in front of Independence Hall behind me, right there. Andrea, give us a sense of that crowd and where this campaign stands right now with a few hours to go before everything starts.

ANDREA MITCHELL, NBC CORRESPONDENT: This is simply amazing. I mean, as an American, as a Philadelphia person, as -- I mean, just as a citizen, to be in front of Independence Hall with this kind of crowd on election eve, it`s just a phenomenal setting. The crowd is exuberant.

You know, this has been a very long and often painful 18 months, Chris, by anybody`s account, and until the very last moment, clouded by the e-mail controversies, only cleared up by the FBI director, you know, yesterday.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MITCHELL: Still, Hillary Clinton was really ebullient. I started the day with her up in Westchester on the tarmac. She took a few questions, we posed for some pictures, and she said -- you know, we tried to ask her a question about Jim Comey, and she said, We`re on a good track.

So she will not respond to that. We talked about this last night, you and I. She does not want to talk about that because they think it`s just a reminder of all of the troubles that they`ve had with the personal server. And she`s going for swing voters in Michigan today and in Pennsylvania. She was saying, you know, To those of you who aren`t with me, I can be a president for all of you.

There`s a primetime ad on tonight on NBC and CBS, a two-minute ad straight to camera. This is her pitch. I want to unify the country. That`s what she told us at the airport this morning, and we`re told there`s a possibility at 3:00 o`clock this morning when we get back to Westchester County, she`s going to talk and be met by supporters on the tarmac again. An amazing day!

MATTHEWS: Yes, it is. (INAUDIBLE) I`ve been thinking -- do you have a sense of your reporting, can you tell whether she hoped in this campaign -- remember for a while there, she was saying, When they go low, we go high. We`ll take the high road. Then we got the FBI report Friday a week ago, two Fridays ago. And it seemed like then she had to change the campaign back to tit for tat, rather than -- and now at the last minute, she`s turning high road. Did she want to turn high road before this?

MITCHELL: She -- absolutely. She told us -- we were talking to her on the plane coming back from the last debate, and she would not rise to any bait. She did not want to debate or argue with Donald Trump after that debate. She clearly felt she`d won that final debate, and then the very next day, got slammed, blindsided really, by the Comey letter, and they felt they had to go negative.

So all of the plans for 10, 12 days of a positive ending, an uplifting ending, were, you know, erased by that. And now she`s really hoping in these closing hours to reach people as she did, she hopes, in Pittsburgh and now in Philadelphia later tonight, joined by -- an unprecedented closing rally, as you have said -- by both Obamas, by Bon Jovi, by Springsteen. I mean, an amazing setting.

And I was thinking about the setting because you go to all of these rallies -- I`ve been traveling for 18 months with her. And there`s also a lot of orchestration and drama and lighting, which I first witnessed covering Ronald Reagan, who was the master of all this. His people were.

But this is so symbolic, Independence Hall. She`s talking about becoming the first woman president, and this is where the founders met. And just think about what history she could be making tomorrow if she`s successful.

MATTHEWS: I agree so well. Thank you, Andrea Mitchell. You got a sense of this importance of what`s happening tonight. I love it.

Let`s bring in Chuck Todd, NBC News political director, moderator of MEET THE PRESS, Nicole Wallace, former communications director for President George W. Bush and an MSNBC political analyst, and Eugene Robinson. Thank you all for joining us tonight.

I guess I want to ask you all about where this stands. And -- and Trump, I guess, if I were Trump -- and I want to start with Chuck on this -- to think through what`s going on in his head up there in Scranton tonight and later in the evening, I think, if you`re behind in the polls, you have got to do two things.

You have got hope you can get a last-minute roll and pick up some states you`re right on the edge of taking, like a New Hampshire. And maybe it will help you in maybe in Florida. And then you have to have reach. So, you have to do some roll, hope for the roll, and then reach beyond where you think the roll is going to take you and go to those reach states.

I think that`s what he`s doing. It`s rational, maybe the most rational period of his campaign, but it`s desperate rationalism. Your thinking about what Trump is trying to do in these last hours?

CHUCK TODD, MODERATOR, "MEET THE PRESS": Well, look, yes, I agree this is a very rational move by him.

It is, you know, the traditional swing states weren`t enough. He had to find some others. But I can`t help but wonder if he`s filled with regret. In hindsight, it is stunning that Scranton and Macomb County, Michigan, and, say, Janesville, Wisconsin, to borrow a familiar hometown of a certain Wisconsin Republican, weren`t more regular stops for Trump during the fall.

And, in hindsight, did he -- just as the Democrats have taken all of these formally red states in the Sun Belt that have been diversifying year after year, there`s been a demographic change taking place in the northern tier that Republicans should have been able to take advantage of sooner. And Trump was the messenger to do it when it came to issues of trade and things like that.

And to watch this last week makes you think, boy, what could have been an what a different place we might be in tonight.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Well, let me go to Nicolle on that.

Nicolle, your thing, you have got a big brain in this kind of political setting. You know what the big brain has to do, think about what you can do in the time you have left. What`s Trump doing, as you see it?

NICOLLE WALLACE, FORMER BUSH WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Listen, I agree with both of you.

I think he`s doing the only thing that there is left to do, which is to throw that Hail Mary. I can`t believe I`m making a sports analogy with the likes all of you.

(LAUGHTER)

WALLACE: But he is doing what he has to do if he wants to win, because he can sweep the battlegrounds and lose, right? He could win Florida, Ohio, all the gray states on our map and still lose the presidency.

So he`s doing exactly what you have to do. But you`re asking the question that I think haunts most Republicans as we lay awake sleepless at night, which is what could have been. And most polls show him coming up short. Most Republicans I have talked to of the much-loathed establishment ilk think he`s going to come up short.

But this is not the kind of election where we can wake up the next morning and go back to business as usual. And you talked about the counties where a different message is the one that it`s going to take if we want to reclaim any sort of hope of ever winning a national election again.

This will be -- we have lost a few now in a row. And there are a lot of good lessons to learn about the way Trump talked to the GOP base about economic despair. It`s something that a lot of Republicans, the 16 that he ran against, failed at.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Gene, you and I have talked about the way Trump -- and I don`t think you like it -- you like it less than I like it. And I don`t like it much, which is the way Trump has disparaged minorities, just disparaged people of color. And he`s done it in a way that`s almost suicidal.

If you take 20 -- if you spot your opponent, in this case Hillary Clinton, a quarter of the vote, Hispanic and African-American, you just spot them that, and then you say, oh, I`m still going to win, who are you lying to? Because you would have to carry two-thirds of what`s left, two-thirds, 66, 67 percent, to win an election.

It`s crazy, what he did. I`m saying it`s also probably immoral, but let`s start with the crazy.

EUGENE ROBINSON, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, yes, crazy, immoral, and just plain wrong.

Look, I have always said -- we have had this discussion before. It doesn`t make any sense. If -- someday, the Republican Party, there will be a Republican Party, I hope, that makes a sincere appeal for African-American and Latino votes. And that will require not just, you know, showing up at a black church on a Sunday. It will require examining policies and including people on the grassroots level and a lot of stuff that the Republican Party hasn`t done.

Donald Trump is not the person to do that, obviously. He was never going to do it. In fact, he did the opposite. And he sort of energized the alt- right and that sort of sector of voters. But he turned everybody else off. And so, yes, he`d be doing better if he were a different person.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I think that`s very fair.

Let me get back to Chuck.

And you reserve judgment on a lot of these things as a straight analyst, but let me just say this. The decision to start his national role as a birther, he chose to emerge as a birther by saying the president of the United States, the first African-American -- he comes from a mixed background, but he`s African-American -- and saying he`s basically somebody who snuck in the country under an assumed identity and is not who he says he is, nobody knew him in school -- it`s worse than being -- saying he`s an illegal **immigrant**.

He said he`s basically a Manchurian Candidate. And he did that to get himself his legs politically. And that`s how he built his voice. And then to end it later and then to develop with rapists and murderers -- you can argue about **immigration** policy all the time our lives getting it straight, but accusing **immigrants** of all being criminals is not a starting point, unless you`re him.

TODD: Look, he created a toxic mix here, right?

Economic populism was very powerful and potentially a terrific message in a general election, but he mixed it with sort of this cultural backlash that has also taken place in this country.

It happens. We have made some -- there have been some dramatic changes in our culture, whether it`s marriage equality, the election of the first African-American, the possible election of the first woman president, transgender folks like Caitlyn Jenner now front and center type of things.

So, there`s been a dramatic change in culture. And Trump basically wrapped both issues together, which was one way to win a -- the nomination, but it automatically -- going to what you guys did here, if he had separated his cultural backlash message and never touched that, never got into it -- I mean, look, the most powerful future coalition in this country is going to be an economic populist message that unites working-class whites and working-class Latinos and working-class African-Americans.

MATTHEWS: I`m with you. I`m with you.

TODD: Bernie Sanders might have put that coalition together had he gotten a nomination and might have shown us how potentially powerful that is. That`s what Trump cut himself off from.

MATTHEWS: Well, that politics of Bobby Kennedy is a long way in the past, unfortunately, but it was once there, because we saw as the train went by in New Jersey and by here in 1968, the funeral train of Bobby Kennedy, there were white faces and black faces, and they were all working people, and they were saluting this guy as a fellow patriot.

That was a moment that we have to get back to.

By the way, it`s a great honor working with you guys, all of you.

Thank you, Chuck Todd, Nicolle Wallace, and Eugene Robinson, the night before the election.

WALLACE: Thanks, Chris.

TODD: You make it fun, buddy.

ROBINSON: OK. See you tomorrow.

MATTHEWS: Up next: Hillary Clinton`s fighting hard in the Industrial Midwest. She`s pushing to hang on to Michigan and Pennsylvania, as Trump looks to make inroads into these traditionally blue states.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: By the way, Michigan is in play. You know, it hasn`t been in play for Republicans for 30-something years. Michigan is in play because they`re tired of watching their car factories be taken out.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL live from Philadelphia tonight, as we await tonight`s rally with the Clintons and the Obamas and Bruce Springsteen.

Anyway, Donald Trump earlier today told supporters he`s going to win Michigan, a state, as he said, that hasn`t voted for a Republican presidential candidate since 1988 anyway.

But Hillary Clinton`s pushing hard to defend her advantage in Michigan, another Rust Belt state, if you will, like this one of Pennsylvania. Earlier today, President Obama, Hillary Clinton`s top surrogate, made a direct appeal to Michiganders.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: So, to every autoworker on the assembly line right here in Michigan, to every small business owner, every barkeep, every teacher in communities that depend on the auto industry, I think I have earned some credibility here.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: Plants that were closing when I took office are working double shift now.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: The auto industry has record sales. I think I have earned some credibility here.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: Manufacturing jobs have grown at the fastest rate since the `90s, when another Clinton was president. I think we have earned some credibility here.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: So, when I tell you that Donald Trump is not the guy who`s going to look out for you, you need to listen. Do not be bamboozled.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Wow.

For more on Donald Trump`s blue state pickup plan, I`m joined by former Michigan Governor and Hillary Clinton supporter Jennifer Granholm, and also John Brabender, Republican strategist.

Thank you, Governor, for joining us.

Let`s talk about Michigan.

It has an appeal. It has appealed in the past to anger. Back in `72, before you were in office, the state Democratic voters voted for George Wallace in that primary back then. Trump seems to be appealing to that kind of anger. What are his chances?

JENNIFER GRANHOLM (D), FORMER MICHIGAN GOVERNOR: No way.

Do not be bamboozled, as the president said. He was wright right on the money. This president and Hillary Clinton, who supported him, saved the auto industry. There`s clearly an element in Michigan -- and I believe it strongly -- who`s against these unfettered trade agreements without enforcement of them.

She`s got a plan to do that. And, in fact, Chris, there was just a poll out that shows that people trust her more on trade than trust Donald Trump. I know he`s sort of, you know, throwing darts against the board and hoping that something sticks. It`s not going to stick in Michigan.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

What do you think appealed to him out there? Is it just desperation? Because everybody thought a couple of week -- maybe a week ago, a few days ago, his root north was like Robert E. Lee`s. He`s going up through Pennsylvania. He was going to hit Pennsylvania, take it away from the Democrats. What sent him off to Michigan? Desperation? What do you think?

GRANHOLM: Yes. I mean, I think it`s desperation, and, of course, that Bernie Sanders had victory in the primary here based upon a message that was about jobs and trade.

But she has taken that back. Her whole 100-day plan is about jobs and making sure we renegotiate NAFTA, so that we create jobs in America. So, I just think that he`s hoping for something, but it`s not going to fly. In fact, Chris, the early ballots that come through in Michigan -- we don`t have early in-person voting, but we have absentee voting. And the Democrats are up 50,000 votes in just those absentee votes.

I think it`s going to be a good -- I think it`s going to be a really good day for Michigan tomorrow.

MATTHEWS: Well, Governor, it`s great to have you on. Stay with us.

President Obama also took Trump to task out there for previous calls to let the auto industry go bankrupt. That was not a smart move by Trump, and he`s going to pay for it tomorrow. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: Since we`re in Michigan, take a look what he said about the auto industry. Now, remember, when I came into office, the industry was flat on its back. And we made some tough decisions.

Just last summer, Donald Trump said you could have let it go bankrupt, frankly.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Wow.

OBAMA: Wow.

He said squeeze Michigan. Make Michigan hurt. Then your autoworkers would have no choice but to accept less pay.

That`s not somebody who`s a champion for working people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: John Brabender, your thoughts about these two states, the one I`m in right now, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. What`s Trump up to? What`s your history tell you about his chances?

JOHN BRABENDER, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST: Well, I think there`s a couple of things going on.

First of all, I don`t know how we can say it`s desperate. If it was desperate, why are they sending all the reinforcements on the Democrat side? Why is Obama there if the Democrats think it`s not in play? Why are they sending him to Pennsylvania if they think it`s not in play? They`re certainly worried about something.

Number two is, the one thing people know about these two particular states is that there`s a lot of people who feel they have been left on the economic battlefield. They`re the sons and daughters of Reagan Democrats who sometimes vote Republican. And I believe that Donald Trump actually has struck a chord with these people.

We see a state like Pennsylvania, where 75,000 Democrats switched over to the Republican Party to vote for Donald Trump in the primary. These are votes that Mitt Romney could not have got four years ago. And Donald Trump seems to be getting them.

Plus, it`s only the route for Donald Trump to go, I believe. If he can`t win in Michigan, if he can`t win in Pennsylvania...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK. We`re looking at all these states.

Governor, Governor, I want you to go back to the map. And then I will go back to John.

Governor, you take a look at the map right now. You have got it in your head, I know. He`s got a very good shot in Ohio. He`s got an excellent shot in Iowa. He`s got a troubling situation in Florida because the Hispanic vote down there, it`s hard to pick that. He also has to win -- he has to win North Carolina.

But then he has to win somewhere in a big industrial state, Michigan or Pennsylvania. Which one would you go to if you were him? Not Michigan?

GRANHOLM: I just -- I mean...

MATTHEWS: Or would you just tell him to give up?

(LAUGHTER)

GRANHOLM: I would -- honestly, I would say, you better shore up Ohio, if nothing else.

But I`m not advising Donald Trump. But I do know -- to John`s point about why he`s there, I mean, he`s there because, in Michigan, in Pennsylvania, and in New Hampshire, they don`t all have these great early in-person voting. And so, of course, they`re going to go to the battleground states where there is not in-person voting, so they can shore up their strengths.

And, by the way, I don`t think Ohio, I don`t think he`s got a great shot at winning Ohio. I think the numbers that have come in from early voting, especially once people were able to vote, recognizing that there was some shutting down of polls a week early, but I think that Ohio may be a surprise for people tomorrow.

MATTHEWS: Well, it`s too late to make a bet, a gentleman`s bet anyway. But you may be right. Anyway, you know your stuff.

Thank you, Jennifer Granholm, from the state of Michigan, predicting that Donald Trump will not win Ohio.

We will hold you to that bet.

GRANHOLM: OK.

MATTHEWS: John Brabender, you got a tough road to hoe, a tough road to hoe.

Up next, we await Hillary Clinton`s rally here in Philadelphia with the president, the first lady, Bruce Springsteen, Jon Bon Jovi. And we thought we were going to have the vice president, too, but they got a lot of people. It looks like 20,000 people there right behind me.

You`re watching a special edition of HARDBALL from the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. You ought to visit this place.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

You`re looking right now at a live picture from Philadelphia where Hillary Clinton has just arrived for her big rally here with her husband, Bill Clinton, her daughter Chelsea. Also, the first lady of the United States is coming here and the president. Also going to see John Bon Jovi, the entertainer, the singer, and keep forgetting, Bruce Springsteen, how can you forget that?

After hitting eight different states in the last 48 hours, Donald Trump is tonight in New Hampshire right now before heading to his final rally in Michigan where he`ll close out his campaign for president.

I`m joined right now by NBC`s Katy Tur who`s awaiting Trump at his Manchester event.

Katy, I don`t know what Trump was saying in Scranton, but it seemed to be a lot of stuff, sundry stuff without coherence to it. What`s he saying to the voters right now?

KATY TUR, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Well, he`s saying, basically, I`ve said all I need to say and it`s in your hand, but he`s going out and he`s claiming that he`s going to do well among African-American and Latino voters basically because he`s say he`s going to do well. The campaign really hasn`t done that much outreach to minority communities.

They`re also trying to talk about these e-mails, talking about corruption. He`s talking about, you know, how the FBI could not have gone through 650,000 e-mails, it`s just not possible. It`s a talking point we`re hearing from a number of Trump surrogates and from the campaign right now, even though there`s technology to do that.

Basically, he`s trying to I guess leave it on the table going into the final stretch. He`s going in and at time, he is hitting some favorite themes. He`s talking about the wall. He`s talking about a ban of some sort. Although he`s not saying specifically a Muslim ban any longer, more like an extremist ban. But he`s hitting five states, Chris, five states that he absolutely needs to win in Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, where I am right now, and Michigan, because he`s got to find a way to turn a blue state red.

Now, in the Upper Midwest, what the campaign will say to you is they believe their jobs message is breaking through to African-Americans, breaking across all demographics because that matters more than anything else. We`re going to find out if that strategy works come tomorrow, but what I can tell you about New Hampshire, specifically where I am right now, is that the internal polling in this state, a couple of days ago showed Trump neck and neck with Hillary Clinton. And also, about running a nearly as well as Kelly Ayotte is.

So, they`re certainly hopeful in this state they`re going to be able to pull it off, but they`re not making any concrete predictions right now. They say the vote here in New Hampshire is just too independent to predict one way of the other. You can hear this crowd behind me, Chris. They are obviously very enthusiastic. They`re screaming "lock her up, lock her up, lock her up", also, "build that wall".

And one quick I guess fun fact, you could call it, last time Donald Trump was in this arena was the day before the New Hampshire primary, which he won by a large margin. A woman in the crowd screamed out "Ted Cruz is a p- word", and Donald Trump repeated it. It`s the first time we heard the p- word on the trail. And, of course, we ended up hearing it quite a bit more few months later.

MATTHEWS: Thanks so much, Katy Tur, up in New Hampshire with the -- well, we`ll see what we`re seeing tomorrow morning.

Let`s bring in the HARDBALL round table tonight.

Maria, why don`t we spell it right this time. Panaritis with "Philadelphia Inquirer" and James Peterson and professor at Lehigh University, which is not too far from here, and Howard Fineman of Colgate, as MSNBC political analyst, and global editorial director of the "Huffington Post."

Thank you, Maria.

Let me ask you something we haven`t really got into -- women voters in the suburbs. Ed Rendell, the former governor of this state, everybody`s talking about the role the women are going to play tomorrow morning.

MARIA PANARITIS, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER: Yes, in particular, the college educated women of the suburbs of Philadelphia, which combine with the city of Philadelphia, as you well know, deliver a quarter of all votes in presidential election in this very important swing state. They are shown poll after poll to be very much in favor of Hillary Clinton`s candidacy and I`m not entirely --

MATTHEWS: There they are, we`re watching them. The president, former president and well, I was going to say first lady, but the former secretary of state now, her latest --

PANARITIS: And it`s not entirely clear, the extent to which they will support her only if they`re Democrat. I think in fact, I heard just today earlier in a conversation that I had a party chief here in the suburb, the Republican Party chief, he`s worried. He knows a lot of moderate sort of old school Pennsylvania Republican women who are not sure they can bite the bullet at the top of the ticket.

MATTHEWS: How much secret --

(CROSSTALK)

PANARITIS: They don`t love Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: How much secret marital division`s going to go on out there?

PANARITIS: That`s a really good question. I`d love to be a fly on the wall.

MATTHEWS: Maybe they won`t talk about it. Just go their separate ways.

PANARITIS: You can hope, right?

MATTHEWS: It makes sense to me.

James, you`re thinking about this campaign.

JAMES PETERSON, LEHIGH UNIVERSITY: I mean, so part of it is, remember, we haven`t talked enough about this is the fact this is possibly the first woman president in the history of the United States. So, of course, there are going to be some women who are going to dislike Trump, but I think there are also going to be some women, even on the Republican side, who are acknowledging the history of this moment. We haven`t covered it so much because the Clinton campaign hasn`t pushed the identity politics issue so much. But the reality is, folks, women who step into the voting booth tomorrow are going to be thinking about making history in --

MATTHEWS: OK. Supposed, let`s supposed something that`s not impractical, that Hillary is going to win tomorrow night, right? So, six months, six years, 60 years from now, do you want to be a mother who voted against Hillary Clinton when she ran for president when she does win?

PETERSON: Right.

MATTHEWS: When she does win? And say, I voted for this guy named Donald Trump who I can`t quite explain what he said, because he said awful things. But I voted for him. Not Hillary, the first woman president.

How do you explain that to your granddaughter?

HOWARD FINEMAN, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, I think history matters a lot here, Chris. And I think as you say, Hillary herself is down played it right now. But if the results go the right way for her tomorrow night, you`re going to hear a lot of it. But you`re not going to hear any crowing from Hillary Clinton.

I think Hillary Clinton is, let`s give her credit not only for experience and a lot of tough things she`s gone through, but for some wisdom acquired. And I think if she does win and you heard this last night from her, she understands that Donald Trump however crudely has raised a lot of important issues and if his voters are not Donald Trump --

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: And her first job is going to be not to crow about the history, she`ll do some of that, but to reach out to those people, if she`s lucky enough to win tomorrow night.

MATTHEWS: OK, thank you. The round table is sticking with us.

Bon Jovi is on the stage right now. You can hear him. You can hear him here, on the air. Clintons have arrived here in Philly, right here as the spot here.

Up next, these three will tell me something about tomorrow`s election I don`t know. By the way, not the Clintons and not Bon Jovi, but these three.

Anyway, this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And I`m sure that you do, too.

MATTHEWS: We`re back from Philadelphia now with John Bon Jovi on stage, as we await Hillary Clinton at the big rally tonight, big campaign rally, with some 20,000 people who already there and it keeps growing this crowd right out in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, on East Market Street at Fifth.

Anyway, Maria, tell me something I don`t know.

PANARITIS: My colleague just crunched these numbers today. He found that looking, comparing today`s voter registration compared to 2012, same time, we see that there`s been a significantly higher shift to Republicans registered in Metro Pittsburgh versus to Democrats, the increase in Southeast P.A., a big hurdle for Hillary.

MATTHEWS: James?

PETERSON: Well, there are a lot of young people issues on the ballot initiatives across the nation, like legalization of marijuana, raising the minimum wage, the reality is young people are not engaged in this selection because of the negativity of the political discourse. I`m seeing young people on college campuses around the nation organize efforts, No Labels efforts and different initiatives to bring back civil dialogue in political discourse.

MATTHEWS: Howard?

FINEMAN: Here`s what you don`t know -- everybody in my role in journalism right now is writing about how this election has basically destroyed -- or damaged if not destroyed all of the institutions of democracy. Well, I`m here sitting in front of Independence Hall to say whoever wins tonight, that`s not true. This country has endured a whole lot over 240 years and it will survive whoever wins tomorrow night.

MATTHEWS: Good for you.

James Peterson, thank you -- Maria Panaritis, and Howard Fineman.

When we can return, my election diary for this final night of the presidential campaign. Stay tuned.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary November 7th 2016.

My father loved to tell the story of the man banging his head with a hammer. Asked why he was doing such a thing, he said, because it feels so good when I stop. To a lot of Americans and to a lot of our friends overseas, this election has been extremely painful. Even if they don`t like Donald Trump, they haven`t had much fun watching him struggle. Even if they don`t like Hillary Clinton, they`ve gotten a little tired of Trump saying crooked Hillary a dozen times a day.

We`ve gotten used to local politicians being like this, watching TV ads featuring old yellow newspaper clips and a macabre voice alerting us to some vote congressman or woman had cast because the leaders from the other party had contrived some bobby trap for their opponents to get caught up in.

But this is a presidential election. We`re just now getting through. And by midnight, we may be clear from the most destructive campaign of its kind. At least as far back as we can remember.

I`ll blame it on Trump. I don`t deny he`s raised some powerfully vital issues, uncontrolled **immigration**, loss of our manufacturing base, bad wars -- but that doesn`t justify the way in which he`s conducted himself in this campaign. You don`t elevate democracy by degrading your opponents, calling them "Lyin` Ted", "Low energy Bush", "Little Marco" or "Crooked Hillary".

Tomorrow night, it will all be over. But there will be casualties. One will be a delusion you can win a presidential campaign by kissing off a quarter of the vote at the start. That`s what Trump did with this birther propaganda about our first African-American president, and with calling **immigrants** from Mexico rapists and murders.

The other casualty will be the moderate East Coast Republican Party I grew up with. There is a distinct possibility that tomorrow night will end with a single Republican senator in the entire Northeast United States. It will end with a Republican Party entirely confined to the South, the plain states and the Rocky Mountains west and the Democratic Party hugging the two coasts.

We may need a high-speed rail system across this country as a first step towards uniting us the way the old rail system did when Lincoln built it. What we will most need, however, starting November 9th, is a president determined to save this union the way Lincoln did.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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Chris Matthews, Chuck Todd, Andrea Mitchell, Hallie Jackson, Robert Costa, Pete Williams, Joy Reid

19620 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC HOST: FBI to Hillary Clinton -- You are innocent.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in New York.

Well, just hours to go until election day comes breaking news from the Federal Bureau of Investigation . Director James Comey late today told every member of Congress that the FBI has found no evidence of any wrongdoing by presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. She is clean of any possible charge, innocent, after the FBI has looked at all the e-mails on Anthony Weiner laptop.

That`s the blockbuster. After combing through all the e-mails, the FBI now realizes that those e-mails sent or received by Clinton during the time she was secretary of state are either duplicates of ones discovered earlier or have nothing to do with State Department business.

Nine days ago, FBI director James Comey rocked the election with the announcement to Congress that the bureau was essentially reopening the investigation into Hillary Clinton`s use of personal e-mails. The announcement came after e-mails were discovered on a computer used by Clinton aide Huma Abedin and her estranged husband, Anthony Weiner. It was the equivalent of nuclear bomb at that point.

Well, today, the FBI director has rocked the race again, giving Clinton a clean bill of health. In his letter to Congress, Comey said, "Based on our review, we have not changed our conclusions that we expressed in July with respect to Secretary Clinton." In other words, he`s cleared her.

According to NBC`s Pete Williams, the FBI concluded that nearly all the e- mails on Weiner`s computer were duplicates of e-mails previously sent (sic) by agents, or otherwise, they were unrelated to government business, as I said.

Neither Clinton nor Donald Trump reacted to the news yet. But Clinton`s communications director, Jennifer Palmieri, had this to say to reporters earlier today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JENNIFER PALMIERI, CLINTON CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS DIR.: We have seen Director Comey`s latest letter to the Hill. We are glad to see that as we were -- that he has found, as we were confident that he would, that he has confirmed the conclusions that he released -- reached in July. And we`re glad that this matter is resolved.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, joining me right now, "The Washington Post`s" Robert Costa, NBC`s Hallie Jackson and MEET THE PRESS moderator Chuck Todd and NBC`s Andrea Mitchell also -- she`s doing a report on MSNBC. Thank you very much. She`s up in Manchester, New Hampshire, where Hillary Clinton is holding a rally today.

I want to go to you, Andrea. Is Hillary Clinton playing this low key? Do they not want to be -- have this exoneration, if you will, the last 48 hours, be the main story?

ANDREA MITCHELL, NBC CORRESPONDENT: What they`re doing is trying to stay as far away from the e-mail controversy that has cast a shadow over their campaign for the past nine days. So she did not mention it in Cleveland. We`re told she will not mention it when she comes here.

She`s trying to get back to -- trying to end on a positive note. They are planning to have Khizr Khan, the Gold Star father, introduce here. In Cleveland, it was Lebron James.

They want to get back to their message, but there is -- it`s undeniable that this has damaged their campaign, that they had to pivot from a positive message to go on the attack to try to defend herself for the past nine days. And it has certainly given more momentum to Republicans in states like New Hampshire.

MATTHEWS: Well, wait a minute. She`s been completely exonerated today. Why doesn`t she gets up to date? She`s clean as of now. Why doesn`t she brag, spike the football and say, I`m clean as a whistle, I won this argument? Why doesn`t she do that?

MITCHELL: They think (INAUDIBLE) that any time she`s talking about e-mails is a negative. Let her talk about bringing the country together. She`s got a two-minute paid ad on NBC and CBS tomorrow night.

I think you can understand the strategy. They`ve been playing defense for nine days and going on the attack against Donald Trump. All that negativity has caused her the support, they believe, of many Republican women, suburban women, other independents in swing states like New Hampshire, which decides late.

The less she talks about all of that and the personal server and everything else that some of the Trump people, Mike Pence, are still talking about tonight, even after the exoneration, the worse off she is.

MATTHEWS: OK...

MITCHELL: For them, they want to get back on message with Lebron James and Khizr Khan...

MATTHEWS: I get it.

MITCHELL: ... and a closing paid video.

MATTHEWS: Hold on there, Andrea. I just want to go to Chuck. Chuck, it seems to me that she would want to drive that news out as far as she could, make sure the next 24 hours, everybody hears that she`s been cleared. Why not push it?

CHUCK TODD, MODERATOR, "MEET THE PRESS": Because then you`re talking about the FBI and e-mails. I mean, I think you`re still reminding people that, You know what -- and to me, the thing that always was the bigger negative for her on the Comey announcement was it was the reminder that with the Clintons come drama because that was the reaction I heard from some voters.

And I remember having (INAUDIBLE) which was people that even -- that were going to still vote for Clinton, it`s, like, the -- Oh, it`s always so exhausting with the Clintons. And even folks would say, Yes, it may be the Republicans` fault, but they`re the magnet for this stuff. Why are they always the magnet for it? Somehow, the Obamas are not the same level of magnet for all of these investigations and things like that.

So you know, I think that to talk about it more? I mean, look, it`s done damage. It`s probably cost Democrats one, maybe two Senate seats these nine days. They still may get control, but it`s hurt them.

MATTHEWS: Hallie?

HALLIE JACKSON, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Well, I`m not...

(CROSSTALK)

I mean, that`s the real story, right? Why is she not talking about it? Because her supporters never believed that she actually had an issue with it, the people that are at her rallies, and the media`s going to talk about it because it`s in she headlines. So she doesn`t...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... counting on the media to carry the story...

JACKSON: Yes, she doesn`t need to get out there.

MATTHEWS: ... on the front page tomorrow.

JACKSON: But the story that Chuck`s talking I think is the real one, is how does this affect down ballot races? And I think you`re already starting to see some talk about that, about what does this do now? Does it put them sort of more at risk? Probably not. But there was a lot of discussion when this first happened of what it could do and frankly boost some of the Republicans (INAUDIBLE)

TODD: There`s two -- there`s two that are extraordinarily close that, you know, any tiny movement -- and that to me is...

MATTHEWS: Missouri?

TODD: Less Missouri...

MATTHEWS: North Carolina?

TODD: ... more North Carolina and New Hampshire. I think that`s where it would have the most (INAUDIBLE)

ROBERT COSTA, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: How moderate Republicans...

MATTHEWS: Wait a minute. Which way is Missouri now? You think it`s...

TODD: I think Missouri is -- I think this...

MATTHEWS: Kander?

TODD: I think Comey -- no, I think Blunt is being bailed out by a Trump surge in rural America.

COSTA: Well, part of that surge, and I saw when I drove across Pennsylvania the last few days, was it seemed like moderate Republicans, Republicans were on the fence. They were tilted toward Trump because of what the FBI did last week. Now with the FBI coming out and saying it`s a different story, you want to do (ph) those moderate Republicans who a few days ago were saying, I`m going to go for Trump now because I just can`t have Clinton in there. Do they stay home? Do they go for her? Do they -- what do they do? Does Trump`s turnout actually get changed?

TODD: See, I think they already voted.

MATTHEWS: Well...

TODD: A lot of them early voted. You know, the only ones left -- that`s why the only one left really may be New Hampshire.

MATTHEWS: I`m just looking at this -- Andrea, I want you back in here. I`m looking at this race as it was moving towards Hillary, the moments (sic) with her -- the momentum with her until Friday a week ago, two Fridays ago. And all of a sudden, it was like in the -- like in the World Series the last game, somebody hits a three-run home run, Comey. All of a sudden, the whole direction of the thing is back to even money again.

And then, of course, Hillary overran that. By Wednesday, she was getting back her pace, picking up a point or two a day. She had outrun this thing. Do they feel they already outran this thing, so they didn`t have to jump and make a big deal about the decision by Comey to exonerate her tonight?

MITCHELL: Well, they frankly, because of all those leaks, Rudy Giuliani and all the rest -- they frankly did not that this would be so (ph) before the election. So they had come up with an alternative strategy.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MITCHELL: Go on the attack and then try to ride the closing days and get all -- flood the zone with President Obama, Michelle Obama, all of the surrogates out there.

Now I think that they want to just stick on anything that does not remind people, as Chuck said, that she had a private server. That`s what the -- what some would call the original sin that she can`t really properly explain.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MITCHELL: She`s apologized now for it. So...

(CROSSTALK)

MITCHELL: ... the more she...

TODD: Can`t blame the FBI ...

MITCHELL: The more she talks about...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So the Clinton plan, just to stay on her for a minute now, has changed three or four times. The original goal, we`re told, was a big high road ending. They go low, we go high. Then it was, We got to do the thing they did back with -- back in the old days of Monica, We just have to win. Remember that line from Clinton, Mr. Clinton? We just have to win.

So then they came (ph) the strategy of flood the zone, do all the political stuff you need to overcome it. And then it -- now we`re again tonight back to high road, right?

COSTA: Well, I don`t know about high road. I think it`s ignore the bad and just grind out these last 48 hours. Just let the machine do the work.

MATTHEWS: So it`s a hybrid between high road and grinding it out on the road.

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: ... run against the Republican Party right now, if you`re the Democrats and Secretary Clinton, because you can look ahead and say, Republicans want to investigate. Is this what you really want? The FBI has cleared me. We`re safe here. We`re looking at a culture in Washington that`s all about investigations. Let`s move beyond that, elect Democrats and elect Clinton.

TODD: You know, by the way, that is something we haven`t talked about, is it takes some air out of Trump`s closing argument. I mean, Comey gave Trump a cohesive closing argument of, essentially, Hey, you don`t want all of this Clinton mess. She`s going to investigated the whole time she`s there, and all this stuff. So it does take a little bit of air out of that balloon for Trump.

MATTHEWS: You`ve just anticipated my closing argument tonight because I`ve already written it. And I basically said this was his closing argument, and it was founded on this FBI report that they`re still looking at the e- mails.

TODD: Right.

MATTHEWS: And he was able to say that`s evidence in itself...

TODD: Look at the...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... an egregious crime, worse than Watergate, the fact that they`re looking at e-mails.

TODD: Look at the TV ad with Weiner, which -- the pervert thing, which...

MATTHEWS: That`s strong.

TODD: It was a strong ad. It was -- it certainly stuck out. Now it`s irrelevant.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, look, here`s -- since Comey`s first announcement nine days ago, Trump has made it a centerpiece of his closing argument. Let`s watch that. That`s what we`re talking about.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: The FBI would never have reopened this case at this time unless it were a most egregious criminal offense.

This is the biggest scandal since Watergate.

She`s likely to be under investigation for many, many years. Also likely to conclude in a criminal trial. This is not what we need in this country, folks. The work of government would grind to halt if she were ever elected. She`ll be in court for her entire tenure. And she`ll be convicted!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Hallie, what`s this do to this whole line of argument that we`ve been hearing?

JACKSON: Nothing.

(CROSSTALK)

JACKSON: Look at what happened. He`s still talking about what he calls a potential indictment against Hillary Clinton, even though there`s no evidence to support that.

MATTHEWS: Based on?

JACKSON: (INAUDIBLE) came out on a different network, it was then walked back, that there wasn`t going to be an indictment.

MATTHEWS: FBI leaks.

JACKSON: So he`s going to keep talking about it. He`s going to keep talking about her corruption. What I think this did for him was teach him, I think, more than any other moment in this campaign, that if he really does what all of his advisers have been wanting him to do, which is stay on message, that you would see some of the polls tighten. He gave himself that pep talk about it. His supporters...

(CROSSTALK)

JACKSON: Well, the race is tight. He`s going after her constantly. He`s going after Affordable Care Act constantly.

COSTA: The thing that we`re also hearing in Trump`s closing message is it`s anti-Clinton, but it`s just also this brutal (ph) populism and nationalism that Steve Bannon`s whispering in his ear. And that`s part of this two-minute closing ad you see from Trump. He thinks that`s -- the reason he`s going to Minnesota, he`s going to all these blue states, he think if there`s a record turnout of white working class people, he could somehow have a narrow path to victory. That`s the way they`re thinking about it.

MATTHEWS: Chuck, the people in the Clinton campaign apparently believe they`ve been able to thwart him, to prevent him from talking his message, that he`s been able to -- he`s been so busy talking this stuff, he hasn`t been able to talk about the reason he was up to 40 percent, the reason he beat 16 guys in the primaries -- he hasn`t been able to talk about trade, illegal **immigration** and wars.

TODD: No, he did make the mistake -- frankly, this is sort of a similar mistake that Mitt Romney made in the last month of the campaign in 2012, which is follow the news cycle. You know, news cycle candidates -- I mean, and there`s some -- you know, there`s some of our colleagues in punditry that sit here and talk about who wins the news cycle, those things matter.

No, it doesn`t. You get caught following the news cycle, it can feel good in the moment. It`s like taking, like, a B-12 shot, but it doesn`t last.

And fundamentals matter more in the long run. There were larger fundamental issues in this country that Trump was tapping into correctly, and he got off the message a little bit long-term.

You know, they almost got around to it a little bit -- but you know, Bannon -- Bannon`s problem is he`s got one part of it right, the populism. The conspiratorial and sort of weird allusions to some anti-semitism...

MATTHEWS: I saw that in the ad, yes.

TODD: ... that is stuff that is just going to cost him the ability to go mainstream...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That`s not a 51 percent strategy.

Andrea Mitchell, has Trump been able to stick to his message, or has he gotten caught in investigative politics, which is fun but it gets you off your positive message for being president of the United States?

MITCHELL: I think probably so, especially because of the way this has turned out. Just one point. In Cleveland tonight with Lebron James, of all people, Hillary Clinton said, Look, I know there`s anger out there and I know a lot of it is directed at me. But anger is not a plan. We have to get past that.

That`s the closest she`s coming to acknowledging the problem and the change message that she`s not been able to have, of course, because Donald Trump is change. She isn`t change. But she`s trying to talk more positively.

And finally, she`s got all these surrogates, these celebrities, Beyonce, Katy Perry, and now they`ve announced tomorrow night not only Bill Clinton, and of course, Michelle and Barack Obama, but Bruce Springsteen in Philadelphia...

MATTHEWS: Yes, that`s going to be...

MITCHELL: ... at their closing rally.

MATTHEWS: ... a fascinating event tomorrow night. We`ll be covering it live with -- I think you`ll be with us. We`ll be there at...

MITCHELL: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: ... well, at Independence Mall (ph), right there on the reality of the greatest place in American history, Independence Hall. We`re going to be there, and we`re going to have Bon Jovi, of course, and...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... E Street Band and a couple of Philly people here. You`re from the `burbs. Anyway...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Hallie Jackson and -- Robert Costa.

(CROSSTALK)

TODD: I`m a non-Philly (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: Coming up -- well, you also count, Chuck. You`re moderator of MEET THE PRESS.

Coming up we`ll get reaction to the FBI director`s announcement today, this clean bill of health -- do you believe it? What a story the Sunday before an election! She`s clean as a whistle, clean as a hound`s tooth, as General Eisenhower used to day. Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway`s going to come with us in a moment, plus Democratic congressman Elijah Cummings. They may disagree.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Well, last week, Donald Trump praised FBI director James Comey and his decision to continue investigating -- continue to investigate Hillary Clinton`s e-mails.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I have to give the FBI credit. That was so bad what happened originally, and it took guts for Director Comey to make the move that he made in light of the kind of opposition he had, where they`re trying to protect her from criminal prosecution.

What he did, he brought back his reputation. He brought it back.

He`s got to hang tough because there`s a lot -- a lot of people want him to do the wrong thing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: But now that Director Comey has announced today that the FBI has concluded the review of Clinton`s e-mails and has not changed its recommendation on -- that she should not face criminal charges, does he still -- Trump -- feel the same way about Comey that he did last week? Let`s ask Trump`s campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, who joins us now.

Kellyanne, your view of this topsy-turvy situation regarding the FBI director. When he made his announcements in July, the conservatives and the Trump people didn`t like it at all. When he made the announcement two Fridays ago, the Democrats didn`t like it one way or the other. Now the Democrats are elated. They`re -- I don`t know, they`re popping the champagne bottles or whatever on the plane. They`re thrilled with this exoneration of their candidate.

What`s your reaction?

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: And why in the world did they go so viciously personally and professionally after Jim Comey and his reputation and his job performance when this was all announced? I mean, they basically spent all last week, Chris, for nine straight days impugning the integrity of Jim Comey only because they didn`t like his latest move.

I think that`s really unfortunate. Even the president of the United States got into the act, saying that, We don`t deal with innuendo, we don`t deal with speculation. We don`t -- this -- you shouldn`t be interfering with an election. So do they think that this announcement two days before the polls close is, quote, "interfering with an election"? And so I think that they just were way out of bounds in the vicious attack on Jim Comey because they didn`t like the result.

And look, we think the FBI investigation was mishandled from the beginning. That`s pretty obvious because we just learned overnight that she asked her maid to print out information that was classified. This woman does not have a security clearance. It`s not her fault. The woman was put in a bad position. But Hillary Clinton should know better.

We know that she left materials out in a hotel in China. We know there were materials on Huma`s front seat of the car. You know, the list goes on and on.

So I don`t think it changes what most people think about Hillary Clinton. Those who were defending her agreed with her that they had long ago made up their mind about the e-mails, but it also doesn`t change the minds of lots of swing voters and independents who just aren`t there, who just won`t put her at 50 percent in any of these blue states, where we now have them on the run. They`re following our lead. We scrambled the whole map the last couple of days to week, and they`re following us.

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s go back to...

CONWAY: It`s not like they`re saying, You know, we won`t go to Michigan tonight because of what Comey said. They`re in Michigan because we`re in Michigan.

MATTHEWS: Here`s Donald Trump. "The FBI would have never reopened the case at this time unless it were an egregious criminal offense. This is the biggest scandal since Watergate.

Does that still hold, what he said, those words, biggest scandal since Watergate...

CONWAY: A lot of people...

MATTHEWS: ... an egregious offense, when it turns out that all they did was decide to look at these e-mails. They didn`t decide it was an egregious offense, they just decided to look at the e-mails.

But your candidate said it was an egregious offense, worse than Watergate based upon the fact that the FBI bean to look at these subsequent e-mails.

Is he still saying that?

COMEY: He hasn`t said that in a while, but more to the point on the egregious criminal offense piece...

MATTHEWS: In a while?

COMEY: Many people said that, Chris. Many people said...

MATTHEWS: Well, he said it.

COMEY: Many people left, right and center said there must be something big there for him to reopen it or continue it, however the verbiage is, this close to an election. Now, I want to commend the FBI`s efficiency...

MATTHEWS: Well, what about now that they`ve said that they`ve exonerated Hillary Clinton, saying there`s nothing in the e-mails to justify any kind of prosecution, where is your candidate without his basis? He had a basis, he said, for charging her with the worst crime since Watergate. What`s his basis now for saying that?

COMEY: He didn`t say that tonight, but let me just remind you that...

MATTHEWS: He said this is the biggest scandal since Watergate. Donald Trump said that.

COMEY: He did at the time. But look...

MATTHEWS: You mean that doesn`t hold?

COMEY: Chris, if you want me to answer, let me know.

MATTHEWS: I`m asking you the question.

CONWAY: This doesn`t change anything.

MATTHEWS: Does he still believe...

CONWAY: OK, and here`s the answer...

MATTHEWS: Does he still believe that she`s committed a crime worse than Watergate?

COMEY: He said that one time, but the fact remains -- the facts remain that what she did, what Jim Comey said she did on July 12th under oath to that committee in front of Chairman Gowdy (sic) -- nothing changes.

I totally agree with Jim Comey today that nothing changes from the original conclusion. And let`s review -- that she lied about having the private server to begin with. She lied about what was on the server. She lied about classified information being on her e-mails. It was. Under oath, he also testified that she lied about using one device. She had used multiple devices.

So we believe everything he said under oath on July 7th, which was a pretty remarkable spectacle in and of itself, is still the truth. And that`s why a majority of Americans, including in your own MSNBC polling, don`t trust her.

MATTHEWS: OK.

CONWAY: They don`t think she`s trustworthy. That`s not going to change. It didn`t change last week, and it`s not going to change tonight.

MATTHEWS: If -- if Mr. Trump wins the election, does he want to have the FBI continue its investigation of these e-mails?

COMEY: I don`t know. We`ll have to see what happens. But the fact is, I mean, for a campaign and for conservatives who generally are critical of inefficiency of government and how slowly it moves, I have to really commend the efficiency of the FBI in this case because they read 650,000 e- mails or so in a very short period of time. That`s pretty remarkable.

MATTHEWS: But he said that the investigations going to continue ad infinitum, it`s going to end up in convictions and that`s going to screw up any Hillary Clinton administration. That is the way he -- I think it`s a very smart political statement to make because it suggests if you`re a Hillary person, why bother electing her because there`ll be just nothing but chaos and investigations the whole term.

Does he still believe that would be the case if she wins?

COMEY: But what would -- but what would -- what should he have said? He`s not the FBI . He`s not Director Comey. Director Comey made that decision, and Mr. Trump gave his opinion of it. I think it was a very -- it`s a very logical -- it`s a very logical opinion to have, conclusion to make.

MATTHEWS: OK.

CONWAY: And it does hurt her because she`s Hillary Clinton. Chris, the idea that people started to question Hillary Clinton`s ethical standards or the cloud of corruption that seems to follow her around -- the idea that that happened for the first time last Friday...

MATTHEWS: OK...

CONWAY: ... is a fiction.

MATTHEWS: OK, we`re going to right now...

CONWAY: People don`t trust her.

MATTHEWS: Thanks, Kellyanne. I`m sorry to interrupt you. I try to hear all your thoughts. We`re going right now to your candidate, Donald Trump. He`s on stage at a rally...

CONWAY: Awesome.

MATTHEWS: ... in Sterling Heights, Michigan. Let`s go to the Trump campaign.

TRUMP: The worst trade deal ever signed by any country ever, China`s Entry into the World Trade Organization , the job-killing deal with South Korea, another beauty that was a disaster. And Hillary now wants the Trans- Pacific Partnership. She calls it the gold standard.

(BOOS)

TRUMP: Hillary Clinton`s policies have devastated your automobile industry all to the benefit of special interests. We will put a stop to all of that on November 8th. Get out and vote, Michigan!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: You know, I don`t know if you`ve been seeing what`s happening over the last week or so, but they are going well, the very dishonest media, the world`s most dishonest people.

(BOOS)

TRUMP: Today I was watching...

SUPPORTERS: CNN sucks! CNN sucks! CNN sucks!

TRUMP: They`re bad people. They`re bad people and they`re dishonest people. They don`t tell the truth. They don`t write the truth.

But I will say this. So I was watching the polls. We`re leading in Ohio. We`re leading in Iowa.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: We`re leading in New Hampshire, just out.

MATTHEWS: That`s Donald Trump out in Michigan. Right now, we`re going to listen to what he says, and if he talks about FBI`s decision, we`re going to bring that to you live.

Joining me right now is U.S. Congressman Elijah Cummings, a Democrat from Maryland, who`s also the ranking member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Mr. Cummings has called for the Justice Department inspector general to investigate whether the FBI is leaking information that could benefit Donald Trump.

Mr. Cummings, thanks. It`s an honor to have you on, sir.

REP. ELIJAH CUMMINGS (D), MARYLAND: Good to be with you.

MATTHEWS: Where are you now, right now that the FBI has come out and basically -- not basically, clearly exonerated Hillary Clinton, saying there`s nothing in any of these e-mails, 650,000 of them, that even relates to anything more than a duplication of previously studied e-mails or household sort of things, nothing to do with the government?

CUMMINGS: Well, I`m glad that the FBI cleared that up. But I must say, Chris, it is very alarming that the -- Director Comey even put out that letter nine days ago. And I think that it was very vague. And keep in mind, a lot of people have already voted since that letter came out. And so we don`t know exactly how it may have affected them, but it does concern me.

And I still think that the inspector general should take a clear look at the FBI and try to figure out where are all these leaks coming from because in my 20 years of practicing law and my 20 years of being on this committee, I can tell you I have never seen a situation where we had so many leaks coming out of the FBI . And I think that we`ve got to take a look at that.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about the law. Suppose there`s a fellowship -- I imagine there is -- between -- among former and current FBI agents. So you retire at 65, or whatever, whatever the official age is. You retire and you keep in touch with your old men and women you worked with, and you call them up and say, at a party or something, you say, What`s happened back there? And they say something -- Well, we`re not happy about this investigation of Hillary Clinton, blah, blah, blah, and just in general terms say they`re steamed up.

Is that a criminal violation or is that just -- it`s shop talk?

CUMMINGS: I don`t think that`s a criminal violation, but it is not the way they are supposed to proceed. I mean, let`s look at what Mayor Giuliani did. What he did was, he took information from agents and then...

MATTHEWS: He says former agents.

CUMMINGS: ... he sort of laundered it...

MATTHEWS: He says former agents.

CUMMINGS: Yes, yes. I said he took information from former agents that he said they had been taken from current agents. Well, and then he puts that information out. Now, I know he`s denied things, he`s walked it back. But the thing is that what he basically did was launder the information from the current agents. And that`s just not the procedure.

I`ve talked to five or six people, Justice Department type and FBI type over the last day or so, and they told me they just -- that just doesn`t work that way and he shouldn`t have done that. So and...

MATTHEWS: How would you -- how would you track that. You know tracking a leak is difficult. There`s leaks on Capitol Hill all the time from staff people or members. How do you track a leak that`s so amorphous, that somebody talked to somebody...

CUMMINGS: Yes, I think...

MATTHEWS: ... who talked to Rudy Giuliani or some friend of Giuliani`s?

CUMMINGS: Yes. I got to tell you, I`m not sure. I mean, somebody`s got to look at it. (INAUDIBLE) I use Giuliani as one.

But Chris, keep in mind, come on now, we`ve had leaks coming out of the FBI almost every day, sometimes two and three times a day coming out. And at some point, that needs to be dealt with because we have a situation here in this country -- it`s not so much what the FBI eventually finds, just a person being under investigation can be extremely damaging.

Now, going to this case, we`ve got all of this information being leaked out about these cases. But again, that`s not fair. It was not fair to Hillary Clinton. She couldn`t defend herself against it.

And I`ve got to tell you that I think -- the one thing that I demanded of our committee and of the agencies that come under us, is I want them to be fair. I want them to be honest. And I want them to treat the American people appropriately.

ELIJAH CUMMINGS, U.S. CONGRESSMAN: The one thing I demanded of our committee and of the agencies that come under us is I want them to be fair. I want them to be honest. And I want them to treat the American people appropriately.

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: To make your point, we had a big politician in Philadelphia about 34 years ago, what a huge liable case for a leak coming out. It was given to local broadcasting affiliate. They put out the fact that he was going to be indicted. But he won a big killing on that because you can`t do that. You can`t just throw out the word that somebody is under indictment or something is coming when it`s not true. Anyway U.S. Congressman Elijah Cummings, thank you, sir.

CUMMINGS: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Up next, we`re going to continue to follow our top story this Sunday surprise, November surprise had been well from the director of the FBI, did the Clinton e-mail probe is over, kaput, good-bye, clean bill of health for Hillary Clinton from the FBI director himself, James Comey. What a show stopper tonight -- there`s two nights before the election.

Plus, reports of a surging, but this is the other big story. We thought would be the biggest story. Latino vote in key battleground states like Nevada, Hispanic people and Latino people are voting big-time. And you can assume which way they`re voting based on who wants to be called rapists and murderers. Anyway that`s ahead. This is Hardball, a place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to Hardball. What Hillary Clinton needs to win on Tuesday night she`ll need a strong showing from her coalition of Hispanics, African-Americans and women of course. In this week at (inaudible) are reporting a surge of Hispanic voters out there already voting, according to "Politico" in Florida Hispanics have so far cast about 14 percent of the 5.7 million early and absentee ballots casts that puts Hispanics far ahead of where they were in casting early ballots back in `12.

Anyway when it comes to Nevada, Jon Ralston, we much respect right, Donald Trump may have been here this weekend believing in the polls that show him ahead are competitive here. Well, like Bruce Willis in the sixth sense he does not realize he is dead. Anyway that surge in the Hispanic vote was evident. The delays at a polling location out in Nevada were votes were processed until 10:00, Friday that`s just two nights ago to accommodate the long lines. Look at the lines there.

And last night chairman of Nevada`s Republican Party complained that the move keeping the lines open favored what he called a certain group of people. And Donald Trump further said, there`s evidence that the system is rigged. Here is GOP chair Michael McDonald followed by Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL MCDONALD, NEVADA STATE GOP CHAIRMAN: They kept a poll open until 10:00 at night so a certain group could vote. The polls are supposed to close at 7:00. This was kept open until 10:00. Yeah, you feel free right now.

DONALD TRUMP, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: It`s been reported that certain key Democratic polling locations in Clark County were kept opened for hours and hours beyond closing time to bus and bring Democratic voters in. Folks, it`s a rigged system.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I`m joined now by MSNBC Political Analyst, Maria Teresa Kumar of Voto Latino. And former RNC chairman, Michael Steele.

Well, let`s get to the facts here, the polling place is supposed to close at 8:00. They stayed open at 10:00 because there was a line at 8:00. So what we all know if you`re waiting in line anywhere in the country you get to vote. The charge is made apparently. The buses started arriving after 8:00.

Now, I don`t know how much give there is in a normal point. But if somebody is five or ten minutes late do they get grace periods or not. But he`s talking about busloads of people coming in to turn the results around.

MARIA TERESA KUMAR, VOTO LATINO: Except that no media outlet has reported that there has been busloads of people coming in. And I think, you know, I air on Don Austin, he was very clear and said he has not seen anybody that -- he hasn`t that there`s some shenanigans on the ground floor. And he was saying that basically people were already there in line. And if you`re in line you`re eligible to vote.

MATTHEWS: And why would they want to vote -- if you really want to get extra people in the vote, bring them tomorrow or the next day. I mean, anyway, go ahead.

MICHAEL STEELE, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: It`s very simple Chris, if you have a turnout operation you don`t worry about what the other team is doing.

KUMAR: Right.

STEELE: You get your vote to turn out. And that`s been the problem here.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk politics.

KUMAR: That`s politics.

MATTHEWS: I argue that I believe, and I think you would accept, although you`re an advocate, there`s a legitimate need for real **immigration** policy which is rushed up progress in American. But we don`t have one. Instead of saying that, Trump could have said that. He did, he said rapists, murders. He blamed the **immigrants** himself for a lousy system, for failed system. He blamed them personally and then he criminalized them. That`s one way to get the other vote. And we had a guy in Philadelphia, Mayor Frank Rizzo.

STEELE: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEWS: . he walked around with a night stick in his cummerbund. And guess what he did, the highest increase in black registration history in the city, blacks out registered white people because of him. It sounds like trump.

KUMAR: Right. Well, I`m sure they registered because everybody keep saying, "Oh, Latinos coming out and voting because they`re offended with Trump." No. You -- Los Angeles County, Chris, you have 25 percent -- 24 percent increase in hate crimes. People in the Latino community are feeling under the gun. They`re feeling under pressure.

MATTHEWS: What kind of influence, draw the picture.

KUMAR: Everything from so -- in the high school -- in the town where I went to high school, in -- up in Northern California last week, there was ...

MATTHEWS: Watsonville.

KUMAR: No, no, no Windsor, California. So it was right -- so right by Santa Rosa.

So in that elementary school, they went up and said build the wall higher for a school that`s Spanish dominant. That for parents is scary. All of a sudden people feel under pressure. Like I actually just show up that I`m American, I`m going to vote. For the **immigrants** that is going after undocumented **immigrants** live with 1.5 million American voters. This is personal.

STEELE: yeah. I still hold trump responsible.

KUMAR: Absolutely. No. But he said that.

STEELE: I think you approached the way you stated it, is what the smarter way. You come out. And you know what the concern is in the country. There`s no secret there for some time now we`ve been beating each other back and forth on the issue of **immigration**.

You come out and you lay down a forward-looking message. You don`t demonize. The one thing in politics you learn is, you don`t attack the very people that you ultimately going to need. You know, you had a platform there, the autopsy which spoke very clearly about the direction the party wanted to go. I think the mistake made, and I`ve said this over and over again. Was that critical moment the party didn`t go to the Trump campaign and said, "Here`s a personalized copy of the autopsy. Read page 47 to 57 and understand exactly where we`re going from 2000 .

MATTHEWS: Can you see in Trump?

KUMAR: Well, I mean like -- but if I -- but don`t anger **immigrants** and don`t anger women.

MATTHEWS: Well, first thing he did was he said the president of the United States who is African-American, the first one ever, he kept forgetting is an illegal **immigrant**.

STEELE: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: That`s the first thing he did.

STEELE: That was worse than illegal **immigrant**.

KUMAR: Well, the Republicans are going to have a really big hard time on their hands because in Orlando County alone, they had a 29 percent increase of first time Latino voters. Trump is effectively expanded the electorate base for the Republican and Democrats.

STEELE: A lot of those people could be Republicans.

KUMAR: Not in Orlando.

(CROSSTALK)

KUMAR: Mostly Puerto Rican.

MATTHEWS: Yeah, well Mexican-Americans I have a hunch have tremendous potential to be American conservative Republicans.

KUMAR: No.

STEELE: Just a little.

MATTHEWS: You want them all to be Democrats.

KUMAR: No, I don`t. I actually think that we need a two-party system. But in -- you had, depending on what generation you`re in, if you are third or fourth generation you`re more likely to lean Democratic versus if you`re first time.

STEELE: Well, that`s what goes wrong, that`s you`ve got to get them when they get here.

KUMAR: Right, awesome.

MATTHEWS: Michael Steele and Maria Teresa Kumar.

KUMAR: Like the Irish.

MATTHEWS: I disbelieve, they don`t have a lot of great experience with government in Latin America. They don`t have to be pro big government.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: I would think they`re pro-entrepreneurial for small business very much, a very much a Republican opportunity. And I do believe in an active two-party system in all communities.

Up next, Steve Kornacki joins with the look at where things stand in the battleground map and which states are so close right now with today`s all clear from the FBI , the exoneration for Hillary Clinton could tip the balance towards Clinton. I got to believe, there`s four or five states like that where she could win just because of what Comey said today, that she`s clean.

Here is the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back harbor, with two days to go. Let`s take a look at the latest battleground map. MSNBC Political Correspondent, Steve Kornacki`s at the wall. I love that with the latest, you`re at the wall. Go ahead.

STEVE KORNACKI, MSNBC POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: All right Chris. Well, let`s take you through, look, we have Clinton right now, you see 268 in pretty good position in states adding up to 268. So the bottom line in terms of where this race is, if you`re Donald Trump how you can pull off an upset win here. Basically look at it this way. If she`s at 268 and you`re Trump, everything that`s gray on here, consider that sort of a toss-up, a battleground right now. You`re going to sweep it. You`ve got to win everything that is gray on this map. If you slip up anywhere Clinton goes over 270. She`s the president elect.

And the problem for the Trump campaign, what they are seeing is they are getting some alarming indications from some of the early vote, from some of the demographics we`re seeing in these states, particularly Nevada, also Florida, and so with the Trump campaign is looking at this and saying "Look, if we don`t sweep all these states we`ve got to pull a rabbit out of the hat somewhere. We`ve got to start flipping some blue states."

And so that`s what you see here. Donald Trump today, where is he campaigning? We`re talking about Minnesota, I think that thing here. Talking about Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania, even looking in Virginia, from the Trump campaign`s perspective, what do they see that would make them look at blue states? Some of which haven`t gone red in a long time.

What you`re seeing, I`m just saying these are long shots, and Minnesota is an ultralong shot. But what the Trump campaign is been seeing is unusual strength in rural areas, unusual strength with sort of white non-college voters. So they look in Minnesota. They look at like the iron range in Minnesota. They look at the Upper Peninsula in Michigan. They look at McComb County outside Detroit. They look at the rural parts of Pennsylvania. They look at Southwest Virginia. And they say, "Hey, maybe, maybe we can run up the score there in ways nobody expected, ways we haven`t seen before and we could pull a surprise in one of these blue states."

Make no mistake about it. It`s a real long shot in Michigan. It is an ultra, ultralong shot in Minnesota. But if you`re in the Trump campaign and these gray states start disappearing, you lose them to Hillary Clinton. The only thing you`re left with is pulling off a miracle in some of these Roosevelt states.

MATTHEWS: Steve Kornacki, that`s so great, thank you.

Just moments ago there`s rally in Michigan, Donald Trump addressed the FBI`s all clear. Let`s catch that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: The investigations into her crimes will go on for a long, long time. The rank and file special agents at the FBI won`t let her get away with her terrible crimes, including the deletion of 33,000 e-mails after receiving a congressional subpoena. They forget about all of this.

Right now she`s being protected by a rigged system. It`s a totally rigged system. I`ve been saying it for a long time. You can`t review 650,000 new e-mails in eight days. You can`t do it, folks. Hillary Clinton is guilty. She knows it. The FBI knows it. The people know it. And now it`s up to the American people to deliver justice at the ballot box on November 8th.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So let`s bring in the roundtable right now. MSNBC`s Kasie Hunt has been all over the country with these guys. Harold what a year for you, what a year. And Harold Ford is a former Democratic ties in the future way ahead of him. He`s from Tennessee. But who knows where next. And he a visiting professor at University of Michigan School of Public Policy and Tony Schwartz is the co-author of Donald Trump`s "The Art of the Deal."

You know what strikes me, when were listening to Steve there. And he`s the best of any of the networks. This town versus gown thing, so is it for Democrats who believe in smaller Democrat like you do, congressman, you want to be the peer person who looks for the little people, the people who had a problem, like didn`t have a break to go to college, any college, right.

And then here we have Democrats saying, wherever we have college graduates we win. Wherever they don`t then go to college, those damn Republicans are going "What happened to the idea of party of the little people. What happened to that -- have we become the anti-Archie Bunker party? Is that what the Democrats are, the anti for the little people?"

KASIE HUNT, COVERING THE CLINTON CAMPAIGN: No.

MATTHEWS: Roosevelt was for the forgotten men. The Democrats now being -- seem to be for the Ivy League man, don`t you think? I could have just said.

HUNT: Look, I think that the Trump is losing those people. Those typically are people who vote Republican. And Trump is losing more of them. He`s losing in greater degrees in those groups.

MATTHEWS: Which groups?

HUNT: In your Ivy League, married white wealthy people.

MATTHEWS: . because look, what we just went through. The parts of Michigan, McComb County, you go to run the iron works whatever it`s called up there, Minnesota. You go down to West Virginia. It`s all those places that didn`t make it.

HUNT: Right, but those are the people who are upset about trade and NAFTA . Those are people able to, you know, get a union job. It`s really, that`s what it is, it`s the decimation of unions. And the ability for those people to have, you know, strong manufacturing jobs. I mean that was as, you know, the core organizing principle.

MATTHEWS: Harold, one issue that they say can break the voter right now is, did you finished college. If you`ve got finished college, you finish college you had the break to go to school. Your parents helped you, whatever. You`re going to vote for Hillary Clinton. If you didn`t you`re probably going to vote for Trump. It`s to me, it`s an amazing change in American politics.

HAROLD FORD, JR. (D-TN) FMR. U.S. CONGRESSMAN: There`s no doubt. The late `80s to early `90s when Clinton the emerged as -- some of the Democratic voice and the Democratic leadership councils all in effort to show that I`m a part of the Democrat that we can manage government. We would not run up big deficits. We understood the limits of government.

And as a part of that, the business community became more integrated to the party. And over a period of time that continued even under George W. Bush it continued. I consider Sanders and Trump as being candidate who represent this rebellious. And it`s rebellious who takes on a negative tone. It`s really the tone of Tony Schwartz, there are number of people who`s going to your point who feel left behind, who been left out. And frankly, who feel looked down upon.

Now, Trump is an interesting vessel.

MATTHEWS: So how he would does that.

FORD : He`s an interesting vessel because Tony has written about this and can speak to this better than I can. He knows him far better. But this is a vessel, and Donald Trump who you would not have constructed from the -- in the abstract as being the person or force that could pull this together.

And Secretary Clinton took the irony in all of these. She understands this, I mean because, if she`s elected which I believe she will be, she will help to re-empower and I think raise wages for .

MATTHEWS: She calls them deplorables.

HUNT: These were her people in 2008. They were her people.

MATTHEWS: She didn`t call them deplorables. She called some of the .

FORD : She called David Duke and that group deplorable. She was not calling all of his supporter, I think that`s unfair.

And she should not have said it and she apologized for it. But I don`t think that`s what .

MATTHEWS: The last word was unfair. Not me reminding her of it. But go ahead.

HUNT: I think there are plenty of .

MATTHEWS: I`m sorry.

HUNT: I think there are plenty of people who support Trump who, you know, would not want to lump themselves into that part or the Republican Party as well.

MATTHEWS: You know the elite people for Trump.

HUNT: Elite people for Trump.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

FORD : I mean like schools, that sort of thing.

MATTHEWS: I do there a lot.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK. You nailed the one. OK. And let me talk to Tony, this thing about the map here because it looks like Trump`s going to lose in like his last bash of support are people that didn`t get the breaks. It`s ironic because he`s a billionaire.

TONY SCHWARTZ, TRUMP GHOSTWRITER: Well, you know, it`s funny because you`re actually leaving out. You`re referring to the white people who didn`t get breaks. The -- there`s overwhelming support and attention to everybody who Trump had disced. And who Hillary had those. We see in a fitting potential irony or end game that the Latino vote probably is going to be the thing that provides the firewall or pushes Hillary over the top and we`re not talking in that community about an enormous percentage of very wealthy people.

MATTHEWS: Well, why are the Democrats capable of winning minority support on economic issues and they can`t win white supporters on economic issues from the same class basically?

FORD : But I think that`s a little unfair there. They are winning. This is the first time we`ve seen an election where these kind of demographics are being discussed as loudly as Kornacki just said.

MATTHEWS: You`re sitting with John Lindsey back in the `60s. You had working vast people Italians whatever, Irish, all ticked off at a liberal mayor. You know, that was part of that class thing back then.

FORD : And Reagan was a part of it too, with a lot of the Reagan Democrats. So when you have excesses either way, these things certainly happen but .

HUNT: And these voters rejected the Republican Party too. Don`t forget. I mean embracing Donald Trump is not an embrace of it`s -- of the -- if anything, when you look at this landscape stretched out, yes, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders are in many ways ideological opposites. But they`re driven in many ways by the same things. There are a lot more reasons why Hillary Clinton and Paul Ryan are more alike than Paul Ryan is like Donald Trump or that Hillary Clinton is like Bernie Sanders.

MATTHEWS: So where are we getting here with our politics?

HUNT: I think that`s really the question that I think. I mean look, Paul Ryan and his freedom caucus. He`s going to step into if Trump loses this thing, a giant mess that`s tearing the Republican Party apart. He`s going to have to decide, am I going to cut a deal with Hillary Clinton and push this farther away. And Hillary Clinton similarly, you already have progressives with Warren and Bernie Sanders threatening her on all kinds of issues.

MATTHEWS: If trump loses, guys, he`s still going to get about 40 percent, right? So where does that going to go after this election, the Republicans going to grab it back or the Democrats going to make a bid for it?

SCHWARTZ: Unfortunately, you`ve got two people here who are pundits and you don`t need one more. What I do think is that at a broader level, it`s a -- it is a true clash of civilization and we are at where that 47 percent represents a group of people who for whom either capitalism as we know it, market free market capitalism and even to some extent, the traditional notions of democracy have failed. And that includes millennials who are coming, who are yet to have jobs. And so I think that you`re going to see a realignment win or lose, that is very dramatic.

MATTHEWS: How do we get bake the Roosevelt coalition on the democratic side which included all of those forgotten man and white .

FORD : You lead and deliver to your point about Paul Ryan. I think she needs a partner in the House and the Senate to get something done if she`s elected. I believe she`ll be elected that night. I hope she talks about winning the trust of Americans who have not trusted her for reasons. I hope she`s that one who represents all.

MATTHEWS: She did that tonight.

FORD : She start -- I thought that was the most important part of her speech and I think the most important pivot that`s happened in this campaign a long time. If she stays there, not unless you have Paul Ryan perhaps as ally, she might even have progressives. And for that matter other conservatives. But this happens in cycles. I appreciate some of the dramatic talk around where we are. But politics in America is about leadership. If you can lead during moments of crisis, people respond.

I also think the next president is going to have a foreign policy, a set of foreign policy challenges that have eluded the conversation here in the last couple of weeks for obvious reasons. We`re going to have to make choices about Syria, make choices about the South China Sea, make choices in other part of the world that frankly have not been talked about in a serious way in the latter part of this campaign. And Secretary Clinton is uniquely poised in position.

MATTHEWS: And by the way I think Monday morning after the election, I`ve said this before personally.

SCHWARTZ: Tuesday morning. Wednesday morning.

MATTHEWS: Wednesday morning. You`re being so helpful here, being unfair. I get the days wrong. It is late. All I can say is .

SCHWARTZ: You sound like Trump.

HUNT: We forgive you. I can`t remember where I was yesterday.

MATTHEWS: No, I really do think it`s all. But you`re suggesting it`s all about negotiation and rebuilding and people like Hillary Clinton as the leader, she`s the president or Trump even.

HUNT: And that`s going to be the challenge on both sides. Because Hillary Clinton when she was in the Senate, she proved that she could make Republican allies and she could learn to work with them. She`s going to have to decide .

FORD : Even people who impeached her husband.

HUNT: Right, she`s going to have to decide, "OK, am I going to be willing to anger my progressive base." And Paul Ryan is going to have to decide, "Hey, am I going to work with this woman that is frankly has become a totally toxic brand with basically everyone."

MATTHEWS: He has to decided whether he wants to be a great speaker running for president. I`m not sure he can do both. That`s going to be .

SCHWARTZ: I think the second question on Wednesday morning assuming that Hillary does win is really what is Trump going to do because you cannot underestimate amount of range building in this man. And that rage personally and it`s not .

MATTHEWS: You bet he`ll concede?

SCHWARTZ: No. I bet he will not concede. The one exception I`d say to that is if they -- if it goes more than 6 percent and 300 something electoral votes and there`s really actually not any room to do it. But the odds if it`s in any way close are that he will not and I think what happens to his rage, which he`s been able to, you know, use in the sort of stoking the fire, the rage of other people is the second big question.

What is it going to be like, starting with if he doesn`t concede and after that, is he going to try to get those people to whip those people into a frenzy.

MATTHEWS: OK, I think you`re right. But one thing, I don`t think he wants to walk away from his audience.

SCHWARTZ: I don`t think he wants to walk away from an audience. He must have an audience.

HUNT: I don`t think that he has by conceding. But I do think that this is potentially the biggest impact of that FBI news of what James Comey decided to do. And it`s because before he did that, they were talking about exactly what you mentioned. They were saying we`re going win this election. Our challenge now is to win this so big that he has to concede. The conversation is totally different now.

FORD : We move beyond George Bush. We will move beyond Donald Trump.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: . clear result, one way or the other Tuesday night an he does behave. Anyway, Kasie Hunt, thank you, and Harold Ford and Tony Schwartz.

We`re not done. Another hour, the specialist of Harvard is coming up at the top of the hour. We`ll be right back. Our guest will actually improve the next hour, just kidding. You`re watching Hardball, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAL)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to a second hour, this special Sunday night edition of Hard Ball and what a night to have a night. Anyway, Clinton campaign aides were described as elated over the breaking news from FBI today. It was an all clear from James Comey. In a letter to every member of Congress, the FBI Director said the Bureau, the FBI has finished examining all the new e-mails discovered on a computer belonging to Clinton aide Huma Abedin and her estranged husband -- her estranged husband as well, Anthony Weiner. And nothing has changed his original conclusion. The Director`s in conclusion, this summer that Clinton remains cleared.

For the second time in two week, Director Comey and his FBI were at the center of a major political bombshell. Well today, Newt Gingrich accused Comey of caving under quote "enormous political pressure". And Donald Trump said, the FBI knows and what he means by this, knows Clinton is guilty. Here he is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: The investigation into her crimes will go on for a long, long, long time. The rank and file Special Agents at the FBI won`t let her get away with her terrible crimes including the deletion of 33,000 e-mails after receiving a congressional subpoena. They forget about all of this. Right now, she`s being protected by a rigged system. It`s a totally rigged system. I`ve been saying that for a long time.

You can`t review 650,000 new e-mails in eight days. You can`t do it folks. Hillary Clinton is guilty. She knows it. The FBI knows it. The people know it. And now, it`s up to the American people to deliver justice at the ballot box on November 8th.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: OK, meanwhile, Hillary Clinton`s running mate said the entire episode raised quote a lot of questions. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. TIM KAINE (D-VA), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I think there`s still a lot of questions about it. But that kind of how it happened and why it happened and, you know, obviously altered dynamic for a few day. But we did have the confidence when we were surprised with it two Fridays ago that we would be back in place because they spent so much time looking at it and reached a conclusion so unequivocal. So, we`re glad to get that news, but not surprised.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: It`s clear the Clinton campaign want to keep Comey a base on the ground on this one. Joining me right now with latest is MSNBC News, Justice Correspondent Pete Williams, Huffington Post Global Editorial Director, Howard Fineman, MSNBC`s Joy Reid, the host of AM Joy.

Pete, it seems to me that it`s a pretty clear, they`ve cleared her.

PETE WILLIAMS, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Well they`ve said they`ve gone through the e-mails. But that part of it looking at these e-mails that were on Anthony Weiner`s computer is over. In other words this is not interim report. This is not halftime. They are -- they have finished their analysis of the e-mails that the Director said -- told Congress two Fridays ago they were going to be doing.

MATTHEWS: 650,000 e-mails, how did they reduce it down to a number they could examine?

WILLIAMS: Well remember, 650 is the total number of e-mails on the laptop. So first, you window it down to those that belong to Huma Abedin, then you window it down to those to and from Hillary Clinton while she`s Secretary of State. And then you begin to go the automated process to see how many of they -- they call it deduping to see how many of the e-mails on the laptop they had looked at and matched those in their database.

Once they had done that, then they looked at what they had left and some turned out to be social messages, you know, what time do you want me to pick you kind of thing. And then they did have to look at some and some e- mails were told do forward e-mails that had previously been described as containing classified information. But fundamentally, they say they don`t find new classified documents that they were not aware of before.

MATTHEWS: All right, it looks like to me, case closed. The one we were talking about two Fridays ago was reopened or continued and then they said well, whatever reason we had for doing that two Fridays ago, is kaput now. There`s no reason to believe she`s guilty and I say that because Trump has been so clear saying she`s guilty because they continued this investigation. He said she was obviously guilty of o an egregious crime worse than Watergate. Now he has no evidence to say that.

HOWARD FINEMAN, HUFFINGTON POST: Well I would say that in addition to legally its case closed politically at this point, even though conservatives would disagree. Even though they say their still -- the FBI is still looking at the Clinton Foundation , et cetera, et cetera. But politically, a whole lot of Donald Trump`s closing argument, a whole lot of his last couple of weeks is built around the idea that there was that criminal conspiracy, criminal global conspiracy called the Clintons.

And that this investigation was evidence of the seriousness and the gravity and the earth shaking nature of it. Not the mention the fact that if it were to be ongoing, the Clinton Administration should it be elected would be crippled. Therefore, Donald Trump was saying, you can`t elect her because she will be a crippled President. You need me. Now that argument is knocked out from under him. I would think the Clintons though would just as soon we stop analyzing the whole story.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I know. That`s what I don`t understand. Why don`t they do it? Why don`t they do it like in a football game when you hit touch down at the last minute, you know, you spike the ball. You put on advance. Why don`t they want to do that?

FINEMAN: No -- well there are two reasons. First of all, they would just as soon not keep the story going any longer if they could. They want to go to Philly tomorrow. They want to end on a high not, a lot of her recent advertising has been positive as a matter of fact.

MATTHEWS: Well how recent, an hour ago?

FINEMAN: Well like last day or two, you know, little confidence there.

MATTHEWS: Would you take the high road or the low road? I`d take high road doesn`t exactly been happening.

FINEMAN: Yes, I know. Yes, there`s that and also, I think there`s a lot of resentment. They want to keep their options open about how they deal with Comey and the FBI afterwards.

MATTHEWS: Let`s get to cover points. One is I thought I think you agreed, that one of the reasons why Trump was playing it this way was to dishearten the Clinton voter.

JOY REID, MSNBC HOST, "AM JOY": Yes.

MATTHEWS: Saying to the person who wanted to vote for Clinton. Hey you put in there all there will be is investigations and probes and probably impeachment so don`t bother, suppression of the vote.

REID: Yes.

MATTHEWS: And now I don`t know, maybe that`s still in the air. I don`t know.

REID: And I think that was mostly aimed at Republican suburban women who were tempted to vote for Hillary Clinton because the reality is, you know, I`m sure that Kelly Ann Conway, anybody whose still in there that does campaigns and does this for a living is telling Trump, Democrats weren`t being swayed to suddenly vote for Donald Trump because if the Democrat didn`t believe this in the beginning and as a matter of fact, it energized Democrats because they felt Comey and once the Wayne Barrett and other reporting came out that you had some Pro-Trump people in the FBI pushing this stuff that actually energized Democrats. I think what the Trump campaigns --

MATTHEWS: What`s Wayne Barrett story?

REID: Well the story being essentially there`s a group of Pro Trump FBI agents in the field office in New York whose been pushing these investigations based on that book Clinton Cash. These are discredited book that`s tied to Steven Bannon because it`s written by God (ph).

MATTHEWS: But there is evidence there are some disgruntled agents, right?

REID: That there`s some disgruntled agents who are talking to Rudy Giuliani, that there`s this whole sort of conspiracy against Hillary Clinton inside the FBI . That energized Democrats as a matter of fact. I think what the Clinton campaign was concerned about is that you had nine days when Comey put out the letter then you have nine days of people voting -- actively voting based on that.

MATTHEWS: That`s right. That`s done.

REID: And that voting is already in the can. And so, even if he takes it back now -- I think a lot of people wondering, why didn`t he just -- why didn`t they just look at the e-mail, come to a conclusion and then it felt update Comey.

MATTHEWS: I`m sorry. Do you think there`s a power here and, you start. It`s hard to figure to this out. But if you had these nine days in which she`s been put under suspicion basically by the statement by the FBI director, is that a reversible?

WILLIAMS: You`re all better.

MATTHEWS: OK. You go Howard on this.

FINEMAN: All right. Well, I think Joy is absolutely right. The fact is in a state like Florida and then a lot of other states that had early voting. You can`t those nine days -- but you can`t take those days back --

MATTHEWS: Yes.

FINEMAN: And to the extent that the turnout maybe among young people. You mentioned suburban women. I would say also some young people, who love Bernie Sanders and who are looking for a reason not to vote for Hillary Clinton and be in love with Bernie forever. You know they might not have shown up. You`re not going to get those votes back necessarily.

Now that`s one reason why Hillary is focusing in the last days on places like Pennsylvania and Michigan and Virginia I believe, none of the three of which have early voting. So, this will be helpful -- this will be helpful to her in the last few days.

MATTHEWS: I want to go with you about the culture of the FBI because I think I`ve been trying to get the Democrats who criticize Comey to answer this question. Are they arguing there`s some outside Republican partisan influence on the FBI that caused him to make the report Friday a week ago? Or are they arguing there`s just conservative feel. I`ve said the FBI is not the Peace Corps. There`s conservative thinking within the organization. They are pro-prosecution. They are pro law and order.

What is your sense of the culture of the institution? Is it more likely that the push to go after Hillary Clinton if there was one was internal rather than being influenced by partisan from the outside?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes. And you have to remember, some of this is the typical field headquarters conflicts that happen in any business. It probably happens in the plumbing business, the insurance business. I can tell you, it happens in the network news business. When the field agents get started --

MATTHEWS: You mean like a reporter wants to get on the air.

WILLIAMS: Well whatever or they feel they know what the story is and the people of New York think they know better. I mean this is typical. So, you get the field agents who get started on the case. They think their almost there. They take it to main justice. The main justice says you`re not there.

I`ve seen it happen in the Boston Marathon Bombing Case when tree are agents who felt that others should have been charged other than -- that there were others involved Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and his brother. And that main justice didn`t approve that. And agents get very upset about that.

So, you see some of that happening here. But I think it`s more the headquarters field dispute than it is any kind of political dispute.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I get it. The partisanship addressed toward the agency by people like Harry Reid saying, you know, there out to be a hat shack violation call here. I mean really? Hat shack is where you sit and you go after an agent because he`s involved in local politics and shouldn`t be doing it.

FINEMAN: Well I do think politics was part of looking at it from outside. I don`t really understand the internal workings of it.

MATTHEWS: You mean there were influences on the agency from --

FINEMAN: No, I think their influence is on -- no, I think James Comey in this effort to be seen as the ultimate non-political good cop used his considerable political skills to try to be that person. And I think he got in a little over ahead of the skis here because I think what he was worried about and tell me if I`m wrong that there would be a leak -- in other words, if he did not OK this investigation --

WILLIAMS: That`s exactly it. That`s exactly it.

FINEMAN: There would be -- there would be a leak. And the Republicans on the Hill who are already mad at him for not indicting Hillary to begin with would be on his case. And you can`t tell me I don`t think he wasn`t aware of that. And the other thing I`ve heard is that and I don`t know if Pete has heard the same thing. But the New York -- the relationship between the FBI field office in New York and the New York City cops, that the New York City Police are the ones telling Rudy a lot of what was going on.

MATTHEWS: You know what jumps at people on the Democrat side? I hear it. You hear it probably. Jason Chaffetz from Utah.

REID: Yes.

MATTHEWS: He seem to be so far ahead of this story. He comes out Wednesday before the FBI , a week ago .

REID: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: . and says, I`m now voting for Trump.

REID: Right.

MATTHEWS: The next day, apparently, the agents tell Comey what`s up and he puts it on Friday.

REID: Yes.

MATTHEWS: So he`s too, he`s a day ahead of Comey.

REID: He`s a day ahead of Comey.

MATTHEWS: And finally had seems because you she go, wait a minute, why is he all of sudden. That`s what I hear from supposition from people.

REID: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Also the other day -- today he was the first one out with the news.

REID: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: He always seems to have it right there.

REID: He always seems to have and so does Rudy Julgiuliani.

WILLIAMS: But I`m told that Jason Chaffetz has got no kind of heads up here. He did not know this letter was coming. And he said so --

MATTHEWS: So it`s coincidental that he announced for Trump the day before?

WILLIAMS: That part I don`t know about. But I know there are a lot f people who thought he tweeted it out before the letter went to the Hill and that`s not true.

MATTHEWS: I heard from a former Congressman from New Jersey told me. He calls you out and says, `How did (INAUDIBLE) is still two days ahead. I`ll tell you guy`s name later.

REID: Yes. But I think what Democrat and you do have now Elijah Cummings and John Conners calling for the Inspector General of the Department of Justice to look into this and into what Comey did because when you talk to the former ethics lawyer for the Bush Whitehouse, the George W. Bush Whitehouse you know what he says, it`s not just Democrats are saying that Comey`s job is to resist that kind of pressure that you`re afraid of leaks. OK, that`s fine. But Comey`s job is not to intervene in an election and Comey ...

MATTHEWS: But what would you have said if he had done it -- well what would you have said if it had a leak?

REID: Well as we now know there`s nothing in the e-mail. So he would have of -- they would have done through actually done the work, done the investigation as the President said and then they could have sent a letter to Congress saying, "Look we have laptop. We found e-mails on it but there was nothing in them." So that is what he ended up saying anyway.

MATTHEWS: Supposed there had been noise coming of the FBI that was picked up by the major press that not only --

REID: But Republicans would have beat him up. That`s what he`s getting paid the big puck bucks for.

MATTHEWS: OK.

REID: That`s what he`s getting paid the big bucks for. He`s the head of the FBI . He`s not supposed to be a part of the election. He made himself apart of the election.

WILLIAMS: Two points. One is the question of whether he should have sent the letter itself which I think is basically what you talking about.

REID: Yes.

WILLIAMS: But the second point is what the letter said. and even if he had -- and even if you defend the decision to send it to Congress, if the letter had been perhaps a little less Delphic, a little more clear to say look we`ve got these e-mails. We don`t know if there`s anything`s in them. But look we`ll let you know. But by saying that they were -- they may be pertinent to the investigation .

FINEMAN: Right.

REID: Right.

WILLIAMS: . a loft people jumped on that and said there must be something there or they wouldn`t have done this.

MATTHEWS: Yes he did tell you that -- that the fact that people responded that way sort of threw the FBI for a loop. They thought they sent a letter that was terribly clear. And it may not have been.

FINEMAN: Well just saying he did is same thing on a grander scale in the original press conference where he said we`re not going to indict Hillary Clinton, but she was exceedingly careless.

REID: That here is all the ballot.

MATTHEWS: You know, the promise he didn`t put a constraint on the speculation.

REID: Right.

MATTHEWS: I know it sounds easy now, but he could have said something in addition that would have said but there`s no reason to believe that she`s guilty. There`s no reason to believe there`s reason to believe that she`s guilty but he didn`t want to do that.

REID: But all he had to do was behave the way he himself and the FBI have behaved with regard to the Trump side. I think part of the problem is the big difference with how the FBI is treating what a lot of believed are investigations into the Russian influences and the way --

WILLIAMS: I think there`s an explanation for that. The FBI had no choice on the e-mail investigation. It was a referral from the intelligence.

MATTHEWS: OK. You know I made a judgment about Comey a long time ago positively and in spite of that. So I`ve sort of thought my sense is he`s a good public official.

FINEMAN: I think he`s -- I think he is. I just think he`s been in a way he`s been too careful and too political to try to be non-political.

MATTHEWS: That could be it. We do that here sometimes.

FINEMAN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Anyway we try to be perfect and we fail. Anyway, Pete Williams the best. Howard Fineman, the best and a much wider range of activity Joy. I know where you`re coming from, Joy. Where is that passion and she usually right?

Coming up, Donald Trump continues to rail against what he calls a rigged system. So what can we expect to see from him on election night? Will he concede if he loses and he says if he wins, he says if I won`t get. What did he say? If I win I`ll accept the results. That`s clever.

Any way this is -- and I think Annie Amin (ph) said that, too one. This is Hardball. The place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, it`s a four way race then too. It`s Thurmond, Truman and Wallace too. Anyway, welcome back to Hardball. That was NBC news calling the 1948 race President. Harry Truman in a very first election ever broadcasts on this medium. While the coverage of our (INAUDIBLE) takes its change over the years.

The country and the candidates have always accepted the will of the America people even in close elections. That was especially apparent in 1960 when John Kennedy narrowly defeated Richard Nixon. And here`s NBC`S coverage from the evening of election day followed by both candidates on the results.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Kennedy needs five more to go over the top. It could not be the State of Washington. It could be California. It could be New Mexico. It could be Illinois. The odds are that Kennedy will win.

RICHARD NIXON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES 1969-1974: There are some results still to come in. If the present trend continues Senator Kennedy will be the next President of the United States.

JOHN F. KENNEDY, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES 1961-1963: The election may be a close one. But I want to express my appreciation to all of them and to Mr. Nixon personally.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, by any measure, this Tuesday night coming up in two days will also be an historic election. It comes after the FBI first delivered in October surprise and then cleared -- cleared Hillary Clinton of any wrong doing just today. You might call that the November surprise. It comes as a foreign adversary. By the way Russia in this case not the Soviet Union, Russia attempts to weaken our confidence in the Democratic process here.

And it comes after one candidate, Donald Trump, has repeatedly called the election itself election rigged. That`s his word, rigged. Not least of all 2016 is historic because it could be the year that this county elects its first woman president.

I`m joined my people that know history. Former CBS New Anchor, Dan Rather, my friend now at AXIS TV. Political author and analyst, Jeff Greenfield at Politicoand Susan Page, Washington Bureau Chief for USA Today. Bow to history here for these two guys. And Susan is the best we go got. But we got her all the time.

Dan, this election, I guess the extent question is, will Trump cause more trouble if he loses?

DAN RATHER, FORMER CBS NEW ANCHOR: Well he`s certainly capable of doing that and I think it`s very important to note we shouldn`t underestimate the danger of this talk of a rigged system. It goes to the very core of who we think we are as people which is basically what this election is about. If you listen to the voices of reason, after the election is over, the question is, what kind of country are we going to have? What kind of society are we going to be?

Listen, America at its core it`s always been steady, calm, tender country, peace loving people. Warriors when we have to be. That hasn`t gone by the board. All this talk about, you know, eventually, you`ll go this way and basically you go this way is all mildly interesting. But in the end, you need to pull back what we call in television a wide shot. What`s the election going to be about? And what it is what kind of country were going to have once it`s over.

MATTHEWS: Jeff, even Al Gore when he won the popular vote by about 600,000. He got a very questionable Supreme Court intervention gave the best speech of his life in 2000.

JEFF GREENFIELD, POLITICO : I think we`ve crossed the divide. And I have - - I`d love to be optimistic on the night before or two nights before the election. But I`m not. There are too many things that have happened already.

The fact that three senators, are some them says, have already said if Hillary is the next President, we can go four years without a Supreme Court nominee. Go back to 1991 and the most bitter confirmation fights ever with Clearance Thomas.

You know what? No Democrat suggested? Filibuster. It was not thought of.

MATTHEWS: 52 votes was enough.

GREENFIELD: But never even heard to anybody. Now you`ve got situations where, you know, the idea that the only way I can lose seems to be Donald Trump`s message if it`s rigged. I`m less concerned with what he says Tuesday night. Though I think it`s going to be grim, than what happens in January if that`s the climate.

If the climate is that the base of the Republican Party believes that next President is a criminal, not just wrong headed on policy. And that everything we can do should be done to stop this. That there are no norms that we will not cross, you know, we`ve had a situation where the full faith and credit of the United States have been placed into jeopardy by not raising the debt ceiling. If all those norms have been b broken, I don`t have a lot of faith that whatever the speeches are going to say yes, let`s all work together. Really? I don`t --

MATTHEWS: Jeff, you know, Jeff`s so right because it takes some mineral level of cooperation even to get a debt ceiling through. But it sounds so boring, but they have to do it come January, February.

SUSAN PAGE, WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF, "USA TODAY ": It takes an assumption that even if you were voting for the other guy that you support -- you accept that person who was elected President. And then he get the question when they raised -- when Donald Trump raises questions about a rigged election because that means you don`t necessarily have to accept the vote as being the fair and accurate vote in a legitimately elected President.

I was talking to Nicole Hemmer who`s a Presidential Historian University of Virginia about the last time we had this kind of Presidential Election where these accusations and allegations were made before the vote and she came up with 1860 which was the first election of Abraham Lincoln before he could inaugurated Southern states stated.

MATTHEWS: You know I love concession speeches because I`ve been following politics since I was five. I just -- that`s the one moment of truth. The guy or woman who lose, tends to say something poetic, you know, like Adlai Stevenson, too old to laugh. What was that again?

GREENFIELD: Too old to cry -- it hurts too much to laugh and I`m too old to cry.

MATTHEWS: Too old to cry or Ed Brook from Massachusetts once said, "I didn`t cry in the mountain. I will not cry in the valley." I mean these are great moments, you know?

RATHER: Well for one of the few times I can remember in a long career, disagree with my friend. I`m an optimist and by nature an by experience, that`s true. But I`m very optimistic about how the people of the United States will react to the election. Yes, it makes a difference, what kind of concession speech the loser gives if they give a concession speech.

But what really counts is what is in the heart of the people and they`re going to want a government led by a new President that can get things done. America was built on optimism. We are an optimistic people. I know it`s hard in the president`s environment and easy to be cynical. As a reporter I`m skeptical but try never to be cynical. And I think that`s the spirit of the American people.

MATTHEWS: I remember Kennedy after he didn`t get a decent concession from Nixon because Nixon got an airplane at 5:00 o`clock and flew back across the East Coast. He never really gave it. So he had cut out a deal with the old man, Joe Kennedy, got a meeting with Herbert Hoover that got Nixon to agree to go meet with him in Key Biscayne and basically concede. I argue it really is important that the loser say I lost.

GREENFIELD: I don`t disagree with that. But I -- what I`m suggesting is that look, you know this church better than I do. And I don`t often say that to you. A man can go to the Al Smith Dinner and accuse his rival of hating Catholics is not playing by the rules you and I assumed.

MATTHEWS: He did. He did. In front of all he did it.

GREENFIELD: You know I was watching that thing and I`m thinking, you know, she`s sitting next to the cardinal. You don`t do that. And part of the thing that I think I`ll speak for myself that I didn`t recognize until way too late was many of the things that Trump does that have broken all these rules. The rules of civility let us say. The name of the great novel we both like. That was her features.

For millions of people the fact he was willing to behave that way showed that he wasn`t locked into the system an air view was at the root corrupt, mendacious and betrayed them. And that`s why I have some real problems.

MATTHEWS: I`ll state this. Well then that suggests to play the suit, to play he is. He has to deny he lost because that`s the game he`s won on so far.

PAGE: And you know Hillary Clinton Campaign is now trying to make plans to deal with the situation where he doesn`t concede or whether he`s not gracious, where she`s put in the position where that natural honeymoon, the kind of lift that a newly elected President doesn`t happen for her. How do you -- how do you address that? And you saw her start to do it in her comments today at rallies where she says, I want to be President of the people who voted for me and the people who didn`t vote for me. And their plan involves trying to do something quickly after she takes office.

MATTHEWS: How does she deal with that? How would you think she could do that?

PAGE: I think it`s -- you mean how do you deal with --

MATTHEWS: Distrust, distrust, disliking --

PAGE: I think the only way you can effectively deal with it is by getting something done.

MATTHEWS: You know, Bobby Kennedy use to work -- well Bobby use to say, you know, he may written the phrase. He said hang a lantern on your problem.

RATHER: No, I didn`t --

GREENFIELD: Well one way.

MATTHEWS: But that was the line because, you know, he had admit -- oh, yes, he would kid about being ruthless. He would kid about himself OK, that takes some of the edge off.

GREENFIELD: My only quick point is that obviously, what she will want to do is to reach across the aisle, reach the people who didn`t vote for her but the mechanisms by which you can demonstrate that, by cooperation. I mean just play it out very briefly. She`s got her own problems on the left. She goes to Paul Ryan if he`s still speaker and says let`s cut a deal, you know, some entitlement reform, maybe infrastructure with a two tiered wave system. And then what do supporters on the left say about that?

RATHER: Her best bet though is to be magnanimous, to be grateful and to be humble which we haven`t seen much of that on the campaign trail from her. That`s her best bet if she wins.

MATTHEWS: Yes and I think you know the human way of doing this. Let see - - maybe the human way will work. Anyway thank you Dan Rather. Thank you Jeff Greenfield, guys are great. Thank you Susan because you`re always great.

Up next, and you`re always around. Anyway Donald Trump made an enemy with Latino voters that may have knocked him out of the key state of Nevada. Veteran Political journalist John Ross is going to join us. He says Trump`s dead as a door nail in Nevada, the silver state. He`s coming here next. This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Reno and Northern Nevada could carry this state, but don`t let crazy broken Harry Reid and his corrupt political machine decide this election for you. It`s being reported that certain key Democratic polling locations in Clark County were kept open for hours and hours beyond closing time to pause and bring Democratic voters in. Folks, it`s a rigged system. It`s a rigged system and we`re going to bit it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back. That was Donald Trump campaigning in Nevada Ground City. Nevada over the weekend. Nevada was once thought to be leaning Trump`s direction, but after a wig early voting period, is it still as close as it was? Well one person who should know the answer to that is Nevada political expert, Jon Ralston, The Ralston Report. He joins me now.

Jon, you were all over the place. You have stuck your neck way out. Well beyond the guillotine and the question is, why do you risk your reputation on such a sure statement as Trump is finished in Nevada?

JON RALSTON, HOST, RALSTON LIVE: Well, Chris, I guess I just wanted to get clicks on that post. I`m kidding. I`m kidding.

Listen, I`ve been watching these early voting trends for a long time. The numbers here in Nevada look almost identical to what they were in 2012 when Obama won the state by seven points. The Democrats have built up this huge ballot lead in Clark County. About 73,000 ballots. That`s 70 percent of the vote already in and Clark County is 70 percent of the state.

Chris, you just know the math does not work for him unless there`s something really strange going on there or there`s some gigantic turnout on Election Day. If you do the math Chris, he essentially has to win Election Day by more than ten points unless he is just absolutely crushing Hillary among independents and then she`d bleeding Democrats. Neither of which is showing up in the private data I`ve seen.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about what`s not on television or in the numbers. Can you in conversations in reporting history, do you sense an animus towards Trump on Latino community?

RALSTON: There`s no - there`s no question about that. And you look at the main Latino turnout driver in the state, Chris which you know is the culinary union which is now more than half Hispanic. It`s in a dispute with Trump at his Place here Trump Las Vegas. You can just sense it just by a lot of newspapers have interviewed people. Both nationally and here and they are not -- they`re not going out to vote for Hillary Clinton so much as they`re going out to vote against Donald Trump.

There`s a clear lack of enthusiasm in the Democratic base for Hillary Clinton. Visa vie or what it was here for Obama in 2008 and 2012. But Trump has taken care of that for them specially in the Latino based.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about early voting. Does that tell you about energy and attitude? In fact, you get out and vote a couple of weeks early?

RALSTON: Yes, listen. The read machine, the corrupt political machine that Trump referred to -- by the way, those polling places were not all kept open late. What he said is false, but forget about that for a second.

The read machine does two things incredibly well. And they did it in 2008 and 2012 is they find those voters and turn them out early to bank those votes because they assume the Republicans will have a turnout advantage. They got the registration numbers up in the last few months here, Chris, well 90,000 voter lead statewide.

So even if the Republicans have a slight turnout advantage, it won`t make up for the registration numbers. So, these are enthusiastic voters, some of them yes, but they`re ones that the read machine is driving out to turn out early so they can bank those votes. These are Partisan Democrats. These are not crossover voters they`re turning out for the most part.

MATTHEWS: Well let`s talk about Trump`s assault on the legitimacy of your voting out there. He says that voting place where there`s a large number of Hispanic voters, obviously, that`s what he`s referring to were kept open hours later and then bus load of people were arriving after the closing time. What`s the fact?

RALSTON: Well that there`s no evidence that bus loads of people arrived after the closing time. There was one polling place Chris, a supermarket called the Cardenas Supermarket where hundreds of voters, most of them Latino, were if line when the polling place was supposed to close. They always keep them open and let folks vote Who are in line. That happened at a few other poling place, but there were no buses bringing people.

Now, it is true the casinos in the culinary union bus people to the polls during early voting, but that wasn`t occurring on Friday evening. And let`s face it, Chris, there weren`t that many votes that were banked during those times anyhow. The Democrats won Friday by 11,000 ballots. They had banked most of those before the polling places were kept open. Trump as usual is living in a fantasy world when he talks that kind of thing.

MATTHEWS: You`re not. You`re not. Jon Ralston, those reality - where we only had to wait until Tuesday night. We`ll know exactly how right you were. Thank you so much Jon Ralston from Nevada.

Anyway, Hillary Clinton`s in the stage right now on a rally up at Manchester, New Hampshire. She`s with Kaiser Ken. Of course, Kaiser Ken, the Gold Star Father who spoke of course so memorably the Democratic convention in Philadelphia. And later was the target of Donald Trump`s personal attacks.

Up next, our top story tonight. The FBI gives Hillary Clinton, let`s call this, a Clean Bill of Health. Their e-mail investigation is over and Jon, and she`s clear. You`re watching "Hardball, The Place for Politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to Hardball. Just a couple of days left, or hardly two days left in the elect - until the election. The finish line is in sight. As Time Magazine has it, The End Is Near. That seems creepy.

Though this Presidential Election has been one of the most polarizing in modern American history. Here are some highlights or low lights.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: She`s the devil. He made a deal with the devil.

CLINTON: It proves yet again he is temper mentally unfit to be President and Commander-in-Chief.

TRUMP: ISIS is honoring President Obama. He is founder of ISIS. He`s the founder of ISIS. I would say the cofounder would be crooked Hillary Clinton. Cofounder, crooked Hillary Clinton.

CLINTON: Imagine if you dare imagine, imagine him in the oval office facing a real crisis. A man you can bait with a tweet is not a man we can trust with nuclear weapons.

TRUMP: Hillary Clinton is a bigot, who sees people of color only as votes.

CLINTON: So, he has a long record of engaging in racist behavior.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: For more on what this year has been about and that the country can come back to it, from it together, getting together. I`m joined by around tonight, Michelle Bernard, President of Bernard Center for Woman, Kurt Anderson, journalist and Host of Studio 360 and Hugh Hewitt, MSNBC Political Analyst and hosted the Hewitt Show.

I love the way you guys are all named after your organizations on the some of radio station. Kurt, you`re going to have to get into the IPO (ph) and started missing -

KURT ANDERSON, POLITICAL ANALYST: Right. I`m missing out.

MATTHEWS: Kurt Anderson, but that was already POW camp in the Civil War. What do we know? And the people around me, my producer, one of them says, you know, this is a mutual destruction. Mutual destruction. Even the FBI`s now have been brought down to a lower level than it had been. Everything seems to be the media course. Everybody`s been impugned. Mostly Trump. Doing this.

MICHELLED BERNARD, BERNARD CENTER FOR WOMEN: The coarseness of our politics, it`s been increasing, it`s been getting worse year after year. Politicians don`t listen and now, we`ve seen it culminate in, I think one of the most embarrassing campaigns we`ve seen in U.S. history. I mean I feel like the country is the laughing stock of the world.

Not just because of who the Republican nominee is, but the fact that the people will stand up during the Republican debate talking about who has small hands, who has wet their pants. Why crooked Hillary. You know, it`s terrible.

MATTHEWS: You know, I was thinking, of scores (INAUDIBLE) and what it is when your army is retreating, you burn the field. You burn the - they kill the animals so the advancing army can`t eat and they starve to death somehow.

It`s almost like that. We`re burning everything around you.

ANDERSON: Well, I would argue that hasn`t been much burning on the Democratic side toward the right. But it is, we are not get -- however it happens tomorrow, however it comes out on Tuesday, rather. It`s not going to be all OK. And the thing that beyond the coarseness, beyond the -- all those things, it seems to me we have tipped over into a time when facts don`t matter. With this post factual age, the post truth age. That`s when we`re -

MATTHEWS: Does it matter, attitude?

ANDERSON: Attitude and my facts, you know, Patrick Moynihan, famously said you can, you know, "You can have different opinion, but you`re entitled to your own facts." We are at a place where people actually behave as though they are entitled to that --

MATTHEWS: No. I would argue they can even get the same fact and have a totally different attitude. Firstly, you can say Hillary Clinton`s an ambitious woman. She`s been ambitious since she married Bill. She may have decided she had a shot at the presidency in the late `90s. But she always was ambitious to a Republican, a critic of Hillary, that`s evidence of evil.

ANDERSON: Sure. But that -

MATTHEWS: So with Democratic, that`s a courageous woman as a path finder, someone who`s had the guts to run for president of the United States and really go all the way unlike some of the other women candidates and mean it.

ANDERSON: But that`s the way it`s always been. That`s what politics are is, oh, here are the facts. My spin is this. Your spin is this.

This is different where Donald Trump can lie and lie and lie and lie and the people who support him accept perhaps for Hugh Hewitt, don`t care.

HUGH HEWITT, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST: Some good news. Some good news, on Friday night, I was at a - the all service of YMCA.

MATTHEWS: I think it`s the other voice for broadcasting.

HEWITT: Thank you. And I heard chairman of the joint Chief Of Staff Joe Dunford give a speech about the American Military, how it`s not broken. How it`s the greatest in the world and then he honored five corps man, medics, pararescue professionals who had run in to the teeth of fire to rescue their fellow warriors who were down. And it did remind you that there`s a lot that`s not broken in America. The not for-profit sector is not broken.

The Supreme Court has weathered a very unusual time with a great deal of dignity and some compromised among themselves. I think the House Of Representatives is going to work well under Paul Ryan. I do think the FBI has gotten a bad wrap and then come and did exactly what he had to do when the new information surface and he did what he had to do today. And I`m kind of happy that the - that it hasn`t been more damage done.

MATTHEWS: Well yes, the best basketball players. But more important tonight. More important tonight. We have the best education, the higher educational system in the world.

HEWITT: Sure.

MATTHEWS: All the kids with wealthy parents, wherever they come from in the world, where the Saudi Arabia, they may not like our culture. They want to educate their kids right in United States. If some third world (INAUDIBLE) and dictator got cancer, or something, he doesn`t go to Russia. They come right here. So we still on education. We have health care for those who can afford it the best in the world. So we are excellent in so many ways.

HEWITT: And Silicon Valley is another - endlessly entrepreneurial. There has to be some kind of coming together after this is all over to say we have to fix Obamacare, which is spectacularly failed and the premiums are driving the middle class into despair. We have to fix a number of things, but it`s doable.

ANDERSON: But another way in which things are good is crime. Crime by depending on what you`re talking about and where you`re talking about is down 50 to 80 percent in the last 20 years in America. Are cities safer?

HEWITT: Yes, they are.

MATTHEWS: Unless they`re in a gang.

ANDERSON: Unless you`re in certain areas of Chicago. And that`s what I`m talking about when Donald Trump can say, "Oh, the murders are higher than they`ve been in 45 years." Now, they aren`t.

BERNARD: He`s making up facts. But the -

MATTHEWS: That`s not true with the big cities.

BERNARD: And I don`t want to rain on our happiness parade because you know -

MATTHEWS: Well wait a minute. You may stack (INAUDIBLE), why are you doing this?

BERNARD: I`m not because - well, you don`t know what I`m doing because you haven`t heard what I said.

MATTHEWS: OK. But slowly. So they were right about what they said?

BERNARD: Yes. And what I was about to say is like I disagree with Donald Trump when he says, we need to make America great again. America is great. I firmly believed that we are the greatest nation on earth that when we talk about the things that are great about America, we`re making the same mistake that has led - led politicians to be where they are today. Because for people who can`t afford health care, for people stuck in an education system based on zip code, we saw it with occupy Wall Street, then we saw it with the Tea Party and now with the rise of the KKK and all these nationalist groups.

People who are suffering want to be heard by the government and they feel their government institutions aren`t hearing them.

MATTHEWS: I agree with you and everything except the importance of the KKK. What`s the importance of the KKK?

BERNARD: Well the importance of the KKK - well look KKK -

MATTHEWS: How many members does it have?

BERNARD: I don`t know, but the fact that the KKKs newspaper came out and endorsed Donald Trump last week, the fact that we are seeing a rise of nationalist groups. The fact we are in a society now where it`s okay not just to not be PC, but to say overtly racist things is a problem and we have - and the only way you cure it is to get jobs for everyone.

MATTHEWS: I think the KKK is a joke. It`s irrelevant. It doesn`t even hardly exists. It may be able to pour the -

BERNARD: But as a white man, you can feel that way.

MATTHEWS: It doesn`t exist.

BERNARD: You can feel that way.

MATTHEWS: No. But there -

BERNARD: As a white male, you think about when -

MATTHEWS: Where have you - where have you encountered in KKK -

BERNARD: I have not encountered in KKK.

ANDERSON: And they`re going to -

MATTHEWS: OK.

BERNARD: And the fear is that I might and I don`t want to and I didn`t ask to.

ANDERSON: There`s no Jon Burge Society meaningful anymore either, but there are millions of people who could be, who would have been Jon Berchar that`s what he would have called him 50 years ago.

MATTHEWS: And I think it`s a joke. Anyway, but I understand your concern because it`s a potential predator.

BERNARD: Well and the nationalists are rising. It`s not good.

MATTHEWS: OK. Thank you. Hugh Hewitt, Kurt Anderson, that`s why we have lot of opinions on this show. Michelle Bernard. Thank you.

Up next, My Election Diary with just two days to go before the 2016 Presidential Election. This is "Hardball," The Place for Politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary Sunday, November 6, 2016, Innocent. That`s the news tonight all over America. Hillary Clinton has been exonerated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Director James Comey declared today the agency stands by its determination of July, that there`s no reason to charge the former secretary of state, period.

The FBI director said that today that having combed through the e-mails found on Anthony Weiner`s laptop, the FBI has no reason to order the lie determination that Secretary Clinton should not and could not be prosecuted. That there is no evidence she committed a crime. Well this is huge news.

When the FBI Director announced two Fridays ago that the agency was looking at the Weiner e-mails, it shifted the presidential election dramatically. Hillary Clinton strongly was eliminated. Trump became a strong contender in the poll numbers. The election suddently became a nail biter. Well it took the news that Hillary Clinton was once again the subject of an investigation a while to fade.

The past week, there`s been a continual rise in her polling compared to Trump`s. By Friday, we could report that she had reestablished the significant lead. Well today`s news that the FBI has cleared her will add to Clinton`s advantage that it should. Once people absorb the fact that the FBI is no longer probing her e-mail, we should see an uptick in support for her.

I have tried to reserve judgment of Director Comey. We have watch it being attacked from both sides. He was hit from the right for clearing her in July. Hit from the left from bringing her back in the suspicion nine days ago. Mr. Comey will no doubt facing others surge of criticism. This time again from the right for his announcement today.

The right doesn`t want to see Hillary Clinton cleared. Let`s face it. Cleared of anything. But Comey isn`t running for President. Neither is the FBI, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are. And today, Clinton got a break. It deserve at one.

Trump found himself still attacking her, but now, which is our people election day without his FBI probe of e-mail which she had built. He`s closing argument. And That`s "Hardball" for now.

Tomorrow night, Monday night, President Barack Obama, First Lady, Michelle Obama, President Bill and Hillary and Chelsea Clinton all will appear in a giant election eve rally in Philadelphia. Bruce Springsteen will perform and Hardball will be there for the whole time to cover from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. And that`s tomorrow. Big night in Philly.

Up next, I`ll join Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow followed by "THE LAST WORD" with Lawrence O`Donnell at 10:00 p.m. Eastern.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Michael Steele, Ron Reagan, Robert Costa

9120 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Big mo? Don`t know.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

With just days to go, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are both making their final pushes to drive out voters. Today, neither candidate was seen cruisin` on the high road.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Putin has no respect for Hillary Clinton . He dreams -- he dreams of her becoming president. You know who else dreams of Hillary Clinton ? ISIS.

She always talking about me. See, what I have is a winning temperament. I have a winning temperament. Hillary is an unstable person.

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Donald stood on a stage and said, and I quote, "I`m honored to have the greatest temperament that anyone`s ever had."

(LAUGHTER)

CLINTON: He knows we can see and hear him, right? His instinct is to say whatever pops into his head, no matter how wrong he is. He can`t help himself. So is this someone we want to put in charge of our military?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You take the high road? No, you take the high road!

Making a rare appearance on the campaign trail today, Melania Trump today gave her first speech since the Republican national convention. She told a crowd up in Pennsylvania that as first lady, she will focus on advocating for women and children. She called for combating, by the way, meanness in our culture, and she vouched for her husband. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MELANIA TRUMP, DONALD TRUMP`S WIFE: He loves this country, and he knows how to get things done, not just talk. He certainly knows how to shake things up, doesn`t he?

"Make America great again" is not just some slogan. It is what has been in his heart since the day I met him. Every time my husband learned of a factory closing in Ohio or North Carolina or here in Pennsylvania, I saw him get very upset. He could see what was happening. He saw the problems. And he always talked about how he could fix them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Also today, we learned that the eve of the election -- on the eve itself, Monday, that`s two days, three days from now -- Hillary Clinton will join her husband, Bill, their daughter, Chelsea, and both President Obama and Michelle Obama , all at a big rally Monday evening in Philadelphia, and we will be there to cover that for a couple of hours.

Anyway, joining me right now, "Time" magazine contributor Jay Newton-Small -- we`ve missed you -- former Republican National Committee chairman Michael Steele. We`re used to you.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: And author Ron Reagan. I think you all are fascinating.

I want you all to tell me your political noses. I want to start with you, Michael. Does your nose tell you -- I can usually tell on Thursday before an election which way the wind`s blowing. And right now, I don`t think there`s any velocity or any direction to it, but many people keep telling me it`s a little bit in Trump`s direction. How do you read the wind right now?

MICHAEL STEELE, FMR. RNC CHAIR, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: I would read the wind that way. And the objective -- or I guess, obvious, you know, information I can rely on is the car I was in this morning on my way to the airport. I was talking to the driver, and he was going on about Hillary. And I`m thinking this guy`s a Hillary supporter. He`s a minority voter.

And at the end of it, he turns around and he goes, you know, But at the end of the day, I just can`t trust her, so I think I`m voting for Trump. And that kind of momentum -- I was, like, startled because it confirms to me that Trump has sort of tapped into this late energy.

The problem he`s going to have, Chris, is with lack of organization on the ground, lack of real focus on those key battleground states until just recently, whether he can turn that vote out. The voter that was driving the car this morning, to get him to the polls, that`s going to be his real test.

MATTHEWS: Jay, you heard the word "him? I heard the word "him."

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Yes. Right. I get it. And I think that`s a focus group of a guy. But here we got to ask about women because I keep hearing college- educated women are the best voters in the country, meaning they show up, and they`re going to show up this week because of their ambitions, their aspirations, and their attitude towards people who are trying to stymie those aspirations.

JAY NEWTON-SMALL, "TIME" MAGAZINE": So that`s always been Hillary Clinton`s firewall, right, is actually college-educated white women who are turning out in larger numbers than anticipated for her. I mean, they just love her. They -- you know, that -- that`s -- that`s who she really is trying to turn out. The interesting thing...

MATTHEWS: Explain why they like her, just for the people who are going for ABCs here. Why would a woman -- I hate to say "white." Why would a woman, a professional woman who goes to work in the morning and deals with men at work, deals with the whole thing -- why would that person be for Hillary Clinton ?

NEWTON-SMALL: Well, I mean -- and again, we`re talking about a subset of college-educated white women who don`t like Donald Trump , don`t like his rhetoric, don`t really relate to him but also want to see the first female president ever elected. They really like the idea of a woman.

They understand -- they can relate to Hillary. They can see themselves to some degree in Hillary, especially the older women, and they`ve seen her over years and years and years change as they have changed and grown into the workforce.

MATTHEWS: Ron, do you have a sense of which way the things -- everybody does their anecdotal polling. We all do it. My -- I just don`t sense any direction -- I hear everybody saying Trump, like -- I heard Michael say it. I don`t know if it`s true, but I do think this is a weird weekend coming up. If there`s no wind direction, where do those undecideds go?

RON REAGAN, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, that`s a very good question. I mean, and who could be undecided at this point, really? I mean, we`ve said -- we`ve had this conversation before during presidential elections, where it gets down to the last few days and there`s still, you know, a sizable percentage of the electorate who`s undecided. And you think, How could you possibly, at this point, not be...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: There are probably people, at least 5 percent, that said, What`d you think of Reagan? I don`t know!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: After Obama, there`s probably 5 percent that say, I don`t know. But just remember, when the allies and the French army, the Free French Army, went into Paris, liberating the country from the German occupation, there were people lying with their towels along the Seine sunbathing! They weren`t interested!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: There are people that just aren`t political...

REAGAN: War? What war?

MATTHEWS: ... and there`s nothing you can do about it. What are those tanks doing here? What`s all the action about today? Well, they say there`s a war going on. Give me a break!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Your thoughts, Ron.

REAGAN: I think you`re probably right, though, that the wind is sort of swirling at the moment. If you look at the polls and look at all the -- you know, the polling sites like 538 and the rest of them, it does seem that the race is tightening. And you`ve got to, you know, ask yourself the question why. Why are we even having this conversation? Why aren`t we talking about the coming Hillary Clinton , you know, administration and the...

MATTHEWS: Because everybody doesn`t live in Seattle. Ron, because everybody doesn`t live in Seattle.

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

REAGAN: I suppose that`s true. Yes, or New York or Chicago or San Francisco or Los Angeles...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, in her speech today out in the suburbs of Philly, Melania Trump chose an interesting area to focus on. This seems to be the thing to talk about now, the rise of cyberbullying, as I said, the meanness of our culture. Let`s watch Melania.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

M. TRUMP: Like anything that is powerful, it can have a bad side. We have seen this already. As adults, many of us are able to handle mean words, even lies. Children and teenagers can be fragile. They are hurt when they are made fun of or made to feel less in looks or intelligence. This makes their life hard and can force them to hide and retreat. Our culture has gotten too mean and too rough, especially to children and teenagers.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: OK, Jay, and then I want to hear Michael because Michael knows this as well of any of us at this table. Why do all the ads at the end -- I watched the World Series last night. It was a great game, a really great game. Baseball looked good last night and the teams looked like great. I love all those dugout shots. You really get a sense of the place.

Why is it always nasty at the end? I`m watching these ads here, with LuAnn Bennett against Barbara Comstock, a local race for the House. Nasty, nasty, nasty! And they paired them together all through the game. It`s just two women going at each other, nastily.

NEWTON-SMALL: Yes. That`s what works. I mean, polling has always showed that going negative does work and you can`t -- but you can`t do it for a long amount of time because then it destroys the things (ph). The power of going negative always works right at the end, and that`s why everybody does it, is going nasty at the end.

But I do think -- I want to -- I wanted to give you my analogy of the boat thing.

MATTHEWS: Go ahead.

NEWTON-SMALL: So I feel like Hillary is just -- we`re just short of the finish line, and Hillary`s boat has stalled and she`s kind of bailing out water with all this Comey stuff going on. And Donald Trump , the wind is coming right up behind him, but that`s also stalled, that the wind is kind of letting (ph) out of the sails a bit, and so they`re both, like, frantically paddling to get over the finish line!

(LAUGHTER)

NEWTON-SMALL: (INAUDIBLE) to get there!

MATTHEWS: This is -- I want to make a point here that Trump is such a flawed candidate -- and I think we all agree with that, Michael, you included.

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... that there must have been something behind that message he tapped into. You can talk about the racial (INAUDIBLE) part of it, the ethnic prejudice part of it, but there was a powerful message of dissatisfaction with the elites of this country in both parties that showed itself all through the Republican primaries. All those guys ended up looking like bozos, and they`re not bozos, but they look weak because the party record is weak in the Republican Party, doesn`t really have strength or belief left in it.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: And the Democratic Party has been so complacent this year, it hasn`t really made its case. Hillary talks about being for women and children and all. That`s good. Those are good values. But nothing -- no lift of a driving dream coming out of the Democratic message machine, nothing, that I can see.

STEELE: Well, I...

MATTHEWS: So I can see why Trump -- just think if Trump were a good candidate. Just think...

STEELE: Well, to that point...

MATTHEWS: ... if he were clean and selling what he`s been selling. Your thoughts.

STEELE: Well, to that point, Chris, I go back to my driver this morning, who when I asked him why said, Because I think Trump will help me with my business. That economic message, which was the beginning salvo from the Trump campaign, resonated and still resonates. And if -- if we had not had...

MATTHEWS: That`s in the ad, by the way. That`s in the new ad. Go ahead.

STEELE: Yes. If we had not had -- you know, entered into the land of crazy for the last 11 months, we -- and this was, as you said, a campaign that was focused on, yes, defining Washington, but going beyond Washington in a way that people felt that their futures were going to be helped by his administration, this would be a very different race right now.

MATTHEWS: Ron, what do you feel about the voters this time? I mean, I know you don`t like Trump. Most people I know don`t, either. But what is your feeling about the voter and how the voters reacted to Trump? The fact that this race, in the latest polling by "The Washington Post ," is within a point or 2 points, it`s back and forth, it`s almost even. It has -- it seems like the crap doesn`t hit the fan for three days, it goes back to 50- 50 in this country.

REAGAN: Yes. Yes.

MATTHEWS: You know, if there`s no news, it goes back to 50-50 again. Your thoughts.

REAGAN: I think that people in Washington, D.C., in the political elite, if you will, and also in the media elite -- meaning us, among other people -- underestimate the level of contempt there is -- and I use that word advisedly, contempt" -- there is in the country at large for Washington elites and we in the media.

I mean, there are people that listen to what we say, I presume, but not all that many. A lot of people just tune us out and people like us out. And they really are fed up with what`s going on in Washington. They want radical change of some type. And a lot of them are low-information voters. They vote with their gut, and Donald Trump appeals to that gut.

You know, again, it`s remarkable that we`re sitting here, talking about a potential Donald Trump presidency...

MATTHEWS: I know.

REAGAN: ... which would amount to a national emergency, I have to say. I mean, we`re having fun here. We`re talking.

MATTHEWS: I know.

REAGAN: It`s a conversation. But we should be taking this very seriously. A 1 in 3 chance of Donald Trump becoming president is a 1 in 3 chance of a giant asteroid hitting the planet.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

REAGAN: You know? This is serious.

MATTHEWS: Well, there`s a part of me that wants the city to take some nitroglycerin, too, and shake itself up. I think this city needs to be shaken up.

Anyway, President Obama...

REAGAN: It does.

MATTHEWS: President Obama hit the campaign trail again today and knocked Trump as unfit to be president. He`s been -- you talk about having fun, the president`s been joyous out there, Ron, doing what he`s doing. He is so happy in this blue wall...

REAGAN: He`s so good at it, too.

MATTHEWS: Let`s watch him. Let`s watch him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Donald Trump is uniquely unqualified to be president! I`m not joking. He is temperamentally unfit to be commander-in-chief.

Anybody who is upset about a "Saturday Night Live" skit, you don`t want in charge of nuclear weapons. This is guy who, like, tweets, They should cancel "Saturday Night Live," I don`t like how Alec Baldwin`s imitating me.

Really? I mean, that`s the thing that bothers you, and you want to be president of the United States? Come on, man!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: Come on!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, a short time later, Donald Trump , as you might expect, hit back. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

D. TRUMP: He`s down here campaigning for crooked Hillary. Why isn`t he back in the White House, bringing our jobs back and helping our veterans? He`s campaigning every day. This guy ought to be back in the office working! He`s not going to be there very long, thank goodness, but he ought to be back in the office working.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, there`s a lot here going on. I want to go back to Michael and the politics here of these two.

STEELE: Oh, it`s rich (ph).

MATTHEWS: It seems like they`re both -- I mean, the president has stakes in this, he wants his legacy to continue...

STEELE: Sure.

MATTHEWS: ... but clearly, he is a looser guy than I`ve seen on the stump lately from either party.

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: He is a happy guy. He`s the happy warrior out there. Who`s he going to get to vote? I`m not sure he`s going -- I notice every time he speaks, whether it`s Chapel Hill or down in Florida, he`s got this young, wind-swept look group of happy young people in their early 20s, all looking very happy, without a lot of worries.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: Who`s that bringing in? Who`s that bringing into the polls, anybody?

STEELE: That`s -- not really. And I think that`s what -- been one of the problems for Hillary Clinton . Having the president, you know, in North Carolina, in Florida, has not translated into African-Americans, for example, coming out on behalf of, you know, Hillary Clinton ...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: ... at the request of the president. He made a direct plea earlier this week for that. So yes, a lot of this, though, is these two men genuinely dislike each other, for very obvious reasons on behalf of the president, why he has very little regard for Donald Trump . So I think he gets that pleasure. He`s having fun with it.

But I don`t know how much of a lift he`s actually brought to the table...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: ... for Hillary Clinton in terms of those key constituencies that she wanted him out there for.

MATTHEWS: Have you decided yet how you`re going to vote?

STEELE: Who, me?

MATTHEWS: Just tell me -- just tell me if you`ve decided yet.

STEELE: I`ve already voted. I`ve already voted.

MATTHEWS: Oh. Oh, God, I can`t ask you anymore. Anyway, thank you, Michael Steele.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Jay Newton-Small, and thank you, Ron Reagan. I think I know where you`ve ended up in the booth. Anyway, Ron, thank you for coming on. You speak clearly.

Anyway -- I`ll say it -- let`s look inside the numbers now. We`ve seen movement in the polls in the last couple of days. And which side should be sweating out the race at this point? Trump may have some momentum -- most people are saying that -- but Clinton may still have the advantage because she had the jump on this guy. She was leading a long time before Trump made his move.

Plus, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are making their closing arguments. They`re fine-tuning their messages on the stump and in their new TV ads, which are interesting. Who`s got the most effective closing argument? And are there any voters out there who still can be swayed?

And once again, the issue of race has sadly been socked (ph) back into this presidential race, thanks in large part to the fight -- the debate last night in Louisiana featuring David Duke.

Finally tonight, my "election diary" on what last night`s game seven of the World Series could tell us about the presidential campaign. An interesting contour, very much like the last days of this campaign, lots of surprises, homers in the eighth, things like that, FBI reports.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We continue to track the key Senate races around the country. We`ve got new polling data for some of those matchups. Let`s check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

In Pennsylvania, a new Quinnipiac poll shows Democrat Katie McGinty with a 1-point lead -- that`s no lead! -- over incumbent Republican Pat Toomey, McGinty 48, Toomey 47. That is hard to figure.

Next to Florida, where Marco Rubio has a 6-point lead over his Democratic challenger, Patrick Murphy. I`m betting on Rubio, 50 to 44 right now. That`s a lead.

In North Carolina, Democrat -- this is a big surprise -- Deborah Ross (ph) is up by 4 over an incumbent Republican, Richard Burr, Ross 49-45. Look for Ross there.

The Democrats need to pick up four seats to win control of the United States Senate . That`s if Hillary Clinton wins the White House -- four, from 46 to 50. That`ll be enough because Tim Kaine will break the tie.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Hillary Clinton supporters were likely relieved yesterday after polls showed she had an edge in Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Florida. But, today, a WBUR poll up in New Hampshire shows Donald Trump`s up by a point now after Clinton had been leading there since the summer.

A separate Suffolk University/"Boston Globe " poll shows the candidates tied at even, 42 points a piece. In Arizona, where Clinton held a rally last night, Trump leads, however, five points, by five, 45-40, but there`s still five more points to win there. And that`s in the latest NBC News/Wall Street Journal/Marist poll.

That poll also shows a close race in the state of Georgia, where Trump narrowly leads Clinton by a percentage point, 45-44. And in Colorado, a University of Denver poll shows the candidates now tied at 39. However, NBC , that`s our network, notes that the poll assumes the Hispanic vote, the Latino vote, in that electorate at 8 -- at 9 percent, while turnout among that group in 2012 was 14 percent, and it`s expected to exceed that. So, they may have the wrong weighting going on there -- W-E-I-G-H-T-I-N-G, weighting.

To that point, the Associated Press reports today at, the national level, the tens of millions of early votes cast also point to strength from Democratic-leaning Latino voters, potentially giving Clinton a significant advantage in states like Nevada and Colorado. With more than half the votes already cast in those states, Democrats are matching, if not exceeding, their successful 2012 race.

Anyway, tonight, both candidates are set to speak in the battleground state of North Carolina, where the RealClearPolitics average has the race dead even.

I`m joined now by the Democratic pollster Margie Omero, as well as David Paleologos, Director of Political Research Center at Suffolk University.

Thank you.

Thank you, David.

David, what do you think? I have never seen so many states where they`re almost dead even. In other words, it`s hard to predict the Electoral College at this point, because there`s so many states -- even Georgia, they`re bopping back and forth, in New Hampshire, bopping back and forth. And what do you see?

DAVID PALEOLOGOS, SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY: Yes, it`s amazing. I think you kind of have before Comey and after Comey.

And if you look at the RealClearPolitics averages, and I think when we look back at this election, we will be judging a lot of the polling with the after-Comey totals. In New Hampshire, as we just released this afternoon, the polls showing the race dead even.

None of the polling prior to today had shown Trump leading or the race dead even. There are a couple of other polls that actually had...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Who`s moving -- David, who`s moving to Trump?

Jay Newton-Small was just here and she said she believes -- and she knows her stuff -- she said it`s white working women who didn`t go to college. That group is moving back to Trump, having been against him after that "Access Hollywood" thing came out.

PALEOLOGOS: Yes.

And we asked the Comey question, too, to your point, and that -- and this covers all demographics, really. And we asked the question of whether or not people were less likely to vote because of the Comey letter to Congress or if they thought it was an overblown story and it wouldn`t affect their vote.

Now, going into this poll, I thought it would be around 30 percent. That`s what I was hearing in other polls. In New Hampshire, it was 49 percent less likely; 44 percent said that it is an overblown story and it wouldn`t affect their vote.

That aside, among independents, the number jumps to 52 percent. And if you look at the people who are third-party voters in New Hampshire...

MATTHEWS: Fifty-two percent who believe it affects their vote? Fifty-two say it would affect their vote?

PALEOLOGOS: Less likely.

(CROSSTALK)

PALEOLOGOS: Fifty-two percent of independents who said less likely.

And if you look at total of the three third-party candidates on the New Hampshire ballot and the undecideds, it`s almost 60 percent less likely. And so I think that finding sort of crosses many demographics of the people who are the remaining voters. In addition to that...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, explain. I don`t think it`s what you`re saying.

David, it`s not clear what you`re saying. What percentage of the voters in New Hampshire are affected negatively toward Hillary Clinton by the disclosure from the FBI ? What percentage are affected?

PALEOLOGOS: Forty-nine percent. Forty-nine percent.

MATTHEWS: Are now less likely to be for Hillary?

PALEOLOGOS: That`s right; 49 percent says less likely. But that number jumps over 50 percent in the key categories, which are independents and those people who are remaining to vote, which -- remaining to pick one of the two party candidates, that is, the undecideds or the third-party candidates.

And that`s a problem going forward.

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Margie Omero on this question of, we`re going to go up to Philadelphia tomorrow and talk to the political organization up there, one of the last political machines. All the ward leaders are meeting, et cetera, getting together.

How much is this ground game going to make up for Hillary? In other words, if you say both are at 48 percent, will Hillary win with 50-48 because she has got a ground game? How do you measure that?

MARGIE OMERO, DEMOCRATIC POLLSTER: Well, you would measure it first in the polls. You would have people who are being contacted a lot.

We just did a poll that measured recall of being contacted through 10 different points of contact. And Clinton did a better job at contacting her base than Trump did among his across a variety of different types of contact, Web and online and so on.

But you would also see it in the early voting, which is why you see a lot of advantages in a lot of states like Nevada and North Carolina and Florida, where...

MATTHEWS: Is that a pulled vote?

OMERO: Is that a polled -- well, you mean, is that...

MATTHEWS: Are people are called up, going to get out there and vote two weeks ahead of time? Is that pulled?

(CROSSTALK)

OMERO: I mean, look, it -- well, yes, it is part of polling. Polling captures that.

MATTHEWS: Pulling, P-U-L-L. Are they pulled out?

OMERO: Are they pulled out? Yes.

So, and you`re able -- look, we don`t know yet, is that just people voting early that would ultimately vote on the Election Day, or are you improving by banking those votes when she`s higher in the polls?

MATTHEWS: Tell me the story you told me off camera, because I want to respond to it, David, about the couple where the husband is probably for Trump, the wife is -- I`m just guessing -- the wife is for Hillary Clinton .

What goes on there?

OMERO: So, we did a focus group of couples who disagree, of Wal-Mart moms, swing voting moms, and their husbands who disagree with them.

And, in fact, we had two couples where the wives were Trump and the men were for Clinton. And we had a whole...

MATTHEWS: What does that tell you?

OMERO: Well, one of them, the man was Latino.

MATTHEWS: Ah.

OMERO: And so he was voting for Clinton. He said, if Trump wins, he`d have to leave, he`d have to leave the country.

And you had couples saying, this is the worst our marriage has ever been. Other couples saying, I watch -- we watch in separate rooms so we don`t have to be near each other, or we don`t talk about it.

And another husband said, I`m glad she doesn`t talk about it, because I don`t want to be in the doghouse.

MATTHEWS: I love it.

In our family, we don`t argue politics. That`s the genius of us. We stay away from it.

(LAUGHTER)

OMERO: I find that hard to believe.

MATTHEWS: We really -- no, we don`t. We just don`t do it. It`s hard to believe. I have too many arguments.

Anyway, thank you, Margie Omero.

OMERO: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: And, David Paleologos, thank you so much. Say hello to Ed Jesser (ph) for me.

Coming up: closing arguments. We`re seeing a flurry of new campaign ads in the final days from both Trump and Clinton. Who`s got the most effective message in the stretch? We`re going to talk TV ads now. We have talked ground game. Let`s talk TV ads, because there were some really interesting ones on the game last night.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: She is likely to be under investigation for many, many years, also likely to conclude in a criminal trial. This is not what we need in this country, folks.

We need somebody that is going to go to work.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That`s Donald Trump earlier today.

With five days until America chooses its next presidents, both candidates are presenting their closing arguments now to the public. Trying to harness surging momentum, Donald Trump is releasing a number of new ads, trying to paint him, himself, as the only agent of change. Let`s watch this ad.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NARRATOR: The American moment is here. Two choices. Two Americas. Decided by you. Hillary Clinton will keep us on the road to stagnation, fewer jobs, rising crime, America diminished at home and abroad. Donald Trump will bring the change we`re waiting for. America, better, stronger, more prosperous, for everyone. A plan for tomorrow. A future brighter than our past. The choice is yours.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That was a good ad.

Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton has turned more negative in depicting a bleak country divided under a Trump administration. In fact, yesterday in Las Vegas, Clinton painted -- quote -- "a grim picture of a Trump administration in appeal to undecided voters." That`s the headline.

Anyway, today, she reinforced that message by reminding voters just what Trump has said in the past, using his own words. Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: When Mexico sends its people, they`re bringing drugs, they`re rapists.

I would like to punch him in the face, I will tell you. Get him out of here.

Putting a wife to work is a very dangerous thing.

Wouldn`t you rather, in a certain sense, have Japan have nuclear weapons?

ANDERSON COOPER, CNN : And Saudi Arabia have nuclear weapons?

TRUMP: Yes, and Saudi Arabia, absolutely.

MATTHEWS: Talk of maybe using nuclear weapons, nobody wants to hear that about an American president.

TRUMP: Then why are we making them? Why do we make them?

I would bomb the (EXPLETIVE DELETED) out of them. I love war, in a certain way.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: For more on the candidates` closing arguments, I`m joined by Robert Costa, MSNBC political analyst and national political reporter for "The Washington Post ," and Jerry Rafshoon, former communications assistant to President Jimmy Carter .

Robert, you first.

It does seem that Trump, now the all -- for some reason, he`s going, I would call that relatively high road, not totally. It was a comparison ad, the one we just saw. It had a bit of the morning in America aspect of a Reagan ad. Are they going to run them all weekend, or are they going to go back to the dirt?

ROBERT COSTA, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, they`re trying to rev up the vote, not just among traditional Republicans, but among working-class Democrats, independents.

And I have been driving around Pennsylvania, Western Pennsylvania all day today, Chris. And those are the people in states like Pennsylvania, the more blue, purple states that still seem to be a little bit on the fence. They want change. They aren`t sure about Trump. That`s the case Trump`s making, too. That`s the group Trump`s pitching.

MATTHEWS: And while I have got you, Hillary Clinton , I thought -- I had the sense she was going to try to go high road at the end, but this race has gotten so damn tight and so negative since the FBI report came out, that she`s had to react to that with an equal level of negativity from her side.

Do you see that, too?

COSTA: Well, what`s important about Secretary Clinton`s ads is, she`s not talking so much about the comments from "Access Hollywood," about Trump and sex and misconduct and those kind of things.

It`s really about the core issue of being president, about temperament, things she was talking about in the late summer and early fall when she was ahead in the polls, saying, there is something almost apocalyptic about the prospect of a Trump presidency.

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Jerry Rafshoon.

Jerry, I know we talked. And that first ad, you liked the first ad we saw too from Reagan -- from Trump.

JERRY RAFSHOON, FORMER CARTER WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: I liked the first ad, yes, because you don`t hear Trump.

You hear Trump say, "I approve this ad," but you have somebody talking about Trump. And you don`t have -- it isn`t as strident as Trump has been through his campaign. He didn`t run many ads prior to just recently. He didn`t run anything in the primaries. And it`s been all him. And he`s uncontrollable. This was a well-controlled ad. And it was sane.

MATTHEWS: Here he goes negative. I want you to respond to this new ad here. It`s another ad today. It`s the latest ad.

The Donald Trump campaign calls Clinton unfit for the presidency. They`re both calling each other these words. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NARRATOR: Decades of lies, cover-ups, and scandal have finally caught up with Hillary Clinton . Hillary Clinton is under FBI investigation again after her e-mails were found on pervert Anthony Weiner`s laptop. Think about that. America`s most sensitive secrets unlawfully sent, received, and exposed by Hillary Clinton , her staff, and Anthony Weiner? Hillary cannot lead a nation while crippled by a criminal investigation.

Hillary Clinton , unfit to serve.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So much for the high road of Trump.

RAFSHOON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: I mean, that is a totally negative ad, I think.

RAFSHOON: And it`s a mistake.

MATTHEWS: Really?

RAFSHOON: At this point, I think it`s over the top. It`s almost...

MATTHEWS: You mean, it only reaches...

RAFSHOON: ... obscene.

MATTHEWS: It only reaches the people who already hate her.

RAFSHOON: Right.

(CROSSTALK)

RAFSHOON: It reaches those people. It`s obscene.

MATTHEWS: Go ahead, Robert, your thinking about it, because that is a very tough ad. Your thoughts.

COSTA: So, I think, when I see that ad -- I just got back from Milwaukee.

And when you talk to -- when I talked to people in the Milwaukee suburbs, these Republicans, traditional, Paul Ryan , Ron Johnson Republicans, they`re still skittish about Trump at this late stage.

An ad like that speaks to them and says, this election, it isn`t about Trump. It`s about Secretary Clinton. It`s about turning out Republicans against her, rather than getting people convinced about him.

MATTHEWS: And that`s easier to sell to them.

Jerry, this idea that Republicans -- I don`t want to say this, because I like her, and I -- but I do see the problems people have with her in some cases.

RAFSHOON: Yes, of course.

MATTHEWS: But they hate her. And that seems to be the one ringing bell for Republicans. Don`t you hate Hillary? Vote for Trump.

RAFSHOON: Political -- we`re talking about ads. And political advertising can only speak to the perceptions that people have in their minds.

They`re not thinking about Anthony Weiner. She does have drawbacks and...

MATTHEWS: Well, calling him a pervert, what`s the point of that in the ad against Hillary? Hillary`s not a pervert.

RAFSHOON: Right.

MATTHEWS: To use the word is a little risky anyway. But...

RAFSHOON: Yes. I think that -- I think Trump`s overreaching there.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

RAFSHOON: And the one that he had on before was a good ad, because it was the higher, higher road, and still he made -- got his message across.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

As we have talked many times, you got a guy elected president by presenting him as he really is.

RAFSHOON: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Jimmy Carter .

Thank you so much, Robert Costa.

Thank you, Jerry Rafshoon.

Up next: The HARDBALL roundtable is coming here to talk about the issue of race. It has peeked its nose into this race. I`m sure most -- 99 percent oft country doesn`t want it in it, but it`s in it. It`s back on the front pages thanks, in part, do I have to say these words together, David Duke, the former KKK leader who`s running for the Senate in Louisiana.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DAVID DUKE, U.S. SENATE CANDIDATE: Yes, I`m the bad guy, because I defend the people of this country that made this country great, gave us a Constitution and our freedom. And we`re losing our rights in America. Anybody who stands up for this country and tells the truth, what`s happening to our country -- we`re losing our country. Anybody who does that is going to be a target of the media, just like Donald Trump .

It is time we stand up now. This is the tipping point. We`re getting outnumbered and outvoted in our own nation. Lest we stand up now, or our children have no future.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was Louisiana Senate candidate, former grand wizard of the KKK and ardent Donald Trump supporter. I`m not sure Trump wants him, but he is, David Duke last night in his Senate debate. The debate was held at the historically black Dillard University and met with fierce protests from students outside the debate hall, some of whom clashed with police when they tried to enter the auditorium. Let`s watch.

(VIDEO CLIP PLAYS)

MATTHEWS: Well, Duke has embraced Trump, and that may be a lock of death. Much of his nationalistic message, as well, but so has the KKK.

"The Crusader," an official newspaper of the Klan, officially endorsed Trump`s campaign for president this week under the giant banner, "Make America great again". Hmm.

Well, Trump rejected the endorsement. In a statement his campaign put out, quote, "Mr. Trump and the campaign denounces hate in any form. This publication is repulsive. And their views do not represent the tens of millions of Americans who are uniting behind our campaign."

The issue of race has stirred up the 2016 campaign. Of course, earlier in the week in Greenville, Mississippi, a predominantly African-American church, was badly burned with the words "Vote Trump" spray painted on the side of the building. Investigators have concluded that the fire was caused by arson.

Let`s bring in the HARDBALL roundtable, Andrew Sullivan is a contributing editor of "New York" magazine, Michelle Bernard is president of Bernard Center for Women, and John Feehery is a Republican strategist.

First of all, let`s dismiss the credibility in any way of David Duke. First of all, I understand nationalism. But how do you exclude African- Americans from nationalism? African-Americans were here before most of us. It`s like 95 percent of Europeans that are African-Americans here!

MICHELLE BERNARD, BERNARD CENTER FOR WOMEN: And built.

MATTHEWS: They are the nationals --

BERNARD: This country was built --

MATTHEWS: You mean for 250 years, work without pay? Is that what you mean?

BERNARD: Exactly! This country was built on the back of African- Americans. So, you cannot exclude us, like our story is inherently the story of America.

It is -- it is so frightening, this election is so terrifying, because you know, there was a time when people might have these thoughts, but they didn`t voice them. You know, look how long it took Donald Trump to -- I mean, he`s denounced "The Crusader" or whatever the name of the newspaper is, but look how long it took him to denounce David Duke`s support of him, early on, he said --

MATTHEWS: Andrew, shouldn`t he have done it lickety-split, when he heard - - he said he never heard of David Duke?

BERNARD: Yes, and then blamed it on a hearing problem with his Mike.

ANDREW SULLIVAN, NEW YORK MAGAZINE: The fundamental truth about this election is it`s marking the moment where America becomes a majority/minority country.

MATTHEWS: It`s a reaction to that?

SULLIVAN: It`s a reaction to this across the Western world. We`re in a fascist moment here, and that is the huge force behind this --

MATTHEWS: Why would whites, as they become an actual arithmetic minority, why would they become fascist?

SULLIVAN: Because they`re defending what they think -- first of all, they don`t believe they have any choice in this. That the massive demographic shift, which is not actually about African-Americans, it`s mainly about Latinos --

MATTHEWS: I know it is. The African-American percentage in this culture is about where it`s been since we were born. It hasn`t changed much.

SULLIVAN: Yes, but we have had a massive demographic change in terms of brown people and black people and the future. And that`s happening also in Europe.

And the reaction is, we don`t want this country and we didn`t choose it. This is why **immigration** is so central. Because they believe, adios America, to use the other fascist Ann Coulter`s term, they believe that America is ending, their identity is ending.

And that is why Trump is going to win this election, because there are many, many people --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Do you believe this? Turning to the right, hard-right, alt- right?

SULLIVAN: And we`re going to see more of this stuff. There`s going to be racial conflict every day.

JOHN FEEHERY, REPUBILCAN STRATEGIST: I think there`s an element of it within the Trump support. I think you see it through Twitter . I think it`s objectionable.

MATTHEWS: Are they anti-democratic or accept the fact of a minority group, they have a right to vote?

FEEHERY: I don`t think they think enough to think about anti-democracy. I think they think something`s wrong in the country and they want to fix it and Trump is appealing because he says he`s going to fix it.

David Duke --

MATTHEWS: By the way, reasonable **immigration** control is not anti-anything. Every country in the world has some limits on **immigration**. You don`t just open the door.

So, it`s like -- by the way, the Democrats and Republicans have failed to resolve the issue of finding an enforceable, American progressive solution to **immigration** and enforce it. And you don`t hear many people talk like that.

BERNARD: Look, the nation is a nation of **immigrants**. I read somewhere that the election of Barack Obama eight years ago scared white people so bad that his election actually gave rise to Donald Trump . And I don`t know -- you know, it`s --

MATTHEWS: He got re-elected.

BERNARD: Absolutely, he was re-elected. And I question it, because white people voted him in. However, one of the things we`ve seen, we all talked in 2008, you and I were on the set saying, and I said, we are now going to live in a post-racial America.

I was completely wrong. The racism has become -- overt racism has become - -

MATTEHWS: Hope is good, do you remember the poster?

BERNARD: Hope is good. But when we watch the news every day and we see all of the fear that African-Americans have of the police --

MATTHEWS: The police shootings.

BERNARD: Exactly.

SULLIVAN: And Islam is the other critical factor that has galvanized this. It`s the gasoline on the fire. The fear that **aliens** are coming into our country and Trump has deliberately fostered in a way that only the fascists of the `30s have fostered, the notion that these people are a potential fifth column coming to kill you and attack you and rape you.

MATTHEWS: Here`s Hillary Clinton today, the former secretary of state, slammed Trump over the KKK. She`s making him pay for this. Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Donald Trump was endorsed by the official newspaper of the Ku Klux Klan.

They wrote their endorsement under the slogan of his campaign, "Make America Great Again." They said it`s about preserving white identity and they place their faith and hope in him. You`ve got to ask yourself, do any of us, any of us who believe in our Constitution, who believe in the rule of law, who believe that we are stronger together, who believe that we want to keep moving positively toward the vision of freedom and equality, set forth by our founders, do any of us have a place in Trump`s America?

It`s not just about communities of color. That is not who America is and we`re not going to let it ever go back to that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Sure. Anyway, I`m not sure that that works in terms of uniting the country. It certainly may unite the 50 percent that vote for Hillary, though.

Do you think if the moderate liberals like her get back in power for four many years, they`re going to make this country less angry on the ethnic front?

BERNARD: No. It`s impossible.

MATTHEWS: Well, what are they going to do about it? Who`s going to solve the problem or help them better?

BERNARD: Look, I don`t think the problem is going to get solved anytime soon. I think it`s going to get worse. The rhetoric has been so heated that no matter who was elected, particularly if it`s a Republican Congress, they are going to -- members of Congress are going to be expected to fulfill what Donald Trump promised them.

SULLIVAN: And the left is partly responsible. The left has promoted identity politics for a generation. They`ve said all that matters is what you are, whether you`re a Latino, whether you`re black. And now, white people are saying, well, we can play that game, too. And that`s what`s fueling Trump --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Did you watch "SNL" two weeks ago, when the white guy played by Tom Hanks gave the same answers to Keenan Morgan on black jeopardy was the name of the skit and ended up talking just like a dissatisfied African- American, like, oh, I don`t believe the system either.

So, there is a commonality between the working class white guy and the African-American working glass guy that should be addressed politically. They should -- politicians should be able to address both groups on the same issues, I think.

Anyway, the roundtable is sticking with us. And up next, these three are going to tell me something I don`t want know.

I really believe we could have a Bobby Kennedy -type government, where you can address both groups. But we`ll see. Neither these characters --

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, congratulations, of course, to Chicago Cubs . They broke the 108-year drought last night to win the World Series. And interview with ESPN , actor Bill Murray, a huge Cubs fan, managed to mix a little politics into his celebration. Let`s take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL MURRAY , ACTOR: I don`t know what to compare -- there`s nothing to compare it to, really. I mean, I think when John Kennedy got elected president, all the Catholics thought, hey, we`re in a whole new world, everything is going to change completely. It didn`t change completely, but we got a day off from school.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Got a day off from school. Irish American there. And there`s nothing more American politics than baseball.

Anyway, we`ll be right back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with HARDBALL and I do fear what`s coming.

Andrew, tell me something I don`t know.

SULLIVAN: I don`t think you know that Trump is probably on course to win this election. It pains me terribly to say that. This election since the Comey intervention has really become a referendum on the Clintons. If it`s referendum on them, they lose.

MATTHEWS: Michelle? Can`t top that baby.

BERNARD: That`s pretty depressing.

David Duke, a Dillard University last night. In the midst of students chanting, "No Duke, no KKK, no fascist USA." David Duke literally called the Black Lives Matter movement radical, went on and on about Jews trying to defend his statements and then called for the electric chair for Hillary Clinton for her role in what he considers to be a huge, huge debacle in Syria. Electric chair.

MATTHEWS: I don`t think he`ll win the election.

Go ahead.

FEEHERY: All right. Mitch McConnell, the leader who has expertly guided the Republicans in a difficult situation, is pouring $12 million out of his super PAC to save the Senate for the Republicans. And I think he`s going to --

MATTHEWS: Who`s getting the money?

FEEHERY: It`s going to be Rubio, Toomey, Ayotte and Roy Blount.

MATTHEWS: I think that`s really going to be interesting. I think that`s going to matter, that kind of money at the last minute.

Thank you, Andrew Sullivan. Thank you, Michelle Bernard. And thank you, John Feehery. We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary Thursday, November 3rd, 2016.

Thursday before election is usually my time to make a prediction. I have a simple method. Look at the matchup right now, check the wind direction and project where things will stand on Tuesday.

Well, clearly, Hillary Clinton has a few points ahead right now, she is ahead. That`s the easy part.

Now to check wind direction and velocity, and there`s the problem. Is it still in Trump`s direction as it`s been last Friday or has Hillary changed it back to Trump`s personal conduct over the years?

OK, I`ll say it -- I watched last night`s seventh game of the World Series and here`s what happened and why I think it`s happening for Hillary Clinton right now. The Cubs got into the lead, they had the bats. And then Raja Davis hit a three-run homer with two outs in the bottom of the eighth to tie up the game for Cleveland. That`s when Trump did with the FBI report last Friday. Tied it up.

I still think the Cubs, Hillary in this case, has the bats. She`s still out there hammering Trump with the personal stuff. Forget the talk of high road. She is hitting him where he`s bleeding.

None of this is enough about the -- none of this about - remember Bernie saying, enough of the damned e-mails. You don`t get that from her.

When she spots a weakness, Hillary Clinton , she pounds and keeps pounding it. She knows the game. Bernie didn`t.

You have to tell your troops that he wants or you want to win more than they do, otherwise, they wonder who`s leading the army in the first place. So, either of this contest has to go into overtime. It just feels that way.

Trump got his rally, but Hillary isn`t -- well, isn`t she from Chicago? She`s got the bats. I`m still looking at her.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Eugene Robinson, Dara Brown, Ed Rendell

9517 speakers\_end

2 November 2016

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC HOST: Close but no cigar.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

Six days from now at 7:00 PM Eastern, the first state polls will be closing in Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Vermont and Virginia. Today, Donald Trump , Hillary Clinton and their surrogates jetted out across the country to deliver their closing arguments.

In Florida, Trump called Hillary crooked, a liar and unstable. Let`s watch him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: She is a crooked one, there`s no question, crooked Hillary Clinton ! You know, that term has really stuck. Everyone`s calling her -- has anyone seen crooked Hillary Clinton today? That`s going to be a great term for a president, right?

She`s got bad judgment! Personally, I think she`s a very unstable person, if you want to really know the truth.

If you`ve watched her last few speeches over the last few days, she has become totally unhinged.

Hillary Clinton is the most corrupt person ever to seek the presidency. She shouldn`t be allowed to run for the presidency. That`s why I say the system is rigged. She shouldn`t be allowed to run.

Did you see her at the end of the debates? Folks, she was exhausted! You know what she did? She immediately went home and went to sleep.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, he`s got his golden oldies out there again. He`s been saying that stuff for a long time. He spent part of his speech attacking the media. Here`s Trump against us.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Another important issue for Americans is integrity in journalism. These people are among the most dishonest people I`ve ever met!

(BOOS)

TRUMP: There is never been anywhere near the media dishonesty like we`ve seen in this election!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Hillary Clinton , also going a bit low again, has called Trump dangerous and a bully. Here she is in Las Vegas just moments ago.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Imagine with me what it would be like to have Donald Trump sitting in the Oval Office come next January.

SUPPORTERS: No! No!

CLINTON: Someone who demeans women, mocks the disabled, insults Latinos and African-Americans -- what would it be like to have that person in the most powerful office in the world?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: With six days to go, where does things stand right now? John Brabender`s a Republican strategist. He was a senior adviser to Rick Santorum`s presidential campaign. Megan Murphy is Washington bureau chief for Bloomberg News, and Eugene Robinson is a columnist for "The Washington Post " and an MSNBC political analyst.

Thank you. We do define who everybody is here, by the way. We separate journalists from people who are political and we make it clear here and we will continue to do so. I`m quite proud of that.

Brabender!

JOHN BRABENDER, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST: Yes?

MATTHEWS: You`re in a miserable mood, I can tell, so...

BRABENDER: No, I`m...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: What`s going on? Let`s just talk about this thing. We all know that there are voters who vote like my parents, like it was going to church, OK? They don`t ever not vote, in primaries. There are some people are like that. So they`re not the ones who -- some people vote most of the time, go to church most of the time but not all the time. So we talk about turnout -- I heard (INAUDIBLE) today. We`re going to have him on later. He`s just -- well, it all depends on turnout. What depends on turnout, from your side...

BRABENDER: Well...

MATTHEWS: ... the right side?

BRABENDER: ... first of all...

MATTHEWS: Right-wing side.

BRABENDER: ... yes, I am not one of those smart people. I`m a strategist.

(CROSSTALK)

BRABENDER: I look at this completely differently. First of all, I do think people have to be careful this year that turnout`s a little bit different. Trump does not have an organization to turn people out. What Clinton is doing is turning a lot of people out early, and a lot of the Trump people are going to come out later. So there`s not this big advantage that people are trying to read into this. It`s just that the time period`s different.

Second of all, none of us thought we were going to be three weeks ago where we are right now.

MATTHEWS: I agree with that.

BRABENDER: There`s one thing, if I was Hillary...

MATTHEWS: In other words, an Electoral College race right now.

BRABENDER: Right.

MATTHEWS: Who gets 270. It`s a race.

BRABENDER: Absolutely. And if I was Hillary Clinton`s campaign, the one thing that would keep me sleepless at night is all along, she was getting votes of people who still didn`t like her because they didn`t see Donald Trump as a viable alternative. Now as these polls close, it says to them, Huh, maybe it is all right to vote for Donald Trump .

MATTHEWS: I agree with you. Do you agree with that, Megan?

MEGAN MURPHY, BLOOMBERG: I completely...

MATTHEWS: That the numbers themselves justify voting for somebody. He must be OK. It`s almost 45, 47 percent for this guy.

MURPHY: I agree. And also, I think there are several other worrying trends. I think we do see a lower early voting among African-Americans in some states, and we see -- we do see this enthusiasm gap. We see women not committing as much as we`d like her (ph) to see, and she really needs to turn out those young voters, as well, among the Obama...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... demographic problem because (INAUDIBLE) say -- look, I know Trump voters. I`m not one of these people that doesn`t know any Trump voters. I know them. And they`d like to vote 10 times for Trump, and some people would like to vote half the -- half a vote for Hillary.

MURPHY: I think the problem...

MATTHEWS: So there is a -- there`s an enthusiasm, fanaticism on the part of the Trump people.

MURPHY: I think the problem he faces is just the math is still very bad and he has no margin for error. For here, I think the problem is we`re talking about states now like Wisconsin, Michigan...

MATTHEWS: Are you really worried about that if you`re Hillary?

MURPHY: I`m not -- I`m not saying Wisconsin and Michigan...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: When`s the last time?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You`re grimacing.

EUGENE ROBINSON, "WASHINGTON POST ," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well...

MATTHEWS: You know, Gene, I don`t see these states falling.

ROBINSON: I don`t see Wisconsin falling. I don`t see Michigan falling. I don`t see Pennsylvania falling. You know...

MATTHEWS: OK.

ROBINSON: ... I mean, I think those are stronger states. The likely voter screens that the pollsters are using are already counting on a lower African-American turnout than 2012.

MATTHEWS: Which was an extraordinary yearn.

ROBINSON: Which was extraordinary. If it were as high as 2012, then we would be, you know, talking landslide. I mean...

MATTHEWS: Well, we have Hispanic voters...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: ... but...

MATTHEWS: ... like the cavalry.

ROBINSON: Well, we have Hispanic voters coming out in perhaps higher numbers...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: ... than -- than anticipated or than before. And so, you know, whose hand would you rather play right now? I would still much rather play Hillary Clinton`s hand. She`s got...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: ... paths to 270 and Donald Trump has one.

MATTHEWS: I said close but no cigar. Anybody here think it`s really up in the air?

BRABENDER: Yes.

MATTHEWS: You do?

BRABENDER: I absolutely do. I`ll tell you what. I think Pennsylvania and North Carolina are the key to this...

MATTHEWS: I agree. Thank you. I agree with that. So if they -- if we`re watching -- well, I don`t know why I keep saying this. We`re not going to know at 7:00 o`clock at night. It`s going to be a lot later because, mainly, North Carolina didn`t come in until almost 11:00 o`clock last time. SO we`re going to have to wait a while. Anyway -- which is good.

We got a slew of new polls from battleground states today. Here they are (INAUDIBLE) back up Gene here. Donald Trump leads by 5 points in the latest Quinnipiac poll. He seems to be building a strong argument in Ohio. He`s ahead by 5 in Arizona in a CNN/ORC poll. He`s up by 6 in Nevada. And he has a 9-point lead in Georgia, which is now safely Republican again, all according to an Emerson College poll.

Hillary Clinton is up 2 points in Florida, according to the new CNN/ORC poll. She`s up 3 points in Colorado, 3 in North Carolina. She`s ahead by 4 points in Pennsylvania -- that`s down -- according to two different polls out today. She`s ahead by 5 in Virginia and she leads by 6 points in Wisconsin. That`s according to the brand-new Marquette law school poll, which, by the way, is considered the gold standard in that state.

So Megan, it seems to me that it comes to the same thing that most of us have been watching. Gene, as well. And we`ve been thinking about this for a long time. Firewall`s a boring word, but it`s real. North Carolina, for whatever reason, doesn`t like Trump. It`s young people. It`s college- educated people. It`s advanced -- advanced university system down there. People are educated. They don`t like Trump. Women, African-Americans, more and more Hispanics every year -- that state has just turned against him. And Pennsylvania has never turned toward him!

ROBINSON: He has no pathway without North Carolina, just like he has no pathway without Florida. But the issue is for him, as well, one thing I think we have to take into consideration (INAUDIBLE) but I don`t think anyone who went through Brexit and went through that kind of vote -- and what we`re saying is, potentially, are we really underpolling? We always think we underpoll Trump. Are we underpolling disenfranchisement, white working class...

MATTHEWS: But there`s no evidence of new white...

MURPHY: There is no evidence of it...

MATTHEWS: ... working class...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No new registration of white angry people...

ROBINSON: Yes, exactly. We...

MATTHEWS: ... from (ph) the country.

ROBINSON: We haven`t seen any signs of this hidden Trump voter...

MURPHY: Exactly.

ROBINSON: ... who`s going to suddenly appear on election day. I would argue it`s just as likely that there would be a hidden Hillary Clinton voter. After all, you know, she supposedly, you know -- you know, compromised ethically and this and that. So it`s not exactly socially acceptable in some circles to say you`re for Hillary Clinton , either, as, you know...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: ... and so...

MATTHEWS: And that map we`ve been looking at.

ROBINSON: Exactly. And you know, one can imagine voters going into the sanctity of the voting booth and saying, Well, actually, I don`t think this guy Trump...

MATTHEWS: Let me...

ROBINSON: ... you know, but -- but in -- I -- just think back to 2012. In the last week before the election, there were national polls that had Mitt Romney a little bit ahead. You know, in Pennsylvania, President Obama was up by 4. He ended up winning it I think by 6. So you know, this doesn`t look that weird for the Democrats...

MATTHEWS: OK, let me ask you a basic question. I`ve been going through my head, like I`ve been doing this whole election, thinking back 20, 30 elections. (INAUDIBLE) It seems at the end, when there`s a close election, whether it`s Nixon-Kennedy or it`s Humphrey-Nixon or it`s Carter- Ford , the last decision making of the weekend tends to go back toward the incumbent. It`s a safer -- you tend to go, Oh, you know -- you know, it went toward Gore, I think -- you know -- what do you think? Is there -- is the tendency of that last block to loosen up, to go to the safer Hillary or the wilder Trump?

ROBINSON: You know, I -- I would hesitate to predict that this year because I could see, you know, last-minute voters saying, Oh, what the hell, you know?

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: I mean, that -- that sort of thing.

MATTHEWS: Shoot the moon.

ROBINSON: However, I just don`t think there are a lot of last-minute deciders right now.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... showing up!

ROBINSON: Well, you know...

MURPHY: But I think...

MATTHEWS: Do they vote?

ROBINSON: Are they going to vote?

MURPHY: But I think the Comey letter -- that`s what is so unbelievable about that incident last Friday is that even if it doesn`t change any votes, the entire narrative was shifted. We`d be sitting here, talking about how big the landslide was going to be...

MATTHEWS: I agree.

MURPHY: ... and how big the margin...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Brabender, your question. What`s your -- answer my question. Do the last-minute deciders, the ones that don`t read the paper every day - - are those -- (INAUDIBLE) somebody once said when you absolutely have to make a decision, that forces a new reality. You`re going to make a decision because you have to. And you`ve never done it before. How are they going to break?

BRABENDER: Here`s where I...

MATTHEWS: Safe or wild?every day.

BRABENDER: ... think this year is different. I think last time, whether you liked President Obama or not, he had a vision and a message and people could say, Well, I like a lot of things he`s saying. Hillary Clinton never set that stage. She never had a vision, never had a plus message. It was just Donald Trump is a risk.

What`s happened in the closing days is people think this race is really ugly. And if it`s truly ugly and I don`t like any of them, I might as well go with the guy who I can (ph) take a shot (ph).

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) Do you think it works, him saying, Hey, go ahead, vote for Hillary. She`ll be bothered by committee investigations from day one. She`ll probably be impeached, and that depresses the liberal voter and say, I don`t want -- I`m not going to be bothered.

ROBINSON: Well, we`ll see. I mean, you know, negative campaigning historically does depress turnout. and so if you`re just dour and angry all the time, then that tends to make people not eager. You know, you say the whole thing is a mess, the whole thing is rigged, I mean, that tends to depress the vote.

MATTHEWS: I know somebody who`s not dour, President Obama.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: He is the happiest campaigner since Hubert Humphrey. Here he is, Hillary Clinton`s top surrogate. President Obama, warned today that the fate of the world was resting on this election. In fact, he said it at Chapel Hill, and he said the election depends on -- the universe, he said, basically, depends on how voters in North Carolina vote. Let`s watch the president.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: All the progress that we`ve made over the last eight years, all the progress we hope to make over the next eight years, all of that goes out the window if we don`t win this election!

I hate to put a little pressure on you, but the fate of the republic rests on your shoulders! The fate of the world is teetering, and you, North Carolina, are going to have to make sure that we push it in the right direction.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So Gene, all three of you -- would he beat both of these characters?

ROBINSON: Oh!

(LAUGHTER)

ROBINSON: Yes. I mean, easily. Easily! Look, one thing we`ve learned is Barack Obama is consensus, unanimous first ballot Hall of Fame in running for president. He is as good as it gets, right? I mean, he knows how to do this. And he knows how to fire up a crowd. He knows -- and -- and meanwhile, he built that Democratic machine that is turning out the early vote now and that will be turning out the vote on Tuesday. So...

BRABENDER: Yes, but they don`t have the excitement for her that they did - - I mean, you saw the joy on those people`s faces while he`s talking. You do not see that behind Hillary Clinton !

ROBINSON: Well...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You do see it with some women, women my age or younger.

ROBINSON: Yes. Yes.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Go ahead, Megan. Speak loud.

MURPHY: ... in the last week, I think, that they`ve made is -- since Comey, they turned to, you know, this Trump and his Russia ties. They got a little bit distracted by that...

MATTHEWS: Well, wait a minute. We goes low, we go high?

MURPHY: Yes.

MATTHEWS: No. That`s not true.

MURPHY: Exactly. And what she hasn`t done this last week is make her closing argument to voters with exactly the same kind of message that he has made...

MATTHEWS: OK.

MURPHY: ... which is that, Yes, the fate of the world rests on our shoulders. Yes, this is a binary option. It couldn`t get more binary. And here`s a message of optimism.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MURPHY: Here`s a hope -- here`s a message of hope.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: By the way, she wrote a great speech for the Al Smith dinner at the end. She apparently wrote it herself at the end, the last part.

ROBINSON: Sure.

MATTHEWS: I think you got to get up at the end -- Cuomo always said, Leave people with hope.

MURPHY: Yes.

MATTHEWS: The last -- the last thing you do is make them feel hopeful.

MURPHY: Yes.

MATTHEWS: You said that.

BRABENDER: Yes, well, there`s nothing...

(CROSSTALK)

BRABENDER: But you don`t hope voting for Hillary.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... one more punch?

ROBINSON: ... a lot of people who have fun doing it.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Thanks, Brabender -- John Brabender, and have (ph) Megan Murphy and Eugene Robinson.

Coming up -- so after the sights and sounds of the candidates and their closing arguments, what does the fight for 270 electoral votes really look like right now? We`re going to get the latest battleground map to show you and a closer look at the states where Hillary Clinton`s showing strength and where Donald Trump is looking to make inroads. They`re both working their edges right now. That`s ahead.

Plus, the latest installment of our series on the battle for the United States Senate . Tonight, the focus on Missouri -- or "Missour-ah" -- different part of the state -- where the Democrats think they`ve found a rising star.

And Trump and his allies are dampening enthusiasm among Democrats. They`re promising investigations, trials, even impeachment if Clinton is elected today -- anyway, today President Obama`s fighting back, as we say.

Finally, with six days to go, my "election diary" on how Trump`s message might prove better than Trump.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Tonight, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are both hitting the campaign trail hard. Trump will be holding a rally in Pensacola, Florida. That`s due to begin with the hour. And Clinton just wrapped up her event in Las Vegas. Later tonight, she`ll be in Arizona making a late push on a state that last voted for a Democrat in 1996.

We`ll be right back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: When it comes to either candidate`s margin of victory next Tuesday, a look at the state of the electoral map itself could come as a reality check to supporters of both candidates. Trump needs more than he`s got, and Clinton`s lead is more fragile than it looks.

The latest

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: The polls are all saying we`re going to win Florida. Don`t believe it. Don`t believe it. Get out there and vote. Pretend we`re slightly behind.

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: We cannot take anything, anybody, anywhere for granted. Are you ready to work hard and win this election?

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. That`s Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton motivating their supporters to get to the polls on election day.

When it comes to either candidate`s margin of victory next Tuesday, a look at the state of the electoral map itself could come as a reality check to supporters of both candidates. Trump needs more than he`s got, and Clinton`s lead is more fragile than it looks.

The latest NBC battleground map still Clinton with more than 270 electoral votes, but her advantage has faded over the last week. New Hampshire and North Carolina, which previously leaned toward Clinton, have now moved into the toss-up category, while the states of Georgia and Iowa, which had been competitive for Clinton, are both leaning toward Trump.

According to RealClearPolitics, if the results of the Electoral College match the current average in all the swing state polls, Hillary Clinton would win the election by only 3 electoral votes. Look at that! Even in that hypothetical scenario, Trump would need to pry at least one more state from Clinton to win.

I`m joined right now by Tom Bevan, co-founder of publisher of RealClearPolitics, as well as Ed Rendell, the former Pennsylvania governor and MSNBC analyst.

I`m staggered -- I want to start with Tom. I`m staggered by the look of this map. It shows basically everything red except for the peripheries up at the -- on the -- on the -- what we call the left coast and on the up -- the Northeast.

How do you come to that conclusion that, for example, that North Carolina should belong in the Republican column?

TOM BEVAN, REALCLEARPOLITICS: Well, North Carolina, actually -- this is all -- our map is based -- we have a -- we have a map that includes toss-up states, and then we have what we call a no toss-up map. And as you mentioned, those are...

MATTHEWS: How do you force a decision?

BEVAN: Whoever is ahead in the average of the polls.

MATTHEWS: OK.

BEVAN: And so in Florida, for example, Trump is ahead there by less than 1 percentage point. On average, it`s 0.7. North Carolina is actually a dead tie. So we default back to the two-way race, where Trump has a .2 percentage point lead in North Carolina. So he`s got that state for now. But again, one -- one poll that shows Clinton ahead by a couple points could shift that back into her column.

MATTHEWS: Why do you exempt the possibility of people voting for Johnson or -- or Jill Stein?

BEVAN: We don`t. The map is actually based on all the four-way numbers.

MATTHEWS: OK. OK. Fair enough.

BEVAN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Let me go with the governor.

Governor Rendell, you were on today. And I was watching. I think you had it right. But the fact that Trump is now looking to Wisconsin and Michigan, these are states that don`t normally, in a close election, vote Republican, as an alternative route, if you will, to get around Pennsylvania, where maybe he`s given up. I can`t tell.

ED RENDELL, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: No, I don`t think they have given up in Pennsylvania. They are going to be here and they`re pumping ads on TV.

But I think Pennsylvania is a tough stretch for them, but it`s not by any means out of the question. If our people think it is a lock, that`s what I mean, by turnout. If our people think Pennsylvania is a lock and don`t vote -- that`s what I mean by turnout -- they can win. But if our people vote, we will win Pennsylvania.

Wisconsin, I thought the best news for Hillary tonight, today, was the Marquette poll showed almost no movement from the last week, when she was seven points ahead. That`s great news. I think Michigan, the Arab American vote, it`s not huge, but it`s going to be 95 to 5 for Hillary. I think Michigan is going to be secure.

But I will tell you what, Chris. I disagree. I -- before I brush my teeth, I look at RealClearPolitics. So, I have great respect for what they do. But they`re wrong on Florida. Hillary is ahead in the most recent polls. Plus, the early voting, as MSNBC had with the William and Mary study, the early voting, she`s clocking him.

I think Florida is going to go for Hillary. And that is going to be all she wrote. If Hillary wins Florida, she could lose Wisconsin and Michigan and still win.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Brabender, John Brabender, I respect him. He was just on. He`s a conservative. He knows his stuff. And he said that, Governor, he also -- he said that the Hillary people, because they have much better ground game, much better organization, Trump has none really, that they can force their voters out early. But the Trump voters will come out later. I don`t know what that means. How do you know they`re going to come out later. But he says it.

(LAUGHTER)

BEVAN: Well, that`s the theory. Right?

MATTHEWS: What about Florida? Why do you call Florida for Trump?

BEVAN: Well, Florida is actually one of the states we have a decent amount of polling. We have got eight polls that have been taken in the last seven days. Five of those -- I think five of them have Hillary Clinton ahead, but only by a point or two. And a couple of polls have Donald Trump up by four points.

And so he is actually leading in the average. So, we have got a decent amount of data there. But I think, look, again, it is less than 1 percent. It`s within the margin of error. So that state is basically a coin toss.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about what happened last Friday, believe, Governor, we all know that something happened, that FBI announcement. And you were critical of it because you thought it didn`t give accurate information, sufficient information for a voter to decide what it means.

I don`t know what it means, but Trump has been able to define it. My brother up there in Pennsylvania, they`re all giddy about this. The Republicans are all giddy about this. They think this is going to do something.

Do you think sense that, Governor, that this is going to get Republican excitement out, where they could actually change where they were last week?

RENDELL: Yes, I think it will produce a higher Republican turnout.

I think, last week, at the beginning of last week, there were a lot of the non-fanatical Trump voters; 53 percent are enthusiastic; 47 percent aren`t. That 47 percent had pretty much thrown in the towel and were not going to vote, a lot of them not voting.

But now with the FBI thing making it look like it`s a closer race, I think they`re coming at them. And that`s where you`re seeing I think the Trump movement. So, I think it has definitely been hurtful.

And the way it`s -- again, you heard me say, if Comey thought there were going to leaks, maybe did he the right thing sending the letter, but he should have said in the letter, Chris, this should not -- no inference should be taken from this letter. We haven`t seen any of the e-mails. We don`t know if they`re duplicates. We don`t know if they pertain to our investigation. No one should take any inference from this letter.

MATTHEWS: As a former DA, as a former prosecutor, do you think just -- you brought me into something I really care about. Do you think that Comey owes the country and the voters, the electorate, some more information by the end of the week, that he sort of puts up some constraint on what you can speculate out of this?

RENDELL: Yes. He should stand up and say, look, one thing I didn`t make clear last week is, it is going to take us months to go through 650,000 e- mails. We don`t know whether they`re duplicates. We don`t know whether they pertain to the investigation. And so no one should draw any inference from this, other than there is a newly discovered area of the e-mails, but we don`t know any more than that.

He should say that.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Let me ask you, Tom, we were just talking a moment ago about the possibility that when people talk -- and the governor gets this. When you start hearing that Trump is running head to head or close to head to head, and you start hearing that he`s getting up in the mid-40s, does that give him credibility just that way, so the voter who may be a little turned off by his personal behavior over the years and what has been coming out, and his brash manner, might say, well, wait a minute, maybe he is a legitimate candidate?

Do the numbers move the numbers?

BEVAN: Well, look, I certainly think there is a thing as momentum. And Trump has it right now. And Ed is right.

I mean, part of this is...

MATTHEWS: Does it give legitimacy?

BEVAN: ... Republican voters are coming home.

Probably to a certain degree. People want to vote for a winner, I think. And if Trump has momentum and Hillary Clinton is playing defense -- and the other part of this, though, is, I think what the FBI letter has done is depress her marginal voters.

Those millennials who liked Bernie Sanders, were looking at Gary Johnson , had warmed to Clinton over time, but I think might be -- if they end up staying home in some of these swing states, it could make a difference.

MATTHEWS: Maybe it will force Hillary to go positive and say something about being a better president and a better country, make us feel better.

Anyway, thank you, Ed Rendell. Governor. Thank you.

And, Tom Bevan, it`s great having you on.

BEVAN: Thanks.

MATTHEWS: Up next: the battle for Senate control. This is fascinating. Democrats have a real shot at Missouri right now, where their candidate, a veteran of the Afghan war, burst onto the scene with an ad showing him assembling an assault rifle while blindfolded. It`s the race that could determine whether Democrats win the Senate.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DARA BROWN, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Dara Brown. Here`s what`s happening.

A law enforcement source tells NBC News the man suspected in the execution- style killings of two police officers in Des Moines had a history problems and mental issues. Scott Michael Greene surrendered to authorities early this morning.

The Federal Reserve left interest rates unchanged, but says the case for an increase has continued to strengthen.

And tonight in Cleveland, the Cubs and Indians go head to head in game seven of the World Series. The Cubs haven`t won a World Series since 1908. And for the Indians, it was 1948 -- now back to HARDBALL.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JASON KANDER (D), MISSOURI SENATORIAL CANDIDATE: For 20 years, Senator Blunt has been protecting the status quo, because the status quo has been great for him, his family and his special interests donors.

Today, Senator Blunt lives in a $1.6 million mansion in Washington and only visits Missouri when he has to.

SEN. ROY BLUNT (R), MISSOURI: I have been listening to Missourians. I have been fighting for Missourians. I have been trying to find solutions. I hope to continue to have a chance to do that. But that`s what voters get to decide on Election Day.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

One race that has -- far from anybody`s radar at the beginning of the year was the Missouri Senate race. Missouri is a deep red state where the incumbent, Republican Senator Roy Blunt, is a household name and has served in Congress for about a generation there.

But As Donald Trump has ushered in an unpredictable and fiercely anti- establishment sentiment across the country, Blunt has gotten caught up into the undertow, as Democrats paint him as the quintessential Washington insides.

Blunt`s Democratic opponent, Missouri`s 35-year-old Secretary of State Jason Kander, has emerged as the breakout candidate of 2016 across the country. Kander, an Army vet who volunteered for a tour of duty in Afghanistan, grabbed national attention last month when his campaign released a TV ad that went viral. In the ad, Kander defends his support for background checks while assembling an AR-15 rifle blindfolded.

Let`s watch him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KANDER: I`m Jason Kander.

And Senator Blunt has been attacking me on guns. Well, in the Army, I learned how to use and respect my rifle. In Afghanistan, I volunteered to be an extra gun in a convoy of unarmored SUVs.

And in the city legislature, I supported Second Amendment rights. I also believe in background checks, so that terrorists can`t get their hands on one of these.

I approve this message, because I would like to see Senator Blunt do this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, even though Donald Trump leads Hillary Clinton by a whopping 15 points out of Missouri, the Senate race has remained neck and neck for weeks.

The latest poll just out today shows Blunt and Kander tied at exactly 45 all.

Jo Mannies is a political reporter with the Saint Louis public radio station out there, and Jennifer Duffy is a senior editor for The Cook Political Report.

I want to start with Jennifer here about this race.

First of all, you can`t get a -- there`s no mansions in Washington, D.C., that you can buy $1.5 million. This is a very expensive real estate market. And I don`t think there are many mansions to start with. But that sounds good out there in Missouri, I will sure.

JENNIFER DUFFY, THE COOK POLITICAL REPORT: Oh, it sounds -- it sounds like a mansion in Missouri. They usually say it is in Georgetown, you know, which is pretty posh -- yes, posh, universally known.

We haven`t seen...

MATTHEWS: Is it in Georgetown?

DUFFY: According to the ads, it is in Georgetown.

But we haven`t seen an incumbent`s house frequently so -- we haven`t incumbent`s house so much in an ad since 2004, when John Thune ran against Tom Daschle.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I think that Santorum used it against Doug Walgren too at one time way back when.

What is this thing about, this race?

DUFFY: This race is really about a Democrat who is drafting onto Donald Trump`s message, anti-insiderism, anti-establishment, drain the swamp. And Roy Blunt, frankly, is a good representation of being a Washington insider.

MATTHEWS: What has he done wrong? Anything?

DUFFY: I don`t know that he`s done thing wrong, except that his wife and three of his children are lobbyists. And they`re featured in about every single ad.

MATTHEWS: Jo Mannies, thanks for joining us.

How does that affect voter out there? Can you tell? The word lobbyist is never a positive word.

JO MANNIES, SAINT LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO: Yes.

Well, because Missouri has had a lot of controversy lately in the state capitol over lobbyists and lobbyist misdeeds and that sort of thing. So, Missouri voters are -- already have sort of a dim view of some of this.

And then Kander -- frankly, Blunt, I think, underestimated Kander. I have known Blunt for a long time. I think he underestimated Kander. A lot of people did, until that ad. Then, all of a sudden, things changed really quick.

Now, Blunt is underperforming, as you mentioned. He is underperforming Trump in the state. In fact, all of the Republicans running statewide are underperforming Trump.

And Trump`s activists actually will not put their operations in the Missouri GOP buildings because they want to be separate, because they have some independent Democrats who they think are with them, blue-collar Democrats in the southern suburbs of Saint Louis.

So, Kander is trying to kind of mark this path. Now, the Republicans have come in big time in the last few days with a lot of attack ads, some that have his face morphing into Hillary Clinton`s. So it is going to be interesting to see if he can hold this off.

MATTHEWS: It reminded me, looking at Vice President Biden there, that`s what Biden did he when he was 29 years old. He beat a guy who had been governor a couple times, senator a couple terms, congressman a couple terms, unbeatable, Caleb Boggs, and beat him, when he was 29.

(CROSSTALK)

DUFFY: Yes, exactly.

And the thing is, there`s a real generational difference between Blunt, who is 66, Kander, who is 35. Voters see that. Voters see him as an agent of change.

MATTHEWS: Are gun owners out there, Jo, are they going to be willing to vote for a guy who says he is not anti-gun, but is for gun background checks? I have always wondered whether the NRA people, who really are Second Amendment people, they don`t like the background check thing. They think that is gun control, don`t they?

MANNIES: Yes. But here`s what he`s doing.

Our candidate -- the Democratic candidate for governor, Chris Koster, who is also in a tight race, has been endorsed by the NRA . So, Kander and Koster are now traveling in a bus around the state.

MATTHEWS: I got it.

MANNIES: So, in some ways, Kander, I think, is trying to neutralize some of that by having Koster, who is backed by the NRA , and to kind of make it more gray.

And Blunt, while he does have the NRA endorsement, it`s not like Blunt is a big hunter or anything. So, it is more complicated than what would look like on the face.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

But usually senators are ideologically picked by states. A state like Utah can pick a Democratic governor once in a while. They`re not going to pick a Democratic senator anymore. Eastern states are not going to pick Republican senators, but they will pick a Republican governor once in a while, because they like to divide up the power and they don`t mind giving some power to the non-ideological position.

You pick Kander, you`re picking a Democrat to be your senator. That`s a big deal.

Anyway, Blunt and Kander had this exchange over guns in their debate last month. Let`s watch it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KANDER: Now, Senator Blunt is about to talk to you about his NRA rating and about mine. But I would happily put my Army marksmanship badge up against a political rating any day of the week, because I fundamentally believe that there is no conflict between being a supporter of the Second Amendment and wanting to show you -- one of the ways to protect the Second Amendment is to make sure that terrorists and criminals don`t have the same access to guns that you and I have.

BLUNT: Apparently, Secretary Kander wants to be able to have a gun, but he`s not nearly as concerned about whether other people can have guns or not.

He got an F from the NRA in the Missouri General Assembly, not easily done. So he can stand here and say "I`m a defender of the Second Amendment," but nobody who watches these issues believes that to be the case.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Jo and then Jennifer, is it possible that Trump can carry Missouri comfortably and Kander can also win?

MANNIES: It`s possible.

All you have to do is look at 2012. Romney carried about the state by 12 points. Claire McCaskill carried it by almost 15 points. It can happen.

MATTHEWS: It`s a ticket-splitting state, right?

DUFFY: Absolutely.

MANNIES: Yes. Yes.

(CROSSTALK)

DUFFY: I can actually see Chris Koster getting elected governor, and I can see Kander winning, absolutely.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Well, people are voting anti-establishment this year.

Anyway, Jennifer Duffy, a pro.

DUFFY: Thank you, sir.

MATTHEWS: And, Jo Mannies, thanks. Nice to meet you, Jo. Thanks so much, Ms. Mannies, for coming here.

MANNIES: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Up next: Trump and his allies are sounding the alarm that, if Hillary Clinton wins, there will be investigations, trials, impeachments. They want to blunt voter enthusiasm for Clinton, don`t you think?

But now President Obama is fighting back. Let`s watch what happens.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

With less than a week now, only six days until the election of 2016, Donald Trump is pushing forward with his closing argument. Much of that argument from Trump is full of doom and gloom. Should Hillary Clinton be elected president?

Watch how he is working the crowd to stay home, I think. Here he is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: She`s unfit and unqualified to be the president of the United States. And her election would mire our government and our country in a constitutional crisis that we cannot afford.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, it`s an idea, a popular one you might say picked up by fellow Republicans down the ticket. Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin told a newspaper out there that Hillary Clinton could be impeached and Newt Gingrich told "The Washington Post " the Hillary Clinton presidency would be very much like 1998 when we impeached Bill Clinton . Of course, Newt was busy at that time.

Earlier today, President Obama took those Republicans to task.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: You`ve got some Republicans in Congress who are already suggesting they will impeach Hillary. She hasn`t even been elected yet. It doesn`t matter what evidence. They`ll find something. That`s what they`re saying already. How can -- how does our democracy function like that?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s the president down in beautiful Chapel Hill, the southern part of heaven.

For more on this, I`m joined by our roundtable: Josh Green, senior national correspondent for "Bloomberg Businessweek", and Anne Gearan, of course, national political reporter and superstar for "The Washington Post ", and Clarence Page, columnist for the Washington -- actually, the "Chicago Tribune ", always has been.

CLARENCE PAGE, CHICAGO TRIBUNE : That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Let me talk about, Anne, you first. What`s Trump up to when he`s saying, she may win, but if she wins, it`s going to be all mishegoss, disaster or whatever? Go ahead.

ANNE GEARAN, THE WASHINGTON POST : Yes. He`s doing two things. He is absolutely throwing red meat to the crowd that`s in front of him and helping really energize down ballot, making Republicans -- kind of giving Republicans something to cheer for and change the subject.

The other thing he`s doing is invoking for anyone else listening, every kind of ick factor about the Clintons that makes, that could potentially make wavering Democrats, or Republicans who are turned off by Trump and were considering Clinton, not consider her anymore.

MATTHEWS: Josh?

JOSH GREEN, BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK: I think that`s right. And he`s not just doing it from --

MATTHEWS: Is it to get the votes to change or to get the votes not to show up?

GREEN: No, to get them not to show up. I mean, he did say today, look, if you`re in some early voting states, technically, you can change your ballot.

(CROSSTALK)

GEARAN: I don`t think he`s going to get a lot of those votes.

GREEN: I don`t think he`s going to get a lot. But if you look at what he`s doing, it is not just on the campaign stage. His campaign as we report in "Bloomberg Businessweek" this week has a three-pronged effort to go out and specifically depress the votes of black voters, liberals --

MATTHEWS: The look I`m giving you right now, the look of a guy who just got flocking for something. But go ahead.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: No, anyway, thank you. No, I think -- I think the question is, he said if you vote Wisconsin, you get two more tries. You can go back and do -- you know, it`s like one of those houses you bought something, like "Glengarry Glenn Ross", you can get out of this deal in 24 hours. I never knew that.

But is he saying to people, take back your ballot and rip it up? Because we don`t want you to vote at all.

PAGE: Only what, four states where you can do that any way. Trump has been very good at giving out false information, by the way. There`s a woman who`s arrested in Iowa last week, trying to vote twice. For very certain reason, she thought that it was legal. But, you know --

MATTHEWS: I think he`s right about Wisconsin.

PAGE: Yes, in Wisconsin, he`s right. But, you know, is this kind of change people -- I mean, look how much the vote is baked in right now.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Yes. OK, I`m talking about the 7 to 10 percent that keeps floating out there. Some of it is going to end up voting for Gary Johnson for whatever reason or Jill Stein. But a lot of it is floating out there.

PAGE: Trump is banking on the lack of enthusiasm on the other side compared --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I think it`s 10 percent in play right now, at least. Your thoughts?

GREEN: I think it`s probably more like 5 or 7. You can keep the Hillary voters on the couch, that is a win for Trump.

GEARAN: Yes. I mean, it still ends up being, you know, a net advantage for Clinton.

MATTHEWS: Hillary, can she do the other thing? Can she stop Republicans? I think Republicans are energized. They just love this Comey report from last week. They`re all thrilled.

PAGE: Oh, yes. Well, certainly, those around Trump are. But they`re filtering out all the, by the ways, you know, like we don`t know that any e-mail came from Hillary Clinton , for example.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I know, I know. They seem to give them hope and they didn`t have it last Friday morning. It`s a Lazarus-like recovery, if you will.

GEARAN: Yes, and Trump has been doing a very good job of using it for that purpose. He`s also been making stuff up as he goes along, and says, kind of fills in the blanks the way he might like.

MATTHEWS: As a matter of fact, Hillary said, she quoted Michelle Obama said, "when they go low, we`ll go high." Well, she`s not going high anymore. They`re both going low. It`s a fact. They`re both doing it because they have to. Why do they both go low at this? Why is the next week just be crap?

GREEN: Well, because --

MATTHEWS: I`m sorry to use the word, but I think it`s going to reduce voters. All I hear is, even the president said today, even politicians get tired of politics.

GREEN: Here`s why -- I mean, the one critic that I think the Trump folks have right about Clinton is she really does have trouble inspiring people. And it`s easy to talk positive when you`re up 10 points. But when suddenly things narrow, her best narrative is to remind people what they don`t like about Donald Trump and why they shouldn`t vote for him.

And Trump, you know, he`s really only got a negative case against --

MATTHEWS: So back into the stats of golden oldies that have worked against him and assume that the voters now paying attention and haven`t heard that or have forgotten it.

I think the voters have about a three-day attention span right now, memory. And it seems like if you don`t have something new in the last three days, starts all over again.

GEARAN: Well, yes. And the things that they`ve used over and over again - - I mean, they`ve recycled the same 18 crazy things that Trump said, divisive things, for a year and half. They`ve been using the same stuff.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Making fun of people`s behavior.

(CROSSTALK)

GEARAN: The kids watching television and now saying, what are we telling our kids?

(CROSSTALK)

GREEN: Amazingly, there has been no new Trump scandal in six, seven days. I mean, that`s like an eternity.

MATTHEWS: See, that`s my argument out there.

Clarence? I have a theory and I watched like all of us, this is what we do. And I`ve noticed whenever there`s a week or two of nothing bad, it goes back to 50/50 country again. I`m not saying Trump wins, it goes back to the county we really are, which is a 50/50 country.

PAGE: Except Trump hasn`t gotten 50 yet, or even close to it really. I mean, this is a big bloc of voters that he hasn`t penetrated or been able to hold very long. That`s what Hillary is banking on. That folks at least know her.

With Trump, he`s going to push the fact that he is unreliable.

MATTHEWS: Right. So, she`s a safer bet.

PAGE: Serial liar, et cetera.

MATTHEWS: Safer bet?

PAGE: Yes, exactly.

MATTHEWS: Safer bet.

The roundtable is sticking with us. And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We are just six days away, as I said, from election night. That`s next Tuesday, of course.

Keep on it MSNBC for all the latest developments. They keep coming including a special two-hour edition of HARDBALL this Sunday night. Tune in at 7:00 Eastern on Sunday for everything you need to know in the final days, actually two days of the presidential campaign.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

Josh, you start. Tell me something I don`t know.

GREEN: All right. For all the talk this week, all the focus on what swing states we didn`t expect that Trump is visiting, talked to a senior official on the campaign he said, what we`re focused on is Miami-Dade County, Florida, the most important county in the country for us, could likely decide Florida. Florida decides the election for us. There you go.

MATTHEWS: That`s Cubans, Jewish voters, a very mixed meringue down there, right?

GREEN: Hispanic. Yes.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

GEARAN: So, there`s been something of a resurrection on the Hillary Clinton plane in the last week. Philippe Reines, her long time aide, one of the funniest people around her, but also a man with many enemies has been on the plane twice. This is after more than a year of being essentially banished from public view as a way to show that this campaign would not be like 2008 with the drama.

MATTHEWS: They needed him.

GEARAN: They need him and also, he was outed by the Podesta e-mails.

MATTHEWS: Outed as a participated.

GEARAN: Yes, just at arm`s length.

PAGE: Yes, Democrat Stan Greenberg and Republican pollster Whit Ayers got together hired by RespectAbility, a disability -- well, pro-disability organization. And the poll found that over half of American voters have -- either have disabilities or have a disabled person in the family. And they and voters in general overwhelmingly in favor of politicians who will pass some --

MATTHEWS: It`s a Bob Dole issue. It`s a Bob Dole issue, too. It`s not a Trump issue by any means.

PAGE: By any means.

MATTHEWS: Josh Green, thank you. Anne Gearan, thank you, Clarence Page.

When we return, my election diary for tonight. You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary Wednesday, November 2nd, 2016.

Six days to go to the election, I find it important how close this election is drawing. Not close enough for Donald Trump to win, I remain convinced, but enough for the ruling class to pay attention. By that I mean the people who think they have it all together and think the regular people out there should leave them to run the show, letting them continue to alternate Democrats and Republicans, one party replacing the other in the revolving door of routine establishment politics.

If this election is close, if Donald Trump carries big states like Ohio and Florida, if he comes within a couple of states of winning the presidency, if someone carrying his trainload of baggage is able to seriously challenge someone with Hillary Clinton`s resume, it`s an election for the record books. The people of this country will have spoken very loudly, so loudly even a deeply flawed candidate like Trump gets hoisted up all the way to the finish line, because if Mr. Trump can get enough votes say in the mid- 40 percent, that means he could have won this thing without all that baggage he`s accumulated year by year.

If he could manage in one year of campaigning to get close to winning after all those years of behaving like he did, it tells you something about the power of his message. I believe he was on to something in this race. I believe that half the people in this country maybe more have had it with establishment elite politics. They`re tired the of the same best and brightest who took us into Vietnam, went for broke there and then come back to take us into Afghanistan and Iraq and Libya and Syria and God knows what next desert war.

They`re tired of watching whole wastelands of this country where manufacturing once was king or the government to establish an honest **immigration** policy all Americans would be proud to see work. They`re tired of the elite making decisions or failing to make them and dump everything on the working people. The ill-conceived wars, the global economics that destroys so many local economies, an **immigration** flow that affects where working people live, leaves the elite to live where it has the least possible impact.

If Trump comes close, if he gets a popular vote in the mid-40 percent, the ruling class ought to note the percent he got, not the percent he came short because that 40 percent could soon be looking angrier and for a leader, even stronger.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC HOST, "ALL IN" (voice-over): Tonight on "ALL IN" --

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We`re almost at the end.

HAYES: Six days out, a campaign frenzy.

TRUMP: But we`re really at the end of the beginning, if you think about it.

HAYES: Tonight, inside the new blue state polling that`s looking pretty good for Democrats.

BARACK OBAMA , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: The fate of the republic rests on your shoulders.

HAYES: As the president drills home the stakes and takes on his own FBI .

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Michael Steele, Ron Reagan, Beth Fouhy, Howard Fineman, Nick Confessore

9562 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Something about women.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews up in New York.

Who would you rather have in your corner if you`re a boxer, I guess, Michelle Obama or Newt Gingrich? Well, with the first lady, with her, you have her inspiring young people to vote with a call for moral clarity. With the former speaker, you have him bashing a TV news anchor.

And today, Michelle Obama took the stage in North Carolina to campaign with Hillary Clinton. In front of 11,000 people, she praised Clinton, the first lady, took some jabs at Donald Trump, and made a case for American greatness. Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: She has more experience and exposure to the presidency than any candidate in our lifetime, yes, more than Barack, more than Bill. She is absolutely ready to be commander-in-chief on day one. And yes, she happens to be a woman!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: We want a president who takes this job seriously and has the temperament and maturity to do it well because we want to go to sleep at night knowing that our kids and our country are safe.

It`s a country where a girl like me from the south side of Chicago, whose great-great grandfather was a slave, can go to the finest universities on earth, a country where the daughter of an orphan can break that highest and hardest glass ceiling and become president of the United States!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Talk about political ability. I`ve never seen it quite as good as the first lady.

Anyway, earlier in the week, Newt Gingrich went to war with Fox News`s Megyn Kelly. He was then congratulated for his performance by Donald Trump. Let`s watch that performance.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MEGYN KELLY, FOX NEWS: If Trump is a sexual predator, that is...

NEWT GINGRICH (R), FMR. HOUSE SPEAKER, FOX CONTRIBUTOR: He`s not a sexual predator! You can`t say that...

KELLY: OK, that`s your opinion. I`m not taking a position.

GINGRICH: You could not defend that statement!

KELLY: I am not taking (INAUDIBLE)

GINGRICH: No, I`m sick and tired of people like you using language that`s inflammatory that`s not true! You want to go back through the tapes of your show, recently? You are fascinated with sex, and you don`t care about public policy!

KELLY: Me? Really?

GINGRICH: Well, that`s what I get out of watching you tonight!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Congratulations, Newt, on last night. That was an amazing interview.

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: We don`t play games, Newt, right? We don`t play games.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes? That was the latest example of a campaign that some Republicans say is driving away women from the party. Don`t just limit it to women.

Anyway, according to "The Washington Post" today, quote, "A growing number of prominent Republican women are worried that as members of their male- dominated party step up to defend Donald Trump against accusations of sexual assault, they are causing a irreparable damage to the GOP`s deteriorating relationship with female voters."

"Ironically" -- continuing with "The Post" -- "Ironically, it is Trump`s candidacy rather than Hillary Clinton`s that has brought sexism to the forefront of political debate."

Katie Packer -- she was on the show recently -- the deputy managing -- campaign manager for Mitt Romney`s 2012 campaign, told "The Washington Post," quote, "For next-generation professional women, the party`s going to have to do something very, very drastic to change the course of where this candidate has taken us."

Well, how much damage is it? We`ve watched a lot of this and we`ve shown you the exhibits on both sides. Joining me right now, Michael Steele, the former chair of the Republican National Committee -- he`s, of course, an MSNBC political analyst -- author Ron Reagan, also an MSNBC political analyst, and Molly Ball, staff writer for "The Atlantic."

Molly, I want to defer to the former chair of the Republican Party first. I know it`s a women`s issue, but I`ve got to ask Michael.

This is the craziest, craziest juxtaposition! There you have the most dash -- I don`t know -- I can`t -- you`ve got to be careful how you say things - - beautiful first lady, attractive, dynamite speaker, incredibly polished, Ivy Leaguer in every possible good sense of that word, charming, persuasive, a role model for everyone, male and female, of every background.

And then you have Newt Gingrich duking it out in this sideshow along the gangway of some circus that they`re running against Megyn Kelly, who is one of the most popular conservative anchors we`ve ever seen.

What is going on with your at least current -- well, erstwhile political party, at least?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I don`t know where you stand, but go ahead. Why are they such fools?

MICHAEL STEELE, FMR. RNC CHAIR, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: This is a party that is actually outside of itself right now. It has no orienting moorings. It`s not moored to any idea or any particular leader, in the sense that you have the congressional leadership is going in one direction, you have the political leadership going in another. And then you`ve got the nominee of the party that really has not laid out a direction.

So you have this moment, this quintessential moment, where all the work that the party has put in over the years to captivate the imaginations of women, African-Americans, Hispanics -- all that`s for naught. And it`s all being lost not in a matter of years, but in a matter of weeks.

In the last few weeks, this sort of dumbing down of the political process by party leaders and others has just been stunning. And the women of the party in this hour saying, Enough. And in my view, it`s about time. I want more of those voices to come out to send the clarion call that this party is going to require a different leadership and a different direction after this election.

MATTHEWS: Molly, I have a plan for you to get into the front pages of the newspapers, whether you want it or not. Just get within four feet of Donald Trump!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Did you see Dana Bash the other day? I mean, he called her insulting because she asked him about why he was taking time from the campaign to go open up a hotel. I mean, it was a fair question. Of course, it was a little bit provocative, but that`s the idea of these questions, you provoke the candidate. And he was provoked.

Anyway, your thoughts?

MOLLY BALL, "THE ATLANTIC": Look, I don`t speak for all women, obviously, but the women who are pronouncing themselves divorced from the Republican Party, prominent women, women who are Republican political professionals -- they`re not doing this because they disagree with Republican positions. They would very much like there to be a conservative party that women can be a part of...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

BALL: ... a party that is pro-life, a party that`s for small government. They are not becoming liberals, right? If they`re voting for the Democrat, it`s because they feel they`ve been forced to by, as Chairman Steele was saying, a Republican Party that has signaled it doesn`t want to respect women as human beings.

And so it`s a tough decision for a lot of these women, and I think there is potentially long-term damage without new leadership. That being said, I think there are a lot of conservative women out there who would respond very positively to a future Republican candidate who was able to make more polite overtures.

MATTHEWS: What happened to the Republican Party that looked up to -- and I mean really looked up to -- Margaret Thatcher? Big-time. She was the role model for what a conservative woman would be. And now it`s a party that seems to be -- I don`t want to say because it just gets you in trouble saying what you think of what`s going on.

Let me go to Ron on this, who has some experience with that history. I mean, your father`s best friend in politics was this very strong leader, leader of men and women, not somebody to be treated the way anybody should be treated. But now you see these side fights.

I mean, why is Newt Gingrich fighting with Megyn Kelly? Just move on! Dust it off. Say something.

RON REAGAN, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, let me make one point first, and that is that we tend to characterize these issues of sexual harassment, and sexual assault, in this case, as women`s issues.

They`re not women`s issues. If anything, they`re men`s issues. Men are the ones, generally speaking, doing these -- the harassing and the assaulting. But they`re human issues.

Now, as far as Newt Gingrich goes, really, could you ask for a worse person to be discussing issues like this? This guy`s been married three times, cheated on his first two wives, told one of his wives that she had a choice, a divorce or an open marriage, was impeaching Bill Clinton for having a consensual affair while having an affair himself!

And then, worse than that, really, conflates the two issues of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sex, which is a mistake you see Republicans making all the time when they discuss this.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

REAGAN: This, to them, is somehow sex. When you grab a woman`s genitals against her will, you`re having sex, as far as Newt is concerned.

MATTHEWS: We`re getting into that world now of conversation Mr. Trump has dragged us into.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Well, anyway, Trump`s comments about women has caused trouble throughout the campaign. He`s attacked Hillary Clinton`s look and her stamina, which I`ve never heard that gone after, gone after the weight of a beauty queen, mocked the looks of women who have accused him of misconduct and attacked female journalists asking him questions, as I said.

Well, let`s look at a little run-through here, a little reminder, a recap. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: She doesn`t have the look. She doesn`t have the stamina.

Such a nasty woman.

She was the winner, and you know, she gained a massive amount of weight, and it was -- it was a real problem.

Take a look. You take a look, look at her, look at her words. You tell me what you think. I don`t think so! I don`t think so.

I don`t have a lot of respect for Megyn Kelly. She`s a lightweight. She starts asking me all sorts of ridiculous questions, and you know, you could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever.

For you to ask me that question is actually very insulting because Hillary Clinton does one stop and then she goes home and sleeps. I think it`s a very rude question, to be honest with you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Donald Trump said the following about you. Quote, "Look at that face. Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that the face of our next president?"

CARLY FIORINA (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Mr. Trump said.

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I think she`s got a beautiful face, and I think she`s a beautiful woman.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Good for Carly Fiorina. She nailed that one.

Anyway, Trump went after Hillary Clinton`s stamina again today. He seemed to imply that Hillary Clinton was so tired after their second debate, she almost collapsed. Let`s watch this argument.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: She`s definitely a low-energy person. I said, Where is Hillary? I watched after the last debate and after the second debate. She was tired! Wow! She walked off that stage -- of course, she had a lot of people around. They had a lot of people around her, which was smart.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So Michael, just to project what he`s trying to say there because it`s not hard, in other words, she had a cadre of people around here, corner people, to hold her up...

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... so that she wouldn`t fall to the ground after he was finished with her!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I mean, everybody saw her on television. It`s like the old Groucho Marx, You going to believe me or your lying eyes.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: We all saw her do very well in the stamina department in all three debates. It`s not questionable that she was weak.

STEELE: Well, I think the reality for Trump is that Hillary Clinton has very effectively batted back all of that...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: ... and pushed back on it very, very clearly and effectively and done so in a way in which she showed, actually, in my view, him to be the weaker of the two of them.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: And that`s what`s been so profoundly stark for me in the last few weeks of this, is just how utterly Donald Trump`s campaign has moved into a space -- it`s not where no campaign has ever gone before. It is a space that doesn`t exist in politics. And you`re seeing the results of that. Women, African-Americans, other groups are just saying, Enough.

And I don`t know how you translate that into votes in 12 days. I don`t know if there`s a hidden vote. They`re now acknowledging that there isn`t this hidden Trump vote, after all. But this thing is pretty much damn near toast. And it`s largely not because of anything Hillary Clinton`s done or the Democrats have done, it is what this party and this nominee has done to itself.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I think a good part of it is Hillary`s restraint, too, I think. Molly, I want to talk to you about Hillary, but I want to get to the larger question we tried to raise here.

Looking down the road the next -- - we don`t know foreign politics, the next four, eight years, of women who are aspiring, any woman, a woman who may have missed her generational chance because there weren`t the opportunities there is today back in her day, those women in 60s and 70- year-old and even older, looking back and say, You know what? A young woman like my granddaughter`s trying to make it today. This guy`s not her friend.

That kind of personal reaction, what do you think it`s going to do to the GOP, the Republicans, when this is over in two weeks?

BALL: Well, I want to go back, actually, to what Ron was saying about men and about human beings because I think that`s really important. What I think is really interesting is, you know, Donald Trump is running an "us versus them" campaign. And the calculation was, Sure, we might, you know, anger America`s women, but men will flock to this macho appeal. Men will flock to this idea of sort of dominance and machismo and old school, you know, male entitlement.

And that actually isn`t happening. That`s what`s so interesting...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

BALL: ... is that according to a lot of polls, Donald Trump is doing worse with men than Mitt Romney did. So even men don`t agree with this sort of polarization by gender. And I think that that...

MATTHEWS: And their daughters, too.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... sisters or daughters, mothers, you know?

BALL: Or they just think women are people.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

(CROSSTALK)

BALL: And they`re voting on that basis, in the same way that, you know...

REAGAN: Makes me feel better about my gender.

BALL: ... he`s doing worse with white people than Mitt Romney did. So it turns out that just by **alienating** African-Americans, you don`t win over a lot of whites who wanted to hear that. And so, you know, we have an America that is saying, We don`t want to be polarized along these lines. We don`t want to be divided along these lines. Even if they don`t agree with Hillary Clinton, they`ve been put off by...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Ron, get in here because I think -- I mean, you may have been ahead of all of us, but -- Ron, because I know you, but I think evolution is really true. I believe in evolution. I think men have evolved.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... evolved, you know? And I think -- I think maybe Trump hasn`t. But I think most men have tried to adjust to their daughters` aspirations. They`re trying to be equal...

REAGAN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... with their kids.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... young boys have better a opportunity than the young girls. I mean, they want to -- they want to be fair, even now (ph).

REAGAN: There is hope for men, after all. I mean, I`m glad that...

(LAUGHTER)

REAGAN: ... share that information with us.

But you know, there`s so many -- for instance, the third debate. Think of the third debate when Chris Wallace got around to asking about abortion. How did he characterize it? Late-term abortions and partial-birth abortions.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

REAGAN: There`s no such thing as partial-birth abortion. Doesn`t exist. 1.3 percent of abortions take place in the third trimester, almost all of them because there is a serious health problem for the mother or the child or both.

And that`s the reality of that, and yet nobody, even Hillary Clinton, did not correct Chris Wallace when he said that.

MATTHEWS: I think -- they`re not picking hair color.

Anyway, thank you, Michael Steele -- not to be too crude about it. Molly, you`re great. Thank you so much, and Ron Reagan. And Michael Steele, you got a rough job these days!

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: At least you`re not Reince Priebus these days!

(CROSSTALK)

STEELE: and Chris, it`s working out just like we planned it.

(CROSSTALK)

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Let`s move the Priebus question.

Anyway, coming up -- that`s a little pun. Coming up -- inside Bill Clinton, Incorporated. The latest hacked memo from Wikileaks reveal just how intertwined the Clinton Foundation was to former president Bill Clinton`s money-making ventures. And while the new revelations don`t mention Secretary Clinton, she`s facing new questions on the campaign trail tonight.

Plus, Donald Trump`s at real risk of losing a deep red state that Republicans haven`t lost since 1964, Utah. That`s because independent candidate Evan McMullin is making a strong push in a state where he has roots, and he`s with us tonight.

And new fears tonight that election day won`t be the end of the partisan rancor in this country but a new beginning of it. There`s been plenty of talk among Trump supporters of revolution. Who knows that means or what it can start if he loses. And there`s new polling that shows fears of that might come true.

Anyway, finally, my "election diary" for tonight, October 27th.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: New battleground state polls. Let`s check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

Let`s start in Georgia. A new Quinnipiac poll shows Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump neck and neck there. It`s Trump 44, Clinton 43, a 1-point race. The poll had Trump up last month by 7.

Next to Iowa, Clinton 44, Trump 44, same number. Trump led by 7 in the Quinnipiac poll last month there. North Carolina, Quinnipiac`s poll shows Clinton with a 4-point lead. That`s down. It`s Clinton 47-43. Clinton`s lead was -- well, it was 3 a month ago. Other polls have shown her way ahead in North Carolina.

Next to Pennsylvania, where a "New York Times"/Siena poll shows Clinton with a 7-point lead over Trump. It`s Clinton 46, Trump 29. The RealClearPolitics average in Pennsylvania is up by 5. I think Clinton`s going to win Pennsylvania. I think that`s the key.

Finally, to New Hampshire, a new poll from U. Mass. Amherst and WBZ has Clinton up by 5. It`s Clinton 43, Trump 38. RealClearPolitics average has Clinton up by 6.5, and he needs New Hampshire to win.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

A memo which was stolen from the e-mails of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta and made public by WikiLeaks yesterday raises new questions about the convoluted relationship between the Clintons` charities and their personal business.

It`s the latest in the ongoing release of illegally hacked e-mails, which U.S. intelligence agencies say was perpetrated by the Russian government.

The memo in question was allegedly sent by Doug Band, former aid to Bill Clinton, and a key figure behind the Clinton Foundation`s fund-raising, who now runs a consulting firm called Teneo. It appears to show that while Band raised money from his clients for the Clinton Foundation, he would simultaneously press those same donors to offer business opportunities to Bill Clinton.

According to the memo he wrote -- quote -- "Independent of our fund-raising and decision-making activities of behalf of the foundation, we have dedicated ourselves to helping the president secure and engage in for- profit activities, including speeches, books, and advisory surface engagements."

Doug Band referred to his efforts as -- quote -- this is his quote -- "Bill Clinton, Incorporated, Bill Clinton, Inc.," and he said the network of deals he secured if they remained in place would pay the former president $66 million over nine years.

These e-mails were exchanged after Chelsea Clinton raised concerns with John Podesta that Doug Band was hustling business for Teneo and acting on behalf of the former president.

An e-mail made public two weeks ago allegedly shows Band complaining about Chelsea after Podesta`s raised her concerns with him -- quote -- this is Band talking -- "She`s acting like a spoiled brat kid who has nothing else to do but create issues."

Well, Clinton and Band eventually parted way, and the e-mails show that stricter guidelines were enacted to separate personal business involving the former president from his foundation. It should also be noted that, at the time, Clinton and Doug Band were private citizens. The memo does not mention Secretary Clinton by name, nor do the hacked e-mails show that she traded any favors as secretary of state.

Well, the e-mails have not been independently authenticated by NBC News, and the Clinton campaign has offered no authentication either.

I`m joined now by Beth Fouhy, senior political editor at MSNBC, as well as Howard Fineman, who is global editorial director of The Huffington Post and also an MSNBC political analyst.

Beth, let`s try to figure this out. If we say it`s not illegal, but there`s an interesting sort of packaging going on. When you hear about Hollywood, they -- sort of packages. If you want Tom Hanks, you got to take these other two people. You got to take the director -- you want the director, you have got to take -- in the case of Doug Band, it seems like if you want to get involved with the Clinton Global Initiative, OK, the Clinton Foundation, can you get us some speeches for the former president?

And, by the way, can we borrow the airplane? I don`t know how it works, but this is what it looks in these e-mails.

BETH FOUHY, SENIOR EDITOR, MSNBC.COM: Well, it does, but think about it.

Bill Clinton at the time was this incredibly popular ex-president. Everybody wanted him. He`s apparently -- we all know how charismatic he is. But apparently he knows nothing about managing money, nothing about managing his own time. He trusted Doug Band to do that work for him.

So, Doug Band, ingeniously, one might say, figured out how to make himself rich, the former president rich, and enrich the Clinton Foundation, all at once.

MATTHEWS: So when people want to be grabbed for a generous contribution to the Clinton Foundation, why should they be grabbed to give him a speech, when he asked for a big chunk of money? Why are they all of a sudden fair game to grab money from?

FOUHY: They probably wanted him. They probably wanted him. That`s the crazy part to this.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So, you see nothing wrong with this? Are you...

FOUHY: I`m saying...

MATTHEWS: No, it sounds like you`re saying there`s nothing wrong with this. Explain.

FOUHY: Look, it`s not for me to judge. It`s what the Clintons do.

MATTHEWS: It is. It is for you to judge.

(CROSSTALK)

FOUHY: They tend to run right up to the edge of what`s legal. And that`s -- that`s the problem that their critics have with them.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: If you spend your life hitting the chalk line in tennis, just right at the edge of what you can get away with, where you bring everybody in, the contributors into the White House back in the `90s.

(CROSSTALK)

FOUHY: Yes, the Lincoln Bedroom, yes.

MATTHEWS: Rent out the -- at some point, the problem is, you`re going to look crooked to some people of different perspectives.

FOUHY: But this is important, Chris. He is not the candidate. Hillary Clinton is the candidate. None of this implicates her.

MATTHEWS: Well, she was involved in this or not?

FOUHY: The last sort of dustup around this was when it appeared that she had been visited with or been...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So she`s clean? I`m just asking. Is she clean?

FOUHY: Again, not for me to judge. She did not...

MATTHEWS: It is for you to judge.

(LAUGHTER)

FOUHY: She did not meet with people for the Clinton Foundation simply because they were donors. They were people who had business before the secretary of state`s office, like Bill Gates, like Melinda Gates. These are people who legitimately have business before the secretary of state. And they were also contributors to the foundation.

MATTHEWS: So how do you read -- before I go to Howard, how do you read this whole thing, this debate between, on one side, you have got John Podesta and Chelsea Clinton challenging the way things are being done, and on the other side defending them? That seems to be the way it`s going, Beth.

FOUHY: Well, you know, Chelsea Clinton, you know, looks like kind of the hero here. She looks like the person who is stepping in there, making sure her father`s name isn`t being taken advantage of by somebody who means well, but perhaps is using that...

MATTHEWS: Well, she says he was hustling.

FOUHY: She says -- she does seem to suggest that. And she stepped in to make sure that that was not how things were going to continue. And, sure enough, Doug Band left shortly after those memos were released.

MATTHEWS: Well, it looks like he didn`t have a choice.

FOUHY: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Howard, how do you read this? Because it`s pretty much now in the open.

The one thing great about opening up this -- lifting up this rock is you see the bug life under the rock. And you see about all this stuff that never gets out publicly. I guess thanks to the Russkies and WikiLeaks, we now get a view you normally don`t get of politicians in action.

HOWARD FINEMAN, NBC CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: Well, Chris, I have been covering the Clintons since they were in Little Rock and when Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas, and through all of his presidential campaigns and Hillary`s entire career.

Their whole life is built on the combination of public office and money. And the Clintons didn`t have any money. They didn`t start out with any money. They`re not like the Bush family or some other people. They didn`t have much access to money.

FOUHY: Or the Trump family.

FINEMAN: Yes, or the Trump family.

And they`re down there in Little Rock, and they want to play on the national stage. And it quickly becomes apparent to them that they have got to get in on the money action, not so much, I think, because they`re avaricious people in any sense. They`re not really in it to make money exactly, but they want to be around -- they will take the money, but they want to be around the money in order to play in the ball game of politics the way it exists.

MATTHEWS: Why did Hillary Clinton demand $250,000 to give an hour-long speech, the same speech she gives over and over again? That`s not about campaigning. That`s about personal income.

FINEMAN: No, it`s not about campaigning, but it`s about -- maybe I`m being too generous here, but it`s -- they spent their whole lives trying to get contributions from rich people.

They have immersed themselves in that, going back to renaissance weekend, and that networking by the sea back in the `80s and `90s, the big donors, the soft money donors. These are the people they spent their lives around. They want to be like those people.

MATTHEWS: I think you`re so right on the note.

FINEMAN: They want to have money like those people. They want to be like those people, because it`s demeaning to have to do that all the time.

So, they are going to be on that level. They`re going to get the cash for themselves. More important, they`re going to get the cash for campaign contributions, for PAC contributions, for the foundation that makes the Clintons feel good, like they`re doing good in the world.

It`s like -- it`s a continuously moving carousel of access and money, none of it specifically illegal, but if you look at the totality of it, it looks like they have spent their whole lives searching for cash, and using power to get it, to get more money, to get more power, to get more money.

And they have not said that they`re going to shut down the Clinton Foundation if Hillary becomes president. What they have said is, they will no longer take any foreign donations. And, by the way, Chelsea Clinton wasn`t complaining that Bill Clinton -- about Bill Clinton looking bad for getting cash for speeches. She was complaining that Doug Band was using the foundation to get money for himself.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

FINEMAN: It was not some principled objection to protect her dad from looking bad. They wanted as much money as they could get.

I mean, two days after she was declaring her candidacy in Iowa, Hillary Clinton wanted to give a speech to J.P. Morgan, until they told her, you can`t do it.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You know what I think? I`m going to be more judgmental than Beth, who`s a straight reporter. I will make a judgment.

Every time I have watched a politician engage in a certain pattern of behavior before they go to the White House, they continue to engage in that pattern afterwards. People don`t change because we swear them into the White House. They become that person big-time. And the Clintons were raising money like this hand over hand back in -- hand over fist back in 1996 using we called it Motel 6.

They were bringing people, hoard them in, pulling them in by train loads of contributors, and then letting them sit in the Lincoln Bedroom for a while, then charging them by the hour.

This is what they did before. They is what they -- you can still vote for Hillary Clinton, but, remember, you`re getting this as part of the package, because that`s been their pattern.

Beth Fouhy, thank you. You`re so nice to these people.

Anyway, Beth Fouhy, Howard Fineman, thank you.

Up next, the conservative candidate hoping to keep Donald Trump from winning deep red Utah, Evan McMullin. He`s running for president in Utah. Is he running anywhere else?

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I want you to tell your Republican neighbors and friends, this is not the time to make a statement. This is our chance to make a difference.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

PENCE: There`s only two names on that ballot that have a chance to be president of the United States of America.

And while I will always respect the right of any man or woman to cast their vote in the manner that may seem best, a vote for any candidate other than Donald Trump, bottom line, is a vote to make Hillary Clinton the 45th president of the United States.

(BOOING)

PENCE: It`s a hard truth. So it`s time to come home.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was Donald Trump`s running mate, of course, Mike Pence, campaigning in the deep red state of Utah, with less than two weeks to go until the election.

Pence pleaded with Republicans -- you saw it there -- to come home, as he put it, and support the GOP ticket out of concern that Utah might not be as safe as it used to be for the party. Utah hasn`t supported a Democrat for president since 1964, when they went for Johnson over Goldwater.

But because of the entrance of independent candidate Evan McMullin, the state`s suddenly in play. The latest poll shows a three-way race out there among Trump, McMullin, and Hillary Clinton. One poll has Trump up three points. Another has him up two points. But a third poll shows McMullin leading Trump and Clinton by four. You see them all there.

Anyway, McMullin responded to Pence and Twitter after the Indiana governor called on Utah supporters not to support his independent bid.

Here`s what McMullin tweeted: "A vote for Pence is a vote for Trump, and a vote for Trump is a vote for religious bigotry, misogyny, and the expansion of government."

McMullin is a former intelligence officer in the Central Intelligence Agency, investment banker at Goldman Sachs, and a senior staffer up on Capitol Hill for House Republicans. He joins me now.

Evan, what do you think of if somebody votes for you and you carry the electoral votes of Utah, what does that do to the race for president come election night itself? What does that do?

(CROSSTALK)

EVAN MCMULLIN (I), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Well, if you believe the polls -- and I do believe the polls -- Hillary Clinton has a massive lead in most Electoral College projections. And so what happens here in Utah is not likely to impact the out...

MATTHEWS: It stays in Utah?

MCMULLIN: What`s that?

MATTHEWS: It stays in Utah?

MCMULLIN: Well, for now, it does.

But we`re building a new conservative movement, because we think that`s what`s required. You know, Mike Pence said that voters should come home to Donald Trump, which I think is ridiculous, because conservative voters are -- can never be at home with Donald Trump.

Donald Trump has invited Vladimir Putin in to influence our elections and undermine our elections and our democratic institutions. He`s attacked people for their race and religion and their gender. This is not what real conservatives stand for. And it`s not what principled conservatives in the Mountain West and in Utah stand for.

So there`s no going home to Donald Trump for true conservatives.

MATTHEWS: What other state do you have a very good -- a decent chance of winning? You have got a good shot in Utah. We have looked at the numbers there, those electoral votes. Where else can you win besides Utah?

MCMULLIN: Well, our best chances are in the Mountain West.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, name a state, other state besides Utah you can win.

MCMULLIN: Idaho -- Idaho and Wyoming are our best chances.

MATTHEWS: You believe you can carry Idaho? You believe you can win Idaho?

MCMULLIN: We can.

But, look, Chris, we have been transparent about this whole thing the whole way through. I`m an independent candidate. I don`t have the support of a party. We have a strong message and we`re running on that. We have limited resources, so we have to choose very wisely about where we spend them and our time.

And the reality is that we knew we would need to do that. And we focused on the Mountain West, because that`s where Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were rejected.

MATTHEWS: I understand.

MCMULLIN: And we have gotten a lot of traction here in Utah. I was born here. People are looking for somebody...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I`m with you on that. I know you have got the roots out there. I know Utah politics.

Let me ask you about why LDS people, people who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, why they would like you -- let me put it this way, a tougher question. Why wouldn`t they like a guy of Trump`s lifestyle? What is it about his personal behavior that turns off Mormon people, generally speaking? What is it?

MCMULLIN: Well, look, I will say that Mormon people -- and I can`t speak for all of them either.

MATTHEWS: Well, just the ones you talk to.

MCMULLIN: That`s sort of silly.

MATTHEWS: The ones you talk to.

MCMULLIN: Yes, I think a lot of people, not just Mormons, Catholics, evangelicals, Hindus, Jews, a lot of people expect their leaders to be decent people, to care about Americans and to defend Americans, not attack them.

And so this is -- these are the kinds of qualities they`re looking for in our leaders, both here in the Mountain West and across the country. I think Donald Trump`s indecency and the way he treats people, the way he attacks people of different faiths, and, you know, based on their gender or skin color, it just -- it doesn`t sit well with people out here.

And they know that our leaders need to be uniting and respectful of Americans.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Not to be turned off by Donald Trump and disavowing the Republican nominee, Utah Republican Congressman Jason Chaffetz is now back on board with Trump. He tweeted just yesterday: "I will not defend or endorse Donald Trump, but I am voting for him. HRC is that bad. HRC is bad for the USA."

What did you think of that statement by a congressman who`s been around a bit out there, who`s now going to vote for Trump?

MCMULLIN: Well, I`m really disappointed in Jason`s decision to do that.

Just a couple of weeks ago, he was saying that he couldn`t look his daughter in the eye if he supported Donald Trump. And here he is, just two weeks later, doing that very thing.

MATTHEWS: How about Orrin Hatch? How about Orrin Hatch? Isn`t he going to be for Trump, the senior senator out there?

MCMULLIN: Well, Orrin Hatch is -- Orrin Hatch has been for Trump. And, unfortunately, he`s urged Utahans to -- quote -- "do the right thing " and support Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: How about Mike Lee, the other senator?

MCMULLIN: Well, I don`t know about Mike Lee. I think he`s taken a stand in some way against Trump.

MATTHEWS: He has? OK.

MCMULLIN: But, look -- well, he has. He tried. He was at the convention.

But, look, this is the thing. Our leaders need to take a stand for what has made this country special, which is that all men and women are created equal. That`s true for all humans. But it`s enshrined in our founding documents, that all have inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And if our leaders won`t stand up for those principles, we have to ask ourselves, what are those leaders doing? And it`s just not enough to say I oppose this or I oppose that candidate or idea. True leadership is standing up and saying what you`re for and then fighting for that thing.

And that`s what I haven`t seen.

MATTHEWS: I think -- you know, I think that`s nicely put.

But you know what I think`s going on?

MCMULLIN: What is that?

MATTHEWS: I believe that the LDS community in your state is appalled by Trump`s public behavior, uniquely appalled.

MCMULLIN: Sure.

MATTHEWS: No, uniquely appalled. They don`t like showing off, braggarts. It`s not just the sexual misconduct. It`s the bragging. It`s the egotism, all of that stuff about Trump.

I look at the guy and say, I worked with Mormons out there. My wife worked with Mormons. We really get along and like the people. If you can generalize, we like the people. And one thing we notice about them is modesty and humility. This guy Trump is not your guy in Salt Lake Valley.

MCMULLIN: No, he`s not.

MATTHEWS: He`s just not your guy. And I think that`s what`s going on, why you have a unique chance to upset the Electoral College and win the electoral votes of Utah. I think that`s why you have a good chance. You agree or not?

MCMULLIN: I hope so. I hope so. I think so. We`re fighting hard for that, and we`re humbled by the support we have received so far.

MATTHEWS: And I have been saying this for a while, not just you, Evan. But thank you for coming on. You`re making a big statement out there.

MCMULLIN: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Up next: We have been hearing from Trump supporters who are calling for -- this is a weird word in this country -- revolution if Hillary Clinton wins.

Well, now new polling shows Americans are really worried about the threat of just that, maybe some violence? That`s ahead with the roundtable.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, U.S. FIRST LADY: So, when you hear folks talking about a global conspiracy and saying that this election is rigged, understand that they are trying to get you to stay home. They are trying to convince you that your vote doesn`t matter.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: That was -- the first lady is just incredible out there on the stump. That was her, of course, smacking back, or swatting back Donald Trump`s talk of rigged elections, but with a little less than two weeks to go, it seems like some voters aren`t listening to her, the first lady.

"The New York Times" reports that some of Donald Trump`s supporters are warning, I can` believe this, of a revolution -- I sound like Bernie Sanders -- if Hillary Clinton wins. "The New York Times" reports that some worry that they will be forgotten along with their concerns and frustrations. Others believe that the nation might be headed for violent conflict.

A new "USA Today"/Suffolk University poll released just yesterday shows that 51 percent of likely voters, a majority, are either somewhat or very concerned that there will be violence after the election. Four out of ten of Trump`s own supporters say that if Clinton wins, she would be legitimate, just 32. Sixty-eight percent say they`re worried that the election results will be manipulated.

For more, I`m joined right now by the roundtable: Jamal Smith of MTV News, Jeanne Zaino, who`s professor of political science and consultant with Applied Technomics, and Nick Confessore of "The New York Times."

All right. Jamal, let`s run through this thing.

JAMAL SMITH, MTV NEWS: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Is there damage or danger in people yelling out these revolutionary statements?

SMITH: Oh, my goodness with, yes. I mean, I think, you know, first of all, it`s not like Bernie Sanders` revolution. This is Bernie Sanders` revolution with guns, with people threatening actual violence, saying, we`ve got to take her out. All this kind of rhetoric that we`ve seen is absolutely dangerous and could actually, you know, not arise passions in the wrong person.

MATTHEWS: Is he responsible?

SMITH: Yes, he`s responsible. He`s encouraged all of it and he`s done nothing to stop it. He`s responsible.

MATTHEWS: Jeanne?

JEANNE ZAINO, POLLSTER: I would go a little further. I think the Republican Party has to take responsibility here and the Democrats, as well, for losing sight of what`s going on in their base.

You know, there never would have been a Donald Trump if the Republican Party had listened to its base much earlier on. Say, go back to George W. Bush`s time with the birth of the Tea Party movement, then they were incredibly frustrated that they elected a president who did anything but what he promised to do. Lower the deficits, they got raised. Get us out of foreign entanglements, we got into them. And you can go through the list.

So you lose sight of your base on the Republican side. And I would venture to say the same thing has happened on the Democratic side. Now, certainly, that doesn`t arise to issues of anger and violence in that regard, but I think there`s a certain amount of responsibility to bear on party leaders, who haven`t been listening to their base and responding to it.

MATTHEWS: I`ve been giving that speech for a while now. Thank you, I agree completely with what you said.

NICK CONFESSORE, THE NEW YORK TIMES: I think people are so torqued up and it`s really worrisome. I think on Election Day, there`s a real danger of violence at ballot boxes, in shopping malls, at gas stations. We`ve already seen --

MATTHEWS: Do you think gun play?

CONFESSORE: No, I`m just saying --

MATTHEWS: Anger, or what kind?

CONFESSORE: We`ll see. I hope nothing. But we have seen scattered violence at Trump rallies, from supporters, and opponents --

MATTHEWS: Fistfights?

CONFESSORE: Fistfights. We`ve seen fights at shopping markets from Trump supporters, people at gas stations getting into fights. You know, Trump hats getting ripped off of people.

MATTHEWS: It`s pretty ugly.

Here`s a weird thing that could happen, if you look at the path. Suppose you live in Scranton Wilkes-Barre, I`m looking at the numbers. Huge support for Trump. So, everybody you know is for Trump it seems. If you live in Philadelphia, everybody you know is for Hillary Clinton, right?

So you`re going to come out at an election booth and think, everybody in this room has a Trump hat, so Trump`s going to win. Then you think, there`s got to be cheating on. How is it that everybody I know is voting for Trump, right, Jamil? That could be a phenomena where they say, it must have been stolen, because everybody in Scranton voted for him.

SMITH: In all seriousness, though, I don`t have a whole lot of sympathy for those folks, the same thing may have been true in `08 and 2012 when Barack Obama won the election, a lot of those people probably voted for John McCain and Mitt Romney. Look, I mean, at the end of the day, we have to face what`s going on here, white supremacy dies hard. And this is what the campaign has been pushing. It`s been pushing white nationalism.

MATTHEWS: Give me the words.

SMITH: As far as words, what, what do you mean?

MATTHEWS: How did they say white supremacy? I think they`ve been selling nationalism. I wouldn`t call white supremacy.

SMITH: But what I`m saying, is policies that undergird white supremacy is what I`m saying. So white supremacy is a concept --

MATTHEWS: Like what?

SMITH: Like, for instance, talking all this stuff about blacks -- and Black Lives Matter and police wanting basically to give police wanton powers that they can just do anything with.

MATTHEWS: And Trump`s done that?

SMITH: National stop and frisk. That is white supremacy.

MATTHEWS: And Trump`s pushed that?

SMITH: Oh, yes.

ZAINO: You know, but I do think there`s another part of this. I agree that the rhetoric has been horrible. But you know, you have to go deeper than that. You have to look at levels of unemployment in some of these communities, where these messages are selling.

You have to look at, I`m sorry, that the responsibility that the president bears for his inability to address some of the really key issues that are fueling some of this. I agree with you, the rhetoric is horrible. But you also have to look at what is fueling this. People have a changing America, which is changing before them, and they haven`t been able to address to those changes --

(CROSSTALK)

CONFESSORE: Well, what`s fueling it is a nominee who is telling his supporters that things are rigged that aren`t rigged. That polls are made up that aren`t made up and he bears some responsibility.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, I look at this at a rally in Toledo, Donald Trump suggested canceling the whole election. Maybe it`s making your point. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE : Hillary Clinton wants to raise taxes on small businesses, up to 45 percent. What a difference. You know, what a difference this is. And just thinking to myself right now, we should just cancel the election and just give it to Trump, right? What are we even -- what are we having it? Her policies are so bad.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I guess we have elections for democracy.

Anyway, the roundtable is sticking with us. And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, today I spoke with Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, the sister of Jack and Bobby Kennedy. She took the opportunity to endorse Hillary Clinton. Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I got to ask you, in the middle of a presidential campaign, less than two weeks to go. I know you`re a Democrat. Hillary Clinton, tell me all why you think she should be president.

JEAN KENNEDY SMITH: Oh, I think she`s terrific. I`ve always thought she was terrific. And I think she`s always been committed to doing tremendous work, particularly with women and with children and she`s always been interested in foreign affairs. I think that she is everything that I can see that`s needed for this job.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: She was great today. You`ll see her tomorrow night.

Jean Kennedy Smith joins me on HARDBALL tomorrow night to talk about what it was like to grow up a Kennedy. Her new book "The Nine of Us". It`s about growing up with Jack, and Bobby and the rest of them. And also, her thoughts tomorrow night on having a first woman president. She didn`t grow up in that generation.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We are back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

Nick, tell me something I don`t know -- Nick Confessore of "The New York Times."

CONFESSORE: Of "The New York Times", OK.

Well, Donald Trump once promised he would spend $100 million of his own money on this campaign. This morning, he was $44 million short of that amount. We`ll find out tonight how short he really is.

MATTHEWS: That`s why he hates "The New York Times," they pay attention.

CONFESSORE: There you go.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, Jeanne?

ZAINE: Since we`re talking about election vulnerability, and hacking, it`s important to know the best way to guard against hacking, is to have a paper backup of your vote. Eighty percent of us will have that when we go into the polls, but that means 20 percent of us won`t. And some of those 20 percent are in Pennsylvania and Virginia.

MATTHEWS: When we walk out to the point, we have a piece of paper that --

ZAINE: Well, there`s a piece of paper that remains there, and 80 percent of our cases that`s a backup that can be checked if the results look questionable.

MATTHEWS: You don`t want people to walk away, you don`t want anybody to walk away with saying how they voted. There will be a committeeman or ward member to check in here.

ZAINE: And don`t take a picture like Justin Timberlake.

MATTHEWS: Jamil?

SMITH: Police in North Dakota advanced on a group of protesters protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline, that`s supposed to advance through what was once Standing Rock Sioux Land. Now, these folks are out here trying to reclaim the land that`s been stolen from them generations ago by the U.S. government.

Jesse Jackson was there yesterday and said he called it the ripest case of environmental racism he`s seen in a long time.

MATTHEWS: OK. Well, thank you, guys. Thanks to you, Jamil. Thank you, Jeanne, and thank you, Nick.

Before we go to break, some breaking news. We`re just getting word that the Pence plane has slid off the runway at LaGuardia airport in New York. We can report that there are no injuries and we`ll be talking to Governor Pence on this show tomorrow. So, everything is fine.

When we return, my Election Diary for tonight, October 27th.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary Thursday, October 27th.

Whatever you think of Donald Trump, I mean, whatever you think of Donald Trump, you have to wonder, why isn`t he doing it? Why isn`t he running for president? Why isn`t he spending every hour asking the voters again and again, do you like way things are, the way they`ve been headed in this country?

Do you like the continued destruction of our manufacturing base, the jobs that went with it? Do you like the uncontrolled illegal **immigration**? Do you like the string of stupid wars from Iraq, to Libya, to Syria?

If you want to say yes to all that, you want to keep all this the way it is? Vote for Hillary Clinton. If you don`t like the way things have been headed, you got a chance to really shake the system to its roots.

If you wake up the day after the election, the same it is today, if it`s the same four, or five, eight years from now, remember you had a chance to change it but you were too dainty to do it. If Trump were to win this election, those would be the reasons that would be listed right at the top of the newspaper the day afterwards.

So, why doesn`t he say now what would win him the election? Why doesn`t he fight and create stupid headlines with his battles with Megyn Kelly and Dana Bash? He seems to devote day after day to fighting fights that make people forget the reasons he started running for president, reasons that continue to carry the shrinking chance he has to win this thing.

I say this not because I want Trump to win, but because I can`t stand politics being practiced so pathetically.

We have been looking at live pictures, by the way, from LaGuardia Airport in New York of Mike Pence`s plane which slid off the runway this evening. There were no injuries.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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Chris Matthews, Raul Reyes

9881 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC HOST: Up in the air.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in New York.

Well, 13 days to go, and Hillary Clinton has opened a big lead in two national polls heading into the final stretch. Clinton is up 9 points in the latest "USA Today"/Suffolk University poll, 47 to 38 in a four-way race. In a brand-new poll from the Associated Press, Clinton leads by 14 points, 51 to 37. But as a counterweight, Fox News, which has a good poll out this evening that shows the race closer. Clinton has just a 3-point lead nationally, 44 to 41 in that Fox poll.

But the polls that will decide the election, as we all know, are in the battleground states themselves, and there the picture`s also mixed, suggesting the race is still to be decided. A new Bloomberg poll down in Florida shows Trump ahead by 2 points, just 2. Most other polls down there show Clinton ahead. The RealClearPolitics average, by the way, down in Florida has her leading by just a point-and-a-half. So Florida is very much in contention.

In Nevada, the candidates are tied -- actually tied, according to a brand- new NBC News/"Wall Street Journal"/Marist poll. And in New Hampshire, that little state up there, the NBC poll has Clinton up by 9, while in another poll, Monmouth, shows her lead in New Hampshire just 4 points.

Anyway, Clinton campaigned in Florida today. She warned supporters not to get complacent. And at one stop, she mocked Trump`s debate performance.

Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: I stood next to Donald Trump for four-and-a-half hours in those three debates, proving, I think, once and for all, I have the stamina to be president!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: No matter what he did, no matter what he said, no matter how he stalked me and lurked over me...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: ... I just kept thinking about what Michelle Obama said. When he goes low, we go high!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, meanwhile, a stand-off between one of Trump`s top surrogates, Newt Gingrich, and Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly marked the campaign trail today. Here`s that Fox exchange from last night.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MEGYN KELLY, FOX NEWS: If Trump is a sexual predator, that is...

NEWT GINGRICH (R), FMR. HOUSE SPEAKER, FOX CONTRIBUTOR: He`s not a sexual predator! You can`t say that!

KELLY: OK, that`s your opinion. I`m not taking a position on it.

GINGRICH: You cannot defend that statement!

KELLY: I am not taking (INAUDIBLE)

GINGRICH: I`m sick and tired of people like you using language that`s inflammatory that`s not true!

KELLY: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

GINGRICH: Donald -- Donald Trump...

KELLY: You have no idea whether it is true or not. What we know is that...

GINGRICH: An neither do you!

KELLY: That`s right. And I`m not taking a position on it, unlike you.

GINGRICH: Yes, you are! You want to go back through the tapes of your show recently? You are fascinated with sex, and you don`t care about public policy!

KELLY: Me? Really?

GINGRICH: That`s what I get out of watching you tonight!

KELLY: You know what, Mr. Speaker? I`m not fascinated by sex, but I am fascinated by the protection of women...

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, today Donald Trump congratulated his surrogate, Newt Gingrich, for that performance. Let`s watch Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Congratulations, Newt, on last night. That was an amazing interview. We don`t play games, Newt, right? We don`t play games.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I`m joined right now by "USA Today`s" Washington bureau chief Susan Page, Trump surrogate Matt Schlapp and the chairman of the American Conservative Union -- he has both those hats -- and Democratic pollster Cornell Belcher. His new book`s called "A Black Man in the White House."

Thank you all for joining us. I want to go right now with Susan Page, who I rely on a lot for common sense reporting here. And this is this -- Newt versus Kelly. Why on earth would Trump want to -- he -- the polls are mixed right now. They`re bouncing all over the place. I trust this Fox poll. Who knows if he can still win this thing.

But he ain`t going to win this thing if he focuses on battles with Megyn Kelly. He`s got to keep saying over and over again, If you like the way things are in this country on trade, **immigration**, on wars, vote for Hillary Clinton. That`s the status quo. He`s got to say it every minute of the campaign, and maybe he streak -- what -- find a victory in all this mess.

But if he keeps wasting his firepower on these intramural battles with the media -- I don`t get it. I don`t know why he cares about Newt Gingrich`s peeing match, basically. Why does he get involved in these things?

SUSAN PAGE, "USA TODAY": You know, and it`s not only a distraction from a message that would be more productive for Donald Trump, it also is not appealing to the voters he needs to get back, which are women.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

PAGE: You know, this kind of language...

MATTHEWS: Exactly.

PAGE: ... "You`re fascinated with sex" to a highly respected journalist is not really designed to appeal to some of the college-educated women who have been moving away from the Republican Party this year in a big way.

MATTHEWS: And I think people who would like to get ahead in life, like Megyn`s gotten ahead, they`re thinking, Well, here`s a successful person and he`s dumping on her. What would he do to me? You know, I don`t have the firepower that she has.

Anyway, let`s go to Matt Schlapp on this. Why is Trump fighting these stupid -- I`m not knocking -- certainly not knocking Megyn Kelly. She`s a pro. But why is he getting involved with these fights? I don`t get it.

MATT SCHLAPP, AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE UNION CHAIRMAN: Well, I think when he talks about the issues, and I think his speeches have been focused like a laser on...

MATTHEWS: When is he going to do that?

SCHLAPP: Oh, I agree with you. I think he did it in North Carolina. I think it`s a much smarter way to do things.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

SCHLAPP: I mean, he focuses on the issues. This race should naturally tighten. He is the candidate of change, and the American people want change. And when he doesn`t talk about those key issues of terrorism, the economy, and change in Washington, it`s a day he loses.

MATTHEWS: I agree with you. I think the country`s 50/50. It could be a close election, if he were together as a candidate, didn`t have that history that he keeps bringing back up.

Every time he fights on the front with -- on one of these sex discussions, he`s just reminding everybody of the "Access Hollywood" stuff.

Anyway, Cornell, I don`t know whether you agree or not, but I think this country is divided politically fairly closely between left, right, between now and something different than now, and that Trump keeps wasting his time, in fact, deluding himself into himself into thinking the real battle is between him and some -- a woman -- anchorwoman. What`s that about?

CORNELL BELCHER, DEMOCRATIC POLLSTER: Well, at some point, we`ve got to -- you know, Trump is exactly who he keeps showing us he is, right? And you know, we can talk about him wanting to sort of talk about issues and be a change agent. But consistently, he shows us, in fact, who he really is.

And it`s absolutely ridiculous for him to be getting into these back-and- forth fights that actually expand sort of his problem with women.

But you`re right, Chris. The problem is that, structurally, we are a country that is going to be hard for one candidate to blow another candidate away in the battleground states. At the same time, we`re seeing Clinton expand her overall lead nationally. We know in the battleground states -- you know, go to Nevada. Go to Florida. Go to North Carolina. Structurally, it is really hard for -- experience for a Democrat structurally to open up a 6 or 7-point advantage in those states. So it`s going to be 3 or 4 points.

So you know, what he does now and what she does right now sort of on the issues and generating turnout is really important in these battleground states because it`s not going to be an 8-point race in Florida. It`s not going to be an 8-point race in North Carolina and Nevada.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, I just think there`s a couple things we`re learning in the biographies of both these candidates, one that Trump -- we`re getting focused on his biography, which is a very important thing to do, but it`s killing the message that could be coming as a protest in this campaign over trade and war and a couple other things. We`re losing that message of protest. And Hillary Clinton -- you know, Trump`s doing her the best favor in the world. He`s keeping the focus away from her.

Anyway, in an interview with Bloomberg`s Mark Halperin today, Trump said he liked his chances heading into the home stretch. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARK HALPERIN, BLOOMBERG: What`s your general sense of where you are in the battleground states, Florida, Iowa, Ohio...

TRUMP: I think we`re winning. I think we`re winning Iowa. I think we`re winning Ohio. So do you. I think we`re winning Florida. I think we`re winning Florida, actually, by much more than your polls. You have us 2 points up. I think we`re going to do fantastically in Pennsylvania. I think we`re winning North Carolina. I think we will soon be winning New Hampshire.

It`s jobs. It`s fix our military. It`s take care of our vets. It`s don`t let the world take advantage of us. I mean, I don`t know if I`m a great messenger, but the message is absolutely the right message.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Susan, what`s the smart aspect of saying he`s way ahead in Pennsylvania?

(LAUGHTER)

PAGE: Because...

MATTHEWS: Nobody...

PAGE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: No poll finds that at all.

PAGE: Well, he said something that`s true. I mean, Iowa, Ohio, Florida -- those are states that are very close and that he could definitely win. Pennsylvania seems to be pulling away for Hillary Clinton, and so does New Hampshire.

MATTHEWS: So is North Carolina.

PAGE: And North Carolina also. And maybe Nevada will be close. I mean, the race has been a little scrambled by -- by the -- his candidacy and some of the changes we`ve seen in the demography (INAUDIBLE) in the two parties. But it is now hard when you put together the states where he`s competitive -- it`s hard to see how he gets to 270 electoral votes. That`s been tough for some time. It gets harder now as we get in the home stretch and some of these states open up leads for Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: How do you explain the difference between a Fox poll, and it`s a good Fox poll generally, 3 points today, just came out, and a 14-point difference on AP?

Matt, you want to answer this? How can two polls be that different, 14 and 3?

SCHLAPP: Well, there`s the endless...

MATTHEWS: Why do we bother reporting them, they`re so different? Your thoughts.

SCHLAPP: There`s this endless chatter about what the model is and are they skewed, asking too many Democrats. And will the Democrats turn out, certainly, the African-American vote and Hispanic vote, like they did for Barack Obama? You have all of that.

But I do think there`s a big dynamic that we don`t know how big it is this time, but because Donald Trump has been so excoriated for the last four weeks, and he`s had an October in presidential politics -- we`ve really never seen anything like it.

I do think there`s a lot of voters who like to put him in time out, and there`s a lot of things about Donald Trump they don`t like. But in the end, do they move back to him when the coverage of the race is more serene, or at least as serene...

MATTHEWS: I agree with you.

SCHLAPP: ... as this race could possibly be? So I actually think he`s much closer. This race is going to get tighter. I think that Fox poll, that Investor Business Daily poll, which called it right last time, which says Hillary Clinton is up 1 -- I think that`s much more indicative of this race than these double-digit polls.

MATTHEWS: Cornell, I had this sense watching this thing, like all of us have been doing now for so long, that there`s a sort of a situation that develops. If nothing bad happens to Trump for, like, two or three weeks, or two weeks, and it settles down, it gets much closer.

It`s like his bad behavior, whether it`s historical or current, is what makes the race easy for Hillary Clinton. The minute he doesn`t screw up for, like, a week or two, it seems like it gets much closer. He hasn`t screwed up now since, what, a while ago.

BELCHER: Well, I think that`s right, Chris, because part of the problem is if you look at that "USA Today" poll that came out right now -- I mean, he`s running 9 points behind among Republican performers where she is among Democratic performers. So a lot of the vote that`s left him -- I mean, it`s not like, you know, Hillary Clinton`s all -- all of a sudden winning, you know, over vast majorities of voters who`ve been breaking Republican for all this time because she`s not. She`s doing a little bit better.

But his problem is, when you look at -- you know, go to -- he talked about Philadelphia. Go to Philadelphia and look at the suburbs around, you know, in Pennsylvania, where those college-educated white voters, especially those college-educated white women are so critical. And the college- educated whites, they`ve been -- they haven`t been voting Democrat for the last couple of years. They`ve been voting Republican. And he`s struggling with them right now.

But the moment -- if he can get them back, the moment he gets them back...

MATTHEWS: Didn`t help him today, though.

BELCHER: ... it`s a tight race...

MATTHEWS: Didn`t help him today.

BELCHER: No.

MATTHEWS: I think Susan`s right, Cornell. Susan, I think you`re dead right. Picking fights with successful professional women, like Megyn Kelly, says to a woman in her 20s, 30s or 50s, or one who missed the opportunities in her generation -- they didn`t have the opportunity there are today in larger form -- that person says, That guy doesn`t care about people like me. In fact, he`s against people like me. Susan?

PAGE: Yes. I think that`s true. And Cornell made a great point. In our poll that came out today, 89 percent of Democrats are supporting Hillary Clinton, 80 percent of Republicans are supporting Donald Trump. Now, that`s also an opportunity for him...

SCHLAPP: Sure is.

PAGE: ... because if he doesn`t have some turmoil, self-created wounds over the next 12 days, you would naturally assume some of those Republicans to come home to Donald Trump, and that would tighten up this race.

MATTHEWS: Well, here`s more mishegoss, a new Yiddish term I`ve heard (INAUDIBLE) this year. Here it is. On CNN today, Trump had a strong reaction to a reporter who dared to ask him why he wasn`t out campaigning but was attending the opening of his new hotel in Washington, D.C. Let`s watch that fight.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DANA BASH, CNN CORRESPONDENT: To people who say you`re taking time out of swing states to go do this, you say?

TRUMP: I say the following. You have been covering me for the last -- long time. I did yesterday eight stops and three major speeches. And I`ve been doing this for weeks straight. I left here -- I left the airport, and I don`t have -- I`m going to North Carolina right now, then I`m going to Florida, I`m going up to New Hampshire.

For you to ask me that question is actually very insulting because Hillary Clinton does one stop and then she goes home and sleeps. And yet you`ll ask me that question. I think it`s a very rude question, to be honest with you. And what I do is I want to back my children.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Matt, bingo. Why`d he do that today?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I mean, it is a tough question, but it is interesting...

SCHLAPP: It is.

MATTHEWS: ... that he took time out for a commercial enterprise in the middle of a -- within two weeks of a presidential election. He`s got something better to do? OK. Fine...

SCHLAPP: You know, let me tell you, I worked for President George W. Bush. And one of the things we all complained about is he kept saying, I want to have my head on my own pillow in my own home at night. And we were like, Jeez, if he`d just get out there and spend the night and so some of what we call RONs (ph), we could be in more cities.

And Donald Trump has done twice as many events with three times the crowds. So he does have a fair point to make that nobody can look at Donald Trump and say, you know, you`re not having enough events with the people. Of course, as someone who supports him, I think he needs...

MATTHEWS: OK, you`re missing my question.

SCHLAPP: ... every minute possible out there.

MATTHEWS: I`ll try again, Matt.

SCHLAPP: OK.

MATTHEWS: Why did he accuse her of insulting him? That`s what he did in that conversation. He said, You`re insulting me by asking that question. That`s not an insult!

SCHLAPP: Chris...

MATTHEWS: He could have -- he could have -- he could have spun that back - - You know, what? I still have a responsibility to my company, and this is one of the Republicans I have to meet even when I`m running. He could have said that.

SCHLAPP: Yes, no, look, he`s -- he`s thin-skinned right now with the press. He feels like he`s not getting the fair coverage, and it comes across in those kind of prickly answers.

MATTHEWS: Well, he`s not getting positive coverage, and that`s not helping. Anyway, Cornell, your thoughts in that last minute. Why does he keep picking fights with whatever woman`s nearby?

BELCHER: Because that`s exactly who he is, Chris! I mean, I`m sorry, Matt, but -- but he`s not a disciplined candidate. And the narrative about him not being a disciplined candidate and him being so a little unhinged and particularly prickly with women -- when he -- he keeps reinforcing that narrative over and over and over again, and it`s absolutely killing him with women voters.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... unhinged is being used a lot lately, and it`s not helping. It`s not a word we hear a lot in politics at the presidential level, "unhinged." Anyway...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, thank you, guys. Thank you, Susan. You`re so smart, and you know the history of this stuff. Anyway, thank you, Matt Schlapp. You`re a reasonable guy. And Cornell, I`m looking to you for brains.

Coming up, new revelations from those hacked e-mails show the Clinton campaign in turmoil now over Hillary Clinton`s penchant for privacy. Even if she wins the election, this could be a hard issue to put to bed.

Plus, Vice President Joe Biden took aim to his own party yesterday with me for not doing enough to reach out to white working class voters, well, voters that traditionally have voted Democrat in the past. Well, tonight Michael Moore joins us to talk about how Democrats can reconnect with those voters.

And much more on Newt Gingrich and his fight with Fox`s Megyn Kelly. That`s -- can`t get away from that one for tonight. Why is Newt, a big Trump surrogate, going to war with one of the most popular people in the media?

Finally, my "election diary" for tonight on the strange direction of this campaign, a big Clinton lead nationally, but a tighter, much tighter fight in the battleground states that will decide the Electoral College.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, there`s some evidence out there that Donald Trump`s talk about a rigged election`s having an impact. In that "USA Today"/Suffolk University poll, a majority, 51 percent, of likely voters said they are either somewhat or very concerned there will be violence after the election.

Well, meanwhile, among Trump supporters, 4 in 10 say if Clinton wins, she shouldn`t be seen as legitimately elected. That`s 2 out of 6. 68 percent of Trump voters say they are worried the election results could be -- I love this phrase -- manipulated.

Anyway, the revolutionary rhetoric continued today with Trump supporter Joe Walsh, a former Republican congressman from Illinois. He tweeted, "On November 8th, I`m voting for Trump. On November 9th, if Trump loses, I`m grabbing my musket. You in?"

We`ll be right back after this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. As of Tuesday, Wikileaks has published more than 31,000 e-mails they say belong to Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta -- one guy, 30,000-some e-mails. Anyway, the cache of illegally obtained e-mails appear to provide a real-time view of how a political campaign is run, especially this campaign, the Hillary Clinton campaign.

This morning, "The Washington Post" wrote that "Wikileaks reveals fears and frustrations inside Clinton world. One e-mail exchange highlights that struggle. In the alleged exchanged, a close Clinton ally, Neera Tanden" -- we know her -- clashed with campaign chairman Podesta over Clinton`s e-mail server.

In the e-mail, Tanden allegedly fires off an e-mail writing, "She," meaning Clinton, "start making some other more positive news soon."

Well, Podesta allegedly responds by calling out some of Clinton`s closest staffers, saying: "Speaking of transparency, our friends" -- he`s being sarcastic -- "David Kendall, Cheryl Mills, and Philippe Reines, sure were not forthcoming of the facts here."

Well, Tanden, who worked with Clinton during her 2008 campaign, wondered why these allies didn`t get information about that server out earlier, writing: "I guess they wanted to get away with it."

Well, that`s pretty strong.

Again these e-mails have not been independently authenticated by NBC News. And according to U.S. intelligence officials, Russians are to blame for the cyber-attack.

Anyway, the Clinton campaign is not authenticating -- well, they`re not going on authentic the e-mails either.

Anyway, for more on these, I`m joined by Annie Karni, political -- politics -- actually, politics reporter for Politico. That`s redundant. And Anne Gearan is national political reporter with "The Washington Post."

Anne, I have got to get to you. I wanted you on so much because you`re a straight reporter.

What are we learning? Just if you were like studying a small island in the Western Pacific, and you wanted to know what can we learn about their anthropology, what are we learning about the Clinton world inside?

ANNE GEARAN, "THE WASHINGTON POST": Well, this is Clinton campaign and the Clinton allies that are outside the campaign in their natural habitat, so, to carry your analogy forward a little bit.

We`re sort of studying their folk ways, how they speak to one another, what they`re worried about. And I think a lot of reporters certainly are interested in how they, the campaign, was assessing her strengths and weaknesses and what they considered to be various kinds of outside threats to her candidacy.

One of the interesting things we know, which we see here, something we knew to be true otherwise, but we see it unfold, the way the campaign actually was functioning as a campaign, long, long before she announced and well before her announced date that she said she would decide whether she was running, by January of 2015.

Through the fall, we see John Podesta acting as air traffic control for all kinds of people who were involved in what would become that campaign. So, that`s the kind of thing you can see from this. Nothing terribly surprising, but interesting.

MATTHEWS: Annie, the good news is -- and I think it`s something you have to watch -- is, I`m glad that it looks like not everybody drank the Kool- Aid, that there are people who go -- who see the problem of Hillary Clinton like most objective observers, her penchant for secrecy. It is not a crime, but it is a penchant that has to be observed.

And the others who will say -- who seem to be the ones who help her keep everything secret, and then the newbies that come along like Podesta and Neera, who has been around. But they also see the problem and try to fix it. They say, how come we didn`t put this out about the server? Why didn`t we get ahead of it? Why did we wait for the press to grab us?

ANNIE KARNI, POLITICO: Well, I think there`s two things going on there.

One is, I think you`re right that a positive spin on this critiquing that we`re seeing from Neera Tanden and John Podesta is that Clinton does have aides around her who are very aware of her biggest flaws and weaknesses and can identify them. And now that they`re out there, it seems like that they`re willing to say that to her face as well.

So, she doesn`t just have yes-men around her. It is easier for them to criticize how Cheryl Mills and the old guard from the State Department handled the e-mail server issue because they were not part of that.

MATTHEWS: Oh, I get it. It is easy to blame the guilty.

(CROSSTALK)

KARNI: They can say our friends in the State Department did such a bad job of it.

They -- Neera Tanden and John Podesta were not part of that decision-making process. So it is always easier to critique from the outside. But we also are seeing from the outside of covering this campaign, it seemed like a big difference from `08.

There hasn`t been a shakeup. The same team that was there in place 18 months ago is ending the campaign at the same jobs.

MATTHEWS: Well, she won. If you`re winning, you keep the team.

KARNI: Yes.

But this shows us that, behind the scenes, there are still -- people still think of the State Department people as a clique. And there is some distrust among the levels of aides from different parts of Clinton`s life.

MATTHEWS: I think it is great. I know we got it in the rotten way, through the Russians, but it is still great to learn things.

Anyway, in alleged e-mail exchange from September of 2015, John Podesta purportedly e-mailed Neera Tanden about some concerns he had about the candidate.

He wrote: "We have taken on a lot of water that won`t be easy to pump out of boat." He added that: "Most of that has to do with terrible decisions made pre-campaign, but a lot has to do with her instincts."

Well, Tanden allegedly -- I love this alleged -- well, responded -- you can put the alleged or not there -- responded by writing -- quote -- "Almost no one knows better than me that her instincts can be terrible."

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Anne Gearan, I just find it amazing that somebody I always thought was 100 percent loyal, and she probably is still 100 percent loyal, is still able to see her candidate`s flaw, her bad instincts, bad instincts for secrecy, whatever you want to call it, keeping things under the covers, keeping things back.

Whatever it is, it is a flaw she sees and shares with somebody else who is trying to get her elected.

GEARAN: Well, sure.

Well, Neera Tanden had direct experience with that as deputy campaign manager in 2008. She was part of what really became a pretty dysfunctional campaign. And part of what she was battling against during that campaign was the sort of cabal around Clinton that helped her keep secrets, and certainly, in Tanden`s view, as you see expressed in these e-mails in different contexts.

Now her view is that there is a group of people around Clinton who reinforce her worst instincts. And she is trying to go around that and encourage Clinton to be more forthcoming.

In fact, Podesta writes back to Tanden at one point and says, why don`t you e-mail her? Why don`t you call her and tell her that? And we don`t know what happened, because we only have the Podesta part of this.

MATTHEWS: Easier said than done.

GEARAN: Yes, right.

MATTHEWS: Well, I worked for politicians. I got to tell you something. Nothing is tougher than critiquing the boss, because the boss doesn`t want to hear it. They want to hear you say, nice job. Really good work tonight.

That`s what they want to hear. When you say, you know what, I think you could have sped it up or slowed it down or spoken English or stop hiding stuff, that`s very hard to tell them that.

Anyway, great having you on, Annie Karni.

KARNI: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: And thank you, Anne Gearan, as always. I wanted you and I got you tonight. You`re our best guest on this.

GEARAN: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Up next: Vice President Joe Biden told me yesterday that the Democratic Party needs to do a better job connecting with the kinds of voters that have flocked to Donald Trump, the kind of voters like Joe Biden.

And when we return, filmmaker Michael Moore will be here to talk about what Democrats need to do about that problem.

There he is. I had a great time with him yesterday. Look at him. What is he preaching at me for?

Anyway, this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHAEL MOORE, DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER: We`re all Americans, right? Let`s just start there. Regardless who we`re voting for, right?

We`re all in the same boat. And we`re going to sink or swim together. And I would rather we swim, because I believe we have more things in common than not. We believe in the same things. First of all, we want the best schools for our kids, right, Trump voters, right, right? You want the best schools for your kids.

That`s not -- I know there is a rule don`t agree with Michael Moore on anything.

(LAUGHTER)

MOORE: But I`m trying to come out and meet you halfway.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was filmmaker and liberal activist Michael Moore in a scene from his new documentary just released this week. It`s entitled "Michael Moore in TrumpLand." And it really is. It`s a one-man show performed on stage before a bipartisan, a lot of Trump people there in a Trump stronghold of Wilmington, Ohio, where a lot of Trump people live.

But the film is not the daunting indictment or the damming indictment of Trump that some might expect. Instead, Michael Moore makes a proactive case for Hillary Clinton, someone he readily admits he`s never supported before by voting for her, until now.

It`s Moore`s appeal to the working-class voters who make up Trump`s base in an effort to persuade them that Clinton is the answer of this.

I`m joined right now by himself, Michael Moore.

OK, I`m going to give you a couple minutes here. No interruptions. Why have you fallen in love with the political possibilities of President Hillary Clinton?

MOORE: I have been in love with her for 23 years.

MATTHEWS: But you never voted for her?

MOORE: No, no, because I`m able to separate my personal feelings and my forbidden love from the political issues.

MATTHEWS: Seriously, come on. Tell me why somebody out there should support Hillary who...

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: No, I am serious. I am serious.

In 1993, this woman decided to risk everything and put it all out there so that we could all have universal health care. And she went for it. And she was attacked and humiliated.

MATTHEWS: By a lot of people, including John Dingell and Pat Moynihan. She faced a lot of headwinds.

MOORE: Correct. She did.

MATTHEWS: Rightly or wrongly.

MOORE: Well, it wasn`t wrong to those of us who believed in universal health care. She was the first one out there trying to do that.

MATTHEWS: No, I meant her critics, rightly or wrongly.

MOORE: Right.

MATTHEWS: Because some of them had arguments. But go ahead.

MOORE: Well, you know, I just think I have felt for a long time that she was a force for good, that what she believed in, and the things, the people that she cared about.

Now, I have my disagreements with her politically, and that`s why I was for Bernie and I was for Obama in `08.

MATTHEWS: So who would you prefer were the nominee right now? You prefer it was her or...

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: Right now, tonight?

MATTHEWS: You prefer Bernie right now?

MOORE: No.

MATTHEWS: Why?

MOORE: Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: You voted for him. Why did you vote for him if you don`t want him?

MOORE: Because he lost.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Would you like him to have won?

MOORE: He, as far as I`m concerned, by winning 22 states, a socialist...

MATTHEWS: OK.

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: No, no, no, listen, that was a huge -- you don`t understand what is going to happen after 2016.

These young people, these 18-to-35-year-olds, remember, there are three million new 18-year-old voters every single year.

MATTHEWS: So?

MOORE: By, the next election, that`s 12 million more of them. They favor socialism over capitalism. The whole Bernie thing is absolutely...

MATTHEWS: OK, fair enough. Do you?

MOORE: Absolutely. Yes, because...

MATTHEWS: But Hillary is not a socialist.

MOORE: Well, she is a Christian, so it is the same thing.

It`s all about making sure everyone has a seat at the table and the pie is divided, so that everybody gets a slice. Isn`t that what Christianity is? That`s what she is about, so...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Tell me about -- I don`t want to get in a fight with you. So, I`m not going to...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I`m stopping right now.

MOORE: Yes, OK.

MATTHEWS: I will let you talk.

MOORE: No, no, you said I was going to have two minutes. You gave me 20 seconds. But I`m happy. I`m happy to be here.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Give me the personal case for Hillary. Take more. Take more time.

MOORE: The case for Hillary?

Hillary Clinton, sitting in that -- well, first of all, on a macro level, the fact that we`re -- it isn`t being said enough that we are going to elect our first woman president. This is huge for the country, for the world, for the future, for our young girls, our daughters and granddaughters, all of that.This is a very, very positive, great moment.

When she is in the Oval Office, she is not going on harm the planet. She is not going to harm children.

MATTHEWS: You don`t think she is more hawkish than Obama?

MOORE: She may be more hawkish than Obama. I hope not.

MATTHEWS: Does that worry you?

MOORE: Of course it does, yes, yes. That`s why I was for Bernie.

I mean, she voted for the war. So, this is something that we have -- but she has said that she was wrong. She wrote in her book she had never been more wrong about anything. What more do you want? I mean, she said that she was wrong.

And I think that if the Bernie revolution stays intact, and everybody who is organized behind Bernie, on November 9, after she is in the White House, we will be there to support her in the good that she`s going to do and make sure that, if she doesn`t...

MATTHEWS: We all agree that women have a different advantage in life and perspective you and I don`t have. They know things we don`t, childbearing, child raising in many cases.

MOORE: Oh, no, no.

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: It is not just that. It`s that they have not caused climate change. They don`t build factories. They don`t build atomic bombs. They don`t start wars. They don`t -- how many school shootings have...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I am asking you.

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: ... go in there and shoot up the school.

MATTHEWS: Do you think women are less warlike? Are women less warlike than men, to start?

MOORE: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: Like, give me an example of a national leader in the world who has been less warlike.

MOORE: Well, because women haven`t been able to...

MATTHEWS: Margaret Thatcher.

MOORE: That`s the outlier.

MATTHEWS: Golda Meir? Golda Meir?

MOORE: Whenever you have -- if you have watched my last film, Chris, whenever you have just one or two women, just as when you have one African- American on the Supreme Court, you end up with that token who has to appease the other side to get in there, so you have Clarence Thomas.

But what you have, now that we have had over 80 countries that have elected a woman, how many of those have gone to war?

MATTHEWS: You think Thurgood Marshall kowtowed to the other countries?

MOORE: No, but we lived in a different time then.

MATTHEWS: OK, I`m just challenging them.

MOORE: When we had presidents -- when we had presidents -- when we had Republican presidents that weren`t willing...

MATTHEWS: I get your point, and I`m inspired by it.

Look, Vice President Joe Biden told me yesterday the Democratic Party has not spoken well enough to the concerns of working-class voters. Let`s watch this, because I think you had a shot at him for putting those boxing gloves on, that sort of thing. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOSEPH BIDEN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We don`t associate with their difficulty anymore. And it`s almost like -- like, somehow, they`re in good shape. But they`re not. They`re not.

And so we just started getting back to the point we could talk about actually beginning to rebuild the middle class. Wages are actually up. Real wages are actually up for the first time in a long time. But we don`t talk enough to their concerns.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Do you think Biden could have beaten Hillary Clinton in the primaries?

MOORE: I don`t know.

MATTHEWS: I think he thinks he could.

MOORE: You don`t have me on for that kind of talk.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Yes, but you were for Bernie. You were Bernie, and now you`re with Hillary. You said you`re a socialist, but you like Hillary.

MOORE: I like Joe Biden, of course. What`s not to like about him?

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s talk about Hillary positively. Let`s see the first six months of her administration, first 100 days. What would you like her to do, get done?

MOORE: Replace the pipes in Flint, Michigan, so people can stop drinking poisoned water.

MATTHEWS: OK, go direct to that, your town.

MOORE: Yes. Yes. My initial concern is with friends and family who live there, absolutely.

She could do a bunch of things with executive orders in terms of with **immigration**, with the FDA. Ban high-fructose corn syrup. How about that for an idea? How about let`s starts nonviolent drug offenders from prisons, at least the federal prisons, that Obama has already started to do?

There`s a number of things that she can do without Congress. My fear and my hope, both, is that she doesn`t begin her first 100 days like President Obama did, bringing in the Wall Street guys to run the Treasury Department, going, holding the olive branch out to the Republicans.

We have been through enough of this. We need somebody like her.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: How do you get the 60 votes that you need in the Senate to get anything done? You got to get some Republicans.

MOORE: I thought it was 50, 51. I thought it was the majority.

MATTHEWS: No, well, they will just stop the vote.

MOORE: Oh, they will stop the vote we so don`t do anything, right? Yes.

MATTHEWS: That`s right. It`s a fact.

MOORE: Yes, that started because...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: How do you get rid of that?

MOORE: ... Democrats don`t have the courage of their convictions.

MATTHEWS: How do you get rid of that?

MOORE: Republicans never would have done that math. They would have said, damn it, it`s 51. Get the hell out of here, right?

MATTHEWS: You`re right. The segregationists did it. I know who did it.

MOORE: But the Democrats...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But in the real world, how do you get rid of it?

MOORE: Well, 51 is the majority. But we need 60. Oh, we don`t have 60.

MATTHEWS: What do you think? It`s just namby-pamby?

MOORE: Yes, the Democrats have been namby-pamby and not just standing their ground and saying, damn it, this is what the American people

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: The majority of Americans are liberal. They`re liberal on all the issues.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MOORE: The only reason Republicans have any house in Congress is because of gerrymandering and voter suppression. And those days are coming to end. And that`s why you hear...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But the Senate is two votes automatic. It`s not about gerrymandering in the Senate.

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: It`s about voter suppression.

And, yes, it is about, within the states, the districts in the states get gerrymandered. And Congress...

MATTHEWS: Of course that is true. I know that.

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: So, when are we going to stop that?

MATTHEWS: How do you get something through the Congress?

MOORE: I believe Hillary Clinton is going to make...

MATTHEWS: The nuclear option. She is going to go all the way and just go with it, and go with 50 votes? She doesn`t even need 51, by your counting.

MOORE: I think that she -- as I said in my piece, she is going to put on those, I can`t say the word, kicking boots that Beyonce had on at the Super Bowl, and she`s going to kick some ass.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Tim Ryan (sic) can break the tie in the Senate with 50 votes.

MOORE: That`s right, 50. We don`t need 51. We only need 50. Come on.

Come on, Chris. Have a little hope.

MATTHEWS: Michael Moore, that`s the world he lives in.

Anyway, thank you. He`s an idealist. He`s...

MOORE: Oh, how horrible that we still have some idealism left.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I didn`t say it horribly.

MATTHEWS: Michael Moore, who always likes to make everybody else into a conservative.

Anyway, Michael Moore...

MOORE: Not you, Chris.

MATTHEWS: He did a good job in "TrumpLand." I watched the movie. It is really good.

It shows how you can appeal to people who normally don`t like you if you do it right. And that`s not about left or right. It`s just smart.

Anyway, up next -- see?

MOORE: Thank you.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It`s a very interesting movie.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Why is the Trump camp back at war with Megyn Kelly? This is Doofus! Why are they fighting with Megyn Kelly and fighting with Dana Bash? They picked any woman reporter that gets within five feet. They start a fight with them. What is this about?

This time, top surrogate Newt Gingrich picked a fight with her. And that`s ahead.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

As we showed you earlier, unbelievable, FOX News` Megyn Kelly tangled with Donald Trump`s surrogate, the former speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, last night.

Let`s watch this thing.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KELLY: If Trump is a sexual predator, that is --

GINGRICH: He`s not a sexual predator. You can`t say that --

KELLY: OK, that`s your opinion. I`m not taking a position on it.

GINGRICH: You can`t defend that statement.

KELLY: I`m not taking a position on it.

GINGRICH: I`m sick and tired of people like you, using language that`s inflammatory, that`s not true.

KELLY: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker --

GINGRICH: Donald Trump does not --

KELLY: -- you have no idea whether it`s true or not. What we know is that there --

GINGRICH: Neither do you.

KELLY: That`s right. And I`m not taking a position on it, unlike you.

(CROSSTALK)

GINGRICH: Yes, you are.

Do you want me to go back to the tapes of your show recently. You are fascinated with sex and you don`t care about public policy.

KELLY: Me, really?

GINGRICH: That`s what I get out of watching you tonight.

KELLY: You know what, Mr. Speaker? I`m not fascinated by sex, but I am fascinated by the protection of women.

GINGRICH: Do you want to comment on whether the Clinton ticket has a relationship to a sexual predator?

KELLY: We on "The Kelly File" have covered that story as well, sir.

GINGRICH: I want to hear you use the words. I want to hear your words, Bill Clinton is a sexual predator. I dare you. Say, Bill Clinton is a sexual predator.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that wasn`t going anywhere.

NBC`s Hallie Jackson caught up with Newt Gingrich this afternoon and says Republican women are thanking him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HALLIE JACKSON, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Mr. Speaker, what do you say to the Republican women who saw that interview last night and are upset by it, frankly? What`s your message to them?

GINGRICH: I haven`t seen that in Twitter. I haven`t seen that anywhere. I`ve had a lot of Republican women write me and thank me for standing up for the baloney that is thrown at us by people who excuse Bill Clinton, ignore Bill Clinton and then explain to us how shocked they are by Donald Trump.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Let`s bring in the HARDBALL roundtable tonight. Heidi Przybyla is political correspondent with "USA Today", and Catherine Rampell is opinion writer for "The Washington Post". I read her column all the time. And Raul Reyes is a contributor to NBCNews.com.

So, we have to start with the women because this is -- this seems like a festivity of craziness by this guy. Why doesn`t he -- doesn`t he know, that he only gets one headline a day and he chooses this one?

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, USA TODAY: And the weird part is they just doubled down on it and don`t realize that was such a losing position to be in. They think they won that.

And I think what`s coming out of this is that we`re seeing that there`s not just a civil war within the GOP but there is -- the hot, white war and debate within the party on gender lines, because conservative women are starting to rebel. And Megyn Kelly is in many ways the face for that. This is kind of bookend, Chris. If you remember how this entire narrative started --

MATTHEWS: Of course I remember. The starting gate (ph) --

PRZYBYLA: Right, was with Megyn Kelly`s questions.

MATTHEWS: OK. Here`s a question, John Silber, a former Boston University president, had a good shot of being governor up there. He picks a fight with a very popular, local anchor woman, who gets blown away.

Why do these guys pick fights with people that seem to be politically likable, popular and trusted? Why pick a fight with somebody like that?

CATHERINE RAMPELL, THE WASHINGTON POST: I don`t think it`s so deliberate or strategic. I think what`s happened is that you can`t defend defensible, right? You can`t really defend any of Trump`s behavior or comments, at least on this issue. So --

MATTHEWS: The taped stuff, you mean?

RAMPELL: Yes, yes.

So the knee-jerk reaction is to impugn the motive or the neutrality of the person asking the question. And this is an effective strategy for the most part when you`re dealing with non-conservative media, right? This is what Republican dozen all the time. This it`s what Trump and his surrogates have doubled down.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

RAMPELL: It doesn`t work so well when you`re dealing with a very popular, well-respected conservative journalist.

MATTHEWS: Raul?

RAUL REYES, NBCNEWS.COM CONTRIBUTOR: And look at the dynamic -- look at the dynamic that was in play in this interview. When she is addressing him, she calls him Mr. Speaker. She refers to him as sir. When he talks back to her, he is saying, Megyn, he is wagging his finger. And he tries - -

PRZYBYLA: Pointing his finger.

REYES: -- pointing his finger. And then he is telling her how to do her job.

Now, first of all, you never get in a fight of someone -- with a host when it`s their show, as you know. You cannot win.

MATTHEWS: Don`t fight with somebody who has a barrel of ink. The old argument.

REYES: Right. And second of all, he is doing that thing, that mansplaining thing which --

MATTHEWS: What is mansplaining?

REYES: That is when a man is trying being condescending and arrogant, trying to tell women what they think they should know. Women don`t like it. Anyone who is evolved doesn`t like it.

MATTHEWS: That`s a new term, mansplaining?

REYES: Not that new.

MATTHEWS: New reality.

RAMPELL: I think the best part of all this is when the guy who had the affair --

MATTHEWS: Bingo!

RAMPELL: -- who was supposed to be replaced by someone who had an affair, but was instead replaced by somebody who was a pedophile, who happened to have impeached someone having an affair.

MATTHEWS: You`re describing the order of succession of House of Representatives on the Republican roll.

RAMPELL: He is accusing this journalist of being fascinated by sex. It`s like a comical lack of --

MATTHEWS: Who are you to keep memories of all this alive is this?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: It`s all true.

PRZYBYLA: Republicans, they will quietly tell that you they have had their minds blown throughout this entire episode looking at the guys who`ve been put up as Trump`s character witnesses on his women problem.

MATTHEWS: You mean the nine wives club?

PRZYBYLA: Yes. Yes. You got Newt and Rudy.

MATTHEWS: I know. Nine wives among three guys. You have a baseball team out there.

Anyway, our roundtable is sticking with us. And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know. They keep doing it.

Anyway, this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, that new "USA Today"/Suffolk poll with Hillary Clinton in front by nine points has some other interesting nuggets in it. The poll found that 51 percent of voters say they believe the women who have come forward to accuse Donald Trump of sexual misconduct. They believe them. And more than four in ten say those accusations make them less likely to support Trump for president.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

Heidi, tell me something I don`t know.

PRZYBYLA: Chris, you just referenced the stratosphere of poll numbers that we`re seeing. I talked to one of Hillary Clinton`s top strategists yesterday just to see kind of where they are in terms of the math. And they`re being very, very conservative. I know they`re not just spinning me.

They told me, look, we can see a scenario where we actually lose Iowa. You know, we don`t get the Obama map. We don`t get even get to --

MATTHEWS: They don`t get Ohio or Florida.

PRZYBYLA: Yes, and don`t pick up North Carolina, don`t compensate for that.

And they aren`t just spinning me because then today I looked at where they`re running their final round of ads and they`re playing it in all the conservative states. We don`t see them going into Arizona. We don`t see them going into Georgia. That could change. You know, we`re going to start --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: They`re running just what they need.

PRZYBYLA: The most basic battleground map, yes.

MATTHEWS: Catherine?

RAMPELL: So, there was an interesting poll recently of millennials conducted by NORC. And --

MATTHEWS: Are you still a millennial?

RAMPELL: I am still a millennial.

MATTHEWS: I`m reading your column, you`re about 55 years old. I think you`d been in the business about 25 years --

RAMPELL: I like to project maturity but I`m actually very mature.

MATTHEWS: Through your writing, I`ve got to tell you.

RAMPELL: Well, thank you.

MATTHEWS: You don`t seem like a millennial when I`m reading you.

RAMPELL: Well, in any case, this poll of millennials asked among other things, what are the most important problems facing this country. And there was a huge divide based on race. So black respondents again age 18 to 30, they were most likely to name racism. Hispanic respondents were most likely to name **immigration**. Asian --

MATTHEWS: What do you mean by **immigration**?

RAMPELL: That`s just the catch-all capper, I don`t know exactly. The Asian-American respondents were most likely to name education.

MATTHEWS: How did I know that? I knew that was going to be it.

RAMPELL: And white respondents were most likely to name terrorism. So, there`s a little bit of a difference here.

REYES: Lionel Sosa, he`s one of the most influential Latino Republicans in Texas. Now, this is a guy, he pretty much created what we call Hispanic outreach. He was doing it for Reagan, H.W., George W. Bush. So, he is decades before everyone had a person going out to Latino community, he was the strategist, he created ads, he`s a big league Republican player.

He, so now -- now, for some time he`s been dissatisfied with the direction of the party. He just announced he is voting for Hillary Clinton. So, that`s just one guy.

But if someone like him who decades in the GOP is finally saying he`s throwing in with Hillary Clinton, that just speaks how far Trump has taken the GOP away from --

MATTHEWS: It may be temporary. I think Republicans will do well in your community eventually. I think entrepreneurism --

REYES: But losing someone like him, that speaks a lot.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I think it`s Trump himself, not the party.

Heidi Przybyla, thank you. And, Catherine Rampell, thank you, and Paul Reyes.

REYES: Raul.

MATTHEWS: Why do I keep reading Paul? Get my head into this. Raul, thank you so much.

We`ll be right back.

REYES: Thank you.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary, Wednesday, October 26.

Well, I have a sense that this election for president is being pulled in two ways. I`m not talking about the tension between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. That`s natural. No, there`s a different tension at work right now that`s remarkable. It`s the attention between a voter`s impulse to vote their beliefs right now about the country and the tendency to vote for or against a candidate based on his or her fitness for office.

I believe if Donald Trump did not have his history of personal behavior or misbehavior, we all know the allegations, if he were merely judged by the three main issues he`s raised, 11 million people in the country illegally, the massive loss of the country`s manufacturing base and the bad war decisions especially Iraq, he would be running very close to if not ahead of Hillary Clinton.

So, here`s the danger, if Trump loses and Hillary wins, the message of the Trump campaign will be dismissed. It shouldn`t be. People are not happy about it. But we don`t have an upstanding **immigration** system we`re proud of, not happy with the loss of manufacturing jobs, not happy with the wars that damaged the lives of so many young Americans. The fact that a candidate with Trump`s personal baggage is still getting the support he is should tell the winner, if it`s Hillary, to take seriously the message Trump was sowing to so many despite himself. Don`t lead the rejection of Trump lead the next president to reject his entire message.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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Chris Matthews

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CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Is Donald Trump the new Baghdad Bob?

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews out in Pittsburgh, where tomorrow, I`ll be interviewing Vice President Joe Biden, who`s out on the campaign trail.

With just two weeks to go in the race and polls showing a lead for Hillary Clinton, there`s at least one person who thinks Donald Trump is winning -- Donald Trump. According to Trump, the polls are phony and the Democrats are trying to discourage his supporters. Here was Trump earlier today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: There`s some great polls have just come out. I believe we`re actually winning. If you read "The New York Times" interview (ph) and some of these phony papers -- these are phony, disgusting, dishonest papers. But if you read this stuff, it`s, like, What are we doing? What are we wasting time for?

The truth is, I think we`re winning. What they do is they show these phony polls, where they -- you know, where they look at Democrats, and it`s heavily weighted with Democrats. And then they`ll put on a poll where we`re not winning, and everybody says, Oh, they`re not winning. What they do is they try and suppress the vote. This way, people don`t go out and vote. But we`re winning this race. I really believe we`re winning.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, later in the day, Trump said the polls show he`s down, but said his voters have greater enthusiasm than Clinton`s voters. Let`s listen to that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I think we`re going to have a Brexit situation. You know, that one was behind in the polls, And I guess I`m somewhat behind in the polls, but not by much. I mean, in your state, I`m 1 point, 2 points, and even in three polls -- 1 point, 2 points, and even. And I think we have a much greater -- a tremendous enthusiasm, much greater enthusiasm than she has.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, yesterday, Trump`s campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, acknowledged they were the underdogs. Let`s watch her.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Where do you see this race right now? Do you acknowledge that you`re behind?

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: We are behind. She has some advantages, like $66 million in ad buys just in the month of September. Our advantage going in -- we were behind 1, 3, 4 points in some of these swing states that Mitt Romney lost to President Obama, Chuck.

Our advantage is that Donald Trump is just going to continue to take the case directly to the people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Meanwhile, Karl Rove, who spent election night 2012 arguing with the Fox News decision desk over the results, is throwing in the towel for his party`s candidate. Let`s watch him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KARL ROVE, FMR. BUSH SR. ADVISER, FOX CONTRIBUTOR: If he plays an inside straight, he could get it, but I doubt that he`s going to going to be able to play it. He has 186 electoral votes in states that he either leads outside of the margin of error that`s -- or is thought comfortably put away. That compares to Romney`s 206.

He would have to not only win two states where he is either only slightly ahead or behind by 4, but he would have to pick up states where he is behind by, at, or above the national average. I don`t see it happening.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: On the latest ABC News tracking poll, Clinton has a 12-point lead over Trump, 50 to 38. That`s nationally. Well, today Trump called it a totally phony poll, that one. Anyway, a CNN Opinion Research poll just out today shows a closer race, with Clinton leading by just 5 points, 49 to 44.

I`m joined right now by "The New York Times`s" Yamiche Alcindor, Hugh Hewitt, host of "The Hugh Hewitt Show" on the Salem Radio Network, and Democratic strategist Tad Devine -- he`s back. He was former senior adviser to the Bernie Sanders campaign. Good to have him back.

Let`s go to Yamiche and let`s go in this order. What is the strategy of Trump saying he`s not behind? Because just the other day, he was saying the election is fixed and he can`t possibly win. I thought one was to encourage his voters. I`m not even sure -- what is his strategy, saying he`s going to win and the polls are wrong, or saying he`s going to get screwed and the polls are right? I mean, which is his strategy here, Yamiche?

YAMICHE ALCINDOR, "NEW YORK TIMES": I mean, we`re seeing two things happen here. Donald Trump I think is in one way trying to tell people that he`s realizing that he`s behind and that he wants to kind of rile up his base and wants to tell people, Hey, there`s still time, we need to get this together.

But there`s also this other part of Donald Trump that I think where he really is in denial in some ways. He sees these polls, the same polls that he would be talking about if he was winning and he says now they`re rigged. And it goes to this idea of making the case that the election is rigged and really wants his supporters to feel like, If I lose, it`s not because of anything that I did, but really, it`s because of the media and the people who are rigging this election.

MATTHEWS: Yes, Hugh, he`s really trying to be scientific about her, clinical. He`s saying, Let me tell you how they rig it. They give more weighting to the Democrats when they`re polled than they give to the potential Republican voters. He`s really getting into the science of polling and showing how it`s being, according to him, rigged. At the same time -- well, I`m not sure what at the same time is, except it`s rigged. The polls are rigged. The elections are going to be rigged.

Is that the theme to get his people out?

ALCINDOR: I think it`s the theme to get his people out. But I should say I think it`s also part of this -- him being angry at the system. Yes, he wants to get his voters out. And they are enthusiastic. I think I would say that he is...

MATTHEWS: I would say.

ALCINDOR: ... right with that, that he`s -- that his supporters are very enthusiastic. So there`s a little bit of that going on.

But I think some of this is the fact that he is -- he`s really kind of departing from the message of his campaign. Kellyanne Conway is really trying to tweet out and really trying to do interviews where she says, We understand we`re behind, because she wants people to understand that they are serious, that they`re presidential candidates, that they understand what the numbers are saying to them. But Donald Trump is kind of really doing what he wants to do in this case.

MATTHEWS: Hugh, can you understand his strategy, his public strategy?

HUGH HEWITT, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: No, not really. I think it`s important for him to focus on the "Obama care" meltdown, to focus on issues at this point and leave the pollsters to their polling. If he wants to point to anything, you point to Tom Cotton winning by 17 percent two years ago in Arkansas and Mitch McConnell winning by 15 percent, neither of which were predicted anything close to that kind of a landslide.

But you don`t unskew polls. It`s a bad move. I`ve fallen into that trap myself.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

HEWITT: I learned trust the RealClearPolitics average and campaign on the issues.

MATTHEWS: What do you think was -- I hate to take you down a rabbit hole you don`t want to go down, but why was the Cotton race underpolled? Why was Mitch McConnell underpolled?

HEWITT: I do think that state polling is much more difficult than national polling. I`ve tried to figure it out with people like Sean Trende at RealClearPolitics. The bigger your sample, the easier it is to model a turnout. The smaller your experience, and a Senate race in every six years on an off year was a real bust.

But I think Cotton won by 17 points. Brad Dayspring (ph) of Politico pointed out to me that the last poll showed him winning by 8 to 10. But about three weeks out, they thought that Prior-Cotton race was a dead heat, and Cotton wins by 17 points. It does give you pause when you come to some polls.

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Tad, who`s a political strategist, not a pollster. Tad, I don`t understand. When you got two weeks to go in the polls, why doesn`t Trump say the following. If you like the way things are going, vote for the usual candidate, Hillary Clinton. If you like the way we`re losing jobs in the manufacturing part of this country, getting killed on that front, vote for what we have. If you like the way we have uncontrolled **immigration**, vote for that. If you like these stupid wars, vote for that. Vote yes for Hillary.

Why doesn`t he set it up as a zero-sum game, If you vote for Hillary Clinton, you`re voting for the way things are, and really set it up smartly instead of arguing about polling and crap like that? Your thoughts.

TAD DEVINE, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: My thoughts are because he`s not a disciplined candidate, because he doesn`t really care about the mechanics of campaigns, because he doesn`t stick to a message. You know, this is a guy who will say whatever he wants to say if he thinks it serves his purposes at that momentum. It`s a Twitter kind of form of communication.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

DEVINE: So you know, I think he`s trying to offer reassurance to his supporters that he`s not out of it. But the truth is, he`s fallen far behind, and there`s very few, if any, paths for him to win the election.

MATTHEWS: What you think`s happened to him? Is it the tape from 2005? What is it that broke his chance?

DEVINE: Well, I think a combination of, number one, the debates, where Hillary Clinton performed like a president. She demonstrated presidential capacity. She dealt with him very effectively.

Number two, I think that tape that was released of him on the bus confirmed all the suspicions that people had about him, particularly with women. That`s why he`s trailing. He`s 20 points down in the ABC poll with women right now. So I think it`s a combination of those events.

MATTHEWS: Well, Trump went after the media today again, saying he was looking out for working Americans. I wish he would say -- not that I want him to do it, but the smart thing -- and I like politics -- is to do it the right way. Let`s watch.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: The media isn`t just against me, they`re against all of you. That`s really what they`re against. They`re not against me, they`re against what we represent. The media is entitled, condescending and even contemptuous of the people who don`t share their elitist views. And this is all for money. This is for money, largely, money and power. I see you and I hear you. I am your voice!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Hugh on that. What do you make of that argument, that he represents the regular folks out there and the media represents the elite? And why would the media, except a lot of us are -- a lot of media people are Ivy Leaguers and they are, you might say, the intellectual elite, although I don`t think that`s what I brag about, but they are, some of them -- why is the media pro-elite, according to him? Give me the motivation because you`re on that side of thinking and I want to hear the smart way of saying it.

HEWITT: Thank you. To quote Kissinger, it has the additional benefit of being true. Ninety-percent plus of Manhattan Beltway media elites will vote for Hillary Clinton and will applaud her election. That seeps into coverage. It`s what Dan Rather said. News is where you look. Those elites look for news in places other than, for example, the "Obama care" premium hikes or the problems at the FBI.

These are stories where if Donald Trump were making a comprehensive case -- it goes back to Nixon and Agnew. You know this, Chris.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

HEWITT: This is an old saw and it`s a true saw in the Republican cannon that you don`t get a fair shake. But you`ve got to deal with it by focusing on issues, not on the problem of bias.

(CROSSTALK)

ALCINDOR: ... really quickly?

MATTHEWS: Yamiche, do you think that`s true? Do you think that`s true? I mean, I look at Joe Biden. He`s not elite. I look at Bobby Casey of Pennsylvania. I don`t think he`s elite. I look at Toomey, who`s not elite. Who are these -- name me the elite in the media. Give me the names.

ALCINDOR: Well, this is the thing. If we ask people like Donald Trump, or if you ask people like Bernie Sanders, they were both going after some of the same people. They were talking about "The New York Times." They were talking about "The Washington Post."

And really, this is something I think that is kind of an effective argument because people really do feel like when they go and get the news that they`re really getting it from these people who have some sort of plan to rig this election or rig the economy or don`t want to cover the real issues, when, you know, obviously, the media is in some ways covering the news of the day and covering things that we think are important. But there are people making value judgments. But I should add that I talked to...

MATTHEWS: Do you know anybody, Yamiche, at "The New York Times" who`s pro- life?

ALCINDOR: That`s not a question I`m going to answer. I have no idea.

MATTHEWS: Do you know anybody?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You don`t have to name names. Do you know anybody at "The Times" who`s pro-life?

ALCINDOR: I have not asked my co-workers that question, I should say.

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s cute.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... making your point. That`s the way you make your point. Anyway, go ahead. Go ahead, Yamiche.

ALCINDOR: But I really wanted -- this idea of -- I was talking to a Trump supporter today, and he said that he felt that Donald Trump was what he called a blue collar billionaire. It`s the first time I had heard that term. But this is the that people are really believing that he`s a voice for them.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I think so.

ALCINDOR: And I think that that`s something that`s really powerful, and that could be an issue that he could continue to talk about if he wasn`t talking about suing his sexual assault accusers.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I think -- I think people -- I want to go back to Hugh -- let me go back to Tad on that. I think people look at Trump, who like him, those who like him, as sort of a Sinatra kind of guy. Yes, he has a lot of money, but he acts like a little guy who got to be a big guy. He doesn`t look like he was born to it. He doesn`t look like that. Your thoughts.

DEVINE: Well, I think he doesn`t sound like that, you know, the language that he uses. But you know, listen, that clip you just played of Trump, he was taking it directly off the teleprompter. It was very effective. It was a powerful message. Trump`s problem is he stops going off the teleprompter. He goes to Gettysburg to make this big address and he says he`s going to sue the women who are making charges against him...

MATTHEWS: Great headline.

DEVINE: ... and that`s the news! Yes, it`s ridiculous. And it`s stupid and it`s selfish and it`s a big reason he`s going to lose.

MATTHEWS: Over the weekend, Hillary Clinton said she won`t respond to Trump anymore. That`s smart. Today on the trail, however, she had strong words for him, taking him to task for what he tweeted about the invasion of Mosul. Boy, this is getting interesting. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Just last night, he tweeted that the new effort under way to push the terrorists out of the key city of Mosul is already, and I quote, "a total disaster."

He`s basically declaring defeat before the battle has even started. He`s proving to the world what it means to have an unqualified commander-in- chief.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, Clinton was joined at the rally by Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who attacked Trump for labeling Clinton a "nasty woman" at last week`s debate. By the way, Senator Warren knows exactly how to fight with Trump. Let`s watch her here again.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN (D), MASSACHUSETTS: He thinks that because he has money that he can call women "fat pigs" and "bimbos." He thinks that because he has a mouth full of Tic Tacs that he can force himself on any woman within groping distance!

(BOOS)

WARREN: Well, I got news for you, Donald Trump! Women have had it with guys like you!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

WARREN: And nasty women have really had it with guys like you!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

WARREN: Get this, Donald. Nasty women are tough. Nasty women are smart. And nasty women vote!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I have to go to -- I have to go to Tad because you`ve had to deal with clients. How do you find somebody so perfectly designed as Elizabeth Warren to go after Trump? She has no fear of him. She`s unassailable at home. She can`t be defeated. She seems to have a way of getting beyond tough. He`s tough on Hillary. He`s tough on everybody. She`s tougher than him.

DEVINE: Yes, listen, she`s connecting, OK? That`s what it`s all about in politics. I mean, Bernie Sanders connected with voters. That`s why he had the campaign that he ran in the primary process. Elizabeth Warren connects very powerfully. She uses plain language. She goes right at it. She`s pushing back on a bully. And you know, I think that -- you know, she`s just killing him out there.

And I -- listen, this is one of Hillary`s great advantages, that it`s not just Hillary that`s fighting this fight. The Obamas, they`re incredible, the vice president, Bernie`s been great, Elizabeth Warren today -- I mean, this is a murderers` row of surrogates that`s being thrown at Trump right now, and he`s paying the price for it.

MATTHEWS: You`re talking about the Yankees of old, of the `20s. Anyway, thank you -- the murderers` row. Thank you, Yamiche Alcindor of "The New York Times," Hugh Hewitt of Salem and Tad Devine of the Democratic Party.

Coming up -- Democrats are pushing hard to win control of the U.S. Senate. They got a good shot. One of the states they hope to flip from red to blue is Pennsylvania. Looks like they got a good shot, but it`s going to be close.

Hillary Clinton was there in Pittsburgh this weekend -- right here, in fact -- blasting Republican senator Pat Toomey for supporting Donald Trump. He`s not actually supporting Donald Trump. It`s very hard to figure out what he is regarding Trump. He`s playing it very cute. We`re going to take a closer look at the Keystone State in a minute as part of our "Battle for the Senate" series, which we`ve just really started.

Plus, with all Trump`s talk of a rigged election, here`s a real-world concern come election day. The Justice Department will be sharply restricted in how it monitors voting sites this time. We`ll have far fewer election watchdogs this year than at any time since the days of poll taxes and literacy texts.

And Barack Obama`s flying high with an approval rating in the mid to high 50s now. Now he`s using his popularity not just to help Hillary Clinton, but to punish Republicans up and down the ballot for supporting Donald Trump. I love the way he`s going after Darrell Issa of California. He wants to put the -- well, he wants to put the nails in that guy`s political coffin.

Finally, my "election diary" for tonight, October 24th, with just 15 days, two weeks and a day -- can you believe it? -- two weeks and a day and we`re going to have this election.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, the great comedian Bill Murray -- and who doesn`t like him -- has been awarded the Mark Twain Prize for American humor. It happened last night. Murray, whose 40-year film career includes starring roles in classics like "Ghostbusters," "Groundhog Day," "Caddieshack," was honored at the Kennedy Center in Washington last night by fellow comedians Dan Aykroyd, David Letterman and cast members from "SNL."

And after the event, Murray, who grew up in Chicago, paid tribute to his beloved World Series-bound Chicago Cubs.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL MURRAY, COMEDIAN: It`s exciting. You know, if you don`t know what it`s like to wait your whole life for the team you root for to win, you can`t explain it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: We`ll be right back. By the way, I saw Bill Murray at the airport recently. He`s a nice guy.

Back in a minute.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. One contest that could decide control over the U.S. Senate is the race in my home state of Pennsylvania, the most expensive campaign in the country for that office.

Anyway, in the RealClearPolitics average, incumbent Republican senator Pat Toomey holds a 2-point lead over his Democratic challenger, Katie McGinty.

Anyway, Pennsylvania has trended Democratic in recent elections, but one thing Toomey has going for him in history, Pennsylvania voters have split their tickets three times since 1992, when the state reelected Senator Arlen Specter back then and voted in Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton.

They did it again in 2000, when Pennsylvania reelected Rick Santorum to the Senate, but also supported Democrat Al Gore for president, again in 2004, reelected Specter at that time, by throwing their votes to Democrat John Kerry for president.

But things have changed. In 2000, Democrats held only a 500,000-vote advantage in registration over Republicans. Today, Democrats have roughly a million-voter advantage in registration.

Toomey also has to contend with the coattails of Hillary Clinton, who leads in the state by an average of six points, and with the challenges facing his party`s nominee, Donald Trump.

Over the weekend, Clinton took on actually the incumbent senator directly.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Send Katie McGinty on behalf of Pennsylvania to the United States Senate.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: She`s running against someone who refuses to stand up to Donald Trump. How much does he have to hear or to see?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: And in their first debate on television, Toomey, who has yet to say who he will vote for, whether he will vote for Trump or not, was repeatedly pressed by the moderator on that point, and McGinty, to disclose his choice. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

QUESTION: As a leader in your party, yes or no, do you support, as in will you vote for and encourage others to vote for, your party`s presidential nominee?

SEN. PAT TOOMEY (R), PENNSYLVANIA: And because Katie is so extremely partisan, she can`t grasp the idea that somebody might have trouble with a candidate in their own party. But I do. On the other hand, I also know that, if he were president, he would probably sign legislation that would be constructive.

KATIE MCGINTY (D), PENNSYLVANIA SENATORIAL CANDIDATE: I will tell you, waiting to be persuaded is political-speak for waiting for the next poll.

But, again, the senator is the only person in the United States of America who has not leveled with his constituents on this simple question. Are you voting for Donald Trump? I will yield the balance of my time back to the senator, so that he can now answer that question.

QUESTION: We`re going to move on.

But, Senator, just one last go at this. Will you disclose to your constituents and to other voters how you`re going to vote before Election Day?

TOOMEY: You know, at some point, I probably will.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That moderator sounds like me.

Anyway, a few days later, Toomey acknowledged he`s in a tough spot.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TOOMEY: I`m still in the same mode I was Monday night, which is feeling stuck.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: "Feeling stuck." Politicians don`t usually say that.

Anyway, Guy Cecil is a Democratic strategist, of course, and head of the pro-Clinton super PAC Priorities USA. Ryan Williams is a Republican strategist.

So, Ryan, give us an account of what -- I mean, we know what the predicament is. There`s two kinds of voters who could vote for Toomey, those who are for Trump and Republicans who are not for Trump. That`s two groups of voters. You knock one group, the other group may not like you and reverse the same thing. It`s hard to keep both of those Republican groups happy.

RYAN WILLIAMS, REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN CONSULTANT: Well, politically, it`s a tough spot. There`s no question about that.

And I think for someone like Pat Toomey, who`s been a good senator who has been focused on policy, he`s torn between Hillary Clinton, who he hates, doesn`t think she is -- would be a good president, and Trump, who he also doesn`t like. He`s been very up front about his opposition to Trump`s outrageous statements and his policies he disagrees with.

So he`s in a tough spot, but thankfully Pat Toomey has a good record in the Senate. It`s a record a party of bipartisan achievement on gun control and other things. And I think that`s why he`s leading in the polls now, despite the distractions the top of the ticket is throwing at him.

MATTHEWS: Last question on that very front. Then I will get to Guy.

Do Pennsylvania voters in the main, do they still believe there`s such a thing as an East Coast Republican, a Hugh Scott Republican, a Scranton Republican, a Jack Heinz Republican? Do they really think there are Republicans who are not right-wingers that they would feel comfortable voting for, especially in the burbs?

WILLIAMS: I think so. And I think that`s Pat Toomey.

He`s someone who has worked across the aisle, rated one of the most bipartisan senators in the United States Senate, someone who worked -- whether your agree with him or not, with Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia on a commonsense solution to background checks, someone who has worked to keep child sex predators out of school.

He`s worked to clear up the backlog at the VA. He`s someone who has a record of achievement. And that`s why he`s leading right now in a challenging year overall for Republicans.

MATTHEWS: Well, Guy, Democrats have told me, Pennsylvania Democrats at the very top level have told me that Toomey`s been very shrewd in coming out for background checks along with his partner Joe Manchin of West Virginia, a Democrat, that he`s done just enough to look like a moderate on guns, and, at the same time, not to offend the NRA, and therefore can win in the burbs. What do you think?

GUY CECIL, PRIORITIES USA ACTION: Well, I actually they you illustrated it perfectly, that not only when it comes to Trump, but when it comes to gun, he`s trying to have it both ways.

I think the Democrats have done a reasonably good job of pushing back on that narrative, in part by using Pat Toomey`s own words about being a friend and a reliable vote for the NRA. But I would also point to the fact...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: How is he different than Casey, the Democratic senator from Pennsylvania, on guns?

CECIL: On guns?

MATTHEWS: Yes. How`s he different?

CECIL: Sure.

Well, I think there`s a couple of things. If you look at assault weapons, we have seen that there`s still differences there in terms of him disclosing what he believes. He also says, according to the NRA, that he opposes certain Supreme Court justices in part because of their view of the Second Amendment. And he also supports Donald Trump.

And that, I think, is the heart of the argument, especially in the Philadelphia suburbs.

MATTHEWS: But on the issue of guns, he`s different -- just to delineate, he`s different than the popular incumbent Democratic senator on guns? You`re saying that?

(CROSSTALK)

CECIL: On background checks, I think they share the same point...

MATTHEWS: I think they`re both for background checks.

CECIL: Right. But, on assault weapons bans, on limits on ammunition, on their vote for the Supreme Court justice based on the Second Amendment, which, by the way, the NRA scores, which is why most Democrats always get an F with the NRA even if they`re mildly supportive, and also in terms of their support of Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Well, anyway, your group, the pro-Clinton super PAC Priorities USA, is getting into this Pennsylvania fight and running this TV ad against Toomey. Let`s watch that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NARRATOR: Pat Toomey and Donald Trump, they`re just wrong for the women of Pennsylvania.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: New fallout for Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Should a woman be punished for having an abortion?

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: There has to be some form of punishment.

MATTHEWS: For the woman?

TRUMP: Yes, there has to be some form.

TOOMEY: I would support legislation in Pennsylvania that would ban abortion. And I would suggest that we have penalties for doctors who perform them.

NARRATOR: Pat Toomey and Donald Trump, they`re not for you.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Is that a fair ad, Ryan?

WILLIAMS: No, I don`t think so.

Look, you obviously were there. You asked the question of Donald Trump. It was about penalizing women for abortions. That`s not Pat Toomey`s position, never has been. They`re conflating two things.

And, look, I think they`re trying to tie him to Trump. It`s obviously a strategy Democrats are using al across the country. They have tried it with Toomey for a while now. But he`s holding his own. He`s a good senator.

And, look, Katie McGinty is not a good candidate for the Democrats. She`s very wooden. She`s not very likable. She gave a terrible speech at the DNC that was widely panned. I think one reporter said it was like an "SNL" sketch of someone trying to impersonate a politician, it was so bad.

She`s not a great candidate. She`s weak. She`s nothing but really standard Democratic talking points. Pat Toomey has a record of accomplishment and it`s what he`s running on. That`s why he`s leading in the polls right now.

MATTHEWS: Guy, are you running that across the state or just in the Philadelphia market, which is more pro-choice?

CECIL: We`re running it in the Philadelphia market, in the Philadelphia market.

MATTHEWS: Why aren`t you running it across the state, which is more pro- life?

CECIL: Well, in part because we`re still running ads in the rest of the state specifically focused for Trump for Hillary`s own election, which is Priorities` primary function in the election.

MATTHEWS: Yes, but why are you just running it in Philadelphia, where you know that people are more pro-choice?

Is that fair statewide to suggest that you`re just going to go out and you`re going to basically pick up the pro-choice votes around the Philadelphia suburbs, but not advertise to the rest of the state, which is much more culturally conservative, your candidate`s position on abortion rights? Is that fair?

CECIL: Right.

Well, like I said, our first priority is to focus on Hillary. And we think that, in Scranton, in Harrisburg, and in Pittsburgh, where we`re still advertising for Donald Trump, there are actually still votes to gain for Hillary. And so we`re focused on Donald Trump in those particular markets.

And in the Philly suburbs, we think we`re pretty close to maxing out Hillary`s vote in that respect.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Would you run those ads -- would you run that ad we just saw up in Scranton if it were run for free? If somebody paid you to run it, would you run it?

CECIL: An ad that says Donald Trump believes that women should...

MATTHEWS: No, just that, that ad, no, that ad.

CECIL: Yes, an ad that says that...

MATTHEWS: OK.

(CROSSTALK)

CECIL: Yes, I`m answering your question, if you will give me one second.

Would I run an ad in Scranton that says that Donald Trump believes women should be put in jail if they have an abortion? Yes.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

CECIL: Would I run an ad that says Pat Toomey believes doctors should be put in jail if they have an abortion? Yes.

MATTHEWS: But you didn`t.

CECIL: And I also just want to point out that if the number one complaint Republicans have about Katie McGinty is that she`s not likable, which is, by the way, what they say about every strong women running for office these days, she`s going to win the election.

MATTHEWS: OK. Now I have got to give Ryan a response.

Go ahead, rMDNM\_Ryan. Your thoughts about that? Is likability a factor here?

(CROSSTALK)

WILLIAMS: She`s not been a strong candidate. She`s someone who got caught lying about being the first member of her family to go to college. She`s someone who`s been part of this revolving door culture in government, where she was in government, steered money to corporations as a state regulator.

Then, when she left, she sent and worked for those corporations. Voters don`t like that. This is a year of populism on both sides. You have got the rise of Bernie Sanders and Trump. They don`t like people using the system for their own gain, like Hillary Clinton and like Katie McGinty in Pennsylvania. It`s not what voters want this year.

MATTHEWS: OK, Guy Cecil, and thank you, Ryan Williams, both.

Up next, this year, for the first time since the 1960s, the Justice Department will be sharply limited in sending its watchdogs to polling places to protect people`s right to vote. And that`s a big concern, especially considering Donald Trump is pushing his supporters to monitor what he`s calling a rigged election.

That`s ahead. And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Milissa Rehberger. Here`s what`s happening.

California Highway Patrol says a tour bus may have not braked before crashing into a big rig, killing 13 people near Palm Springs.

Pennsylvania`s former Attorney General Kathleen Kane was sentenced today to 10 to 23 months in jail. She was convicted of disclosing details from a grand jury investigation and lying about it.

The White House says it`s up to regulators to decide whether to review AT&T`s plan to buy Time Warner. Critics say the $85 billion deal could lead to fewer choices for consumers -- back to HARDBALL.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: They even want to try and rig the election at the polling booths, where so many cities are corrupt. And you see that. And voter fraud is all too common. If nothing else, people are going to be watching on November 8.

Watch Philadelphia. Watch Saint Louis. Watch Chicago. Go around and look and watch other polling places and make sure that it`s 100 percent fine.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

For months now, Donald Trump has called on his supporters to watch polling elections for what he alleges could be widespread voter fraud in the big cities. Now civil rights advocates say they`re worried that voter intimidation spurred by Trump`s claims the election is rigged could be on the rise this November.

This comes in the wake of the 2013 Supreme Court ruling that cut portions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act which were aimed at preventing discrimination at the ballot box.

As "The New York Times" notes: "For the first time since the days of poll taxes and literacy tests a half-century ago, the Justice Department will be sharply restricted at how it can deploy some of its most powerful weapons to deter voter intimidation in the presidential election."

That means fewer voter election observers can be deployed to monitor polling locations. At same time, Trump is stoking fears of a rigged election, but he said actually on Saturday that voter fraud could actually help him if fraudulent ballots are cast for him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: There are 2.8 million people that are registered in more than one state. So, we will vote here, let`s ride down the road, let`s vote next door. Maybe they will vote for Trump. I don`t know. Maybe I shouldn`t be saying this.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I may be hurting myself. You`re right. You`re right. Maybe they`re going to vote for Trump. All right. Let`s forget that. It`s OK for them to do it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, I`m joined right now by Judith Browne-Dianis of The Advancement Project and Heather McGhee of Demos.

Let me ask you, Judith, first of all, let`s talk specifically about what Trump is saying. He is basically saying, keep an eye out for the big cities, urban cities, with large minority populations, and if you`re from somewhere else, basically, get in your car on Election Day, as a private citizen, drive into some neighborhood where you think there might be, might be voting cheating of some kind, impersonation, whatever, and blow the whistle on it.

Is that feasible? Can we imagine that actually happening? And if so, what would be the impact, if, say, somebody from a suburb goes into a black community, a minority community and starts blowing the whistle? Because, in Philadelphia, there were 59 voting divisions where you didn`t get a single vote for Mitt Romney. And I believe it`s because nobody voted for Mitt Romney, but they may have different suspicions. Your thoughts?

JUDITH BROWNE-DIANIS, CO-DIRECTOR, ADVANCEMENT PROJECT: Well, first, let`s be clear about this, Chris. There`s clearly racism behind this, from, first of all, saying that there`s the boogeyman of voter fraud, and, by the way, my supporters, that bogeyman are -- those are black and Latino people in the inner cities, and then dispatching people and telling supporters to go to those areas and watch what they are doing.

First, we should know that intimidation is against the law, under the Voting Rights Act. So getting in the way of anyone exercising that right to vote is illegal. Two is that, in most places, in most states, there`s actually laws about who can go into the polling places.

MATTHEWS: OK.

BROWNE-DIANIS: And it`s exactly why the Department of Justice is not going to have observers inside, because...

MATTHEWS: OK. Let`s talk about the Trump people. I`m sorry to interrupt.

BROWNE-DIANIS: Sure.

MATTHEWS: But I really want to get the focus on where Trump has to show where it`s possible, even relevant to the universe we live in.

Some guy or woman comes in from the burbs, for example, a Republican comes in or a pro-Trumpy comes in and shows up in an inner-city voting area. They walk up. They got their head over the shoulder. They`re looking at the voting list, decides to stick their face into it, and they say, that`s not Mary McGee. That`s not her. That`s not that person.

Now, is that what they`re talking about, stopping in person? I`m just trying to figure out, physically, what do Trump people -- what`s Trump talking about?

BROWNE-DIANIS: What he`s really talking about is intimidating them just by showing up.

MATTHEWS: Do you think that would intimidate somebody in a tough downtown district where people all know each other, they know the community, they use the term community, they knows who`s in it and who isn`t in it?

And somebody who shows up who`s not in the community and starts giving orders, do you think that would intimidate anybody? I think that person would be shouted down probably.

BROWNE-DIANIS: No, I do think that they would be shouted down. And I don`t think they actually will be able to challenge a voter.

But what I do think it is that, you know, you have some of his supporters who have said, we`re going to racially profile. There was a guy who said, we`re going to racially profile, make them a little nervous.

And so you do...

MATTHEWS: How do you do that?

BROWNE-DIANIS: Well, I mean, I think it`s by some people who are going to show up and hope that they can intimidate people just by their very -- their very existence at a polling place.

I actually don`t think that voters are going to be intimidated. People want to cast a ballot.

MATTHEWS: That`s what I think.

BROWNE-DIANIS: I think that those -- these folks are going to be shut down at the polling place and that there will be observers who will be there to challenge those challengers.

HEATHER MCGHEE, DEMOS: But here`s what they can do.

MATTHEWS: Go ahead, Heather.

MCGHEE: Here`s what they can do, is actually they can slow things down. I mean, we saw this a few elections ago in Pennsylvania.

MATTHEWS: Tell me how that works.

MCGHEE: Because the laws about whether or not a non-official, non- registered person can go up to someone in line and, say, challenge their validity, and then have the onus be on the voter to provide I.D., to provide an affidavit from someone in the community who knows them, it`s really actually a patchwork of laws, as is the case across our country.

And in some places like Pennsylvania, the laws are really, really weak. And so what you can get there is that people -- and this is not new to Donald Trump. There`s an organization called True the Vote that did this in 2012 and have been training sort of vigilante poll watchers.

And what it can do is slow it down, so that you have those lines, because what they`re doing is making someone then prove more than they would have had to do otherwise. And that`s part of the problem.

BROWNE-DIANIS: But then it`s...

MATTHEWS: Judith?

BROWNE-DIANIS: But, in states like Pennsylvania, you -- you have to -- first of all, you have to register to be an observer to go into the polling place.

And you have to either be with a party or be with a candidate. So, it`s not going to be as easy as he`s making it out to be to go into a polling place and challenge

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JUDITH BROWNE DIANIS, THE ADVANCEMENT PROJECT: -- you have to register to be an observer, to go into the polling place. And you have to either be with a party or be with a candidate. So, it`s not going to be as easy as he`s making it out to be to go into a polling place and challenge voters. And in most places, you also have to have some evidence.

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: We have to tell everybody voting, if you`re an honest voter, and you are, vote. Don`t let anybody get in the way. But I don`t think these vigilantes from the `burbs are going to be any problem to anybody who wants to vote in their community.

So, I just really believe those people will be tough enough, they`ve fought for enough of their lives and their parents have, to get the vote. They`re not going to let somebody come in and say, excuse me, and get in their face. I don`t think so.

Your thoughts? You`re the experts?

HEATHER MCGHEE, DEMOS: I was just going say, the real problem here is that this is not just an outlier candidate like Donald Trump who has gone beyond the bounds of so many of our norms. But this is actually a pattern of voter intimidation and suppression that takes a lot of different forms. Demos just won a lawsuit where we sued the state of Ohio for kicking registered eligible voters off the voter rolls, because they hadn`t voted recently, right?

So, these are the kinds of things. Obviously, we know about the North Carolina lawsuit that won triumphantly, saying that legislators there had gone with surgical precision to find out what types of voting laws African- American used and tried to cut those out.

MATTHEWS: I remember.

MCGHEE: This is everyone. And this is part of an ethos that says that --

MATTHEWS: I know.

MCGHEE: -- we`re not all equal citizens.

MATTHEWS: And we`re going to keep reporting on that, because Souls to the Polls is a legitimate way to vote, it`s a nice way to vote, it`s godly. Let`s keep it up.

In any way, Judith Browne Dianis and Heather McGhee, thank you for doing the good work you`re doing.

Up next, if you want to know how much this election matters to President Obama, just look at his campaign schedule coming up. It`s unprecedented for a retiring president. He`s out there not just pushing Hillary, but Democrats up and down the ballot. He`s blasting away at the Republican opponents personally. And that`s ahead.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

With nearly two weeks to go, actually, two weeks and a day left in the presidential campaign, Democrats are setting their sights on a lot more than the presidency. With a sizable war chest now and a comfortable advantage in the polls, Secretary Clinton`s boosting her party`s down- ballot candidates. Let`s watch it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: And Maggie is going to be a great United States senator for New Hampshire.

I want to thank Governor Ted Strickland, our candidate for the United States Senate.

Send Deborah Ross to the United States Senate!

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MATTHEWS: Well, "The New York Times" reporting that Hillary Clinton is, quote, "asking voters to strengthen her hand in Congress and repudiate not just Mr. Trump, but also Republicans who have accommodated or endorsed Trump.

And she`s enlisted a bevy of surrogates from Vice President Joe Biden, who will be on HARDBALL tomorrow. Let`s watch

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOSEPH BIDEN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: What frustrates me about this election, and I couldn`t quite figure it out, as I was on my way up to campaign in New Hampshire, day before yesterday for Hillary, and I realized it. Trump has so dumbed down this election -- no, he really has! Think about it! That the press, they`re decent people, all these folks out there, what are you going to cover?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: And then there`s the president. According to "Politico", he will back nearly 150 candidates across 20 states in an attempt to rebuild the party from the bottom up. That would be the Democratic Party.

For more, I`m joined by our roundtable. Tim Alberta is chief political correspondent with "The National Review", Jay Newton-Small, contributor with the "Time" magazine, and Ken Vogel, chief investigative reporter with "Politico".

From the top, and take over here, guys, this is a roundtable. I want you to explain to me kind of campaigning in plain sight. Hillary Clinton`s not doing a lot of hard-nosed interviews right now. She doesn`t need to risk anything with that. And she`s campaigning for other candidates than herself. I think it`s a strategy to get the focus off her in the last two weeks and keep it on Trump.

Tim?

TIM ALBERTA, NATIONAL REVIEW: Yes, I think that`s right. Look, if you`re Hillary Clinton right now, you`re up six points on average in Pennsylvania. You`re up eight points in New Hampshire. You`re up, you know, eight points in Colorado. You`re up four points in North Carolina. You look around and there`s not a down-ballot race in Colorado.

But in those other three states, for instance, at this point, why not help the down-ballot candidates? Why not try to strengthen your hand when you`re inaugurated in next January? It has sort of a dual effect of not only helping your down-ballot candidates, Chris, but also, it is sort of a prevent-defense strategy. It`s sort of a place it safe, let`s not do anything to possibly hand ammunition to the Trump campaign less than two weeks out, at this point, or 15 days out at this point.

It just makes sense from a tactical standpoint, makes sense from a money standpoint. Democrats are now sort of starting to spread the wealth around down-ballot, as we`ve seen over the last week or two.

JAY NEWTON-SMALL, TIME MAGAZINE: And, Chris, if I can add to that, studies show that women are actually always more popular, when they`re already in office or when they`re campaigning for somebody else or working for somebody else. And so, in this case, Hillary Clinton is generally more popular when she`s out there doing something for somebody else than when she`s actually talking about herself.

And so, I think this is actually just a play to sort of keep her head down, keep her head in the sand, let everything happen with Donald Trump like go past her and really just focus on helping others on the ticket, and getting them across the finish line as well, but it also helps her, too.

MATTHEWS: Ken?

KEN VOGEL, POLITICO: Yes, and I think there`s also -- it`s not just that she`s hiding in plain sight. I mean, her schedule is actually relatively sparse for the final two-week stretch of election. She did two events Saturday, but they`re not expecting like a very vigorous schedule down the stretch.

And I think part of that is, they are legitimately concerned that if she gets out there and does a lot of events, there is the potential for an unforced error. People around her believe that if she`s keeping a really intense schedule, she gets a little tired, as anyone would, and that the chances for that go up, everything is going so well for her right now, they`re trying to look for that sort of path of least resistance --

MATTHEWS: Over the weekend --

VOGEL: -- and give momentum to the candidates down-ballot.

MATTHEWS: Well, there`s one guy swinging pretty loosely. Over the weekend, during a fundraising swing out west in California, President Obama blasted U.S. Congressman Darrel Issa, he called him shameless. The Republican member of Congress in a tough reelection out there in San Diego County, a former Republican stronghold.

Well, during a closed-door event, President Obama accused Issa of being someone who, quote, "spent all his time simply trying to obstruct, to feed the same sentiments that resulted in Donald Trump becoming their nominee," closed quote.

Well, the commander in chief -- campaigner in chief, has had a few words for a number of Republican candidates. Let`s watch him in action.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Now, I understand Joe Heck now wishes he never said those things about Donald Trump, but they`re on tape. They`re on the record. And now that Trump`s poll numbers are cratering, suddenly, he says, oh, I -- now, I don`t -- I don`t -- I`m not supporting him. Too late.

Why does Marco Rubio still plan to vote for Donald Trump? There has to be a point where you stand for something more than just party or more for than just your own career.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: He`s going to be a little careful. He is flying high out there.

Anyway, the roundtable is staying with us.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: A big reminder, tomorrow. I sit down with Vice President Joe Biden out here in Pittsburgh. On Friday, he said he`d like to take Donald Trump behind the high school gym. Vintage Biden.

You don`t want to miss him as he says tomorrow in our interview. He`s going to talk all about it. We`re going to talk about that boxing thing with him.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL round table.

Tim, tell me something I don`t know.

ALBERTA: Chris, we are hearing a lot about **immigration** and Arizona being back in play and how Hillary Clinton would like to try to pursue **immigration** reform in the first 100 days of her presidency. Keep in mind, in Arizona, 200,000 new Hispanic voters since 2010 eligible on the rolls. Mitt Romney only won 22 percent of Hispanics in Arizona four years ago. If Trump is at that number or even lower, that state goes blue in a couple of weeks.

MATTHEWS: Wow. What a prediction.

Jay?

NEWTON-SMALL: Well, in the race in Louisiana to replace David Vitter in his Senate seat, you have David Duke, who`s a former white supremacist and he actually just qualified for a debate in that state and that debate is going to be held at an historically black college, which will make for a very interesting debate.

MATTHEWS: Geez. That`s strange.

Ken?

VOGEL: The Clinton campaign officials tell me they have not asked to review nor have they actually reviewed the John Podesta`s personal e-mails from his Gmail account. These are the ones that WikiLeaks has tens and has tens of thousands that they have jet to release so there could be some surprises in there not just for us or the media, our voters, but also even for the Clinton campaign. You`ve got to wonder, either they have total confidence in John Podesta and his discretion or that`s almost like political malpractice.

MATTHEWS: Wow.

Anyway, Tim Alberta, thank you so much for joining us. And, Jay Newton- Small, as always. Ken Vogel, as always.

Back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election Diary Monday, October 24th, 2016.

Something`s changed. This campaign feels very different than it did a week or two ago. Now, there`s this feeling that the battle between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton is over. Hillary`s going to win.

Will the former secretary of state be joined in the morning after headlines with a Senate takeover as well? Will there be a big number up there on the front page telling how many seats in the House of Representatives the Democrats gained and the Republicans lost?

You can see it in President Obama`s taunting of California Congressman Darrel Issa. He of the perpetual investigation and enduring probe of Democrats. You see it in the president`s big push for Senate candidates wherever he goes. He doesn`t just want a mandate for Hillary, he wants whopper.

And then there`s Baghdad Bob, saying none of this is true, that the Republican president for president is well in the fight. You remember Baghdad Bob? He was the guy broadcasting from the Iraqi capital as the U.S. troops arrived to take over the city.

Today, the die-hard voice coming from the presidential campaign is that of the candidates himself. Baghdad Bob, meet Donald Trump.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Joy Reid, Hugh Hewitt, Robert Costa, Michael Steele

9365 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Big casino.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews at the university campus -- (INAUDIBLE)

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: ... presidential debate. This is a big one. Tonight`s the last chance, as we all know, for Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton to reach a massive television audience before the election, I figure 80 million, at least, tonight.

Trump, reeling in recent polls, needs a game changer. Will he concentrate his fire tonight or just throw everything he`s got against the wall? In other words, what does he want the headline to be tomorrow morning? And is he disciplined enough to deliver that headline, or will he fail tonight?

Anyway, it`s a big showdown. Trump seem to be waging battle on multiple fronts, not a smart move. There`s Benghazi. Among his guests, the mother of one of the slain Americans and a former fiancee of Ambassador Chris Stevens, but also reportedly on the guest list, Sarah Palin and inexplicably...

(BOOS)

MATTHEWS: Well, that went over well -- a half-brother of President Barack Obama. And I don`t know what he responds to, half or full.

Anyway, meanwhile, "The New York Times" reports Mr. Trump`s aides are preparing him with a sharp escalation of the attacks on Mrs. Clinton`s character and a focus on her health. That should be fascinating. Trump previewed that line of attack last night.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: When Hillary develops the energy to go to events, she`s got very small crowds. Now, she`s home sleeping, and I`m working. So that`s the way -- the way it`s going to be in the White House, too. She`d be sleeping, I`d be working.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, taken together, this could be a spectacle tonight. Joining me now, MSNBC`s Joy Reid to my immediate left, host of "AM JOY"...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: ... Hugh Hewitt, how of "The Hugh Hewitt Show" on the Salem Radio Network -- he`s over there and "The Washington Post`s" great reporter, Robert Costa...

(CHEERS)

MATTHEWS: ... and "USA Today" Heidi Przybyla.

I`m going to go right now with a couple big-paper newspapers right to start with. Robert Costa, will Trump spray his bullets or his shots all over the place tonight or focus on something like that news out of that Benghazi e-mail?

ROBERT COSTA, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: He`s got Steve Bannon in his ear, the former head of Breitbart news, whispering a lot of advice, but most of it is to be aggressive as heck in going after Secretary Clinton, not just on her health, but on her e-mails, on President Bill Clinton`s past, different allegations, and make it a (INAUDIBLE) storm.

MATTHEWS: What`s the headline? What`s the headline if he goes like that?

COSTA: Attack, attack, attack. It`s not so much building up Trump, it`s about taking down Secretary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: But if he can`t -- anyway, I`m arguing something right up front here tonight. If you can`t think about what happened tonight after the night`s over, it had no value at all politically. You have to come out with a thought, What did I learn tonight? What will they try to get us to learn tonight?

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, "USA TODAY": Well, I just got off the phone with the Hillary Clinton campaign, and they said, Be our guest. We couldn`t be happier if this is going to be his scorched earth approach to this, which is essentially the same thing that he tried to do in the last debate.

And what did we see after the last debate? We saw her numbers start to move a little bit up and this consolidation in the polls. We saw voter registration numbers start to go up in some of the states.

And all Trump will do if he does do this is play right into that temperament argument that the most recent Fox News poll shows is one of the underlying problems, that she`s been successful in prosecuting this case against him on temperament and judgment.

MATTHEWS: Joy, how do you walk away, right, left or center, pro-Trump or anti-Trump, or maybe undecided, if you see this cavalcade of personalities -- a half brother from Kenya, you know, a supposed fiancee from 20 years ago or whatever? I mean, it`s an amazing -- a mother of a slain guy from -- you know, Mrs. Smith, mother of Sean Smith. Fair enough.

But what are we going to get in terms of this political debate? Then one of the survivors, and then the lone survivor guy, Mark Halper (ph) played him in the movies. You know, what are we getting out of all this?

JOY REID, HOST, "AM JOY": Yes, and some of them are sort of inexplicable, right? The half brother of Barack Obama is somebody who brags about having been good friends with Moammar Gadhafi, of all people.

MATTHEWS: Yes, he`s pretty (INAUDIBLE)

REID: ... somebody who won`t say how many wives he had. Far be it from me, my father and his father before him from the Congo did the same thing with the multiple wives. It didn`t exactly go over well in my family. It`s not something that`s a selling point.

So I`m really not sure what the point of that invitation is and who he thinks that he`s getting at by doing it. But I do think a lot of what you`re seeing in terms of this plan to just do the scattershot attack on the Clintons -- you`ve got people who are surrounding Donald Trump who have waited a quarter century to wage this full-bore scorched earth attack on the Clintons that they feel that the Republican Party was too weak and too timid to wage.

It doesn`t even matter if it has electoral output. What they want to do is wage this attack that in their gut, they feel the Republicans should have been doing for 25 years, and darn it, they`re going to do it, no matter what.

MATTHEWS: OK, what`s the smart move tonight, Hugh?

HUGH HEWITT, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Open up by declaring, Congratulations, Ohio. The Cleveland Indians are in the World Series for the first time since `97.

(LAUGHTER)

HEWITT: Congratulations to the Cavaliers. Go Browns. And win the swing state of Ohio. We just clinched the pennant, Chris, so Donald Trump should be happy, upbeat...

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) go for the one state and...

HEWITT: Go for the one state!

(LAUGHTER)

HEWITT: Knock one down on the first...

(CROSSTALK)

(LAUGHTER)

REID: The one-state strategy!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: That is boring!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Totally boring. I`m sorry. Let me go into this thing here. Does anybody have any idea why the half brother from Kenya is showing up?

COSTA: Yes. Because you have to think about this campaign. It isn`t a Republican campaign. It is a Breitbart campaign. A media organization, a galaxy of Web sites and figures has supplanted the GOP and made their own messaging, dark falsehoods, suggestions about the president, about Secretary Clinton. This has now become the Republican Party nominee. This is the campaign.

MATTHEWS: What are you supposed to -- what`s your emotion supposed to be after you see a guy from Africa?

PRZYBYLA: It feels like it`s just entertainment, Chris. I mean, at what point do we start to bring up these reports about Trump folks going and talking to seed investors in New York about a post-Trump TV network? Because to me, this...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Don`t speculate. If you believe that, say so. Do you believe that the Trump campaign right now is not about winning the presidency but developing a TV network afterwards?

PRZYBYLA: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Do you believe that?

PRZYBYLA: Chris, at this point-

MATTHEWS: Do you believe that?

PRZYBYLA: Even if he wins all the toss-up states...

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: ... Trump wants to survive this.

COSTA: I asked Trump point-blank. He said it`s absolutely false. Besides, the kind of model for this, it would have to be subscription- based. This thing of an uber-conservative network -- I asked Trump many times about this on the record. He said, No, no, no. We`ll have to see.

REID: But not necessarily a TV network. I think that you`re right. The Blaze TV, for a while, it was able to make money, it didn`t make it. Alex Jones does make money on line only.

But think about Donald Trump`s past actions. He used the Brexit opportunity to promote his golf course. He used the supposed...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: What is his purpose...

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: ... counter the allegations.

REID: No, no. This is...

MATTHEWS: From women.

REID: This is 60 million people...

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: It`s not just about marketing Trump. When you talk to the Trump advisers, this is really about countering this wave of allegations and accusations against Donald Trump. He`s facing severe problems with female voters, and part of what he`s doing with Hillary Clinton and the secretary -- Bill Clinton`s past is trying to say, Hey, it`s not just me.

PRZYBYLA: Here`s the problem with that. They are not stupid people, these people advising Donald Trump, and they have had this research, Chris, for months that shows a lot of the moves that he`s been making in terms of going after Bill Clinton on the accusers, for my God`s sake, going after Hillary Clinton on her health. Those are all the exact wrong thing that you want to do in terms of the hundreds of thousands of dollars of research that they put in a long time ago on this. So why, pray tell? Why?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You have the stage. What should they do? What should they be doing tonight?

PRZYBYLA: At this point, I don`t know that -- he`s -- it`s not just that he needs to turn the ship around. The ship`s stuck on an iceberg and...

MATTHEWS: So what should he do?

PRZYBYLA: I don`t know that there`s much he can do.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: If he really wanted...

(CROSSTALK)

REID: If your goal was to win an election, what would you do is -- I spent the morning watching the advertising that`s running on local television here in Nevada. It`s all about women. Even Joe Heck`s ad is running...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

REID: It`s all about women. What Donald Trump, if he was running an actual campaign, would get up there to do tonight and try to make a case to the very small number of women who are still undecided, who maybe want to vote Republican but can`t bring themselves to vote for him. Attacking Hillary Clinton won`t get you there, which is why...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... agree with Robert.

REID: ... campaign. I think he wants to knock those...

(CROSSTALK)

REID: ... so what he`s doing won`t work.

HEWITT: Energize your base by bringing up Project Veritas, by bringing up Cheryl Mills in Haiti...

REID: Most Americans don`t know what any of that is.

HEWITT: ... bringing up General Hoss (ph) Cartright facing jail for misleading the FBI when Hillary Clinton...

REID: That was the last debate.

(CROSSTALK)

REID: That was the last...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: ... have the media follow after it because what you have to do is tie your down ballot...

MATTHEWS: OK...

HEWITT: ... to the fact that Clinton needs to be surrounded by an opposition...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... your one point of view is that he should go out and try to win this election and try to win women back because he has to get women in the suburbs who normally vote Republican. The other one is he`s basically building his anti-establishment cotillion the next 20 years.

Anyway, in recent days, Trump has warned of a rigged election. He tweeted last week, "Of course there`s large-scale voter fraud happening on and before election day." Someone who doesn`t buy that, Trump`s own campaign manager Kellyanne Conway. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Going to the polls in this country, do you believe there will be widespread voter fraud?

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: No, I do not believe that. So absent overwhelming evidence that there is, it would not be for me to say that there is. We know in the past, you know, we know that people who are dead are still in the voter rolls. We know that people are voting a couple of different times in places. So you do hear reports here and there. But I think Donald Trump`s point is a larger one. You don`t want me to talk about the other stuff, but he does -- yes, there is larger conspiracy, larger collusion...

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, Ohio governor John Kasich today also criticized Trump`s rhetoric on voter fraud. Let`s watch the governor.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. JOHN KASICH (R-OH), FMR. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: To say that elections are rigged and all these votes are stolen, that`s like saying we never landed on the moon, frankly. That`s how silly it is. No, I just -- I don`t think that`s good for our country, for our democracy. And I don`t believe that we have any massive fraud.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You know how you watch a football game, college or pro, and there are fouls, and they get penalties, right? That`s not to say the games are thrown.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Right.

MATTHEWS: Just because you can find examples of voter fraud doesn`t mean elections were stolen.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: I mean, Philadelphia, for example, went $330,000 -- 330,000 votes for Kennedy -- 330,000...

HEWITT: Voter fraud exists.

MATTHEWS: Maybe...

HEWITT: It`s a question about how much and whether or not it`s significant. There have been cases in Virginia...

REID: It`s insignificant.

HEWITT: ... and Colorado...

MATTHEWS: Yes, cases don`t mean...

(CROSSTALK)

REID: But this isn`t...

HEWITT: Jon Husted is right. There is no massive rigging.

REID: It`s insignificant, I mean, infinitesimal. But the reason to bring it up and the reason that it isn`t just Trump that brings it up, sorry. Jon Husted does the same thing when he`s trying to undermine the opportunity to vote by making it harder and harder and harder.

It is a dogwhistle to people who want to believe that African- Americans...

MATTHEWS: Listen closely to this.

REID: ... are cheating...

MATTHEWS: Everything...

(CROSSTALK)

REID: ... dogwhistle to the far right...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You mean when he says St. Louis, Cleveland, Chicago...

REID: Think about the...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... Philadelphia. What do they all have in common?

REID: It`s feeding...

MATTHEWS: Majorities.

REID: ... (INAUDIBLE) who feel that this -- that black people...

MATTHEWS: All right, let`s...

REID: ... are stealing our elections.

COSTA: Let`s remember...

REID: That`s all it is.

COSTA: Joy`s right. And let`s remember the history here. You go back to the Republican Party in the 1950s before William F. Buckley. You had this old right that would speak of things like globalists. There was the John Birch Society. What we`re seeing is a revival of this strand that has been part of the Republican past.

MATTHEWS: Yes. So we still have a division here in this jury. I`d say it`s hung right now between those who know what they`re talking about. I`m just kidding.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: And those who agree with me. Anyway, basically, is he going to go tonight and is his (INAUDIBLE) try to win this election by maybe doing something to at least apologize even or soften the anger against him from most Republican women that`s really going to hurt him from any (ph) having a chance of winning, or going on the attack and sticking it to the left one more time and sticking to the Clintons one more thousandth time. Will that change anything?

We`ll see tonight. I`d put my money on him having a brain tonight, which (INAUDIBLE) go after this whole thing with e-mail, Benghazi and the whole murkiness of Washington, which I think appeals to a lot of people. They don`t like it. They don`t like Washington.

Anyway, Joy Reid, thank you. I think you`re on the smart side. Hugh Hewitt, you weren`t. Robert Costa, you were (INAUDIBLE) Heidi was playing it cool.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Coming up, Senator Harry Reid, Rudolph Giuliani, James Carville`s coming here. And also coming up at the top of the hour, I`ll be joining Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow as we all get together for tonight`s debate.

Then at 9:00 Eastern, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump face off in their final big casino debate. At 10:30, we`ll have full team coverage of the debate, and I`ll be here covering everything that happens until 2:00 AM. I think we got Kellyanne on tonight after the debate, Kellyanne Conway.

This is a special edition of HARDBALL live from Las Vegas the final presidential debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. HARRY REID (D-NV), MINORITY LEADER: Mitch McConnell is as responsible as anyone for creating Trump. What they`ve done in the Senate of the United States to give life to birtherism, **immigration**. (INAUDIBLE) Donald Trump all started in the Senate of the United States, and of course, at the House. McConnell is one of the people that created Donald Trump. And if that`s the legacy that he wants, he`s going to have it whether he wants it or not.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to this special edition of HARDBALL, live from Nevada, in fact from UNLV...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: ... for the final presidential debate. That of course, Nevada senator and Democratic leader Harry Reid earlier today running -- well, pinning the rise of Donald Trump on Senate Republicans themselves. Reid`s message to the GOP is, You own Trump.

Well, Senator Reid is no stranger to bare-knuckle fights. He`s retiring after 34 years in the United States Congress. He joins me now. Senator Reid, thank you.

So I want to give you an opening shot, like in boxing, an opening chin here. Of all the Republican candidates for president in your political career, where would you rank Trump in quality?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Is that all you can do?

REID: Can`t go below zero.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you about -- I`ve been watching, as you have, better than anybody, you and Schumer and a few other people, this battle for the United States Senate. It looks to me like you`ve got -- your party has a very good chance to get control of the Senate. If Hillary Clinton`s elected, you just need for. So I figure you got Illinois probably. You`ve got Wisconsin. Feingold`s up by 8.

What are the next best chances to win the Senate.

REID: Well, number one is what`s going to happen in Nevada. That`s ours.

MATTHEWS: You`re going to hold that.

REID: Yes. So going to -- we`re good in Wisconsin. We`re certainly good in Illinois. We`re going to win in Indiana. I have no doubt we`re going to win in Pennsylvania. But we`ve got a lot of stuff going on. The numbers out of New Hampshire have been really good lately for Governor Hassan.

Now, what`s happening in Missouri is unbelievable. Public polls have our candidate ahead...

MATTHEWS: Kander.

REID: Yes...

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) Roy Blunt.

REID: He`s -- he`s -- yes, I think -- I think he`s so good.

MATTHEWS: How`s Burr look? How`s your candidate against Burr look in North Carolina?

REID: Burr looks bad. She looks great.

MATTHEWS: So you`re talking about a pick-up of seven or eight seats.

REID: Well, we feel -- we feel that with Trump pulling everybody down, the only thing the Senate candidates for the Republicans have had is the Koch brothers. They`ve got nothing else other than loads of money.

MATTHEWS: OK, let me ask you about -- do you believe in coattails? Do you believe that people vote for the Senate based upon how they`re voting for president?

REID: No, I`ve never believed in split tickets. I`ve never believe in that. You know, some people split tickets, but they do it just because they want to do it. It`s not anything they think through.

MATTHEWS: Why do they do it?

REID: Because they vote for the candidate, not the party all the time.

MATTHEWS: OK. It could be they`re afraid to trust one party with the whole government.

REID: Well, possible, but I don`t think that`s the case.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you about Trump and Hillary tonight. You`re an old boxer. You know how to put up -- get ready for a fight. What do you think Trump`s going to do tonight, throw everything at Hillary Clinton or just think on the e-mail and Benghazi? Bring in the half brother.

REID: There is no way you can predict what Donald Trump`s going to do, no way. But it would be very nice if for once, he had a debate. They talk about the economy. They talk about foreign policy. They talk about relations with women. They talked about **immigration**. They talked about Planned Parenthood, talked about issues that the American people can identify with, not the craziness about building a wall, who`s going to pay for it.

MATTHEWS: What do you think he can say tonight after all these accusations from women about different forms of groping, terms we`re not used to saying on television, groping and kissing in public in these strange sort of romantic -- or sexually aggressive ways that don`t seem normal and don`t seem appropriation? How could he -- how could he address that issue in one night?

REID: Chris, he has a problem, because actions speak louder than words.

And not only are his words awful, but his actions have been much -- even worse than his words.

MATTHEWS: Do you think he is unfit to be president?

I don`t want to egg you on, because people have been accused of egging on people.

REID: No, people don`t have -- I`m pretty easy to egg on.

So, no, I think that he would be a disaster for the American people. I think he would be a disaster for the world.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

REID: And the world is standing by, going to see what is going to happen at this debate and on November 8.

The world cares, as they should.

MATTHEWS: What are you going to miss in this business?

REID: Not you.

(LAUGHTER)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Thank you. Thank you. I don`t mind that.

Thank you, Senator Harry Reid.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Let`s bring in the former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who will miss me. He supports Donald Trump.

Thank you.

So, let`s bring in -- let`s -- well, Mayor, this guy just took a shot at me. Maybe you can be nice. Anyway, thank you for coming on.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: He just said he won`t miss me. Well, I can live with that.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you about this campaign. The odds now, in Ladbrokes, in London, the betting odds right now in this campaign, to make $11 -- let`s see. To make $2, you have got to bet $11 for Hillary.

Basically, she is the overwhelming favorite. Your candidate is a 4-1 underdog. He`s got to -- you only get $1 -- $4 back from $1. So, it`s a tough bet. So, how does he overcome those odds tonight and winning the election in the next three weeks?

RUDY GIULIANI (R), FORMER MAYOR OF NEW YORK: You know, I`m interested in knowing what Brexit was. I don`t -- I have no idea what the numbers were on Brexit that turned out to be a big surprise.

I think, tonight, he has to do a little bit like Harry Reid actually said, although for a different purpose. He has got to stick to the issues. He has got to point out why he would be a better president than Hillary Clinton on producing jobs, reducing taxes, getting businesses back, putting people back to work, fixing schools, which she can`t do because the teachers union prevents her from doing it.

He has got to talk about the Iran agreement. People kind of get a chance to make an up-or-down vote on, do we agree with this agreement with Iran making them nuclear in 10 years? Or do we disagree with it? She agrees with it. He disagrees with it.

So I would think the best thing for him would be a highly issued- oriented debate, because I think, on the majority of the issues, he comes out ahead. And so far this campaign, the issues have kind of been buried under e-mails on the one side and the revelations on the other.

MATTHEWS: Did you think the Democrats or Hillary Clinton, her people, dug up all these cases against him? Because they have definitely deflected from the issues that made him an exciting candidate, trade, and **immigration** and what he called stupid wars, foreign policy he didn`t like, he didn`t think protected us.

He had those issues in hand to get about 40 percent. And he`s been struggling to hold that 40 percent. Who has been responsible for shifting the attention away from the issues he could win on?

GIULIANI: Well, I think the -- you`re talking about the eight or nine women that came forward.

MATTHEWS: Yes, the whole mess he`s in right now.

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: I don`t believe in coincidences. I have to believe that was orchestrated in large part to blunt the tremendous -- tremendously horrible revelations that come from WikiLeaks about their feelings toward Catholics and evangelicals, about the fact that they were paying people to protest and some of them led to violence, about having a public and private position on different things, about how she kind of played up to all the bankers on the one hand and then gave a totally different impression when she debated with Bernie Sanders.

All of that would have been very damaging if you didn`t have these eight women to come in on top of it. And the press paid a lot more attention to that.

MATTHEWS: What did you make of her speeches that came out from WikiLeaks, where -- let`s assume for a section they`re accurate. And when she came out for open borders, when she came out for absolute free trade within the hemisphere, she says she is against TPP. She never says she is for open borders in public.

What do you make of all that?

GIULIANI: Well, I think it confirmed for me what I have always thought about Hillary Clinton, that she doesn`t tell us the truth, that she does have two or three positions on everything.

After all, she was against gay marriage. Now she`s for gay marriage.

MATTHEWS: A lot of people were like that, though.

GIULIANI: She was for the war in Iraq. Then she...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Mr. Mayor, a lot of people were involved in that issue.

GIULIANI: For the war in Iraq, against it.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

GIULIANI: Then she was against the surge.

She calculates her position for political impact. Or TPP. TPP,, I know she is against -- I mean, she is for it. But she`s pretending she is against it. We know that.

MATTHEWS: I know that. I agree with that.

Well, tonight, what do you think? Trump should focus his attack on the e-mail thing connected to Benghazi where you have this kerfuffle in Washington between the FBI and her State Department? Or do you go all over the place?

He is bringing in half-brothers and fiances and mothers. And it is a whole cavalcade. How the hell are you supposed to absorb all that information in one night?

GIULIANI: None of that is going to have to do with the debate.

I would think the situation with the FBI is a relevant one, sure. It looks like a bribe to me. He is telling the guy he wants to bury a document, and he is offering him eight or nine agents in return for it.

MATTHEWS: Well, he didn`t take the bribe. Let`s be fair. He didn`t take the bribe. Whatever it was, he didn`t take it.

GIULIANI: A bribe doesn`t have to be taken. It just needs to be offered.

The crime of bribery is committed by offering. He offered it. And he offered a quid pro quo. That`s bribery.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I`m getting squeezed, Mr. Mayor. It`s always good to have you on. Thank you so much for coming. I am getting squeezed.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So many people.

GIULIANI: And I will miss you if I`m -- when I finish politics.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You`re not going to miss me, sir.

Up next, Meg Whitman, the CEO of Hewlett-Packard and a former Republican candidate for governor of California, she is in the debate supporting Hillary Clinton. She joins us next.

Plus, James Carville is coming here.

And this is HARDBALL, the place from -- we`re here from Las Vegas for the final president debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL live from Las Vegas at UNLV. That`s where we are heading into tonight`s debate.

Donald Trump has what must be called the daunting task of turning the momentum around. His most challenging task will be stopping the widening advantage everybody sees Hillary Clinton gaining among women voters.

Anyway, currently, according the most recent NBC News and "Wall Street Journal," Hillary Clinton has a 20-point advantage among women voters over Trump, 20 points.

One of Hillary Clinton`s most prominent supporters, Hewlett-Packard executive and Republican fund-raiser Meg Whitman, the one-time Chris Christie supporter, told "The New York Times" that Donald Trump is a -- quote -- "dishonest demagogue" and decided to put country before party when she endorsed Hillary Clinton.

Joining me right now is the CEO of H.P. and Clinton supporter Meg Whitman.

Thank you, Meg Whitman. Thank you, madam.

I want to ask you about this -- about what is the key reason that would stop you from voting for Donald Trump, if there was one thing that said, no matter what else changed, this is the thing would stop me?

MEG WHITMAN, CEO, HEWLETT-PACKARD: Well, as you know, as a lifelong Republican, right, voting -- going across party lines to vote for Hillary Clinton and be a supporter was a challenge.

But I think Donald Trump is a dishonest demagogue. He has exploited our worst fears around xenophobia, racism. And he has lowered the level of discourse in this country, which I think is really, really under fortunate. So, I`m for Hillary all the way.

MATTHEWS: Well, I`m asking you, what is the one issue that bugs you? Do you like the fact that is for -- he says he`s against trade, he`s against TPP, he`s against NAFTA. Does that bother you?

WHITMAN: You know, I actually think it is his character that is the most problematic for me.

MATTHEWS: OK.

WHITMAN: I think we need to look up to the president of the United States. I think he needs to be a role model or she needs to be a role model for our children.

And so it really is around the character that I think bothers me the most. Yes, I don`t agree with his trade policies. I don`t agree with his **immigration** policies. There`s lots I don`t agree with. But what I will say is, I think it`s about the character of the person.

MATTHEWS: What about the fact that over 60 percent of the American people don`t like, don`t trust either Hillary Clinton or Barack -- or Donald Trump? We see these numbers every day. You see them. What do you make of them? How do you explain them, both candidates not being trusted?

WHITMAN: Yes, listen, it is a very -- it`s an unprecedented election. I have never seen anything like this in my entire career.

But one of these two individuals will be president of the United States. And I think Hillary has the temperament, I think she has the global experience, I think she has the economic plan that is going to make the economy work for everybody.

And I really like the fact that she is going to pull this country together, because we are going to be stronger together. Divided we fall, united we stand. And I think she is going to do a great job after the election, when she wins, of pulling this country together, which I think is really important.

MATTHEWS: You were backing Chris Christie. He has gotten involved with this whole Bridgegate problem. You trusted him.

Do you trust Hillary Clinton and Chris Christie both to this day, both of them?

WHITMAN: Well, listen, I was a supporter of Chris Christie. I thought he had done a lot of very good things in his career. I was disappointed around his endorsement of Donald Trump. And, obviously, the Bridgegate thing has been problematic.

But, listen, what I really think that Hillary brings to the party is the economic policy. If the president could only work on one thing -- and the president needs to do a lot of things -- it would be to fix the economy for average working people.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Which Hillary do you believe, though? This is tricky. This is tricky. One last question.

WHITMAN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: We`re hearing that Hillary Clinton, thanks to WikiLeaks, has come out for open trade, open borders, free trade in the hemisphere.

But publicly, her public position has been, I`m against TPP, I`m questioning NAFTA.

Which is she, a free trader or a protectionist? Because we`re getting different messages from her. And which do you like?

WHITMAN: Yes, well, listen, I think smart trade deals are important.

Listen, it is very important for the economy of the United States to trade with other countries. Isolationism will not be the right answer for this country. So, we have got to do smart trade deals. And I think Hillary is for smart trade deals.

MATTHEWS: But that doesn`t say whether she is a free trader or a protectionist. Which is she? Which do you like?

WHITMAN: Well, you know what? Usually, these things aren`t black and white, are they, Chris?

You`re a free trader if the deal is smart. You`re against trade if the deals are not smart.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Meg Whitman, with all due respect, you have to be for TPP or against it. Are you for TPP?

WHITMAN: I am for TPP. Yes, I am.

MATTHEWS: Where is Hillary on TPP?

WHITMAN: So, she is against it, and not that I agree with every single thing that Hillary Clinton stands for.

MATTHEWS: But you said the most important thing is the economy. You said the most important issue is the economy.

WHITMAN: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: And you disagree with her on our role in the world economically. So, where do you agree with her on economics?

WHITMAN: So, first of all, I agree on her infrastructure program.

We need to rebuild the infrastructure in this country. It not only provides jobs, but it actually creates the ability for goods...

MATTHEWS: Yes, Trump is for that, too.

WHITMAN: ... and services and people to move around this country.

The second area is her innovation agenda. We have got to own the next generation of industries in the world, whether that`s 3-D printing or immunotherapy or robotics or artificial intelligence or big data and analytics.

And we need to make sure that we are the leader in those categories, that we create jobs for every kind of American with all kinds of educational backgrounds. And we can do that if we set our mind to it and we decide, as a country, we want that we lead in these brand-new industries that over time will create a lot of jobs for this country.

MATTHEWS: Thank you so much. It`s an honor having you on the show, Meg Whitman tonight from Hewlett-Packard.

Let`s bring in Democratic strategist James Carville. James Carville is down in New Orleans, I believe, New Orleans. And here he is right now.

James, let me ask you about tonight. Try to do this. Give us a tout on tonight`s fight. What it`s going to look -- it is going to be very pugnacious. What do you think it is going to look like tonight?

JAMES CARVILLE, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: Well, normally, if the normal person were doing it, you would say Trump has fallen behind. He has got to solidify the Republicans a little bit. He has got to appear to be a little less scary than he is. That`s what I would or anybody else would do. That`s what you would do.

But I think Robert Costa made the money point here tonight. It is all a Breitbart thing. It`s all narrowcasting, international bankers, and, you know, Obama`s half-brother, and every kind of thing he can think of. So, I have no idea.

In terms of Secretary Clinton, I hope she comes across as answering the questions, straightforward, kind of policy-oriented, sort of likable and gets those numbers up that you keep referring to, and gets her favorability up and drops her unfavorable a little bit. And I think she has a good position to run away with this thing right now.

MATTHEWS: She once said to a crowd, and I`m sure the crowd enjoyed it, because we all did, she said, when somebody is coming at you, deck them. Deck them.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Sometimes -- you`re suggesting a kind of rope-a-dope -- not rope-a-dope -- that`s not right. Sort of let him make a fool of himself tonight and fall back and laugh at him, like she does. Is that a smart strategy to just laugh at the guy?

CARVILLE: Well, I don`t -- I think what she has got to do is take it seriously. She has to take the questions seriously.

I don`t think she necessarily has to take Trump seriously. And she is fond of repeating Michelle Obama, who says, when they go low, we go high. And so there are two different sides here. I mean, she clearly decked him in the first debate. I think the guy has been decked.

He`s on his way to losing. And I think, tonight, if she comes across as I know she can, a very knowledgeable person that has a good grasp on the country, I think she will put him away pretty good here.

MATTHEWS: What do you make -- I have got to ask you something you know more about than I do. That`s Pennsylvania races for Senate and governor and all that, because you have run a bunch of them and won them.

CARVILLE: Right.

MATTHEWS: What do you think is the -- is there a woman problem in Pennsylvania? I have always thought that sort of a -- it has sort of a tough guys, gun owner kind of mentality of the state, especially in the T., away from the big cities.

CARVILLE: Right.

MATTHEWS: Do you think Katie McGinty is facing a cultural threshold there, a ceiling of some kind?

CARVILLE: Well, I think that`s a legitimate thing in the west and to some extent in the T.

But you have got to realize, the Philadelphia suburbs have just become such a big part of the vote in Pennsylvania. And it has become so much more Democratic. Chris, in 1986, when I did Bob Casey`s campaign, if we got 36 percent in the suburbs, a Democrat could win the state. They will get 60, better than 60 in the suburbs now.

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s changed.

CARVILLE: And that`s really -- and the state has changed. It is a little bit different than the state that you grew up and I worked in so many times.

MATTHEWS: You`re right. I think 22 percent of the state is just in the burbs around Philly. That`s a lot. And I think they are much more Democrat, but more Democrat.

(CROSSTALK)

CARVILLE: Democrats, we will get clocked -- yes, we will get clocked in Westmoreland and Washington and Beaver and a lot of counties like that that we used to carry, but Delaware, Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, and those kind of counties, and that`s where the population growth has been in the state.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Some night, we`re going to do all 67 counties, OK?

(LAUGHTER)

CARVILLE: OK.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, James Carville.

CARVILLE: Thank you.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Up next, the HARDBALL roundtable joins with what we can expect tonight. How should Hillary Clinton respond to the question I put to James, to attacks? Should she deck him or laugh? That`s ahead.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics. Or, actually, the place is Las Vegas tonight, UNLV. It`s just about 60 minutes to go to the final presidential debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL, live in Las Vegas. Hillary Clinton wants to expand her widening lead over Donald Trump. Her campaign said she is expecting Trump to take a scorched-earth approach in tonight`s debate. So, what can we expect from both candidates in their last face to face?

By the way, this is the last chance for both candidates to reach basically 70 million or 80 million people tonight. And I always tell people, everybody knows that watching now, that 90 percent of these people don`t watch programs like this every night. They don`t keep up with politics. They show up for the biggies, the big events.

So, they`re watching tonight, the voters. So, Trump has a chance, Hillary has a chance to talk to them.

Let`s bring in our group. Megan Murphy, of course, is with Bloomberg. Michael Steele is the former chair of the RNC and a political analyst for MSNBC, and Ben Ginsberg as well, GOP attorney.

Let`s go right now to you, Megan, in tonight`s strategy. Let`s say you`re Hillary Clinton tonight. Do you deck him or do you smile?

MEGAN MURPHY, BLOOMBERG: You`ve got to smile. I mean, you`ve got --

MATTHEWS: Don`t deck him.

MURPHY: Don`t deck him. You`ve got so much -- hey, like take the shots if you go get shot. Whether he`s going to walk into it, whether it`s going to be a Mohammed Ali type thing, rope-a-dope. She`s got such a huge lead, she really just needs to protect her advantage right now. She doesn`t want to make that mistake.

MATTHEWS: That`s a little Nixonian, though, isn`t it?

MURPHY: A little Nixonian, but also, it`s not her style to go hard.

MATTHEWS: You don`t think she is a tough person?

MURPHY: I think he is tough as nails. I think she`s been very disciplined about not taking that case.

MATTHEWS: Michael, I think she`s going to take some punches tonight because she`s done it before.

MICHAEL STEELE, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: What I`ve noticed about Hillary, what she`ll do is she`ll take them subtly. Like in the first debate where she referenced getting the money from your daddy. That approach. The subtle stuff that will get under Donald Trump`s skin a little bit. So she is very good at that.

I agree with Megan. She doesn`t have to come out swinging. There`s no need. She has the lead. She can counter-punch. She can lead with a couple of soft punches knowing that Donald Trump will probably get excited about that. And then sit back and let him go off the rails.

MATTHEWS: Also, if she can shift the conversation to where he may not want it. He has to win tonight. If he doesn`t get to his sweet spots, he doesn`t win. So, if she shifts the attention away from emails, away from the crazy stuff, how`s he get to it?

BEN GINSBERG, FORMER RNC GENERAL COUNSEL: I`m not sure. She is trained as a lawyer. What lawyers know how to do, know which arguments matter and which are fluff. So if they`ve done debate training, right, and they`ve done a lot of debate training. It has been very, very good. She`s going to have certain things to respond to and certain pivots. And then certain sort of deck him lines. If she gets opening, she`s going to take.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk Benghazi, because they`ve got the Benghazi mother, Mrs. Smith. The mother of Sean Smith, he was killed there. They have a survivor, I believe, from Benghazi. Also, the lone survivor guy from the movie and actually from real -- from that.

And so, we`ve got a lot of focus on Benghazi. Should Hillary Clinton, I`ve always wondered why she didn`t do something like, unlike you, I knew Mr. Stevens and I really cared about what happened and I did my level best that night to save him. It was just too darn late. Something like that.

GINSBERG: She might, but the other thing is why would Benghazi come up in the normal course of this debate? I mean, it`s not certainly not part of --

MATTHEWS: What about the crowd in the first row? All these people, so related to that issue.

STEELE: Well, yes. There may be an opportunity for Donald Trump to use them as a reference point, say, I had with me tonight --

MATTHEWS: In the audience tonight.

STEELE: In the audience tonight, and then try to draw Hillary out that way. I don`t think she bites at that. I think she sits back. And just takes and it says, OK, fine. You make your point and she`ll move. Again, she`s got to lead. There`s no incentive to get into it.

MURPHY: I mean, Benghazi is not going to be a game changer for her when you look at polls --

MATTHEWS: Not for her.

MURPHY: Winning now among men, winning among less educate voters. For the first time since summer, she`s showing a lead, she`s got has 20 points for women. Do we really think Benghazi is going to make up that --

MATTHEWS: Her biggest weakness is trust and below that, a subset of that, e-mail, a subset of that, Benghazi. And then the latest, the big news story about the so-called quid pro quo.

GINSBERG: One of the topics tonight, and they are awfully broad subjects is fitness to be president. So, that probably the segment in which this is --

MATTHEWS: OK. Why don`t we take drug tests? This gets so embarrassing.

GINSBERG: So she goes back to substance.

MATTHEWS: He wants to do saliva test on the air.

GINSBERG: Great entertainment.

STEELE: But the question, I think one of the questions for me, it should be for the Trump camp is, doing all of that, going high profile ballistic on Hillary. Who are you convincing to now come to you and see you as a presidential candidate? What upside is there?

MATTHEWS: OK, Michael. And I`ll go to you because you`re a woman and this is for women.

MURPHY: I am a woman.

MATTHEWS: I know. How do you get to the number he is really being killed on, Republican women? You`ve got to start with that. You start.

MURPHY: OK. First of all, you have a personality change and that you are humbler and apologetic and truly apologetic about the incredibly offensive comments you made. And you say I made a mistake also in the path after that video was released. I didn`t exactly was as contrite as I should have been. I should have come forward and totally acknowledged and admitted how offensive those comments were and how they put --

MATTHEWS: Instead of blaming Billy Bush?

MURPHY: And then second, go back to the issue Republican women really care about, which is the economy and their children`s future. Hammer on those points. Those are the two points that have always shown him in that segment of voters, that he can gain real steam with, and the two issues that he`s been least effective.

MATTHEWS: But his defenses have been so complete. Blame it on Billy Bush. Melania did that. She`s taking it for the team. And then blaming it on Howard Stern? What are you doing on Howard Stern in the first place?

MURPHY: And then Howard Stern saying it.

GINSBERG: Look, in third debates, candidates don`t change their personalities. If they do it, it doesn`t look genuine. So, I think you may see doubling down on what`s happened before. The theme that he`s gotten away from, the income inequality/populist divide. And so, there will be questions on that.

MURPHY: Why doesn`t everything after Hillary saying in public and private speeches when you`re paid $250,000, you`re big a free trader. You get out in front of a labor group or Democratic progressive group and you`re miss protection of the union guy. What is it?

GINSBERG: He needs to go back to, I`m the disrupter, things are dysfunctional. He`s gotten away from that and defending personal things.

MURPHY: What about saying, Hillary Clinton, you told Goldman Sachs you supported open borders? I mean, these are all --

MATTHEWS: I would go after open borders because there`s only one meaning I heard, open borders.

STEELE: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, the round table is sticking with us. Up next, these people tell me more that I don`t know anything about. We`ll be right back.

This is HARDBALL, live from UNLV for the final presidential debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back from UNLV, with just over an hour to go before the final presidential debate right here at UNLV.

Ben, tell me something I don`t know.

GINSBERG: So, what you don`t know is that as Donald Trump goes along, he`s relying more and more on low propensity voters. It`s up to the Republican National Committee to turn them out. This election is turning into a referendum on whether the national party committees can do anything, on whether they`re about to become extinct creatures. Bad cycle for the DNC, bad cycle for the RNC unless they can show --

MATTHEWS: Reince Priebus has to bring out the vote for Trump. He`s got to.

GINSBERG: He has promised that he would and that`s the referendum.

MATTHEWS: He`s stuck with him, it`s interesting.

Megan?

MURPHY: Talk about a rigged election, whether there`s going to be voter fraud and a lot of talk about whether it`s rigged debates. Three- quarters of Donald Trump`s supporters believe the debates have been rigged. But tonight --

MATTHEWS: Debates have been rigged. What`s that mean?

MURPHY: Three quarters, but unfairly tilted towards Clinton.

MATTHEWS: How do you rig a debate?

MURPHY: Good question. I don`t you do it, maybe get the question. The 60 percent of voters think Chris Wallace will be fair tonight. A lot of pressure on him to see what he does tonight.

MATTHEWS: Is tonight rigged?

MURPHY: Does he have the questions?

MATTHEWS: You said 40 percent already said it is rigged.

MURPHY: I can say anything`s rigged.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Go ahead.

STEELE: Efforts are already under way to rebuild post-November 8th inside the GOP. Meetings are starting to take place.

MATTHEWS: You coming back?

STEELE: No.

MATTHEWS: Your record was pretty good when you were running the RNC, in terms of numbers.

STEELE: Yes, biggest historic --

MATTHEWS: Let`s move the previous question here.

STEELE: We`ll move the previous question back to the future.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: So here we go. Anyway, thank you, it`s great.

The crowd out here has been great. There they are, there they are. We`re getting serious now.

Anyway, thank you all, Michael Steele, as my friend always here, Megan. A new friend -- Ben Ginsberg, an old friend.

When we return, my election diary and what I`ll expect you`ll see tonight. I`m making a preview of the final presidential debate.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Wednesday, October 19th, 2016.

As I said, tonight`s big casino, the betting odds are so bad for Donald Trump that he has to bet big and hope it`s his night. Right now, you bet a dollar on Donald Trump this election, you win four. That means he`s got one chance in five chances to come out on top on election night.

So, what would you do? Would you throw everything you have at his rival Secretary Clinton or concentrate your attack on one key target, this murky deal with the e-mail dealing with Benghazi and the former FBI agent who said he saw a quid pro quo to cover it all up?

Anyway, I`m going to get on the Benghazi e-mail. I`ll double down, triple down on it because it gets to Clinton`s chief problem, which is trust. It gets back to Benghazi and puts rival Clinton in the role of having to defend the bureaucracy, in other words, that easily targeted word -- Washington.

So, Mr. Trump, if he`s listening now or listens to anyone any time, he should stick to the smart shot, trying to hit Hillary on everything is trying to go to a 21st century media war with a blunderbuss. Like Elmer Fudd going to war with Bugs Bunny. As you recall, he never did catch that wabbit.

And this is HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us. Stick around. I`ll be joining Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow for our great complete coverage of the third and final debate.

It`s going to be a huge night -- as I said before and will say again, big casino here in Las Vegas. What a night it`s going to be. Who do you bet`s going to make the big shot, who`s going to be calm and laugh at the other guy? I still don`t know and neither do you.

Stick around.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Robert Costa, Howard Fineman, Michael Steele, Milissa Rehberger, Kasie Hunt, Hallie Jackson, Michael Steele, Jon Ralston

9513 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Last saloon in the desert.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews out at UNLV in Las Vegas.

Anyway, the third and final presidential debate here tomorrow night looms as Donald Trump`s last, best opportunity with just three weeks to go to the election to reverse his downward momentum.

Well, today, on the eve of that debate, President Obama addressed Trump`s most explosive charge of the week, that the election this November will be rigged in Clinton`s favor. Here`s the president.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: That is both irresponsible, and by the way, doesn`t really show the kind of leadership and toughness that you`d want out of a president. You start whining before the game`s even over? If whenever things are going badly for you and you lose, you start blaming somebody else, then you don`t have what it takes to be in this job.

There is no serious person out there who would suggest somehow that you could even -- you could even rig America`s elections. And so I`d advise Mr. Trump to stop whining and go try to make his case to get votes.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Wow! According to a new RealClearPolitics polling average, the debates so far appear to have helped Hillary Clinton and hurt Donald Trump. They candidates were virtually tied before the first debate, but Clinton`s margin over Trump grew steadily through the second debate. On average, Clinton now holds a 7-point lead, with 46 percent to Trump`s 39 percent. That`s an average of all the polls.

But as we`ve seen over the last week, there`s mounting evidence that Trump intends to come out swinging in their final showdown. Trump is now alleging, based on FBI documents released yesterday, that the State Department tried to prevent one of Clinton`s e-mails about Benghazi from being classified in a quid pro quo with the FBI. Both agencies deny the charge, but Trump today called it a coverup like Watergate and called for Patrick Kennedy, the State Department`s undersecretary for management, to be fired.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: The State Department was trying to cover up Hillary`s crime of sending classified information on a server our enemies could easily access.

(BOOS)

TRUMP: The FBI document showed that Patrick Kennedy made the request for altering classification as part of a very, very serious quid pro quo. Not allowed to do it.

This is a felony corruption. This is a bigger event than Watergate, and they practically refuse to cover it. Today, I`m calling for him to be fired!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, we covered it last night. We`re covering it tonight.

Anyway, the Trump campaign is also foreshadowing potential new attacks on Clinton over Benghazi, inviting Pat Smith, whose son was killed in the 2012 attack, to sit in the audience during the debate tomorrow night.

Joining me right now is Molly Ball, who covers politics for "The Atlantic." Robert Costa is national political reporter with "The Washington Post" and an MSNBC political analyst. And Howard Fineman is global editorial director at the HuffingtonPost and an MSNBC political analyst.

I want to go to Robert Costa. You follow Trump every day. Tomorrow night, I said it`s the kitchen sink night because I think he`s going to throw whatever he has because it`s the last chance to speak to 80 million people.

ROBERT COSTA, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Speaking to Trump advisers today, debate prep`s been all about aggression. They say Trump`s going to come out there and throw everything he`s got at Secretary Clinton, personal, professional, political. It`s all going to come out.

MATTHEWS: How big will the issue of the e-mail, of the fact that there was this discussion between the undersecretary of state and an FBI agent over how to grade an e-mail which related to Benghazi?

COSTA: Well, at his speech in Colorado Springs today, it was at the top of his remarks. He went on for minutes. It was scripted. So you know, behind the scenes, you got Steve Bannon and others putting that at the top of his list.

MATTHEWS: You can`t bring a prompter into a debate, Molly.

MOLLY BALL, "THE ATLANTIC": Well, that`s the thing, is that we`ve seen that when Trump is on his talking points, he can deliver these attacks very effectively. And I think that Hillary Clinton is going to face some tough questions about this tomorrow night, as she should.

But he gets sidetracked very easily. She got under his skin memorably at the first debate. And it is not always easy for him to stay focused on the things that his advisers would like him to stay on. You know, I agree with Bob that -- you know, Trump and his camp believe he won that second debate handily. They want him to take the same approach...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

BALL: ... hammering Hillary Clinton...

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) did a lot better.

BALL: ... with everything...

MATTHEWS: A lot better.

BALL: ... everything that he`s got.

MATTHEWS: You know, who was it that said that nothing concentrates the mind like the thought of imminent hanging? And I was thinking that he knows that if he doesn`t win this third debate clearly, triumphantly, he`s got problems. So why not focus on what he knows to be the gold? And I would say it`s the e-mail because that where Hillary has -- that`s where Hillary has to play very complicated defense. She has to defend the bureaucrats, deny anything wrong -- went wrong, and he has to want to just say, No, it smells.

HOWARD FINEMAN, HUFFINGTON POST GLOBAL EDITORIAL DIR., MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, he`s caught the bureaucracy fighting with itself here, which is always good for the other side. But I think the importance of the Benghazi story and this e-mail story is not those issues themselves, but Trump`s larger and largest and I think most successful theme, which is that Washington is hopelessly corrupt.

You may not like me, but I`m the outsider. And if it`s a binary choice between Hillary Clinton and the outsider, and you want change, I`m the only guy who can do it. You may not like it, but I`m the only guy who can do it. That`s really his strongest argument.

MATTHEWS: So if you`re advising Hillary, you say, Don`t play bureaucratic defense on this. Don`t get into who the undersecretary is. Act like you don`t know the guy`s name. Don`t get into whether the FBI is right or the State Department because you`re going to look like you`re defending D.C.

BALL: Well, look, I...

MATTHEWS: Washington bureaucracy, you`re one of them.

BALL: Far be it from me to advise any candidate, much less Hillary Clinton. But I think it is tricky...

MATTHEWS: Well, speculate then, don`t advise.

BALL: I think it is a tricky issue for her. I mean, think about what the entire -- I`ve talked to so many voters about Hillary Clinton, and it`s not that they don`t agree with her on policy necessarily, it`s not that they don`t dislike Donald Trump, but they look at her and they see not just someone who`s implicated in the system for 30 years, but a politician pursuing personal interests at the expense of public interests, and someone whose motives they don`t trust, someone who when she opens her mouth, they don`t believe what she`s saying.

FINEMAN: Chris, that...

BALL: And that`s why this is such an effective case against her.

FINEMAN: That is the thing about these e-mails. They`re kind of this weird Greek chorus in the background, showing a different -- showing what the public believes, which is that there are two Hillary Clintons. There`s the somewhat worthy -- there`s the worthy public Hillary Clinton with the policy issues you may agree with, and then there`s the ultra-political Hillary Clinton behind the scenes. That`s what those e-mails play into.

MATTHEWS: Well, those FBI documents released just yesterday show that an unnamed FBI employee described a conversation between Patrick Kennedy of the State Department and Brian MaCauley of the FBI as a quid pro quo. McCauley told "The Washington Post" that Kennedy called for a favor, but McCauley interjected and pressed Kennedy to allow the FBI to put more agents in Iraq. In turn, Kennedy explained that he wanted a classification of an e-mail about Benghazi not to be upgraded to secret. McCauley said there was no contingency binding the two requests and there was no collusion between agencies.

Anyway, Patrick Kennedy also said in a statement today the two matters were not linked. There was no quid pro quo, nor was there any bargaining. Furthermore, the FBI and the State Department say the alleged deal never happened.

Anyway, there`s this other guy, the former agent, who hasn`t been spoken to since the first story where he said there was quid pro quo. So Trump`s got that to play with.

COSTA: The question for Trump is he can only have so many headlines coming out of tomorrow night. If he gets dragged into the accusations, the allegations from the women, Clinton`s ready on all that front. But is he ready to prosecute the case or not on the e-mails and the FBI and the way this was all investigated? Is he ready for that, or is he going to be distracted?

(CROSSTALK)

BALL: Well, and I think also what -- Trump has to stop this from being all about him. He has to turn the focus onto Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: You say he`s going to be aggressive.

BALL: And he has not been...

COSTA: He`s going to be aggressive, but we`re not sure how narrow that aggression`s going to be. That aggression has to have a focus if it`s going to land and it`s going to actually be the story coming out of the debate.

MATTHEWS: He can`t talk about Bill Clinton. That bounces right back to him.

BALL: That`s right. It makes him the story.

MATTHEWS: He`s got to talk about something today.

FINEMAN: Right. I think if you look at the three debates in sequence, the first one was -- was -- was all -- was all Trump on the defensive completely, and punching himself at the same time. He took himself down.

The second debate, Trump was more aggressive overall, but as Robert says, not really focused. And one reason he didn`t win the debate, but his followers think he did, is that he showed that style. Now I think Robert`s right. He has to go in specifically on something, and this could be it.

MATTHEWS: What about this thing -- Chris Wallace is going to be good. I think a moderator -- some of them -- it`s been uneven so far, but I think he`s going to be very aware and he will have learned from all the other moderators this year, right?

And if Trump says something like, We`re going to have a rigged election come next month, I think he almost -- I`m not going to tell him how do this. He knows his business. But he`s got to say, How are they going to do that? How are they going to rig this? Give me -- you can`t throw that out. And he`s going to force Trump to say how it`s going to be rigged.

COSTA: And Wallace has said he`s not going to fact check, so if Donald Trump...

MATTHEWS: That`s not a fact check. It just says, Give me the information you got.

COSTA: But if you`re a moderator and you have someone say the election`s going to be rigged and the evidence of voter fraud is so small and minuscule, are you going to actually articulate that on stage?

FINEMAN: Well, I know how Trump`s going to answer that. Trump has already said how he`s going to answer it. He`s going to say, Are you kidding me? Philadelphia, Cleveland -- you know, he`s going to say that. He`s going to -- it`ll all be innuendo, and he`s going to say it`s illegal **immigrants** and he`s going to say it`s the media. It`s going to say -- those -- those three evils...

MATTHEWS: Can he...

FINEMAN: ... are what`s going to rig -- quote, "rig" the election.

MATTHEWS: If he can point to a state senate corrupt -- like we had in Pennsylvania in `93. You know that race (INAUDIBLE) overthrow the whole thing. A federal judge (INAUDIBLE) throw the case. Can he point to a particular case, say that proves the whole...

FINEMAN: Well, I think...

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: I think that Chris Wallace -- again, not to tell him how to do his business, but he should ask for a specific or two and see if Donald Trump can answer.

BALL: That`s right. Trump has not had any tough questions on this completely ridiculous claim that he`s making.

MATTHEWS: Can`t he just say Chicago `60?

BALL: And it isn`t about specifics for him.

MATTHEWS: That`s what everybody does.

BALL: It`s about...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... stole the election.

BALL: It`s about resentment. It`s about grievance. It`s about telling people they`re getting screwed. And it`s also about him personally refusing to acknowledge that he`s losing (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: OK, one problem he has is cities like Philadelphia are 85 percent for the other guy, for Hillary.

BALL: Well, because it`s rigged, obviously!

FINEMAN: Can I make one other quick...

(CROSSTALK)

BALL: I`m joking!

MATTHEWS: Sarcasm doesn`t work on television!

BALL: I am being sarcastic!

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: I got to say one other quick point, which is having the president of the United States in the Rose Garden essentially -- essentially tweaking the candidate...

MATTHEWS: "You`re whining"?

FINEMAN: ... "You`re whining" -- that was an extraordinary moment.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I just think Trump may -- I don`t know if he`s going to -- is he going to go back at Obama and say, Stop saying I`m whining?

(LAUGHTER)

COSTA: I just -- every single report I`m getting out of Trump Tower and Trump`s inner circle is that he is just going to go out there, and wherever that line is, he`s going to go over it.

MATTHEWS: Well, he`s got Paul Ryan on his side on this e-mail thing, which is unique. That...

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: Paul Ryan`s not on his side generally. He`s...

MATTHEWS: I know.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He won`t be seen with him, but he`s with him on this e- mail. Anyway...

COSTA: Is Trump going to articulate anything for the party?

MATTHEWS: Well, he might on that one. Anyway, Trump today...

FINEMAN: Party? What party?

MATTHEWS: ... painted a grim portrait of what this country would look like if Hillary Clinton is elected president. Let`s watch this grim portrait.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Their international donors control her every move. If we let crooked Hillary`s cartel -- and just remember this -- run this government, history will record that 2017 was the year that America lost, truly lost its independence, truly lost its independence.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

D. TRUMP: And by the way, this is our final shot, folks. In four years, it`s over. You`re never going to be able to win. You`re never going to be able to win. It`s tilting -- it`s going to be a one-party system. This is your final shot.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So we`re Zimbabwe tomorrow morning, right?

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: I was going to say Venezuela.

(CROSSTALK)

BALL: ... we become Zimbabwe, apparently. Look, this is something that Trump supporters feel to their bones. You talk to those people going to those rallies, they really do believe that the apocalypse is imminent and that it will be the end of the world if they don`t win this election.

MATTHEWS: What`s it look like? What do they see coming?

BALL: Like, visually? Is there an actual, like...

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: Venezuela.

BALL: ... landscape. You know, it`s some combination...

FINEMAN: Cuba.

BALL: ... of a liberal Supreme Court and maybe, you know, reeducation camps for conservatives and Trump supporters.

COSTA: It`s not a landscape, it`s a hellscape.

BALL: Yes.

COSTA: Listening to Trump in Colorado Springs today, he says the media is colluding with the Democratic and the Republican Party. They`re an international corporation that are running the whole global political system. I mean, it is beyond the normal right/left, Republican/Democrat dynamic.

MATTHEWS: I know.

FINEMAN: And the concern is...

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: ... concern is that all of -- even if Trump himself goes away, which I don`t believe he will if he loses, that he`s going to leave a legacy of having pulled the whole political spectrum over to the right and exposed the alt-right to the mainstream of the country.

MATTHEWS: Well, maybe Hillary Clinton`s going to have sing from "Annie," "The sun`ll come up tomorrow" because it`s the bleakest thing I`ve heard.

Anyway, thank you, guys -- Robert Costa, Molly Ball and Howard Fineman.

Coming up, Melania Trump defends her husband and dismissed his accusers, a risky strategy that undercuts Trump`s own attacks against the way Hillary Clinton dealt with her husband`s accusers. By the way, we`re going to show the comparison between Melania and Hillary over the years in defending their husbands. We`ll see (INAUDIBLE) It look -- I think Melania is going to help a little bit.

Anyway, plus, tomorrow night`s debate is Donald Trump`s last chance, as I said, best chance to get back in the race. We know there`s going to be fireworks on that debate stage, but how ugly could it get? Will Trump come at Clinton with everything he`s got? You betcha!

And the great Garry Trudeau`s coming here tonight. The creator of "Doonesbury" gives us his take on Trump versus Clinton. I think he`s for Clinton.

Finally, my "election diary" from Las Vegas tonight on the eve of the third and final presidential debate for 2016.

And be sure to tune in for our coverage of the debate tomorrow night. Join me for a special edition of HARDBALL here tomorrow night at 7:00 Eastern. Then at 8:00 Eastern, I`ll join Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow for a preview of the debate.

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump face off on the debate stage at 9:00 Eastern. And then at 10:30, it`s full debate coverage and analysis. We`ll be here all night. That`s all coming up tomorrow right here on MSNBC.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, another big battleground poll is in tonight, and it`s from right here in the key state of Nevada. That`s how you say it, Navadda.

Let`s check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: According to a new Monmouth University poll, Hillary Clinton has surged to a 7-point lead in Nevada, Clinton 47, Trump 40, with Gary Johnson still down at 7. In the previous Monmouth poll, taken just before the debate, first debate, Trump led Clinton by 2 points. So he`s gone from up to down.

And look at this one. A new poll from Texas has Trump leading by 3 points. It`s Trump 41, Clinton 38, with Johnson at 4, and lots of undecideds in a new poll from the University of Houston.

And we`ll be right back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MELANIA TRUMP, DONALD TRUMP`S WIFE: As you can see from the tape, the cameras were not on. It was only a mic. And I wonder if they even knew that the mic was on because they were kind of a boy talk, and he was lead on, like, egg on from the host to say dirty and bad stuff.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You feel the host, Billy Bush, was sort of egging him on.

M. TRUMP: Yes. Yes.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, welcome back to HARDBALL, live from Las Vegas tonight. That`s Melania Trump, of course. She says her husband was egged on to say, quote, "dirty and bad" things about women in that leaked 2005 audio recording. She also said she believes her husband that it was just, quote, "locker room talk," and went on to blame her husband`s opposition.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

M. TRUMP: I believe my husband. This was all organized from the opposition. And with the details that they got, did they ever -- did they ever check background of these women? They don`t have any facts.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Mrs. Trump`s defense of her husband sounds very similar, many think, to another political spouse whose husband faced accusations about his private behavior. Watch this interesting comparison.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

M. TRUMP: They want to damage the campaign. And why now? Why -- after so many years, why three weeks before the election?

HILLARY CLINTON, FIRST LADY: This is part of a continuing political campaign against my husband.

M. TRUMP: This is the media. It was NBC. It was "Access Hollywood." It was left-wing and -- left-wing media.

CLINTON: ... is this vast right-wing conspiracy that has been conspiring against my husband since the day he announced for president.

M. TRUMP: He`s kind. He`s a gentleman.

CLINTON: He is kind. He is friendly.

M. TRUMP: I believe my husband. I believe my husband.

CLINTON: I`m not only here because I love and believe my husband. I`m also here because I love and believe in my country.

TRUMP: It`s a lot of backlash on the media, the way they treated him.

CLINTON: This is deliberately designed to sensationalize charges against my husband, because everything else they tried has failed.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, joining me right now are two of our campaign reporters.

Hallie Jackson is an NBC News correspondent covering Donald Trump. And Kasie Hunt is an NBC News correspondent covering Hillary Clinton.

I want to start with Kasie, who is with me.

I think that was a good piece of work by putting those two together, because the defenses are very similar.

KASIE HUNT, NBC CORRESPONDENT: They are, quite frankly.

And, look, I think the Clinton campaign has really not wanted to engage on this at all. I think, if you put the question to them, they immediately want to say, well, off the record, and they sort of push back. There`s sort of a stiffening in response to that, and I think it`s a place that they don`t want to go. They have steered clear of this.

They have steered clear of talking about her, even though I wonder if there`s any sympathy there from Hillary Clinton to Melania Trump, having gone through something similar.

MATTHEWS: Well, I feel something for her, because she`s obviously not into the political conversation we`re all in all the time. She`s a regular person. Right?

And I just -- I don`t know about you, but I think -- I will start with you and I will go to Hallie with the same question. Inevitably, I get criticism from people on the hard left saying, how come you`re not tougher on them on this private stuff? They`re the same exact people that said move on when Clinton got into trouble. The same exact people said this is great, focus on this, focus on this, who said, why are you talking about a guy`s private life?

Is anybody even-steven about this thing, anybody you meet?

(LAUGHTER)

HALLIE JACKSON, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: I mean, look, I think it`s a difficult and delicate...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Have you ever come across the person who has the same standard for Democrats as Republicans? Is that a rhetorical question?

JACKSON: The same standard for Democrats as Republicans?

MATTHEWS: And Republicans in terms of misbehavior in private life.

JACKSON: Look, I think that Republicans have often been judged differently on this because they have probably had a different set of policies publicly.

I think there`s been a lot of sense among Democrats that Republicans who say you should live X, Y, and Z way, they shouldn`t be judged for it in the political realm.

At the end of the day, I think it`s -- all`s fair in love and politics?

MATTHEWS: Democrats advocate loosey-goosey, that they can behave any way they want? I don`t know about that.

Hallie, I`m thinking about it. Hallie, what do you think about this thing about Melania? I think it`s like chicken soup. It can`t hurt. And she`s a sympathetic figure, a likable figure, and she`s not a pol. She`s not a politician.

(CROSSTALK)

JACKSON: Correct.

And she also -- she is not like -- she hasn`t oversaturated the media airwaves, if you will. She`s not a surrogate that the Trump campaign deploys almost ever, frankly, unlike, for example, Ivanka Trump, who, by the way, is going to be appearing publicly tomorrow morning for this Fortune summit, which will be interesting to watch.

But I think of Melania, Melania Trump, obviously Donald Trump`s wife, I think that there is a sense of, why not put her out there? But here`s the question mark, Chris, timing. Why wait? Why wait until they did, when the story had been sort of simmering away, if you will? It had taken a bit of a back burner compared to some other news about like Hillary Clinton`s e-mails, about the WikiLeaks releases, et cetera.

Why not put her out there when this was really sort of hot and heavy, if you will, the day that Melania Trump issued, for example, that public apology statement not on camera?

MATTHEWS: You know why. Hallie, you know why.

JACKSON: Yes, it`s media strategy, sure.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: The reason why -- you know what they say about real estate? The best time to buy this lot was 20 years ago. The second best time is tomorrow morning. You know? They have to act now. It`s getting tense out there.

JACKSON: I get what you`re saying. And I think that this is a story obviously that Melania Trump is -- what`s the word? She`s sort of clinging to her husband`s line on this. She`s embracing what her husband is saying, of course, that this is a media conspiracy against him. And they are presenting a united front, as I think the campaign would want them to.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Some people think she may have hurt herself with this. Melania Trump also said in these interviews yesterday she sometimes feels like she has two boys at home. Let`s listen to this. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANDERSON COOPER, CNN: He described it as locker room talk.

TRUMP: Mm-hmm.

COOPER: To you. I mean, you sort of alluded to that as well. Is that what it is to you, just locker room talk?

TRUMP: Yes, it`s kind of two teenage boys. Actually, they should behave better, right?

COOPER: He was 59.

TRUMP: Correct. And sometimes I said I have two boys at home. I have my young son and I have my husband. So -- but, I know how some men talk, and that`s how I saw it, yes.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Do you think that was scripted? I have two boys at home. One is my son, and the other is a 59-year-old husband, in this case 70- year-old husband.

HUNT: I do think there have been a lot of women who have told pollsters that -- I think what -- they would sympathize with that, and that they think that this is how men talk in private, that that`s what a lot of people have told us in our NBC News/"Wall Street Journal" polling.

I think that`s probably something that there are probably a lot of women in America who can relate to the feeling.

MATTHEWS: Well, some of this stuff is beyond locker room.

Anyway, one of the -- Trump`s accusers, former "People" magazine writer Natasha Stoynoff, is now speaking out. She says -- quote -- "Women are talking about this, and they need to. We cannot be silent anymore. I didn`t tell my story for politics. I told it for women."

Well, today, "People" magazine has reported that six colleagues of her, of Stoynoff, and close friends can corroborate Stoynoff`s account of being attacked by Trump and are coming forward. Stoynoff confided to these friends and co-workers about the attack shortly after she says it occurred.

NBC News has not verified these new accounts, and Donald Trump has vehemently denied this and all other allegations of sexual misconduct.

Hallie, that`s usually a way we judge if something actually happened, whether a person who experienced something, who was the victim of it, if you will, shared that information at the time it occurred, rather than waiting until there`s a political key moment to bring it out.

JACKSON: So, two points to make on this.

One is that, as you note, Trump himself, his campaign has denied all of these allegations, these five people who say they had the accounts corroborated to them at the time that they happened by Stoynoff, another who was with her when she later, apparently, she says, ran into Melania Trump in New York after the incident allegedly happened.

And here`s why that is significant. In that same CNN interview that you`re running with Melania Trump, Trump specifically is asked about that moment, running into this writer on the street. Melania Trump says it never happened. She says, who could believe her? She made it all up. It never happened.

What "People" magazine is saying is, well, now we have not just one, but two people who have vivid details, who remember down to the shoes that Melania Trump was wearing that moment when they did, in fact, interact, memorable to them, according to "People," because Melania Trump at the time was a celebrity.

So, it is putting into stark contrast what Trump and his family are saying vs. what this one woman is saying.

MATTHEWS: Someone in the news who everybody knows what they look like can meet people in that kind of a fashion and not remember it as well as somebody who has covered them.

I can imagine. Look, it`s always possible people don`t remember an encounter like that. But we`re not in court.

Anyway, thank you, Hallie Jackson. Thank you, Kasie Hunt.

Up next: Tomorrow night may be Donald Trump`s last, best chance to turn his struggling campaign around. What can he do? What can we expect to see on the debate stage here in Las Vegas? The HARDBALL roundtable is going to join us next.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Milissa Rehberger. Here`s what`s happening.

A judge is telling angry Volkswagen owners he is likely to approve a nearly $10 billion settlement over the carmaker`s emissions cheating scandal.

It feels more like summer than autumn. Record-breaking temperatures are expected to surge across the Northeast until the middle of this week.

And President Obama and the first lady are hosting the Italian prime minister and his wife tonight at the president`s final state dinner. Celebrity chef Mario Batali is cooking, and singer Gwen Stefani is performing -- back to HARDBALL.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PAT SMITH, SON KILLED IN BENGHAZI: I blame Hillary Clinton personally for the death of my son, personally.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Wow.

Welcome back.

Of course, that`s the mother of someone who was killed in the Benghazi incident. That was a passionate Pat Smith during the Republican Convention blaming Hillary Clinton personally for her son`s death in Benghazi.

Anyway, tomorrow night will be -- she will be Donald Trump`s personal guest for the third and final presidential debate. She`s also invited President Obama`s Kenyan-born half-brother, Malik Obama. He endorsed the Republican nominee back in July. So, he`s for Obama -- his half-brother.

Earlier this afternoon, we learned that Hillary Clinton has invited billionaire Republican businesswoman Meg Whitman to come tonight. We are going to have her on, I think, at some point tomorrow night.

So, just what can we expect from these candidates?

We`re joined right now by some experts, Democratic U.S. Congresswoman Dina Titus. She is right here in this district. She`s a Clinton supporter. No surprise. And political analyst and MSNBC Jon Ralston, he`s our contributor here and he writes locally here, and former RNC Chair and MSNBC man about the country Michael Steele.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Congresswoman, let me ask you about this election.

Hillary Clinton tomorrow night, I think she is going to be on defense tomorrow, but she may come out and needle Trump, people think, on the rigged election thing, because he doesn`t have much evidence.

REP. DINA TITUS (D), NEVADA: Well, I don`t think she...

MATTHEWS: Are we going to have a clean election?

TITUS: Well, we are.

And you have heard Republican even chastise Donald Trump for talking about it being rigged. If you undermine our election process, that`s kind of the end of democracy. So, you have had...

MATTHEWS: Why do you think he`s doing it?

TITUS: Because he`s not going to win. If you can`t win by playing by the rules, then you say the rules are fake.

MATTHEWS: So, he expects to lose, you say, and this is hedging his bets, so he can blame it on the system?

TITUS: I think that`s exactly right.

If you look at the poll numbers across the country, here in Nevada included, where Clinton is up seven points, I think the handwriting is on the wall.

MATTHEWS: Well, you`re saying he`s smart to do this.

TITUS: Well, I don`t think he`s smart to do anything that he`s been doing.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You make it sound like the numbers match up to his thinking. I think it`s depressing his vote.

What do you think, Jon? Do you think people more likely to vote when their candidate says, I`m going to lose?

JON RALSTON, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Well, listen, I don`t think he cares.

But I do think that his people were going to vote no matter what, and I think they`re going to vote...

MATTHEWS: I agree with you on that way. They would like to have 10 votes each.

RALSTON: Right. And they are going to vote just to show that the election is not rigged and that they`re going to win it for their man. That`s the Trump mentality.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, during his press conference with the prime minister of Italy, President Obama warned Donald Trump that the peaceful transition of power should always supersede politics. Let`s watch President Obama.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: If he got the most votes, then it would be my expectation of Hillary Clinton to offer a gracious concession speech and pledge to work with him in order to make sure that the American people benefit from an effective government.

And it would be my job to welcome Mr. Trump, regardless of what he said about me or my differences with him on my opinions, and escort him over to this Capitol, in which there would be a peaceful transfer of power.

That`s what Americans do. That`s why America is already great.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: If you had to go to a boxing match tomorrow night with Mr. -- with Secretary Clinton, although it`s male/female, so you got to be careful about boxing metaphors, but...

MICHAEL STEELE, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: But...

MATTHEWS: ... would you go after her on open borders, her line when she was talking to the Brazilians for money that day? Would you go after her on this e-mail thing, where there`s apparently some kind of conversation that doesn`t look too pretty right now between State and the FBI about whether they`re going to downgrade or something some e-mail about Benghazi, doesn`t look too good, or would you talk about rigged elections?

What would do you if you`re Mr. Trump?

STEELE: I would lead with the e-mail.

MATTHEWS: Well, me too.

STEELE: I would give a left hook on the open borders. And I would do the uppercut on everything else.

And that`s pretty much the strategy. I mean, Donald Trump has -- if he stays in the game, he has weapons that he can deploy against Hillary tomorrow night. There`s no doubt about that.

But so does she. And the greatest weapon she has is getting under his skin.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: And, once she does that, his game plan goes out the window.

MATTHEWS: And she doesn`t touch him on Bill -- I mean on his behavior.

STEELE: No.

MATTHEWS: Because if she touches him on his behavior...

STEELE: She won`t open that door.

MATTHEWS: ... he hits -- he punches right back at Bill.

STEELE: Yes.

RALSTON: Well, the issue for her is the dishonesty question, right? And Trump`s numbers on dishonesty are even higher than hers.

MATTHEWS: Marginally.

RALSTON: Marginally.

STEELE: Marginally.

(CROSSTALK)

RALSTON: That`s why I think he uses -- yes, I think that`s why he uses the e-mails, though, because that goes directly to that. And then he can pivot off that to all kinds of other issues, including the quid pro quo that you referred to.

And I think, if he uses that, and if he can stay disciplined, which is like it`s going to snow here today, then he`d have a shot.

MATTHEWS: Congresswoman, how does Hillary Clinton defend the conduct of the State Department, which she led for four years, and the conduct of the FBI in this sort of meeting they had, without looking like part of the Washington problem?

If she starts playing defense on the system, he wins.

TITUS: Well, both of them have said that that wasn`t true. And she said that her campaign...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, but this excellent FBI agent is still saying quid pro quo, isn`t he? I don`t know where he is right now.

TITUS: And she said it`s not.

But she doesn`t have to talk about those e-mails. She`s just got to change the subject and talk about him. And I believe that`s what she will do.

MATTHEWS: You think he will let her do that?

TITUS: Well, he`s been getting good advice from people like you all for a long time that he could pivot, he could turn, he could be presidential.

He`s not going to be any of those things. It`s too late. He`s running out of time. The Donald Trump that you see is the real Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Who is going to win out here?

TITUS: Oh, Hillary Clinton is going to win here.

MATTHEWS: I noticed that your numbers...

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Jon, I hear your numbers here are same as the national number, seven points for Clinton. Right?

RALSTON: Well, the last two polls here have showed her up by about six points.

And he`s starting to slide here. He was even. He was ahead for a little while.

MATTHEWS: What has hurt him?

RALSTON: Well...

MATTHEWS: All the women stuff?

RALSTON: Yes, that has hurt him, plus just the inevitable coalescing of the vote here.

Nevadans are notoriously late deciders. And polling here has always been terrible, Chris. It`s undercounted the minority vote, which is going to be huge for Clinton. So, I think she is going to win by between five and 10 points. And the higher it gets, the more it affects the really important U.S. Senate race.

MATTHEWS: What does open borders mean to you? Hillary Clinton used that phrase. They dug it out because of WikiLeaks. She said it in a group of businesspeople from Brazil. She said, I`m for open borders and private and public whatever. Let me go with -- I will just stick with the open borders right now.

TITUS: I don`t think she meant literally open borders. You have to have borders to be a country.

MATTHEWS: What did she mean?

TITUS: I think she meant more cooperation around the globe. She`s the face that has the experience as secretary of state.

MATTHEWS: Is that what open borders means? Is that what open borders means?

TITUS: Well, it may be a poor choice of words.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It`s English. We should be able to handle it. What`s open borders mean?

STEELE: Open borders you are for a full-blown amnesty and that you have a policy in place that mitigates the kind of scrutiny that Donald Trump and others have been talking about.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: So, I don`t think people, when they hear those two words, think that, oh, yes, well, she`s secretary of state.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You wouldn`t use those words on the floor, would you, in a debate over **immigration**, I`m for open borders?

STEELE: Right. You wouldn`t use that term.

TITUS: Well, I think that her position in wanting comprehensive **immigration** reform...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That`s what most people want. I want a deal. I want to end the fight over this. I want it off the table for the next 20, 30 years.

STEELE: Yes, exactly. Exactly.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I want to deal with it fairly and progressively in a court. And don`t pass any law you don`t intend to enforce. Don`t pass another B.S. law like the one they did back...

STEELE: The `86 bill.

MATTHEWS: The `86 law that they never intended to enforce.

Anyway, the roundtable is staying with us. And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL, live from Las Vegas for tomorrow night`s debate.

We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable. UNLV, by the way, right now.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

Anyway, tell me -- Michael, tell me something I don`t know.

MICHAEL STEELE, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: The sleeper issue that`s just beginning to bubble is the whole question about voter fraud and Project Veritas is going to gather a little bit more steam, as more and more people look at these videos, start want to --

MATTHEWS: What`s the project video?

STEELE: Project Veritas is a group of students who went in, young people who went in and talked to some Hillary Clinton supporters and, you know, poster type folks who sort of exposed some of the shenanigans they were engaged in.

MATTHEWS: Give me one.

STEELE: Well, one was in terms of the rallies, at the Trump rallies paying people to actually go and protest start fights at the rally. They admitted to that on camera. So, it`s a big issue. It`s just beginning to break. It will be interesting to see how that plays out.

MATTHEWS: Yes, the guy who brought down ACORN, you like that group.

JON RALSTON, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: James O`Keefe.

(CROSSTALK)

STEELE: I call them as I see them.

RALSTON: Something you didn`t know Nevada is the bellwether in this country. Did you know, you go back a hundred years and Nevada has chosen the winner of the presidential race every cycle except one? Do you know which one it was? What do you think?

MATTHEWS: Goldwater.

RALSTON: That`s close though, `76. That`s it, every year.

MATTHEWS: You guys voted for Gerry Ford.

RALSTON: Yes, exactly. And we voted for every winner.

MATTHEWS: Wow, you`re very important then.

REP. DINA TITUS (D), NEVADA: Yes, we are.

MATTHEWS: You`re the bellwether.

Tell me something I don`t know, Congresswoman.

TITUS: Well, you`re in the heart of district one and in this district, we have the state`s largest employer, MGM, and the smallest, lots of taco trucks. In both cases, a Republican CEO and a very energized Hispanic community are going for Hillary Clinton. So, despite the conventional wisdom, what happens here doesn`t stay here. It goes to the White House.

MATTHEWS: That ladies and gentlemen is a perfect example of wonderful high level flackery.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Congresswoman Dina Titus. Anyway, Jon Ralston, as always. Michael Steele, as always.

When we return, the great political cartoonist, Gary Trudeau is going to come here. He`s the guy who gave us Doonesbury. He`s going to come and talk about the collection.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Tune in tomorrow for all day coverage of the third and final presidential debate. At 7:00 Eastern, join me for a special edition of HARDBALL tomorrow night, right here from the campus of UNLV.

Then, at 8:00 Eastern, I`ll join Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow for a preview of the debate. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump face off at 9:00 Eastern, and then at 10:30, it`s full debate coverage and analysis.

Of course, we`ll be into the night and that`s all come up tomorrow here on MSNBC.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHEN COLBERT, THE LATE SHOW: Now, sir, because we are on a network television show, I cannot allow you to endorse a candidate right now. But I would like to ask you about your choice of snacks. Could I do that?

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Sure.

COLBERT: All right, great.

I have two choices for you here. Would you care for an extra fiber nutrient bar, which traveled to more than 100 countries, or this shriveled tangerine covered in golden retriever hair filled with bile that I wouldn`t leave alone with the woman I love?

OBAMA: Well, I think I`ll go with the fiber nutrient bar.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, we`re back.

That was President Obama with I think Steve Colbert last night. This campaign might be testing our political system, but it has been a bonanza for comedians and humorists.

"Saturday Night Live" has used the two previous presidential debates to create masterpieces of satire this year. Let`s watch them again.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KATE MCKINNON AS HILLARY CLINTON: Number one, insurance companies can`t deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. Number two, no lifetime limits, which is a big deal if you have serious health problems, and number three -- sorry. And number three, women can`t be charged more than men for -- I thought I -- women can`t be charged more than men for health insurance, OK?

And number four --

ALEC BALDWIN AS DONALD TRUMP: Wrong!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That`s Kate McKinnon and Alec Baldwin.

Anyway, Garry Trudeau, the creator of comic Doonesbury actually made it out ahead of nothing. He`s been ahead of curve when it comes to satirizing Trump. He`s been drawing Trump, believe it or not, since 1987, that`s 29 years. He released a book of those cartoons this summer "Yuge!" spelled with a Y, "30 years of Doonesbury on Trump".

Garry Trudeau joins me now.

You know, as a character, you know, I`ve always thought of Trump since I`ve watched him become this figure, as sort of a if he were in a superman comic, he`d be downtown business tycoon walking around looking -- Trump with his khaki raincoat on, you know? He`s like a -- did he create this thing or did you, I mean, this idea of Trump as a brand?

GARRY TRUDEAU, "DOONESBURY" CREATOR: No, he arrived that way in New York. And he was representative of the big honking hubris of New York City in an extreme way. He was like a cartoon character -- he was like born a toon. He was a natural toon right out of the box. So, I just took him as he was and --

MATTHEWS: What were his reactions over the years? Were they ever biting?

TRUDEAU: Oh, yes, he trashed me for -- initially he said he was flattered.

MATTHEWS: Of course.

TRUDEAU: He totally should be flattered, which is what any politician would do. Thereafter, he just trashed me regularly.

MATTHEWS: To your face, on the phone?

TRUDEAU: Through the tabloids. The tabloids were the tweets of the `80s.

MATTHEWS: I was watching Letterman one night when Letterman was still on. He had Joe Theismann, some quarterback on, and maybe more recent than Theismann. He wanted somebody on another building, just to stand there and catch the football. A couple passes. He caught it.

It was Trump. He would show up just to be the guy with no big intro or pizzazz. Why did you want it? Why did he come out at 11:00 at night or whatever it was to do that?

TRUDEAU: Well, for the attention. But most politicians, if we can call him that now, avoid that kind of stuff, unless they`re doing what Obama does so skillfully.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TRUDEAU: But to actually subject yourself to humiliation is something that they avoid at all costs. I mean, satire is a kind of social control.

MATTHEWS: OK. Do you think he -- you know, I watched that "Frontline" documentary that said the reason Trump is running, I think it`s dangerous to get into motive, it`s always complicated, is because he was keelhauled by President Obama at the White House correspondents dinner, he sat there, he just laid into all the satire.

Do you think he`s moved by that anger and satire like your business?

TRUDEAU: I think so. But I think they -- I would be surprised if that was the moment that triggered his candidacy --

MATTHEWS: Why is he running? He didn`t think he`d win, did he?

TRUDEAU: I think what probably pushed him was in 2011, the summer of 2011 when he was on his birther campaign, he was getting numbers in the high 30s. And I think he thought then, I can do this. They`re the same numbers he`s getting now.

MATTHEWS: Then he`s sort of gone off his message. He had a message, trade, illegal **immigration**, stupid wars. It added up to a perfect storm of resentment.

TRUDEAU: Yes, I don`t think the issues have ever been terribly important to him, when he --

MATTHEWS: But they are to voters. That`s where there`s a difference. The voting who are voting for him aren`t voting for all the big showoff from New York. They`re voting for things they care about.

TRUDEAU: No, but what the people who love Donald Trump have really don`t seem to understand, this is very puzzling to me, is that he doesn`t love them back.

MATTHEWS: You think?

TRUDEAU: I think it`s unrequited.

MATTHEWS: Like Nixon.

TRUDEAU: Remember, his demographic are people who are **alienated** and they feel left behind by the economy. Donald Trump has a name for such people, losers. These aren`t people that he would socialize -- he doesn`t go into their kitchens and ask them what their problems are. They`re losers. He only likes losers in the aggregate.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I don`t get a chance to talk to someone like you on television much, a cultural figure. Bob Dylan.

TRUDEAU: How wonderful, long overdue.

MATTHEWS: He`s so great that they gave it to somebody who really was creative and spoke, to me, a couple decades of language.

TRUDEAU: But you didn`t understand him at first, right? I mean, he was so -- the lyrics were so strange and we spent a lot of time deconstructing lyrics.

MATTHEWS: There was sentiment in that voice, though. I thought I heard something there.

TRUDEAU: I thought it was the sound of the words. I thought it was about the music, about the poetry, and he, in fact, said that like 30 years later in an interview. He said, I just wanted to rhyme, man.

MATTHEWS: He`s got a group named after his song, he`s got a magazine. Jann Wenner has the magazine. "Rolling Stone" is something we`ll always know.

Anyway, thank you, Garry Trudeau, an icon himself.

Before we take a break, take a look at moments ago, President Obama and the first lady were hosting a dinner. I guess we won`t get to that. There they are right there, they`re coming up. This is their last state dinner. This is so iconic, coming down those stairs to greet the people with the 41-year-old prime minister of Italy. Wow. Good for him.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Tuesday, October 18th, 2016.

We stand tonight on the eve of one of the wildest political events of our lifetimes. Donald Trump, who did badly in the first debate, did better in the second, must win tomorrow night at all costs. The reasons were in the numbers. Before the first debate, he was one point behind Secretary Clinton. Before the second, he was three points behind. Right now, he`s seven points behind and fading.

That means tomorrow it is kitchen sink night. He will throw everything he has against Clinton, everything. He will accuse the State Department of trying to cover up a Benghazi related e-mail, of colluding with the media to rig the election. He`ll do everything he can to attack her credibility.

I recommend you watch. Everyone has to vote in three weeks. This is not going to be the most satisfying election we have been through. So, it will make us feel better to make sure we`ve given Trump a very good look, given Trump under pressure, a really good look. Because with all the needed talk about how a presidential candidate would act under pressure, tomorrow night, we`re going to get a giant preview of coming attractions. We`re going to see Trump be Trump, trying to win when it doesn`t look so good that he`s going to win, when he`s seven points down and falling.

The same goes while differently for his rival. Hillary Clinton has a chance tomorrow night in this last debate to show what Ernest Hemingway called "grace under pressure" -- the courage to face her accuser calmly, to hear him attack her at very close range, then look back at him and then say to the country, I am the person to get you through this. If I can take this, I can take the larger test events will put before me. The most vivid case for my election may well be my serene confidence in facing down this guy.

In any case, this is the big one. The last saloon before the desert, the final face-to-face, the last grand chance to sit, watch, listen and decide which of these two you trust to lead the country.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Hugh Hewitt

9496 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Trump to Obama, watch out!

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

Well, tonight, Donald Trump`s facing multiple public allegations of sexual misconduct, some of which go back decades. And in response, Trump is saying that his accusers, along with his political rivals and the media, are part of a conspiracy against him and his supporters.

Well, today, two more women have come forward with accounts of Trump`s sexual advances. In a press conference with attorney Gloria Allred today, former "Apprentice" contestant Summer Zervos said that Trump in 2007 accosted her in his hotel room during what she says was supposed to be a meeting about a potential job opportunity. Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SUMMER ZERVOS, FMR. "APPRENTICE" CONTESTANT: He put me in an embrace, and I tried to push him away. I pushed his chest to put space between us, and I said, Come on, man, get real. He repeated my words back to me, "Get real," as he began thrusting his genitals. He tried to kiss me again, with my hands still on his chest, and I said, Dude, you`re tripping right now, attempting to make it clear I was not interested.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, late today, Donald Trump issued a statement denying the accusation of Summer Zervos. Quote, "To be clear, I never met her at a hotel or greeted her inappropriately a decade ago. That is not who I am as a person, and it is not how I`ve conducted my life. Beyond that, the media is now creating a theater of absurdity that threatens to tear our democratic process apart and poison the minds of the American public. When Gloria Allred is given the same weighting on national television as the president of the United States and unfounded accusations are treated as fact, with reporters throwing due diligence and fact finding to the side in a rush to file their stories first, it`s evident that we truly are living in a broken system."

In another alleged incident reported earlier today by "The Washington Post," former model Kristin Anderson said Trump touched her inappropriately at a club in New York in the early `90s. Let`s watch her.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KRISTIN ANDERSON, FORMER MODEL: This is the vivid part for me. So the person on my right, who unbeknownst to me at that time was Donald Trump, put their hand up my skirt. And as I pushed the hand away, and I got up and I turned around and I see these eyebrows, very distinct eyebrows of Donald Trump.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, NBC has not independently confirmed any of the women`s accounts.

At his rally earlier today, Trump again denied all allegations of sexual misconduct.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: The stories are total fiction. They`re 100 percent made up. They never happened. They never would happen. These are lies being pushed by the media and the Clinton campaign to try and keep their grip on our country.

They are all false. They`re totally invented fiction, all 100 percent totally and completely fabricated.

One came out recently, where I was sitting alone in some club. I really don`t sit alone that much. Honestly, folks, I don`t think I sit alone. I go into a -- I was sitting alone by myself, like this. And then I went "Wah!"

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Trump also issued a stark warning to President Obama saying that women could come forward and accuse him of the same thing.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Obama is an incompetent. He is an incompetent president. He doesn`t know what he`s doing. He`s out campaigning all day long. He`s talking about me like he knows me. I don`t know him. He doesn`t know me.

And why doesn`t some woman maybe come up and say -- what they say falsely about me, they could say about him. They could say it about anybody. They could say it about anybody. I`ll tell you what. He better be careful because they could say it about anybody, anybody at all.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I`m joined now by Hugh Hewitt -- he`s nationally syndicated talk show host and MSNBC analyst -- and Michelle Bernard is president of the Bernard Center for Women, also a columnist for "U.S. News & World Report."

Who should we start with? How about you, Hugh? (INAUDIBLE) let`s just talk politics here and -- you know, these accounts have not been verified by NBC News. We have to be very clear about that. Trump has denied them, denied them in their entirety. So where do we go from there?

HUGH HEWITT, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: John Reid (ph) is a legendary evidence professor whom I had at the University of Michigan Law School years ago. Scott Howell (ph), my friend, who teaches at Chapman Law Schools, now another great expert on evidence. They teach you how to categorize and apply one rule across all allegations, things like excited outbursts, contemporaneous accounts, admissions against interest.

Summer Zervos`s account is very detailed. It would lend itself to quick discrediting if it is not, in fact, true.

MATTHEWS: She mentioned...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: ... club sandwich.

MATTHEWS: She`s talking about going for a job with Trump in a hotel room...

HEWITT: Beverly Hills Hotel...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You know what those rooms are. They`re all separate bungalows.

HEWITT: Yes. So to very easily prove -- we will find out about that one.

MATTHEWS: How would we find out? Would we have to check the -- who -- who was booked?

HEWITT: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Who was booked. I think that`s fairly...

HEWITT: Trump came up today with it (ph) -- Mike Pence said in a very tough interview with Matt this morning that there would be evidence forthcoming.

MATTHEWS: Matt Lauer.

HEWITT: Matt Lauer. Immediately, they brought forward a witness to the first class plane ride from many years ago, but he can`t remember what year, and he says he has a the good photographic memory, but he can`t remember what good (ph) year. Not a particularly credible rebuttal, but...

MATTHEWS: How would you rebut something on an airplane. If somebody did what this woman accused him of doing, grabbing, basically, above (ph) her dress, and that kind of thing, under her dress, whatever, how would you be in a situation where you`d see that? First of all, you`d have to be in the same row.

MICHELLE BERNARD, BERNARD CENTER FOR WOMEN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: You don`t look -- you know, you`re not a giraffe. You can`t look over three rows. You have to be in the same row, and have to be, like...

(CROSSTALK)

BERNARD: And you`d have to be peering -- exactly.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and watching Donald Trump`s hand as closely as a person who was feeling it.

BERNARD: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: The person feeling it would obviously be more in touch, literally, with what Trump was up to.

BERNARD: Absolutely. I don`t -- I don`t see that...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But they put this fellow out as their evidence.

BERNARD: Yes, and nothing else. You notice, like, once again, we hear a promise of something that is coming, and I believe towards the end of the day today, Mike Pence said there`s nothing else, at least not right now.

MATTHEWS: Well, I think Hugh is on to something because the evidence here is going to end up being the accounts of the two people...

HEWITT: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... because who else would have the evidence?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Unless there`s contemporaneous assertions by the person who said they were accosted that way, if somebody was treated that way...

HEWITT: One of the rules of evidence...

MATTHEWS: and if they told a bunch of people, like their relatives that, You won`t believe what happened on the plane...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: One of the rules of evidence is, did you tell someone contemporaneously? I never believed Anita Hill because they had no contemporaneous accounts, other than Janet Napolitano. She did not come forward. Both of "The New York Times" women had a contemporaneous...

MATTHEWS: Did you say other than Janet Napolitano?

HEWITT: Yes, but she did not come forward and testify. Janet Napolitano, I believe, was one of the women advising Ms. Hill at the time.

MATTHEWS: At the time that she accused that...

HEWITT: Clarence Thomas.

MATTHEWS: ... Clarence Thomas of doing that?

HEWITT: I believe she was on record as saying that Anita Hill was telling the truth. I`m not quite sure.

MATTHEWS: OK.

HEWITT: But I will say this. It will all out. The fact that we`re talking about it means Donald Trump is losing tonight. A general denial will not work. Specific denials, even if persuasive, are too many to turn back -- he has to change the narrative somehow, or he`ll lose.

MATTHEWS: OK.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Gloria Allred is a smart lawyer. Like anything in the law business, a lot of people just don`t like lawyers, but she certainly has that -- the witness prepared.

BERNARD: Yes.

MATTHEWS: That witness has -- as you just said, had a very detailed account. She was very nervous, but she was laying it out there herself.

BERNARD: Yes.

MATTHEWS: That was impressive.

BERNARD: And I`ll tell you, I read -- I was -- I was doing a lot of reading today, trying to understand what is the psychology that we have as a country where we seem to elevate the needs of men or people who have been accused of sexual misconduct above the needs of women who have said that, This person has perpetrated a crime on me. And one of the things...

MATTHEWS: You still are innocent until proven guilty. And under the law...

BERNARD: No, absolutely, but you see -- we live in a sort of rape culture and a victim culture and a culture that doesn`t believe women when they say they have been sexually abused.

MATTHEWS: You think people don`t believe this -- this account by these women?

BERNARD: Well, I believe that of all of the women that I`ve been watching on every...

MATTHEWS: You don`t think these women are believed right now?

BERNARD: I don`t believe that many -- I believe that there are a lot of people who do not believe them. I believe that there are people who say that it didn`t happen, or if it did happen, it was no big deal. There are women...

MATTHEWS: That`s a different account.

BERNARD: ... all over the nation...

MATTHEWS: I think I...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: ... false allegations abound. There were false allegations at Claremont McKenna (ph) College earlier last year. There are false allegations all over the United States. We have to be careful with them. As a political matter, if you`re defending, false or true, you`re losing. You`re losing.

BERNARD: No, I understand what you`re saying, but I`m -- as a woman, it is so unbelievably...

MATTHEWS: OK...

BERNARD: ... irritating...

MATTHEWS: We...

BERNARD: ... to have to hear about...

MATTHEWS: OK, look...

BERNARD: ... the fact that...

MATTHEWS: ... the fact that we...

BERNARD: ... it could be false.

MATTHEWS: OK...

BERNARD: It could be false. We know that.

MATTHEWS: It`s like these police cases. I always say to people, Treat each case as a case. That`s why we have a courtroom...

BERNARD: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... because each case is different, a little different than everyone else, or we wouldn`t need a court.

BERNARD: Well, and if you`re going to assume Donald Trump is innocent until proven guilty, but that also means that the victim or the alleged victim is to be believed until proven...

HEWITT: And taken very seriously.

BERNARD: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: OK, well, as I reported, Trump yesterday lashed out at his accusers, his political rivals in the media, saying they`re a part of a conspiracy to destroy him. Let`s watch him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: The establishment and their media enablers wield control over this nation through means that are very well known. Anyone who challenges their control is deemed a sexist, a racist, a xenophobe and morally deformed.

I knew these false attacks would come. I knew this day would arrive. It`s only a question of when. This is a conspiracy against you, the American people, and we cannot let this happen or continue!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, in his speech today, President Obama today mocked Trump for his latest conspiracy theory. Let`s watch that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Apparently, in a speech yesterday, he started talking about global elites, that there was a conspiracy of global elites.

This is a guy who spent all his time hanging around, trying to convince everybody that he was a global elite, talking about how great his buildings are, how luxurious and how rich he is and flying around everywhere. All he had time for was celebrities. And now suddenly, he`s acting like he`s a populist out there. Man, I`m going to fight for working people. Come on, man!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So what do we make of this wild accusation -- it seemed like an accusation -- Be careful, Mr. President because they could come for you?

BERNARD: Well, I...

MATTHEWS: Was that -- was that a way of just telling his people -- which I would understand, politically -- Hey, this is all a charade anyway, so I can play this, too, or is it trying to spur, perhaps, some accusations?

BERNARD: Well, that`s what I believe. I honestly believe that when you have somebody running for president and they make this kind of statement -- Be careful, it could happen to anyone, and he says it over and over again - - I believe that he is sort of saying to some nutcase out there or -- maybe or maybe not -- please accuse President Obama.

If you`ve had any troubles with President Obama or if you think you`ve had some problems with President Obama, if he has ever, you know, engaged in any sort of sexual misconduct with you...

MATTHEWS: That would be unlikely, but...

BERNARD: Well, it would be highly unlikely because, quite frankly, given everything that the president went through to be elected in 2008, if something like that had happened, I think we would have heard about it...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: I want to thank the president for helping my party and rallying my base, leading from behind, red line...

MATTHEWS: OK, can we -- I want to help you here. You don`t have to do this.

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: He is going to help us rally our base.

MATTHEWS: I don`t care about your party or the other party, but let me tell you something, what`s really sad about this election. If it`s going to be based on this, OK, it`s going to be based on this. Hillary Clinton might as well go sit in a rocking chair because this...

HEWITT: That`s what`s she`s doing.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But there is a problem here. The sentiment that Trump tapped into, whether he believed it or not -- and I have very great suspicions he didn`t believe in any of it -- concerns about trade and lost manufacturing jobs among the working class people of this country, all races...

BERNARD: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... concerns about the lack of any reasonable control over **immigration** that doesn`t seem to be going on, and third, wars that we really didn`t benefit from in terms of our security and the perception of most people who are working class people whose kids had to go out and fight those battles...

BERNARD: Yes.

MATTHEWS: They`re going to be betrayed by this because what`ll happen is people are not going to vote on these issues. They`re going to vote on the personal fitness of the candidate. And that, I think, is a loss. We should have had a vote, like they did on Brexit in England. Have a vote on the issues, and I`m afraid we`re not going to have...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: ... down ticket on "Obama care" because premiums have doubled...

MATTHEWS: OK...

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: ... as Bill Clinton said, and it costs us half of the -- they`re going to vote on that which is their lunchbox issue. Who cares about...

MATTHEWS: Who`s going to win on the basis of that? Name me the senators who are going to...

HEWITT: Paul Ryan is going to win...

MATTHEWS: No, the senators...

HEWITT: Pat Toomey is going to win. Kelly Ayotte`s going to win. Richard Burr`s going to win. Joe Heck, the doctor, is going to win.

MATTHEWS: You`re just saying all the Republicans are going to win.

HEWITT: They are going to win. We`re going to hold the Senate.

MATTHEWS: All Republicans are going to win?

BERNARD: But you know what...

HEWITT: Not all. We`re not going to win Mark Kirk. Mark Kirk`s a dead man.

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: No, Mark Kirk is dead.

BERNARD: Well, he`s -- I`m glad that you`re excited to talk about Congress tonight, but we have to -- I mean, we have to focus on the presidency. We are the...

MATTHEWS: Who isn`t?

BERNARD: ... greatest nation -- well, Hugh right now wants to talk about members of Congress who are going -- you know, who are going to win their elections...

MATTHEWS: He`s salvaging. He`s riding the salvage vote!

BERNARD: He is salvaging...

(LAUGHTER)

BERNARD: I am going back...

MATTHEWS: He`s trying to save the -- I know...

(CROSSTALK)

BERNARD: I am going back...

MATTHEWS: Make your point.

BERNARD: ... to the presidency. If Donald Trump truly believed that this was coming and he`s been waiting for it and he was going to be prepared, he would have had evidence on his side, waiting for the day that these accusations were going to come forward.

I don`t for any stretch of the imagination believe that he thought this day was going to come.

MATTHEWS: OK...

BERNARD: And quite frankly, from a woman`s perspective, if you are an abuser -- and I said, "if" to be nice, but if you are an abuser, if you are someone who engages in predatory sexual behavior...

MATTHEWS: Right.

BERNARD: ... you never think that you`re going to get caught. And the reason you don`t think you`re going to get caught is because we live in a culture...

MATTHEWS: OK...

BERNARD: ... where women are not believed when they make these allegations.

MATTHEWS: Thank you. Thank you. That`s an argument. Anyway, thank you, Hugh Hewitt. I don`t think it`s that bad. Michelle Bernard, thank you.

Coming up -- first it was Michelle Obama, now President Obama is out on the takedown effort of Donald Trump. For the president and the first lady, this fight is personal. That`s clear. And they`re hoping to use their popularity with voters -- and by the way, the president`s going to reach 60 percent in a few weeks -- to defeat Trump and help Hillary Clinton over the finish line.

Plus, the new NBC battleground map shows big gains for Hillary Clinton in the last couple days and an erosion of support for Donald Trump even in states that traditionally vote Republican.

And at the end of what has been a dramatic week, the HARDBALL roundtable is here with three things about the presidential campaign you might not know.

And finally, big part of the show for me, "Let Me Finish" with something not having to do what`s going on in this depressing political campaign. It`s about Bob Dylan being a Nobel laureate for literature. I love it!

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: NBC News has released the latest version of its battleground map, and things are moving in Hillary Clinton`s direction. Take a look at where things stand right now.

Here`s the states that are likely to go for Clinton or already leaning her way. It`s a total, by the way, of 287 electoral votes. That`s more than the 270 she needs to win the White House.

Look at this. Donald Trump has only 157 electoral votes in the current polling, down by more than 30 from last week. So he`s beginning to lose where he was.

And look at the states we`re calling toss-ups right now. You see some of the biggies are Florida and Ohio, but also some traditionally red states like Arizona, Georgia, and yes, Utah. They`re in the toss-up column. And when Utah`s in the toss-up column, look out on the right.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. Well, this week, Hillary Clinton has lowered her profile, letting Donald Trump bask in the spotlight, if you will. Since last week`s debate, the campaign has taken a particularly acrimonious tone, don`t you think?

But two people have broken through the noise to deliver powerful messages, and they are two of Hillary`s most powerful surrogates, Barack and Michelle Obama. Yesterday, the first lady delivered an emotional and searing takedown of Donald Trump for his recent comments about women. Here`s a bit of it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: It has shaken me to my core in a way that I couldn`t have predicted. The belief that you can do anything you want to a woman? It is cruel. It`s frightening. And the truth is, it hurts.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, her powerful rebuke quickly went viral. And "The Washington Post" described the speech as a moment in which the country had never seen Michelle Obama like this, writing, quote, "Thursday brought out in Obama something different, something more personal, more passionate, more urgent." Sure sounded like that.

Anyway, today, on the heels of his wife`s speech, President Obama, in his own way, took on the Republican nominee.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I noticed her opponent, he - -

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: He`s craven (ph).

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: He seems to be in the middle of a game making excuses all the time for why he might be losing. And it`s always interesting to me to see folks who talk tough, but then don`t act tough.

(APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: Because if you`re tough, you don`t make excuses.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: It`s amazing. Everybody, I mean both political parties, whatever you think of them, all drop their Gs when they`re speaking to us like we need a little help with the language.

Anyway, for Barack and Michelle Obama, this campaign has become more than just politics, you could feel that. It`s become personal.

I`m joined right now by Colleen McCain Nelson from "The Wall Street Journal," and also Fred Hiatt. He`s the editor of "The Washington Post" editorial board.

Colleen, let me ask you about this. Why is it personal with Michelle Obama? Can you report why? Can you get into her head and heart?

COLLEEN MCCAIN NELSON, WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL: Well, she talked about how this kind of shook her to her core, the revelations of --

MATTHEWS: "Access Hollywood."

NELSON: -- kind of lewd remarks, and, I mean, she speaks as a mom, and it`s resonant. And it`s resonant in a way that it`s not when Hillary Clinton talks about being a mom and being a grandmother, but I think it`s also personal because of the birther issue. I mean, President Obama and Michelle Obama took that very personally. It resurfaced in recent weeks and --

MATTHEWS: You mean, being called an illegal **alien** while you`re in the White House?

NELSON: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

NELSON: And so that was very personal for them. And so you`ve seen a kind of a new energy, a new passion, from both of them in the last few days.

MATTHEWS: Last question along those lines. Do you think President Obama is counting the votes that are going to Trump and feeling every vote he gets is a shot against me and my legacy and my belief in America, really?

NELSON: That`s actually right. I mean, he sees --

MATTHEWS: He wants to reduce, not just defeat, but minimize the Trump vote.

NELSON: Exactly. I mean, he`s so offended by the potential of Donald Trump being the guy who could unravel any part of his legacy. And he thinks that he has worked so hard to do the right thing, he can`t imagine letting this guy unravel it. And so you hear that in his voice, when he says, come on, man. I mean, he basically says, this guy?

MATTHEWS: Well, this morning, Fred, I got up and watched your beautiful lead editorial in in "The Washington Post," which packs a wallop in this city and around the country. "The Washington Post" editorial board endorsed Hillary Clinton for President today.

In the editorial, "The Post" says, quote, "We are not making this endorsement simply because Ms. Clinton`s chief opponent is dreadful." Well, you made that point. They continue to say that, quote, she is "dogged, resilient, purposeful and smart, unlike Mr. Clinton or Mr. Bush when they ascended. She knows Washington, unlike Mr. Obama when he ascended. She has executive experience. She does not let her feelings get in the way of the job at hand. She is well positioned to get something done." "The Post" also concludes that, this year, "Eloquence and charm may matter less than policy chops and persistence."

You know, like most people who live in this city, I`m fascinated we`re getting something done. It`s often more important than ideology. And you point out, if Hillary Clinton doesn`t have pizzazz, you know, she does have the wonk`s ability to cut and have the chops to decide where the opportunity is. Like a lawyer, I can see where to cut there.

Explain why you have confidence that she can actually get **immigration** reforms, she can actually do something on infrastructure, she can do the important this things.

FRED HIATT, EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR, THE WASHINGTON POST: You know, Chris, I mean, this election has gotten so ugly, and it gets uglier every day and frightening that I think we do tend, sometimes, to lose sight of the fact that there is a well-qualified, well-prepared candidate.

And a lot of her past, I think -- we think on the editorial board, which doesn`t speak for the whole newspaper, as you know -- has prepared her for the kind of environment where you`ve got to work with the other side, where you`ve got to accept some incremental progress. You`re not going to have a revolution, but you fight every day to get something done.

MATTHEWS: Where in her past do you see that?

HIATT: I see --

MATTHEWS: The ability to do things with the other side?

HIATT: Well, certainly when she was elected to the Senate, I think a lot of people thought, there`s no way she`s going to work, especially with some of these Republicans who had just been impeaching her husband and trying her husband. And, you know, you talk to people in the Senate, including Republicans, they say she was businesslike. She didn`t hold grudges. She didn`t care that much about getting credit, and she wanted to get things done.

And I think the same in the State Department. You know, you talk to the professionals there. Like even the reset with Russia, which gets maligned so much, at the time, that was a reasonable thing to give a shot to, and she got something out of it.

MATTHEWS: On foreign policy, her Russian views. Do you think she`s more of a hawk than Obama, and is that a good thing?

HIATT: Well --

MATTHEWS: More hawkish, more active in the world?

HIATT: I would assume that the fact that they`re hacking her campaign and trying to get Putin elected is not --

MATTHEWS: You mean, trying to get Trump elected?

HIATT: Trying to get Trump elected is not endearing Putin to her. I think she is --

MATTHEWS: You mean, it`s a sign that they don`t want her as President?

HIATT: They don`t want her, that`s for sure. I think --

MATTHEWS: Because?

HIATT: Trump is Putin`s dream. Destroy NATO, end alliances, he admires dictators. And I think Clinton may be a little bit more than Obama, believes that the United States should be out there standing up for democratic values, liberal values.

MATTHEWS: Do you think Donald Trump -- there are a lot of things he doesn`t know, that`s pretty sure, like most people, but he has particular areas of vacancy. Do you think he knows how bad a guy Putin is? It`s just that, do you think he knows who he is up against? Because Fred, you lived over there. I mean, you know the Russian world over there. Do you think Trump knows it?

NELSON: He seems --

MATTHEWS: That these guys are not -- if not the enemy, they`re certainly a menace in many ways.

NELSON: He seems to be willfully ignorant about this. I think he`s chosen not to know more about foreign policy and, in particular, Russia and Putin, and so he has made a point to not delve into these intricacies.

HIATT: You know, I think it`s even more than that. You know, as you say, I`ve covered a lot of countries, dictatorships, democracies, everything in between. And the key thing to a democracy -- I mean, there`s really two things that are key. You have an election and the loser acknowledges that they lost, and the winner lets the loser survive for another day, right? And Trump is challenging both of those things. He`s saying, if I lose, it`s not legitimate. And if I win, I`m going to lock her up. So --

MATTHEWS: That`s what we`ve been saying on this show for days now. He --

HIATT: This is the Putin model. I mean, it`s not democracy. And I think that`s why he`s so dangerous, and I think it`s why he doesn`t see Putin as a bad guy.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Bhutto lost an election in Pakistan, they hanged him.

HIATT: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: That`s the Trump approach, apparently. Anyway, thank you so much, Fred Hiatt. Very important endorsement, top of the fold there right there, right up there. Anyway, thank you.

HIATT: Thanks, Chris.

MATTHEWS: And, Colleen, as always. Colleen McCain Nelson and Fred Hiatt.

Up next, Donald Trump is lashing out at the press, so he sent a vitriol towards the media now is making some reporters a little worried. Apparently, when he points the finger at the evil media, some of his people out there, some of the people that some call -- I think Hillary calls them deplorables pay attention. It`s not too happy there. And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: The lies, corruption, and false accusations of the crooked Hillary Clinton campaign and the mainstream media, which they control and use quite viciously.

It`s a disgraceful thing that you can be on the front page of the failing "New York Times" -- and it is a failing newspaper. Third-rate people, I`m telling you. Third-rate, bad people. Bad people. Sick people.

The establishment and their media enablers wield control over this nation through means that are very well known. Anyone who challenges their control is deemed a sexist, a racist, a xenophobe, and morally deformed.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You can`t beat that. Welcome back to HARDBALL. That was Donald Trump lashing out at the media, and as Trump denounces the press, his supporters are following his lead. Campaign reporters traveling with Trump yesterday tweeted about their experience at a rally in Florida and also one in Ohio yesterday.

NBC`s own Hallie Jackson tweeted, "Traveling press files into seats at Trump rally in Cincinnati. Crowd boos lustily upon their arrival."

The "L.A. Times`" Seema Mehta tweeted, "Press at Trump evening rally getting escorted to motorcade under watch of cops in riot gear per pool. This is getting increasingly scary."

"Yahoo! News`" Holly Bailey tweeted, "as Trump attacks press today, there is notably more security around media assembled here," while "The Washington Post`s" Jose del Rio tweeted, "The vitriol toward the media here is as bad as I`ve ever seen it. Boos and cursing and middle fingers as soon as traveling press walked in."

And one television reporter made an unfortunate discovery at the event. This is CNN`s Jim Acosta.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIM ACOSTA, CNN SENIOR WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: One Donald Trump supporter left this sign on a press table in the press pen. It shows a swastika and the word "media." It is shaping up to just be a race to the bottom in the final weeks of this campaign, Wolf, and it is, at times, just getting downright scary.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Downright scary. Let`s bring in the HARDBALL round table. John Stanton is Washington bureau chief for BuzzFeed, and Francesca Chambers, White House Correspondent for the "Daily Mail," and Michael Steel is a Republican strategist.

I want to go to you, John. Are you afraid of these people?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Because Trump is apparently siccing the crowd, if you will, on the reporters.

JOHN STANTON, WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF, BUZZFEED: Yes.

MATTHEWS: You know, it is something we`ve seen on T.V. He does it over and over again. These people are scum, basically, over and over, and the crowd, they know they`re talking about the people in the room, not off somewhere.

STANTON: Yes, yes. Well, the weird thing about announcers, when you go to a Trump rally, the people that you talk to, you know, before he comes on and does his little schtick, everyone`s very nice to us. They let you do interviews. They don`t have -- there`s no, you know, screw you, you`re media, or punching anybody or anything like that, generally speaking, before.

And recently, we started to have some people heckling folks, particularly the T.V. people when they`re doing standups before a rally starts. It`s kind of during the rally when things get really, really ugly. And that`s - -

MATTHEWS: Is he hopping people up?

STANTON: He is, he is. And he`s spinning people up. And I mean, you know, we see it on Twitter and probably, Francesca and I both --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Do you think he`s issuing a license, Francesca? Is he licensing people, if you will, it`s okay to yell epithets and give the finger at the --

FRANCESCA CHAMBERS, WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT, DAILY MAIL: Well, he keeps bringing it up during his speeches, and he`s certainly not telling them to stop. And I almost exclusively covered Hillary Clinton and Bill Clinton and the Clintons, but you don`t see this sort of thing happening at Hillary Clinton rallies.

And she`s also not getting up on stage blaming the media, for instance, for WikiLeaks and anything bad that happens to her with her e-mails or anything to that effect. And so I think that`s part of the reason why you don`t see the same hatred.

MATTHEWS: Yes. But to be fair, you pick up a major newspaper in New York, like "The New York Times," and every day, there`s five or six stories against him.

CHAMBERS: Mm-hm. But that is not to say that there`s not --

MATTHEWS: Well, I mean, not five or six stories.

STANTON: Yes, but --

CHAMBERS: -- that there`s not stories against her either.

MICHAEL STEEL, FORMER JOHN BOEHNER SPOKESPERSON: First, I mean --

MATTHEWS: Like, there are innumerable accounts of why Trump`s no good in the major newspapers.

STEEL: First, they`re there for a reason. There`s an issue with making sure the reporters can do their job safely. There`s a bigger issue, which is the fact that he`s losing. He knows he`s losing and he`s laying the predicate to try to make, for his supporters, at least, the results of the election invalid. And that`s terrifying.

MATTHEWS: We just heard a moment ago, Fred and Colleen were talking there about how, in third world countries, any developing -- that even in Russia, big country he`s been around a long time, the trick is, if you`re going to lose, blame it on a rigged system. And then if you win, you arrest your opponent to make sure there`s no more elections for a while.

Anyway, let`s take a look at this scuffle that occurred down in Greensboro, North Carolina, between a protester -- look at this. Look at this thing. Look at what`s going on here, a protester and a Trumpian. I think the Trumpian did the work there on that guy. Jesus. There`s a certain physicality here that`s not part of American politics.

STANTON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Usually, people just, they yell at each other. They curse each other, at the worse.

STEEL: And that`s always been part of the Trump thing, the, you know, throw him out of here, get him out of here, I want to punch that guy. It`s always been part of his schtick, and it`s --

STANTON: Yes. Well, and again, I think what the -- the biggest concern to me is not the individual people. The individual people are just, generally speaking, like I said, very friendly and, you know, willing to talk to you.

It`s when that mob mentality -- he knows how to tap into the anger and frustration that these people have and then he turns it. And when he turns it on Hillary, Hillary`s not in the room. When he turns it on, you know, the establishment, the establishment`s not in the room.

But when he turns it on us, we`re standing there. And oftentimes, you know, we`re surrounded on all sides by the protesters, and there`s, you know, two secret service agents standing there, maybe two local cops, and that`s it. And, you know, some of the stuff, like I said, on Twitter has become part of the fold.

MATTHEWS: Did you ever feel like a scapegoat there?

STANTON: Yes. I mean, it`s always a scapegoat, right? He feels like, there`s a story that comes out, he looks bad, so he blames up. And everybody just turns around and boos and, you know, say horrible things.

MATTHEWS: Did you ever get scared at one of these things, physically scared?

CHAMBERS: No. Me, personally not, but I haven`t seen the same behavior that you`re describing quite often because I`ve mostly been covering Democrats for the last year and not as much Republicans.

But what I will also say is, you`re talking about the mob mentality, and the major question, I think, moving forward is whether all these people are going to come out and vote for him, whether he`s going to really energize them, and at the same --

MATTHEWS: Right.

CHAMBERS: And at the same time, the Clintons are worried -- the Clinton camp is worried that all of this negative stuff that we`re hearing is going to depress turnout on their side. That people are just going to get really frustrated by this whole thing and say, this whole process is disgusting, I`m done, and, as she said, maybe just go watch cat videos instead.

MATTHEWS: Well, I hate to break it to you, but I think that most of the Trump people would like to have ten votes to vote so they could vote against Hillary. And some of the people voting for Hillary, some of them, would like to have half a vote to vote for her. The enthusiasm thing is not balanced.

Look at the faces of this people. You can call them deplorables, whatever you want, that will just make some more people to --

CHAMBERS: But you also have to turn those people out. You have to have a good get out to vote operation and that --

MATTHEWS: The ones at the rallies will show up.

STEEL: Yes.

CHAMBERS: And the ones at the rallies will show up, but that`s not everybody in America that you would need to vote for him. And so they have to be very strategically building up --

MATTHEWS: Yes, but isn`t there a lot more -- just to be fair, isn`t there a lot more oomph, Michael, in voting for Trump, a lot more statement there?

STEEL: Yes. I mean, the presence of the people --

MATTHEWS: If you vote for Trump, you`re saying something for life.

STEEL: The people who are excited about him are excited to vote for him because they think he represents change.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEEL: And two-thirds of the country thinks we`re on the wrong track. People want change. They hate the Washington establishment, and nobody embodies that better than Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: Well, the round table is staying with us. I thought that was a very smart thing, she embodies Washington and the success of the Washington establishment in ruling this country.

Up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know. This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

And, John, tell me something I don`t know.

JOHN STANTON, BUZZFEED: Well, what I would say that you don`t know is I`m re-reading a book from 1991 race and what it will tell you and certainly I think a lot of your viewers is that the race problem in this country is the exact same as it was then. That we are still -- it`s almost like reading an account that was just written yesterday. And it`s a little terrifying that we have not gotten anywhere in, you know, 15 years. In 25 years.

MATTHEWS: It seems like that in Chicago.

STANTON: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: Francesca?

FRANCESCA CHAMBERS, THE DAILY MAIL: Well, this week, there were news stories about how Bill Clinton seemingly referred to Donald Trump supporters as rednecks, but he told me that`s not what I was saying at all. And the explainer in chief explained to me what a difference between a redneck and a hillbilly is, which I will now share with you.

A redneck --

MATTHEWS: Jeff Foxworthy --

CHAMBERS: A redneck would be somebody like him. He said he was a redneck and he was very proud of that, because rednecks are somebody who comes from the South.

And if you are a hillbilly, you`re someone who comes from a state that has mountains, instead. His state is both southern and it has mountains, so they have hillbillies and they also have rednecks, but he was not calling Donald Trump`s supporters rednecks.

MATTHEWS: What did he mean when he used the word, though?

CHAMBERS: When he used the word, he meant that he, himself, is a redneck, because he is a Southern Protestant white working class voter.

MATTHEWS: Where`s it come from, redneck?

CHAMBERS: Originally? I`m not --

MATTHEWS: It`s from working the fields. Sunburn on the back of your neck.

Anyway, John -- I mean, Michael.

MICHAEL STEEL, FORMER JOHN BOEHNER SPOKESMAN: Fellow of the Georgetown Institute of Politics this semester and I asked my kids this question. They had four different dorm rooms and there`s no plaque to commemorate those dorm rooms. They`re still in use by regular students.

MATTHEWS: Not like.

Anyway, Fred Hyatt -- it`s not Fred Hyatt, it`s Michael Steel, Francesca Chambers and John Stanton. Obviously, we made some changers here.

Coming up next, we`ve been watching the presidential campaign go to a much darker place this week. We want to bring you an uplifting story. This is an upbeat story. You can take it. You haven`t had one in a while. And that`s ahead.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re now just five days away from the third and final presidential debate. And you can watch it all right here Wednesday night coming up on MSNBC. I`ll be in Las Vegas starting at 7:00 Eastern with a special edition of HARDBALL that night. And then, Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow will join us at 8:00. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump take the debate stage at 9:00 Eastern.

And then, stay with us all night for a complete coverage. We love to do this. We`ll be there for you. That`s Wednesday night here on MSNBC.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

As a young adventurer, Richard Blum learned early in his life that millions of people around the world who have been born to economic hardship have little prospect at changing their lives. So, he`s used his business skills for global development. He became a living philanthropist, pioneering new ways to reduce the burden of poverty around the world.

His new book, "An Accident of Geography", is about the work that people like Sir Edmund Hillary and former President Jimmy Carter and the Dalai Lama have done to bring transformational change to developing countries and how others can follow their example.

I`m joined right now by himself, the author, Richard Blum, who`s also a husband to U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein of California.

Dick, thanks for joining us.

You know, your life is a mixture of adventure and doing good. And I was just thinking how different you are from Donald Trump. Because Donald Trump says, if you`re rich, flaunt it. Flaunt your money. And only worry about the United States.

You, on the other hand, have used your business know-how to focus on the world and developing it, you know, and also, worried about more than a world than just us. There is a bigger world out there. Trump seems to only think about the United States.

RICHARD BLUM, AUTHOR, "AN ACCIDENT OF GEOGRAPHY": I think he couldn`t be more wrong. For us not to worry about the rest of the world, one, it`s the right thing to do. And two, it`s in our interests.

And to not try to build friendships and help develop in places like Nepal, where I`ve been going for 49 years, but also in Latin America and our center at Berkeley, the Blum Center for Developing Economies have kids that have been to 80 different countries.

And what you want to do is make friends. Maybe it`s one by one. It`s to take a village, one by one.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

BLUM: And, by the way, where you make the friendships is on the ground.

A lot of these countries, you may not like the governments, you know, Nepal is not a particularly good government. A lot of corruption there. We don`t bother with the government. We go right to the villages.

And I would say, just using Nepal as an example, you`ve had Peace Corps kids there for over 60 years, you have trekkers who are by and large are well-received. You have people like our American Himalayan Foundation which touches 400,000 lives.

And, by the way, one of the things that we do, we started with Ed Hillary and the Sherpas, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan **refugees**. Our biggest project today is to keeping from young girls from being sold into prostitution. And I can`t think of a worse example for how you treat women or how you may influence young men the wrong way than what Donald Trump is doing.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Let me ask you about this amazing ability to mix ad vent you are with doing good in this world. It`s not just consuming wealth. It`s about enjoying the world we live in. I was in the Peace Corps in Africa for two years. I (INAUDIBLE) over Africa. I had a great time, you know, working with small business guys doing good work.

You`ve been able to do it all. You`ve been having adventure as well as doing good. That`s a good combination.

BLUM: Well, I think you had an adventure, too. And by the way, all this is an adventure. And we have, as I said, kids that have been to 80 different countries out of Berkeley and we`re now in all ten campuses. We do work with George Soros and the Central European University in Budapest. And for me, every day is an adventure. You get out of bed and there is something you can do.

MATTHEWS: What`s -- because you`re focused on this human trafficking. My wife is involved in that and talks about it with me a lot. What`s going on? Are women -- is this like slavery? What goes on with these young women or women?

BLUM: It`s slavery or worse. We have some we have now 15,000 young women in school being saved from being sold in Nepal. I would say for the first ten years we were over there, I was unaware of the problem.

And, by the way, you say, 15,000, you must be making a difference. There`s 20,000 people, just from a little country like Nepal, these girls, they go across the border into India and their families never see them again.

But, you know, I live in San Francisco. You don`t need to go to Nepal to find it. Oakland is full of trafficking. It is -- I understand now -- the second largest criminal endeavor in the United States.

MATTHEWS: How does it work? People bring people this as servants or prostitutes? How do they get them in?

BLUM: It`s a con game. First of all, the people that work for the government are in on it. They get paid off. So, somebody comes along and these tend to be low caste Hindu women. We have a husband for you or we have a good job for you in India. And they collect these girls and they wind up in the brothels and can`t get out.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask but a guy I used to work for, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton, Clinton Foundation gets a lot of hits for conflicts and everything. What is your experience with working with these former presidents around the world?

BLUM: I love them both. I`ve been on Jimmy Carter`s board for about 15 years. I have been everywhere with him in Africa. By the way, we never go to any place that`s any good. What he`s often doing is chasing the last guinea worm. He`s basically had a lot to do with wiping out two diseases, guinea worm and river blindness and some other ones.

And when you go around Africa and hear people speak about Jimmy Carter, nobody in this country has a better reputation in Africa than Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter is 91.

MATTHEWS: He is amazing.

BLUM: And we need -- by the way, I am involved in the Clinton Foundation. Yes, I give Clinton Foundation money. I know what they do. And they do an enormous amount of good work.

MATTHEWS: Yes, my son worked for him in Rwanda and making sure the aids, the medicines didn`t get in the wrong hands over there. That`s an important job to do.

Anyway, thank you.

BLUM: That`s number one --

MATTHEWS: "An Accident of Geography" by Richard Blum. Thank you, sir.

When we return, let me finish with my thoughts on Bob Dylan who this week was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Let me finish with something that not this depressing political campaign.

I have long belief, felt really, that our homegrown politicians are often not the best of us. By that, I`m referring to those other people who get us to think more clearly and at a higher elevation, who truly lead us, raise our sense of what it means to be a human being.

I`ll give you a couple names. One is Winston Churchill who stood against worst nemesis of the 20th century and for many frightening months did it alone, and yes, even without us.

The other, a different kind of leader, is Earnest Hemingway. And like Tom sort of getting others to whitewash that fence by saying it was cool to do it, Hemingway got us all convinced it was cool to drive an ambulance in World War I and getting shot doing it. Living in Paris in the 1920s. Being an aficionado of the bull fights, tracking big game in East Africa, marlin fishing off Cuba and let`s not forget writing.

How many of us still want to write the great American novel because Ernest wrote one, "The Sun Also Rises".

Both men, Churchill and Hemingway, were given the Nobel Prize for literature and yesterday, these two men were joined in that honor by another leader of another kind -- Bob Dylan, the author of "Rolling Stone", "Blowing in the Wind", "The Times They are Achanging", and how about, "It Ain`t Me, Babe".

All the times I listened to that song, I thought it was a rejected lover, someone the singer didn`t want or couldn`t make a commitment to. Well, maybe not. Some believe it was Dylan`s way of saying to all of us that he didn`t want the burden of being a laureate of the left, a reliable troubadour for the latest liberal doctrine.

"I`m an entertainer", I can remember him saying and figured what he was saying, he knew people believed in his words of his songs for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, but they were also enjoying them, enjoying listening to them and, of course, getting to feel them along with him. They enjoyed being on what they judged to be, of course, the right side. I got it then, I get it now.

A lot of getting Dylan comes from when you grew up. I grew up on campus when all this happened, when the anti-war movement led the edge to life. I was over in Africa in the Peace Corps when I heard "Nashville Skyline", when an English girl brought it back from school with her.

Bill Clinton`s another member of my generation, who speaks with authority on the real and deep connection between our music and our politics. His and mine. Quote, this is Clinton, "If you look back on the `60s," he once said, "and on balance you think there was more good than harm, then you`re probably a Democrat. If you think there was more harm than good, you`re probably a Republican." That is Clinton.

And I couldn`t agree more and you probably agree too.

I was there when Bob Dylan was awarded the Kennedy Center honors. I was sitting way in the back seats. When it was time for Dylan to be recognized and all the stiffs in the expensive seats sat there doing nothing, like stiffs, I stood and cheered. And so, I do it again today.

The Nobel Prize for Literature goes to Mr. Bob Dylan of the United States of America.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Katy Tur, Michael Steele

10086 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Michelle Obama makes her case against Donald Trump.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

Just two words showcase today`s campaign story -- Michelle Obama. What she said about Donald Trump is the headline. And the story of what she had to say promises, as we say in the news business, to have legs. It`s going to go on.

Michelle was the undeniable star this Thursday, October 13th. She told a crowd in New Hampshire that she was shaken to the core by what Donald Trump said back in 2005 about how he treats women.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: This is not something that we can ignore. It`s not something we can just sweep under the rug as just another disturbing footnote in a sad election season because this was not just a lewd conversation. This wasn`t just locker room banter. This was a powerful individual, speaking freely and openly about sexually predatory behavior.

And to make matters worse, it now seems very clear that this isn`t an isolated incident. It`s one of countless examples of how he has treated women his whole life.

And I know it`s a campaign, but this isn`t about politics. It`s about basic human decency. Now is the time for all of us to stand up and say, Enough is enough.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, the other drama today was Donald Trump defending himself against a variety of allegations, some of the claims stretching back decades, that he engaged in inappropriate conduct with women.

In Trump fashion, he responded by lashing out at the women making the charges, the media reporting on them, and the Clinton campaign, which he accused of being behind the charges. Well, just in the past 24 hours, a number of more women have come forward claiming that Trump inappropriately touched them. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JESSICA LEEDS, ACCUSER: It was a real shock when all of a sudden, his hands were all over me. He started encroaching on my space. And I hesitate to use this expression, but I`m going to, and that is he was like an octopus. It was like he had six arms. He was all over the place. When he started putting his hand up my skirt, and that was it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, a second woman, Rachel Crooks, told "The New York Times" she met Trump at an elevator in Trump Tower. She introduced herself, but Trump began kissing her on the cheek. She said Trump then, quote, "kissed me directly on the mouth."

Well, then Trump tweeted, quote, "The phony story in the failing `New York Times` is a total fabrication." A lawyer for Trump sent a letter to "The Times" demanding it retract the story.

Well, separately, "The Palm Beach Post" reported that a woman named Melinda McGillivray said was groped by Trump in 2003 during a reception at Mar-a- Lago. Well, Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks told "The Post," "there is no truth to this whatsoever. This allegation lacks any merit or veracity."

A "People" magazine writer also claimed inappropriate contact with Trump. In 2005, she was at Mar-a-Lago, writing a story about Trump and his wife, Melania. At one point, Melania wasn`t present. The writer said, "We walked into the room alone. And Trump shut the door behind us, and turned around, and within seconds, he was pushing me against the wall and forcing his tongue down my throat."

Well, Trump denied it all. Quote, "Why didn`t the writer of the 12-year- old article in `People` magazine mention the incident in her story? Because it did not happen."

Meanwhile, a reporter for NBC spoke with a former Miss Utah -- Temple Taggart`s her name -- who alleged that Trump kissed her back in 1997.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TEMPLE TAGGART, FORMER MISS UTAH: I remember him walking over. My dad was very confident and really admired Donald Trump. And so he went over and introduced himself first and then he introduced me. And it was at that time where turned to me and embraced me and gave me a kiss on the lips. And I -- I remember being shocked and -- because I would have just thought to shake somebody`s hand. But that was his first response with me.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Trump told NBC News, quote, "I didn`t even know -- I don`t even know who she is. She claims this place -- this took place in a public area. I never kissed her. I emphatically deny this ridiculous claim."

Well, NBC News hasn`t confirmed any of the claims. Trump has denied all of them. He did so again today. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: These vicious claims about me of inappropriate conduct with women are totally and absolutely false! These events never, ever happened, and the people that said them meekly (ph) fully understand. You take a look at these people, you study these people and you`ll understand also.

These people are horrible people! They`re horrible, horrible liars! And interestingly, it happens to appear 26 days before our very important election. Isn`t that amazing?

I take all of these slings and arrows gladly for you. I take them for our movement, so that we can have our country back!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, joining me right now is NBC`s Katy Tur -- she`s in Philadelphia -- "USA Today`s" Susan Page -- she`s here, along with former chair of the Republican National Committee and MSNBC political analyst Michael Steele.

Katy Tur, how does this all ring with you, having covered him all these months? Is this -- I guess it`s hard to ask, but you must have had some reaction when you hear these stories pouring out every couple of hours now.

KATY TUR, NBC CORRESPONDENT: You know, I can`t verify any of these claims. What I will say is that we are seeing a snowballing effect, with more and more women coming out and saying that they feel more comfortable now telling their stories. They`re saying that the 2005 audio leak enabled them -- or first girded them to do so.

And then when Donald Trump denied touching anybody, denied, you know, acting on any of those -- any of those brags during the debate, they felt like they needed to come out in order to, essentially, protect the country. They felt like it was their duty, their civic duty, to come out and alert the public about what kind of man he is behind the scenes.

Again, Chris, I can`t verify any of these stories. I have not spoken directly with any of these women, and I certainly wasn`t there for any of these allegations. But we are hearing women come out and tell tales of what Donald Trump was like in person that match very closely to how Donald Trump bragged about his behavior both in private, as we heard in that 2005 audio, and in public, on Howard Stern, even on places like Fox News, talking about how he felt entitled to go up to women and to touch them. He felt like he could because he was a celebrity. He was allowed to do these things.

So while we can`t say that these claims are true, what we can say is that they do line up with Donald Trump`s own words.

MATTHEWS: It`s got to be the first time a public figure has served as the narrator of the story he`s denying. I mean, he actually -- if you listen to what he said on those programs, including "Access Hollywood" on that bus, and you listen to what he said on Stern, it sounds like he`s describing himself rather adequately.

TUR: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, Trump forcefully denied the allegation by a "People" magazine writer that he forcefully kissed her. Let`s watch that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: And I ask very simple question. Why wasn`t it part of the story that appeared 20 or 12 years ago? Why wasn`t it part of the story? I was one of the biggest stars on television with "The Apprentice," and it would have been one of the biggest stories of the year!

And by the way, the area was a public area, people all over the place. Take a look. You take a look. Look at her. Look at her words. You tell me what you think. I don`t think so! I don`t think so.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Insult to injury.

SUSAN PAGE, ""USA TODAY": Well, he does...

MATTHEWS: He`s insulting her looks after he`s been accused of this, so his way of responding is say, She isn`t somebody I would do this to. I mean, it`s another way of whacking at somebody.

PAGE: Yes. And so here`s the question. Do his words today, which were so defiant against these women who have stepped forward -- does it encourage other women, if they`ve had that kind of experience, to come forward because they feel like it`s important to do so, or does it discourage them...

MATTHEWS: What do you think?

PAGE: ... because they don`t want to...

MATTHEWS: What do you think?

TUR: ... they don`t want to...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, the fact that he apparently -- Michael, to be really blunt about it, the fact that he`s appearing to lose this election right now...

MICHAEL STEELE, FMR. RNC CHAIR, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... that in addition to the truth of the -- the transparent truth of what was on the "Access Hollywood" tape and the rest of this, the Howard Stern stuff, that would be another inducement, I would think, to come out.

STEELE: I think that`s...

MATTHEWS: He`s not going to be president of the United States.

STEELE: I think that`s what`s going to happen. I think that over the next week or so, you`re going to have more and more women who`ve been in that orbit and have had that experience speak to that.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: And I think what -- what makes that happen, and as Katy knows in listening and watching this campaign real time, is that when he gets up on that stage and he emphatically denies it and denies it, that cuts -- that cuts and undercuts the woman that was in that situation with him and then forces her, almost, to just take the dare -- All right, now I`m going to come out and tell my story.

MATTHEWS: It`s so interesting. Anyway, Michelle Obama, who was unbelievable today, called Trump`s past comments about women disgraceful and intolerable. She told the story of one young boy reacting to Trump. Let`s watch her.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: Someone recently told me a story about their 6-year-old son who one day was watching the news. They were watching the news together, and the little boy out of the blue said, I think Hillary Clinton will be president. And his mom said, Well, why do you say that?

And this little 6-year-old said, Because the other guy called someone a piggy. And he said, You cannot be president if you call someone a piggy.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: So even a 6-year-old knows better. A 6-year-old knows that this is not how adults behave. This is not how decent human beings behave. And this is certainly not thousand someone who wants to be president of the United States behaves.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Who wants to start here? I`ll start with you, Michael. You`re the guy here. What do you think -- what do you think inspired Michelle Obama -- we`ve watched her now, she`s been a great first lady, but she hasn`t been this impassioned about anything that we`ve seen her on.

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: I don`t remember anything like this. This is like, I`m talking to you. I`m talking.

STEELE: Yes, I think this was personal. I think she probably -- my sense in listening to the speech was she was talking and speaking on behalf of people she knew who had been in that situation, and maybe other situations in her family. I mean, it was a very personal way of pushing back and saying, as she said at the end there, Enough is enough.

So I think that aspect of this changes this whole dynamic right now.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

STEELE: I think her sort of reframing this, the story with the 6-year-old, the -- you know, the pushback on drawing the line -- No more, no more -- I think is going to really have a debilitating effect on the campaign.

PAGE: You know, I think this was one of the most effective, most powerful, compelling...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Her speech today will have legs. We`ll be showing this for a while.

PAGE: And she gave a great speech at the convention. This was better. And it wasn`t -- it was not a partisan speech.

STEELE: No, it wasn`t.

PAGE: I mean, there wasn`t a bit of policy ideology in it. I mean, I think -- and I think she felt personally because there`s no woman who hasn`t had some kind of experience like this.

MATTHEWS: Yes. You know, we don`t all know that.

PAGE: Yes, well...

MATTHEWS: I`m hearing stories from producers today that I had never heard before about stuff...

TUR: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... where people have been through stuff and...

TUR: Women know what she`s talking about. And they also can understand why, 12 years ago, a magazine writer wouldn`t have put that in her story.

MATTHEWS: Of course not because that would shatter the whole deal.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Katy because Katy`s been up front. I got the feeling when I was listening to the first lady today, she said something that I thought was very first person. She said she can`t believe that this guy who talks like this is a candidate for president, meaning she knows what an elevation that is. Her husband`s had that elevation. To be a major party candidate for president is not being president, but it`s a really, really close to being president thing.

And I think it offends her, the notion that somebody can be like Trump and be also in that small group of people who`ve ever been nominated for president. It`s a short list. It`s, like what, 70 names in history.

TUR: Yes, and she`s not the only one. There are a number of people out there who just can`t wrap their minds around why Donald Trump is so popular and why he`s being excused for behavior that normally would never be excused.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TUR: I was speaking to women supporters of Donald Trump, and without irony, they`ll tell me that everybody says these words. And then I`ll ask them if they ever said these words, and they`ll say, No, of course not. Don`t be stupid.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TUR: So this is -- this is defying the laws of not just politics but normal and decent human behavior. We don`t generally exalt people who speak so negatively about women, who trash women who are victims.

And I will point out, too, not necessarily the women that are accusing Donald Trump of anything, but let`s look at Michelle Fields, the reporter from Breitbart who said Corey Lewandowski grabbed her after one of the primary celebrations. Donald Trump vehemently denied that that happened, said he would fire Corey Lewandowski if it did.

Video came out proving that it did. Not only did Donald Trump not fire Corey Lewandowski, but he went on the attack against Michelle Fields, victim-shaming her over and over again, saying that she was lying about the bruises.

So that speaks to something that a lot of women in this country find to be inherently appalling, that it`s a guttural reaction you get from women who have ever been placed in that situation...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TUR: ... where people don`t believe them because they are a woman. It`s not necessarily women out there who have been touched in inappropriate ways.

And I got to tell you, most of us have at one point or another, even just walking down the street, some of us, but people who have felt like they have been diminished because they are a woman, unable to speak out about situations that make them uncomfortable because they feel like their jobs are threatened, their position is threatened. They don`t want to ruin the mood of a party, say.

This is not something that is unique. It doesn`t happen infrequently. It is something that is -- that is -- that is something that you`re brought up to learn how to deal with as woman from a very young age.

MATTHEWS: Well said. Katy Tur, you`re the best. Thanks so much for that very personal portrait of what the world looks like right now, the world of Donald Trump. Anyway, thank you, Susan, as always, and Michael Steele, another erudite comment tonight. Everybody`s at their best tonight.

Coming up -- Trump is sinking in the polls. That`s a fact. His party is reeling. That`s a fact. And the damage could get much, much worse for Republicans as a whole. We all know this. We don`t have to report it, we know what`s going on, everybody watching now.

Plus, the Clinton campaign`s also in a bit of a damage control mode right now over the latest batch of e-mails hacked by Wikileaks.

And we`re waiting now for two big live events tonight in this hour, both from the battleground state of Ohio. President Obama will be making remarks to the Ohio Democratic Party in Columbus. He`s expected to respond forcefully to the allegations facing Donald Trump. That`s going to be hot, too, tonight.

And Trump also is on the campaign tonight himself, holding a rally in Cincinnati, another Ohio spot. We`re watching both events, and we`ll bring them to you as the news develops.

Finally, the HARDBALL roundtable is here as Donald Trump`s campaign enters meltdown mode.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Let`s get to the latest polling today from the key battleground states. For that, we check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

In North Carolina, a new NBC News/Marist poll has Hillary Clinton up by 4, and Trump needs that state -- Clinton 45, Trump still at 41, 3 shy -- 4 shy. In a four-way matchup in the Tarheel state -- that`s been trending towards Clinton. Next to Ohio, where NBC News/Marist poll has Trump up by 1. He`s still holding onto Ohio by a thread, 42 to 41. The RealClearPolitics for Ohio has Clinton up by half a point. He needs that state.

Next to Pennsylvania, where a new Bloomberg poll has Clinton up by 9. It`s Clinton, 51 to 42. And that lead for Clinton is fueled by huge margins in the Philly suburbs, and that could be the killer punch against Trump.

Finally, to Michigan, where Clinton`s lead in the new "Detroit News" poll is 11. It`s Clinton, 42, Trump down at 31 -- a lot of missing votes there. Clinton`s lead was 7 in the polls two weeks ago.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. The Republican Party appears to be coming apart at the seams right now. Think about it. Since Trump -- since Donald Trump`s attacks on House Speaker Paul Ryan, two of the most loyal advisers of his, former House speaker Newt Gingrich and Dr. Ben Carson, have said Trump isn`t doing himself or the party any good. Let`s watch.

Byline: Howard Fineman Guest: Katie Packer, Annie Linskey

since Donald Trump`s attacks on House Speaker Paul Ryan, two of the most loyal advisers of his, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Dr. Ben Carson have said Trump isn`t doing himself or the party any good. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NEWT GINGRICH (R), FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: First of all, let me just say about Trump, who -- and I admire and I try to help as much as I can -- there`s a big Trump and a little Trump.

The little Trump is frankly pathetic. Donald Trump has one opponent. Her name is Hillary Clinton. Her name is not Paul Ryan. It`s not anybody else. It`s Hillary Clinton. Donald Trump`s job is to go out and make the case, because the elite media won`t. He has to make a case that is clear, unified, simple, that people understand.

DR. BEN CARSON, CONSERVATIVE ACTIVIST: Getting into fights with Ryan or anybody else, complete waste of time. And it`s not helpful at all.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, NBC News reported that the Trump campaign is moving resources out of the key swing state of Virginia. A source told NBC News that it`s because the path to win to get to 270 is easier through these states, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina. I agree with that.

The source says that the RNC is not helping in states where they don`t have any competitive down-ballot races -- quote -- "What the RNC told the Trump campaign is, if you want to play in Virginia, you have to write your own check." So that`s one less state he`s going to win.

For more on the crisis facing the GOP, joining me right now is former deputy campaign manager of Mitt Romney`s presidential campaign of last time Katie Packer. And Howard Fineman is global editorial director of The Huffington Post.

Katie, let`s go into this thing. What do you think`s actually happening when -- it`s almost like choose your leader. Do you think Republicans are being asked, are you loyal to the movement conservatives of Paul Ryan -- the Tea Party to some extent is also part of that -- or are you loyal to the Republican establishment, or you`re loyal to Trump?

I`m not sure. Trump is one side. What`s the alternative to Trump in this civil war in the Republican Party? How would you describe the alternative?

(LAUGHTER)

KATIE PACKER, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST: Well, there isn`t much of an alternative right now. I mean, it`s whether or not to uphold the values that you hold dear and the values that brought you into the Republican Party or to sell out to this guy. That`s really the option that`s before Republicans right now.

And a lot of people feel like they have to sell out because Hillary Clinton is such a horrible alternative. They spent the last three decades despising the Clintons and the values that they brought to the White House. And so it does feel like none of the options for Republicans are appealing right now.

MATTHEWS: So, in other words, the Clinton campaign, which is to hose Trump every night, which they`re doing in their ad campaign, isn`t working, because it`s not making her more attractive to moderate Republicans, right?

PACKER: Exactly.

And I`m not sure that there`s much that they can do for Republicans, because FOX News and Rush Limbaugh and sort of the conservative media have done a really good job of making Hillary Clinton into such a pariah to them that they can`t stomach the thought of supporting her.

And so it`s a very -- a very steep hill to climb for the Clinton campaign to get those Republicans on board.

MATTHEWS: Well, the Hillary hatred is something that`s almost a religion or a disease, whatever you want to call it, Howard. It`s a strange thing, but it`s not just the alt-right, the hard-right people.

There`s a lot of suburban Republicans that don`t like Hillary either, so -- a lot of women, too, so you can`t generalize.

HOWARD FINEMAN, NBC CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: Absolutely.

But one of the top Republican strategists who I spoke to earlier today said, this is every man for himself, every man and woman for himself within the Republican Party right now. Trump`s got his supposed path to the presidency through those four states that you mentioned. He will focus on those. He will hold the rallies there. He will spend whatever money he`s going to spend there.

Everybody else is on their own. Mitch McConnell is on his own in Kentucky with the Senate. Paul Ryan`s on his own out of Wisconsin trying to preserve the House for the Republicans. Reince Priebus is trying to maintain his dignity, if he can. And that`s the situation.

And Donald Trump in his speech today gave what to me was the toughest, most hard-right speech that he`s given, scripted speech, that he`s given so far. Defending himself against those women, he basically created an aura of conspiracy and shadowy evil surrounding him.

MATTHEWS: Demons.

FINEMAN: Demons around him, and offered himself as a kind of sacrificial lamb for the Republicans. I will take the slings and arrows for you, he said.

MATTHEWS: From Shakespeare, yes.

FINEMAN: I will take the slings and arrows. I will suffer on your behalf.

I will lose, perhaps. He didn`t say that, but that was the subtext. I will lose in the interests of trying to save the country. And if we don`t win this time, he said, there will be no America, basically no American culture, no American future, all in order to try to fight back those accusations from those women.

MATTHEWS: It`s so Hamlet, whether to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take up arms against the sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them.

FINEMAN: Yes.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: My God, who is this guy?

Anyway, let me ask you about this. This is a hard one. I only ask hard questions here, Katie. So, I`m going to ask you a hard one. If you had to say, the people who All right, opposing Trump right now, are they to the right of the Republican Party, those opposing him? Are they to the left of him in the Republican Party?

Because Howard`s pointing out he`s making his final call to hold what he can on the hard right, the alt-right. He`s not saying -- he`s going to the alt-right, at least you guys stay with me, the haters. The real right- wingers, stay with me. I will send you all the signals. It`s us against all establishment people in this country, Republican and Democrat.

Is that what he`s doing? He`s trying to hold the right. Is that fair?

PACKER: Well, I think he`s trying to hold the far right, but I don`t think that necessarily means that that`s where Trump is.

Trump has staked out this position because he thought that it was a position that would get him the nomination and potentially the presidency. But I think we all know by now that Donald Trump doesn`t necessarily subscribe to any of these views.

MATTHEWS: It`s so true.

PACKER: He`s just sort of inserted himself into this political philosophy as a means to an end.

MATTHEWS: Well said. I haven`t heard anybody say that before, that the whole thing is a guise.

FINEMAN: Yes. No, I...

PACKER: Absolutely.

FINEMAN: I agree with that up to a point.

But when he said today, I used to be a member of the club, I could have stayed in the club, but I have gotten out of the club, and now they hate me for it, because I`m telling the truth about them, I think he means that.

I think this experience that he`s had, especially in the last few weeks, first with the tax story, then with his horrible performance in the first debate, then with this flood of accusations, I think have really turned him into a more bitter and kind of desperate guy. That`s the sense I got in this -- that`s the sense I got in this speech today.

MATTHEWS: Katie, Katie, you`re really on to something here, I think, because I`m a political buff, like probably you are too.

And I have an older sense of this buffdom. And I have got to tell you, what you just described about Trump is what Joe McCarthy was, who basically was a demagogue of the early `50s. And Joe McCarthy ran an anti-communist campaign because he heard about anti-communism. He said, that`s a good thing. I`m going to ride that baby.

And so he rode the anti-communist very effectively. He was a good demagogue, a good showman, a good marketer. He didn`t believe any of it. There are many people believe -- Richard Rovere wrote about this -- that, basically, that`s why he drank himself to death, because, after it was over, he lost, he was censured, he said, well, I don`t care about any of this stuff, because if he really was an anti-communist and he really believed in his cause, he would have fought to the end. He would given himself to it.

Trump, we all know, a week from after the election, do you think he`s still going to be Trump on all these issues, still against trade, still against illegal **immigration**, still against wars? Or will he flip on anything again? We don`t know, Katie.

PACKER: Well, any time he`s asked a complicated question about any of these things, he can`t really even scratch beneath the surface.

That`s why, when you ask him about a Supreme Court nomination, he always goes to Scalia, because he doesn`t really know any of these people whose names he put forward. He doesn`t know what qualifications conservatives are looking for. He points to Scalia because it`s an easy answer, but he doesn`t even really know why Scalia is appealing to conservatives.

MATTHEWS: You`re so smart.

PACKER: He`s just sort of a centimeter thick.

FINEMAN: OK, so to argue against what I just said and agree with you, Donald Trump himself said that, if he loses, of course, American civilization will end, as we know it, if he loses.

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: The deluge comes out to be.

But, on the other hand, he says, if he loses, he doesn`t know what he`s going to do. He has no idea what he`s going to do, which to me -- which goes to your theory, which is, if he really was in this for the alleged crusade that he`s on, for the -- quote -- "movement" that he talks about, he would be saying, well, I`m going to fight this whether I win or lose.

PACKER: Right.

MATTHEWS: Bernie is like that.

FINEMAN: I`m going to keep fighting against the establishment whether I win or lose.

MATTHEWS: Compare him to Bernie.

FINEMAN: One gets the sense that, having exiled himself from the club, we will see if he knocks on the door again within a week or two.

MATTHEWS: Comparison to Bernie Sanders, who I`m not as far over with, but I totally believe he believes it.

PACKER: Oh, for sure.

MATTHEWS: I absolutely am convinced that Bernie is Bernie is Bernie. It`s not a show. It`s not a gig. It`s who he is. He`s a socialist, and proud of it, because he wants the government to play a larger role in our lives.

I don`t necessarily. But I do believe he is for real. Trump, mezza mezza there.

Anyway, thank you so much.

PACKER: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, Melania Trump issued a statement through her attorneys tonight. She`s demanding an apology and a retraction of that "People" magazine accusation against her husband. So, the beat goes on.

That was -- thank you, Katie Packer, for that great thinking here today. Thank you so much, and Howard Fineman.

And up next: new revelations in that latest batch of hacked e-mails from the Clinton campaign. And that`s ahead.

And we`re also waiting for President Obama in Ohio to speak live out there. He`s expected to take on the Trump thing. By the way, we have got good information he`s going to be tough tonight, very tough, maybe as tough as the first lady, which should be very tough.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

WikiLeaks today released 2,000 additional hacked e-mails from the Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta`s account today, which follows five previous e-mail dumps since last week. The e-mails, which the U.S. intelligence community say were hacked by Russia, the intelligence community says that, have not been authenticated by NBC News.

And the Clinton campaign has said they won`t -- well, they`re not going to help anybody with this story. Let`s face it. The Clinton people are not going to come out and say, of course they`re all real.

But the content we have seen so far shows anxiety and concern over Secretary Clinton`s candidacy from within.

And as "The Washington Post" reports, the correspondence reveals a campaign that has struggled all year to improve a flawed candidate. Aides were keenly aware that she was resistant to the media, perhaps out of touch with regular Americans, and unable to convey a clear message to voters.

In an exchange last may over whether Hillary Clinton should take questions from the press, John Podesta says, "If she thinks she can get to Labor Day without taking press questions, I think that`s suicidal."

Well, one former political adviser wrote in a March e-mail -- quote -- "Right now, I am petrified that Hillary is almost totally dependent on Republicans nominating Trump. She has huge endemic political weaknesses that we would be wise to rectify" -- close quote.

In another Clinton communications director -- actually, communications director Jennifer Palmieri commented on Rupert Murdoch`s decision to raise his kids Catholic -- quote -- "I imagine they think it is the most socially acceptable politically conservative religion out there. Their rich friends wouldn`t understand it if they became evangelicals."

Well, that`s a conversation which should never have been held, obviously.

Anyway, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan yesterday condemned the campaign for, as he says, disparaging the Catholic Church, but when asked about the comments, Palmieri said she did not recognize the e-mail.

Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JENNIFER PALMIERI, CLINTON CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: I`m a Catholic. I don`t recognize that e-mail that we saw. And this whole effort is led by the Russians. The Russians are the ones that orchestrated this hack. We believe, as noted by the statement from the director of intelligence, that they`re also behind the timing and manner of the leaks.

And we`re not going to do any more to comment or aid their efforts.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I`m joined by Annie Linskey, who is national political reporter for "The Boston Globe."

Well, first of all, that`s Clinton M.O. Let`s do that. Whatever you think of the Clintons, that`s their won -- back when they had that tape with Gennifer Flowers, President Clinton at the time apologized to Mario Cuomo for what he said on the tape. Meanwhile, Carville`s out saying, it was edited. It wasn`t real.

ANNIE LINSKEY, "THE BOSTON GLOBE": It was doctored, right.

MATTHEWS: So, they get the advantage of doing -- of fend-mending people offended by it, at the same time denying it`s real.

LINSKEY: Right.

MATTHEWS: She`s not authorized, obviously, Jennifer Palmieri, who is a great person, not authorized, to say it`s real, because Hillary won`t say it`s real.

LINSKEY: Yes. Right.

MATTHEWS: Because something else will come out worse, and they will have to say that is real.

But what I found great about it, from the Clinton side, was the intelligence of the people inside.

LINSKEY: Yes.

MATTHEWS: They`re asking the questions that everybody on the outside has been asking, like, where`s the coherent message? What does Hillary really want to say? What does she truly believe should be said?

LINSKEY: Right.

MATTHEWS: Can she really identify with regular folks making regular incomes?

LINSKEY: Yes.

It was very affirming for anybody who`s covered the campaign and asked those questions on the outside. Like, is she connecting with people? What exactly is her message?

MATTHEWS: What`s the media strategy?

LINSKEY: What`s the strategy here?

And, you know, is she going to talk to people? There was one point -- there`s one e-mail that I love where there was a suggestion that she say, oh, well, I have been in living rooms across America, and somebody said, well, actually, she hasn`t really been in that many living rooms this time around. So, let`s not do that one.

So, you know, it was very much a bunch of adults talking about and grappling with some of the same issues that people on the outside have identified.

MATTHEWS: I guess the only one that was damaging to some extent was when she told those bankers, I guess those swells up in New York, that you have to have a public presentation, a public message, and then a sotto voce private message that you don`t...

LINSKEY: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: That sounds like politics.

LINSKEY: It does.

MATTHEWS: But you`re not supposed to admit it.

LINSKEY: Right. And I don`t think she had a very good answer for that in the debate.

MATTHEWS: Like, you can say -- it`s like Alinsky, Saul Alinsky. When you get into an argument, always take the whole side.

You may have certain views about abortion, for example, where you don`t really believe in late-term abortion, you`re against it.

LINSKEY: Right.

MATTHEWS: But your whole crowd is for, you know, a woman making that choice in late term, so you shut up.

LINSKEY: Sure.

MATTHEWS: That`s what I think politics unfortunately is.

LINSKEY: You don`t want to say it.

The way that she said it -- and the problem is that that e-mail or that transcript in particular so underscored her weakness as a politician who can`t be trusted, who`s saying one thing to some people and another thing to other people.

But that`s something that came out 30 minutes after this Donald Trump bombshell of a tape.

MATTHEWS: I know.

LINSKEY: So, it really -- if that was the big surprise, the atom bomb, it was really washed away.

MATTHEWS: Well, to use Newt Gingrich`s phrase about little and big, the big Donald and the small Donald, nobody likes to think that she`s giving one message to the big shots and another one to the little people, the regular people, because that means it`s elitism.

LINSKEY: Right. Exactly. And that`s exactly how that one came across.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Well, we should keep watching these e-mails. I think they`re great to learn. I think they`re a great learning device, however we get them. I`m not going to thank the Russians for it. But it`s one way to get the information. They`re not going to tell us otherwise.

LINSKEY: They`re not going to tell you, yes.

MATTHEWS: Annie Linskey, I like your journalism. Thanks so much for coming on from "The Boston Globe," from the hub of the universe.

LINSKEY: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Up next, we`re expecting to hear from both President Obama and Donald Trump in the next half-hour, in fact, fairly quickly. The president`s in Columbus, Ohio, right now, where he will speak before the state`s Democratic Party. And Trump is holding a rally across the state in Cincinnati, a much more Republican area. We`re keeping an eye on both those events. They`re both live tonight. They`re coming up.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

We`re expected as Ted Strickland now campaigning for the Senate seat in Ohio, we`re expecting President Obama to take that stage before the Ohio Democratic Party. It`s in Columbus, right now, as you`re watching.

Anyway, the president is expected to respond to the Trump campaign in harsh language tonight, and the new allegations, of course, facing Donald Trump. And Trump himself is about to take the stage at a campaign rally in Cincinnati, well, earlier today in a combative and unrepentant speech, Trump dismissed his accusers and laid out a kind of apocalyptic choice.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: This is a conspiracy against you, the American people, and we cannot let this happen or continue. This is our moment of reckoning as a society and as a civilization, itself.

I didn`t need to do this, folks. Believe me. Believe me. I built a great company. And I had a wonderful life. I could have enjoyed the fruits and benefit of years of successful business deals and businesses for myself and my family, instead of going through this absolute horror show of lies, deceptions, malicious attacks.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, the new allegations that Donald Trump groped women has sent his campaign into what the "Time" magazine is calling a total meltdown. Look at that rough cover there, in the article that hits newsstands on Friday, the writers at "Time" talk about an unhinged Trump in the throes of a meltdown, demolishing, quote, "the emollient line between a campaign aimed at the base and one intended to debase."

Anyway, for more, I`m joined by Alex Altman. He`s one of the authors at "Time" magazine, one of the writers of that cover story. Ashley Parker reported for "The New York Times," and Eli Stokols is political reporter for "Politico".

You know, it`s very apocalyptic, but he`s also offering himself as the people. I am you. Like Marshal Petain, taking over the government of Vichy, or offering up the French republic to the Germans, by saying, I will take this role upon myself.

ELI STOKOLS, POLITICO: He`s been messianic for a long time, but this is next-level stuff here. And all these victims come forward. And what does he do? He dismisses them and he plays the victim. He tells his supporters that they`re being victimized by this conspiracy theory, this cabal of media and banking elites, which is rich, right?

I mean, the bank saved Donald Trump, the media made him, and he`s out there sort of dog-whistling to the base, saying, it`s all those East Coast elitists, those greedy people trying to preserve their power.

MATTHEWS: Well, it could be. That can also be true. It isn`t a lie that says that the elite liberals don`t like Trump. That`s not a lie, including those in the media. It`s not a lie.

But the thing is, how did he get there?

Ashley, it`s like he said, I did this as a sacrificial being for the people. I gave up the trappings of wealth, to come out here and defend your cause. Now, he did pick up the cause of anti-trade, anti-illegal **immigration**, and anti-stupid wars. But we don`t know what the motive was, do we? He will say the motive was sacrifice.

ASHLEY PARKER, THE NEW YORK TIMES: Well, the thing you realize when you cover Donald Trump, very quickly, is that it`s all about him. He is sort of a classic narcissist and everything is about him.

But the smartest thing or one of the smartest things his campaign has done is sort of say, this is about you. This is a movement. I`m doing it on behalf of you.

And you see the way it moves the crowd. I mean, those are some -- other than building the wall, you know, and having Mexico pay for it, those are some of the biggest roars that he gets.

MATTHEWS: Is that in danger now that he`s talking about himself?

PARKER: I don`t think so, because let`s be honest, he`s been talking about himself this entire time and he`ll occasionally throw it to the crowd. But it`s really about you in Pennsylvania. It`s really about you, whose jobs I`m saving. And that`s just more of what he`s doing, sort of on steroids today.

MATTHEWS: Alex, do you think he`s a fraud, Alex?

ALEX ALTMAN, TIME MAGAZINE: You know --

MATTHEWS: More so than most politicians? In other words, he`s presenting himself as a man of the people as the guy -- in this case, a guy, who despite all his wealth and success in business and the beautiful wives and the life he leads and Mar-A-Lago and all the golf courses, in heart, in the depths of his soul, he`s the guy looking out for the Saudi buster after the regular guy fighting it out for a living, is he that guy who did this out of sacrificial purpose?

ALTMAN: No, I don`t --

MATTHEWS: Or did he do it to enhance his PR?

ALTMAN: Well, I think he did it to enhance what he sees as his future. I don`t think he ran to lift up factory workers in Ohio or, you know, the people in Pennsylvania that he goes and talks to.

You know, I think it`s difficult to know what Donald Trump believes, because he shifts his policy position so often --

MATTHEWS: What does he care about?

ALTMAN: I think he cares about himself. I think, you know, narcissist is an apt word for it. He has built his campaign when he says I am --

MATTHEWS: Why couldn`t somebody who does care about it speak out and become the leader? That`s what I don`t get. Why`d it take this guy to put together that, what you call perfect storm win called it, of trade, illegal **immigration**, and stupid wars with the working class that says we`re getting screwed, because on every front, we`re the ones that pay the price and get no benefits, between the wars and **immigration** and loss of no manufacturing jobs.

How come he can do it and Democrats can`t -- why can`t a -- Democrats can`t do it because it would be seen as anti-Hispanic or whatever. A Republican can`t do it because it would be seen as anti-cheap labor, right? And also, Republicans like wars -- at least they have supported the war in Iraq, you know?

STOKOLS: He speaks very successfully. His message resonates with people who have deep grievances about the way the country is going, feeling left behind in this economy, this changing economy and changing country. And he`s sort of used his own grievances, personal grievances to sort of motivate his run. I mean, this whole presidential run, a lot of people think came out of that speech that the president made five years ago at the correspondents` dinner, where he just trashed and humiliated --

MATTHEWS: So you think it isn`t about the larger picture?

STOKOLS: I think he was very motivated by vengeance in a way. And who knows what he does?

MATTHEWS: And guess who`s motivated by that now? Obama -- Michelle, they`re looking back at him and saying, yes, you said, we`re illegal **alien**, I was an illegal **alien**. I`m from Kenya. Well, I have some thoughts on that.

Anyway, the roundtable is sticking with us. This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, top Trump supporter Rudy Giuliani, there he is, he`s on stage right now in Cincinnati. Giuliani`s backtracking after suggesting that Hillary Clinton lied after being at New York`s ground zero on 9/11. Here`s Rudy yesterday.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RUDY GIULIANI, FORMER NYC MAYOR: Don`t tell me, if you said that, that you remember September 11th, 2001. I remember September 11, 2001. But I heard her say one day that she was there that day. I was there that day. I don`t remember seeing Hillary Clinton there.

That was like -- that was like when she said she had to run through gunfire. That turned out to be, what do we call it? A lie!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Shortly after Giuliani made that statement, NBC News and other outlets report that Clinton never claimed to have been in New York City on September 11th, 2001. She returned to New York the following day and surveyed Ground Zero alongside then-Mayor Giuliani. There they are together.

Later yesterday, Giuliani was told that Clinton never said what he said she said.

Anyway, when Giuliani was told he was wrong and was being criticized online about it, her told our NBC affiliate in New York City, "I probably deserve it." Well, we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, we`re watching right now for President Obama to take the stand, stage in that Columbus, Ohio rally, up there. He`s also expected to forcefully respond to the allegations facing Donald Trump. He`s going to be tough tonight.

Back with our roundtable right now, Alex Altman, Ashley Parker, and Eli Stokols.

Well, here`s a little bit more of Michelle Obama`s passionate speech earlier today. Let`s watch that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, U.S. FIRST LADY: We thought all of that was ancient history, didn`t we? And so many have worked for so many years to end this kind of violence and abuse and disrespect, but here we are, 2016, and we`re hearing these exact same things every day on the campaign trail. We are drowning in it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Ashley, she has a presentation which is unbeatable. I`ve never -- I mean, this encompassing, we, it`s interactive, it`s personal, it`s dramatic reading. She doesn`t yell. She speaks in a way that`s like the highest level of performance. And she means it.

PARKER: She`s possibly the best messenger for this because even though she never mentioned him, she was clearly talking about Donald Trump and about groping, but what she did was she sort of brought into that, right, not every woman thankfully has been groped or kissed when they didn`t want. But every woman can relate, the man who stood too close, stared too long, the man at your workplace who made you uncomfortable but you didn`t feel like you could say anything because you`d jump through the hoops to get there.

I mean, that is a very universal message that I have to imagine resonates with every single woman.

MATTHEWS: We`ve been talking right here with the producers, also the old things where the guys sitting with the helmets, the hard hats on the corner when the woman walks by and get an approval, disapproval button pushed. Nobody asked for that.

ALTMAN: Yes. I mean, you know, she spoke with such emotion, just sort of a stirring remarks. You know that Brooklyn right now, Hillary Clinton`s advisers believe she is their most powerful surrogate for the next 25, 26 days. And I would even say she`s probably the Democrats` best speechmaker, perhaps the best speechmaker in American politics right now including her husband.

MATTHEWS: OK, Eli, let`s talk politics. Not gender politics but politics generally.

Isn`t this a time for her to be very positive and talk about why she should be president? Because the risk she runs right now, she would be elected without a fault, without a mandate, without a purpose, without a mission, without a momentum behind her. They won`t be any woosh behind her as they say now.

STOKOLS: Yes, I think that`s what she`s trying to do.

MATTHEWS: All her ads are negative on Trump.

STOKOLS: Well, I think what was also successful about the Michelle Obama speech today was that it was sort of simultaneously devastating on Donald Trump and also inspirational and uplifting, right? It doesn`t have to be this way, shouldn`t be this way.

I mean, inspirational and uplift is generally what we see at the end of the campaigns from both candidates. Since Trump has gone so much in the opposite direction, it shouldn`t be that difficult for Hillary Clinton to come out with that and to sort of be careful as she`s going to be by nature --

MATTHEWS: I think there`s a vacuum developing where people are saying, yeah, can`t vote for -- people said today on this show that Republicans in the suburbs who are the swing voters now will not go for Hillary. Well, they ought to make an effort at it because women going to vote, ought to have a reason why they do it, not just anti-Trump.

ALTMAN: Well, I that one thing Trump`s campaign is calculating, if they drag this campaign so far down into the mud, it will depress turnout such that they could get lucky and pick up a couple states or two because we know that Trump has electrified the smaller base of core supporters whereas Clinton is sort of banking on a turnout machine.

MATTHEWS: I think she`s got to go positive. I`m not the boss obviously.

Ashley?

PARKER: I think you`re right. We also have to keep in mind if we weren`t talking about Trump right now, what we might be talking about are the --

MATTHEWS: E-mails.

PARKER: The hacked e-mails. So, in a way she may not be going positive but she`s certainly avoiding what would otherwise be a negative story.

MATTHEWS: I haven`t seen anything bad in the e-mails. I`m looking for a good story. I see the worst is this one about the inside message and outside message. That`s not lethal.

PARKER: Sure, sure. And for people who cover politics, that`s sort of how the sausage gets made, but it`s never pretty and it`s never what you want to expose to the wider world.

MATTHEWS: Yes, like people who have made clear that we`re not against all trade with Canada, but we have to say that during the campaign. Remember that guy?

Where we have to say this but we know in the end it`s going to be a deal, or we`re going to find a middle in the end but we can`t say we`ll find a middle because we have to play to the left or the right? Can people see through, Eli? I hope they can by now. Politicians do that.

STOKOLS: Yes, I think so. And I think, you know, at this point, these are the two least popular nominees, candidates we`ve had in history. So, I think Ashley`s right, you know, the candidate that we`re all talking about, that`s the one who`s losing.

And it`s been Trump dominating media coverage of this for better or worse from the beginning when there is -- when there have been these stories that could be damaging for Hillary Clinton, he has stepped on too many of them to count.

MATTHEWS: Did you see Jacob Rascon of our news reporting team today, every time he goes to a rally he meets Trump people, and he never has ever in all the rallies he`s been to found anybody who changed their mind about Trump? They stick with him.

PARKER: It`s so striking. They either, there are three camps there. One is, they don`t believe the media, right. They take his line -- dishonest, crooked media. The second is they don`t care. He`s just acting like an American male. And then the third is they do care, they wish it weren`t that way, but Hillary is just so awful, they`re still sticking with Trump.

MATTHEWS: Whereas Trump keeps giving people new reasons not to like him. Hillary hasn`t given anybody any brand new reasons not to like her. Isn`t that weird?

The Hillary hatred, whatever is formed upon, sits there like this brewing thing, self-brews itself over and over again. I just hate her, why do you hate her again? I just don`t like her.

Oh, Benghazi. What, actually, did she do in Benghazi? What did she do? They can`t tell you.

What did the e-mail thing tell you about her? Well, I can`t -- it`s not clear. She`s a liberal. She`s well-educated.

What else? She`s going to be the next president. I guess that`s enough.

ALTMAN: Yes, I mean, I think it`s the accumulated drip of hearing sort of -- seeing sausage making as revealed in the e-mails, hearing sort of scandals real and imagined over the course of many years. People get tired of it. I think it`s one reason that, you know, as we`ve said, both campaigns want this to be --

MATTHEWS: These are so small, though. Whitewater was nothing, it turned out. Nobody`s ever forgiven the people went after it -- it was nothing. It was nothing. They made no nickel, nothing.

There was no -- the travel-gate, it was about who paid -- who handles press travel. Who cares?

STOKOLS: But it`s not that any of these are that damaging by themselves. Right? Even the e-mails that the FBI investigated, even the Clinton Foundation, there`s this aura of something being amiss or some corruption. Really, it`s the Clintons are secretive, nervous about these things, day try to protect themselves and go too far.

It`s not that anyone of these things on its own -- just like WikiLeaks and e-mails we`re going through, it`s not like you ever find a smoking gun.

MATTHEWS: Like Trump on the other end is brazen. He doesn`t seem to hide his boorish behavior.

ALTMAN: You call that, sort of the primary where he said, I could shoot somebody in the middle of the street and I wouldn`t lose votes. You know, he might not have been half wrong.

MATTHEWS: Well said. Sometimes I`ve been outdone. That was well done. Good recall.

Anyway, thank you, Alex Altman for joining us from "Time" magazine, the home of the total meltdown coverage. Anyway, Ashley Parker of "The New York Times", Eli Stokols, thank you.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us. We`re going to have coverage of President Obama`s speech tonight coming up. There he is.

"ALL IN," Chris gets to cover this. What a great opportunity. That starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Joan Walsh

10447 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: To the bitter end.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

With 29 days to go, Donald Trump is clearly going to tough it out. Facing a lot of defections and calls to drop out over the weekend, Trump`s campaign took an aggressive turn Sunday night, holding a surprise press avail just an hour before the debate with former president Clinton`s accusers. There they are.

They also tried to stage a televised confrontation with the former president, which was averted by the Commission on Presidential Debates itself at the last minute.

Well, in the debate itself, Trump called Hillary Clinton a liar, of course, and he said she had hate in her heart, or does. He called her the devil at one point. He said if he had his way, she`d be in jail. Well, we know all that.

Well, today, a new national poll shows the people know a lot of this, too. It was conducted after the release of that "Access Hollywood" tape. It shows that the bottom could be falling out of the Trump campaign.

Catch these numbers. The latest NBC/"Wall Street Journal" poll finds that Clinton has jumped to an 11-point lead, double digits over Trump, among likely voters in a four-way race. It`s Clinton with 46, Trump with 35, 11 points back, Johnson with just 9 percent.

But Trump today doubled down on his attacks on former president Bill Clinton, threatening to go even further if more damaging tapes on him are made public. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Bill Clinton sexually assaulted innocent women, and Hillary Clinton attacked those women viciously, one of them said more viciously than he attacked them!

If they want to release more tapes saying inappropriate things, we`ll continue to talk about Bill and Hillary Clinton doing inappropriate things. There are so many of them, folks. You probably saw yesterday. We brought four wonderful women to St. Louis...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: ... and honestly, it was both very beautiful and very sad.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Wow. He`s poetic.

On a conference call with Republican lawmakers today, House Speaker Paul Ryan said he would no longer defend nor campaign with Donald Trump. That`s the speaker of the House, a Republican. Instead, Ryan says he plans to focus on down-ballot races. And while he told his members to do what`s best for themselves, he did not rescind his endorsement of Trump. It`s hard to read what he`s actually saying.

Anyway, Trump today lashed out at Ryan, tweeting, "Paul Ryan should spend more time on balancing the budget, jobs and illegal **immigration** and not waste his time on fighting the Republican nominee."

Well, the message from the Trump campaign to the Republican Party itself today couldn`t be clearer, You`re either with us or against us. This is every man for himself, according to the party.

And joining me right now is Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union, Heidi Przybyla, senior politics reporter with "USA Today," and Cornell Belcher is a Democratic pollster and the author of the new book, "A Black Man in The White House."

I want to start with Cornell on these numbers. Are these -- can you tell if these numbers are outliers, an 11-point spread for Hillary now? That`s hard to catch up with.

CORNELL BELCHER, DEMOCRATIC POLLSTER: Well, it`s part of a trend. And when you look at the NBC/"Wall Street Journal" poll and you look at the internals of it, at least from the gender standpoint, Chris, she`s continuing to -- to -- a big advantage among women, but his lead among men is shrinking. And he`s always made this thing about, you know, he`s going to run (ph) numbers (ph) with men. But his lead among men right now are only 2 or 3 points. So it`s continuing to slide and head in the wrong direction. The other interesting...

MATTHEWS: Is he doing any better among men -- just to go with my gender here -- because of the sexual nature of all this stuff that`s come out? Is there -- is he doing even as well as Mitt Romney...

BELCHER: No. No.

MATTHEWS: ... or John McCain?

BELCHER: Well, she -- I mean, she`s within...

MATTHEWS: Among men.

BELCHER: She`s within 2 or 3 points within men. I tell you right now, if Barack Obama was within 2 or 3 points among men, we would have had a Reagan-like landslide in 2012, right? So no, he`s got to do better there.

And also when you look at the internals of the numbers, it`s an interesting number for me because I always look at this because this was a problem for John Kerry. Right now, the majority of his voters right now say they`re voting, you know, against her, not necessarily for him. A plurality of her voters are saying they`re voting for her.

MATTHEWS: OK. Heidi, that explains the strategy, trash the Clintons and keep trashing them to keep his base together, at least for -- through this rough patch, if he`s going to make it.

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, "USA TODAY": Yes. I mean, the Republicans have been trying to warn him all along, though, that the one thing he had to do -- if he wanted to expand off that base last night, he had one goal, and that goal was to come in in light of this videotape and show total contrition. And he didn`t do it. He -- he...

MATTHEWS: Do you think that would have worked? Come on. You really think that would have worked?

PRZYBYLA: It was the only hope of making it work.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: I`m skeptical that it would have worked...

MATTHEWS: No, I wonder, isn`t that...

PRZYBYLA: ... but it was the only way.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... middle of the road, namby-pambies always say, Just apologize again. Everybody`s always apologizing in this business. But the bottom line is the people he would apologize to, the moderate suburbanites -- would they have changed their minds about Trump if they`re watching that video?

MATT SCHLAPP, AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE UNION: I think he handled it in the right way. It`s the first time he`s apologized during this campaign.

MATTHEWS: He did apologize last night? For what?

SCHLAPP: He apologized in the tape before and he reiterated it at the debate and he moved on. And you -- a lot of people in the Democratic Party were really happy...

MATTHEWS: How do you do this? How do you do what you`re doing right now?

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... Baghdad Bob number!

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: Stop! That`s totally below the belt!

MATTHEWS: Did you actually hear him apologize?

SCHLAPP: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Any sentiment? Did you sense a sentiment of shame there with him?

SCHLAPP: I don`t know if it was shame...

MATTHEWS: Or was it like a POW saying, OK, I got my fingers crossed, whatever.

SCHLAPP: As he said -- as he said in his video apology...

MATTHEWS: I didn`t hear any -- any shame from him!

SCHLAPP: He said he needs to be a better man, and I think that`s the right way to take it. I mean, look, both these campaigns are doing the same thing. They`re both attacking the other because their negatives are so high. And we can go through all these polls. The polls are going to be bad for Trump for a while here.

MATTHEWS: Well, (INAUDIBLE) I`m not a huge believer in black and white and all these things (INAUDIBLE) you`re not going to get me on that one because I agree with you.

At her rally today, for example, Hillary Clinton slammed Trump for what he said about women in that tape. She`s not letting him off this, as if it`s all behind him. What do you say, move on? That`s what the left used to say during -- Heidi...

SCHLAPP: Moveon.org.

MATTHEWS: ... during -- not Heidi, during Lewinsky -- sorry about that...

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: ... really help my career.

MATTHEWS: I know.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Total ridiculous slip (INAUDIBLE) let`s go. You`re here. Let`s go. Let`s watch this thing. I`m getting (INAUDIBLE)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Now, I`ll tell you what.

SUPPORTERS: Hillary! Hillary! Hillary!

CLINTON: Donald Trump spent his time attacking when he should have been apologizing!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: Last night, when he was pressed about how he behaves...

SUPPORTERS: Hillary! Hillary! Hillary!

CLINTON: -- he just doubled down on his excuse that it`s just locker room banter. Well, I`ll tell you what. Women and men across America know that is just a really weak excuse for behaving badly and mistreating people!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, in turn, Donald Trump blamed the media, of course, for ignoring Bill Clinton`s accusers, comparing them -- or comparing Clinton to Ted Kennedy and Chappaquiddick. Let`s listen to that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: But the hypocrites in the media don`t want to talk about what Hillary Clinton has done to these victims. They don`t want to talk about what their other political heroes have done to other innocent girls and women, people like Kennedy, Chappaquiddick -- we remember that, driving his car into a pond instead of calling the police, possibly saving her life, in fact, almost definitely being able to save her life. He went home and went to sleep, did not report the incident to the police for 10 hours. Yet he was hailed as a hero.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s about as far back and as deep as you can go in the cutting (ph) world, don`t you think, Matt?

SCHLAPP: Well...

MATTHEWS: Does it get worse than this? We`re going back to 1969.

SCHLAPP: I`m amazed how many people I talk to who are younger than me who don`t even know Bill Clinton was impeached. It`s amazing how a lot of people, a lot of millennials -- we all praise them, but they don`t -- they`re not that political, always, and they don`t know what`s happened. And look, this is how it was...

MATTHEWS: How`d it happen -- how`d it happen that Bill Clinton gets impeached, the only president besides Andrew Johnson to get impeached...

SCHLAPP: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Is it because they think he was innocent, that the Republican charge...

(CROSSTALK)

BELCHER: It`s called an economic boom. It`s called low unemployment and growing wages.

SCHLAPP: Don`t be dismissive to the women he abused.

BELCHER: I`m not being dismissive...

SCHLAPP: He did terrible things!

BELCHER: Listen, we`re not going to have a conversation about him abusing women, when...

SCHLAPP: Yes, we are. That`s what we`re talking about.

BELCHER: Well, to move away from what Trump has been doing. Look, I`ve got to tell you, not -- even in a partial way...

MATTHEWS: Can`t we just straighten this out? I`m not sure what you meant there because I believe what Cornell -- and I think it has to be very carefully stated for interests of decency and respect for women and misbehavior when you see it in either party.

And that is that I think people judge presidents -- say Watergate, for example -- Watergate was really a function not so much of political misbehavior, which there was, clearly breaking in and covering it up, but that stuff has gone on before. It`s was we were in terrible economic times, people were so angry -- they were so angry, they wanted to blame Nixon a lot. They really did -- they threw...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: But it was also mitigated. A lot of those...

BELCHER: Well, Clinton...

MATTHEWS: They weren`t that angry at Clinton because the economy was doing well.

(CROSSTALK)

BELCHER: He won an election around some of that. So the voters made a decision about this.

MATTHEWS: They thought the Republicans overdid it. That`s right.

BELCHER: Well...

MATTHEWS: If they had censured him and moved on, I think they...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: But he did something serious. That`s all I`m saying, is whether you`re impeached or censured or whatnot...

MATTHEWS: What did Clinton do?

SCHLAPP: What he did...

MATTHEWS: What did he do wrong?

SCHLAPP: Lied under oath...

MATTHEWS: OK.

SCHLAPP: ... about attacking Paula Jones.

MATTHEWS: You`re looking incredulous.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: I just don`t...

SCHLAPP: Is it OK to lie (INAUDIBLE)

PRZYBYLA: No! But why is it OK to go along with some of the things that Donald Trump has said, when what Bill Clinton did was so offensive that it even led to the investigation and led to his impeachment? So I just think there is a certain reckoning that people in the party, you know...

MATTHEWS: OK, here`s what...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: First of all...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I believe that every time Hillary Clinton gets attacked for this -- and I`ve been through this in so many ways. Every time Hillary Clinton gets attacked on that stuff, it`s very hard to assign blame to her. Now, you can argue that she helped in some way to cover up, but you have to prove that. And nobody ever proves that. They`ve never proved that she had something to do with covering up Bill Clinton`s misbehavior...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Just a minute. Let`s get the facts straight. I believe that she called Juanita Broaddrick...

SCHLAPP: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: ... and said, Thank you for your support. She didn`t threaten her.

SCHLAPP: That`s not what Juanita says. Juanita says that she threatened her.

MATTHEWS: With what? With what?

SCHLAPP: With the fact that if she went public against her husband, there would be repercussions.

BELCHER: I got to tell you...

SCHLAPP: That`s a fact.

PRZYBYLA: There`s a lot of allegations...

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: Well, it`s a fact that she made an allegation.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: ... the fact that she made an allegation, just like there`s a lot of allegations against Trump. Bottom line is, Bill Clinton`s not on the ballot.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: He`s not on the ballot.

(CROSSTALK)

BELCHER: I don`t know how you win with this. I mean, listen, all due respect to you, but how do you win with this? How do you win talking about Bill Clinton over a decade...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: We`ve been through this before. In 1998, the Republicans threw the book at Bill Clinton, and they went through fantastic advantages in the next election in `98.

SCHLAPP: Right.

MATTHEWS: Then Hillary Clinton runs for the Senate in New York, walks into a state she hadn`t been living in...

SCHLAPP: It is New York.

MATTHEWS: ... becomes United States senator. Well, you can`t just throw these little things out in the...

SCHLAPP: But it is New York.

MATTHEWS: She won!

SCHLAPP: Yes, she did.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: ... hundreds of thousands of dollars in research on what -- on Hillary Clinton before because they knew she was going to run. And the thing that they learned from that hundreds of thousands of dollars of research is the one thing you didn`t want to go after her on was this Bill Clinton stuff because it brought out great...

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: I don`t understand that this is where we are...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It`s the right kind of debate, and you let each person talk.

SCHLAPP: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Let`s do it -- let`s give an example to all debate moderators now, right?

SCHLAPP: Can I go?

MATTHEWS: Is this going to be the issue that brings Donald Trump back to life?

SCHLAPP: No. Donald Trump can only win if he talks about the economy...

MATTHEWS: OK.

SCHLAPP: ... defeating terrorism and upending Washington.

MATTHEWS: Heidi, is this within the bounds of a reasonable public discussion?

PRZYBYLA: Not...

MATTHEWS: Talking about Hillary?

PRZYBYLA: Not a few weeks before the -- I think the American voters would not think that this is what they want to hear, the discussion they want to be having...

SCHLAPP: On either side.

PRZYBYLA: ... (INAUDIBLE) before the election on either side.

MATTHEWS: You can`t resist, can you. You can`t resist, can you.

(LAUGHTER)

SCHLAPP: I`m sorry.

MATTHEWS: Cornell?

BELCHER: No! I mean, there`s not -- listen, there`s not a woman -- a white woman, college-educated, in the Philadelphia suburbs who he needs to win who`s going to say, You know what, you`re right on this and I`m going to vote for you because of this. There`s not one...

MATTHEWS: Why won`t -- just explain to me because I think you`re right, but why are you right?

BELCHER: Because that`s not their issue. They`ve mitigated (ph) that. Guess what? They voted for Bill Clinton. They`re concerned about their pocketbook issues and they`re concerned about gender equity issues. They`re not concerned about relitigating Bill Clinton from over a decade ago.

MATTHEWS: Here`s an anthropological -- I just interrupted you. Here`s an anthropological question.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Bill Clinton`s one of the most popular people in the world. I mean, Carville says it all the time, but he`s a total supporter, but James Carville last night, he kept saying it over and over again. But he is.

I`ve been around the -- I`ve been in places like Ireland with him. He`s loved! Why is he loved despite the public record of his misbehavior? Whether it`s all true or some of it`s true or a third of it`s true, something`s there.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Why does that not hurt Bill Clinton in the public mind?

BELCHER: It`s two-part. It`s partly because of who Bill Clinton is as a politician, that he was able to do what neither Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton did last night on the debate stage, which is to make a really genuine, heartfelt connection with voters.

And he came -- Bill Clinton is the American dream. He came from nothing to become -- to hold the highest office in the land. And I think, also, secondly, people have fond memories of a better time in terms of the economy, as well. I mean, the 1990s were undoubtedly -- you know, indisputably a growth era for people.

MATTHEWS: I think it also...

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: ... blue collar voters.

MATTHEWS: He kept coming back. People love that sort of -- it`s sort of a Protestant thing, I guess, this idea of we all sin, we all fail, we all ask for forgiveness. We all keep coming back. It`s Catholic, too.

And I`m just thinking that the one thing last night that got to me -- I am a complete sentimentalist about politics, when something wonderful happens. I thought what she said about the kids, the Trump kids, was nice. But what he said about her was so fundamental, so to the heart of politics -- the fighter.

I don`t think Donald Trump could say something better about anybody than they`re fighters.

PRZYBYLA: That`s a good (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: It just blew me away. It was almost what you say when you`ve lost, it`s like, I got to hand it to the person who beat me. What a fighter.

Cornell, your thoughts.

BELCHER: But the point is...

MATTHEWS: I guess you`re not as sentimental as I am about -- when you say something so profoundly good about your opponent after you`ve been sort of, you know, potty mouth through most of the last couple days, and out of this potty mouth comes this -- really, this wonderful accolade...

BELCHER: But that`s a difference. And going back to Bill Clinton -- look, Bill Clinton made that mistake, but that`s not what defines Bill Clinton. That mistake doesn`t define Bill Clinton got millions and millions of Americans.

MATTHEWS: What mistake are you talking about?

BELCHER: What he got impeached for, for lying (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: You think that`s his only mistake in that department?

BELCHER: Well -- well, I`m not...

(LAUGHTER)

BELCHER: But that`s not all that sort of defines him. There is little other than sort of scandal and demagoguery that defines Donald Trump.

SCHLAPP: Oh, gosh! You just can`t have it that way. It`s got to work both ways. Give grace to both people. When they`ve done stupid things and they`ve said terrible things...

MATTHEWS: OK...

SCHLAPP: ... and done terrible things to women...

(CROSSTALK)

BELCHER: I don`t think it`s equal.

(CROSSTALK)

BELCHER: I don`t think it`s anywhere equal to sort of what Bill Clinton has done with his life...

SCHLAPP: Wow.

BELCHER: ... and what Donald Trump has done with his life.

MATTHEWS: I want to ask everybody the same question (INAUDIBLE) answer, or no answer. When we elect our president, we don`t just elect the head of government, like a prime minister. We elect the president, who is basically a democratically elected monarch, in a sense, because they represent the person of the country. You`re not just there (ph). That`s why we give them a White House. That`s why we respect the first family and first and the kids because it represents our country.

Does everything matter, or just their public policy positions? Does all this stuff matter?

SCHLAPP: No, I think (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: So what happens on the bus matters?

SCHLAPP: It plays into the equation.

MATTHEWS: OK. Does everything matter, Bill Clinton`s behavior in and out of his marriage? It all matters.

PRZYBYLA: It matters. We`ve got to assign weight. And what matters most is what they`re going to do for you, what they`re going to do for the American people.

MATTHEWS: So it`s a small part of what...

PRZYBYLA: I didn`t say small.

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: But the more important part...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Does it matter? Does it all matter...

(CROSSTALK)

BELCHER: Everything matters when you`re running for president.

MATTHEWS: That`s what I think. I think it`s like, unlike being a senator or a congressman, and that`s why the inspection and the terrible digging and the oppo research is so intense.

And we`re going to get to this at the end of the show. Trump should have known this was coming. He should have known somebody knew about that tape. He should have made more friends on his way up because...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You know, don`t you, what I`m going to say.

SCHLAPP: Yes.

MATTHEWS: If you`re not nice to people on your way up, they`re going to kill you on your way down. Anyway, Matt Schlapp -- an old show biz thing - - Heidi Przybyla -- interesting positions you`re taking here.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Cornell, you`re the pro. Thank you. Matt Schlapp, you`re the - - you`re to the bitter end, until the last dog dies!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Coming up -- last night, Trump fired up his base and did enough to stop the bleeding, I think, and Clinton showed she can withstand Trump`s worst attacks. She was charming. She was happy, even when confronted with Bill Clinton`s accusers. But with a month to go before the election -- it is a month after tomorrow -- the race is very much Hillary Clinton`s to lose. Wait until you -- well, look at these numbers.

Plus, many women who watched last night`s debate saw Trump engaging in the worst sort of gender politics. He attacked Hillary Clinton for her husband`s infidelity, threatened to put her in jail, and for some, Trump`s actions fit into a larger pattern of punishing women. We just talked about that. Cornell talked about those suburban women and how they`re going to react to this punishing ordeal that Hillary Clinton`s been going through here.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, today`s NBC New York (sic)/"Wall Street Journal" poll shows that more Americans now say they would prefer Congress to be controlled by Democrats. Look at that number there! That`s more than at any time since 2013 and the government shutdown back then. That`s 49 percent who favor Democratic control to 42 percent who say they`d rather Republicans remain in control. That`s a big number, maybe not enough to give the House to the Democrats.

We`ll be right back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Donald Trump scored points last night among his base of supporters, who cheered on his attacks against Hillary Clinton. But by throwing out the red meat and hammering Clinton, Trump also, well, did he expand the pool of support he needs to win the White House? Did he win the moderate Republicans?

Clinton seemed unfazed by Trump`s attacks the whole night, and interruptions didn`t bother her, and she never took the bait when he tried to bait her, instead choosing to ignore the Republican nominee, laugh at him a lot, and, for the most part, pivoting to her positions on the issues.

Let`s watch her tactic here.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ANDERSON COOPER, MODERATOR: Please allow her to respond. She didn`t talk while you talked.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Yes, that`s true, I didn`t.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Because you have nothing to say.

CLINTON: I didn`t in the first debate, and I`m going to try not to in this debate, because I would like to get to the questions that the people have brought here tonight to talk to us about.

TRUMP: And get off this question.

CLINTON: OK, Donald, I know you`re into big diversion tonight, anything to avoid talking about your campaign and the way it`s exploding and the way Republicans are leaving you.

But let`s at least focus...

TRUMP: Let`s see what happens...

(CROSSTALK)

COOPER: Allow her to respond.

TRUMP: Let`s see what happens.

CLINTON: But let`s at least focus on some of the issues that people care about tonight. Let`s get to their questions.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, according to a CNN/ORC instant poll of debate watchers, Hillary Clinton won the debate, beating Donald Trump 57 percent to 34 percent.

Well, Trump`s performance has been generally received as an improvement from the first debate, but did he pick up new voters? Did he win over female swing voters in places like the Philadelphia suburbs, like we talked about a moment ago? Or did he just stop the bleeding over the fallout from his lewd comments about his treatment of women?

Well, Joan Walsh is with "The Nation" and also an MSNBC analyst.

Joan, thank you for joining us.

And Steve Cortes is an adviser to the Trump campaign.

I want to start with Steve about this, because I sort of agree with the way that phrase, that leading question we opened with phrased it. I think he stopped the bleeding. I think he showed he was alive and a fighter. All the rough language, and I think -- well, I would say bad manners, of course, continue.

But I thought he showed he was alive and not dead, which is the most important thing he had to do tonight. Your thoughts? I don`t think he picked up moderates or moved into the center politically or found people that didn`t like him before are going to like him now. I think he was Donald Trump last night. Your thoughts?

STEVE CORTES, TRUMP SURROGATE: Well, I would like to think, Chris, that he did both, but the first, most important task -- you`re exactly right -- was triage, was, we had to stop the bleeding.

We had a bad Friday, bad Saturday. But you know what? On Sunday, he showed us that he is, indeed, a fighter. I know you have complimented him or he complimented Hillary Clinton on being a fighter. He showed that he is a fighter. He got off the mat and he roared back to life.

And so I think that`s number one, is, we stopped the bleeding. Number two now is, we have to win over those moderate voters, those undecided voters that you`re talking about. I think he started to make that case. And I think what he did forcefully was make the case that Hillary Clinton is unfit to be the president of the United States.

And he did so with humor, he did so with force, and with examples. He brought up all the things that he didn`t bring up in the first debate that a lot of supporters like us wanted him to, things like Benghazi, like the e-mails, like the Clinton Foundation. So, I think it was a forceful indictment.

He did stop the bleeding, and we are going to move forward from here in convincing unconvinced voters.

MATTHEWS: You know, Joan, I have been following debates forever, and I like certain tactics in certain situations. Hillary Clinton was brilliant last night. She did exactly what she had to do, which is not to lose.

And I thought -- it reminded me just now, because somebody brought up the word -- the name Ted Kennedy. I don`t like the way it was brought up, but it was brought up. When he was first running for the Senate back in -- he was just barely 30 years old, and he was up against Eddie McCormack, who was a tough opponent.

And he went after him, Eddie McCormack, and said, if your name was Edward Moore, you wouldn`t be here. It`s only your name Kennedy that got you here.

Anybody else would have attacked back. Teddy was told, don`t attack back. People will feel for you. They will understand that you`re not attacking back, and you are going to win.

Hillary last night knew the guy was going to throw the kitchen sink at her. He was going to use all the deplorable language he could come up with. And Hillary Clinton never -- I know I shouldn`t, as a male, talk about a woman`s appearance, but it was spectacular last night.

She was -- she looked great. She spoke incredibly confidently. Everything about her was poised. Everything about her was presidential. And she laughed.

I mean, Churchill used to say, I like people who can grin when they fight. She grinned.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: She grinned like Davy Crockett at this guy, like a bear. You know, she laughed at him.

JOAN WALSH, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Right.

MATTHEWS: It must have driven Trump crazy.

WALSH: I`m sure it did.

MATTHEWS: And, therefore, I think it was a spectacular performance by her, even though Trump probably saved himself a couple more weeks in this candidacy.

Your thoughts? Your -- take over here.

WALSH: Well, sure.

I think that, right now, Chris, it`s not really only a matter of our opinion, did he win, did she win, did he stop the bleeding? Yes, he got a tourniquet, but he didn`t stop the bleeding. I think we have got some empirical evidence right now that shows who did what.

And he needed to do two things. He needed to kind of bring back some Republican leadership, some Republican officeholders, some of those candidates who fled there him. And he needed to bring in women. As you and Steve, I think, and I all agree, he needs to do that.

He did neither. We know, today, it`s only gotten worse. Paul Ryan came out and said, it`s every man for himself. I`m not going to campaign for him or with him, and you should all go vote your conscience, as Ted Cruz once said.

And then that CNN poll you talked about, the more -- even more interesting thing is, men actually thought Hillary Clinton won by about 10 points. Women thought she won by 34 points.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

WALSH: So, he did not convince one, in my opinion, moderate Republican woman, our classic woman in the Philadelphia suburbs who might have been on the fence. I don`t believe he brought anyone to his side with that stalking around, stalking her, looking menacing behind her, and humiliating her, or trying to, because he didn`t do it, with her husband -- with these women that have made these allegations against her husband.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Let`s talk about this -- I`m sorry to interrupt, but this is what...

WALSH: Go ahead.

MATTHEWS: I want a comment from Steve.

I could -- every time -- it`s almost like what Al Gore did. He -- why is Trump lining up behind her every time she`s speaking? It seems something out of "The Da Vinci Code." I couldn`t get it.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Why was he there, Steve, behind her? There he is.

CORTES: Look, you can put a camera anywhere you want and get that kind of angle.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, but watch him. He walks with her. He walks with her.

WALSH: He does, Steve. He does.

CORTES: Look, I think you`re really trying to read too much into that.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Don`t you know when somebody`s standing behind you? Can`t you sense the presence of a person right -- it`s like he wanted to intimidate - - why was he standing right behind her? It`s a simple question. You say it didn`t look that way. Well, we have got pictures to show it.

CORTES: No, my point is, look -- and the mainstream media has done this throughout the campaign to us.

MATTHEWS: Oh, here we go. I`m the mainstream media. One thing I`m not is mainstream media.

CORTES: Whatever Donald Trump does, we attach the most nefarious intention.

MATTHEWS: OK.

CORTES: He was standing where he was standing.

MATTHEWS: I`m asking you, why was he doing it?

CORTES: He was standing where he was standing.

I would say this too. Regarding the officeholders, which Joan mentioned, regarding Speaker Ryan and other Republican officeholders, when I was in junior high, my favorite book was "The Outsiders." And I would say, politically, we are the outsiders in this Trump movement.

MATTHEWS: Yes. That`s for sure.

CORTES: We are the Greasers.

MATTHEWS: The numbers show that.

CORTES: And Washington, D.C. -- Washington, D.C., they`re the Socs.

But guess what? The hero of that book ends up being the Greasers. And we`re going to be the heroes, I think, of this story, too, because most Americans, particularly working-class Americans who have not participated in this very sluggish economy, they are sick and tired of a rigged, crony capitalist system in Washington, D.C., that exists only for its own benefit.

WALSH: Steve...

MATTHEWS: OK.

CORTES: And what Donald Trump did yesterday is show those people that he is a fighter for them against Hillary Clinton, against the Washington establishment, against the media.

WALSH: Steve, I have got to say, though...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Joan`s turn. Joan`s turn.

WALSH: Whenever we use the term working class, we have really got to throw in there white working class, because the black and Latino and Asian working class is not supporting Donald Trump.

I`m not going to say it`s about race or racism, but we really need to be careful with that modifier, because a lot of working people, a lot of people who might be angry about their taxes or the cost of living or that they haven`t got an raise in a few years, those people of color are with her.

The people -- the white people tend to be with him. And we need, when this race is over, to talk about why that was, because I personally think this race is over here. But we`re going to have a lot of time in November, December, January to talk about how we got so bifurcated in this country that we can`t use the term working class anymore.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, that`s good. I have got end to now.

I just want to ask you both. I love final questions, Steve, you first.

Why`d they shake hands at the end of the debate, but not at the beginning?

(LAUGHTER)

CORTES: I don`t know. Do you have an idea?

MATTHEWS: OK, Joan, do you have a theory?

I think because Trump wanted to shake hands at the end. Something -- I think he thought he had a good close last night. And, by the way, Jerry Seib in "The Wall Street Journal" front page has it right. I think he came on not so great. By the end of the second debate last night, he knew how to debate a lot better than he did. He was much better by the end.

CORTES: He was getting stronger as it came -- as he went along, for sure.

MATTHEWS: I think that`s why he was feeling better about shaking hands.

WALSH: I agree.

MATTHEWS: I think -- you all agree.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I agree. And I will. I never -- I don`t think I have ever said anything nice about him on your show, Chris.

But I will say, if he campaigned like that man we saw in the last minute who gave her credit for her strength, if he could treat her as an equal and campaign eye to eye with her and say, we disagree, he would be running a much better campaign. It would be a lot closer.

But he hasn`t. But I will say, that last moment was impressive. And the handshake was all about cementing that feeling.

MATTHEWS: Joan, you`re a fighter.

(LAUGHTER)

WALSH: I am. It`s true.

MATTHEWS: Everybody likes being a fighter.

Steve, you want to be a fighter too.

WALSH: He`s a fighter.

MATTHEWS: Who doesn`t respect that in this country? We`re a country of fighters.

Thank you so much, Joan Walsh. A rare moment of common ground. Even Steve is silenced in his fervency here.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Up next...

CORTES: I`m not silenced. I thought we were done.

MATTHEWS: OK. Well, you are. Thank you.

What women saw from Trump last night on the debate stage, for some, it was the latest example of a pattern of -- here`s his word, not mine -- punishing women.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Donald Trump entered yesterday`s debate, last night`s debate, with the Herculean task of turning his race, this race around, as he often does. He`s down and nearly out, and went on the attack trying to punish Hillary last night, something he`s done before.

Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Do you believe in punishment for abortion, yes or no, as a principle?

TRUMP: The answer is that there has to be some form of punishment.

MATTHEWS: For the woman?

TRUMP: Yes, there has to be some form.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Yes.

Anyway, last night, he threw the kitchen sink at Hillary Clinton.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: WikiLeaks, that just came out, and she lied. Bernie Sanders, between superdelegates and Debbie Wasserman Schultz, he never had a chance. And I was so surprised to see him sign on with the devil. She has tremendous hate in her heart.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Tremendous...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I have never seen anything like this.

Anyway, after months of hearing supporters demand that he lock her up, he made good on that threat and delivered this message straight to Hillary Clinton`s face.

Watch this last night.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: It`s just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge of the law in our country.

TRUMP: Because you`d be in jail.

MARTHA RADDATZ, MODERATOR: Secretary Clinton...

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: This is like the taste of turkey the day after Thanksgiving. It`s so unbelievable the second day.

And it`s not like -- last night, it was all so much, but here we`re getting pieces of it. I have never heard politicians talk like that.

It was clear Donald Trump went on the defensive, and he was looking to land some punishing blows as well. And it`s not -- definitely not the first time. He`s publicly scolded the former Miss Universe Alicia Machado for gaining weight. There he is. Look, he was putting this on television, showing her workout to get her weight down, all that, and, by the way, calling her Miss Piggy.

Here we go.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: At one point, she was actually an eating machine. She was. Someone said, gee, that`s not a very nice thing to say, but it`s true. I mean, she gained a tremendous amount of weight, but now she`s losing it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Oh, my God.

Anyway, for more, I`m joined by Dana Loesch and White House correspondent for American Urban Radio Networks, can I progressive, April Ryan, since I said conservative. I think we ought to balance this out.

Do you mind that?

APRIL RYAN, AMERICAN URBAN RADIO NETWORKS: You can do whatever you want to do.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, no, I`m just trying to get it straight here.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Dana, I want to keep this honest. Why we always do this in this business, that every conservative gets tagged like a wild animal with some tag that says conservative on them? Everybody gets to be a free-thinking intellectual.

DANA LOESCH, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST: Right.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, let me ask you this.

What do you think about these -- putting it all together? Women should be punished for endorsing was his impulsive answer with me. This thing about, if you gain an extra 10 pounds, I`m going to put you on television and show you sweating it off. Some of the treatment he`s had towards, oh, Rosie O`Donnell, some of this other public -- does it add up to you or not, Dana?

LOESCH: In terms of -- I think these are all such incredibly different issues. I`m not quite sure you can put it all in the same equation together.

Look, I have been incredibly critical of every particular candidate. And I have caught H.E. double hockey sticks for it too, Chris.

And I`ll tell you say this. Like, with regards to the abortion question, because I thought that was a good discussion that you and he had, granted, as somebody who is pro-life, I don`t ever want to punish a woman for a really heartbreaking and a heart-wrenching decision.

I mean, if anything, you want to make it known that you`re there for a woman and that you`re there to help out, you`re there to support, you`re there to help with adoption, you`re there to help with whatever different means. I know there were a lot of groups that had responses to that who have been in the trenches on this for a long time.

With regards to Alicia Machado and the whole Miss Universe thing, I have never owned a corporate beauty pageant, but, Chris, I will say this. If you are going to participate in a corporate beauty pageant, you have to realize that, whether you like it or not, looks are part of the package.

You`re signing up and you`re showcasing your fitness. You`re showcasing your beauty. You get scholarship money. You get to travel -- you around the world. It`s like your job for that particular year. There are athletes who have to sign fitness -- they have fitness clauses in their contracts. People who are actresses and actors.

MATTHEWS: Yes, but that`s not the issue. No one denies...

LOESCH: That all goes into it. It`s part of the package.

MATTHEWS: No. Like, nobody denies that looks are in many cases the chief element in a beauty contest, whether it`s wrong -- sometimes, with the Miss America, they throw in talent and all this. But, in the end, it`s often a very attractive person.

LOESCH: Right.

MATTHEWS: So, here it is. But putting her into a situation where there`s cameras on her sweating it off, did that show a certain attitude about how to deal with a situation that isn`t -- that is a professional public situation? But, yes, let`s put her on the carpet down there, get her on the ground and make her sweat it off on camera.

Was that considerate? How would you call that?

LOESCH: I don`t know what I would call it. I would call it, why are we talking about a 20-year-old issue, because she didn`t get this title in like 1996?

MATTHEWS: Well, because the guy`s never had a political job in his life, and all we have is what he`s done in business.

(CROSSTALK)

LOESCH: ... in high school, then, Chris. Come on.

MATTHEWS: All we have is what he`s done in business. What he`s done in business, that`s all we got.

April, that`s all we got on this guy.

LOESCH: Right.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He has never done anything, passed a bill, governed a state, been a mayor. All we have are his public stuff and his tapes.

Your thoughts?

RYAN: His buildings with gold tone that glisten brightly in New York.

It`s -- it`s -- we need to see this. We need to know this. We need to know the Billy Bush conversations. We need to know about this -- Alicia Machado. We need to know more about what he said in the fight with Rosie O`Donnell.

We need to know more about what he thinks, especially when it comes to women, and what he said to Megyn Kelly. Women are a key piece of this society, of the economy. They`re the biggest voting bloc.

And for him to go against them the way he has -- I mean, even talking to you, he was basically going down a line that both political parties in this nation have been trying to walk carefully. He basically tried to say it was criminal for a woman to have an abortion. Who would be -- where would the onus fall? Will it be the doctor and the woman or the woman?

I mean, he`s going down a very dangerous road when it comes to women. He is not going to win talking like this and doing this.

MATTHEWS: OK, I want to go back to get the thinking here of Dana.

What did you think of him when he went after the looks of Carly Fiorina, one of his opponents for president? Going after her looks, what did you make of that? Didn`t that jump at you, like, people don`t do that?

LOESCH: Oh, at the time, I thought -- yes. Well, at the time, during the primary debate, I thought I`m not quite sure what this has to do with the - - with considering who`s going to end up as...

MATTHEWS: He`s running for president.

LOESCH: ... the Republican nominee. Yes.

MATTHEWS: Well, why do you think -- what does it tell you about him that he would knock somebody`s looks just because -- how they were born, how God made them.

What an amazing thing to attack. I mean, why would you attack somebody because of their looks? Why would anybody do that, if you think about it?

RYAN: It`s called self-esteem issues.

LOESCH: Well...

(LAUGHTER)

LOESCH: No, I said at the time, I had no idea why that would even be brought up in a discussion...

MATTHEWS: He brought it up.

LOESCH: ... during the Republican primary.

I know, that`s what I said, on radio and TV at the time, and I even wrote something about it over on my website. I`m not even quite sure why that`s even a consideration or even why that was even a talking point in the primary. But, look -- I mean, Chris, we`re here --

MATTHEWS: What language are you using here? It wasn`t a talking point. It was something he said on stage in the heat of a debate, and that was his reaction --

LOESCH: Yes, I don`t know why. If you`re expecting me to own or defend any of these comments, I`m not going to.

MATTHEWS: I`m trying to figure out what you think of them.

LOESCH: I told you, it had no place in a primary discussion, or any kind of a discussion, why you would go after somebody`s look. He didn`t like it when people were criticizing his wife, other women don`t like it if you go after their looks or you criticize them. I mean, it`s an open and shut kind of case.

But we just had the second general debate last night, so why are we re- litigating what happened during the primary?

APRIL RYAN, NATIONAL URBAN RADIO NETWORK: Because he did it. He started it. He`s attacking women. He`s bringing out these women. He`s --

MATTHEWS: He called her the devil last night.

RYAN: Her --

MATTHEWS: He called a candidate for president --

(CROSSTALK)

LOESCH: She called his supporters deplorables.

RYAN: But wait a minute, wait a minute, he was caught on tape, and we found out about this tape just a couple of days ago, and then to help bolster his confidence, he`s got to find something on someone else that happened 20 or 30 years ago and try to get his confidence, and put them on the stage, basically using those women, making them objects and products of people -- so people can look and say, oh, those poor women, and take it off -- the onus off of him.

So, there is an intrinsic problem that`s common sense that we`re dealing, as we`re looking at this Republican presidential nominee.

MATTHEWS: I think he`s down 36 points right now among suburban women. So it`s not like --

RYAN: Suburban white women or --

MATTHWES: I guess that`s our code, like, inner city, suburban. These words are used interchangeably. Perhaps not appropriate.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Why is that funny?

LOESCH: The code word, suburban, urban --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Because we try not to speak entirely in ethnic terms. That`s why. That`s why we do it.

LOESCH: Both candidates have issues.

MATTHEWS: OK. Thank you.

LOESCH: You`re not going to find anybody that`s going to defend or own anything that was in the Billy Bush -- in the "Access Hollywood" takes. But here`s the thing --

RYAN: Were you offended last night? Were you offended last night, as a woman? Were you offended last night as a woman?

LOESCH: About what? About the debate? What was there to be offended about during the debate last night?

RYAN: Let me just say this. African-American Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, who is a Democrat. She was one of the former heads of a national sorority, Delta Sigma Theta, said she could not sleep last night. She woke up in the middle of the night because she was so distraught about how she -- Hillary Clinton was attacked, how women were paraded for the benefit of Donald Trump. I`m just asking, what did you feel?

LOESCH: At the debate? I don`t -- I don`t think that Hillary Clinton was bullied at the debate last night. I don`t think that there was an attack on women during the debate last night.

RYAN: To say for the first time ever --

(CROSSTALK)

LOESCH: I don`t think that she`s going to be bullied be someone. She`s never been bullied in her career.

MATTHEWS: OK.

RYAN: This is the first time ever a woman is a nominee and for a man to say that he would put the female nominee in jail if she -- if he is elected president, that`s a whole different --

LOESCH: When are we going to stop playing the "war on women" card? We`ve got a female nominee, that`s great. I think that in a certain way disproves the war on women. We`ve got to stop with it.

RYAN: We have to agree to disagree. But it was a problem last night.

MATTHEWS: Well, there`s another side to yelling, "lock her up", too. They`re not serenading this.

Anyway, thank you, Dana Loesch, for coming on, and, April Ryan, thank you.

LOESCH: Thank you, Chris.

MATTHEWS: Up next, with Paul Ryan cutting Trump lose, and he sure did today, and the bottom falling out of the Trump numbers, the HARDBALL roundtable is coming here to tell us where things are going from here.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are holding the competing rallies right now. Trump`s in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, while Clinton`s in Columbus, Ohio.

Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Anyway, the Republican Party seems on the verge of open civil war tonight over its presidential nominee, with Speaker Paul Ryan now saying he will no longer defend Donald Trump nor show up with him in any situation for politics. It comes after dozens of congressional Republicans abandoned their nominee during the most tumultuous weekend in Trump`s campaign, as of yet.

Well, Donald Trump`s debate performance last night only created more uncertainty. How does the Republican Party navigate the final four weeks of this campaign?

I`m joined with tonight`s roundtable. Molly Ball is a staff writer for "The Atlantic". Andrew Sullivan is contributing editor for "New York" magazine, and Eli Stokols is a reporter for "Politico".

And so, I guess the question is, here are we going from here, Eli? We`re in the stretch.

ELI STOKOLS, POLITICO: Straight to the bottom. I think there`s liberation for Donald Trump after a two-week freefall, and after the scandal he`s been in and seeing the erosion of support over the weekend. There`s liberation. He`s free of a lot of these burdens. I mean, not like he was ever --

MATTHEWS: Free because he knows he can`t win?

STOKOLS: But now, he`s playing the Bill Clinton card. I think that`s part of it. But I think he`s in the bunker with people -- I mean, you saw a very Breitbart-y debate last night, right? And so, he`s in this bunker right now, and when he`s attacked, he attacks back, and I think what`s that we`re going to see.

MATTHEWS: Breitbart, Bannon --

STOKOLS: Yes, right-wing, yes, alt-right, fringe, I mean, you know, conspiracy theory stuff. And that`s what we`re going to see. He says if she wants to go there and there are more tapes released, I`ll just keep bringing up, you know, Juanita Broaddrick, Paula Jones --

MATTHEWS: This could go back to the Clinton chronicles. We could be next with the murder charges.

ANDREW SULLIVAN, NEW YORK MAGAZINE: Isn`t this the worst for the Republican Party? I mean --

MATTHEWS: I don`t think we`ve ever seen a guy realize unless he throws everything at the opponent, he doesn`t have a prayer of surviving with dignity. This is -- I think this is Trump`s effort to maintain some dignity in defeat. I don`t think this is a win with.

SULLIVAN: He needs to attack. When he`s feeling vulnerable, the only way -- he can`t acknowledge error. He can`t be calm and sit and reflect. He has to double down and increase the attacks on the other person.

For more, it seems like the Republican Party has the worst of all possible worlds. If he was really flaming out last night, then Pence could step in or there could be some moment in which they could fix this. But last night what he did was really shore up his base, really well. I mean, if you`re for Trump, last night must have felt, you know, euphoric. Because all those things you`ve always wanted to say to her face, finally --

MATTHEWS: Your face, I -- anger in your face right now, you`re simulating -- you`re simulating it, it`s the hatred of Hillary, the hatred of Bill, the hatred of the Democratic and Republican establishment, the hatred of all the cultural leaders. You see them. And here`s a guy just throwing crap at them for an hour and a half.

SULLIVAN: And it must be -- if you despise the elites in this country, if you despise the moderators in the media, if you despise Republicans, this was fantastic for them. He really solidified his base. But for those swing voters and for the Republicans in those swing seats, this is a nightmare.

MATTHEWS: Charlie Dent from Lehigh Valley, when I heard him, I go, I know what`s going on. He`s the bellwether. That is the swing part of Pennsylvania, which is the key state that Trump needs to win with. And it`s not a good sign that he dropped off yesterday.

MOLLY BALL, THE ATLANTIC: Well, the problem is that not only is Trump ginning up the base at the expense of all of the potential persuadable voters, he`s ginning them up against the establishment. He`s practically encouraging Republican-based voters to vote against the down-ticket Republicans.

MATTHEWS: Is he forming a new political party?

BALL: I have no idea. I have a firm policy of never predicting what Donald Trump is going to do next.

MATTHEWS: I can tell you, it could be a media campaign. It could be a media empire. It could be something. But it`s not to join the Republican Party.

BALL: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: You`re giving me an incredibly profound look.

The roundtable is sticking with us. And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the hardball roundtable.

And, Eli, tell me something I don`t know.

STOKOLS: We know that Trump has slid. The private polling tells us that a lot of Senate candidates, Republican Senate candidates, may as well be finished. I mean, there are a lot of consultants who think that the Senate majority is gone and they are looking at Missouri as a race that --

MATTHEWS: Roy Blunt.

STOKOLS: -- they may be about to lose, as well as Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and a lot of other ones. Yes, I mean, it`s crazy.

MATTHEWS: I agree with you. Every close race could go Democrats.

Yours?

SULLIVAN: Straw in the wind, the pound on the international market is crumpling. Brexit, as a precursor to Trump, is ruining their economy and their future. Maybe that will be brought to bear before this election is over.

MATTHEWS: Any chance of another vote over there in Britain?

SULLIVAN: I don`t think so right now.

MATTHEWS: OK.

SULLIVAN: I have a piece in our new print issue, a profile of one of the dear broken hearted conservatives who are trying to pick up the pieces post-Trump and figure out what it all means.

MATTHEWS: OK. Thank you, Molly Ball. Thank you, Andrew Sullivan, Eli Stokols. A great panel tonight.

We`ll be right back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: When we return, my election diary for tonight, October 10th, and where this race stands after last night`s presidential debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Monday, October 10th, 2016.

With the election for president just a month from tomorrow, it`s impossible to ignore the shattering power of the new NBC poll numbers. Hillary Clinton holds a double-digit lead at 46 percent. Donald Trump is down at 35 percent, hardly a third of the voters. If that number holds to Election Day, Trump will finish worse than Barry Goldwater in `64, George McGovern in 1972, both of whom won 38 percent.

And unlike those two candidates, the greatest electoral disasters of modern American history, Trump isn`t losing because of his ideas, his ideas on uncontrolled **immigration**, bad trade deals and stupid war decisions are doing fine. It`s he who finds himself in an electoral free fall.

What caused all of this is obvious -- the tape. Didn`t Mr. Trump notice that the sign over to the National Archives, the one that`s chiseled up there for all to see, "The past is prologue". Didn`t he know about the past he would need to depend in today`s political combat, where elections are won and lost with opposition research, that the first thing a hopeful candidate needs to do is hire a hot shot researcher to dig into himself to confront personally and beforehand what the public will eventually get to do when the race gets close.

Maybe Mr. Trump knew all of this, could even see it coming. What else are we to make of his admission on this show, HARDBALL, in 1988, in the heat and heart of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, quote, "You think about him with the women," Trump told me. "How about me with the women? Can you imagine?"

So, didn`t he realize when he finally decided to run that while we`re getting into now with this video, it was going to be part of the bitter end?

Well, that`s HARDBALL for now, and it really is hardball. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Bill Karins, Miguel Almaguer; Howard Fineman, Robert Costa, Craig Melvin, Mariana Atencio, Ron Mott, Tammy Leitner

10686 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

Well, it`s getting to be a make-or-break time for Donald Trump. He`s holding a town hall this hour up in New Hampshire in preparation for Sunday`s huge debate, a debate he needs to win, and many people believe he needs to win big.

We`ll get to all the day in politics in a minute, but first an update on Hurricane Matthew, which is barreling toward the Florida coast tonight, bringing with it 140-mile-an-hour winds and the threat of what could be an historic devastation.

Matthew intensified to a Category 4 storm and is expected to make landfall tonight or early tomorrow morning. Florida, as well as Georgia and the Carolinas, are under a state of emergency. Millions have been ordered to evacuate coastal areas, and residents are bracing for the worst.

Experts are saying that Matthew could prove to be the strongest storm on record to ever strike the east central region of Florida, threatening lives, and of course, costing billions of dollars in storm-related damage, potentially.

President Obama today ordered FEMA to mobilize disaster relief efforts, and Governor Rick Scott of Florida this morning issued a dire warning to those still remaining in the evacuation zones.

Here`s the governor.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RICK SCOTT (R), FLORIDA: Don`t take a chance. A small movement could mean a lot. That`s why we have to prepare for a direct hit. So again, if you need to evacuate and you haven`t, evacuate. This storm will kill you. Time is running out.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, for more on the path of Hurricane Matthew, let`s check in with NBC meteorologist Bill Karins. He`s at the Weather Center tonight. Bill, give us an update on what it looks like the next couple of hours.

BILL KARINS, NBC METEOROLOGIST: Well, thanks, Chris. We`re in the critical period now, where the slightest little jog or wiggle is going to mean destruction for one city and maybe not so much destruction for another city.

Already watching the forecast path, and where the direction it`s heading up the coast. The forecast has improved over the last couple of hours. In the Miami area, you`re probably barely even going to see tropical storm- force winds. Great news for you. Even Ft. Lauderdale, maybe some tropical storm-force winds. The storm surge will be well to the north of you. A glancing blow for you, it appears.

I can`t give you the all-clear in West Palm Beach. You still have a chance of going through the outer eyewall of the storm. So here`s the center. That`s the eye. That is where we have the 140-mile-per-hour winds. Gusts could even be higher than that.

So this is what you want to eliminate. This will be catastrophic, where this comes on shore later on tonight. And then we have what we call this outer eyewall that has developed. And this is where the hurricane-force winds are. So once you get into that, that`s when the trees go down, we start to get some roof damage, and that`s also problematic once it gets to the coast.

That is only probably about three to four hours now away from the West Palm Beach area. That`s when we`ll start hearing about the power outages, the power surges, transformers blowing up in the sky.

Here`s the forecast path. So 2:00 AM, we`re still off shore. Then during the night, we rake the coastline near the Space Coast, maybe a landfall, maybe not right near Cape Canaveral.

Here`s the key. If the storm is going to be historic, likely it`s going to be because of two things. One, the wind damage with the 140-mile-per-hour winds, Cat 4, and especially the storm surge. That`s what typically what kills the most people. That`s typically what does the most damage to businesses, hotels, houses all along the shore.

As I mentioned before, West Palm Beach southwards, we`re really not concerned with any storm surge there at all. It`s once we get from Jupiter northwards, Port Saint Lucie, Vero Beach, Indian River, Cocoa Beach area to Melbourne. This is where we`re going to be anywhere in the 5 to 7-foot range.

And the really nasty stuff, Chris -- this is going to be occurring late tonight into tomorrow -- is going to be from Daytona Beach, Palm Coast, Jacksonville, Brunswickto Savannah. This is where we could get up to a 10-foot storm surge in isolated areas. That`s 10 feet, Chris, of where the water levels normally are, add 10 feet to that. That`s where the destruction will come in.

MATTHEWS: OK, Bill Karins, thanks for that report from the Weather Center. We`re going to get to politics in about a minute now, but (INAUDIBLE) one more report. NBC`s Miguel Almaguer is with us now from West Palm Beach, which is bracing right now for a possible direct hit.

Miguel, what`s it look like down there? I can`t tell from watching.

MIGUEL ALMAGUER, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Hey, Chris, good evening. The weather conditions here really have rapidly changed over the last two or three hours here. When we first got here this morning, we had a light breeze and a pretty steady wind. That developed into a pounding wind, and then of course, we got buckets of rain. That`s been intermittent. We just got hit with a round a short time ago. Those bands are certainly moving their way through this area.

Let me show you what the scene looks like out here. This is Ocean Street, one of the most popular areas in all of West Palm Beach. We have had police completely shut down this area. My photographer, Abraham, (ph), will show you down the street here. It is completely deserted.

For the last couple of hours, we have seen police cruisers come up and down this street ordering everyone in this area to leave. Now, the media has been given special access here. Police tell us we will be safe in this area for a few more hours. And then later on this evening, we`ll be forced to evacuate.

I want to show you across the street here. This is some of the waves here that have been building over the last couple of hours. As Bill mentioned, the storm surge isn`t necessarily a major problem here, but they are going to expect other issues like wind speed to be a major problem tonight.

Chris, everyone here is bracing for that next band that may hit us. And of course, overnight, the even more extreme weather that`s coming our way.

Back to you, Chris.

MATTHEWS: Great report, Miguel. Thanks so much, Miguel Almaguer in West Palm. We`re continuing to watch Hurricane Matthew bear down on Florida, on the coast down there. We`re going to keep the radar map there on the screen so you can keep up yourself. We`ll be back to our reporters on the ground there momentarily.

By the way, the second half of this hour, we`re going to really get into this storm.

But right now, in New Hampshire, Donald Trump is holding what his campaign is calling a town hall event, a practice run, a dry run, you might call it, before Sunday`s town hall-style debate with Hillary Clinton, the real thing.

The difference tonight is that the people in Trump`s town hall are all invited guests. It`s an exclusive party up there, which likely means friendly questions.

"The New York Times" reports today -- this is a huge report -- that Sunday`s debate, the one upcoming on Sunday, could be a do or die moment for the Trump campaign. If Trump stumbles, congressional candidates might openly abandon him.

Public polls show Trump losing ground around the country in all the key states. According to "The Times," private polling -- this is the key stuff -- by both parties, both Trump and Hillary Clinton -- show a precipitous drop in his support in the last couple of days, especially among independent voters, moderate Republicans, and of course, women.

And today, 30 Republican former members of Congress announced their opposition to Trump. They wrote, quote, "Sadly, our party`s nominee this year is a man who makes a mockery of the principles and values we have cherished and which we sought to represent in Congress."

Joining me right now, the HuffingtonPost`s Howard Fineman, April Ryan of the American Urban Radio Networks and "The Washington Post`s" Robert Costa.

Robert, let`s get to this thing. The way we were looking at this coming up debate on Sunday was, well, just the bar is so low after the disastrous performance in the first debate. But now I`m getting from your reporting and others that Trump has to win. He`s got to be a whiz on Sunday because he`s got to turn things around from what looks like right now a sinking ship.

ROBERT COSTA, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: The bar is very high for Trump on Sunday. It`s not just about the Trump campaign. It`s about the future of the Republican Party. Are they really going to have strong, across-the-board performance this November 8th?

Trump is not the kind of guy, based on his friends and associates, who wants to even be having a mock debate or a dry run. But he feels compelled to do so tonight in New Hampshire.

MATTHEWS: What kind of a bar do you put for him? What does he have to -- make a call here. Does he have to clearly win -- let`s put it this way. Does he have to do at least as well as his running mate did on Tuesday this week and walk away known to be by all quarters, including Podesta, the chairman of the Clinton campaign -- he had the poise, he was likable, basically, he won. Does he have to do that well?

COSTA: My sources tell me Trump`s been on the phone with Governor Pence, trying to talk through Pence`s own debate performance, what could he learn. Body language, I hear, is part of the discussion...

MATTHEWS: You mean acting like a grown-up?

COSTA: And not looking at your watch, not being fidgety. It`s 90 minutes, it`s intense, it`s person to person.

MATTHEWS: Howard?

HOWARD FINEMAN, HUFFINGTON POST GLOBAL EDITORIAL DIR., MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, Chris, you and I...

MATTHEWS: Where`s your bar?

FINEMAN: Well, the bar is high, and he`s got to -- he has to be -- it has to be a Pence-like victory, let`s say.

MATTHEWS: Pensive.

FINEMAN: A Pensive victory. You and I -- you and I took a road trip...

MATTHEWS: Spent all day today.

FINEMAN: ... to the "T" in Pennsylvania, Trump territory, and we spoke to the Republican chairman of Adams County up there around Gettysburg. This is a woman who`s solid for Trump. And she told us in no uncertain terms he`s got to do a much, much better job this time. He`s got to hit it out of the park this time in a way he didn`t (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: Well, I`m looking at this, April...

FINEMAN: And this is a Trump supporter.

MATTHEWS: What I`m looking at is what matters, the Electoral College. And I look at the states. I thought Trump had a good grab for Florida, Ohio, North Carolina. It He looks like he`s losing those three, let alone not even winning Pennsylvania, even winning states like Virginia. He`s not even close to having a good shot at this point. So he has to do something that`s, wow, it seems to me. You agree?

APRIL RYAN, AMERICAN URBAN RADIO NETWORKS: Yes, most definitely. The wow -- he thought the wow was attracting his supporters, those people who watched him on "The Apprentice" saying "You`re fired," those types of people because he was coming up with one-liners. From what I`m told, when he was in debate prep for this first debate with Hillary Clinton, it was a lot of one-liners. And he paid a lot of people a lot of money to help him come up with these, and it just didn`t work. So now...

MATTHEWS: Did he use them?

RYAN: He -- well, if he used them or not, it did not work. It failed. The bottom line is for him to go up against Hillary Clinton, who`s done well in debates, and then for his number two to be much better than him, he has -- the bar has got to come up much higher than that.

FINEMAN: Chris, our chairman that we talked to, that Republican chairman in the "T" of Pennsylvania, Trump territory, said he`s got to make his substantiative points and move on. In other words, he`s got to be disciplined. And in terms of Trump, that is a high bar.

(CROSSTALK)

RYAN: ... it cannot be personal. It cannot go personal. He`s got to hit the issues.

FINEMAN: Especially in front of a crowd...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... Hillary Clinton -- I don`t mean to call her Hillary. Hillary Clinton, the former secretary of state, is not going to let him have a clear field to do what he has to do. She`s going to be every step of the way Sunday night screwing him up, reminding him of Alicia Machado, throwing in those things that sort of drive him nuts.

COSTA: It`s not the whole performance, not just must-wow (ph) in a general sense. He`s got to wow those suburban voters who remain skids (ph), women voters...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK (INAUDIBLE) that because Pence can`t do that. Pence is very good, I think, looking at it over the religious right...

FINEMAN: (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: We watched today. He talks about, you know, religious -- he talks religiously about prayer and how he`s praying for success. It`s very good, I think, in the middle of the country, but I don`t think that works with suburbanites.

They think, Keep religious out of politics. They don`t even like that sort of religious tone. It`s secular! It`s jobs! It`s foreign policy! It`s war! It`s hard stuff. They don`t want to get too mystical about it.

COSTA: And a lot of Republicans say the only chance Trump has is to play in non-traditional areas, like different districts in Maine and do well in certain parts of New England and in Pennsylvania.

MATTHEWS: OK. You`re from Bucks County.

COSTA: I am.

MATTHEWS: As is Hallie Jackson...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... your classmate. That is, to me, is becoming to look like ground zero. Can he get the kind of woman who in the old days when I was - - took her husband to the train in the morning, picked him up at night, went to New York once in a while, read the papers, knew what was going on.

Is that woman still out there? She may be in her 60s or 70s now, or older, but they`re out there voting.

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: I always say they`re intrigued by Trump. I was just up in Bucks County. These are the kind of women and men who are pro-choice.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

COSTA: They`re pro-choice moderates, both parties. They`re looking maybe for an excuse to vote for Trump, but as long as he continues to have incendiary language on women and other issues, there`s a bar.

MATTHEWS: OK...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... gets to the heart of this, Howard and April. Look at this. Despite days of teasing that he might bring up Bill Clinton`s past scandals, like sex stuff, at the next debate, today Trump seemed to rule that out. He told "The New York Post" -- there`s a reliable source -- "I want to win this election on my policies for the future, not on Bill Clinton`s past. Jobs, trade, ending illegal **immigration**, veteran care, and strengthening our military is what I really want to be" -- well, that`s what he should be talking about!

FINEMAN: Chris -- Chris, that`s what the county chair, the Republican county chair told us up there...

MATTHEWS: I should say "The Post" is a good source for him.

FINEMAN: Yes. The Republican county chair that we talked to in the "T," in Trump territory, said he`s got to stick to his substantiative topics. And even though she`s died-in-the-wool for Trump, she said, We`re lacking civility in politics. Remember when she said that? We have no civility in politics. I think a lot of those suburban women, they`re going to vote partly on the basis of who comes off as a decent person.

MATTHEWS: But she originally said that`s why she was for Trump, which doesn`t make any sense to us.

FINEMAN: I know, but what...

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: ... is her yearning for civility somewhere.

RYAN: It doesn`t serve Donald Trump to get up there again and talk things that really basically put his foot in his mouth and brought his numbers down, talking about the fact that he has taken advantage of the housing crisis and made money off of people`s pain, then also talking about -- I mean, if we have to pay taxes, talking about the fact that he has not paid taxes for 20 years after he lost $916 million.

MATTHEWS: OK...

RYAN: The American public feels what they feel, and they know what they know.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Yesterday, Trump said many of his past comments about women`s looks were done -- catch this -- for the purpose of entertainment. Let`s watch. I don`t know if this covers him at all, but let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Do you understand the concern from parents of younger girls that some of the wording that you`ve used to talk about attractiveness or unattractiveness might make it more difficult for girls who are struggling with their body image and the pressure to be model- perfect?

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Sure, I do. And you know, a lot of this is done in the entertainment business. I`m being interviewed for "Apprentice" long before I ever thought in terms of running for office.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

TRUMP: But a lot of that was done for the purpose of entertainment. And you know, when people hear it and when they hear -- there`s nobody -- I can tell you this. There`s nobody, nobody that has more respect for women than I do.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Are you trying to tone it down now, not use those words...

TRUMP: Well, it`s not a question of trying, it`s very easy. But you know, you`re in the entertainment business, you`re doing "The Apprentice," you have one of the top shows on television, and you say things differently for a reason.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

TRUMP: And now it`s a much different world.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You know, I`ve always thought about one phrase that I think is true. You only get one reputation in life. And here`s a guy trying to shake his whole reputation of being a show business guy, an act, and now he`s saying, Oh, that was just an act. That was just for show biz.

RYAN: This is not an act. I`ve covered three American presidents for 20 years January. What you say is what you mean. You can`t take it back. This is not entertainment. This is real life. This is real-life drama. People are affected. Women are the key voting bloc for this election and any election...

MATTHEWS: He wasn`t ready for that.

RYAN: He wasn`t ready.

MATTHEWS: Miss Piggy and all that stuff.

RYAN: He`s not ready for primetime. And for him to talk about a woman -- again, it goes back to the trophy look. His daughter is beautiful. His wife is beautiful. Everyone out here is not glamorous. Everyone -- there are people who work every day, who fight hard every day. How many of us have not had weight issues? I still deal with it.

MATTHEWS: I agree about it. And you know what I thought what was interesting, Howard, how effective -- you know, some ads -- this wouldn`t have happened (INAUDIBLE) like, 10 years ago. You would -- Hillary does this ad. I`ve been watching it on our network. It`s so good. They have young, you know, regular-looking people, good-looking people, but they`re not movie stars, and they come on, a girl, a thin girl, you know, then they have the "flat-chested comment." Then they show somebody a bit overweight, and they had the weight comment.

They`re directly targeting the very basic kind of people who would be offended by these shots (ph) by Trump.

FINEMAN: Well, Chris, we saw evidence of that today when we went to Gettysburg College. We had 10 or 15 college kinds in the room...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... one young woman.

FINEMAN: There was one young woman...

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) emotional.

FINEMAN: ... who was very emotional on this topic. Was she a huge Hillary fan per se? Not necessarily. Is she driven to Hillary because of her fear and loathing of Donald Trump and his comments about women, including women who have weight issues? Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: She was great. She was great. She was -- I said, You`ve got to run for office, and I meant it to her. Because she`s the kind of person, a regular person, obviously smart and political, wouldn`t be in the room with us today at Gettysburg College if she wasn`t one of the top students.

And I said, Why don`t you run? And then I asked everybody in the room to close their eyes and I said, Put up your hands if you`re ever going to run for office. And this is where the country is right now, and it`s such a troubling thing to see. Less than half of them. This is the politically astute, political junkies, as we call them, totally into it -- not, what, 40 percent at the most said they were going to run for office.

Why are young people being driven away from running for office? We`re getting the most scant list, the weakest list of presidential candidates we have ever had. Now, Hillary`s fine in terms of her resume, but she`s got problems, too. And what I don`t understand is nobody wants to run for office anymore, nobody, especially these bright young kids today. That is scary.

FINEMAN: Well, why would you...

MATTHEWS: Democracy depends on good candidates!

FINEMAN: Why would you, given the atmosphere that we`re living in...

(CROSSTALK)

RYAN: People talk about you -- anything that`s associated with you is in the street and on the table. But I`m going to say this. As the mother of two young girls, I try to instill in them every day self-esteem. They don`t look like every person out here, but they`re individual and they`re perfect in their own way.

MATTHEWS: Good for you.

RYAN: And I`m telling you, that what Donald Trump did is wrong.

COSTA: One quick point on the polling. You brought up internal polling. Both parties show Trump sliding in the past couple of weeks.

MATTHEWS: That`s what I want to know.

COSTA: There are...

MATTHEWS: What started it, the debate performance?

COSTA: Not the debate performance, what happened after the debate performance...

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: ... the late-night tweets. The two most important people watching this debate on Sunday, Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate leader McConnell. What do they privately think and advise their members?

MATTHEWS: I`ll tell you people watching. They`re women. And they`re going to make a final judgment on this guy, and if he acts like he`s been acting -- did you like that sound?

FINEMAN: The technical term is (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: Yes, Howard Fineman, April Ryan and Robert Costa are staying with us for one more segment. Much more on Trump as he gets ready for Sunday`s rematch -- that`s a phrase, rematch -- with Hillary Clinton. And more on what Howard and I learned today when we went and talked to people up in Pennsylvania.

That`s a state Trump needs absolutely to win, and it may be slipping for him out of reach, which means he ain`t going to win.

We`ll be back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Some people think I won that debate. Now, I -- I...

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

PENCE: But I -- honestly, I would leave that to others to say.

But, from where I sat, Donald Trump won that debate.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

PENCE: Donald Trump`s vision to make America great again won that debate, and Donald Trump`s vision to make this nation great again is going to win all the way to the White House!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What was the Julius Caesar line? Thrice, he was offered the crown, and twice he denied it.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, we`re right back.

That was Governor Mike Pence earlier today up in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Howard and I were there.

We continue to follow the news from Florida, of course, which is under a state of emergency, as Hurricane Matthew barrels towards it at this hour. We will wait and see when it does hit. We will have much more on that coming up in the last half-hour this hour.

Well, we continue now with Howard Fineman, April Ryan, and Robert Costa in this pivotal race in the presidential race.

Howard, you came out of there. And you were great at reporting, getting the right people. We were talking to regular kids -- not kids -- college kids. We were talking to party chairs from both parties. We watched a Pence rally. You were running around and interviewing all the guys and people at those rallies, a lot of cat hats, a lot of working people, very few suits in the room.

These were not the rich people. These are regular people backing Pence and Trump. Interesting, they were the classic T. people in Pennsylvania, what Carville calls Alabama, the middle of the state.

Howard, what are the big three things you got out of...

HOWARD FINEMAN, NBC CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: Well, my first big takeaway is that Mike Pence is the real deal in that part of the country and in that part of the political system, very confident.

But what struck me, also, was that his was not a cult of personality speech. The thing about this campaign is, neither of these -- it`s not a cult of personality. These are issues. People say that this is not an issues-based campaign, in a way because the candidates are so disliked.

The focus is on the Supreme Court, it`s on taxes, it`s on, actually, substantive things.

MATTHEWS: They got the headlines. They got the cheers today.

FINEMAN: That`s right. Yes.

And Mike Pence did not go on and on about Donald Trump`s life story. You didn`t hear, you know, him building X building or Y building. It was pretty...

MATTHEWS: He said the importance of the Supreme Court in this election, and they all went crazy.

FINEMAN: Yes, Supreme Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Court. So, that`s number one.

Number two is the fact that the millennials that we talked to at a place like Gettysburg, however reluctantly, however unenthusiastically in some cases, are coming towards Hillary Clinton. And I think there are two reasons, college money -- money for college tuition.

MATTHEWS: The Bernie people like that.

FINEMAN: The Bernie people. College tuition and the Obamacare, which allows them to stay on their parents` health care until the age of 26.

None of these kids, by the way -- we asked them this -- we asked all 15 or so of them, do you think Social Security will be around when you`re ready for it? Not a single person said that, said so.

So, they want to get what they can get now, which is college tuition and health care. And, third, as obscure as it sounds, we were in a rural farm area, where having migrant labor is actually not -- is seen as a good thing, not a bad thing.

MATTHEWS: For the apple -- that apples.

FINEMAN: Believe it or not, to pick the apples, you need the migrants.

MATTHEWS: It`s like "Cider House Rules."

FINEMAN: And this is something you wouldn`t know if you hadn`t gone there. And, as a matter of fact...

MATTHEWS: And they`re year-round residents. They`re not just migrants.

FINEMAN: They`re not just migrants.

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: And it tinges and softens the views in some rural areas toward migrants, which I think is interesting and unexplored.

MATTHEWS: And I don`t think they feel the cultural change or any of things in big cities people worry about.

I think, up in the apple orchards, they said they`re doing a job that needs doing and they`re open to it. It was very interesting.

Anyway, yesterday a rally in Reno, Donald Trump made a point of pronouncing the state of Nevada correctly. The only problem, he didn`t pronounce it correctly. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Heroine overdoses are surging and meth overdoses in Nevada -- Nevada -- and you know what I said? You know what I said? I said -- when I came out here, I said, nobody says it the other way. It has to be Nevada, right?

And if you don`t say it correctly -- and it didn`t happen to me, but it happened to a friend of mine. He was killed.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: He just dug the hole deeper and deeper and deeper by saying Nevada.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That`s what we said growing up on the East Coast.

But you learn, when you go out there, any time, you learn, it`s Nevada. By the way, is Frisco next? Is he going to go to San Francisco and say, it`s great to be in Frisco, which they don`t take lightly?

FINEMAN: There goes Nevada.

APRIL RYAN, AMERICAN URBAN RADIO NETWORKS: Or Tanzania. A couple of months ago, remember, he said -- and he was doing this big foreign policy speech, he said Tanzania.

(LAUGHTER)

RYAN: So, this is -- look it up. It`s true.

MATTHEWS: I think it`s Tasmania, and it`s right near Australia. He got them mixed up.

RYAN: No, Tanzania.

MATTHEWS: I know what it is.

RYAN: So he`s used to -- I guess he`s used to misspeaking.

MATTHEWS: I`m the only one at this table to hitchhike through Tanzania.

RYAN: Oh, right.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I know it well.

RYAN: All right.

ROBERT COSTA, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Peace Corps.

MATTHEWS: Huh?

COSTA: Peace Corps, right?

RYAN: Yes for the Peace Corps.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, do you think things matter, or are we just picking points here?

COSTA: I think Howard`s point is a really provocative one, because when you ask the question to people on Capitol Hill, why haven`t you deserted Trump, they think, when he sticks to trade, when he sticks to the issues that appeal to the T., economic, jobs, and he`s not becoming just Donald Trump and all the Donald Trump controversy, they think he has a shot.

And that`s what they want to see Sunday.

MATTHEWS: OK, Sunday, suppose he does the perfect storm on Sunday and does what most of us think he`s got this far on, illegal **immigration**, uncontrolled **immigration**? And that`s mostly the Republican Party`s fault, because they don`t want a bill, to some extent, the Democrats, too, because they haven`t done a tough bill.

Losing jobs through trade, everybody is responsible for that, because we kept cutting these trade bills, and places like Michigan get hollowed out, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan City in Indiana. All these places, you go to, there`s nothing there but rust. And maybe there used to be Blockbuster movie place there.

Now there may be a diner, and that`s it, Spencerville, Ohio, places like that.

FINEMAN: Terrorism, law and order.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, the three. No, I would say illegal **immigration**, trade and loss of jobs for guys, mainly manufacturing tough guy jobs, and, third, stupid wars. And yet we think, in the whole week, what it`s about? Machado. Alicia Machado.

FINEMAN: Right.

COSTA: Can he speak to what you`re talking about, or is he going to speak about Donald Trump? That`s the question.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, can he resist a personal shot from Hillary?

FINEMAN: No.

I asked -- I asked Mike -- we asked Mike Pence. I said, what do you do when he tweets out something at 3:00 in the morning about this woman? Why don`t you take his smartphone away?

MATTHEWS: Yes, that`s what you did. You said it to Governor Pence. Take away his phone.

FINEMAN: They should take away his phone.

RYAN: What did he say? What did he say?

FINEMAN: Mike Pence, not an ounce of daylight, a sliver of daylight there, he said, no. He said that Donald Trump likes to and can communicate with the...

MATTHEWS: With the American people.

FINEMAN: With the American people.

MATTHEWS: He used it as a plus.

FINEMAN: It`s a plus.

MATTHEWS: Like, not only does he talk to you during the daytime. He`s going to be talking to you at 3:00 in the morning.

FINEMAN: He will talk to you at night. He will talk to you at any time.

MATTHEWS: That`s what a running mate has to do.

RYAN: And that`s for the California -- that`s for the West Coast folks.

But you know what?

MATTHEWS: What?

RYAN: No.

FINEMAN: You mean time of day.

RYAN: Yes, the time of day, tweeting at 3:00 a.m., OK?

Anyway, but here`s the deal. When we really look at these debates -- and I`m thinking about a conversation I had with former Baltimore City Mayor Kurt Schmoke in Baltimore.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Rhodes Scholar.

RYAN: Rhodes Scholar.

He said, one of the main issues, going back to Howard`s point, the Supreme Court. There`s also issues of the economy, which brings in the trade issue. Then there are also the real issues in urban cities and mothers who have to deal with this criminal justice. That`s on the table as well.

So we have got to look for answers, not just the glitz and the glimmer and shine and who can throw the one-liners. It`s about real people, real issues, and what affects the pocketbook at home.

MATTHEWS: I would go into every major city in the United States, if I were Trump -- and he`s not me and I`m not him -- and I would say, I`m going to rebuild the Philadelphia subway system.

I`m going to build it up to the ground up.

RYAN: Infrastructure.

MATTHEWS: I`m going to build it up. And we are going to have so many real jobs, paying $30, $40 an hour, whatever. It`s going to be real union jobs with Davis-Bacon rates of payment. Everybody`s going to work for years. And then we`re going to have a city that`s up to date, like the parts of the world anybody gets to visit.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Which is most of the rest of the world.

Look, we have got to go.

RYAN: What about the nation`s bridges, the nation`s bridges?

MATTHEWS: Everything.

RYAN: Yes, everything, infrastructure, roads.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, I would spend money on fixing things up with real jobs. Forget the welfare, everything else. Stick with real building jobs, real jobs, not leaf raking. And he doesn`t talk like this. I don`t understand. I think Hillary should do the same.

I think building this country is what we ought to talk about, building it together. That`s Hillary`s way.

Howard Fineman, April Ryan, Robert Costa.

We will be right back, full coverage of this monster storm right now. It`s a Category 4 storm right now, which is big-time. It`s called Matthew as it bears down on the coast of Florida.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RICK SCOTT (R), FLORIDA: These catastrophic levels can completely wipe out well-built homes and destroy neighborhoods.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That`s Florida Governor Rick Scott today talking earlier about the profound danger facing his state of Florida, as Hurricane Matthew nears the coast.

For the latest, let`s go down to the National Hurricane Center.

Ed Rappaport is the NHC deputy director.

Thank you, Ed.

Give us a sense of where this stands in history. Can we place it now in terms of its danger?

ED RAPPAPORT, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER: Well, it depends on whether the center comes ashore and how close it gets to it.

Right now, we have got the center of the hurricane about 100 miles off the Florida coast. But the forecast is for that center, which is here on this graphic, to move towards the northwest. Here`s the Florida East Coast. The red means we have a hurricane warning in effect.

And the track of the center is forecast to come right up to the coast, perhaps move inland. And it`s the area here in brown, which we can move along, slide along there, which is where the worst of the conditions are going to be, the core of the hurricane.

This is where the Category 3 and 4 winds are occurring. This is where the very dangerous storm surge is at a maximum.

MATTHEWS: What strikes me, as a total amateur following this, is that the danger here is not just the horror, and horrible nature of the winds and everything. It`s how it just sits. It`s apparently going to just sit over a lot of the United States for a couple days. It`s just going to sit there and just wreak havoc for a long time.

RAPPAPORT: Right.

Well, at this stage, it does look like the entire Florida East Coast, particularly north of Palm Beach, is at risk, as is the coast from Georgia to South Carolina. And our biggest concern, really, as it is with most of the hurricanes, is storm surge.

And this is a prototype National Weather Service graphic that will be official next year. And it shows where there`s the threat for life- threatening -- where there is life threatening storm surge. You can see, along the coasts, spreads a little bit inland, even goes down the St. Johns River. That occurs because, if you have the center of the hurricane here, with the winds flowing this way, it piles the water up along the coast and pushes it ashore.

And, for this hurricane, we could see seven to 11 feet of storm surge. That`s the depth of the water moving inland, and, on top of that, there`ll be waves as well.

MATTHEWS: So much of Florida along the resort areas, certainly the expensive parts of Florida, have these offshore islands, like the offshore strips like Miami Beach.

Can that surge just go right over a place like Miami, which apparently is deserted right now? Can they go right over it, right to West Palm?

RAPPAPORT: Yes, they can certainly top the barrier islands.

In this case, though, fortunately, the center is passing far enough offshore of Miami-Dade and Broward counties that that`s not an issue. But it will be a concern as it moves up -- the storm moves up the coast.

Again, biggest concern is that storm surge.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

RAPPAPORT: And it`s the entire East Coast really from Palm Beach northward, up to South Carolina.

MATTHEWS: Thank you so much, Ed Rappaport. Thanks for your expertise coming on from the National Hurricane Center.

U.S. Congressman Patrick Murphy is going shelter to shelter in his Florida district.

He joins us now by phone from Jupiter, Florida.

Congressman Murphy, thank you for coming up.

Give us a sense of what -- are people -- are they dealing with the fact that this could be the worst? Are they getting ready for the worst?

REP. PATRICK MURPHY (D), FLORIDA: Well, Chris, it`s a little bit early to tell right now.

I went to a few shelters earlier today. And, unfortunately, there weren`t as many people there as the experts had predicted. And I was talking to a family in one of the shelters, and they said that they live in a trailer park that is near the shore, and they were the only family to evacuate.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MURPHY: And that`s scary to me, because this could be a catastrophic storm.

And it looks like it`s going to veer a little bit more north, but, as you know, these things can change at the last minute. It can move a little bit left or to the west. And those folks that are, you know, on the -- along the coast there, whether that`s the storm surge, whether that`s the power outage, whether that`s the wind, they need to be very careful.

At this point, it`s getting a little bit too late to evacuate, so we are recommending that folks hunker down and stay put until this storm has passed.

MATTHEWS: I heard Rick Scott, the governor, say something odd today. He said that don`t disobey this order just because -- or this request to get out to evacuate just because you like to defy orders. It was almost like working against the orneriness of people.

Does Florida have a law that can tell people to leave by law or not? What`s the legal situation for evacuation?

MURPHY: Well, I was with the sheriff of Martin County -- that`s the county just north of where I`m at right now in Palm Beach -- earlier.

And he said that he`s not going to go around and arrest people, that they simply don`t have the resources to do that. They have to make sure the resources are going to the true emergency situations.

They are in what they call the emergency operation centers right now, whether that`s the fire department, the police, folks from FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers, all coordinating with the federal and state governments to make sure they`re handling the most critical of circumstances.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

You know, I remember, Congressman, as you all do, you do as well, that back when we had Katrina hit New Orleans, everybody was bragging about how we`re going to get 95 percent of the people out of here, but that left 50,000 people stuck below the water line.

So, the question is, what about those hangers-on? You said that their best bet now at this point is to hunker down, as you put it?

MURPHY: Yes.

At this point, it is -- the first bands are starting to come through where I`m at in Northern Palm Beach. The power is already flickering around that. And I imagine, in the next hour or two, we will probably lose power here. We are of course hoping we don`t, but, with those tropical-storm- force winds, oftentimes, you lose power.

You don`t want to be on the streets, what happens, the kind of debris out there, or, worst yet, a downed power line in some water. You step in it, and it doesn`t end well. So, we`re advising people to stay in, use flashlights. Don`t use candles. That sometimes can lead to even worse conditions.

So, hunker down, stay safe, and don`t leave at this point.

MATTHEWS: Is it smart to go to a local hotel even, or stay in your house?

MURPHY: It`s best to go to one of the shelters that have generators, that have food, that have emergency officials there.

MATTHEWS: OK.

MURPHY: They have been -- and most folks should have power and Internet right now.

Go on to your local news station, go on to your local agencies to find out the best place to go regarding a shelter, not a hotel.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Thanks so much, U.S. Congressman Patrick Murphy of Florida.

We continue to monitor the path of Hurricane Matthew, now a Category 4. It`s called a monster storm.

MSNBC`s live coverage of Hurricane Matthew will continue after this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I will stay with a co-worker and wait out the storm, and hopefully come back and be glad that I left.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Board her up and then pray.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It`s a little scary.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RICK SCOTT (R), FLORIDA: Stop and think about this. We should not be putting people`s lives at risk because you made the foolish decision not to evacuate.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Well, Florida is bracing for Hurricane Matthew right now, a strong category 4 storm. NBC`s Craig Melvin is with us now from Melbourne, Florida, which is getting ready for the worst.

Craig, you`re right where it`s going to hut?

CRAIG MELVIN, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Chris, we are. And I can tell you the last 20 or 30 minutes or so, we`ve seen the winds pick up considerably. You can see some of these palm trees that are all over, of course, all of Florida. These palm trees starting to sway far more than they have throughout the course of the afternoon. Street signs like this.

We are, for the most part, minus some emergency vehicles and a few police officers, we`re the only people on the street here in Melbourne. Roughly 75,000 people live here, about an hour south of Orlando. And a drive in from the airport, you would be hard-pressed to find even a gas station open. Fast food restaurants boarded up. A lot of folks heeding the warnings from local officials here to get the heck out of town.

I talked to one of the cops a short time ago. He said they were very pleased that most folks, most folks seem to have evacuated. Again, I`m going to show you the street here. There`s a causeway maybe about a quarter of a mile from here, Chris. Typically, they shut down the causeway when the winds reach 35 to 40 miles per hour. Police tell me they`re not going to do that tonight, because they really want people to continue to get out of here.

They are expecting wind gusts tonight, somewhere between 55 and 60 miles per hour. Tomorrow morning, somewhere between 5:00, 6:00, maybe 7:00, local officials say they are bracing for wind gusts north of 100 to 120 miles an hour. This is the same area where you might remember back in 2004, 2005, hurricane after hurricane after tropical storm battered this city so much so, in fact, that they`re still recovering more than 10, 15 years later.

This is an area that has seen its fair share of storms. I talked to an official, I said, they are expecting this to be the worst that they`ve seen, in some 30 years. You can`t really see it from here. I`ll try to show you, we are maybe 200 feet away from the ocean.

The fear here, of course, is that storm surge that we spent so much time talking about this afternoon and this evening, that when the waters rise and they`re saying they could rise somewhere between 10 inches to a foot, if not more than a foot, then a lot of these businesses behind me, a lot of these homes behind me, they`ll be flooded. That`s going to be the story here of the storm surge, the power outages, of course, as well, Chris.

MATTHEWS: Well, take care of yourself. I just saw you, by the way, somewhere around Richmond. There you are down in Florida, Craig. Take care of yourself.

That was Craig Melvin, of course.

By the way, 1 1/2 million people have been ordered to evacuate in advance of Hurricane Matthew, but not all are leaving. They`ve been encouraged to leave, they haven`t left.

NBC`s Mariana Atencio is with a family hunkering down right now in Melbourne where we just were with Craig.

Mariana, tell us -- well, let`s meet that family.

MARIANA ATENCIO, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Chris. That`s right, I`m here with the McKinney family. They`re about three miles from where Craig was. Like millions of families throughout this state, they`ve made their preparations. They pondered whether or not to evacuate. In their case, they`re staying put, they`re now sitting down, watching the news, waiting for this monster storm to arrive.

I want to talk to Susan here, who I met at the boardwalk where Craig was earlier this morning.

Susan, you live in Georgia. What are you doing here now in Melbourne?

SUSAN STALCUP, MELBOURNE RESIDENT: Well, we had a trip already planned here. We were going to come down, surprise our mom and watch one of our kids play soccer. We found out about the hurricane, we already had the time off, we were already coming here, and I didn`t want to turn around and tell my family I wasn`t going to come down here when they could need us, so we came.

ATENCIO: And you`re a hurricane pro, because you grew up here in Florida?

STALCUP: My whole life, my whole life.

ATENCIO: So, mom to Susan is Barbara over here. I want you to meet Tom and Barbara McKinney, and their dog, Bella, Chris.

Are you happy your daughter decided to stay and accompany you through this storm tonight?

BARBARA MCKINNEY, MELBOURNE RESIDENT: Yes, I am. I was a bit concerned, but I know how stubborn she is and when she wants to see her family, she wants to see her family. Good times, bad times, she`s coming. So, I`m glad she`s here.

ATENCIO: Barbara, you`ve got your whole family here. What kind of preparations have you made for when this storm hits, possibly, tonight into tomorrow morning?

B. MCKINNEY: Well, we have water, we have food, we have ice, our biggest thing is if we lose power.

ATENCIO: And Chris, just (AUDIO GAP) I think upwards of 20,000 people have already lost power throughout this state and the storm hasn`t even hit.

Tom, do you guys have a generator, for example?

TOM MCKINNEY, MELBOURNE RESIDENT: No, we don`t.

ATENCIO: Does that concern you at all?

T. MCKINNEY: No, we`ll be all right.

ATENCIO: You also are hurricane pros, right? You were referencing Andrew before, do you think this will be like Andrew?

B. MCKINNEY: Actually, Andrew, if you remember, a high came out when it was supposed to hit Brevard County. A high came out and it hit Miami instead.

So, we really didn`t experience that. I don`t think this storm will be anywhere near Andrew. Do I think we need to be concerned and watchful? Yes, I do. But it`s just being prepared and making the best of what you can.

ATENCIO: And I -- before I leave with you, Chris, I want you to meet young Eisley (ph) over here.

Eisley, this will be your first hurricane?

UNIDENTIFIED GIRL: Yes.

ATENCIO: Are you scared?

UNIDENTIFIED GIRL: Well, I`m nervous.

ATENCIO: She`s nervous.

So, a slice of life here, Chris. Families like the McKinney`s deciding to stay put and we`ll follow up with them tomorrow when this monster storm hits Melbourne, Florida.

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s a great report, Mariana Atencio. Thanks so much for joining us and bringing those people to us.

Anyway, the Palm Beach area is getting ready for a possible direct hit.

Joining us by phone is Mayor Jeri Muoio of West Palm Beach, Florida.

Mayor, thank you for joining us. I was asking about these barrier islands being hit by a surge. Can that surge jump across Miami Beach to West Palm? Can that happen?

MAYOR JERI MUOIO, WEST PALM BEACH, FL: Well, we have Palm Beach to the east of us, which is a barrier island. I don`t think we`ll see any jumping going on, but we have an intercoastal waterway that will surge, as well, and mostly some flooding along Flagler drive, which goes right along the intercoastal waterway.

You`ve been here, Chris, you know what it`s like in North Palm Beach. It`s beautiful and right now we`re hoping for the best.

MATTHEWS: What do you think people should do, if you had to advise them right now? Get out of town, join the traffic rush out of town or hunker down or go to a hotel or go to a shelter? They`ve got some options, not many.

MUOIO: Yes, well, we`ve been telling people to shelter in place at this point. If you haven`t left, it`s probably not a good time to leave, because we`re starting to see the bands come in here, and a lot of wind and rain. Make sure people have a safe room in their house. Be careful if the electricity goes out, be careful using candles, try to use flashlights. If you have a generator, don`t bring it inside. Just try to give people a lot of good advice.

MATTHEWS: Do you think this is part of the regular hurricane season, or is this something that`s extraordinary in terms of climate?

MUOIO: Well, you know, I think it`s extraordinary. Part of the reason this hurricane is so large is that there was nothing to stop it. So the water around Florida and in the Atlantic is very warm. And that, of course, is a concern, as we talk about global warming. And it didn`t go over any land to get broken up, so the problem is it just -- there to stop it. And part of it is because the water is so very warm.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I just wonder about Florida being so close to sea level and the fact that this climatic situation is raising the sea level and making everything more precarious. Thank you for taking the time.

MUOIO: It`s very concerning.

MATTHEWS: Mayor, thanks so much, Mayor Jeri Muoio for joining us, from West Palm Beach, where she`s mayor. That`s right near, right across to the west of Palm Beach itself.

Back with more, as we continue to track Hurricane Matthew as it bears down on the coast of Florida.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: People do not seem to get it and are not leaves, and I have already checked. I`m not saying this to be theatrical. You all know me. I don`t lean towards bravado, but I talked to my detective captain earlier today and I asked him, do you have body bags? Are you prepared for mass casualties? Because if people do not leave, and we get 140 mile an hour wind gusts in some of our mobile home place, we are going to have fatalities.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back.

Hurricane Matthew has left 264 people dead across the Caribbean. Many of them in Haiti. And now, Florida`s getting ready for the worst.

Let`s go to Daytona Beach. That`s where NBC`s Ron Mott is in an SUV on the roads there.

Ron, give us a sense of what`s happening there.

RON MOTT, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hey there, Chris. Well, we decided to get out here on the road just to see what we could see out here before this becomes impossible to do.

This is the main north/south drag along the coast here in Daytona Beach, Atlantic Avenue. Let me take you outside here. Show you what we`re seeing. This is a scene that officials want to see all night long, which is very little to no traffic out here.

We have seen a couple cars go by us before we got on the air with you, Chris. You see some flashing lights up there. There`s a police officer sitting there in the middle of the intersection and is stopping cars making sure that people know where they`re going and not just wandering around, because that is going to be a problem here in a couple, three hours when this business end of this storm bears down over Daytona Beach.

We are anticipating getting quite a bit of storm surge here. Could top ten feet. We`ll see. If it does, that may threaten this roadway here.

One thing that I thought was interesting, Chris, is that a lot of these businesses, they`re geared toward the tourism industry, and all the folks who come down for fun in the sun here, many of them didn`t board up which I found sort of interesting and maybe they`re taking their chances thinking that because they are facing due east, we`re expecting when those first bands, real bands get in here, we`re expecting the winds to be coming almost straight at us from the north, maybe north-northeast, they think they`re going to be okay to last through the storm.

Again, this all depends on where this eye is when it gets around Daytona Beach. If we stay on the western side, which everyone is hoping for, the winds won`t be nearly as strong and we think that that should help a lot of these businesses that didn`t board up make it through the worst of this storm. If somehow we get too close to that eye or end up on the eastern edge of it, all bets are off, Chris, because that`s the side you don`t want to be on. Back up to you.

MATTHEWS: Ron Mott, thanks for that.

Anyway, we used to go down there for our spring breaks and drive along the beach. Those beaches were so strong down there.

Anyway, for a sense of what Florida may be facing right now, just look at the Bahamas. NBC`s Tammy Leitner is with us from Nassau in the Bahamas, of course, which took a direct hit from Hurricane Matthew.

Tammy, give us a preview based upon what`s happening there.

TAMMY LEITNER, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Chris, the rain is finally sub sided enough that we can go out and check out the damage, now this is the main downtown area where the tourists come, from the cruise ships stop. The street is lined with stores and now it`s also lined with water. You can see they put some sandbags up here, but it did not do a lot of good. There`s actually water inside of these stores and it goes pretty far back.

You know, we had a very short, short window to take a drive around the island and we saw a lot of devastation. Trees down. Power poles down. Trees on top of houses. Roads completely washed away. And we now know people are still trapped in their houses. Chris?

MATTHEWS: So is paradise island under water, too, and Atlantis, all these resorts? Are they under water?

LEITNER: You know, we have not been able to get over to Paradise Island, as you know, there`s a bridge connecting them. We do know everybody at Atlantis, they were evacuated from their rooms. They had to sleep on the floor over there in a big ballroom. So I`m guessing that everybody is safe. We`re told there are about 3,000 visitors on this island and all the visitors are accounted for.

MATTHEWS: Was it -- was it a category 4 when it went through the Bahamas? What was the category level of the storm when it went through where you are?

LEITNER: Yes, it eventually upgraded to a category 4 and, I mean, this island just got pummeled. I mean, we were out there in the eye of the storm for at least nine hours and the winds were 125, 130 miles an hour. Trees were just bending in the wind. We saw cars smashed, roads completely flooded and just devastation, utter devastation from this nine hours of beating that this island took.

MATTHEWS: So, to be in a brick building, we`re looking right now at the sort of classic pictures of the look down there in Bahamas. If you`re in a brick building or strong structure, were you okay? Or is -- people in the mobile homes, the manufactured homes in Florida, who`s going to be at risk?

LEITNER: I can tell you who`s going do be at risk. The houses on the south side of this island. You know, we were in a hotel and our hotel had tiles coming through holes in the ceiling where water was coming through. Our hotel was falling apart this morning when the storm was coming through. So I can only imagine what the houses on the south side of the island look like now.

We`ve not been able to get over there. That was the first part of the island that was hit from this hurricane and I`m guessing that`s where most of the damage is.

MATTHEWS: Is the water level crested now around you? I see a car driving through. It looks like it`s about three, four inches deep. Is that it? You`ve seen the worst there, in the Bahamas?

LEITNER: You know what, this is actually receded, Chris. So I`m up on the sidewalk. I`m stepping down here onto the street. I mean, this is only about ten inches now. It has receded some from when we first came out a few hours ago.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

LEITNER: I mean, there are neighborhoods that have three feet of water in their front yards.

MATTHEWS: You`ve got a story to tell for all times, Tammy Leitner. Thank you, from Nassau in the Bahamas. What a look.

Anyway, that does it for us this hour. Our continuing coverage of hurricane Matthew continues now with Chris Hayes.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Katy Tur, Ron Reagan, Bonnie Schneider, Elise Jordan, David Corn, Jonathan Capehart

9666 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Pensive.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews back in Washington.

Well, it`s an interesting challenge to decide in real time who`s won a political debate. But if you accept the challenge, as I have, you better do it straight. Don`t pretend to be a judge if you`re not willing to accept the responsibility of judging.

Well, last night, I called it for Pence right off the bat. He acted like a grown-up. Kaine seemed overwrought, on the other hand, and mostly upset at what Pence was saying. It`s as if Kaine couldn`t stand hearing anything said well about Donald Trump, couldn`t stand hearing anything said bad about Hillary Clinton. It was emotional.

Pence was solid, if often misleading. Kaine was forever trying to get his point in, sometimes successfully but not impressively.

But if you think this is how I look at the two of them generally, you couldn`t be more wrong. My job isn`t to say who I preferred on the issues going into the debate last night. It`s to say who I thought did well and advanced his position during it.

Well, after Trump`s bad week last week, the big question now is whether Pence`s strong performance last night was enough to reverse the momentum toward Clinton before Trump and his face -- and her face off again Sunday night. So they got a few days to do this.

Will Trump be able to exploit his running mate`s performance last night to get things headed back in his direction?

Well, throughout last night, Tim Kaine tried repeatedly, as I said, to engage with Pence, attempted to hold him accountable for everything Donald Trump has said and done over the course of the campaign.

But Pence delivered an unwavering performance effectively side- stepping Kaine`s attacks while sticking to his talking points. As "The New York Times" noted, "Pence dodged, deflected and demurred, deciding, it seemed, that all the fires that Mr. Trump has set in the past year could not be doused in a single night." That`s good writing.

And as "Time" magazine pointed out, "To some observers, it was a sign that the independent -- the Indiana governor`s debate strategy was also designed to protect his own political future in the event of a Trump loss this year."

Well, Trump didn`t hesitate to praise Pence, by the way, at a rally this afternoon, citing Pence`s performance last night as an example of -- guess what? Donald Trump`s judgment.

This is Trump on Trump, sort of, on...

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Mike Pence did an incredible job, and I`m getting a lot of credit because that`s really my first so- called choice. That was my first hire, as we would say in Las Vegas.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I`d would argue that Mike had the single most decisive victory in the history of vice presidential debates. I believe that.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: And last night, America also got to look firsthand at my judgment. And that was judgment.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Katy Tur is an expert on Trump`s ego, and it was on full display. Katy, here we have a guy instead of saying, you know, I got a great running mate. The guy did a hell of a job last night. He`s bucking me up. I had a terrible performance. He had a good one. Instead, he says, Well, just this goes to show that I`m a great man and I know how to pick `em.

Anyway, your thoughts about Trump and his reaction to last night`s strong performance, I believe, by Mike Pence.

KATY TUR, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Oh, you`re right. He did take credit for Pence, saying that he should get credit because he picked Pence as his running mate. It was reminiscent of Donald Trump taking credit for a number things on the campaign trail, also reminiscent of Donald Trump talking about himself for 30 minutes while he was supposed to be introducing Mike Pence as his running mate officially. Also, the tweets where he congratulated himself on predicting things like terror attacks both in Orlando and when he talked about the New York bombings at a rally in Colorado.

Donald Trump is never going to say that he did a poor job on anything or that maybe he should have improved on something, frankly. That`s just not something that he`s done in this campaign. (INAUDIBLE) I don`t believe it`s anything he`s really done during his business career. So you`re not going to have him come out and say, Mike Pence excelled in areas that I need on improve on.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TUR: But the reality is, is that Pence did. Where Governor Pence was calm, Donald Trump was erratic during his debate. Where Pence was able to deflect, Donald Trump was easily baited by Hillary Clinton. Where Pence was able to turn the conversation into more favorable territory -- pivot, if you will, spin the conversation, start talking about a different subject entirely than he was asked -- that`s not something that Donald Trump was able to do during his first debate.

Looking forward, it`s going to be interesting to find out how and if Donald Trump takes any of his running mates`s performance to heart and adjusts for his next debate, which is on Sunday.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and I guess that`s the question we`re going to get to. Is this going to be an opportunity for Trump to exploit the success of his running mate last night, but also to learn from it. And it seemed to me, in a way, that -- well, I don`t want to knock Kaine. I like the guy. But Kaine was acting more like Trump last night. I mean, he was the one jumping in and out, interrupting, as you know. Go ahead. Your thoughts. Not mine, yours. Go ahead.

TUR: Yes, I think you`re right. I think what the RNC was trying to capitalize on today was how many times that Tim Kaine interrupted Governor Pence. It`s almost like the "I`m rubber and you`re glue" campaign strategy. Every time Donald Trump is knocked for something, Donald Trump or his campaign or the Republican Party, seems to turn that around and then insult the opponent with that same criticism or take that criticism and throw it at their opponent.

In this case, they did have -- they did have a little reason to do so, at least, when it came to Tim Kaine. He did repeatedly interrupt Governor Pence. Donald Trump, though, repeatedly interrupted Hillary Clinton during the first debate.

In -- ultimately, though, Chris, these vice presidential debates, while interesting to us, don`t matter so much to the viewer and don`t matter so much to the voter at home. They`re very much voting for the top of the ticket, and these are two candidates with large personalities and large presences.

So the idea that one way or another, how the VP reacted, behaved, or went off on policy discussions -- that`s not really going to factor that much into whether a voter decides to vote for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump.

The reality is, Governor Pence looked pretty good on that stage last night, and many are saying that he was auditioning, essentially, for 2020, to run on his own ticket for president in 2020, whereas Tim Kaine was auditioning to be VP in 2020.

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s an opinion. I don`t agree with it. I think that 40 million people last night maybe...

TUR: Some people were saying it. Some people were saying it. That`s what I heard.

MATTHEWS: That`s an opinion you have. Let me tell you my opinion. When 40 million people or so watch a television program, they form an opinion about the ticket.

I remember years ago voting for Humphrey because I liked Muskie. So sometimes, you look for an excuse. Now, if Republicans are feeling uneasy about Trump, which many should be, they may say to themselves, You know, I think this guy Pence is solid. I feel a little better about voting for Trump now.

I do think it makes a difference. And any time you`re talking about audiences of 40, 50 million people, which we may have last night -- I`m not sure. We don`t know the number yet. But that`s an enormous amount of people paying attention. That means -- all it means is a couple percent of those millions of people watching, and it changes things. I think it`s about the enormity.

You know, we only get about 10 million people a night on cable. But when all of a sudden, you have one of these debates, it blossoms to 40 to 80, and all of a sudden, people who never show up for political shows show up for this.

So I`m going to with you, Katy Tur. I think it does matter.

TUR: Well, and I think -- you know, I think you`re -- I think you`re -- you`re not -- you`re not incorrect there. And I think what you have in terms of this campaign season, there is a bloc of people that just don`t like either candidate.

MATTHEWS: Yes. We know that.

TUR: And are they going to see either Senator Tim Kaine or Governor Mike Pence as a way to enable them to feel more comfortable...

MATTHEWS: To both.

TUR: ... voting for the top of the ticket? This is about enthusiasm. Can Donald Trump turn out more people than Hillary Clinton can? Right now, his base is white men without a college degree. He needs to find a way to appeal to women. He needs to find a way to appeal to moderate Republicans. Maybe Governor Pence would be able to help him do that.

But remember, Governor Pence is a very conservative Christian, who has been on the very conservative side of abortion politics in the past and does not necessarily appeal to women in this country...

MATTHEWS: I know.

TUR: ... many women in this country. And in terms moderates, Governor Pence is not a moderate, either. So it might only -- it could do some to help him gain some of those Christian conservatives that Donald Trump might not have in his corner, but I`m not entirely sure it`s going to get those moderates and women...

MATTHEWS: OK, let me...

TUR: ... which is what he needs right now.

MATTHEWS: OK. I want to bring the other guys in, but thanks, Katy. But here`s my last point. Among Newt Gingrich and Giuliani and Trump, they got nine wives among the three of them. They need some sort of more conservative Christian or whatever, traditional religious kind of person to come in and say, You`re OK, because those other surrogates are not helping Trump in the heartland. That`s my thinking.

Giuliani and Newt are not helping Trump. He needs somebody with a more traditional -- I`m not making a value judgment here -- more traditional, rural, perhaps, thinking about religion and et cetera and behavior, human behavior to back him up. He`s not getting the right surrogates out there.

Thank you, Katy Tur.

In his harshest attack of the night last night, of course -- this was memorable -- Tim Kaine invoked the name of former president Ronald Reagan in an effort to portray Trump as too darn dangerous to serve as commander- in-chief.

Let`s watch this very strong strike against Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. TIM KAINE (D-VA), VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Ronald Reagan said something really interesting about nuclear proliferation back in the 1980s. He said the problem with nuclear proliferation is that some fool or maniac could trigger a catastrophic event. And I think that`s who Governor Pence`s running mate is, exactly who...

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRES. NOMINEE: Oh, come on!

KAINE: ... President Reagan warned us...

PENCE: Senator -- Senator, that was even beneath you and Hillary Clinton, and that -- that`s pretty low.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That`s even beneath you!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: That was genteel. Anyway, thank you, Ronald Reagan for coming on. It`s always great to have you on. He`s author, and of course, MSNBC political analyst. We also have Steve Cortes, surrogate for the Trump campaign. Steve, I think it`s great.

I want to talk with Ron and get a little point of view, and both you guys mix it up here. Last night and then next Sunday -- I`m looking forward to St. Louis -- "Meet me in St. Louis," as Judy Garland said -- meet me in St. Louis next Sunday night.

Will Trump learn and exploit the strong performance by Mike Pence or not? You`re first, Ron.

RON REAGAN, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: No, I don`t think that he will learn. I think Donald Trump is Donald Trump, and you always get Donald Trump. I don`t think -- if he was going to learn, he`d have done so by now. He`s been doing this for quite some time now, running for president, and he hasn`t bothered to learn anything about anything. So apparently, he doesn`t think he needs to learn anything, and I don`t think he will by next week, no.

MATTHEWS: Do you think that was too strong a shot or too low a shot for Tim Kaine to say that he was the guy that your dad, when he was talking about some maniac getting hold of a nuclear button, now has a face, his name`s Donald Trump?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Do you think that was too personal to say he`s a nut case with a chance to blow up the world?

REAGAN: "Maniac" might have been a little over the top...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: That`s my word.

REAGAN: ... but basically, I think he was correct. And I`m quite sure that my father would be appalled by the Donald Trump candidacy, so in case that was where you were going with this.

MATTHEWS: No, I -- I`m always going there because it`s amazing how progressives are lining up at the altar of Ronald Reagan this year, in the strangest kind of way!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Let me bring in -- let me bring in Steven. Steven, your thoughts about last night and next Sunday because I really want to know how this leads from one presidential debate. I`ll give credit to Katy Tur, who just said it`s the presidential candidates that matter.

STEVE CORTES, TRUMP NATIONAL HISPANIC ADVISORY COUNCIL: Right. And listen, appreciate you having me on, Chris. And Ron, I pleasure to be on with you. You know, I grew up -- my formative years were in the 1980s, and I`m a political nerd. So most of my buddies, on their locker at school, they would have either Joe Montana or perhaps Pam Anderson or some other fetching girl. I had a picture of your father on my locker at school! So I`m very proud to be on with you today. And I will say this...

REAGAN: I`m not sure you needed to admit that, Steve.

(LAUGHTER)

CORTES: Well, I just did on national television, so...

REAGAN: I appreciate it.

MATTHEWS: Well, for it.

CORTES: And listen -- and listen, here`s the thing...

MATTHEWS: We`re past the beefcake. We`re on to the politics.

CORTES: Sure.

MATTHEWS: Let`s go.

CORTES: Is Donald Trump Ronald Reagan? No. There will never be another Ronald Reagan. There`ll never be another Winston Churchill.

However, are the scenarios similar? And I would argue vociferously they are right now, to the late 1970s. Back then, we had slow growth. We had an America that was lost in the world. We had a dangerous world. We had a crisis of confidence. We had a malaise, self-described at that time by the president -- then president, Jimmy Carter.

I think we have a very similar scenario right now, and we also have another outsider. We have Donald Trump, who is saying, I am ready to smash the political class! I`m ready to smash the crony capitalist system that K Street has constructed in Washington, D.C. And guess what? The people are rallying to that cry.

And so I think it`s working so far and it will continue to work into November because the macro issues of prosperity and security are on our side!

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: ... status quo...

MATTHEWS: OK, that`s not working. What you`re talking about is not the message of these debates. It`s not the message of the news every night. It`s not about -- it`s about Machado. It`s about a guy that ran the Miss Universe contest who wanted to be Hugh Hefner. It`s all about his social life. He has not been able to escape who he is.

Now, you`re talking about -- I agree with you, there`s a force out there for change. But Donald Trump is Donald Trump. He`s bigger at some points than the discussion...

CORTES: Chris...

MATTHEWS: ... we should be having about change versus the way things are, the status question.

CORTES: Fair point.

MATTHEWS: That`s a great argument you`re making, Steve, but that`s not what Trump`s talking about.

CORTES: Chris...

MATTHEWS: He`s talking about Machado and Miss Universe and all this nonsense he gets involved with. Go ahead.

CORTES: And he should stop doing that, and I think he`s going to, OK? And it`s a -- listen, it`s a fair point. And part of having an outsider and a maverick and a non-politician, it`s mostly an attribute (sic), but it does come with the challenges, which you`re mentioning. And I think it`s a two-edged sword...

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORTES: ... to somebody. But also, he hired Mike Pence. And I do think last night matters for that reason...

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORTES: ... not because the debate itself mattered so much...

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORTES: ... but because he showed the American people, if you`re worried -- and it`s OK to worry. It`s natural to worry about a non- politician. Can you handle the Oval Office and the nuclear button?

MATTHEWS: OK, let me go back -- let me go back to Ron. Last night, I remembered Alfred E. Newman of "Mad" magazine. I mean, I`m telling you, every time that Kaine had a shot at Trump`s record, the stuff he`s done, his positions on everything -- nuclear proliferation, everything -- the answer from Pence was, What me worry? I mean, he -- he -- like Alfred E. Newman! He acted like it didn`t happen or I don`t have to talk about it or I got something else to think about. He was the key -- the king of deflection last night! It`s an art!

REAGAN: Yes, he...

MATTHEWS: And not useful perhaps to us, but to him.

REAGAN: Well, I guess it`s useful to him. And I don`t know what else he would have done because some of the things that Donald Trump has said over the last -- well, over the course of the election are really indefensible.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

REAGAN: So there was no defending these things. And I think Mike Pence was thinking ahead to his career. And you`d notice that even when he would defend Donald Trump, he would do it without, for the most part, mentioning Donald Trump`s name. He didn`t -- there was no full-throated defense. there. It was as if he didn`t want, you know, any videotape of him to exist when he was talking about Donald Trump because I think he has a feeling that, you know, a few years from now, when he wants to come back and maybe take another run at this thing, he doesn`t want Donald Trump`s stench all over him.

MATTHEWS: Thank you. That`s what I thought. In fact, last night, I thought -- Steve, what was the safer move for your guy, Mike Pence, to defend Trump or attack Hillary? The obvious answer is the safest thing in the world on the Republican side is attack Hillary! One more shot at her ain`t going to -- it`s not going to hurt her much, but it`s certainly going to help the guy who takes the shot.

And you`re laughing because you know it`s true. It`s better to attack...

CORTES: No, no!

MATTHEWS: ... Hillary than defend Trump.

CORTES: I`m not laughing, and it`s not true. What happened is -- well, here`s what happened is Tim Kaine showed up with a laundry list of embarrassing quotes or supposedly embarrassing quotes...

MATTHEWS: Were they true?

CORTES: ... about -- about Donald Trump, and when...

MATTHEWS: Were they true?

CORTES: A couple were, some weren`t, and...

MATTHEWS: And which one wasn`t true?

CORTES: And what Mike Pence did...

MATTHEWS: Which ones -- just a minute, Steve. I`ll give you a minute here. What did Mike -- what did Tim Kaine say that wasn`t true?

CORTES: I`ll tell you one, and this matters a lot to me as the son of an **immigrant** and as a Latino. He said -- and they`ve said this all along - - they keep saying that Donald Trump is a racist. And that is the sign...

MATTHEWS: Did he say that last night?

CORTES: ... of an intellectually failing campaign!

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I don`t think Tim Kaine said that last night. Go ahead.

CORTES: Well, he said that we -- he said that Donald Trump said that Mexicans are all rapists and murderers. And that`s ridiculous! He never said that. Are there some illegal **immigrants** who are? Are there dangerous illegal **immigrants**? Absolutely, there are! And I think they need to gone yesterday.

And there are sanctuary cities and there are people literally suffering and dying because of that policy. But are most Mexicans? Of course not. Or most Latinos. Of course not. Latinos are a treasure to this country, as are **immigrants** in general.

So I think that -- what he showed up with, Tim Kaine, was a laundry list and said, I dare to you defend one through ten.

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORTES: And what Pence said is, I will defend broad principles, but I`m not going to go -- I`m not down your rabbit hole!

MATTHEWS: OK. OK, here`s -- here`s a -- here`s not a rabbit hole but a Google search (INAUDIBLE) and you can do it, too. Everybody (INAUDIBLE) their keyboards, do this now.

Just look up Google. Take Google, the search engine, and look up two words, right, Mexicans and rapists, and see if the word "Trump" doesn`t show up, as well. Just betting it will. That`s all I have to say, Steve Cortes. It will, and you`re wrong. It will show up. He`s the one to attach the word rapist to Mexicans. Nobody in history has ever done that! He did it, and you know it.

Thank you, Steve Cortes.

CORTES: (INAUDIBLE) not know that.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Ron Reagan. It`s great to -- (INAUDIBLE) all have -- you have a great tan. (INAUDIBLE) from here you`ve been, Ron!

Anyway, coming up, Democrats are starting to feel optimistic about winning the White House, but how about the Senate? We`re going to talk a little bit about that. It`s fascinating. This presidential election between Trump and Hillary Clinton is having a huge impact on about five or six seats in the Senate. We`re going to talk about the big five starting tonight.

New Hampshire, two solid candidates are going to have their careers changed by this presidential election. We`re going to talk about that right now. Kelly Ayotte, not a bad Republican, a hawk, though, up against Maggie Hasan, the governor, both popular. This is great stuff. And that`s ahead right now.

This is HARDBALL, a place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`ve got new polling now for the key state of Ohio. Let`s check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

According to a new Monmouth poll, Hillary Clinton has a 2-point lead - - she`s in the lead now over Donald Trump. It`s Clinton 44, Trump 42, with Gary Johnson just at 5. That`s a change from recent polling for Ohio. The RealClearPolitics average of all the polls still has Trump up by 2.5 in that state.

OK, without Ohio, Trump would have no path to winning the 270 elector votes he needs to win the president (INAUDIBLE) Ohio is always a must, and it is again this year.

We`ll be right back -- for Republicans.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Through Election Day, we`re going to take a look at the five hottest Senate races across the country, contests that could well change the balance of power in the U.S. Senate come November 8.

And, tonight, we`re starting with the battleground state of little old New Hampshire. In the past two presidential elections, New Hampshire went for President Obama. And in 2014, a good year for Republicans, New Hampshire also reelected two Democrats, Maggie Hassan as governor and Jeanne Shaheen as U.S. senator.

Well, this year`s Senate race is razor-thin up there in the Granite State. Governor Hassan is mounting a tough challenge to first-term Republican Senator Kelly Ayotte. And the latest poll shows Hassan with a two-point lead. But that`s just the latest error. And it has very little room for error.

And on Monday night, in their second debate, Senator Ayotte made what many think is a devastating mistake. Here she goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. KELLY AYOTTE (R), NEW HAMPSHIRE: I would tell a child to absolutely aspire certainly to be their best and to be president and to seek to run for the presidency, absolutely.

QUESTION: Would you -- would you -- again, to the question, would you tell them to be like Donald Trump? Would you point to him as a role model?

AYOTTE: Well, I -- I think that, certainly, there are many role models that we have. And I believe he can serve as president. And so, absolutely, I would do that.

QUESTION: If you believe he can serve as president, why won`t you endorse him?

AYOTTE: Because I have had some disagreements with him. And I have been quite clear about those disagreements.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, after that debate, Ayotte released a statement saying she misspoke, which she repeated again yesterday.

Here we -- here she goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

AYOTTE: As I said, I misspoke. I`m sure all of you at one point in your lives have misspoken.

I misspoke. And, certainly, I hope that all of our children aspire to run for president. But I would not hold out either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton as good examples. And I wouldn`t hold them out as examples of role models for my children.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: But just hours after the debate gaffe, Hassan`s team blasted out -- Hassan`s team blasted out this Web video.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

QUESTION: Would you tell a child to aspire to be like Donald Trump? Would you point to him as a role model?

AYOTTE: Absolutely, I would do that.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: She gained a massive amount of weight. And it was a real problem.

QUESTION: Donald Trump called you Miss Piggy.

ALICIA MACHADO, FORMER MISS UNIVERSE: Yes, Miss Piggy, Miss Housekeeping.

QUESTION: Miss Housekeeping. How did that make you feel?

MACHADO: So sad.

TRUMP: But here`s a woman. And she can`t make it 15 feet to her car.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: As you can see right there, he suffers from a chronic condition that impairs movement of his arms.

TRUMP: Oh, I don`t know what I said. Oh, I don`t remember.

I would look her right in that fat ugly face of hers.

Blood coming out of her wherever.

QUESTION: Would you tell a child to aspire to be like Donald Trump? Would you point to him as a role model?

AYOTTE: Absolutely, I would do that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Joining me now are two experts in New Hampshire politics. James Pindell is a political reporter with "The Boston Globe" and Neil Levesque is executive director of the New Hampshire Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm`s great college.

First of all, James and then Neil, what do you make of that? Was that a fair Web ad? Because she didn`t quite say -- she seemed to be trying to say to, Senator Ayotte, to try to say generically if you get to be a president, I guess that means you get to be a role model, without sort of making it personal. And she was desperately trying to get the thread through that needle, James.

JAMES PINDELL, "THE BOSTON GLOBE": Well, look, Kelly Ayotte has been running a tightrope this entire campaign about, where exactly does she stand with Donald Trump?

Her official position is that she is supporting him, as in she is voting for him. But she refuses to endorse him. She is right, when you saw in the earlier part of the way that you set this up, that, repeatedly, she has called out Donald Trump. She never endorsed him or anyone in the presidential primary process.

I understand that the Hassan campaign not only is going to do that particular Web ad. There`s another Web ad that came out today, but she is going to run a full TV ad by as early as the early part of next week.

So, this is going to be a pretty big impact on the race in terms of what Hassan is trying to push. But, overall, look, Kellyanne is running against New Hampshire history here this particular year. New Hampshire has been the swingingest swing state in the country for the last 20 years.

During presidential years, it votes Democratic. In the midterm, it votes Republican. She got elected in the midterm of 2010. She is now running against history trying to win in 2016. And the idea that Donald Trump is on the top of the ballot has certainly complicated matters.

MATTHEWS: James, that`s a great -- and, Neil, that`s a great point, because as James said, this great thing about a six-year Senate term is that it lets you get elected in a nonpresidential year, which may help you.

But then the very next test is to go in a presidential year, and you get beaten. It happens so often. It can be the other way around. If you can withstand the test of a presidential test which goes the other direction, you`re pretty strong in the next midterm.

But, anyway, if it weren`t for Donald Trump`s campaign, would Ayotte be the strongest candidate or not? Or would it still be a close call?

NEIL LEVESQUE, SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE: I definitely think she would be the strongest candidate.

Clearly, she misspoke. It wasn`t a good gaffe. Hassan did the same thing about a month ago. She made a gaffe. These candidates are really good, and it is surprising that they would make a mistake. But keep in mind...

MATTHEWS: Well, wait a minute. What`s the right answer? What`s the right answer when you`re asked if the party -- your candidate`s party, your party`s candidate for president, is he a role model or she a role model for your children? What is the right answer in the case of Donald Trump? What is Kelly Ayotte supposed to say?

LEVESQUE: I think she answered it afterwards perfectly, because most Americans see both candidates unfavorable. And both candidates would really not probably be role models for them, which is rather sad.

The fact is, is that she also has to balance this 35 percent of people in New Hampshire who are going to vote for Trump and are committed supporters to him. So, she has got to balance that, too, in order to get on 51. It`s just classic politics.

MATTHEWS: James, you`re laughing because she has a problem here. If she supports Trump, she offends a lot of people. If she opposes Trump, she offends the Trump people. And there are a lot of them up there in your state, in that state.

PINDELL: To some degree, I wish you could show you my phone, because, during the debate, it was Democrats nonstop. Did you see that? Did you see that? This is a huge moment.

And then, about two hours later, when Kelly Ayotte put out a statement saying -- renouncing Donald Trump, and then of course Hillary Clinton, then I was getting blown up with people from the right, saying, can you believe that she just dissed Donald Trump? How could she do that?

This is what I`m talking about, this political tightrope that Kelly Ayotte has been on. She lost her footing a little bit there. But certainly she needs -- she is trying to walk this needle.

And the other thing I would say is this. She had a primary just a weeks ago in mid-September. And a lot of people thought that clearly once she got over the hurdle against her primary opponent, she would drop Donald Trump. It is clear by now she`s made the calculation that is not the smart move to do.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Well, there are going to be a lot of casualties in this election. And she may well be one of them.

Thanks, James Pindell of "The Globe." And thank you, Neil Levesque of Saint Anselm.

We will be looking at the hot Senate races around the country between now and November. This has been a big one and will be a big one on election night in New Hampshire. It will be worth watching.

Up next: Bill Weld wasn`t on the debate stage last night with Tim Kaine and Mike Pence, but the vice presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party was making news of his own, saying he is now going to the dedicate the rest of his campaign from now to November to making sure Donald Trump doesn`t win. So, what side is he on? It sounds like he`s on Hillary`s side.

Is he still on the side of the Libertarians, or is he just sort of an outlier, an outrider , riding for Hillary? I think he is.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BONNIE SCHNEIDER, MSNBC METEOROLOGIST: I`m meteorologist Bonnie Schneider.

We are tracking Hurricane Matthew, a powerful Category 3 storm right now, 205 miles south-southeast of the Bahamas. But keep in mind it`s 400 southeast of West Palm Beach. Look at the hurricane warnings. We have almost nine million Americans under a hurricane warning right now.

The hurricane watch has been extended to cover the entire Georgia coast. And one of the places that we`re watching very closely, of course, is Florida. Look at this new track that just came in not too long ago. We`re looking at a Category 4 storm.

If it doesn`t make landfall near Space Coast, it is going to get very, very close. With those hurricane-force winds right now extending 45 miles out, just a little bit of a jog to the left can make a huge difference.

And then our focus is more toward the Carolinas to the weekend. But right now, in advance of the storm, people are evacuating, especially the low-lying areas of South Carolina, in advance of dangerous Hurricane Matthew -- now back to HARDBALL.

MATTHEWS: That`s quite a report on the weather down there.

Welcome back to HARDBALL.

While most of America was watching the Republican and Democratic vice presidential debates last night -- they go after each other, the candidates -- Bill Weld, the Libertarian V.P. candidate, was busy making some news of his own.

The former governor of Massachusetts told "The Boston Globe" -- quote -- "that he plans to focus exclusively on blasting Donald Trump over the next five weeks, a strategic pivot aimed at denying Trump the White House and giving himself a key role in helping to rebuild the GOP."

Well, shortly after that article ran, this was posted, Weld assured Libertarian voters -- quote -- "That my L. hat remains firmly in place."

Well, but his statement is particularly telling given the series of high-profile gaffes by his running mate, Gary Johnson, the ones he`s made, including one made here. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Who is your favorite foreign leader?

GARY JOHNSON, LIBERTARIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Who is my favorite...

MATTHEWS: Any -- just name anywhere in the country -- any one of the continents, any country. Name one foreign leader that you respect and look up to, anybody.

JOHNSON: Shimon Peres.

MATTHEWS: No, no, OK. I`m talking about living. Go ahead.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You have got to do this. Anywhere. Any continent, Canada, Mexico, Europe over there, Asia, South America, Africa. Name a foreign leader that you respect.

JOHNSON: I guess I`m having an Aleppo moment, in the former -- former president of Mexico...

MATTHEWS: But I`m giving you the whole world.

JOHNSON: I know, I know, I know, I know.

MATTHEWS: Anybody in the world you like, anybody. Pick any leader.

JOHNSON: The former president of Mexico.

MATTHEWS: No. Which one?

JOHNSON: I`m having a brain -- I`m having a brain...

MATTHEWS: Well, name anybody.

(CROSSTALK)

BILL WELD, LIBERTARIAN VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Fox.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, according to NBC, actually Monday`s NBC poll, Gary Johnson and the Libertarian ticket is polling just about 9 percent of the voters in a four-way race. That`s a lot.

Joining me right now for more is MSNBC political analyst and former adviser to Rand Paul Elise Jordan and BuzzFeed bureau chief John Stanton.

Elise, first, what`s going on with Bill Weld? Everybody -- not everything -- most people, you say Bill Weld should be at the top of the ticket. He is a pretty worldly guy. He knows his stuff. He was a very popular governor of Massachusetts, almost knocked off John Kerry for that Senate race. And here he is sort of tooling around with this other guy. But you can`t figure out what he is up to. And now he puts the word out, I`m really out there to make sure Trump doesn`t win.

ELISE JORDAN, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, first, you have to remember that Gary Johnson really had to fight to get Bill Weld as his running mate at the Libertarian Convention.

And Gary Johnson`s argument for Bill Weld was that having Bill Weld along would help propel them on the debate stage, and that, if the ticket didn`t have a place on the debate stage, that they didn`t stand a shot at winning.

And so I think that`s pretty telling, because, at this point, Bill Weld is evaluating what`s going on and has pretty much concluded that there`s no chance at all, and he doesn`t want to play a role in putting someone like Donald Trump, who he considers an authoritarian and the greatest threat on Libertarianism, in the Oval Office.

MATTHEWS: So, John, is that -- do you agree that the threat that the Libertarian ticket really poses right now is against Hillary, that they take votes away from Hillary? I would think that`s a little bit problematic. I think they take votes away from Republicans as well and maybe more so. What do you think?

JOHN STANTON, WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF, BUZZFEED: I do think they take some votes away from Hillary.

And I think what Governor Weld is going through is what I think a lot of Libertarians and a lot of even people that have been talking about voting for the Green Party are probably starting to go through, now that the election is really sort of on top of us, which is they`re looking at this thing. They`re seeing that the polls are not nearly as wide as I think some people thought they were going to be.

Trump does have a lot of support. And they`re starting to get cold feet, frankly, about voting for a third party, worried that anything that they do could in the end help elect Donald Trump. And I think that`s probably what you`re seeing with him. And it is probably reflective of what a lot of people that aren`t sort of avowed Libertarians who have been talking about saying they`re going to vote for the Libertarian ticket are going through right now

MATTHEWS: Yes. In the world of corrective lenses and views of things, here comes Gary Johnson`s interesting defense for his Aleppo flubs.

Here`s what he told my colleague Andrea Mitchell when she asked him to explain what happened in not knowing some things, in fact, anything about the world.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHNSON: You know what? And the fact that somebody can dot the I`s and cross the T`s on a foreign leader or a geographic location then allows them to put our military in harm`s way.

We put our military in this horrible situation where we go in and support regime change. They get involved in civil wars, where hundreds of thousands of innocent people are in a crossfire.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Now, Elise, that`s insane. That`s saying, if you know something about the world, you will probably start a war.

And I will give you a contrapositive. W. didn`t know anything about the world, and he got us into the Iraq War. So the idea that ignorance is bliss, that not knowing any of the world leaders at all, not being able to mention them, not knowing anything about Syria and the hell that is going to on there, somehow keeps us out there, is the strangest causality argument I have ever heard.

JORDAN: Well, Gary Johnson`s ignorance on foreign policy and the world around him and the lack of curiosity is why I can`t support him, even though I do consider myself a Libertarian Republican.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

JORDAN: And I think it`s also what has given Bill Weld serious pause.

Bill Weld is a serious governor. He`s a serious man. He is a respected lawyer. And he can`t be confident in Gary Johnson right now.

MATTHEWS: Well, I think we agree on that.

John, last thought for you quickly. But I don`t think that argument that ignorance is bliss, that somehow you can walk through the jungle, and not know there`s any animals there, and somehow you won`t get hurt, is the craziest argument I have ever heard.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Your thoughts.

STANTON: Yes. Yes. That`s just a crazy thing to say, frankly.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: OK. We agree.

Thank you, Elise.

And thank you, John.

Up next: just four days to go before the next presidential debate. There`s one coming at us this Saturday. And after the week Trump has had last week, he needs to shake things up fast. Can he mount a comeback in Sunday`s rematch?

I think he has to. I mean, I`m being blunt. He has to, if he wants a chance to win this thing. He has a very outside chance at this point.

The place for politics here, right here. Come back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I would argue that Mike had the single most the decisive victory in the history of vice presidential debates, I believe that. And last night America got to look first hand at my judgment, and that was judgment. You know, you need judgment for people, for deals.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was Donald Trump talking about himself. He was praising and taking credit for what happened last night, in the debate he wasn`t in. But, of course, he names himself as the real winner in the vice presidential debate.

Anyway, Trump`s next big battle is the real one for himself with Hillary Clinton, who beat him last night. It is also a big NFL night with the Packers playing the Giants.

Anyway, as the new national poll shows how much ground he has to make up. Clinton now leads Trump by 10 points in the Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll. This is a big one, 46-36. But you can see, there is a lot undecided, 46 and 36 is not enough to cover 100.

What can Trump do with 34 days until the election?

I`m joined by tonight`s roundtable. David Corn is Washington bureau chief for "Mother Jones" and MSNBC political analyst, Jay Newton-Small is a contributor to "TIME" magazine, and Jonathan Capehart is the opinion writer for "The Washington Post", and an MSNBC contributor.

Jonathan, let`s try to be completely down the middle for a second. We`re looking at this as a contest. Some of the polls show a wide, almost double digit, in this case, double digit spread. But it has wobbled back something much closer to even.

What I noticed today, what is really putting the pressure on Trump that`s coming, if he`s paying attention. Today, he is losing in Ohio. Absolutely have to win Ohio to win an election.

JONATHAN CAPEHART, THE WASHINGTON POST: Right.

MATTHEWS: He is losing in Florida. Has to win Florida. He`s not even winning the states he has to win, let alone moves up to win the states like Virginia and Pennsylvania which take him to the top. So, just to get back into the running, he needs a couple of good weeks just to get in the running.

CAPEHART: Right. Well, what he needs to do is to get out of his own way.

MATTHEWS: What he`d do?

CAPEHART: The one thing that I was looking forward to is, here you have this big moment. The first debate, and I wondered, OK, we don`t know how it`s going to go down. This is before we watched that amazing debate. But I knew that no matter what happened on debate night, Donald Trump will invariably do something that will stop all over whatever performance he had, whether good or bad.

And that`s exactly what we saw in the tweet storm against the Miss Universe, the horrible things that he said.

MATTHEWS: Three o`clock in the morning.

CAPEHART: Three o`clock in the morning tweets, and all the other things. For a week, we didn`t talk about his horrible debate performance. We talked about his horrible judgment in temperament for a week.

MATTHEWS: Jay, you know, this election has been close. It may well end being close not because of Donald Trump being an overwhelmingly likable person. It`s because, first, whatever reason, he had a good ear for the concerns of half the American people -- illegal **immigration**, bad trade deals, stupid wars. He seemed to put that perfect storm together and then let it go away.

Instead, he`s gotten himself pulled into a discussion about Alicia Machado, which is a brilliant bit of oppo research by the Clinton people and he got sucked into it.

JAY NEWTON-SMALL, TIME MAGAZINE: I mean, that`s --

MATTHEWS: Tweeting about something he should not have even talked about it.

NEWTON-SMALL: I mean, that`s so --

MATTHEWS: Tweeting about something he shouldn`t have even talked about it.

NEWTON-SMALL: Yes, I mean, especially because it had already gone off the news because of the train crash in New Jersey, right? People weren`t talking about it and he brought it back again.

But that was really striking last night with the presidential debate was this was an actual debate about substance, right? They actually talked about policy to some degree. I mean, they weren`t talking about Machado.

MATTHEWS: Especially at the end.

NEWTON-SMALL: Yes, they were talking about, especially at the end.

So, you saw more traditional debate between politicians talking actual substance and that`s sort of what was been missing the last two weeks. It`s been all this sort of craziness that really defines the Trump campaign.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about Trump`s ability to learn. Most people that are in business, it`s -- oh I know what politics is. It`s essentially a learning profession.

DAVID CORN, MOTHER JONES: Yes.

MATTHEWS: You have to constantly learn what the people care about, constantly learn new issues, constantly follow the news. You have to always be learning. In all professions, you have to learn. Doctors have to read the manuals. Lawyers have the read law, the court decisions.

In most part, is Trump capable of learning?

CORN: I don`t think so, because you would keep saying that he needs to do this. Every Republican you talk to says they`re waiting for Trump 2.0. And we don`t get past the 1.0 version.

You know, four years, it`s not so much learning, Obama had a terrible first debate performance, and he realized that, you don`t have to learn, but he had to learn but he had to prepare differently. And you get no sense that Donald Trump can do that because ultimately and this goes back to your --

MATTHEWS: If you look at the game --

CORN: It goes back to your issue talking about policy. I think Trump cares about one thing, and that`s Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: OK. Well, then, he should care about winning.

CORN: Well, he does care because Donald Trump is the winner.

MATTHEWS: What`s he going to do to win?

CORN: Be Donald Trump, because people love Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: At some point, Jonathan, when you look at the game pictures, where you see how badly he did, where you see what Pence was able to do, how you can dodge certain questions. You have to talk about everything the other guy wants to talk about.

CAPEHART: But remember, though, Mike Pence did a phenomenal job for the role that he had. He brought some sanity to an insane ticket. But what did Trump do when he learned that Pence was getting better reviews than him? He got angry. It`s been --

MATTHEWS: How do you know that?

CAPEHART: Well, it`s been reported --

MATTHEWS: Wait a minute. Who reported it?

CORN: John Harwood.

MATTHEWS: What did he say?

NEWTON-SMALL: That Donald Trump aides told him --

MATTHEWS: One aide said somebody went and talked on three people and said what?

NEWTON-SMALL: He had been grandstanding, he felt grand stand. That Pence had grandstanded.

MATTHEWS: Did that person talk to Trump? See, I don`t know this stuff.

(CROSSTALK)

CAPEHART: Well, let me get back to it, to my major point. And that is Donald Trump feels the reason why he is the nominee is because what happened in the primaries got him the nomination and by God, that`s what`s going to get him the presidency. But he has not figured out that is not how you`re going to win the presidency.

NEWTON-SMALL: I wonder, is it almost too late? Because you got almost half the states have started early voting. And every day, thousands of people --

CAPEHART: Well, Martha Raddatz is going to do a great job next Sunday night. And I think Anderson Cooper as well. I think it will be more of a referee discussion that we had last night. I think you need a referee. Just not to necessarily interrupt but to keep it running in some kind of a pendulum so you can follow it.

Just -- last night was very hard to follow. OK? And I`m scribbling notes like mad all the time. I scribbled like ten pages or more of notes. Lots of notes in that first presidential debate. Last night, I couldn`t even scribble notes. It was so cockamamie out there.

Referees, you`ve got to have a referee. You shut up for a while.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: We`ll be right back --

CAPEHART: Do you think that`s going to happen on Sunday?

CORN: Not with Trump.

MATTHEWS: It`s not going to help Trump if you can`t understand him.

CORN: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, he`s not going to bully his way to this one.

The roundtable is sticking with us. Up next, they`re going to tell me something I don`t know.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Sunday`s a big day, as I said, here on MSNBC. It`s the second presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. We`re going to have all-day coverage that day and at 7:00 Eastern, I`ll be out in St. Louis for the debate and I`ll be joined from New York by Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow. The debate begins at 9:00 Eastern on Sunday, and we`ll have post-game coverage live from St. Louis. So, that`s why I`m tired, 2:00 in the morning.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

Of course, David, tell me something I don`t know, quickly.

CORN: Last night, during the debate, the Trump campaign put out a press release here`s his plan for defeating ISIS -- work with allies and have more air strikes. That`s Obama`s plan, no difference.

MATTHEWS: OK.

NEWTON-SMALL: "Time" and Survey Monkey came out with a poll showing that women are much more scared about the election than men, 53 to 37 percent, and that`s really bad for Trump because Trump is trying to win women and they`re afraid of him.

MATTHEWS: Why are women afraid of Trump?

NEWTON-SMALL: Women are afraid of Trump because they don`t know that he`s trustworthy to be president yet.

CAPEHART: Target question.

Senator McCain after the debate last night celebrated with a bourbon on the rocks, but he didn`t too much because he had two events after the debate. Didn`t get home until around 2:00 a.m.

CORN: Were you with him?

CAPEHART: No. But I`ve got real good sources.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I wasn`t home until 2:00. Is that as exciting as politics get these days?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Not until 3:00. Is that exciting?

David Corn, Jay Newton-Small and Jonathan Capehart.

When we return, my election diary for tonight, the 5th of October. You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Wednesday, October 5th, 2016.

I believe today is the turn in the road in this presidential election. After last night`s solid work by Mike Pence, the big lift now is for Trump himself. He needs to use the break Pence gave him last night and get serious. Hillary Clinton learned last night that it`s not enough to jab at Trump, not enough to score points off of her opponent`s off-putting behavior, she herself needs to climb the stair of greatness, needs to show herself as a superior candidate, not simply superior to Trump.

I say this because the way the race is going now, Trump will be fortunate to put in a strong showing, to win states like Ohio, Florida, North Carolina. He runs a real risk now of winning none of them, finishing a dreadful number of electoral votes behind his rival, a humiliating number of electoral votes. This means that Clinton -- Hillary Clinton is in a position to win a real mandate, winning most of the major states, winning most of the truly contested states and ending up with the U.S. Senate in Democratic hands.

So, the race now balances between a big victory for Hillary Clinton and a smaller one. For Donald Trump, it`s the balance between a nice try and a lifetime embarrassment. To change this situation, Trump will need to change his behavior from the erratic to the deadly serious, back from the crazy to the three big issues that got him this far, trade, **immigration** and bad wars.

To exploit the current trend, which he can do more easily, Hillary Clinton needs to talk about the future and how she will make the big changes America wants. A country focused not on division but on constructing a bigger American future. Not simply getting along together, but building something together.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Andrea Mitchell, Joy Reid, Hugh Hewitt, John Heilemann

9563 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Will this be the counterattack?

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews, live from Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia.

And here we are -- here we are, in fact, 30 miles from Appomattox courthouse, where General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant, thereby ending a Civil War that cost the lives of 600,000 Americans.

Well, tonight, we`re here at Longwood University for a battle in a political conflict between two very different points of view. It`s the vice presidential debate between Indiana governor Mike Pence, Republican, against Virginia senator Tim Kaine, Democrat.

It`s Governor Pence`s test tonight, obviously, to turn the battle from a defense of Donald Trump to an attack on Hillary Clinton. And to do so, he will need to execute a classic debate tactic, the attack from a defensive position. He needs to strike at Hillary, most likely at her weak numbers on trustworthiness, at the very moment she and her running mate are assaulting Trump.

Trump spent the past week battling a former Miss Universe, defending himself against a "New York Times" article on his taxes, and mocking Clinton`s health and even her marriage. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: She was the winner, and you know, she gained a massive amount of weight. And it was -- it was a real problem. We had -- we had a real problem. Not only that, her attitude.

The news media is now obsessed with an alleged tax filing from the 1990s. I was able to use the tax laws of this country and my business acumen to dig out of the real estate mess.

She`s supposed to fight all of these different things, and she can`t make it 15 feet to her car. Give me a break! Give me a break!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: Hillary Clinton`s only loyalty is to her financial contributors and to herself. I don`t even think she`s loyal to Bill, if you want to know the truth. And really, folks, really, why should she be, right? Why should she be?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Meanwhile, today, Clinton again knocked Trump on his taxes. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: He lost a billion dollars. And as I`ve said repeatedly, that`s hard to do when you`re running casinos. But it demonstrates, I think unequivocally, that he was a failure at this business and he wrecked businesses, and by wrecking his businesses, he wrecked the lives of his workers, he stiffed contractors, and he generally disregarded the wellbeing of the communities.

Someone who is claiming to run for president based on his business success should be judged by that business. And I think what we`re finding out is deeply troubling.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Donald Trump tried to turn the attack back on Clinton. Let`s watch him there.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: She complains about how I`ve used the tax laws of this country to my benefit. Then I ask a simple question. Why didn`t she ever try to change those laws so I couldn`t use them? The reason that she did not do that is her donors and contributors have used those same tax laws as I did, the same way!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: For more on this fight coming tonight, I`m joined by NBC`s Andrea Mitchell, "USA Today`s" senior political reporter Heidi Przybyla, and Joy Reid, the host of "AM Joy" on MSNBC.

Andrea, thank you for joining us. Give us a tap (ph) this fight tonight. Give us -- give us a sense of this fight from both ends.

ANDREA MITCHELL, HOST, "ANDREA MITCHELL REPORT": Well, first of all, the Clinton team is feeling really energized. They`re up in two polls now, by 9 and 10 points in two separate polls in Pennsylvania, which is their firewall. She was there today, appearing to suburban Republican women in those bedroom suburbs in Delaware County.

And what they`re going to try to do tonight is to have John -- to have Mike -- excuse me -- have Tim Kaine go after Mike Pence on all of the things that Donald Trump has, they think, messed up on this week, opening up all of these issues, the taxes, as well as, of course, the women`s issues. They think that he can, you know, prosecute that case against Mike Pence.

Pence, of course, they think, will be on the offensive -- on the defensive, but Pence is planning to go after Clinton on her trust, on her reliability, and on those issues you heard Donald Trump bringing up today. So it`s going to be quite a matchup, I think, these two very policy-wonkish running mates taking on the roles of attack dogs.

MATTHEWS: I wonder tonight -- I know in the fight -- watching fighting as I grew up, big heavyweight boxing, I always watched -- the middleweight fights are always the better fights. I think it`s going to be better (ph) that tonight.

Anyway, speaking of polls, a new NBC on-line tracking poll out today shows Clinton beating Trump by 6 points. That`s a pretty strong lead for Hillary Clinton.

We also have new polls from several battleground states. let`s look at those. Clinton leads Trump by 11 in a new poll in Colorado. That`s a big move toward Hillary. And also, Trump`s ahead by 5 in Ohio. Well, that`s where he`s been.

Clinton also leads by 10 in a new Monmouth poll. That`s huge. That is the firewall. Andrea`s right about that. Pennsylvania`s the firewall. That`s where Hillary will probably win, the way things are going, and Trump is not going to win there, the way things are going.

She`s up by 7 also in Virginia, another part of that firewall, and up 6 in one North Carolina poll, although that`s much closer. In Florida, she leads by 5 in a new Quinnipiac poll. That`s another state that`s going to remain close.

Let me go to me other people here (INAUDIBLE) this thing. I think the most predictable thing at 9:00 o`clock tonight, besides the fact it`s going to be 9:00 o`clock, is that Tim Kaine is going to do what Hillary`s been doing, hit him on the taxes, hit him on his treatment of women.

It`s so predictable. Therefore, it should be easy for Mike Pence to predict the attack and counter it. Your thoughts.

JOY REID, HOST, "AM JOY": Well, yes, and I think that Mike Pence knows that he`s here to defend Donald Trump, but I...

MATTHEWS: Or attack.

REID: Or attack. But I think you also have a second sort of line of attack that Democrats or Tim Kaine is going to try to use tonight because as I see it, Mike Pence`s job tonight is try to make Trump look normal or seem normal to that last bastion of suburban women Republicans.

Tim Kaine`s job is to make Mike Pence seem strange. And if you think about it, Mike Pence was put on the ticket in order to normalize Trump, to make him acceptable to Republicans who are uncomfortable with Trump`s being, with the way he is.

I think Tim Kaine will try to go after Mike Pence`s own history, particularly on issues to do with women because if that`s the swing vote, if he goes after him on things like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which is, you know, a very important thing to young voters, if he goes after him on things like Planned Parenthood, defunding it in Indiana -- I actually think Mike Pence himself will come under attack, not just Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: What do you think? But I don`t know why you attack a VP, though. I would attack the top guy. What do you think?

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, "USA TODAY": I think, you know, Mike Pence -- there`s no upside to him owning a lot of the things that Tim Kaine is going to try to make him own today. He`s going to try and make him own Donald Trump and all of these -- I mean, think about all the things that have happened just since the last debate, in terms of Alicia Machado and the taxes...

MATTHEWS: I actually (INAUDIBLE) I don`t think it`s complicated. Let me ask you both because it`ll be my rhetorical question. What`s the safest thing for any politician on the Republican side who has a future, 20/20, way down the road -- what`s the safest thing to do, defend Donald Trump or attack Hillary Clinton? What`s the safest...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Tell why. Explain why because...

REID: Because the Republican Party has an existential hatred of Hillary Clinton...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: And she`ll be around!

REID: And she`ll still...

MATTHEWS: If she gets elected this time...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... go against her next time!

REID: And you remember...

MATTHEWS: And you`re in a perfect position, if you`re already attacking Hillary Clinton, to be attacking her now so you can do it again later, whereas defending Trump is dangerous because of why?

REID: And you also have to remember, too, that Republicans are looking at a midterm in 2018 where they don`t know how much...

MATTHEWS: OK. Right.

REID: ... of their own electoral base is going to be for Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Defending Trump.

PRZYBYLA: Not to mention...

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: Not to mention that Trump -- well, first of all, not to mention that Trump didn`t prosecute this case himself. This was one of things coming out of his last debate that Republicans were most upset about, was that he didn`t take the opportunity...

MATTHEWS: He never mentioned the Clinton Foundation!

PRZYBYLA: ... to hit her on the Clinton Foundation, on Libya, on Benghazi, or even on the e-mails, which was such low-hanging fruit.

MATTHEWS: Her hawkishness. Anyway...

PRZYBYLA: Pence will.

MATTHEWS: ... Mike Pence has got to do what Trump didn`t do and he`s got to go after Hillary Clinton tonight. I`m absolutely convinced the tactic tonight to watch is the attack from a defensive position. Everybody, including all the Republicans and all the commentators, are going to say, Oh, Mike Pence has got to defend Donald Trump tonight. No, he doesn`t. He can just attack Hillary Clinton.

Anyway, earlier today, Hillary Clinton responded to a question from a student about Trump`s comments about how women look. Here`s how she -- why would Pence want to talk about that tonight?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, he can just stay away from Trump, attack Hillary. (INAUDIBLE) watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: You know, it`s shocking when women are called names and judged on the basis, solely on the basis of physical attributes. We have to stand up against that. My opponent insulted Miss Universe.

(LAUGHTER)

CLINTON: I mean, how do you get more acclaimed than that? But it wasn`t good enough. So we can`t take any of this seriously anymore. We need to laugh at it. We need to refute it. We need to ignore it. And we need to stand up to it. And especially the bullying.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: We`ve got Andrea Mitchell back. Andrea, this -- give me a sense of what you think Pence is going to do. I have a theory. I think you missed it. What do you think Pence is going to do? I don`t think he`s playing defense tonight. What a waste of time. He can`t defend Trump. Trump`s got to defend Trump. Your thoughts.

MITCHELL: Yes, absolutely. I think he goes after Hillary Clinton in ways, as you just pointed out, that Donald Trump didn`t -- the e-mails, cybersecurity, all the things he did not open up because he got so distracted in the debate once she really got him off his game by mentioning that he had inherited that company -- $14 million loan from his dad.

And after that, he just kept returning over and over and over again to his business issues, which were hardly what he should have been prosecuting in that debate against Hillary Clinton.

So Mike Pence is very smart. You know, he clearly knows how to go after Hillary Clinton tonight. And you know he will have prepared a whole lot better than Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and I think Pence is a very serious guy -- perhaps a lot of people would say in terms of politics, too serious. But he`s deadly. I want to go back to my colleagues here.

Mike Pence -- look at the guy! He`s in this thing seriously. He isn`t here to have fun. He`s got an ideological commitment. He actually says what he believes, which separates him from most politicians. You may not like his very conservative views on women, on abortion rights, on gay rights...

REID: And a lot of women may not know them. A lot of women...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... but he is for real. That separates him from most politicians. I`m sorry. That`s rare.

REID: Yes. And he took a job that was probably the most unpopular, unwanted job in Republican politics. You see other elected Republicans running from Donald Trump and cringing...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... candidate for governor of Indiana.

REID: Well, there you go.

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) worst job. But go ahead.

REID: But the other issue is, is that Mike Pence may want to do the full pivot. You call it the full 180. You`re asked a question about, the same Kelly Ayotte question. He gets that question, Would you be proud to have your children or your church see Donald Trump as president? Is that something of which you can be of proud? Good luck trying to do a 180- degree pivot without answering that question. It`s almost guaranteed to get the Kelly Ayotte question. And he`s got to answer it. You just can`t do a 180.

MATTHEWS: Well, depends (INAUDIBLE) the moderator is.

REID: That`s a good point.

MATTHEWS: I`ve watched a lot of moderators that don`t push...

REID: Let it go.

MATTHEWS: ... a second and third time.

PRZYBYLA: And think about on the tax issue, for example. Donald Trump has not had to answer for this in the way that Mike Pence is going to have to answer for Donald Trump.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Is the moderator tonight going to be tough and keep pressing like that, do you think?

REID: It`s hard to say. But I mean, she`s a tough reporter...

MATTHEWS: I`ve never seen her in action...

REID: ... she`s a good reporter. I haven`t seen her do a debate. But I think that at this moment, the media is under such pressure, as well, that if she doesn`t try to get him to answer that question...

MATTHEWS: OK, let me...

(CROSSTALK)

REID: ... if she lets him go, she`s going to face a lot of criticism.

MATTHEWS: Where do we stand right now on the role of the moderator? Is it the fact checker or not? Because, you know, one of our colleagues got attacked for not fact checking, then another one got hit for fact -- I mean, what is the state of the art on that? Do you fact check or not?

MITCHELL: I think you have to do it as appropriate. You have to expect that the debaters will do a lot of fact checking for you, but you have to do a considerable amount of fact checking yourself. But each moderator -- look, the pressure is enormous. Each moderator has to make their own decision.

But I think Mike Pence has an easy answer. I think he`s all in with Donald Trump. He cannot not not say, Of course I would be proud, of course he`s a role model. I really think that he believes in this, but on all of the issues where Trump has been arguably rude and vulgar, he`ll just pivot back to things that he believes Hillary Clinton has done wrong.

MATTHEWS: I think he can isolate where he supports Trump. He said -- he can say Trump has had the guts to take on the political establishment of this country of both parties. That`s an act of courage, in my department, and I do respect it. He can define what he likes about Trump. Grown-up politicians can define their answers.

Well, here we are in Virginia. Thomas Jefferson said the whole art of politics is the art of telling the truth. If they`d only remember that.

Thank you, Andrea Mitchell.

MITCHELL: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Heidi Przybyla and Joy Reid.

Coming up -- what do Tim Kaine and Mike Pence hope to accomplish tonight? For Kaine, it might be to do no harm, but after the rough week Donald Trump`s just had, Pence has the sharper challenge. He has to break the Clinton charge because if he doesn`t, who`s going to do it?

And coming up at the top of the hour, I`ll be joining Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow, of course, as we get ready for tonight`s debate. And then at 9:00 Eastern, Tim Kaine and Mike Pence go face to face in the only presidential debate for the vice presidents.

At 10:30, we`ll be back with full coverage of the debate, and I`ll be back here covering everything that happens tonight until 1:00 AM Eastern. We`re sticking with you!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

HARDBALL`s coming back, and this is a special edition of HARDBALL, live from Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, site of the vice presidential debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: It`s a wild night here! Look at these people!

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D), MINNESOTA: All right!

MATTHEWS: This is...

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: We`re out here in the real Virginia, in the country out here. This isn`t some suburb in a bedroom community of Virginia. This is way out in the country here, live from Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, for tonight`s vice presidential debate.

By the way, everybody knows this who follows anything -- women make up a larger share of the electorate than men. Everybody keeps forgetting this, more women voters than male voters.

Anyway, today, they`re getting the full-court press from Hillary Clinton. Two of Clinton`s most powerful surrogates, Michelle Obama and Senator Elizabeth Warren, hit the campaign trail today to exploit Trump`s terrible week and boost turnout. Here they go.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: If a candidate regularly demeans and humiliates women, making cruel and insulting comments about our bodies, criticizing how we look, how we act -- well, sadly, that`s who that candidate really is.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, she`s good. And with good reason. According to NBC`s most recent on-line survey among women likely voters, a majority of 52 percent said they support Clinton compared to just 34 percent who say they support Trump. That`s quite a spread.

Down here in Farmville, it will be up to both vice presidential candidates to make the hard sell for both of the people at the top of their tickets, obviously. They`re surrogates. They`re the big surrogates, the VP nominees.

Governor Mike Pence will have the more challenging task, of course, because after a bad week -- some people say a horrible week for Trump -- it`ll be up to him to turn the battle against Hillary Clinton, and that`s a challenge. Pence is strongly pro-life, of course, and in 2015 passed a controversial religious freedom bill that gave stronger legal defense to businesses if they refuse to serve gay people.

Anyway, here`s how he described himself when he accepted the nomination for VP.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRES. NOMINEE: I`m a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican, in that order!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Tim Kaine, who during the 2012 Senate election, carried 56 percent of women voters in Virginia, will have to defend his own complicated views on abortion, whether he`s personally pro-life, but we`ll get to that.

For more, I`m joined by Senator Amy Klobuchar, Democrat from Minnesota, and Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe. Both are Clinton supporters, big-time!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, thank you. Thank you, Governor.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: This is...

KLOBUCHAR: This is something!

MATTHEWS: OK, I really love this trip down here.

(CROSSTALK)

GOV. TERRY MCAULIFFE (D), VIRGINIA: Welcome to Virginia.

MATTHEWS: I love coming down here tonight, and thanks to the senator for being here. Let me ask you both...

KLOBUCHAR: Farmville.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you both.

You`re both, I know, besides being statespersons and men and women of the world who care about this country, you`re also political tacticians and strategists. You know, what is -- let`s try. And you`re both here supporting Secretary Clinton and Tim Kaine, who`s a very likable guy. We all like Tim Kaine.

MCAULIFFE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: But let me ask you, tell me about that battle of the two different personalities, Mike Pence, Tim Kaine. Size them up as debaters, as personalities.

MCAULIFFE: First of all, both very strong.

I have known Tim now for two decades. I have known Governor Pence for a long time. I served as chairman of the National Governors Association. I worked with Governor Pence.

He has got a much harder deal tonight. Tim Kaine talks about Hillary Clinton`s vision, building the middle class, getting people back to work. Mike Pence tonight has to defend all of the things you have been talking about on this show. I think he has a much tougher road tonight, to be able to have to defend all the things...

MATTHEWS: Can he pivot?

MCAULIFFE: He`s going to have a hard time pivoting. People want to have answers.

Donald Trump said all the following things. This is the head of your ticket. How do you respond? Tim Kaine can talk about the five-point plan on economic development, how we move this country forward.

You`re in Virginia today. We are a swing state. We have been very strong for Clinton and Kaine now for months and months. Hillary has been up here for the last eight months anywhere from seven to 12 points.

MATTHEWS: Yes. You say it`s a swing state, but it`s getting to be a Democrat state, isn`t it?

MCAULIFFE: Yes. I mean...

MATTHEWS: Went twice for Obama.

MCAULIFFE: When I won -- I broke a 44-year trend when I won the governorship. I brought in with me my lieutenant governor and attorney general, first time in 24 years Democrats swept.

Democrats now control all five statewides here in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Why? Economic -- I just announced the other day, lowest unemployment rate of any major state in America.

MATTHEWS: What he is not saying, although he knows it better than any of us know, women in this state. Northern Virginia is packed with a lot of women who come to work in the Washington area, single women. A lot of them are single, for life in many cases.

They are very pro-choice. And we have watched this with the Doug Wilder campaign. We watched it with all the campaigns. Women in Virginia are pro-choice. The state is pro-choice. Is that going to be an issue tonight?

KLOBUCHAR: Well, I think it will be discussed.

MATTHEWS: Because Pence is very pro-life.

KLOBUCHAR: Oh, yes. Pence has said he would want to overturn Roe v. Wade. He introduced the bill to defund Planned Parenthood, where a lot of women get their contraception.

This will be a part of the debate. I don`t think it`s the only issue for women, though, Chris, as you know. Women workers are two-thirds of the minimum wage workers. And the fact that Hillary Clinton has been out there on increasing the minimum wage, on a strong work family leave policy, on a strong child care policy, a lot of the women are focused on those, and that`s why you see that, in addition to the debate performance, where after she answered every question for an hour-and-a-half, he had the gall to look at the camera and look at her, and say, you don`t have the stamina to be the president of the United States.

MATTHEWS: Was that a code? Was that a whistle for you, a dog whistle, stamina?

KLOBUCHAR: Yes. Well, I screamed at the TV.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You think it`s anti-woman.

KLOBUCHAR: I yelled at the TV, because I`m thinking, are you -- what is wrong with you? She is the one that has been strong. She is the one that...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It`s the strangest word, because -- but you guys live longer than we do. You bear children. And anybody who`s been through a childbirth, like I have been watching -- all we do is watch. And you have babies. I don`t know what this stamina thing is about.

Let me ask you about young people, a lot of them here.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: How many of you are millennials?

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: How many? OK. They are millennials.

Both candidates have had a hard time stirring these guys up. How do they do it? They have a month to do it.

MCAULIFFE: Look what`s going on. Listen, everybody out here, they want a good-paying job. That`s what they want. They want a great education system. Hillary has come out with her plan. In a state school, if you make under $125,000, you will get a higher education.

This is what these folks out here all want. They want a good-paying job. They want an avenue to success. Why is Bernie Sanders cutting commercials, traveling all over the commonwealth, all over the country? Because he`s out there supporting Hillary Clinton because he knows that she`s the right thing for this country and she`s the right thing for millennials.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Why would anybody who is a millennial vote for Gary Johnson if they voted for Bernie Sanders? That`s what I can`t understand. How can you go from socialist to Libertarian? It doesn`t make -- you handle this, Senator.

How can you go from socialist to Libertarian? It makes no sense.

KLOBUCHAR: Well, I think that Bernie Sanders, who is in my home state today, is going to have a lot to do that. He`s out there strong? He`s out there talking about why the vote should be for Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: OK. Is Hillary closer to socialist or Libertarian? What is she closer to?

KLOBUCHAR: One more thing.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: This is HARDBALL. Come on. This is HARDBALL. What`s she closer to?

KLOBUCHAR: One more thing.

MATTHEWS: You don`t want to answer. OK.

KLOBUCHAR: One more thing about the millennials, though, Chris, they support each other.

And when you have a candidate in Donald Trump who`s going after **immigrants**, who is going to after -- wants to get rid of gay marriage, those kinds of things, they respond to that, because they look out for each other.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: They`re pro-LGBT.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MCAULIFFE: And who`s promising **immigration** reform? Hillary Clinton, first 100 days, **immigration** reform.

MATTHEWS: Let`s get it done. Let`s get it done.

MCAULIFFE: Infrastructure. Let`s get it done.

MATTHEWS: Because I really think that`s one thing that`s got to get done.

Anyway, thank you.

KLOBUCHAR: Thank you.

MCAULIFFE: Great.

MATTHEWS: Very popular figure here, very popular governor.

MCAULIFFE: Well, but spend every penny you got here in Virginia before you go across the Potomac River, Chris.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: OK.

KLOBUCHAR: Yay!

MATTHEWS: We`re going to the Silver Diner on the way home tomorrow.

MCAULIFFE: Good.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, thank you, Senator Amy Klobuchar, a very popular person in the United States, and Terry McAuliffe, who`s some day going to rule the world.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, when we come back, all eyes on Mike Pence. After the bad week Donald Trump had, can Pence dig him out? I think Pence is going on offense tonight like you have never seen. He is a tough customer.

We`re just about 90 minutes away, by the way, from the start of this debate. And, by the way, middleweight fights are always much more exciting than heavyweight fights.

We`re live at Longwood University in Virginia -- back with more.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: As a businessman and real estate developer, I have legally used the tax laws to my benefit and to the benefit of my company, my investors and my employees.

I mean, honestly, I have brilliantly -- I have brilliantly used those laws. The unfairness of the tax laws is unbelievable. It`s something I have been talking about for a long time, despite, frankly, being a big beneficiary of the laws.

But I`m working for you now. I`m not working for Trump.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

What a crowd we have here. What a crowd.

Anyway, that was Donald Trump defending his use of tax laws to his benefit yesterday at a campaign stop out in Colorado.

Well, Trump`s been playing defense on that lately, so will his running mate, Mike Pence, tonight defend Trump`s troubles tonight in the debate, or will he instead hit at Hillary Clinton`s weak points?

Hugh Hewitt is a radio talk show host and an MSNBC contributor, and John Brabender is a Republican strategist.

Gentlemen, thank you all.

John and then Hugh, OK, I will go back to my point of view. Critique me on this. The worst thing in the world that Mike Pence could do tonight is spending his hour-and-a-half defending Trump, because Trump may not be around in four or eight years, but Hillary Clinton will be.

And she will always been the nemesis of the Republican Party. I think the smart move for him is attack Hillary where he can, where he`s justified, hit hard and hard again and again and again, relentlessly bringing the case against her credibility. She`s at 61 percent unbelieved right now by the American people.

Don`t waste your time on Machado, on taxes. You won`t gain an inch. But you can gain a lot of footage going after Hillary. In other words, attack, don`t defend, if he can. That`s what I recommend he do tonight.

JOHN BRABENDER, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST: Well, I think that`s right.

I think he can`t spend the whole time saying, well, yes, Donald Trump said this because. I think he has to give some confidence of who Donald Trump really is from a first-person perspective, but he`s got to move the conversation certainly to Hillary.

He`s got to make sort of the conviction or the prosecution of her, but he`s got to do it in a tone and temperament different than Donald Trump has. He has to use facts and still come across as likable and believable, rather than by shouting or by rhetoric that...

MATTHEWS: Where would you put the first punch? On her general lack of credibility, on the whole history starting in the early `90s of sort of vague trouble, always the unending soap opera around the Clintons that just seems to always be there. How would you do...

(CROSSTALK)

BRABENDER: I think there`s two things he should do. Number one is that.

I think he`s going to say, you know what? They gamed the system. Every chance she had, they gamed the system for personal benefit. Second of all, I think he`s going to talk a lot about how she`s been there for 24 years. We tried it her way. She likes to say she`s tested. He`s going to say, but she failed the test.

MATTHEWS: OK.

BRABENDER: And he`s going to go through a lot of examples.

MATTHEWS: Hugh, how do you critique my suggestion that he go on offense?

HUGH HEWITT, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: One hundred percent correct.

She has to be the target of every single statement he makes tonight, not Senator Kaine, not Donald Trump, but Egypt, Libya, Syria, the server, the Supreme Court, the status of forces agreement that she did not come up with, Bill Clinton today, double the premiums, half the coverage.

It`s his first speech in a presidential campaign. Whether that`s in 2020 or 2024, Michael Pence is going to run for president. And, tonight, he has to prove that he can make...

MATTHEWS: He has got nothing to lose attacking her. He`s got a lot to lose defending everything Trump has done.

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: That`s why everything, it`s bingo. He ought to bring up President Obama`s bad six-word legacy as well, leading from behind, red line, and J.V.s. Everything is a bingo card for him. He just has to hit those squares.

MATTHEWS: Can he get the headline tomorrow and not her -- not Kaine? Can he come out, Pence attacks Hillary on credibility? If it`s Pence defends Trump, I think that`s a wash.

BRABENDER: I think you have got to be careful tonight. I don`t think this is the type of debate that you`re going to have these dramatic headlines.

I think what he can come out of here...

MATTHEWS: I do. I predict there will be a headline in the paper tomorrow.

(CROSSTALK)

BRABENDER: But I think what he can do is that he -- Mike Pence is so likable and knowledgeable that I think he can do a better job probably than Trump can to create the real doubts of Hillary Clinton, and why they matter.

Trump just sort of throws them out there and assumes people will know. I think Mike Pence is better at putting it in context why people should be outraged about what Hillary Clinton has done.

(CROSSTALK)

HEWITT: One thing he can do, I think, is build audience for Sunday night.

He needs to get Trump a chance to get back into the ring against Hillary Clinton with a reset. So, he says, watch Sunday night. If you want change in this country, if you think we`re on the wrong direction, watch Sunday night. A different Donald Trump is coming.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about how he handles the tricky stuff to get to the attack.

My -- the question was asked of Kelly Ayotte, who is the senator from New Hampshire, do you want this -- do you want Donald Trump to be your kid`s role model? Well, there`s an answer to that. You don`t -- you isolate and say, in terms of guts and taking on the establishment, yes, in terms of guts. Nobody`s perfect, but there`s certain things the guy does represent.

You don`t have to say, I like his marital history, right? Who is going to say that?

BRABENDER: He will answer it different than she did.

What he will say is, I have gotten to know Donald Trump very well. Let me tell share with you some of the things that I have found that I do like about him. I do wish my kids had some of those. But let me tell you why I would be scared to death for them to turn out like Hillary Clinton.

And I think everything will go back in that direction.

HEWITT: And I think he has -- this is the first presidential election in history where there the known knowns are the negatives. We have always known the positives about candidates.

This is the first time that we know the negatives about each of them.

MATTHEWS: Every presidential debate, I have watched almost all of them -- in fact, all of them -- the winner is the person who attacks from a defensive position, whether it`s there you go again, attacking Carter after he`s been attacking Reagan`s record on Medicare, or it`s, what`s his name, Dan Quayle saying he`s Jack Kennedy.

HEWITT: True.

MATTHEWS: Every time you go on the offense, the other guy or woman has the chance to respond at that moment, that precise moment of attack, when the attacker is most vulnerable and most committed. Nail them right in the nose.

HEWITT: That what`s Chris Christie did to Marco Rubio in New Hampshire.

BRABENDER: Right.

MATTHEWS: That`s what you can do.

And, therefore, I think the opportunity tonight...

BRABENDER: But Pence doesn`t have to prove he`s credible. He`s already proven.

MATTHEWS: I know. I`m just talking about, can you attack and hurt?

Anyway, thank you, Hugh Hewitt. Thank you, John Brabender, both great guests on this program.

Up next: Hillary Clinton`s bringing out the heavy hitters. She`s taking no chances now that she`s got the lead in the polls. She`s got the best surrogate team around.

Plus, the HARDBALL rules on how to win or lose a debate. We will get to that.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: What can Mike Pence and Tim Kaine learn from past V.P. debates?

You`re watching HARDBALL, a special edition, live from Longwood University, for tonight`s vice presidential debate.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: When it comes to the qualifications that we should demand of our president, to start, we need someone who will take the job seriously.

I think we can all agree that someone who`s roaming around at 3:00 a.m. tweeting should not have their fingers on the nuclear codes.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You know, what an accomplished platform speaker the first lady has become all these years.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL, live at Longwood University for tonight`s vice presidential debate.

In fact, just about an hour and 20 minutes from now, it`s going to happen.

And that was, of course, the fantastic first lady, Michelle Obama, on the campaign trail today in North Carolina. She`s just one of several high- profile Democrats to hit the trail for Hillary Clinton in what amounts to be an unprecedented surrogate operation.

We`re looking at a bunch of them there, chief among them, of course, President Obama, who`s indicated that he plans to spend two days a week every week this month campaigning for Clinton in the homestretch to November.

And unlike outgoing Presidents George W. Bush in 2008, Obama`s approval rating now is at 54 percent, according to Gallup, which means he`s in a unique position to help secure a third consecutive term for his party in the White House.

I`m joined right now by some experts, our roundtable tonight, John Heilemann, managing editor of Bloomberg Politics and host of "With All Due Respect." Megan Murphy is Washington bureau chief for Bloomberg. And Jason Johnson is politics editor at The Root.

Of course, Jason, you have been great on the show lately.

Let`s talk about the president. I mean, I can`t think of a time since Eisenhower back in `60 where a sitting president is this popular...

JASON JOHNSON, THE ROOT: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... and can go out and throw his weight behind his party`s nominee.

JOHNSON: Look, he can sing. He can -- he can bring people out and...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He can sing?

JOHNSON: Look, he sings. When Obama gets in front of certain block audiences, he will sing. He`s Al Green.

But here`s what`s key. I mean, it`s amazing that he`s this popular and Clinton is still struggling. So, he`s going to really have to put in this time to pull her over the finish line.

MATTHEWS: Because Bill Clinton had a problem again today.

First lady, what a surrogate. She sort of kept herself to herself. She`s never been a politician. She doesn`t bang the drum for her party or her husband.

She`s sort of like a movie star, you don`t see much of her, but when you do, you pay attention.

MEGAN MURPHY, BLOOMBERG NEWS: I think it`s a perfect analogy, and her use on the campaign trail shows how deeply personal they both feel this race is. They feel it`s not only Hillary Clinton, but their legacy, as well, and what they try to achieve together.

MATTHEWS: What`s personal about this besides her husband`s legacy?

MURPHY: Well, he`s an anathema to everything they stand for. It`s an anathema to everything they thought --

MATTHEWS: She doesn`t like the birther stuff anymore than he did?

MURPHY: She doesn`t like the birther stuff. She doesn`t like how he stands on women. She doesn`t like how he stands on their entire progressive record. She doesn`t like the fact that we may have as many as three Supreme Court justices on the table.

This is everything to them. It is personal. And I think Michelle Obama has proven, she would be almost the most effective surrogate Hillary Clinton has, particularly closing the gap with women in states like --

MATTHEWS: You and I have not seen an effective big-time surrogate in our lifetime. It`s a rarity that could endorse up like this. If you`re going to endorse down, a president with somebody running for governor. But to endorse up, here you have the president of the United States and a first lady with the firepower I think that might change.

I think this month, you`re going to see a lot of Obama.

JOHN HEILEMANN, HOST, "WITH ALL DUE RESPECT": I will say, Reggie Jackson is a good analogy. David Ortiz may be a better analogy, an even better collection --

MATTHEWS: You want to explain that?

HEILEMANN: David Ortiz, he`s become, he`s the best clutch hitter, best October/November player ever in baseball. But we`re going too far afield.

Here`s the thing, I think it`s -- forget about legacy and all that stuff. You can`t glide past the birther thing. Donald Trump was the face of the movement that tried to delegitimize Barack Obama`s presidency on racial grounds. They are both, as a couple, have been deeply offended and angered by that from the moment that it started.

And so, this is a thing of like, we don`t want that guy to occupy this seat. Not just what he would do to our legislative accomplishments, it`s a deeply personal thing. Deeply personally.

MATTHEWS: OK. I have to ask you about who else won`t matter. Does Bill Clinton count anymore in terms of this? He tries, but I don`t know if he`s got the --

MURPHY: I think when you`re looking at this election --

MATTHEWS: No, I`m asking him. Don`t dodge off of this. Is Bill Clinton an effective surrogate?

MURPHY: I think she`s got far more effective surrogates out there.

MATTHEWS: Bill Clinton still got it?

HEILEMANN: He can still play in certain parts of the electorate.

MATTHEWS: Where?

HEILEMANN: They`re sending him to a lot of places to -- he`s going to spend most of his time going to rural communities, going to places -- he says when he`s out of the trail, he says I go places --

MATTHEWS: Who`s a better politician, him or her now? Hillary or Bill? Who`s better right now?

MURPHY: She`s on an incredible wave up.

MATTHEWS: Who`s better, Bill or Hillary?

JOHNSON: I think he`s a better politician. He`s the best explainer surrogate she`s got. He can still get on stage and explain policy in 20 minutes.

MURPHY: If he doesn`t screw it up.

MATTHEWS: What was he doing trashing Obamacare?

JOHNSON: Because he doesn`t like him. I don`t think he`s ever been that happy about this president.

MATTHEWS: OK, thank you. When you say double the premiums for people that are working 60 hours a week, that`s not exactly applauded.

JOHNSON: No, it`s not.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, when we come back, the HARDBALL rules, how Tim Kaine or Mike Pence can win tonight`s debate.

This is a HARDBALL, a special edition. We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GERALDINE FERRARO, FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Let me just say, first of all, that I almost resent, Vice President Bush, your patronizing attitude, that you have to teach me about foreign policy.

JAMES STOCKDALE, FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Who am I? Why am I here?

LLOYD BENTSEN, FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Senator, you`re no Jack Kennedy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: There are tough moments. Welcome back.

Those were some unforgettable and awfully nasty moments from past vice presidential debates. And over the past two weeks, we`ve covered the HARDBALL rules for how to win or lose a presidential debate.

Well, tonight we have some new advice for the vice presidential candidates before tonight`s face-to-face showdown. Here`s what we`ve learned over the years. Number one, do no harm. Vice presidential candidates must protect the candidate at the top of the ticket. That means they need to avoid creating a side show that might distract from the campaign`s message.

Back in 1976, then Senator Bob Dole famously ignored that advice when he blamed Democrats for the wars of the 20th century. Not only did he give his opponent, Walter Mondale, an opening to counterattack, it also put the campaign on the defensive for a couple of weeks.

Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BOB DOLE, FORMER U.S. SENATOR: It`s not a very good issue, anymore than the war in Vietnam would be or World War II or World War I or the war in Korea. All Democrat wars, all in this century.

I figured it up the other day, if we added up the killed and wounded, and Democrat wars in this century, it would be about 1.6 million Americans, enough to fill the city of Detroit.

WALTER MONDALE, FORMER U.S. SENATOR: Does he really mean to suggest to the American people that there was a partisan difference over our involvement in the war to fight Nazi Germany?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, actually, Nazi Germany declared war on us after Pearl Harbor. Let`s get straight that. Little fact.

Anyway, it`s clearly that Mondale had an easy opening there, Dole gave it to him.

JOHNSON: Look, when you screw up that bad and the other person is waiting, it`s kind of like, Sarah Palin, 2008, can I all you, Joe, so you could set up --

MATTHEWS: We`ll get to that.

JOHNSON: But you know, overall, you`ve got to make sure that your main goal is promoting your candidate. You`re the side show, you`re the undercard, you`re not the main event.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and don`t blame World War II since we were fighting Hitler anyway, and the empire of Japan after they attacked us.

JOHNSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: OK, anyway, debate rule number two. By disarming -- be disarming with your opponent, as you were suggesting, showing a little civility can make your arguments more persuasive, especially since vice presidential candidates aren`t as well-known as the person at the top of the ticket. You`re introducing yourself on a night like this.

In 2008, Sarah Palin famously asked permission to use Joe Biden`s first name and later showcased that kind of folksy charm throughout the debate. Here she is, Sarah Palin.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SARAH PALIN (R), FORMER ALASKA GOVERNOR: Nice to meet you. Can I call you, Joe? Thank you.

Say it ain`t so, Joe, there you go pointing backwards again, though. You prefaced your whole comment with the Bush administration. Doggone it, let`s look ahead and tell Americans what we have to plan to do for them in the future.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Al Gore was similarly disarming with his opponent Jack Kemp at the start of the `96 VP debate. Let`s look at that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

AL GORE, FORMER U.S. VICE PRESIDENT: I`d like to start by offering you a deal, Jack. If you won`t use any football stories, I won`t tell any of my warm and humorous stories about chlorofluorocarbon abatement.

JACK KEMP, FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: It`s a deal. I can`t even pronounce it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that was a bit set up.

Anyway, Megan, talk about naturals --

MURPHY: Yes, I think that seemed funnier at the time than it does now.

MATTHEWS: Tried to look warmer.

MURPHY: Look, this is tricky for Governor Pence, because one of his big missions tonight is going to make good on some of the own goals that Trump left on the table. He didn`t hit out the server. He didn`t hit out on Benghazi. He didn`t hit out on a lot of the things that Hillary is vulnerable on.

So, one of his big themes tonight is going to be --

MATTHEWS: Go tough.

MURPHY: Go tough. Be disarming and tough. It`s not as easy. He`s got a big challenge.

MATTHEWS: How will Pence thread that needle be tough because he`s got to carry the fight?

HEILEMANN: I think he`s got to be aggressive. He`s going to be out so many times by Kaine in places where he`s in opposition for Donald Trump to try to answer for Trump`s mistakes. Pence is going to try to do the quick pivot out of everything.

MATTHEWS: I think he`s smart enough to do it. But you`re right, he has to fight on many fronts.

Anyway, debate rule number three, don`t get personal. And here in an attempt to explode then-Vice President`s Dick Cheney`s differences with President Bush on the issue of gay rights, John Edwards decided to invoke the sexual orientation of Cheney`s daughter. Lynne Cheney later called it a cheap shot. Here`s the exchange for that VP debate.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHN EDWARDS, FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I think the vice president and his wife love their daughter. I think they love her very much. And you can`t have anything but respect for the fact that they`re willing to talk about the fact that they have a gay daughter, the fact that they embrace her. It`s a wonderful thing.

MODERATOR: Mr. Vice President, you have 90 seconds.

DICK CHENEY, FORMER U.S. VICE PRESIDENT: Gwen, let me simply thank the senator for the kind words he said about my family and our daughter. I appreciate that very much.

EDWARDS: You`re welcome.

MODERATOR: That`s it.

CHENEY: That`s it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Ha! Well, how do you the read Cheney? That`s the first time and maybe the last I saw in Cheney`s side.

HEILEMANN: That`s when Cheney first got the idea for waterboarding right there.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That split screen told you everything.

JOHNSON: Yes, it was Belichick like we`re on to the next question. He was like keep my daughter`s name out of your mouth. You don`t have to go there. John Edwards had plenty of things to criticize Bush about. Personal life, (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: I wonder who on the staff said, great idea, go for the daughter.

Anyway, rule number four, praise `em before you hit `em. This example comes from a presidential debate running for reelection in 1996. President Bill Clinton knew any attacks the on Bob Dole`s age could backfire. So he deftly took the issue off the table before going for the jugular. Here is Clinton you might say at his best, but you might say nastiest. So, here he goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL CLINTON, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT: I can only tell you that I don`t think Senator Dole is too old to be president. It`s the age of his ideas that I question. You`re almost not old enough to remember this, but we tried this before -- promising people an election year tax cut that`s not paid for.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that was very Nixonian, Megan, because he got the shout in about his age, but then I don`t really mean to do that, but I`m going after his ideas. Dole gave the scour.

MURPHY: I think this is a real winning ticket for Governor Pence tonight, particularly these guys have sharp, sharp policy contrasts. If we want to keep this debate away from the personal and focus on --

MATTHEWS: How do you put the sugar into that mix? Stick it to the guy for being an -- then you say --

MURPHY: The problem is both these guys believe in what they`re doing. Hard to stick them on lots of things. It will be a policy debate.

MATTHEWS: I don`t think it will be that nice.

Your thoughts, John? Can you be that sugary and get away with it?

HEILEMANN: No.

MATTHEWS: OK, thank you. The roundtable is staying with us.

And up next, this three will tell me something I don`t know. I`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Just over an hour to go now before the start of the vice presidential debate. There is Mike Pence in that group going into the debate center. He`s the first guy in the row there, second guy. But it`s all happening.

We`re back with the roundtable as we get ready for this debate.

Megan, tell me something I don`t know, Megan Murphy.

MURPHY: Well, I`ll tell you something RNC already knows Pence won the debate. They`ve released their post debate spin saying that Governor Pence did a great job hitting on Hillary scandals and the economy.

MATTHEWS: What I thought he was going to do, he`s done because it`s now --

(CROSSTALK)

MURPHY: He`s the clear winner.

MATTHEWS: How do they keep making these mistakes?

Anyway, what you got to tell me?

HEILEMANN: I`m not sure how many Virginians know this, but Tim Kaine has a weird thing in his head. He`s like a reverse dyslexic. If you say any word to him, he can say it backwards immediately. If you say Kaine, it`s eniak backwards.

MATTHEWS: He can do that.

HEILEMANN: But he can do anything, stronger together.

MATTHEWS: How many letters?

HEILEMANN: He can go up to -- if there`s silent letters. He had has a hard time with things like pneumonia. I tried that on him once. It`s a great party trick.

MATTHEWS: That`s complicated. I can do alliteration like that, but not like that.

Anyway, you`re thoughts?

JOHNSON: All right. So, we talk about all the great surrogates Hillary Clinton has. She`s got, you know, Bill Clinton. She got Barack Obama. She now has Kermit the Frog. Yes, Kermit the frog is now online as a brand-new meme supporting Hillary Clinton.

People on the left have been using him to counter Trump`s Pepe Le Frog on the right. It`s become viral. It`s going on all out there.

MATTHEWS: You know the (INAUDIBLE) were all frogs. (INAUDIBLE) good frogs out of existence.

Anyway, thank you, Megan Murphy. Thank you, John Heilemann. It`s great to have you here, Jason Johnson.

That does it for this special edition of HARDBALL. We`re coming back late tonight with another one at midnight. I`ll be joining Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow for full coverage of tonight`s vice presidential debate. That`s coming up right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Howard Fineman, Hallie Jackson, Eugene Robinson

9658 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: The tax man cometh.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

You know those old Polaroid photographs, you`d shoot the photo, then and as you shook the paper, you`d see the picture slowly come into view before you? Is that what we`re seeing with Donald Trump?

Day after day, the real man reveals more and more of himself. We watch him on stage or read his tweets and hear what he says on Fox, and gradually, the picture comes into focus. It hasn`t happened all at once. His people get him to use the teleprompter so he won`t speak what he really thinks off the cuff. But he does it anyway, whacking away at Hillary as a crazy, criminal, whatever. He can`t be stopped from gradually, relentlessly being Donald Trump.

We have the popular image of Trump, the successful real estate developer, for example, who celebrates his wealth and business acumen, the man who ran casinos, luxury hotels, and even an airline. But then you have the other Trump, the one that emerges from reporting like this weekend`s bombshell "New York Times" story.

That`s the Trump that according to "The Times," declared a $916 million loss on his 1995 income tax returns, a tax deduction so substantial, it could have allowed him to legally avoid paying any federal income taxes for up to 18 years.

Well, the Trump camp has neither denied nor confirmed the reporting. Surrogates like Chris Christie and Rudy Giuliani, in fact, spent the weekend saying the story shows their candidate is actually a "genius" -- that`s the word used -- for successfully navigating and avoiding the tax code.

Well, today on the trail, Hillary Clinton took a swing at her opponent. His name is Trump. Let`s watch her.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: In the debate, he said it was smart to avoid paying taxes. Yesterday, his campaign was bragging it makes him a genius. Here`s my question. What kind of genius loses $1 billion in a single year?

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: This is Trump to a T. He`s taken corporate excess and made a business model out of it. He abuses his power, games the system, puts his own interests ahead of the country`s. It`s Trump first and everyone else last.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: She`s rolling up the score! Trump defended his business success at a rally out in Colorado today. Let`s watch it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: I understand the tax laws better than almost anyone, which is why I am one who can truly fix them.

As a businessman and real estate developer, I have legally used the tax laws to my benefit.

Honestly, I have brilliantly -- I have brilliantly used those laws.

The news media is now obsessed with an alleged tax filing from the 1990s...

(BOOS)

TRUMP: ... at the end of one of the most brutal economic downturns in our country`s history.

I was able to use the tax laws of this country and my business acumen to dig out of the real estate mess.

I reached within myself and delivered for my company, employees, my family, and the communities where my properties existed, and I really delivered.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Meanwhile, Trump the campaigner are also continued to come into focus this weekend. While advisers and supporters like Newt Gingrich and Marsha Blackburn have publicly pleaded with Trump to stay on message, Trump went spectacularly off script on Saturday night. He mocked Hillary Clinton for her illness, her state of mind and her marriage. Let`s watch him.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: She`s supposed to fight all of these different things, and she can`t make it 15 feet to her car. Give me a break! Give me a break!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: She`s got bad temperament. She`s got -- she could be crazy. She could actually be crazy. She should be in prison, let me tell you. She should be in prison.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: Hillary Clinton`s only loyalty is to her financial contributors and to herself. I don`t even think she`s loyal to Bill, you want to know the truth.

(CHEERS)

TRUMP: And really, folks, really, why should she be, right? Why should she be?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Wow. And for more on the real Donald Trump, I`m joined now by NBC`s Hallie Jackson in Richmond, Virginia -- she`s right at the VP debate site for tomorrow night -- "USA Today`s Washington bureau chief Susan Page, she`s with us, and HuffingtonPost, of course, global editorial director Howard Fineman, also an MSNBC political analyst.

Hallie, you`re on the site right now, but let`s talk about Donald Trump this weekend. Was there an effort to get him to talk along the lines that he could win the election? Now, I`ve been saying this myself. He had a winning message for weeks. The polling we`ve got tonight to show you shows that he`s blown it. He`s blown away the role that he had, a lead in this campaign. He`s now down behind her, a switch of about 5 points on average. That`s -- that can be lethal in a campaign at this point, a month out from the election.

Why doesn`t he talk about the issues that got him to where he is, jobs, illegal **immigration**, stupid wars? Why is he talking about Machado and talking everything else that will never get him a single vote?

HALLIE JACKSON, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Right, and Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton and all of these questions. He seems to be unable to help himself at times, Chris, when you look at what happened Saturday night, and I think there was evidence of this today.

His campaign wants him to be talking about jobs and about the economy and about national security. I had an adviser, somebody close to the campaign, say to me today, I wish I didn`t have to go out and talk about these issues. I will because the media is picking up on it, but I would rather be talking about, you know, national security and some of these issues that have put Trump where he is.

The problem is, he cannot help going back after Hillary Clinton when he feels attacked. That is what you saw Saturday night in the sound bite that you played from his rally in PA. Today, he tried to get back on message. And let it be noted that on Saturday, too, his campaign had a script that he was supposed to be delivering that night, and we saw again and again him veer off that script. Rather than looking at the prompter, he riffed.

Today, he was at that national security forum. He was talking with veterans, trying to get back on message. But with Trump, we have seen it rarely sticks.

MATTHEWS: I just wonder, of all the things you can use against Hillary Clinton in a legitimate debate -- you can make all kinds of attacks, I`m sure everything`s fair these days -- but calling her crazy is nutty itself. Nobody thinks Hillary Clinton is crazy. She`s one of the most sound minds around. You may not like the mind, but it is sound as hell.

Anyway, let`s look at those brand-new national poll...

JACKSON: But...

MATTHEWS: Go ahead, Hallie.

JACKSON: (INAUDIBLE) Chris, I remember talking to you two months ago about something very similar to this. Donald Trump takes the attacks against him, and oftentimes, he turns those exact same attacks around on whoever is hitting him. So when Hillary Clinton and her campaign comes out and calls him unhinged, for him...

MATTHEWS: I get it.

JACKSON: ... he turns around and calls her crazy. This fits the pattern that he has, you know, delivered on for the last six months.

MATTHEWS: We used to use that when we were 5 years old, that tactic. It was "So`s your old man"...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... at 5 years old, we`d do that.

Anyway, let`s take a look at the brand-new national polls out today which tell you that Trump`s been off message. He`s not winning. According to a new CNN/ORC poll, Trump leads -- Clinton leads Trump by 5 points nationally. Look at these numbers, 47 to 42. Now, this is important. That`s 5 points. Last month, Trump was ahead by 2 points in the same poll. That`s a shift of 7.

In the new "New York Times" poll, CBS poll, together, Clinton leads by 4 points, 45 to 41. Last month, the two were tied. So we`re seeing roughly a 5-point shift.

I want to go to Howard Fineman Here. Howard, you`re seeing -- even I remember (INAUDIBLE) you and I have watched these campaigns. A 5-point shift is a big deal.

HOWARD FINEMAN, HUFFINGTON POST GLOBAL EDITORIAL DIR., MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: It is a huge deal, especially this late, and supposedly with an electorate that`s mostly locked in.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

FINEMAN: The last week that he`s had is the worst political week I can remember any national politician ever having. I`m surprised that he`s even at 40 percent. I`m surprised...

MATTHEWS: That shows you...

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: ... packed it up and gone home. And that`s because there is a strong constituency that`s going to reach out to him, regardless, as an agent of change.

MATTHEWS: I agree. I agree.

FINEMAN: And we know who those people are. However, he has not expanded a -- he`s back to the core that he was at a while ago, when he -- and he blew an opportunity this last week, starting with the debate, continuing through today, to expand that base.

MATTHEWS: Susan, if he wins the election -- and it`s still possible -- the headlines in your paper, on the front page of "USA Today," are not going to be he won because he won the battle of Machado. It`s going to be because he was able to exploit a perfect storm of anger over illegal **immigration**, bad trade deals that cost us lots and lots of manufacturing jobs, and stupid wars. You can write the headline now if he wins, but he`s not even writing the headline himself.

And by the way, another point of politics. At this point in the campaign, the average person is paying attention. Six months ago, when he was saying a lot of this stuff, a very small percentage were watching. He doesn`t seem to know that he has the potential to go out on that debate platform or any one of these rallies and speak to a huge audience and change a lot of minds with what he said in the beginning.

He doesn`t seem to know that it`s the big circus now. It`s not the little sideshow anymore.

SUSAN PAGE, "USA TODAY": Because the landscape is there for a change candidate...

MATTHEWS: Yes!

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Thank you. I agree with you. It is not a year for "steady as she goes."

PAGE: In fact, that`s the problem that Hillary Clinton has. This is a year for change, for fresh blood, for shaking things up. But he goes too far. He -- he...

MATTHEWS: Well, what`s Machado, Ms. Machado, Alicia got to do -- his bad treatment of somebody 20 years ago. I mean, it was bad. It`s objectively bad. He treated a little person, a person without any power, badly. You apologize, you move on. You say, That wasn`t a good moment for me. You know, I`m sometimes get in a rush. I`m under pressure like everybody else, and this beauty contest stuff is a business like everything else. There are ways you can answer it without prostrating yourself on the ground.

PAGE: Right. And...

MATTHEWS: But you have some dignity (INAUDIBLE)

PAGE: ... you can also say, I`ve changed my views on things. People change their views on things like gay marriage and explain it and people can accept it. People don`t expect you to be set and perfect forever and ever.

FINEMAN: He`s unwilling to do it, Chris. He`s just personally unwilling to be told.

MATTHEWS: Well, sometimes, you have to stoop to conquer. Anyway, I mentioned Trump`s surrogates fanned out across the country, all the networks across the country, over the weekend to defend the candidate from the "Times" story about his not paying taxes, or not -- well, getting a tax break of almost a billion dollars back in `95.

Their message -- this is insane -- Trump`s a genius. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RUDY GIULIANI (R), FMR. NEW YORK CITY MAYOR: Our response is he`s a genius. I mean, the reality is...

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: A genius?

GIULIANI: Absolute genius.

It`s a perfectly legal application of the tax code, and he would have been a fool to not take advantage of it.

GIULIANI: Great men have big failures...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: All right...

GIULIANI: ... and then they take those failures and they turn them into great results. I`d rather have a genius like Donald Trump running this country than someone like Hillary Clinton.

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R-NJ), FMR. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: There`s no one who`s shown nor genius in their way to maneuver around the tax code, as he rightfully used the laws to do that.

This is a guy who, when lots of businesses went out of business in the early 1990s, he fought and clawed back to build another fortune, to create tens of thousands of more jobs. And this is actually a very, very good story for Donald Trump.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You know, Hallie and everybody else, when you sit down and do your taxes, if they`re not too complicated to do yourself at some point, but most people do -- some people use the short form. People look for deductions. They really do. The husband and wife usually, if they`re a couple, sit there and sweat it out and they try to be honest.

Now, they`ll take the breaks that are thrown at them, but they generally go, You know, let`s be straight on this and we`re going to go to bed tonight feeling good about ourselves. We`re going to do this honestly.

And those people who do that go, I`m getting screwed, I`m paying a very high percentage, I don`t make that much money, if you add together payroll tax and income tax and all the other taxes, property taxes. And they go, I`m being honest, at least. I`ll live with that. I`m an honest guy, an honest woman.

Then they see Trump, Mr. Wonderful, taking tax breaks for a billion dollars. They go, I`m a chump. I`m a chump because the big shot there with the big gold building and the beautiful wife showing off, that guy is bragging about being -- let me get this right again, dear -- a genius. That`s what the guy has to say to his wife. I guess I`m not a genius, dear, because we didn`t get any money back this year after paying our taxes. I guess I should study how to be a genius.

It`s insane, the politics of this! Forget morality. Why are they putting these guys out on the road to say he`s a genius when he`s playing defense?

JACKSON: So a couple of points. One, because that, I am told, is coming from Donald Trump himself. I`m told by a source familiar with this process, with this thinking process, that Trump does believe that this tax issue is going to be overall net neutral for him, that it is not actually going to hurt him with voters because, Chris, of the flip side of what you are talking about, that it is potentially relatable that somebody would look for tax loopholes and tax deductions because a lot of those folks, mom and dad at home or whatever, filling out their W-2s, going to H&R Block, are looking for deductions that would help them ultimately save money.

What you are seeing from Donald Trump surrogates and what you are seeing from Donald Trump himself today at his two stops in Colorado is the portrayal of Donald Trump as the ultimate success story, somebody who did maybe lose nearly a billion dollars in a single year in the mid-`90s, but who went on to have, in his view, success, you know, 10, 15, 20 years later. That is how Trump is hoping to frame and spin this.

Now, there is a sense, potentially, starting to bubble up with people close to the campaign that what if there is more? What if there are more tax numbers that come out, tax releases that come out? How does Donald Trump then handle that narrative? But at the moment, Trump -- again, from what I`m hearing -- doesn`t see this as harmful to his campaign.

MATTHEWS: I just did the math. You have to work -- most people would have to work 2,000 years to make this kind of money...

FINEMAN: I know. I know...

MATTHEWS: ... 2,000 years...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... even get near his tax break!

FINEMAN: Well, former senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey, who worked with Trump on some of this stuff, told me the other day, said the story of Donald Trump is he became addicted to tax losses. He became addicted -- that his business became the manipulation of the tax code...

MATTHEWS: Depreciation.

FINEMAN: ... yes -- not the actual construction of buildings. And what Trump did was continue to use the tax breaks to then turn the business into one of branding and fame and not construction of buildings.

MATTHEWS: Do you understand that? It`s in the paper today.

FINEMAN: And one thing that it`s done is reinforce the question about why he doesn`t release his tax returns, which...

MATTHEWS: I think we know!

FINEMAN: Eight out of ten Americans say they think he ought to, it would be the right thing to do. And so it`s underscored the fact that he hasn`t done that. It raises questions about his -- about how well he ran that business, and also just about the general fairness about not paying...

MATTHEWS: OK, guess who has to defend all this stuff tomorrow night? Mike Pence...

FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... all this stuff he doesn`t know anything about, guys.

FINEMAN: The real import of this to me is when Donald Trump gets backed into a corner, he reacts with 3:00 AM Tweets. The big potential damage, in a way is not even just this story itself. It`s if in the debate next week, that he`s in...

MATTHEWS: Sunday.

FINEMAN: ... the town hall on Sunday, if he`s backed into a corner, who knows what he says in front of those people in that town hall.

MATTHEWS: Yes. And town halls are not a great place to talk about somebody else`s sex life.

(CROSSTALK)

FINEMAN: We`ll see if he listens.

MATTHEWS: Town halls are essentially anti-squeamish. They do not like conversations about infidelity and stuff like that. Even though whatever (ph) they think when they`re in the back room or the guys are in the locker room talking, they don`t like it out in public because it affects their lives, too.

FINEMAN: I agree with Hallie it`s the ultimate test of whether he can discipline himself. You`ll see that on Sunday.

MATTHEWS: We`ve had a few of those tests already.

(LAUGHTER)

FINEMAN: We already had a few, and he failed them all. Maybe he`ll pass this one.

MATTHEWS: He`s still a billionaire. Anyway, thank you -- he`s going to end up rich. Anyway, thank you, Hallie Jackson. Thank you, Susan Page. You have a good assignment there, Hallie. And thank you, Howard Fineman, as always.

Coming up -- Donald Trump continues to struggle with women voters, whether he`s interrupting his opponent, which he`s done -- I`ve done that, too -- or criticizing the weight of a former Miss Universe, Trump`s got a serious gender gap, don`t you think? And now a new report from the Associated Press sure is not going to help him with women voters. We`ll get the reaction to that from Trump`s campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway. She`s coming.

Plus, more bad news for Trump. The New York attorney general, a Democrat - - you know, he has his own reasons for doing this -- has served a "cease and desist" order against the Trump Foundation, meaning the foundation can no longer solicit money in the state of New York.

Well, the power of parody on "Saturday night live" continues at its greatest Saturday night. Let`s watch a bit.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ALEC BALDWIN, "SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE": My microphone is broken.

(LAUGHTER)

BALDWIN: She broke it with Obama. She and Obama stole my microphone. They took it to Kenya!

(LAUGHTER)

BALDWIN: They took my microphone to Kenya, and they broke it and now it`s broken!

(LAUGHTER)

BALDWIN: And do you hear that? It`s picking up somebody sniffing here. I think it`s her sniffs. She`s been sniffing all night. Testing. Testing...

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Alec Baldwin and Kate McKinnon, what a duo. "SNL`s" impressions (ph) (INAUDIBLE) candidates (INAUDIBLE) of course. Remember Tina Fey`s Sarah Palin? What will Alec Baldwin do to Donald Trump?

Finally, my "election diary" for tonight, October 3rd, on the eve of the vice presidential debate.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, you saw the national polls a moment ago. We`ve got also a big round of battleground state polling taken since last Monday`s debate. For that, we check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

According to new polling from Quinnipiac, Hillary Clinton now has a 5-point lead over Donald Trump in Florida. That`s a big development. It`s Clinton 46, Trump 41, with Gary Johnson down at 5. The race in Florida was tied, by the way, in the last Quinnipiac poll, so (INAUDIBLE) matters.

Next to North Carolina, where the poll now has Clinton up by 3. It`s Clinton 46, Trump 43 and Johnson at 7. That`s roughly where the race was in the previous poll.

In Pennsylvania, Clinton leads by 4, 45 to 41, again, not much change since the last Quinnipiac. Next to Ohio, is Donald Trump still holding his 5- point lead, 47 to 42. He was up 4 points in the previous poll. Now to Virginia, where a new poll from Christopher Newport University has Clinton up by 7 points. It`s Clinton 42, Trump 35, with Johnson getting up to 12. Clinton`s 7-point lead is in line with RealClearPolitics average of all the polls and 1 point higher than last week`s poll.

He needs to get Virginia, Trump does. He needs Pennsylvania, took, and he`s not getting it.

And one more poll to tell you about, Colorado, where a new Monmouth poll has Clinton up by 11, Clinton 49, Trump at 38. And recent polling in Colorado has been neck and neck. But an earlier Monmouth poll from July had Clinton up by 13. So it`s a back-and-forth out there.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: She can`t make it 15 feet to her car. Give me a break.

(LAUGHTER)

TRUMP: Give me a break.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: Give me a break!

She`s home resting right now. She`s getting ready for her next speech, which is going to be about 15 minutes, and it`s going to be in two or three days.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome to HARDBALL.

Donald Trump continued his attacks on his opponent`s stamina Saturday night, delivering a mocking impression of Hillary Clinton, who last month had trouble, as we all know, getting to her car during her bout with pneumonia.

Well, throughout this campaign, we have seen Trump, when challenged by women in a professional setting, has responded publicly with crude or personal attacks.

First, it was his comments about -- about Megyn Kelly, then his remarks about Carly Fiorina`s face. And now it`s his recent criticism of Hillary Clinton`s stamina and even her look. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

QUESTION: You have even said she doesn`t look presidential.

TRUMP: I really do believe that.

QUESTION: But what do you mean by that?

TRUMP: Well, I just don`t think she has a presidential look. And you need a presidential look.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, now an Associated Press report says there are claims that Trump -- Trump behaved similarly towards women off-camera on the set of "The Apprentice."

For instance, Trump called for female contestants to wear shorter dresses that also showed more cleavage. Others said they only had professional -- only had professional experiences with Trump. So, there`s people on both sides in the argument, largely against, of course. That`s why they wrote the piece.

Anyway, the Trump campaign denied the allegations in a statement. "These outlandish, unsubstantiated and totally false claims, fabricated by publicity-hungry, opportunistic, disgruntled former employees have no merit whatsoever."

Meanwhile, "The New York Times" reported yesterday Hillary Clinton engaged passively or directly in efforts to discredit her husband`s accusers -- quote -- "Privately, she embraced the Clinton campaign`s aggressive strategy of counterattack. Women who claimed to have had sexual encounters with Mr. Clinton would become targets of digging and discrediting, tactics that women`s rights advocates frequently denounce."

I`m joined right now by Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway.

Put it all together, Kellyanne.

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Hey, Chris.

I loved "The New York Times" article. I thought it was terrific, because basically it said that Hillary Clinton went to blame and shame the women who had sex, consensual sex, with her husband over a number of years.

We all -- well, not all of us, but those who don`t remember can go Google it, her on "60 Minutes" in 1992, standing -- sitting by her husband, plaintively nodding her head in silence while he lied to the country about not having an affair with Gennifer Flowers, only to discover the very next day there were tapes confirming that affair, audiotapes.

And what was Hillary Clinton`s first instinct? It wasn`t to be angry at her husband, according to this "New York Times" report. It was to blame the woman and dig up dirt on her. And I commend this "New York Times" story for everybody, because it shows how Hillary Clinton reacts when people around her, in this case her husband, have done something to wrong her.

She goes right after the innocent people.

MATTHEWS: OK.

CONWAY: And I think it`s very important, because even Gloria Allred is quoted in this "New York Times" article, someone who was a Clinton delegate to the convention, Chris, somebody you and I both know and I`m sure respect mightily, she says, listen, it`s terrible that you would try to dig up a woman`s sexual past and hire a private investigator.

And then she goes on to say, I don`t think Hillary should have done that, but, hey, I like her position on abortion.

MATTHEWS: I saw that, yes.

CONWAY: This is how she treated those women.

MATTHEWS: Well, she just said she liked her generally. Yes, Gloria Allred said she liked her generally.

Let me ask you about the Associated Press story that ran today attacking, with all kinds of comments, not all on one side, some defending Donald Trump, about his behavior as head of "Apprentice," and his backstage behavior matching some of his rough behavior lately.

What do you make of that kind of set of charges? Do you think it was all a put-up job by the other side, or what do you think?

CONWAY: Look, "The Apprentice" was one of the most successful shows in its day. And it generated many opportunities, including, if not especially, for women who participated.

I mean, Omarosa is one of our best surrogates, most ardent supporters of Donald Trump. She obviously was there the first or second season, I believe. And I think some folks just -- there`s publicity to get. There are scores to settle if they didn`t win.

But I was especially -- I was especially excited to see the number of people who came forward and said, this was a wonderful experience for them, when they were on "The Apprentice."

MATTHEWS: Yes.

CONWAY: And, look, I can take you upstairs here in Trump Tower, Chris, any day of the week and introduce you to people, women who have worked for Donald Trump for years, if not decades, who have nothing but great things to say about him as a boss.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK. Let`s talk about what we see.

Why was he making fun of Hillary Clinton physically this weekend?

CONWAY: Have you heard what she says about him in a given day? Did you watch her in that debate?

MATTHEWS: No, but why does he call her -- well, he calls her crazy, a criminal. "Lock her" up is the song, the big slogan out there.

Why does he make fun of her physically, that she had -- everybody knows she had pneumonia, and she had a -- she basically collapsed. Why do you make of somebody who collapsed because of a sickness? Why is that funny?

CONWAY: Well, first of all, when she collapsed on 9/11, and her campaign lied about it for a number of hours, including to...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: And that justifies...

CONWAY: No, he said nothing. He said nothing that whole day. He was completely quiet.

And since then, she`s done nothing but attack him. That aspirational, uplifting, optimistic campaign her campaign promised, yes, that`s gone.

MATTHEWS: Well...

CONWAY: And all they do is attack Donald Trump.

Their entire campaign is about Donald Trump. He talks about issues. They talk about him. So, if he wants to go out there and talk about her fitness for office, whether it`s -- whether it`s her record as secretary of state, her unremarkable record as -- record as senator, or her stamina, then he`s welcome to do that.

Why is he -- why is he supposed to be the victim who just rolls over every time she and her surrogates attack him?

MATTHEWS: OK. Let`s talk about the big story this weekend, which is taxes.

"The New York Times" basically reported -- they got somebody who walked into there with -- apparently with an address of Trump Tower. I have no idea who the source was, this tipster, put it in the mailbox of this reporter of "The Times."

She put it in the paper, which basically Trump got a $900,000 -- or $900 million tax loss in 1995, which apparently can be spread among a number of years to his advantage.

Taking a tax loss like this, what does it do to his image as a guy watching out for the regular guy out there, regular person? How`s it match up with that image?

CONWAY: Sure.

So, Donald Trump is the art of the comeback. He wrote a whole book about it. Most people couldn`t absorb a loss like that and reinvest it over the years, take those losses, carry them forward that the tax code allows you to do.

No one, including "The New York Times," denies that it`s all legal. Donald Trump has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes over the years, federal payroll taxes, state, city, and local taxes, excise, property, real estate.

And so he`s -- let`s not forget that he`s paid hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes. I verified that number with his accountants and his lawyers, Chris.

And on this one, very few people were betting on New York a lot, and he did. He bet on New York, the job creation, the community revitalization. And this is the American entrepreneurial story. The tax code allows you to carry forward these losses.

"The New York Times" in no way says that he did not pay taxes for 18 years. It says that this loss could have allowed him not to pay taxes. He may not have. Nobody knows that for sure

MATTHEWS: Fair enough. I`m talking politics here. You`re talking a defense of it.

But let me ask you this. He has made statements attacking Americans who don`t pay taxes, some people poor or aren`t making income to pay taxes, others who are making money on the hedge -- hedge fund operators, and they`re not paying taxes.

He has made that wrong. He has said it`s wrong not to pay taxes, per se. Well, why isn`t he wrong?

CONWAY: He`s paid hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes.

MATTHEWS: If it`s wrong per se not to pay taxes -- no, when he says -- well, that year, do you think he paid in `95? Do you think he paid any taxes with a $900 million tax loss?

CONWAY: I think that`s why you have a couple of pieces of paper from one year 21 years ago, because there were years, I`m sure, where he was very profitable.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, we could have more, Kellyanne. We could have more papers, if he`d release them.

CONWAY: And paid an awful lot in taxes.

MATTHEWS: Well, the only reason that little bit of paper that you just minimized is because somebody basically outed him, at least on one return.

And the question you have to ask yourself is, if a little bit of information is bad for the guy, maybe a lot of information is better, but public isn`t going to think that, unless you show the paper. They`re going to think it`s worse.

CONWAY: Sure, but, Chris -- but, as you said in your earlier segment, not everyone`s going to think that`s bad. A lot of people will think, this is what entrepreneurs do. They carry forward those losses over time, and that`s what -- that`s what the tax code allows you to do.

I also want to say, this guy has built things his whole life, buildings, projects, public works, projects, careers, opportunities. Hillary Clinton has destroyed -- what job has she ever created? What does she know about job creation?

It`s just remarkable. Look, let`s give the guy his due as a successful businessman who`s hired thousands of people over the years, thousands of women over the years. He`s evaluated some of them to the highest positions in his corporation and certainly his campaign.

MATTHEWS: Kellyanne, thank you.

CONWAY: Thank you, Chris.

MATTHEWS: I think he should refocus on the things that got him this far. Dance with the one that brung you, illegal **immigration**, bad trade deals that cost us...

(CROSSTALK)

CONWAY: Job patriotism.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: And stupid wars. Talk. It`s a perfect storm. Get back to that.

Forget Machado. That`s a loss. Move on. There`s a tax loss. Move on.

CONWAY: Great advice.

MATTHEWS: I`m joined right now -- but thanks so much. Thanks so much, Kellyanne.

Right now, we have got Michelle Bernard, president of the Bernard Center for Women and columnist for the "U.S. News & World Report."

Thank you, Michelle.

Kellyanne knows what she`s up against here, the behavior towards women, towards Hillary, who is the first woman candidate, I think, is very much deleterious to Trump`s efforts to get women in the burbs, which is who he is aiming for.

MICHELLE BERNARD, FOUNDER, BERNARD CENTER FOR WOMEN, POLITICS AND POLICY: Well, to get women anywhere, whether we`re talking about red state feminists or blue state feminists.

Everyone -- women are going to look at all of the statements that Donald Trump has made, not just about Hillary Clinton, but about women over his lifetime. And it`s troubling. People ask, what do -- what -- who`s the best candidate for women and what do women want? Women do not want to elect a child in chief. We`re not looking to provide...

MATTHEWS: Do you think that`s the image he has?

BERNARD: Well, no, that absolutely is the image he has.

I can see his chief of staff, if he were to be elected, walking in and saying, Mr. Trump, is your train running too high or is it running too low? We don`t want a president who can`t regulate. His temperament is completely wrong.

And with respect to what Kellyanne was saying in terms of Mrs. Clinton and her husband`s affairs in the past, I think it shows her humanity. She was not in a position of power over any of these women, as Donald Trump has been year after year. We don`t have...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But you wouldn`t justify her trying to silence these women, would you?

BERNARD: No, I wouldn`t justify her silencing these women, but what I would say is that, for any woman who has dealt with a husband and indiscretions in the past, that feel that Donald Trump is putting her on trial for staying in her marriage and trying to find a way to discredit women or figure out things about the women...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: And he says she`s not loyal to Bill Clinton. I don`t know what that means, unless he`s talking about NAFTA. I don`t think he`s talking about NAFTA.

(LAUGHTER)

BERNARD: I don`t know what he means, but I think he should tread carefully. He`s been married three times. Women are very interested in the issues.

MATTHEWS: You`re talking about Trump was married three times.

BERNARD: Trump has been married three times, and two of his wives appear to be much, much younger than him.

There have been stories about him going out with his first wife and having dinner with the father.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: This is the troubling area. But go ahead.

(CROSSTALK)

BERNARD: No, well, it is a troubling area.

But if you want to get into a woman`s head and think about what we`re thinking when we`re going to the ballot box, it`s not just fiscal discipline and issues of the economy and national security and child care and all of the issues that men care about, which are just as important to women.

Women want to know that there is a person in the White House that sees the humanity in both men and women. And you have to seriously ask yourself, if a candidate looks at a woman and says, "It would be a pretty picture to see you on your knees," is that somebody who cares about the humanity of women?

I don`t think so.

MATTHEWS: You have made it clear.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I think men -- good guys would also agree with you.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But, anyway, thank you, Michelle Bernard.

Up next: Trump`s rough patch continues, as the attorney general for the state of New York clamps down on the Trump Foundation. They`re going after that. That`s ahead.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

With only five weeks left until Election Day, Donald Trump is hoping to turn his campaign around with a swing through Colorado today, but his message was steered off-course when earlier today it was reported that the office of New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who`s a Democrat supporting Hillary Clinton, ordered the Donald J. Trump Foundation to stop fund-raising in New York state because it`s not properly registered.

Specifically, a cease and desist letter found that the Trump Foundation was engaged in solicitation or fund-raising activities in New York state in 2016, is not and was not registered.

The action comes in the wake of a report by "The Washington Post" that found that the Trump Foundation lacks the certification required for charities that solicit money.

When asked about the letter, Trump campaign press secretary HOPE HICKS issued the following statement: "While we remain very concerned about the political motives behind A.G. Schneiderman`s investigation, the Trump Foundation nevertheless intends to cooperate fully with the investigation, because this is an ongoing legal matter. The Trump Foundation will not comment further at this time."

For more on this story, I`m joined by the guy who wrote the piece, David Fahrenthold of "The Washington Post."

David, this -- you`re behind this whole thing. You came up with the investigation.

This crime -- you know what bugs me? These guys now just break the rules, pay the fine, and move on. It`s become the cost of doing business. Now, they now will have to pay a fine, apparently, right, something like that? Is that what they will face, the Trump people, for not registering?

DAVID FAHRENTHOLD, "THE WASHINGTON POST": The most painful part of it for them is going to be that they have to submit to financial audits of the Trump Foundation going back years, all the years in which they were supposed to be licensed to raise money and they were not. That`s going to be the hard part.

They will have to bring in auditors to really look in Donald Trump`s foundation`s books, which hasn`t happened ever, I don`t think.

MATTHEWS: Why does "The Washington Post" have to tell the New York state government how to operate? How come they didn`t know that Donald Trump has a foundation and he`s never bothered to register it?

FAHRENTHOLD: They were investigating him.

I don`t know what -- they hadn`t come across this part of it yet. I actually was talking to a law professor for another story. And she said, look, look at this these four letters on the Trump Foundation`s Web site, on the New York charity site.

MATTHEWS: OK. Here`s the dirt I see. Why is the foundation making payments to Pam Bondi, the attorney general in Florida, when she decides not to investigate Trump U?

(CROSSTALK)

FAHRENTHOLD: So, the Trump Foundation...

MATTHEWS: Isn`t that a little, a little smelly?

FAHRENTHOLD: Certainly. That`s one of the things they`re looking into.

The Trump people say it was all just an oversight. But the Trump Foundation made an illegal political gift to a group supporting Pam Bondi in 2013, just at the time her office was considering launching an investigation into Trump University.

MATTHEWS: And that was an accident?

FAHRENTHOLD: They say it was an accident.

MATTHEWS: Who told them it was an accident? How long -- someone else had to tell them, right?

FAHRENTHOLD: Yes, me.

MATTHEWS: See? It`s called rolling disclosure. They tell you the truth when they have to.

Thank you, David Fahrenthold. You`re working on that Pulitzer.

Up next, the power of -- you probably have one.

The power of "SNL." How can Alec Baldwin`s impersonation for Donald Trump affect this race? The roundtable is coming here next.

And you`re watching HARDBALL -- there he is -- look at that -- the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

As we`ve been talking about, Donald Trump had a rough few days following "The New York Times" story that he could have avoided nearly two decades paying taxes. "The Associated Press" story that prompted Trump demeaned women, on the set of his show, "The Apprentice." And today`s news that the New York attorney general has ordered a cease and desist order to the Donald J. Trump Foundation after the report that the charity lacked the proper authorization to seek public donation.

Anyway, Trump`s had a rough couple of days, we all agree on. On "Saturday Night Live," he was mocked by the premiere of "SNL," which parodied last week`s presidential debate with the stars Alec Baldwin playing Trump. Here it goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, "SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE")

KATE MCKINNON AS HILLARY CLINTON: This man is clearly unfit to be commander in chief.

ALEC BALDWIN AS DONALD TRUMP: Wrong.

MCKINNON: He is a bully.

BALDWIN: Shut up.

MCKINNON: He started the birther movement.

BALDWIN: You did.

MCKINNON: He says climate change is a hoax invented by China.

BALDWIN: It`s pronounced "ji-na" (ph).

MCKINNON: He hasn`t released his tax returns, which means he`s either not that rich --

BALDWIN: Wrong.

MCKINNON: Not that charitable --

BALDWIN: Wrong.

MCKINNON: Or he`s never paid taxes in his life.

BALDWIN: Wronger.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: It turns out to be true, actually, I guess.

Let`s bring in the HARDBALL roundtable, Eugene Robinson is a Pulitzer Prize-winning opinion writer with "The Washington Post", Laura Bassett covers politics for "The Washington Post", and John Feehery is a Republican strategist.

I got to get to you, John, first on this baby. Do you think, do you know inside, if this is causing any kind of freeze up of the campaign? Or is it just a bad week?

JOHN FEEHERY, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST: Well, you know, Trump has bad weeks and then he has good weeks and he has bad weeks, and you know, this is another one. The polls haven`t seemed to move that much. I think there`s --

MATTHEWS: Well, five points on average.

FEEHERY: Well, a little ebbing and flowing, but not too bad. The fact is that the Hill is panicked about it. The question is, is the campaign panicked? And can they do anything about Trump and his behavior?

He has his own game plan in his own head, doing his own thing. We`ll see if it works.

MATTHEWS: Well, what about these battleground states. If you look at the states that are going to matter, I think we`ve all been looking at the same stuff.

Looking at these, basically, Colorado now. Let`s look. They`re showing they`re moving in Hillary`s direction. A Monmouth University poll shows Clinton with an 11-point lead out in Colorado. Quinnipiac shows Trump leading by five in Ohio. But Clinton leads by five in Florida. By four in Pennsylvania, is up by three in North Carolina.

A Bloomberg poll also has Clinton up in North Carolina, but only by one. So, the states that are going to probably decide this, I always tell people, a firewall against Trump is Pennsylvania and Virginia. He`s not going to get `em, and without `em, he can`t win.

What do you think is going on?

LAURA BASSETT, THE WASHINGTON POST: I mean, I think I would much rather be Hillary Clinton right now than Donald Trump. It`s five weeks until the election and the swing voters are starting to turn against him. He had a really bad debate performance --

MATTHEWS: Is it women?

BASSETT: I think women are turning against him. Suburban moms didn`t appreciate the things he had about Alicia Machado and the things he said about Hillary Clinton`s physical appearance. And I think independent voters are turned off by the idea that he`s actually not as great as a businessman as he says he is. He lost almost $1 billion in a year --

MATTHEWS: Yes, but he got it back. He`s got a lot -- I do not understand why people of regular income argue about a guy who`s got, in the billions, in the billions --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It`s a lot of money!

EUGENE ROBINSON, THE WASHINGTON POST: It`s a lot of money.

MATTHEWS: He`s rich!

ROBINSON: You know, in my opinion, I actually think --

MATTHEWS: Beyond belief rich.

ROBINSON: From this awful, you know, week as horrible as it is, right? That are really bad for him are, number one, the idea that he doesn`t pay federal taxes. That -- I think that resonates the people. They were talking about it in my barbershop today. And when they talk about it in the barbershop, I think it resonates with people.

MATTHEWS: People who do pay taxes.

ROBINSON: And as Laura said, the way he treats women, I think that, you know, time after time, example after example, I think it sort of seeps in. And I think it keeps those suburban women that he needs, in the suburbs of Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. and Cleveland and all -- and these places, from giving Trump a chance.

MATTHEWS: Laura, you`re the one woman here, I`ve got to get the answer from you. There`s new women and old school women. My mom was pretty old school, you know, dad was the boss -- she made all the decisions, but he thought he was the boss, you know? They put up a lot of crap, they had to stay at home, raise the kids, do everything, keep the checkbook, do everything, and yet they get pushed around a bit.

And that`s the older woman, 60, 70 years old. How are they going to react? The younger woman is more professionally inclined, sees more opportunities than her parents did. Give me a look at both of them.

BASSETT: I think no matter what age the woman you are, no matter whether you`re a professional or stay-at-home mom, Donald Trump has said something to insult you. When he was married back in the `90s to Ivanka (ph) Trump, he shamed her personal appearance after she gave birth, he said he wasn`t attracted to her anymore.

MATTHEWS: Wow.

BASSETT: He fat-shamed Kim Kardashian, he shamed Heidi Klum, he takes Miss Universe and says she`s gained too much weight. I mean, no matter --

MATTHEWS: Why is he free from this standard?

BASSETT: Why is he -- oh, exactly.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: All I see is this gigantic tie.

ROBINSON: Keep in mind, by the way, that women in their 60s now are boomers. They`re baby boomers. They`re not women who would be in their 90s or whatever --

MATTHEWS: You`re updating me rather than -- you`re cruelly updating me here, Gene.

ROBINSON: I`m so sorry.

MATTHEWS: You`re so right. Women in their 70s and 80s would be old school.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I met a woman in a doctor`s office, 97 the other day. There`s a lot of women in that grade.

ROBINSON: Yes.

FEEHERY: And if women are fed up with the political system and want to change, they`re going to vote for Trump or if they`re going to vote for somebody else. If they want the status quo, if they like the fact that Hillary is the first female president --

MATTHEWS: Suppose they don`t like the status quo, but don`t like Trump`s behavior?

FEEHERY: I think that`s the big quandary they`re in and trying to go both ways. And Trump has to figure this out, because if he doesn`t, he`s going to lose his election.

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s talk about the veterans thing. He made his shot today. Explain it, though, Laura. I mean, he said, basically, that some people get PTSD and some don`t, same conditions as a battlefield.

BASSETT: Yes, he was talking about veterans suicide and he was saying they`ve seen some really terrible things and some veterans can`t handle it. I think that a lot of people interpreted that as a really mean comment, as him saying that they`re --

MATTHEWS: Joe Biden did.

BASSETT: Right. As him saying they`re weak, for --

MATTHEWS: Was that the right thing for a guy running for commander in chief to say, that some guys can`t hack PTSD --

BASSETT: I didn`t take it that way. I didn`t think that it was --

MATTHEWS: John?

FEEHERY: Well, listen, I think he`s going to still have the veterans vote. They all strong support him. The guy he talks to.

MATTHEWS: Even though this?

(CROSSTALK)

FEEHERY: I think he`s --

MATTHEWS: Gene, last word. Is this going to hurt him? Because he made that shot about John McCain not being a hero. There`s a pattern here.

ROBINSON: It`s not going to help him.

MATTHEWS: He`s not a warrior. He wasn`t there.

ROBINSON: It`s not going to get him any new votes.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Anyway, the roundtable is sticking with us.

And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know. We`ll be right back. This is the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, tomorrow night, stick with MSNBC for complete coverage of the vice presidential debate tomorrow night. At 7:00 p.m. Eastern, join me for a special edition of HARDBALL live from Longwood University in Virginia. Then, at 8:00 Eastern, I`ll join Brian Williams and Rachel Maddow for full team coverage.

Tim Kaine and Mike Pence take the stage at 9:00 for the debate and we`ll have full post-debate coverage and analysis throughout the night here on MSNBC.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable right now.

And, Eugene, tell me something I don`t know.

ROBINSON: So, "The New York Times" got the Trump tax return in the reporter`s mailbox today. There was a virtual traffic jam at "The Washington Post" mailroom. First, people had to find it and then go through it. Nobody goes through the snail mail anymore. Unfortunately, nothing was found that I know of.

MATTHEWS: This is bilateral. OK.

BASSETT: Huff Post has a new tool --

MATTHEWS: Unilateral.

BASSETT: -- an election forecast machine that sort of eats all of the national and local polls and fits them out into a prediction. And it predicted today that as of now, Trump has a 16 percent chance of winning.

MATTHEWS: What`s Hillary`s? Eighty-four?

BASSETT: Yes, 84. Good math.

FEEHERY: My upset special. Todd Young beats Evan Bayh, who`s been effectively portrayed as a Washington lobbyist by the Young campaign and all the outside money. So --

MATTHEWS: Even money?

FEEHERY: Even money. I`d give an edge to Todd Young.

MATTHEWS: I love that guy`s name. Todd Young. What a great name for a newcomer.

Thank you, Eugene Robinson. Thank you, Laura Bassett and Feehery.

It`s heating up. Cantor is the guy that puts the gun together.

Anyway, when we return, my election diary for tonight, October 3rd, on the eve of the vice presidential debate.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary, Monday, October 3rd, 2016.

The campaign continues on agenda set by Hillary Clinton and followed by Donald Trump. That course is directed toward winning women, especially those more conservative married women living in the suburbs, voters who could elect either of the two major candidates. If they go for Trump, the state of Pennsylvania, for example, is within reach. If not, his goose is cooked.

It`s remarkable to see how effective Hillary Clinton has been the past week in undermining Trump with his powerful swing electorate. She`s singly responsible for bringing the experience of Alicia Machado, the former beauty queen to the presidential conversation. Because she`s done it, Trump has been pulled off his position. Every since the debate, the man who should be talking bad job-killing trade deals, uncontrolled **immigration** and stupid Mideast wars has been contorting himself, trying to defend himself against the accounts given by Ms. Machado.

Well, thanks to a mysterious tipster, Trump now also finds himself defending himself for being a beneficiary of a near billion dollar tax loss. Instead of talking about his success in building, he`s drawn into an interminable discussion of why he spent so much effort getting out of taxes and why that makes him, to use his word, smart.

Well, to win, a candidate needs to focus on his or her issues. Trump has a bit more than a month now to get that done.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC ANCHOR, "ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES": Tonight on "ALL IN" --

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Here`s my question, what kind of genius loses a billion dollars in a single year?

HAYES: An October surprise for the ages.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I understand the tax laws better than almost everyone, which is why I am one who can truly fix them.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, David Corn, Ron Reagan, Milissa Rehberger

9617 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: The tweet where you live.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

So why did Donald Trump, busy as he is running for president, allow a former beauty contestant to live rent-free in his brain the last five days? Why doesn`t he evict her from his mind and get back to the issues -- uncontrolled **immigration**, bad, job-killing trade deals and stupid wars? Those are issues that he could win the White House with, instead of tweeting about her at 3:00 o`clock in the morning.

How could he ever perform as president when he can`t focus his mind on matters of state? Better question still. Am I taking Trump more seriously than he`s taking himself?

It began at 3:20 AM this morning, when he tweeted that reporters quoting anonymous Trump campaign sources were just pushing, quote, "made-up lies," close quote.

Starting just after 5:00 AM, again this morning, Trump`s focus turned to his feud with beauty pageant winner Alicia Machado. Here`s Trump before dawn this morning, talking to the world. "Wow. Crooked Hillary was duped and used by my worst Miss Universe. Hillary violated" -- or actually, "Hillary floated her as an angel without checking her past, which is terrible," close quote.

Five minutes later, Trump went on. Quote, "Using Alicia M. in the debate as a paragon of virtue just showed that crooked Hillary suffers from bad judgment. Hillary was set up by a con."

At 5:30 AM, Trump told his Twitter followers to check out what he described as a "sex tape," and he said, "Did crooked Hillary help disgusting Alicia M. become a U.S. citizen so she could use her in the debate?"

NBC News has no evidence that Clinton helped Machado get her citizenship. She became an American in August. What Trump referred to as a "sex tape" seems to be a conspiracy theory, as well. According to NBC News, the closest thing might be a suggestive scene that was in a Spanish reality show. NBC News has not verified its authenticity.

Well, later in the day, with the sun not up, Trump tweeted, "For those few people knocking me for tweeting at 3:00 o`clock in the morning, at least you know I will be there, awake, to answer the call."

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: So what is Trump up to, if anything, and why does he stick to this line of attack? David Corn is Washington bureau chief for "Mother Jones" and an MSNBC political analyst and Ruth Marcus is a great columnist for "The Washington Post" and Matt Schlapp is chairman of the American Conservative Union. He`s a member of Trump`s Catholic advisory group.

Well, of course, I have to start with you on that point.

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: This is about -- yes! I`m just wondering where the League of Decency stands on this so-called sex tape. I just wonder -- look, I`m not in the business of hatcheting Donald Trump. I think the voters ought to know what he stands for. They ought to know who he is.

But he did have a set of issues to run on that got him into the limelight. We really do have a debate in this country about our trade issues.

MATT SCHLAPP, AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE UNION PRESIDENT: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: We have real issues about whether we actually control -- any kind of **immigration** control. And we certainly have a debate over the wars we`ve been fighting. He could have had a perfect storm of issues, and yet he`s chasing down this rabbit hole...

SCHLAPP: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... to some to a person he doesn`t -- well, unfortunately, he didn`t treat like a human being in the first instance when he dealt with her. And now he`s treating it like the most important issue of the campaign.

SCHLAPP: Well...

MATTHEWS: He seems crazy on this thing.

SCHLAPP: It was 15 hours ago, and I agree with you completely...

MATTHEWS: No, this morning.

SCHLAPP: Well, exactly.

MATTHEWS: Well, what, is the dead news by dawn? Does all news die at dawn?

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: In all seriousness, I want to agree with what you said in your opening, which is if he talks about jobs and the economy, like he did in the first 20 to 30 minutes of the debate...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

SCHLAPP: ... if he talks about trade, if he talks about regulations...

MATTHEWS: Yes, so Hillary just manipulated him...

SCHLAPP: I think he owned that part of the debate. When he got on the defense, first with the first question from Lester Holt, it wasn`t his fault...

MATTHEWS: No, Lester asked him a simple question.

SCHLAPP: It`s a fair question.

MATTHEWS: Did you really inherit $14 million to start with there, which got to his ego.

SCHLAPP: Right.

MATTHEWS: And he thought -- this is the problem with Trump. This campaign shouldn`t be about him. It should be about the issues he`s raised.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I know. And it shouldn`t be because the only reason he`s in this campaign...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: You don`t deny that he is in the thick of it, that he...

MATTHEWS: Because of the issues!

SCHLAPP: And every -- and even the -- and even the two polls that have come out in the last couple of days, this is a tight race, and if he continues to talk about the issues that matter to voters, he can win this thing.

RUTH MARCUS, "WASHINGTON POST": But haven`t we learned that that`s actually not going to happen...

SCHLAPP: It`s going to happen.

MARCUS: ... that he`s going to have his good 15 or 20 minutes, and something is going to inevitably happen because it`s not that hard...

SCHLAPP: And something`s going to happen to her, too!

MARCUS: That`s going to -- no, it`s not, because she is a disciplined candidate. This is not a partisan thing. She is, for the most part, a hugely disciplined candidate, and he is, for the most part, a hugely undisciplined candidate.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Wait, wait, wait, wait! David`s turn.

DAVID CORN, "MOTHER JONES," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: A guy waking up or not going to bed at 3:00 AM and tweeting out these tweets is someone who`s not stable. It`s true.

SCHLAPP: Oh, stop.

CORN: No, come on! No other politician...

MATTHEWS: You`ve never tweeted at 3:00 AM.

CORN: Not about sex tapes that don`t exist!

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... at 3:00 o`clock in the morning?

(CROSSTALK)

CORN: No, no, no. The point is, he`s in the thick of it...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I`m just teasing.

CORN: ... in order to gain control...

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORN: ... of our nuclear triad, which he didn`t understand what it was, and he thinks it`s important to go after Miss Universe because everything in the world, everything in this campaign, is about him and his emotions and what he feels and what he vents about!

SCHLAPP: I don`t think that`s right.

CORN: This just shows that he is not to be trusted.

MATTHEWS: Can I make an offering? And I`m sure two of you are going to disagree with me. There are legitimate voters out there who are concerned about the economic direction of the country, the social (ph) (INAUDIBLE) everything. They don`t like the wars. Their kids have been the ones fighting them, not the elite. Their kids have been fighting these wars, getting maimed by them, getting all kinds of traumatization. They`ve been disasters! (INAUDIBLE) there`s something like 600,000 guys, mostly, who`ve got mental or emotional problems coming out of these wars. The elite don`t care.

Number two. It is a legitimate issue whether we`ve been trading ourselves into oblivion in this country. We`ve lost our manufacturing base. And we don`t have, for both parties` reasons, political reasons, a real **immigration** policy. It`s really whoever can get in, is really what it comes down to.

SCHLAPP: It`s broken.

MATTHEWS: Fine, I`d try to get in, too. I`m not knocking people for trying to get into this country. It`s where the jobs are. But nobody`s got a system.

So there is a legitimate concern on all three of those issues. Trump said he would be the champion of those issues. He is not performing as the champion. He`s performing as an act. Right now, an act...

SCHLAPP: Look...

MATTHEWS: ... talking about his misbehavior.

SCHLAPP: Look...

MATTHEWS: Or whatever you want to call it.

SCHLAPP: We can keep talking about these tweets, or what we can talk about is what the race is about.

CORN: He talks about them!

MARCUS: Oh, wait. I`m sorry...

(CROSSTALK)

CORN: He`s talking about them! We`re not making this the news. He`s making this the news! He`s the candidate you have!

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s talk about Hillary Clinton and her -- and I would say her success in focusing on the campaign where he can`t win. Hillary Clinton first mentioned Alicia Machado at Monday`s debate. For the past four days now, Donald Trump has continued to battle against the former Miss Universe. She threw this puck out and he can`t get his stick off it! Lookit, let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: And one of the worst things he said was about a woman in a beauty contest. He loves beauty contests, supporting them and hanging around them. And he called this woman "Miss Piggy." Then he called her "Miss Housekeeping" because she was Latina.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: She was the winner, and you know, she gained a massive amount of weight. And it was a real problem. We had a real problem. Not only that, her attitude.

I saved her job because they wanted to fire her for putting on so much weight. And it is a beauty contest. You know, I mean, say what you want, Bill, I mean, they know what they`re getting into. It`s a beauty contest. And I said, Don`t do that. Let her try and lose the weight. Can you imagine I end up in a position like this? So that`s the way it is.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: A few times in my life, I`ve gotten up in the morning and seen a mouse is in the trap. The poor mouse is dead. And you wonder, did he really like the cheese that much that he put his head in there and took the chance?

Why did he put his head in that mousetrap? Why is he talking about -- why is he doing this now? Just tell me, why is he doing this?

MARCUS: Because he`s never seen cheese that he can`t go after, no matter how many times the trap comes and hits him on the nose or whatever, whatever happens. I mean, look...

MATTHEWS: It usually gets you on the neck, is what it does.

MARCUS: Well, in politics, right -- well, I was trying to get him out of the trap so he can go back in. In politics, sometimes it`s really important not to let an attack go unanswered, but it`s also important sometimes in politics to know which attacks to leave unanswered.

MATTHEWS: You`re so smart, Ruth. That`s why (INAUDIBLE) And it`s the opposite of Dukakis. You always said Dukakis and John Kerry...

MARCUS: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... let charges go unanswered, whether it`s Swiftboating or it`s something to do with Dukakis and -- and if he`d only answered them, we always say, Shrummy and the rest of you guys -- if you`d only answered the charge, you would have won. Now we`re saying to the guy, Don`t answer the charge.

(CROSSTALK)

MARCUS: Wait. And one second. If we hadn`t -- if he had not kept going on this, the chances that we would be talking about Alicia Machado today, not great.

CORN: But remember...

MARCUS: And if the Clinton campaign had been able to script this, they could not have scripted...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... Hillary`s people and Hillary who deserve...

CORN: But wait a second...

MATTHEWS: ... the credit for taking this guy down a rabbit hole.

CORN: But this did not happen in a vacuum. This happens in a context of years and years, including on this campaign, of Donald Trump making misogynistic remarks. And you know, it started out with, What about her looks? What about her looks? What`s wrong with Hillary Clinton`s looks? He did it with Carly Fiorina and...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You`re misquoting. He didn`t (ph) say look.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... not the same thing.

CORN: But you know that this is the big issue. And he knows, or he should know, or you people should...

(CROSSTALK)

CORN: It is a big issue!

MATTHEWS: We`ve got to get this guy -- you get a couple of minutes to respond to this.

SCHLAPP: We can keep talking about this all we want...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: That`s fine, too. The fact is, is this. We`re talking about these mistakes. These mistakes (INAUDIBLE) mistakes. Hillary Clinton`s been doing this for 25 years. She looks like a perfectly horrible candidate. Yes, she`s disciplined...

MATTHEWS: This week?

SCHLAPP: She`s completely -- well, she had a good week...

MARCUS: Her campaign...

SCHLAPP: She`s unlikable...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: She`s unlikable. She is not striking a chord with the voters...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let`s go right now -- let`s take a look at the polls and we`ll see how this week is doing.

CORN: She`s doing better than Trump! How can you say she`s that doing worse in striking a chord?

MATTHEWS: David you`re right. A series of state polls, which is how we pick presidents, by state, released today showed some good news for Hillary Clinton since Monday`s debate. Clinton now leads Trump by 4 points in Florida. She was behind him down there, according to a Mason-Dixon poll. In August, her lead was only 2 points. Anyway, in Nevada -- by the way, it`s not Nevahda -- Clinton beats Trump by 6 points, according to a Suffolk University -- what`s Suffolk University doing out in Nevada?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... compared to a 2-point lead back in August. In Michigan, Clinton is ahead by 7, which means I think she`ll win Michigan, in a new "Detroit News" poll.

And in New Hampshire, Clinton also leads by 7 -- that`s a very powerful fact, New Hampshire should be even-steven -- according to a new WBUR poll. Meanwhile, earlier today, Fox News released -- FOX News has good polls -- released a new national poll. Clinton leads Trump by 43 to 40 in a four- way race. Still close.

SCHLAPP: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: And that`s your point. My point -- there`s a lot of issues that divide this country pretty much 50/50.

SCHLAPP: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Clinton`s up 2 points since earlier this month, while Trump has remained steady. There is a national...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Can we stop for a second?

SCHLAPP: Sure.

MATTHEWS: There`s a national debate over a lot of economic issues and social issues and war issues that are really worthy of debate. Is it good for the country if people say, We just love the way things are going, and elect Hillary. If that`s the message, I think it`s disastrous.

SCHLAPP: That`s right.

MATTHEWS: There is a real debate over issues. Trump is a terrible vessel to make those charges. But it is a charge made by a lot of Americans against the system.

SCHLAPP: ... if you think about, with the kind of Mitt Romney kind of candidates we`ve put up, when we go out and try to talk to these regular Joes, as you`re referring to them, you know, these people that have fought the wars, these people that have the economic consequences of our trade deals and everything else, Trump actually does connect to them. And I think if you look at that Fox poll...

MATTHEWS: This week?

SCHLAPP: If you look at that Fox poll -- he had a bad week! I`ve said that. I agree with that. But if you look at that Fox poll and look at how close it is...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: Let me finish! Look at what the question was on the debate. She killed him. She got over 60 percent, said they thought she won. And yet the race is still tight, which shows you he can have a bad debate performance and still win this thing.

MATTHEWS: I agree with that.

(CROSSTALK)

MARCUS: One of the things that`s important to understand...

SCHLAPP: Yes, I just got to get a sentence out...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You`re right. You`re right, Matt.

MARCUS: I do think...

MATTHEWS: Don`t complain about the mike here, OK?

MARCUS: I give you this point. The mike might have been faulty, so I give you this point.

SCHLAPP: It was faulty.

MARCUS: It is really remarkable, given Donald Trump`s flaws as a candidate, that the race is -- and problems with his performance...

SCHLAPP: And her flaws, too!

MARCUS: ... that the race is so close. And I attribute that both to the kinds of anxiety and unhappiness that Chris is talking about...

SCHLAPP: And she`s not so good.

MARCUS: ... and to her flaws as a candidate.

MATTHEWS: OK, let me...

MARCUS: But this behavior does just not make sense.

MATTHEWS: OK, how do we (INAUDIBLE) you know, we had Mike Pence on (INAUDIBLE) The poor guy -- you know, I don`t know the guy (INAUDIBLE)

SCHLAPP: He`s great.

MATTHEWS: He`s the one who`s got to defend all this crap. You know, he doesn`t not anything about these sex, lies and videotape (INAUDIBLE)

SCHLAPP: He is not going to talk about it.

MATTHEWS: He`s not going to -- so how does he or how does his opponent, the good guy, Tim Kaine, get this campaign back on the issues and away for the personality of Donald Trump?

SCHLAPP: Well, you know how a vice presidential debate is. The impact will probably be negligible. Both of these guys...

MATTHEWS: No! How many millions watching, 40 million?

SCHLAPP: Half of what (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: That`s 40 million people!

SCHLAPP: And I think they`re both sturdy, a little bit plain kind of presenters. And my guess, you`ll look for Mike Pence to connect to conservatives. That`s the goal for Mike Pence, to get the base excited.

CORN: Can I make a point, though?

MATTHEWS: Doesn`t he wish...

CORN: Chris -- Chris...

MATTHEWS: ... he was running against Evan Bayh?

CORN: Chris, you rightfully yearn for a policy debate...

MATTHEWS: I want a real debate!

CORN: ... but you know what? Donald Trump isn`t doing that. If you watched his convention speech, he puts out these memes -- law and order, be tough. He won`t tell us what his policy is regarding ISIS...

MATTHEWS: Well, why doesn`t he focus on (INAUDIBLE)

CORN: Because you know what? He can`t put a paragraph together!

MATTHEWS: Let me tell you something...

CORN: He says he knows more about the generals (sic), and he doesn`t!

MATTHEWS: When Joe McCarthy was going down, and he drank too much -- that`s obvious -- and he killed himself, basically, with booze, people pointed out that it showed that he really didn`t believe in the anti- communist cause. If he really believed in the cause he was fighting for so successfully and dramatically, he wouldn`t have killed himself. He would have stuck to the cause. But the minute he was censured, he quit. He just gave up and drank himself to death.

I look at Trump -- obviously, everybody`s different. But I look at Trump - - if he really cared about trade, really cared about illegal **immigration**, really cared about stupid wars, he`d be talking about those relentlessly, like Bernie Sanders does. Bernie Sanders doesn`t change the topic. Bernie sticks to why he`s running.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Motive (ph) is everything in politics!

MARCUS: But I think that the fault in your argument is that you`re assuming that Trump actually can control that. And we have not had evidence of that.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let me tell you the evidence...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: How did he pull this race together in September, a whole month?

MATTHEWS: What is the Catholic role, by the way, your religious, sectarian role in this campaign? I`m amazed (INAUDIBLE)

SCHLAPP: Coalition politics. They have it on the Democrat side and they have it on...

MATTHEWS: So what`s your role for the Catholics? I want to be a part -- I want to know what`s going on here.

SCHLAPP: We want to make sure the campaign understands the issues that are important to Catholics. It`s critical. It`s critical in Pennsylvania. It`s critical in Wisconsin.

MATTHEWS: Oh, I know it is.

SCHLAPP: It`s critical in Iowa. And it`s critical -- look, Donald Trump is new. It`s first time he`s running...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Send me a memo on that, will you? I want to keep up.

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: How about I send you a tweet?

MATTHEWS: No, just send me a memo.

SCHLAPP: Not at 3:00 AM.

MATTHEWS: I would -- you know what I`d really like? A piece of paper with something written on it (INAUDIBLE)

Anyway, thank you, David Corn. Thank you, Matt Schlapp. Thank you for coming, Ruth. Ruth, you`re always right.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Except don`t use rhetorical devices to say I`m not thinking straight.

Anyway, coming up...

MARCUS: Oh!

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes, you did! You said the trouble with your thinking is. I mean, I`m just saying what ought to be the way politics is fought in this country, over issues.

Anyway, Donald Trump has fallen right into a trap set by Hillary Clinton. We all believe that. She`s been able to put a name and a face on Trump`s challenge to women. Boy, has she done it. Her name`s Malicia -- Alicia, rather, Machado. There`s a name for his pain.

Her campaign`s getting more confident it will propel her to victory this fall. By the way, Hillary Clinton is in many ways a mood ring. If you just look at her, you can tell how the campaign is going right now! She`s not hiding anything now.

Plus, the increasingly difficult job Trump`s surrogates are having. Imagine having (INAUDIBLE) imagine being Kellyanne this week defending him. Imagine being Mike Pence next week. It`s getting harder and harder. And now it`s Mike Pence`s turn. He`s got to answer about sex tapes and all that, all of Trump`s recent missteps this Tuesday at this -- next coming Tuesday. I`m going to watch that debate. We`re going to be on all night with that one.

And what should we expect when "Saturday Night Live" -- I can`t wait! -- begins its new season tomorrow night, the cold open? Alec Baldwin is set to play Donald Trump and Kate McKinnon, of course, is Hillary. And the big question is how "SNL" plans to parody -- how do you out-parody parody! And how damaging will it be?

Finally, my "Election Diary" for tonight as September draws to a close.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, four days to go now before the vice presidential showdown next Tuesday. Tim Kaine and Mike Pence will face off at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia. We`ll be there physically. I`ll be there, as always there.

MSNBC will have all-day coverage, and join me for a full hour of HARDBALL at 7:00 PM to start the evening. The debate itself starts at 9:00, and then I`ll be back for post-game coverage and analysis on until 1:00 AM.

That`s Tuesday here on MSNBC, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Well, it`s clear the Clinton campaign intends to showcase Donald Trump`s latest attacks on Alicia Machado, which he posted on Twitter earlier this morning, as evidence to advance their case that Trump is unfit to be president, very basic charge, unfit to be president. This proves it, they say.

Well, the Clinton campaign reacted to Trump in a series of tweets itself today, writing -- quote -- "This is unhinged, even for Trump. What kind of man stays up all night to smear a woman with lies and conspiracy theories? When something gets under Donald`s thin skin, he lashes out and can`t let go. This is dangerous for a president. We have heard Donald`s insults for years, and his policies reflect his disregard, even contempt for women."

And here`s what she, Hillary Clinton, said at a campaign event in Florida late today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I mean, really, who gets up at 3:00 in the morning to engage in a Twitter attack against a former Miss Universe? I mean, his latest Twitter meltdown is unhinged, even for him. It proves yet again that he is temperamentally unfit to be president and commander in chief.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, there`s also new evidence that Donald Trump`s ongoing attacks on Ms. Machado might help Clinton with Hispanic voters.

As "The New York Times" reports -- quote -- "Google Trends data indicated that the searches for voter registration have surged over the past week and that the highest rates of searches have been in disproportionately Hispanic areas."

Boy, that`s powerful information.

Joining me right now is Heidi Przybyla, senior reporter covering the Clinton campaign for "USA Today," and author and radio talk show host Ron Reagan.

Ron, a friend of mine after the debate the other night said that the person who dug up the story of Alicia Machado is headed for Paris as our ambassador, because the reward from Hillary Clinton will be so great, because whoever came up with -- it`s what you look for in oppo research, a human, sympathetic face for something you have been charging against a guy, that he`s anti-women, anti-Hispanic, anti-whatever, anti-beauty queen in this case.

He`s just a user of people, and here you have got somebody who lives and willing to make your case, as a citizen, make a case for you.

RON REAGAN, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Yes, it`s true.

It`s a little like the Khan family or Judge Curiel. When you say Donald Trump is misogynistic, he says nasty things about women, OK, true enough. But when you can put a face to that, when you can put a very attractive face to that, a young woman here who he said terrible things to, that`s just perfect.

The fact that she`s a woman, the fact that she`s Latina makes it even better.

MATTHEWS: I know.

REAGAN: But this trap wouldn`t have worked for -- you know, against Donald Trump had Donald Trump not been Donald Trump. If he`d had the wit to simply say, during the debate, when the name came up, ah, yes, I remember her fondly, I`m sorry if there was a misunderstanding, I wish her well...

MATTHEWS: That`s a good point.

REAGAN: ... and ended it right there, it would have been over.

MATTHEWS: That`s what Hillary Clinton said about the e-mail. I made a big mistake. Forget -- La Guardia -- the old La Guardia line in New York was, when I make a mistake, it`s a beaut, and move on.

REAGAN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: However, however, this gets to the point of how he treats little people.

And you always want to know about a politician, not how he treats big shots he wants to kiss up to, but you always want to know, is this the kind of guy that kisses up and kicks down? And we meet them in this business of media, meet them everywhere, the kind of person that treats other big shots with great care, and anybody below the line, as they say in Hollywood, is nothing but dirt. And that kind of behavior gets to people.

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, "USA TODAY": And like Ron said, this is just putting another human face to that.

You make a very good point. And she`s been doing the same thing, for example, with the little people and the contractors that he`s stiffed over the years.

MATTHEWS: Like her dad would have been.

PRZYBYLA: Ms. Machado was on the Clinton campaign`s radar basically since May, and they had an entire media strategy coordinated around that.

MATTHEWS: How did they find that she existed?

PRZYBYLA: Well, she did an interview with a news organization, I think, back, and they had seen that.

But, in any event, she`s been on their radar. They had all of this kind of set up. They had a Web video ready to go.

MATTHEWS: Before the debate.

PRZYBYLA: Before the debate even happened.

And, if you remember, Chris, it was a question about Hillary Clinton`s stamina, the comments that Donald Trump had made about her stamina. And she deftly turned that around into a commentary about Donald Trump and the way he treats all women. And then you put a face to it, like Ron said.

And that has been -- these have been some of the most successful moments, like with Khizr Khan. They gave him a prime speaking slot over at the convention, just like they`re evaluating Ms. Machado. After, you know, she had interviews, she had a media call with all of us, she had an Instagram of her wrapped in an American flag.

So, it was a very good production. But, like Ron says, with any good production, there`s a credit space here. And, you know, there`s a lot of credit that goes to Trump.

MATTHEWS: I`m not totally insensitive to what people talk about. People talk about hair loss. They talk about weight-gaining. You look at all the ads, they`re almost all erectile dysfunction. You look at all the ads, they`re basically human needs, human situations.

And I`m taking about all the eating disorder issues that we have. We talk with women, young men, young boys. People send their kids to camp to deal with it. And I think about people who gain weight naturally, they can`t do anything about it.

And here`s Donald Trump putting a woman on television on some exercise regime on camera, punishing her, which rhymes with what he said about abortion. There has to be some form of punishment.

Why is his first reaction when someone has a condition he doesn`t like or look he doesn`t like is punishment? Why`d you get pregnant? You ought to be punished. The whole thing is just -- I just think it`s Donald Trump`s instinct and his impulse, which is punishment of the woman in this case. He said it. I didn`t.

REAGAN: And, really, for Donald Trump to be criticizing somebody about her weight? Donald Trump is not exactly Jack LaLanne, you know? This sort of porky orange guy with weird hair, he`s criticizing people`s looks.

But this goes to something, Chris, that`s been lingering around the periphery of this campaign ever since Donald Trump became a real factor. And that`s, shall we call it, his state of mind.

(LAUGHTER)

REAGAN: You know, we`re not psychiatrists. We can`t diagnose this man, but let me say that we`re people, and we judge people`s character all the time by what they do and what they say.

(CROSSTALK)

REAGAN: And what Donald Trump and what -- does and what he says points to a real character issue for Donald Trump. And I mean that seriously. There`s something wrong with this man.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about gender here, and not sex, but gender. Let`s talk about -- Heidi, let`s talk about this.

I think women are very aware of men in public life, and how they think they look at women, right? Now, let me give you the example that I always kid about, Alan Alda.

Alan Alda was to me was the sensitive man, the guy that was a good guy, treated women as equals, with great respect, didn`t objectify them. You know what I mean? Classic. And it was always in his parts, but also in his private statements about this.

Trump seems to be at the other end of that spectrum.

PRZYBYLA: Well, I was actually in Hillary Clinton`s motorcade with a bunch of other mothers, women who happen to be mothers. We were discussing when this first happened, oh, this will blow over in 24 hours. It didn`t because of the way Trump responded.

Then we got to learn a little bit more about Alicia Machado, and the thing that really hit me as a mother was that she had, at the time, anorexia and bulimia, and this is -- every mother`s worst nightmare is those magazines that you see at the end of a grocery store aisle, and the messages that those are sending to our daughters.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: All those ads, all those magazines.

PRZYBYLA: And then a man like Trump comes along and tells you you`re fat. That`s the problem.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you, Ron, one question. This could be -- this has nothing to do with gender or sex, certainly. It has to do with mind.

You talked about Trump`s mind. Why can`t he lose it, just drop it? Just drop the -- this is a losing issue, we say in politics -- you know the rule. When you`re in a hole, stop digging. He doesn`t seem to have that in his being, to just drop it.

REAGAN: Because he always has to be right and he always has to win.

He`s a narcissist, and any insult to his sense of ego and the well-being of his ego is seen as an existential threat. So, Alicia Machado, this -- you know, this women who really is no big threat to him, he has to treat her like this deadly, deadly threat. He has to extinguish her.

MATTHEWS: OK.

REAGAN: And I would look for Hillary Clinton to lay similar traps in the next debates coming up, to bring up individuals who maybe went to Trump University or maybe contributed to his charity, and saw their money go to 6-foot-tall portraits of Donald Trump and things like that.

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You are tough. OK, Ron, thank you. I miss you when you`re not here.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You know, it`s -- you know, in other words, you`re saying let me interpret you. Let me interpret you.

In other words, this campaign is not really about the things that Trump said it was about, trade and the illegal **immigration** and stupid wars. It`s really about Donald Trump.

Anyway, Heidi Przybyla, thank you, and Ron Reagan, who I do miss.

Up next: It`s getting harder for Trump`s surrogates. Imagine being a surrogate to stay on this message. By the way, remember the message, trade, illegal **immigration**, stupid wars. Now the message seems to be, I can`t take any more -- well, I have got Alicia Machado in my head.

Anyway, on Tuesday, by the way, Mike Pence`s 90 minutes in the spotlight, the vice president -- I`m going to really like these, because the vice presidential debate is sort of like middleweight boxing. It can be a lot faster and snappier than the big stuff. He`s got to answer, by the way, Pence does, for everything Trump has said and done this week.

Whoever the moderator is, is going to nail him with this stuff.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Milissa Rehberger. Here`s what`s happening.

President Obama said today that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas` attendance at the funeral for Israeli statesman Shimon Peres was a reminder of the unfinished business of peace in the Middle East. Peres was buried today in Jerusalem.

And National Transportation Safety Board investigators held off questioning the engineer in yesterday`s deadly train crash in New Jersey because of his injuries. They are struggling to lift clues from the train`s black box recorders -- back to HARDBALL.

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Well, surrogates, how would you like to be one of those, for Donald Trump have been giving their best effort to defend Trump`s treatment of former Miss Universe Alicia Machado.

Here`s Trump`s spokesperson Katrina Pierson:

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MEGYN KELLY, FOX NEWS: He has called some women fat pigs. He`s constantly evaluating women based on a number. They`re a seven, they`re a 10. He`s very into body shape of women.

(CROSSTALK)

KATRINA PIERSON, TRUMP CAMPAIGN SPOKESPERSON: Well, absolutely. Mr. Trump owned a beauty pageant, and that`s where some of that comes from. That is also entertainment. That is also television.

When you look at the woman, for example, like, his wife and his daughters, they say he treats everyone the same.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, other Trump surrogates are now trying to turn the tables and focus on Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton`s treatment of the women who said they had affairs with Bill. Here we go.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NEWT GINGRICH (R), FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: I`m very proud that, at the very end, when she attacked him and went off on this whole rant about women, and you could see his face. In the Republican primary, he would have just smashed her. Instead, he came off looking like a gentleman and she came off looking pretty mean and miserable.

ERIC TRUMP, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, TRUMP ORGANIZATION: It`s amazing when you hear her talk about sexism and these various claims, which are ridiculous, aside from obviously, Bill, her husband, being maybe the worst that`s ever lived.

RUDY GIULIANI (R), FORMER MAYOR OF NEW YORK: She didn`t just stand by him. She attacked Monica Lewinsky. And after being married to Bill Clinton for 20 years, if you didn`t know the moment Monica Lewinsky said that Bill Clinton violated her, that she was telling the truth, then you`re too stupid to be president.

LESLIE RUTLEDGE, ARKANSAS ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is ill-advised to viciously attack women or anyone, for that matter. And that`s why, when you look back at how Hillary Clinton treated those women during the 1990s and went to destroy them, Donald Trump`s actions pale in comparison to Hillary Clinton`s actions.

She literally was, you know, in charge of a war room, where they spent six figures on what they called the bimbo eruptions. What she did do was viciously attack women who fell prey to her husband`s advances.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Will this strategy work or will it backfire on Trump, going after Bill Clinton?

Let`s bring in the HARDBALL roundtable tonight.

Jason Johnson is politics editor of The Root. Anne Gearan is political correspondent for "The Washington Post" and Margaret Carlson is a columnist with Bloomberg, Bloomberg View, in fact.

Margaret, a couple things. They`re throwing a lot of non-facts out there, first of all. But I have never -- you remember those contortionists in the circus, where you had to like bend your body, double-jointed, you had to make the weird -- what people have to do -- I can`t even follow Newt Gingrich, who`s a smart guy.

You don`t have to like him to agree he`s smart. And the contorted stuff he has to do is incredible, to try to bend their case to make Trump look like the gentleman.

Was he the gentleman Monday night? What are we talking about here?

MARGARET CARLSON, COLUMNIST, BLOOMBERG VIEW: And no shame.

I can`t count high enough on air to get up to the number of marriages with Giuliani, Gingrich, and Trump, but it might be over 10.

MATTHEWS: You mean the nine wives club?

CARLSON: It might be double digits, close to it. And Trump may not be done.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You can field a World Series team with those nine. OK.

(CROSSTALK)

CARLSON: Yes.

Also, Monica didn`t accuse Bill. That`s number one. All that I remember Hillary doing was calling, in a private e-mail to her best friend, Monica Loony Toons. And, by the way, every wife`s instinct is to defend the husband.

MATTHEWS: By the way, they`re throwing stuff out there that has not been demonstrated yet, right? It`s never been demonstrated that Hillary`s out there squeezing people`s arms and saying, don`t talk, and some sort of -- you know, it`s all possible. It`s tough politics out there, as you say, in defense of your spouse.

Anything`s possible, but no evidence of it. And he`s throwing the it out. They`re throwing it out.

ANNE GEARAN, "THE WASHINGTON POST": Yes.

We, actually, at "The Washington Post," one of my colleagues published a very, very long article this week, trying to go through every known case of women who claimed two things, either that Bill Clinton went after them or that Hillary in some way abetted that or attacked them, attacked their veracity afterwards.

And while there are multiple unflattering examples of things that Bill and Hillary Clinton did, there is absolutely no evidence that we were able to find in that story that she was part of some war room, that she was part of some concerted effort to destroy or hurt any woman who was involved.

MATTHEWS: By the way, Monica didn`t come clear on that whole thing for a while there. We had the grand jury. We went through that whole stuff.

It was never her saying I had an affair with him and he was denying it. So, this thing that Rudy`s talking about, Rudy Giuliani, that scene didn`t occur.

JASON JOHNSON, THE ROOT: Not only did it not occur, Chris, but who is this appealing to?

MATTHEWS: OK, that`s the bigger question.

JOHNSON: Yes. I don`t understand who it appeals to, because, you know, if you`re older and you remember going through the 1990s, your idea is already set about this. You either feel the way you feel about Bill, you feel the way you feel about Hillary.

And if you`re a Generation X or a millennial, these are Halloween masks now.

(CROSSTALK)

CARLSON: Maybe it`s that tiny philandering husband vote.

(LAUGHTER)

JOHNSON: Must be.

MATTHEWS: By the way, it`s very hard. You have to be an -- if there`s such a thing, you would have to be an incredibly skilled public figure to make the case that she`s responsible for Bill`s behavior. It`s just -- I don`t think it`s even conceivable. But if it took -- one guy who couldn`t do it is Donald Trump.

JOHNSON: Well, right.

GEARAN: Well, right.

MATTHEWS: I don`t know how you make the case it`s her fault.

And she looked very strong during all that, in fact, had poise. And the reason why people respect her today, I think, to a large extent, was how well she handled that and her poise and the fact that she kept he dignity.

CARLSON: Her favorability went way up, for the first time, as first lady.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

So, I don`t know what the -- and, by the way, we have also an area we all are better at than talking about sex and crap like that, is -- not that sex is crap.

(LAUGHTER)

CARLSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: But just by talking about it...

GEARAN: If you`re Catholic, you just can`t go there.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Dancing is heresy there, of course.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: No, the whole question of the Republican Party took this to the voters in 1998.

JOHNSON: Right.

CARLSON: Right.

MATTHEWS: They pushed it real hard. They impeached him. They got clobbered by them.

So, the voters, the entire electorate shot him down on this thing.

JOHNSON: I got to tell you, if Donald Trump were to mention this -- he can talk about it all week, if he wants to, even though Bill Clinton`s...

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: ... 49 percent.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He does. He does want to.

JOHNSON: But if you take this to a town hall, there will be audible gasps.

MATTHEWS: Oh, that`s going to be -- that`s right. Make that point.

JOHNSON: That would be terrible. That would be a horrible thing to do.

(CROSSTALK)

CARLSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Because people are...

CARLSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Tell me how people would behave in a room, where family members and kids are watching them talk about this kind of stuff in front of the world.

JOHNSON: It would blow up in his face.

MATTHEWS: I don`t think people want to talk about it, Anne.

ANNE GEARAN, THE WASHINGTON POST: Well, I mean, this has been litigated and re-litigated for years --

MATTHEWS: That`s a new word, by the way. Relitigated is a 2016. Like psyche, that`s a new word.

GEARAN: Yes. But people have formed an opinion about what they think about the Clinton -- and frankly, what they think about Hillary Clinton, and she -- Trump risks looking like he`s being a bully and --

MATTHEWS: And for whatever reason, Bill is such a member of the family nationally right now, that everybody`s --

GEARAN: Well, he`s been rehabilitated as a political figure now.

MATTHEWS: They just know him. There`s no secrets with Bill. He`s just Bill.

MARGARET CARLSON, BLOOMBERG: Like he was late getting on the plane today. You know, how Bill.

MATTHEWS: That is so Bill.

CARLSON: He`s like a doddering grandfather now. We`re just not going to get that --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: When is this guy going to understand, I`m the president! It`s my airplane! Get on the plane!

Anyway, the roundtable is sticking with us.

And up next, the 2016 presidential candidates will get the "SNL" treatment tomorrow night. We`re going to look at that, get a peek at that, Alec Baldwin. Anyway, how is "Saturday Night Live" going to portray Donald Trump and what we`ve seen from him? How do you out-parody this week. That`s ahead.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(VIDEO CLIP PLAYS)

MATTHEWS: Well, do not adjust your television sets.

We are back with HARDBALL, and that was Alec Baldwin and Kate McKinnon giving us a taste of what to expect this Saturday night when they premiere this season of "Saturday Night Live" with a fabulous, I bet, cold open.

The last time we heard from the ensemble over there was back in May, and a lot has happened, of course, since then. We`re now 39 days closer to the end of this crazy roller coaster. I think we`re very close to the end. And that is the 2016 campaign. But the good news is, for a few moments, we can laugh at the whole thing.

Let`s take another look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: She`s in deep trouble. Is that OK? Good. The agreement is better. Bigger numbers than ever.

MATTHEWS: Who is your favorite foreign leader?

GARY JOHNSON, LIBERTARIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Who is my favorite --

MATTHEWS: Just name any one of the continents, any country, name one foreign leader that you respect and look up to. Anybody?

BILL WELD, LIBERTARIAN VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I like Shimon Peres.

MATTHEWS: I`m talking about living. Go ahead.

You got to do this, anywhere, any continent, Canada, Mexico, Europe over there, Asia, South Africa, name a foreign leader that you respect.

JOHNSON: I guess I`m having an Aleppo moment in the former president of Mexico.

MATTHEWS: But I`m giving you the whole world.

JOHNSON: I know, I know.

MATTHEWS: Anybody in the world you like? Anybody. Pick any leader.

JOHNSON: The former president of Mexico.

MATTHEWS: Which one?

JOHNSON: I`m having a brain --

MATTHEWS: Well, name anybody.

WELD: Fox.

TRUMP: I don`t think anybody knows that it was Russia that broke into the DNC. She`s saying Russia, Russia, Russia, but I don`t -- maybe it was. I mean, it could be Russia, but it could also be China, it could also be lots of other people. It also could be somebody sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds, OK?

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MATTHEWS: How do you beat that? Who is this person with 400 -- again the weight issue. "SNL" timed its season premiere for the week after the first debate. Do you think they knew they would have plenty to work with? Maybe so.

And more on how the show will parody Monday`s debate.

Back with our roundtable, Anne Gearan of "The Washington Post", Jason Johnson of "The Root", and Margaret Carlson from "Bloomberg".

Jason, I don`t know what your favorite moment is, but there`s so much material, can they outdo reality?

JOHNSON: I don`t know. I trust Alec Baldwin, but I still have Larry David as Bernie Sanders in my head and I wish he would come back.

This is going to be -- it`s going to be a really difficult challenge because there`s nothing -- usually when you`re doing "SNL," you`re playing on that person`s earnestness. Like, Tina Fey was making fun of the fact that Sarah Palin really took herself seriously.

MATTHEWS: I can see Russia from my house.

JOHNSON: Right, exactly. I don`t know what you`re going to play off of, but I know that Kate McKinnon is great. I love her desperate, needy Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: Doesn`t she have Hillary down?

JOHNSON: Yeah, from "election."

MATTHEWS: Yes, from election. It`s a little bit too game.

JOHNSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Margaret?

CARLSON: Well, she did win an Emmy for it. And the best I have ever seen Hillary was with Kate McKinnon on "Saturday Night Live". And oddly enough, Hillary was more human, while completely scripted, the irony of that. But wasn`t she great? And Kate McKinnon brought it out.

Alec Baldwin has had some well-publicized anger management issues, so he could bring some of that with --

MATTHEWS: A very similitude.

CARLSON: Very similitude, you never see that word, except in writing. Thank you, Chris.

Very similitude to the pout, because he has a slightly pouty face.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and he`s a little bit -- a little bit something.

CARLSON: Doughy.

MATTHEWS: There`s something going on with Alec Baldwin, that`s not normal day to day life, makes them interesting.

Well, Darrell Hammond, the great mimic of Trump, but also the greatest ever possible mimic of bill Clinton. He inhabited Clinton`s soul. When you see Hammond do Clinton, it`s the hamburgers, the women, this needy -- hungry guy.

CARLSON: Alec Baldwin needs to get this down. This is the --

MATTHEWS: Oh, yeah.

Do you ever read the religious books growing up, Jesus doing this. He does that. It`s awful! It`s blasphemous!

CARLSON: It`s the sermon on the mound.

MATTHEWS: I stand to you, and he`s giving us the truth and beatitudes and giving us this Trump stuff.

GEARAN: I`m just waiting to see how Trump reacts to Alec Baldwin being Trump. Because I mean, that could be fabulous, right? I mean, Trump could start tweeting -- Alec Baldwin`s gotten in trouble for some of the stuff he`s tweeted, so he could tweet back.

(CROSSTALK)

CARLSON: Oh, 3:00 in the morning on Sunday on Twitter --

JOHNSON: Oh, yes!

MATTHEWS: Flying tweets at 12:30.

Anyway, the roundtable is staying with us. Up next, these people tell me something I don`t know. More coming back on the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, you can play HARDBALL all week long online. Follow the show on Twitter and Instagram. They get big these days. Like us on Facebook. You`ll get access to interview, videos and behind the scenes photos as we head into the home stretch of the 2016 presidential campaign.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

And, Anne, tell me something I don`t know.

GEARAN: So, this hasn`t been reported. Tomorrow night in Washington, there`s a fund-raiser for Hillary Clinton called "Karaoke for Hillary" featuring Chelsea Clinton, and for $2,700 you can hear the insider -- Clinton insiders Capricia Marshall and Cheryl Mills do karaoke and pick the songs.

MATTHEWS: I have no comment.

JOHNSON: I can`t wait --

MATTHEWS: You are really like the insiders. That`s only Washington.

JOHNSON: We know the Russians are coming. We know that they`ve been hacking. That Trump`s been talking about it, Putin`s been talking about it. The Department of Homeland Security has identified two states that are at risk to be hacked this fall. That is Georgia and certain counties of Pennsylvania that do not have paper receipts for their voting machines.

And there`s a real concern, and Homeland Security has been offering assistance. And, right now, the secretary of state of Georgia has been saying, I don`t know if we want your help. So, that`s a real issue that`s been popping up. It`s a real concern.

MATTHEWS: I hope this announcement gets the right kind of cyber security firms to get working. That would be a disaster.

CARLSON: So, Chris, Carl Bernstein is reporting that Bill Weld is trying to figure out a way to bow out gracefully at some point. Bill Weld says no, but he said two interesting things today. He said -- asked he answered that Johnson is not more qualified to be president than Hillary Clinton, but adding no one is.

And he also said that he will keep the interests of the United States upper-most in his mind. Against that he said, I`m having the time of my life. But it`s not going to be fun to turn into Ralph Nader. So, I`d stay tuned on this one.

MATTHEWS: Yes, he seemed a little uncomfortable the other night when we had him on -- trying to physically distance himself at some points from his running mate, if running mate is the right phrase.

Anyway, thank you, Anne Gearan. Thank you, Jason Johnson and Margaret Carlson.

We`ll be right back with my election diary. It`s a pretty good one tonight. I think I`ve captured the week.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Friday, September 30th, 2016.

For five days now Donald Trump has blown the opportunity to keep his extraordinary challenge to the political establishment on course. Think of it this way -- if he were to pull an upset in November, the next morning`s lead would read something like this, Donald Trump won the election by exploiting the country`s anger over uncontrolled **immigration**, trade agreements that caused millions of American jobs, and Mideast wars that brought loss to working families but failed to protect the country. Trump`s victory came after weeks of focusing voters` attention on the perfect of the dissatisfaction with the country`s political elite. The candidate showed remarkable discipline in keeping the headlines pointed at this historic voter unrest.

Hillary Clinton simply could not withstand the electorate`s anger nor could she shift attention away from Trump`s proven topics of strength.

Well, this is what the headline could be. And now, thanks to Trump`s mismanagement of his campaign, look at the direction the headlines have actually taken. It`s been a five-day run of back and forth between Trump and a former Miss Universe contestant featuring accusations by Trump over her weight, accusations by her of abuse by the now candidate.

Instead of a week pushing his winning issues, Trump now rides shotgun on a wild goose chase in search of, you won`t believe it, a sex tape.

That`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

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CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: He can`t get over it.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews back in Washington.

Well, there`s a well-known rule in politics -- when you`re in a hole, stop digging. Well, one guy doesn`t seem to know this well-known rule. His name is Donald Trump. He can`t stop saying that he won a debate that voters by 2 to 1 give to his opponent. He can`t stop talking about a former beauty pageant winner, can`t stop behaving like Baghdad Bob -- remember him, the Iraqi who kept said they were winning the battle against the U.S. invaders, and worse yet, like Kim Jung-un saying that North Korea -- did you know this? won the Olympics.

Well, because he keeps going over it and over it, Trump has trapped himself in a political twilight zone, where he blames everyone he can, anyone he can think of, as responsible for Monday night, a night on which he claims desperately to have been the winner.

Well, if he won, you have to ask, why did the need for so many people to blame? As I said, while Trump has been spinning his performance as a victory, an NBCon-line poll shows that 52 percent, a majority of likely voters, say that Hillary Clinton won the first debate, 26 percent say neither one, and down in third place, 21 percent say that Trump was the victor.

Now Trump`s dismissing the debate as a "rigged deal." Here`s what he said this afternoon.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: During the debate the other night, she was saying, Oh, no, she never said that. She said it. I mean, she said it. And then I had to put up -- then I had to put up with the anchor and fight the anchor all the time on everything I said. What a rigged deal.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So it`s Lester Holt`s fault now. Boy, he`s blaming everybody. This comes after Trump confidants this week have been airing their grievances about the candidate`s lack of discipline. On Trump`s debate prep with former Fox News chairman Roger Ailes, "The New York Times" reports that, quote, "Mr. Trump found it hard to focus during those meetings that left Mr. Ailes discussing his own problems, as well as recounting political war stories."

Well, Rudy Giuliani didn`t have any more luck once he took over for Ailes. Quote, "With Mr. Trump receiving so much conflicting advice in those sessions, he absorbed little of it."

Well, meanwhile, Trump`s feud with former Miss Universe Alicia Machado has now entered its third day, with Trump doubling down on his assertions about Alicia Machado`s weight. Well, last night on Fox, Trump defended his behavior and suggested he is the victim because he says he saved Machado`s job. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: She did not do well. She had a lot of difficulties. And you know, they wanted to fire her. I had nothing to do with this person, but they wanted to fire her. I saved her job because I said that`s going to be ruinous. And I`ve done that with a number of the young ladies, where I saved their job. But the staff itself -- and you know what happened? Look what I get out of it? I get nothing.

I saved her job because they wanted to fire her for putting on so much weight. And it is a beauty contest. You know, I mean, say what you want, Bill, I mean, they know what they`re getting into. It`s a beauty contest. And I said, Don`t do that. Let her try and lose the weight. Can you imagine I end up in a position like this? So that`s the way it is.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, now NBC News has obtained an internal Trump campaign memo that advises surrogates out there on how to respond to questions about the beauty contest winner, Alicia Machado.

And joining me right now is NBC`s Katy Tur, who`s in New Hampshire. MSNBC political analyst Robert Costa`s a "Washington Post" reporter, Kathleen Parker, opinion writer for "The Washington Post," as well.

Katy, let me -- give me a sense -- just, you know everything about this fight. I`m trying to keep up with it. Trump -- I`ll start with my rule. When you`re in a hole, stop digging. Why does he keep talking about a beauty contestant, what, 20 years ago?

Why does he keep wrapping himself in this twilight zone existence that he can`t win? There`s no way he can win this argument. There`s no way that people are going to change their minds. He looks like the bad guy in this incident. Why doesn`t he let it go?

KATY TUR, NBC CORRESPONDENT: It`s the same thing he did with Judge Curiel, when he was talking about how he wasn`t fair and he was biased and he shouldn`t be presiding over the Trump University case. It`s the same thing he did with the Gold Star families and Khizr Khan. Now he`s doing it with Machado.

He doesn`t have the ability to let things go when he needs to let them go. He wants to defend himself. And oftentimes, when he does that, he digs himself into a deeper hole, as we`re seeing with Machado.

I`m not sure how women will react, those suburban women that he is trying to get, when he says he was actually protecting this woman because she got too big. And for that matter, the president of the Miss Universe pageant told "The Washington Post" at the time, in 1997, the idea she was going to be de-crowned or lose her job was bogus. That wasn`t happening. So this was already debunked 20 years ago.

Donald Trump is continuing that narrative, though, and so is his campaign, Kellyanne Conway saying that both last night and today on "The View."

So I`m not sure why the campaign is going forward with it. They`ve even released this internal -- not released, we`ve obtained this internal memo that says wherever surrogates are asked about Machado, they should instead pivot to Hillary Clinton, saying that she is trying to present herself as some sort of feminist champion and that is a joke, and encouraging those surrogates to say Hillary Clinton attacked Monica Lewinsky and attacked Paula Jones and attacked Gennifer Flowers.

They are enabling this story to live longer than it should. Conservative talk radio is already getting upset about this, including an Iowa talk radio host, Steve Deace, saying that Donald Trump doesn`t have the ability to let go and that he keeps digging himself into a hole. As you said, Chris, when you`re digging a hole, stop digging. (sic)

MATTHEWS: Yes, the question I have to ask is a very political one. It is not a moral one in this sense. Baghdad Bob -- we laugh about him because he was the Iraqi official who kept saying they`re winning a war they`re clearly losing. Kim Jong-un is out there saying they won the Olympics on his official broadcast over there North Korea.

People -- you lose all credibility when you say things are not true when they clearly are. He lost the debate. He has a problem with this young contestant. She was 18, an **immigrant** from Venezuela. He`s going to be the bad guy, the heavy in this case, and that`s the way it`s going to be.

TUR: But let me -- let me counter point the argument --

MATTHEWS: And he thinks he can win the argument? Go ahead.

PARKER: Let me give you a counter vision on that. What -- Donald Trump has been doing this sort of thing since this campaign started. He often talks about crowd sizes being much larger than they actually are. He did it again today, saying that there were thousands of people inside this venue, when the place only holds about 1,200, maybe 1,800 people, and there were only a little bit more than a thousand people here. He said there were 3,000 people waiting outside, when there was not anyone waiting outside.

He has been presenting things that aren`t true as fact now for quite a while. It hasn`t done anything to crack his credibility with his base of supporters. That is why he won the primaries.

What he has not realized, and that`s because the polls are very tight, is that it potentially is going to hurt him in the general election. We`re going to have to see how it plays out because this has been such a topsy- turvy campaign.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

PARKER: But the polls are so close. And Chris, if there`s one thing that I`ve learned on this campaign trail, it`s that Donald Trump pays attention to the polls more than he pays attention to anything else...

MATTHEWS: OK...

PARKER: ... more than he pays attention to his advisers or his kids. If he stays close in the polls, he`s not going to see a reason to change. If he drops down, then we`re going to see more debate prep. Then we might see him stray or get away from these negative topics.

This thing is particularly bad because there is so much past -- you know, so many past comments from Trump out there that are negative towards women. There`s countless Howard Stern interviews where he talks about women, saying that, you know, it`s hard to be a 10 if you`re flat-chested.

This enables his detractors to go out and dredge all of this stuff back up, present it, and say Donald Trump is not a champion of women.

MATTHEWS: OK, he was in another business, it`s clear.

Anyway, Trump supporters have had to defend the candidate`s behavior this week. In a speech to the Log Cabin Republicans last night, Newt Gingrich told the audience -- catch this whopper -- you`re not supposed to gain 60 pounds during the year you`re Miss Universe. Well, I don`t think anybody gained 60 pounds.

Anyway, asked about Trump`s behavior toward women on Fox last night, Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway tried to refocus the debate on Hillary Clinton`s negative ad campaign. Here`s Kellyanne.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Yes, I`m just wondering why she`s spending tens of millions of dollars in negative ads and negative mail pieces and never putting together an aspirational, positive...

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Because she`s killing him with women. And she sees an advantage there, and she`s trying to exploit it. And my question to you is whether he needs to come up with a better answer than telling "Fox & Friends," Well, she gained a bunch of weight when she won Miss Universe and she was a real problem.

CONWAY: Well, now we`re conflating different things. What I would say to that is this, that he should speak to America`s women based on the issues about which they care.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, we`ll talk about that right now. And here`s how Conway, Conway herself, Kellyanne, defended Trump`s treatment of Machado, the beauty contestant, on "The View" today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: In the past, he`s called her an eating machine. I feel uncomfortable with it as a woman, but I`m curious how you felt about those comments.

CONWAY: Well, I don`t discuss people`s weights and their looks. I`m sure that on your Twitter feed right now, you have viewers discussing my looks and my intelligence.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Did you reprimand him for that and say to him, Listen, why are you saying women are fat? Why are you calling women fat pigs? Did you say that to him?

CONWAY: Yes. I think it`s beside the point...

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: And what did he say?

CONWAY: Hold on -- that he gave that particular woman a second chance. She obviously has a troubled past that I won`t get into, but...

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: So what?

CONWAY: Well, hold on...

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: ... nothing to do with her being fat or skinny.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: This is going into a terrain where it`s fairly clear, Kathleen, that Trump can`t win. Why is he -- and poor Kellyanne, who is -- I`ve known forever...

KATHLEEN PARKER, "WASHINGTON POST": Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... she now has to flack this.

PARKER: Yes.

MATTHEWS: That`s how you break your pick, when you go into a political argument on behalf of a candidate with an unwinnable argument, it undercuts you in all arguments.

PARKER: Yes, I...

MATTHEWS: Because people say, If you`re willing to defend that, then we can`t really rely on what you`re telling us.

PARKER: Yes, I feel sorry...

MATTHEWS: You put her in a bad position.

PARKER: I feel sorry for her. But look, the reason he is doing this and the reason he can`t let go -- this is a psychological question.

MATTHEWS: Which one?

PARKER: Well, no, he is developmentally a child. That`s why. He`s like the child who falls down and stands up and says, I meant to do that, you know? And he can`t admit ever being wrong. He`ll never apologize for saying something that was rude or crude because in his mind, he`s never wrong. You know...

MATTHEWS: Why can`t he pull back...

(CROSSTALK)

PARKER: It`s a problem. He`s immature.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Can he pull back, Robert, and say, Hey, it`s a beauty contest. I don`t set the rules. It`s based on appearance. There`s this sort of prejudice towards thin. It`s been going on for a while. I`m there doing a job. I`m just trying to think -- OR should he just say, You know, I wasn`t at my best that time. I should have been much more compassionate, much more empathetic and stop being such a bad guy.

I mean, how do you step back from these situations, which are embarrassing in 2016, when your number one target are women, and young women, in the suburbs, and you`re trying to win them over? And they do worry about these issues of weight and everything (INAUDIBLE) sensitive points. They just are in our society. And he didn`t create that.

ROBERT COSTA, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: My reporting tells me that inside of Trump`s campaign, at Trump Tower, there`s not a sense of stepping back. What they really are is frustrated. They`re frustrated in their minds...

MATTHEWS: Why are we talking about this crap?

COSTA: They think that Trump left a weapon on the side, that he didn`t go after the Clintons, that he didn`t pivot. I spoke to Rudy Giuliani a few minutes ago, and he says, Look, there`s so much Donald Trump can say about the Clintons` past...

MATTHEWS: Why?

COSTA: Well, he --

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: Of course, and that`s -- and people like Newt Gingrich are saying to the Trump campaign, Hey, maybe this is...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Look, I`m not into morality on this program. I`m talking about politics here. Three marriages, Newt. Three marriages, Trump. Three marriages -- who`s the other guy? Giuliani. I don`t hold that against them at all.

But politically...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... these are glass houses. That`s all I`m saying. Why do they want to talk about this stuff?

PARKER: Because there`s nothing else to talk about.

COSTA: Because...

PARKER: They don`t have...

COSTA: That`s true.

PARKER: There`s no policy to talk about, so let`s talk about fat women, you know?!

MATTHEWS: Well, let`s talk about Clinton. This idea if you go back to...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... the notion that there`s a treasure trove -- we all saw what happened. The Republicans impeached Bill Clinton, right? They spent a whole summer going after him. OK. OK. They may have had an argument morally or whatever. They had a case. But look what happened. The Republicans lost the Congress.

I mean, Hillary Clinton got elected to the Senate because she stood up to this. And she showed guts and poise, and everybody else looked like a crazy person. The evidence is Hillary knows how to handle this topic, all right?

PARKER: Right.

MATTHEWS: She knows how to spin it right back at the other side, and she`ll look good. Nobody`s going to blame her for Bill. And Bill`s not running.

PARKER: Right. She didn`t actually do it. And when she makes...

MATTHEWS: What -- tell me, what do you think they think? What do they...

(CROSSTALK)

COSTA: I`ve been speaking with them for the last few hours, and my sense is because the way that Machado question came at the end of the debate, they all walked out at Hofstra into the spin room frustrated that Trump didn`t come back in a certain way. So ever since that night at Hofstra, they`ve been talking amongst each other, saying when it comes to St. Louis on October 9th, he`s going to go right back (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: Let`s go back to Katy Tur reporting. Katy, I thought -- my general notion is that Trump is making the same mistake Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday that he made on Monday night, which is playing defense on personal history stuff.

If he spends time -- what he should be talking about are jobs, the trade deals we`ve made, **immigration**, which is very -- illegal **immigration**, very unpopular, and stupid wars we`ve been fighting. Go to your bases, dance with the one that brung it, win the battle on your winning issues and stop playing on the enemy`s territory.

Your thoughts. What`s he up to?

TUR: You know, that`s what he`s trying to do. And he tried to do that today here in New Hampshire. He tried to move on from that subject. And they came out with a whole, you know, a cachet of new -- or a cache -- excuse me, a cache of new, you know, very catchy talking points, saying that Hillary Clinton is corrupt and follow the money and then talking about the five people that got immunity.

That being said, there`s an issue that we aren`t really talking about here when it comes to Trump and women. And that`s not just his words about women, it`s how his supporters behave and comport themselves at these rallies.

You have many supporters wearing shirts that I couldn`t repeat to you on camera, talking about Hillary Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. You have shirts that say, "Trump that "b." You have children calling Hillary Clinton a B- word.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TUR: A couple of days ago in Florida, I saw a shirt that said, you know, Hillary -- I wish Hillary married O.J. I mean, these are images that are out there. And it`s not just the candidate, it is the campaign supporters that are pushing this narrative, that he is not a champion of women.

And when you`re trying to target suburban women or women who don`t think Donald Trump is stable, they don`t think he`s trustworthy to get into the White House, they don`t think that his interests are their interests, they don`t think that he`s going to fight for them, or maybe they`re weary of how he`s treated women in the past -- nothing he can do now is going to fix that if you still see supporters at rallies wearing shirts like this and using...

MATTHEWS: OK...

TUR: ... terminology and chants like the ones we hear.

MATTHEWS: I just am echoing in my head what he said to me back in March, when I had my last interview with Trump. And he talked about, there has to be some sort of punishment for abortion. Here he is talking about weight issues, eating disorders, things like that, are all on people`s minds.

It is a crying situation we have to face in our society that people do -- mothers worry about it, their kids worry about it, mothers worry about their kids. Too much of it. It`s like the Barbie doll debate. Why do we have a Barbie doll with a certain notion of what a woman`s supposed to look like?

This is sensitive stuff, and when he starts talking about, what`s the right word, punishing a woman for gaining weight, he`s right back into that problem area he got into when he talked about abortion, punishing people because of the situation they find themselves in with eating situations, and not even disorders, he just doesn`t like the look. And I`m telling you this is a problem for him because talk to any human being -- and most voters are women. Somebody`s got to tell that to him. Most voters are women. OK, that`s all I`m saying.

Anyway, Katy Tur, thank you. You`ve got a hell of a story out there you`re following. Anyway, Robert Costa, another case of that. And Kathleen, great columnist.

Coming up -- by the way, the number of newspapers you`re in -- how many now?

PARKER: Oh, gosh, I can`t keep count.

MATTHEWS: Five hundred? Anyway, it`s really -- I think you`ve got the record. I know that`s the case.

New evidence, by the way, that Hillary Clinton`s strong debate performance is paying off with voters. We`ve got the latest battleground state polling, and it`s good news for Hillary Clinton. That`s why it`s bad news for Trump.

Plus, Trump`s team is taunting Hillary Clinton, as we`ve said, with bringing up Bill Clinton`s infidelities, and now the Clinton campaign is warning that that strategy will backfire. I think they`re right. So how should Hillary Clinton respond if Trump does go down that road in the next debate?

And Libertarian presidential candidate Gary Johnson told me last night that Hillary Clinton would push the nuclear button. I thought that was the big news last night. And by the way, he didn`t come up with a single world leader he liked, even called it another "Aleppo moment" for himself. How can Clinton win back those younger voters that have supported, well, Gary Johnson up until at least last night?

Finally, my "Election Diary" for tonight, September 29th, with just 40 days left until election day.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, new battleground polls, and Hillary Clinton is bouncing back. Check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard" with us.

According to new polling from PPP, Clinton now leads Trump in Colorado by 7 points. That was very even. It`s Clinton 51, Trump 44 now. That`s a big switch. The RealClearPolitics average of polls has Trump up by a hair, though. Anyway, next -- but it`s moving in one direction.

Next to Florida, where Clinton is up 3 points. It`s Clinton 48, Trump 45. The last PPP poll had Trump up by 1, so it`s a 4-point switch.

In North Carolina, Clinton`s lead is now 4 points, Clinton 49, Trump 45. The most recent PPP poll had Trump leading there by 2 -- - 6-point change there.

In Pennsylvania, Clinton is leading by 5 points now, 49 to 44. And Clinton`s margin in the RealClearPolitics average there had shrunk down to under 2 points. So that`s changing.

And in Virginia, another state that I think will not go to Trump, the new PPP poll has Clinton up 6, 49 to 43, and that`s in line with the latest RealClearPolitics average.

By the way, I still think the firewall is Pennsylvania and Virginia that will keep Trump from winning. That`s what I think now and have thought for a while.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

With Donald Trump on the defensive when it comes to his treatment of women, his campaign has launched a risky offensive, going after Hillary Clinton for Bill Clinton`s infidelities.

In the internal Trump campaign memo I mentioned earlier in the show, Trump`s campaign has directed surrogates to spin the conversation away from Trump and towards Secretary Clinton. The memo shows that they are directed to say that -- quote -- "Hillary Clinton and her husband actively worked to destroy Bill Clinton`s accusers, and then Hillary Clinton bullied and smeared women like Paula Jones, Gennifer Flowers, and Monica Lewinsky."

Well, just yesterday on MSNBC, Marsha Blackburn, one of Trump`s most prominent surrogates -- she`s from Tennessee, U.S. congresswoman -- seemed to have received that memo. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. MARSHA BLACKBURN (R), TENNESSEE: I find it so interesting that there continues to be this conversation about what he has said, when you look at what she has done, Gennifer flowers, Paula Jones, Monica Lewinsky, my goodness.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: While Trump may not have mentioned Bill Clinton`s infidelities in Monday`s debate, the candidate and the campaign has successful revived a well-worn topic of discussion, obviously.

However, a number of Republican senators who support Trump don`t see the benefits of this conversation. Politico is reporting that GOP senators who finally have grown more comfortable with Trump warned in interviews Wednesday that descending into Bill Clinton`s sexual past is dangerous territory for the GOP nominee, who has his own less-than-pristine history.

That`s the reporting.

Well, late this afternoon, Hillary Clinton addressed the new line of attack. Here she is defending.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: He can run his campaign however he chooses. That`s -- that`s up to him.

I`m going to keep talking about the stakes in this election. I`m going to keep talking about my agenda.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, for more on this impossible new line of attack that seems to be in the strategy memo at least, I`m joined by Republican pollster and strategist Ed Goeas, and Democratic pollster for PSB Research and co-host of "The Pollsters" Margie Omero.

I think you guys are great. I have known you for a long time.

You`re too young for me to have known a long time.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: But let me ask you this.

If you`re sitting in the back room, you got the towel over your shoulder, and you`re giving advice to the fighter in there, you`re saying, you have had a bad round, now go for the inside, go for the inside, hit her on her husband`s behavior, is this generally a topic that can turn this election? Is it a game-changer?

ED GOEAS, REPUBLICAN POLLSTER: It`s hard to believe this makes sense in terms of what they`re doing, except for one thing.

And that is that, if you look at Hillary`s negatives, it`s driven by the politics of her past. If you look at his negatives, it`s driven by his persona. This may be the only thing they can do to get someone else to deliver this message, rather than him, because, quite frankly, when he`s out there leading this message, it`s like a fighter with a glass jaw leading with his chin.

MATTHEWS: Can you just bring up, Margie, hey, remind people, Bill Clinton was impeached? Don`t even get into the details. If that was such a successful presidency, why was he the only one of two presidents ever impeached?

MARGIE OMERO, DEMOCRATIC POLLSTER: Look, we have data on how this...

MATTHEWS: Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton.

OMERO: We have data on how this might affect Hillary Clinton.

Ann Selzer and Bloomberg did a poll in June, a national poll, and they asked a variety of things. How much does this concern you about Clinton? They had seven or eight things. This was the least concerning thing they tested.

MATTHEWS: Do you trust the people polled on this? Or is it just too squeamish? Are people going, I don`t want to talk about that stuff, but in the end it does affect how they vote?

(CROSSTALK)

OMERO: Well, look, of course I trust the polls.

MATTHEWS: No, but don`t people particularly say, I don`t want to be somebody who cares about that prurient stuff? I don`t want to be a person, oh, that that person, Omero, oh, she cares about this stuff. Do you want to be that person?

OMERO: Well, look, there are some social desirability biases, but not on that. I think that`s a question...

MATTHEWS: I love that phrases like that, social desirability biases.

OMERO: So, I think that is something that people are honest about.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So you think it`s a bad route to take?

OMERO: Well, look, Democrats and Republicans have come out over the last few days and said, you know, I don`t think he should talk about this.

MATTHEWS: I agree.

OMERO: Even people within the Trump camp say, I don`t know if I would say this.

MATTHEWS: First of all, Newt Gingrich, wise old owl that he is, is smart enough to know this is a vulnerability. You go after Trump, and I don`t -- I don`t even want to make judgments, except that it`s glass house stuff, right?

GOEAS: And the real issue here is that both of these candidates` negatives -- both of these candidates are flawed -- are deeply baked in.

They started with a 55 percent unfavorable rating.

MATTHEWS: Baked in, in regular talk means you can`t get it out.

GOEAS: Meaning that all these issues are baked into their negatives.

MATTHEWS: So, speaking of news, we have got some news right now, breaking news to get now.

"USA Today" has just posted an editorial for tomorrow urging readers not to vote for Donald Trump. Here`s a rarity.

They write -- quote -- "In the 34-year history of `USA Today,` the editorial board has never taken sides in the presidential race. Instead, we have expressed opinions about the major issues and haven`t presumed to tell our viewers, who have a variety of priorities and values, which choice is best for them, because every presidential race is different. We revisit our no-endorsement policy every four years. We have never seen reason to alter our approach, until now. This year, the choice isn`t between two capable major party nominees who happen to have significant ideological differences. This year, one of the candidates, Republican nominee Donald Trump, is by, unanimous consensus of our editorial board, unfit for the presidency."

Now, this is all around, John Warner, the other day, the grandee in Virginia, the Detroit newspaper the other day. Is this too early for them to just close this out? I mean, these papers are acting like the rest of the campaign doesn`t matter, this guy is not fit.

OMERO: What more information do they need? What are you -- what are we waiting for? Obviously, he`s unfit.

GOEAS: And I think, more importantly, as...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That is their view or your view?

OMERO: Well, that`s America`s view. That`s why most people...

MATTHEWS: Is that your view too?

OMERO: It`s also my view. A majority find him...

(CROSSTALK)

GOEAS: Well, no. What we hear from on both these candidates, is this is the best we can do?

The best thing going for Donald Trump is Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: A little late to consider...

(CROSSTALK)

GOEAS: And vice versa.

MATTHEWS: It`s a little late to decide.

GOEAS: But it also plays into the polling. We talk about polling all the time.

Polling assumes that both campaigns are equal on everything else. But, when you look at money, you look at surrogates, you look at endorsements, you look at ground game, all those things have to be factored in. And it`s not going very well...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let me give you something to factor in. Nobody on Earth says they`re for Donald Trump who isn`t going to show up and vote for him, where there are some people who are for Hillary Clinton who will not show up. The Trump people are real. And I will bet they`re more Trump people than admit they`re Trump people.

GOEAS: And that`s not what we`re seeing in our polling.

What we`re seeing in our polling is, they`re both running in the high 70s saying they`re extremely likely to vote.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

GOEAS: The bigger problem is the 20 percent that dislike both candidates that are going with the third-party candidates. And do they vote in this election or do they vote third-party?

After last night, they may be not voting.

MATTHEWS: How do you vote for Gary Johnson, when he`s unfamiliar with the world?

(LAUGHTER)

OMERO: Now that you`re done with him.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I asked an open-minded, open-air question. just name a world leader you respect. And I went through every continent.

As I said last night with the later show, I said, this wasn`t asking who your favorite Nigerian poet is.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: This was asking you, who in the world do you like?

Anyway, Margie Omero, thank you.

Ed Goeas, thank you both.

OMERO: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Interesting numbers we got there.

Up next: Libertarian presidential candidate Gary Johnson, the aforementioned, couldn`t tell me a single world leader he respected in our HARDBALL College Tour last night. I suspect he didn`t have a lot of names on his list, period. Not one.

He also said Hillary Clinton would push the nuclear button. He said that twice she would shoot. He said she would hit that button if there`s a chance for a nuclear war. That was much stronger to me and more dangerous.

The HARDBALL roundtable is here to talk about Johnson and what the Clinton campaign is doing to win back his supporters.

And don`t forget the vice presidential debate. Well, it may be forgettable, but let`s not forget it, coming up Tuesday. I`m going to be at the debate site down there in Virginia, down there in Virginia, for a full pre -- it`s going to be fascinating to watch these two -- these two candidates for vice president, because we don`t really know them. Here`s a chance to get to know them, one night of an hour-and-a-half debate. It`s a great opportunity for democracy.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Milissa Rehberger. Here`s what`s happening.

Investigators are still trying to figure out what caused a deadly train crash at a busy New Jersey train station this morning. The crash left one person dead and more than 100 injured.

For the latest on the investigation and the evening commute, we are now joined by NBC`s Tammy Leitner in Hoboken, New Jersey -- Tammy.

TAMMY LEITNER, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Hey, Milissa.

Investigators are out here right now, will likely be out here working throughout the evening and most likely for the next seven to 10 days trying to piece together what happened.

This is what we do know. At 8:45 a.m., it was a busy morning. A commuter train came barreling through here, and it plowed through a barrier that was meant to stop it. On impact, passengers in the train were thrown. The train actually hopped up on to a platform, and that`s when debris came crashing down.

One woman, a local woman, a 34-year-old woman, was killed. We`re told passengers kicked out the emergency window and crawled out. Other passengers were crawling on the ground. Wires were hanging from the ceiling. There was twisted metal everywhere. People were crawling to safety. About 108 people were injured and transported to area hospitals.

Now, this is what the NTSB has ahead of them. They have recovered two data recorders from the front and the back of the train, so they will be going through those for information. They will also be looking at video. Recorders were on the outside of the train recording out. They will be examining whether there was a mechanical error, whether it was human error, whether there was something wrong with the signals or even the tracks -- Milissa.

REHBERGER: Tammy, thank you -- back to HARDBALL.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

QUESTION: Who is a world leader that you admire, respect, would like to emulate, and why?

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Well, I think Merkel is a really great world leader, but I was very disappointed that -- when she, this move, the whole thing on **immigration**. I think it`s a big problem.

QUESTION: Who`s your favorite world leader?

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Oh, let me think.

(LAUGHTER)

CLINTON: Look, I like a lot of the world leaders. One of my favorite is Angela Merkel, because I think she`s been an extraordinary, strong leader during difficult times in Europe.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Hillary Clinton was having fun with that. That was Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton today. They both named Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, when asked about a world leader that they personally admire.

Well, last night, during the HARDBALL College Tour at the University of New Hampshire, Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson seemed to draw a blank when I asked him that same question. Let`s take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Who is your favorite foreign leader?

GARY JOHNSON, LIBERTARIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Who is my favorite...

MATTHEWS: Any -- just name anywhere in the country -- any one of the continents, any country. Name one foreign leader that you respect and look up to, anybody.

JOHNSON: Shimon Peres.

MATTHEWS: No, no, OK. I`m talking about living. Go ahead.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You have got to do this. Anywhere. Any continent, Canada, Mexico, Europe over there, Asia, South America, Africa. Name a foreign leader that you respect.

JOHNSON: I guess I`m having an Aleppo moment, in the former -- former president of Mexico...

MATTHEWS: But I`m giving you the whole world.

JOHNSON: I know, I know, I know, I know.

MATTHEWS: Anybody in the world you like, anybody. Pick any leader.

JOHNSON: The former president of Mexico.

MATTHEWS: No. Which one?

JOHNSON: I`m having a brain -- I`m having a brain...

MATTHEWS: Well, name anybody.

(CROSSTALK)

BILL WELD, LIBERTARIAN VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Fox.

JOHNSON: Fox.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK. Who is your favorite foreign leader? Get him off the hook. Name a foreign leader you respect.

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: Fox. He`s terrific.

MATTHEWS: Any foreign leader.

WELD: Merkel.

MATTHEWS: OK, Merkel. OK, fine.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, today, Governor Johnson tweeted: "It`s been almost 24 hours, and I still can`t come up with a foreign leader I look up to."

It`s not only that. I think it was a question about coming up with a name of a foreign leader.

How badly did last night`s appearance derail Johnson`s campaign? I`m joined by -- tonight by some smart alecks.

The roundtable include`s Politico`s Eli Stokols, "The Boston Globe"`s Annie Linskey, and "The Washington Post" opinion writer, the great Jonathan.

OK, Jonathan.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: That`s your response, eh?

JONATHAN CAPEHART, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Watching that, even for the 900th time, and watching it like this, it`s so horrifying for him, for Governor Weld.

MATTHEWS: Weld looked very uncomfortable.

CAPEHART: And, as I just said, you ask him, give me a name of a Mexican leader, he couldn`t, but Weld listed some Mexican leaders I had forgotten about.

MATTHEWS: Well, he was up for ambassador to Mexico, so he did know that.

CAPEHART: Yes.

MATTHEWS: But I got the feeling it was like one of those things from "Austin Powers," the ejection seat. Just please push that button. I want to disappear.

ANNIE LINSKEY, "THE BOSTON GLOBE": Oh, I know. It was just -- it was so incredibly excruciatingly painful to watch it.

It`s still painful to watch it. And just what it says about his candidacy is, this is a man who`s completely unprepared. I mean, you would think, after the Aleppo moment that he even referenced, that he would have boned up a little bit.

And it just seemed like -- it seemed like it wasn`t even that he couldn`t think of a leader he admired. It seemed like he couldn`t even name a leader. And that to me what was just so devastating.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I was thinking over this in my head, just to be honest about it.

I was thinking, I do not know all the leaders of the 56 countries in Africa, but I know a couple that are pretty good. I`m looking at Kenyatta, Uhuru Kenyatta, who is doing pretty well. And I look at Ian Khama, the son of Seretse Khama. I know some of that.

I don`t know much about Latin America. But I would have -- you have an option game here. I said anywhere. I said, you can go to Merkel, you can go to Hollande, you can go to anybody, Prime Minister of Britain Cameron. You could go to Theresa May, who is now premier. You could go to a number of names. Go to Justin Trudeau.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But he didn`t -- I think it`s a question of the newspaper habit.

I mean, they used to talk about to Kennedy, do you either -- do you or do you not, whatever the equivalent is today, do you have the habit of getting up each day and trying to keep up with the world?

LINSKEY: Right.

MATTHEWS: Is it something that`s in you or not?

It wasn`t.

LINSKEY: And just a curiosity factor.

MATTHEWS: Just picking up the paper.

(CROSSTALK)

ELI STOKOLS, POLITICO: Well, you can be anti-interventionist, but if you`re going to be commander in chief, there`s a seriousness to the presidency that there are a lot of voters out there who don`t like Trump or Clinton, and they`re taking safe harbor in this idea of a third-party candidate, but you have to really think twice after...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: King Abdullah of Jordan.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: We have got some really good allies over there.

Anyway, one area where Governor Johnson and his running mate openly disagreed last night, who`s more qualified to be commander in chief? Let`s watch this one. This, I thought, was the bigger news.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

WELD: Hillary Clinton is clearly qualified to be commander in chief and president of the United States.

MATTHEWS: How about the other guy?

WELD: Donald Trump is clearly not qualified. And I have encouraged him almost with affection to think of some other job or profession he would like to do.

(LAUGHTER)

WELD: And I have suggested the laundry business. He could do great in the laundry business.

(LAUGHTER)

WELD: He`s got business smarts. But president of the United States is just the wrong tree to be barking up for him.

JOHNSON: I think she`s going to -- I think she`s going to press the button.

MATTHEWS: What?

JOHNSON: I -- well, if confronted with that 10 minutes, she`s going to be hawkish. She`s going to be more hawkish in that role.

MATTHEWS: You think she has got a happy trigger?

JOHNSON: I think that she`s not going to err on the side of not being the aggressor.

MATTHEWS: You believe it would be a precarious situation if she had commander in chief responsibilities over nuclear war?

JOHNSON: I think she`s going to shoot. I think she`s going to shoot. She`s not going to be herself. She`s not going to be perceived as weak. She`s going to shoot.

(APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Now, you did see an audience of young people, mostly college students, at the University of New Hampshire believing Hillary`s hawkish, to the point of shooting.

Did you see that applause? That wasn`t encouraged, by the way.

LINSKEY: Not at all.

MATTHEWS: They just applauded.

LINSKEY: Yes.

MATTHEWS: That is Hillary`s problem among progressives, the perception that she`s hawkish.

LINSKEY: No, absolutely.

MATTHEWS: I don`t think they thought she`d blow up the world.

LINSKEY: I`m not sure where in the world he`s coming up with that idea? You can`t press a button --

MATTHEWS: You know how I set that up, I watched a very powerful, David Martin did on "60 Minutes" a couple of weeks ago, where he talked about the ten minutes out of strategic air command in Omaha where this general out there gets a call from the president of the United States, they determine it`s the president, and in ten minutes, they`ve got to determine what to do in response to an alert, if something looks like it`s coming.

JONATHAN CAPEHART, THE WASHINGTON POST: And in that clip, that demonstrated why I think that ticket shouldn`t remained, should be flipped. Bill Weld`s answer to your question was thoughtful, responsive, and Gary Johnson was just glib. He was as glib in his answer as he thinks Hillary Clinton would be as commander in chief.

MATTHEWS: Let`s make some news now, because he also said, off the camera, but on the record, he said that he thinks that his old opponent, John Kerry, deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for what he did with the Iranian peace deal, deserves the Nobel Peace. He was very strong about that. And that was on the regular.

It sure was, Governor Weld.

Anyway, the roundtable is staying with us.

And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know. Be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

And, Eli, tell me something I don`t know.

ELI STOKOLS, POLITICO: In Brooklyn, they`re not just excited about the debate --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That`s like Berlin in the war. That`s like Berlin in the war.

It`s like Brooklyn means Hillary Clinton. Go ahead.

STOKOLS: They could not be happier with how easy Donald Trump proved to bait in that first debate. And they`re really secretly rooting for him to play the Lewinsky card, because even though it`s a little uncomfortable, they think if he goes after Bill Clinton, that this just underlines, plays right, walks right into the same trap of demonstrating for everyone again that he belittles women.

MATTHEWS: I completely agree. The Clintons, again, removing all morality aside, know how to play this baby.

LINSKEY: They do.

Also about the Clintons, there`s been a lot of discussion, particularly among reporters about the crowd sizes that Clinton is having. They`re not quite as big as --

MATTHEWS: Twelve hundred, compared to 3,000 for somebody else.

LINSKEY: But what people do not realize is that these are very strategically located events. So, Clinton had a smaller crowd size today in Des Moines, but it was directly next door to an early voting center. So, those 1,200 people, you can bet if they were there to cheer on Clinton, they were --

MATTHEWS: You say they want smaller crowds?

LINSKEY: They want --

MATTHEWS: I know!

LINSKEY: They want those crowds --

MATTHEWS: Are we getting spun here?

Go ahead.

CAPEHART: My podcast, Cape Up on Tuesday, I have an interview with Rob Reiner. He had great things to say about you, Chris, and your interview of Donald Trump. But the big news for me in the interview is I asked him, because he`s so passionate about public policy and public service, if Hillary Clinton were to approach him and ask him to serve in her administration, would he, he said yes.

MATTHEWS: Wow.

CAPEHART: And his big issue, not ambassador, nothing highfalutin, infrastructure.

MATTHEWS: Yes, we need a salesperson for that.

Thank you, Eli. You made some happy news here. Thank you, Annie. Thank you, Jonathan. Thank you, Eli.

We`ll be right back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Tomorrow in Jerusalem, world leaders will unite to pay lasting tribute to Shimon Peres, one of the globe`s most beloved figures. Perez is one of the last founding champions of the state of Israel, a leader in the country`s wars, a hero for those who prayed for peace in the holy land.

What Peres represents to people is the real possibility of what people can do together, how they can find the path to mutual acceptance. Here he is in an interview I had with him in Jerusalem not long after 9/11. Listen to Peres and you hear true wisdom, how the terrorists are not as strong as he seems, house civilization still has its edge over the bad guys.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What do you understand their purpose to be, the people that did what they did to us three weeks ago?

SHIMON PERES, FORMER ISRAEL PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT: From my own experience, can I say, that even terrorists are loaded with weakness, like anybody else. There is no perfection in terrorism. We exaggerate from time to time, because understandable reasons, but once we will begin to confront them and fight them, you will discover so many holes and so many disorganizations that you`ll be surprised by it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Shimon Peres, I loved knowing him, loved the chance to meet with him so often. His life evaluates our notion of humanity.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Donald Trump can claim he knows more than all the generals, but the truth is, the candidate all the generals respect is Hillary Clinton.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Imagine what this man, we all know who he is, what the ramifications will be for decades upon decades upon decades.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Politics isn`t entertainment. It isn`t a joke. It isn`t a cool place to set a television show. Politics is the way that we create our moral vision.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: We`re back. That was Emmy Award-winning actor Bradley Whitford and other stars from the hit TV series "The West Wing" out on the campaign trail in Ohio there for Hillary Clinton.

Actor Bradley Whitford joins us now.

Bradley, I know you`re here for a very important cause, the national election. But I`ve Your performance as Hubert Humphrey -- you know, I`m watching the thing, all the way, in the movie, and I`m watching, I say, I know that guy. I swear I know that guy from somewhere. I know you pretty well. I`m thinking, my God, that`s Bradley Whitford in that Hubert Humphrey reality.

Anyway, just for an exercise, compare a guy like Hubert Humphrey, who spent his life fighting for civil rights, who had a real purpose for public life and public service with Donald Trump. Here`s an easy one. Compare those two guys.

BRADLEY WHITFORD, ACTOR: Compare them? I tell you, it`s the same comparison I feel between Trump and Hillary Clinton. She -- you know, as an actor, you think about what is your motivation? Her motivation for her entire professional life has been to speak out for children, for women`s rights, civil rights, rights for people in all communities.

And Donald Trump, on the other hand, his motivation is, I guess, you know, accumulation of attention and money.

MATTHEWS: You know, this seems like a different kind of election. Not just as symmetric in terms of the personalities and motivations. But the way that, "USA Today" came out tonight, it`s going to be in the paper tomorrow, they`re actually endorsing against Trump. Papers like the newspaper down in Texas, the Dallas paper -- the Detroit paper, paper that are normally Republican whatever you want to call them, establishment, are dismayed by Trump.

WHITFORD: Well, I got to say, I always used to joke that the fakest thing aside from my teeth about "The West Wing" was we had rational Republicans and one of the things that really upsets me is an election is not a personality contest. It is an opportunity for us to have an important discussion about how to face these tremendously urgent issues, and this rodeo clown has sucked all the oxygen out of the room. And I think it`s -- it`s not good for us.

MATTHEWS: Well, explain this because great political leaders, whether it`s FDR, Lincoln, Kennedy, all of them, Obama, they all have the able to entertain in a broad sense, in a sense that grab your attention, keep your attention. They`re not boring people.

How does Trump --

WHITFORD: Yes, they`re good on TV.

MATTHEWS: How does Trump corrupt that -- we were allowed to look for charisma. It`s not a bad thing. How is he corrupting that?

WHITFORD: Well, listen, he is fantastic television in the same way watching a car wreck is fascinating television. He`s hypnotic because of his utter lack of shame and his moral bankruptcy. It`s a hypnotic thing to watch.

I just want to say, you know, I`ve been listening to your show in the car on way over here. Here we are talking about a candidate who is fat-shaming people, a candidate who mocks people with disabilities. If I got a call from my son`s school and heard that he was mocking someone`s disabilities, that he was making fun of flat-chested girls, fat-shaming girls, I would disown him.

And yet at a time when we should be discussing, and I really want kids to understand how important this election is, five Supreme Court justices. There`s a lot of things --

MATTHEWS: OK.

WHITFORD: -- that we can`t take for granted.

MATTHEWS: You`re a serious guy. Thank you so much. A hell of an actor, by the way. I love your Hubert Humphrey. I mean it.

WHITFORD: I love Hubert.

MATTHEWS: You made it come to life.

WHITFORD: Thank you. Thank you so much.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, thank you, Bradley Whitford.

MATTHEWS: When we return, my election diary for tonight, with just 40 days left until the campaign ends with an election.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Thursday, September 29th, 2016, where you`re setting some sound numbers -- we`re getting some sound numbers now on how Monday`s debate affected this election.

One clear shift in opinion is among women. If you look at it from a before and after way, there are three times as many women now having a more favorable opinion of Hillary Clinton than those who now have more favorable opinion of Donald Trump, three times as many. The number of women now having a worse opinion to Trump as a result of the debate, as compared to the number having a worse opinion of Hillary is roughly two to one.

So, what`s confounding from a political point of view is Trump`s inability to put Monday night`s debate behind him. He can`t seem to shake it, can`t seem to take the loss and move on. He seems to be a prisoner of Monday night repeating it over and over again like an episode of "The Twilight Zone."

Well, that`s the diary with 40 days until the election.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews

9306 speakers\_end

ANNOUNCER: Gary Johnson...

GARY JOHNSON (NM-L), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We`ve got issues, but we`re going to deal with these issues.

ANNOUNCER: ... and Bill Weld.

WILLIAM WELD (MA-L), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: People think this is a horror movie and they can`t change the channel.

ANNOUNCER: The Libertarian ticket that could tip the scales in the election.

JOHNSON: Trump, Clinton -- they want to kill each other! Does anybody believe that that`s going to get any better?

ANNOUNCER: Tonight, just two nights after the most watched debate in history, they`ll sit down and make their case to Chris Matthews.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

ANNOUNCER: It`s the HARDBALL "College Tour." Live from the University of New Hampshire, the Gary Johnson Town Hall.

Here now Chris Matthews.

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews here at the University of New Hampshire in Durham.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: There was a big presidential debate Monday night. Eighty- four million people watched. And tonight, we`re here to bring two additional voices into the debate.

Let`s welcome the Libertarian candidates for president and vice president of the United States, former governor Gary Johnson of New Mexico and former governor Bill Weld of Massachusetts.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Well, today, President Obama responded to something that happened at Monday night`s debate. And here`s the president.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: You had somebody who basically insulted women and then doubled down, I think, this morning, in terms of how he talks about them and talks about their weight and talks about, you know, how they look instead of the content of their character and their capabilities, which is not something that I want -- not somebody I want in the Oval Office that my daughters are listening to and that sons are listening to.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You know what he was talking about. He was talking about something Hillary Clinton brought up in the first debate last night. Let`s listen to what Secretary Clinton said and how Donald Trump responded.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: And one of the worst things he said was about a woman in a beauty contest. He loves beauty contests, supporting them and hanging around them. And he called this woman "Miss Piggy." Then he called her "Miss Housekeeping" because she was Latina.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: She was the winner, and you know, she gained a massive amount of weight. And it was a problem. We had a real problem. Not only that, her attitude. And we had a real problem with her.

So Hillary went back into the years and she found this girl. This was many years ago. And she found the girl and talked about her like she was Mother Teresa. And it wasn`t quite that way, but that`s OK.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Governors, half the electorate are women. And here we have one of the candidates for president engaging in a weigh-in of some kind. What do you make of this kind of conversation from one of your opponents, Donald Trump?

JOHNSON: Well, horrible. And I was actually reading about it in "The Times" today, where he accompanied her to the gym...

MATTHEWS: With a camera.

JOHNSON: ... where he subjected her to exercising in front of the camera. I guess that was his role in the Miss Universe contest. Look, how does it get any worse?

MATTHEWS: She was 18 at the time. She was an **immigrant** from Venezuela trying to make it in this country. And what does it tell you about Mr. Trump? Governor Weld?

WELD: You know, it`s bad. But take a number. You know, a lot of things are bad in his approach to things and the way he talks about people, tries to set group against groups, stir up envy and resentment, even hatred. It`s the opposite of how I think a presidential campaign should be approached.

MATTHEWS: Were you surprised when I interviewed him earlier this year and I asked him about his position, which is now pro-life -- that`s the position he`s taking -- and I asked him, Well, what should the government do when they find out there was an abortion? He said, Well, there should be some kind of punishment for a woman. That`s what he told me. What do you make of that...

JOHNSON: I was shocked by that.

MATTHEWS: You`re Libertarian. So explain how a Libertarian looks at the issue of choice.

JOHNSON: Well, that -- how can there be a more difficult issue than anyone is going to face -- and by anyone, the woman involved -- and that that should be the woman involved`s choice, period.

MATTHEWS: Governor?

WELD: Well, you don`t know what you`re going to get when you ask Mr. Trump a question. The previous year, he was asked, What`s your position on abortion and said, I`m pro-choice, of course. I`m from New York. You know, it`s just random. It`s like a broken clock. He`s right twice a day.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Well...

JOHNSON: When you asked him that question, thought, at that point in the campaign, maybe he had said, in my opinion, 50 things that would have disqualified anyone else from being president. Now that number, I think, is somewhere closer to 150.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about the other candidate, the other major party candidate who`s running against you. That`s Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State, former senator from New York, former first lady, of course, a hell of a resume.

But she also has a resume with regarding wars. And she supported regime change with regard to the Iraq war, supported W., President Bush. She supported getting involved militarily to knock off Gadhafi in Libya. She now today, I believe, still supports some sort of no-fly military role in Syria. She seems to like U.S. military involvement.

Where do you guys stand on those questions? Should we be a country that gets involved in regular -- so regularly in regime change in the Middle East?

JOHNSON: We should not be involved in regime change. And something I would like to point is there have been three polls now conducted among active military personnel, and I`ve been on top of those three polls. So I would like to think it`s based on what I am saying regarding this.

We`re putting our military in a terrible situation. Look, we maintain that if we`re attacked, we`re going on attack back, that we should have an invincible national defense. But when we do involve ourselves in regime change, we literally get ourselves on both sides of the issue.

In Syria, for example, you just can`t make up what has happened. And I don`t think it was intentional on her part, or Obama`s part, certainly not on Bush`s part. But this is what happens when we get involved in regime change.

WELD: And you know, Governor Johnson likes to point out that wars have unintended consequences, both economic and military and moral. You know, I spent a lot of time abroad after the Iraq invasion of 2003. Nobody can tell me that we didn`t have a -- pay a moral penalty for that in the world at large. And militarily, all the weapons that we armed the rebels with in Syria and Libya wind up in the hands of ISIS. That`s militarily unintended.

MATTHEWS: When we go to war, nobody talks about what the calamities are going to be. The old Europeans, they`ve been through 2,000 years of war over religion, usually, and they know what a war is. Both sides lose eventually.

You know, I`ve spent some time recently with military guys coming home, mostly men, who come home with arms missing, legs missing, disfigured, blind, deaf. In one case, I met a guy with both.

Does anybody think about that when they submit -- put guys into combat, you know, a war that has questionable value?

JOHNSON: So here`s what I`m getting really emotional over. And by the way, I blew this Aleppo question, OK? I want to take full responsibility for that. But...

MATTHEWS: What have you done to correct the fact you didn`t know what Aleppo was...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... or what it was?

JOHNSON: Well, forget about -- forget about Aleppo...

MATTHEWS: I can`t!

JOHNSON: ... completely.

MATTHEWS: I can`t (INAUDIBLE)

JOHNSON: Forget about Aleppo completely and get to the root of what it`s all about...

MATTHEWS: OK, what was it that you didn`t appreciate and that you now appreciate?

JOHNSON: I appreciated it from the very beginning that because a politician can dot the I`s and cross the T`s on some geographic location or the name of some foreign dictator, that in that context, now we should believe them when it comes to these interventions.

And as a result of that -- those interventions, our men and service women are getting killed. They`re getting maimed. They`re getting injured for the rest of their lives. And in this case, hundreds of thousands of innocents in these countries that get caught in the crossfire of these civil wars!

MATTHEWS: Is your point that a resume doesn`t give you discernment?

JOHNSON: Well, a...

MATTHEWS: Is that your point?

JOHNSON: My point...

MATTHEWS: Hillary Clinton`s resume didn`t prepare her for the right decision?

JOHNSON: Well, in this case, politicians that beat their chest over the fact they`ve got a microphone that gets stuck in their face -- What are you going to do about these atrocities? You know what? The atrocities are real. But what`s not being realized is that when we go in to support regime change, to address those atrocities, the situation ends up to be the same or worse in many situations.

MATTHEWS: OK, what is your ticket now on the question of U.S. involvement where it`s hot right now, Syria?

JOHNSON: Well...

MATTHEWS: Should we be involved with military, troops on the ground?

JOHNSON: No, we should not. And what I`ve been saying now for seven weeks is, is that we need to involve Russia in this to come to a diplomatic solution to this. Of course, this ceasefire that was negotiated here a week ago, it was wrought with problems from the very beginning because we are supporting the Free Syrian Army, but they`re arm in arm with the Islamists. Well, we`re not arm in American with the Islamists. You got Raqqa. You got ISIS. We`re supporting the Kurds, but the Kurds are sideways with Turkey who -- who are our ally, but...

MATTHEWS: OK...

JOHNSON: ... not as good an ally as they once were because of Iraq...

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) except for the question of Vladimir Putin. Can we trust or rely upon him as a partner in this kind of peace effort, if there is going to be one?

WELD: Well, you know, I think Gary predicted that the only way out was going to be a ceasefire involving Russia to some extent. And that`s what`s happened and it`s blown up. I mean, it didn`t help that we killed 60 Syrian soldiers.

It doesn`t help that you`ve got all these different rebel groups over there. You`ve got the original rebels. You`ve got ISIS. You`ve got Nusra. You`ve got Jabhat, everyone waiting to be the next al Qaeda. And it`s a complete mess.

And today`s news about, you know, the rocket that shot down the passenger plane in Ukraine in 2014 came in by truck from Russia, boom, downed the passenger plane, goes out at night, that same night so no one can tell (ph) it came from Russia. Of course, Putin knew all about it. And that`s not even taking responsibility for what you do. That makes you less inclined to say, Russia...

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) OK...

WELD: ... Let`s work together.

MATTHEWS: Let`s get with the major thrust here. If you tend to be dovish -- I tend to be dovish -- should somebody like me vote for you guys or Hillary Clinton?

JOHNSON: Well, in the regard of...

MATTHEWS: Dovish versus hawkish. Simple question.

JOHNSON: Yes. Yes. You should.

MATTHEWS: You`re more dovish.

JOHNSON: You should. Yes.

MATTHEWS: OK.

JOHNSON: Well, by dovish...

MATTHEWS: Are you in on this?

(CROSSTALK)

WELD: I`m with him. I`m all in...

(CROSSTALK)

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: All right, let`s -- we`re going to get back to this, I`m sure, with the questions as we get there.

Let`s look at this exchange from Monday`s debate with 84 million people watching when Donald Trump defended his birther crusade, where he said that, basically, the president of the United States is an illegal **immigrant** who snuck in the country, went to college, got into the Harvard Law Review, got everything somehow through secretive sort of "Manchurian Candidate"-style secretive conspiracy theory stuff.

Anyway, here he is explaining and defending.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LESTER HOLD, NBC, MODERATOR: We`re talking about racial healing in this segment. What do you say to Americans...

TRUMP: Well, it was very...

(CROSSTALK)

TRUMP: I say nothing. I say nothing because I was able to get him to produce it. He should have produced it a long time before. I say nothing. And I think I did a great job and a great service not only for the country but even for the president in getting him to produce his birth certificate.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: So Donald Trump was doing a favor to the president of the United States by saying, Show me your driver`s license, basically, since you`re the first African-American president. That`s what he was doing.

Anyway, Michelle Obama, the first lady, spoke out on the birther issue conspiracy theory today. Let`s hear her point of view.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: There are those who questioned and continue to question for the past eight years whether my husband was even born in this country.

(BOOS)

M. OBAMA: And let me say, hurtful, deceitful questions deliberately designed to undermine his presidency, questions that cannot be blamed on others or swept under the rug by an insincere sentence uttered at a press conference.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Trump has said that Hillary Clinton`s people started this. What do you make of that, Governor?

JOHNSON: Well, based on my following the story -- and I`m not a rock thrower. I`ve never, ever said a word about this. I just always thought it was BS from the very beginning, and it just continues to be BS.

WELD: No, but that`s the biggest granddaddy of a whopper of all, him saying, Oh, Hillary Clinton started this. I`m ending it. I mean, that`s pathetic, it`s so palpably a lie!

MATTHEWS: Why do people -- why would he do it? Who is he winning with that?

WELD: I don`t think -- I don`t think the Donald knows when the curtain is down and when the curtain is up.

(LAUGHTER)

WELD: I mean, I think he`s a loose man with the truth. He has a tenuous -- sometimes, he seems to have a tenuous hold on reality. This is a guy we`re going on give the football to? I mean, please!

MATTHEWS: Explain the football.

WELD: The nuclear codes.

MATTHEWS: Yes, the nuclear codes.

WELD: And he wants to arm, you know, Japan and South Korea with nuclear weapons so he can have more nations with nuclear weapons, rather than fewer.

MATTHEWS: "60 Minutes" the other night showed that the president of the United States, whoever it is, has 10 minutes if there`s an alert that comes up, if it looks like something`s coming at us (INAUDIBLE) to decide which of the thousands of weapons we`re going to fire. In that 10 minutes, has to decide that! He gets some advice from a general. He can ask a few questions. But in 10 minutes, he`s got to decide what part of the world we`re going to blow up.

Who do you -- which of these two candidates would you trust with that assignment, if you don`t win.

JOHNSON: Me. No, no...

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: ... would be me.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Second choice?

JOHNSON: When you weight...

MATTHEWS: You think Trump and Hillary are equally qualified to be commander-in-chief in a nuclear age?

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: When it -- when it...

MATTHEWS: No, OK, what...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I want some answers here. This is HARDBALL.

WELD: I don`t know that Gary and I are totally...

MATTHEWS: I like it when you disagree!

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let`s disagree here.

WELD: But no, Hillary Clinton is clearly qualified to be commander- in-chief and president of the United States. Donald Trump...

MATTHEWS: How about the other guy?

WELD: ... is clearly not qualified. And I`ve encouraged him almost with affection to think some of other job or profession he`d like to...

(LAUGHTER)

WELD: And I`ve suggested the laundry business. He could do great in the laundry business!

(LAUGHTER)

WELD: He`s got business smarts. But president of the United States is just the wrong tree to be barking up for him.

JOHNSON: I think -- I think she`s going to -- I think she`s going to press the button.

MATTHEWS: What?

JOHNSON: I -- I -- well, confronted with that 10 minutes, she`s going to be hawkish. She`s going to be more hawkish in that role.

MATTHEWS: You think she`s got a happy trigger.

JOHNSON: I think that she is not going to err on the side of not being the aggressor.

MATTHEWS: OK. Well, let`s talk about something else that we probably are going to have to face more immediately than nuclear war decisions, which is climate. And look at this audience, average age 20, 23 -- maybe at the most 23 right now. I think we`re above the average, by the way.

And they`re going to live in this climate. And we have one of the candidates saying there is no climate threat, even though anybody who lives in Massachusetts sees the water level coming up here. It`s coming up everywhere. The ice, the snows of Kilimanjaro have long gone.

JOHNSON: I`ve been to Kilimanjaro. They`re still a long ways from...

MATTHEWS: Well, OK. All right. So...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, so you`ve been up there.

(APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: I`ve been up there...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: My wife`s been there (INAUDIBLE) Let`s talk about your firsthand report on the top of Kilimanjaro. Do you think climate change is real because one of the candidates challenging you guys, Hillary Clinton, believes it`s very real, the other says it`s a hoax cooked up in China.

JOHNSON: No, I think it`s real. I think that it`s real and that we as human beings are demanding less carbon emission. That`s a good thing. And we`re getting it. We`re 16 percent of the world`s carbon load. So let`s not...

MATTHEWS: OK, you`re a Libertarian. How does a Libertarian avoid overregulation because if we do think fossil fuel use is dangerous to the environment, something has got to stop that use. How do we do it with the Libertarian environment?

JOHNSON: Well, in this case, the free market has dealt with coal. The free market has...

MATTHEWS: Really?

JOHNSON: ... well, has bankrupted, marginalized coal. Thirty-six percent of the load remains coal. But if you are an electrical -- if you supply the electrical grid, which is currently 36 percent coal, you`re not going to replace it with coal because...

MATTHEWS: So you wouldn`t...

JOHNSON: ... because natural gas is still lower in price. So free market. Natural -- everything is being...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You wouldn`t put federal controls on emissions?

JOHNSON: No. I think the federal government has a role to protect us against harm. I put pollution in that category. So federal government setting standards, setting scientific standards regarding harm...

MATTHEWS: Emission.

JOHNSON: Yes. Yes. You bet.

MATTHEWS: Because of the smell or what, bad air, but not on the...

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: ... we`re going to breathe it. We`re going to breathe it. We`re going to inhale it.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You don`t have a problem with the government action to deal with climate. You don`t have a problem with that generally.

JOHNSON: Well, I think that free market does a better job of it, Chris. And I`ll cite...

MATTHEWS: Do you agree with that?

JOHNSON: ... for you right as an example...

(CROSSTALK)

WELD: Environmental regulation is an exception to my general Libertarianism...

MATTHEWS: OK...

WELD: ... because the economies of scale are so great, you can`t rely on the market or a business or an individual to stop environmental degradation, which as Gary points out, arms all of us, and avoiding harm to our fellow man is...

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: I support the Environmental Protection Agency. I think it comes under the heading...

MATTHEWS: OK...

JOHNSON: ... of doing us harm, and but for the Environmental Protection Agency, there would continue to be pollution.

MATTHEWS: One thing I like about Libertarians is that vice presidents can disagree with presidents.

(CROSSTALK)

(APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: I hope we established that here tonight!

MATTHEWS: I`m seeing it.

Let me get a question from -- go ahead, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hi. My name is Brendan Luke (ph). I`m from Westchester, New York. And my question for Governor Johnson is, what do you have to say to people that think a vote for you is a waste of a vote?

JOHNSON: Well, that a wasted vote is voting for somebody you don`t believe in. That`s a wasted vote.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: And right now, we`ve come up among young people to be tied with Hillary among young people. We`re leading among independents. So what I say is offering the two of us -- offering a first vote to people -- that`s something that we`re very proud of.

MATTHEWS: Well, let`s get to some of the thing -- because everybody sees this happening in the Democratic Party. They know you guys are doing well among younger voters, millennials.

Look at this. This was in "The Hill" newspaper today on Capitol Hill. "Democrats panicked by third party candidates drawing support away from Hillary Clinton are ramping up their attacks against Gary Johnson and warning that a vote for a third party is a vote for Donald Trump.

And now listen to President Obama today on that very point. Here`s President Obama warning about you guys.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

OBAMA: If there`s one message I want to deliver to everybody -- if you don`t vote, that`s a vote for Trump. If you don`t vote, that`s a vote for Trump. If you vote for a third party candidate who`s got no chance to win, that`s a vote for Trump.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What do you make of that? He`s talking about you guys.

JOHNSON: Let me -- let me tell you the way (ph) I make that for young people...

MATTHEWS: So you disagree with the president, obviously.

(LAUGHTER)

JOHNSON: Well, yes! Neither -- neither -- neither Trump nor Clinton is going to do anything regarding for Medicaid and Medicare! So I`m going to get my health care. I`m going to get my retirement, but you all are going to foot that bill and you`re not going to get anything? Yes, I think there`s a reason why young people are supporting us!

MATTHEWS: So they`re not going to -- neither guy`s going to reform the situation.

JOHNSON: Nobody`s going to reform the situation! I mean, we`re headed to bankruptcy with regard to the size and scope of government!

WELD: You know, Chris...

MATTHEWS: The government`s too big, you argue.

WELD: What`s going on this year is that both the parties, both the establishment parties in Washington are trying to scare everybody, brainwash them into thinking you have got to vote for an R or you have got to vote for an D because we have a monopoly on power in Washington, and we would like to keep the monopoly.

I would suggest they haven`t done a great job in Washington in the last 15 years getting the people`s business done, because they so obviously want to kill each other, just like the campaigns want to kill each other.

MATTHEWS: We`re going to talk a lot about that, Governor Weld and Governor Johnson. We`re going to get some more questions from the audience here when we get back.

It`s at the University of New Hampshire.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: This is great.

We`re back at the University of New Hampshire, a beautiful campus up here.

And we have got Governor Gary Johnson and Bill Weld, the Libertarian ticket.

You know, I grew up like you guys, argued Libertarianism. And it always looked good when you`re younger. I mean great.

Let`s talk about the basics of Libertarianism. I guess one of the ways it began to develop as an argument is, why should a young guy or woman who want a ride a motorbike, a motorcycle, a big one, a big hog if they want to ride one, why should the government tell them to wear a helmet?

Why should somebody in New York like Bloomberg tell us we can`t buy a Coke bigger than 16 ounces? Why can`t we buy a big Coke? Why can`t we get on a motorcycle if we want to and not put a helmet on? The nanny state, it`s called.

What is Libertarianism about in that regard? I guess it`s against all that.

JOHNSON: Well, no, no.

MATTHEWS: No?

JOHNSON: Well, in this case, I...

MATTHEWS: Are you for helmets?

JOHNSON: I wear a helmet.

MATTHEWS: But do you want to be told to wear a helmet by the government?

JOHNSON: No, I don`t want to be told to wear a helmet.

MATTHEWS: OK.

JOHNSON: And there`s an organ donor shortage out there, so there`s unintended consequences regarding everything, Chris, Chris.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You`re making the news. Did you mean that? Did you mean that?

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: Well, how about somebody with a sense of humor as president of the United States?

MATTHEWS: OK. Great. That`s a sense -- that`s great. All right.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: That`s why I asked you. Do you know why I asked you? Because, the way print journalism works is, it just types the words down. It doesn`t say made funny joke here for emphasis.

Things like the 16-ounce thing and all the stuff that left will argue, the progressives will say, hey, if we have to pay for hospital care for diabetes, if we have to pay for the crash site, and get the guy who is on a motorbike to the hospital, put him under a nice -- take care of the surgery, take care of him, get him back to health, if society has to pay those costs, can`t society say wear a helmet?

JOHNSON: So, in the case of -- let me use Bloomberg as an example.

MATTHEWS: Sure.

JOHNSON: I think he took a real leadership role. He`s doing that in...

MATTHEWS: On cigarettes or on sodas?

JOHNSON: Sodas. He takes a leadership role. He`s a mayor of a town. He wants to implement this.

I don`t want to implement this in the state. I don`t want to implement this in the federal government. But you know what? I think, as a result of what he said, I think we now have the eight-ounce can of Coke. I think we have come to a better awareness nationwide because of what Bloomberg did in New York.

MATTHEWS: But it was a law. Are you against -- aren`t you against laws?

JOHNSON: I am. But his action, his leadership in this area -- Michelle Obama, when she talks about nutrition, that is leadership.

Do we legislate that? No, because then we end up -- because then it is so successful, the reduction in the size of sodas, that I guess, at some point, we will criminalize to it make sure that everybody complies with it.

MATTHEWS: OK. Let`s talk about dope. OK?

JOHNSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Why do they call it dope?

JOHNSON: Why do they call it dope?

MATTHEWS: Yes, marijuana, why do they call it dope?

JOHNSON: I don`t know why that came about.

And I will just tell you, based on my having done it for the first time, which probably a few of the kids in here in this room have maybe had the same experience, why do they call it dope?

MATTHEWS: You`re looking at me. Is this funny?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You`re giving me the look. Am I supposed to respond to that? What do you want me to think here? You don`t think it`s dope.

JOHNSON: Well, it is the safest -- it is so much safer than everything else that is out there, starting with alcohol.

MATTHEWS: Well, let me read you something from your platform, because I know you know this.

Basically, this is -- we -- this is the Libertarian platform. You guys have read it, right?

WELD: I have read it.

MATTHEWS: OK. I just want to make sure.

JOHNSON: You don`t have to agree with every word of it.

MATTHEWS: OK. Well, here are some words you might have some interesting comments on.

"We favor the repeal of all laws creating crimes" -- that`s in quotes -- "without victims, such as the use of drugs for medicinal or recreational purposes."

That`s pretty clear.

Now, marijuana, OK, that`s legal in Colorado. It`s got different degrees of legality or non-criminality in different states. But what about we move it a little further? Recreational drugs. Some people might say cocaine is recreational. Some might say crack cocaine. Some might say meth. They might say heroin.

Where do you draw the line in terms of Libertarianism on drugs?

JOHNSON: Well, so, we are the Libertarian nominees.

And as a governor of New Mexico, I was the highest elected official in 1999 to call...

MATTHEWS: Did you mean that literally?

(LAUGHTER)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: I`m the highest elected official to call...

(LAUGHTER)

JOHNSON: I will use it again.

MATTHEWS: OK.

JOHNSON: All right?

Governor of New Mexico, called for the legalization of marijuana in `99. I`m saying the same things today that I`m saying -- that I was saying then. I only favor the legalization of marijuana. But I believe we are going to do that.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It doesn`t say that here in your platform. It says recreational drugs.

JOHNSON: No. But platform is one thing. And, by the way, we can extend that to Republicans. We can extend that Democrats.

MATTHEWS: I understand they`re not serious sometimes. I agree with that.

So, in this case, it`s not a serious statement, recreational drugs?

JOHNSON: No, but let me extend, too, that, when we legalize marijuana -- and I have said this since `99. I believe we are going to come to a quantum leap when it comes to the understanding of the drug issue.

And it is going to start with recognizing drugs first as a health issue, rather than a criminal justice issue.

MATTHEWS: Let`s get to the crowd. Let`s get to the students.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: First question.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: My name is Hannah Matthew (ph). I`m from Hebron, Maine, and I`m a student here at University of New Hampshire.

And this is a question for Governor Johnson.

What are your thoughts on combating climate change, as well as potentially moving towards a more self-sufficient country in the future?

JOHNSON: Well, climate change, that it is man-caused, that we should reduce carbon emission, that it is happening.

We`re 16 percent of the world`s carbon emission load. I don`t want to put us out front to the point that we lose jobs over this. But I do believe that we`re demanding less carbon emission. And, as an example, coal, marginal coal assets have been bankrupted right now.

Why would you build a coal plant when, as depressed the price of coal is at this moment, you can build a gas-fired plant for less?

MATTHEWS: How many here are concerned about climate change? Put your hands up.

Pretty strong, pretty much unanimous, pretty much, except the guy with the beard. You don`t -- no, that`s all right. No, that`s fair.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Odd man out is the good man sometimes.

Go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: (OFF-MIKE) from Plymouth, New Hampshire.

And my question is for Governor Johnson.

How would you make college more accessible to students of lower socioeconomic conditions?

MATTHEWS: Bernie Sanders was here today. He was very powerful over a couple blocks from here, about four or five blocks on campus.

He is still for free tuition. The tuition here for in-state tuition is $29,000 a year. That covers being here, board and everything. But it`s $29,000. Bernie says he is going to make it free for state college tuition. Where are you on that? That`s not a Libertarian solution, I don`t think.

JOHNSON: Well, I would just like the point out the reason for the high cost of college tuition in the first place.

And the reason for high college tuition in the first place is guaranteed government student loans. If guaranteed government student loans were to have never existed, I`m going to guess that the cost of college tuition today would be half of what it is, because there is a skewed supply and demand. And government has interjected itself in that.

I think students have been sold a bill of goods. They`re graduating from college today with a home mortgage without the home. I would certainly be open to legislation that -- similar to the bailout of Wall Street, that somehow gets kids locked into much lower interest rates when it comes to student loans.

But if you`re going to offer free college tuition for public institutions, what you`re going to do is, you are going to bankrupt the entire private university system. And the model of the future, I think, is free education. It`s the Khan Academy. It`s a kindergarten through doctoral degree in any subject whatsoever.

MATTHEWS: Where does that money come from?

JOHNSON: In the case of the Khan Academy?

MATTHEWS: Yes. You`re talking about free -- well, if you don`t to have pay tuition, who pays the professor?

JOHNSON: Well, that we have become locked in this model that we have now.

Libertarians are all about competition. Libertarians are all about free market bringing competition, the notion of better products, better services.

MATTHEWS: Well, what about -- how many are here at UNH only because they are able to get a loan? How many? How many paid the tuition full bill, the full bill? Well, how did the other guys get here? Are you all on scholarship?

Anyway, I got a -- I went to Holy Cross on student loans. So, you`re making a hard argument to somebody like me.

JOHNSON: No, what I`m saying is, if student loans didn`t exist, you would have -- you would have -- you wouldn`t -- you would have paid half of what you paid.

MATTHEWS: I wouldn`t have gotten in. I wouldn`t have been able to go.

JOHNSON: Well, of you would have been able to pay half of it.

And for a lot of kids, they wouldn`t have gone to school. But, believe me, if everybody boycotted college next year because of the high cost of college, guess what? Tuition is going to drop significantly.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: OK, before we go to break, I just want to say, I`m being told through mechanical information, electronic information, that there is a lot of excitement out there, Twitter excitement, right now because of what you said about Hillary Clinton and the nuclear button.

You believe it would be a precarious situation if she had commander in chief responsibilities over nuclear war?

JOHNSON: I think she`s going to shoot. I think she`s going to shoot. She is not going to be herself. She is not going to be perceived as weak. She`s going to shoot.

(APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: We will be back with Gary Johnson and Bill Weld.

You`re watching HARDBALL at the University of New Hampshire.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to this beautiful room here, Huddleston Hall, at the University of New Hampshire, which is celebrating its 150th year in existence.

We`re back now with the Libertarian ticket, Gary Johnson and Bill Weld.

We got a bunch of people, three people lined up.

But I got actually a little lightning round here. This is where we have fun and maybe make some news.

Who is your favorite foreign leader?

JOHNSON: Who is my favorite...

MATTHEWS: Any -- just name anywhere in the country -- any one of the continents, any country. Name one foreign leader that you respect and look up to, anybody.

JOHNSON: Shimon Peres.

MATTHEWS: No, no, OK. I`m talking about living. Go ahead.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You have got to do this. Anywhere. Any continent, Canada, Mexico, Europe over there, Asia, South America, Africa. Name a foreign leader that you respect.

JOHNSON: I guess I`m having an Aleppo moment, in the former -- former president of Mexico...

MATTHEWS: But I`m giving you the whole world.

JOHNSON: I know, I know, I know, I know.

MATTHEWS: Anybody in the world you like, anybody. Pick any leader.

JOHNSON: The former president of Mexico.

MATTHEWS: No. Which one?

JOHNSON: I`m having a brain -- I`m having a brain...

MATTHEWS: Well, name anybody.

(CROSSTALK)

WELD: Fox.

JOHNSON: Fox.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK. Who is your favorite foreign leader? Get him off the hook. Name a foreign leader you respect.

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON: Fox. He`s terrific.

MATTHEWS: Any foreign leader.

WELD: Merkel.

MATTHEWS: OK, Merkel. OK, fine. Saved yourself. Can`t argue with that.

(APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, let`s go.

Who is your favorite president in history, favorite president, most Libertarian?

JOHNSON: Jefferson. Jefferson, first Libertarian.

MATTHEWS: So, what do you think the Democrats getting rid of their Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner because they didn`t like Jefferson because he had, well, slaves?

JOHNSON: Well, the Constitution did have flaws, in that it was signed by a bunch of...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So, you wouldn`t get rid of the J-J Dinners if you`re a Democrat, would you?.

JOHNSON: I wouldn`t.

MATTHEWS: OK, what about...

WELD: We`re Jeffersonian liberals. We love Jefferson.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Who is your favorite Supreme Court justice? There are eight of them.

WELD: Current.

MATTHEWS: Yes, right now in 2016, favorite judge, favorite justice.

WELD: I would say maybe Kennedy.

MATTHEWS: Anthony Kennedy.

(APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: Kennedy.

(LAUGHTER)

JOHNSON: Ah, yes.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Let`s bring up the next question, next question.

Bill Weld is your lifeline.

Anyway, go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hi. I`m for Gary Johnson.

JOHNSON: Awesome.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: My name is Justin Meirs (ph). I`m from Long Island, New York.

I have a question regarding, what do you plan on doing to combat the misconduct against African-Americans and police?

JOHNSON: You know, I do believe black lives matter, the movement matters.

There is...

(APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: There is discrimination that exists. Blacks are being shot at a much higher rate than whites, being arrested and actually ending up going to jail.

I think, as president of the United States, with the Department of Justice, that we could find the common threads where least amount discrimination exists, best incidence of violence exists, as opposed to worst threads of discrimination, worst threads of violence, and could drive a real education from the federal standpoint.

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: OK. Do you think there`s bias? I mean, bias -- purposeful bias?

JOHNSON: I won`t call it purposeful but it is real. It is real. It does exist. I`d recommend everybody watch the O.J. Simpson documentary that for me, I felt like I was informed but when I --

MATTHEWS: Did he do it?

JOHNSON: Did he do it?

MATTHEWS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Yes. He did it. But why did the verdict turn out as did it? Well, it was based on everything that transpired prior to that verdict, where atrocious actions on the part of police were not prosecuted.

BILL WELD, LIBERTARIAN VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Can I add one thing? I think from police we need intensive training to get over this prejudice against blacks. And I`ve seen intensive training work. When I came into office in Massachusetts, we had a big epidemic of battered women, black and blue every Sunday morning.

And the judges didn`t get it. They would ask, what did you do sweetheart to irritate your boyfriend or your husband last night? So, we had the police come in and train all of our judges. And, you know, I`ve backed them up. I was a former federal prosecutor. It had to be delicious for the police training judges, right? But it really worked.

MATTHEWS: Because they knew what was going on --

WELD: They knew what was going on, and the judges were clueless and they got it after a while.

MATTHEWS: Because the cops are called in again and again for domestic violence and they got the picture.

WELD: Yes. And the judges were just out of it. They were too old school, but it absolutely work and we turned it around and, I commuted the sentences of some women who`ve been convicted of manslaughter for trying to defend themselves with a curling iron when their husbands and boyfriends were trying to beat them to death.

MATTHEWS: OK. We`re going to come right back with more. Hang in there.

We`ll be right back with more questions from University of New Hampshire for our college tour.

(APPLAUSE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL and our college tour.

The libertarian ticket for president and vice president, Governors Gary Johnson and Bill Weld.

Our next student questioner -- go ahead.

STUDENT QUESTIONER: Hi. My name is Kate. I`m San Francisco, California. I`m a student here at the University of New Hampshire.

My question is for you, Gary Johnson.

A lot of candidates recently throughout the campaign have been talking about cutting Planned Parenthood. I want to know what your opinion is on it. Whether you would cut it or what is your stance on Planned Parenthood?

JOHNSON: Bill Weld and I are pledging that we`re going to submit a balanced budget to Congress in the first 100 days. That would be a 20 percent reduction in all of federal spending. We would plan on cutting Planned Parenthood 20 percent along everything with else.

But what we would do as president and vice president is we would stand up to Republicans that would say, look, balancing the federal budget is not eliminating Planned Parenthood. Give us a break.

MATTHEWS: OK. Next question?

STUDENT QUESTIONER: My name is Colin Noel (ph). I`m from Strafford, New Hampshire. I`m a student here in UNH. This question is for Governor Johnson.

With less than two months left in the election season, how do you plan to gain a competitive edge against Hillary and Trump?

JOHNSON: This has to do it right here. This right here.

So, thank you, Chris Matthews. Thank you, MSNBC.

(APPLAUSE)

No, look, look.

We keep plugging away and by our analytics, we keep rising. So, hopefully, we will be in the second and third debates. In my opinion, the only chance we have of winning is to be in these presidential debates. I do think that this could bounce --

MATTHEWS: Governor, where are you strongest in terms of the 15 percent? Where do you exceeded in the country? What are your big states?

JOHNSON: Big states would be New Mexico, Utah, Idaho, the Dakotas.

MATTHEWS: Alaska.

JOHNSON: Alaska, Maine, New Hampshire. I think we have a pretty good showing. I mean, we`re at 17 percent plus in 15 states. So --

(APPLAUSE)

STUDENT QUESTIONER: Hi. My name is Molly. I`m from Shrewsbury, Massachusetts.

This question is for both of you. I`m a student here at UNH and I was wondering how your campaign plans to address the rampant sexual assault that`s happening on college campuses, and as well as what your thoughts are on the Campus Save Act, which only really supplies victims with second class treatment?

JOHNSON: Being aware of it for starters. It is something that exists and when you recognize that the preponderance, for to you claim that you have been sexually assaulted, the odds are against you from the very beginning to the point that you just don`t do it. So, recognizing it. Recognizing that it is rampant and that the deck is stacked against you, as the woman.

MATTHEWS: How many women here, or men, everybody, how many believe it is a problem here as well as elsewhere?

JOHNSON: Yes, yes.

MATTHEWS: Boy. That`s a bad showing right there. Thank you so much.

WELD: It`s like the battered women`s situation I was talking about. You`ve got to take it seriously and change the culture. And that involves, you know, aerating it and making sure these things become public and they`re aerated in public. And then the culture of silence and culture of wink, wink, is going to go away.

MATTHEWS: Next question.

WELD: Thank you.

STUDENT QUESTIONER: My name is Stephanie. I`m a student at the University of New Hampshire as well.

Money and politics has been a huge issue throughout this election. I was wondering how your campaign is funded and how that affects your ideals.

JOHNSON: Well, interestingly right now, apparently, Hillary is spending more money than we have trying to discredit us at the moment. So, we don`t have a lot of money. So --

(APPLAUSE)

But in the context of money, I think that there should be unlimited campaign contributions, but that there should be 100 percent transparency - - something that doesn`t exist today.

Something that is misunderstood is when you limit campaign contribution, basically, that`s incumbency protection. Nothing changes if you limit campaign contribution. It goes to those people that have a name and that things stay very status quo.

I`ve always been also supportive of candidates wearing NASCAR jackets with patches commensurate with the size of donations --

MATTHEWS: How do you approach that? How do you say Koch brothers on your uniform?

JOHNSON: Well --

MATTHEWS: How do you make something for the Koch brothers --

JOHNSON: That there would be 100 percent transparency.

MATTHEWS: How about -- yes?

JOHNSON: So, that, yes, you`d be able -- as a fact checker, you`d be able to make sure that the Koch brothers --

MATTHEWS: Do you think that`s a libertarian idea to make people wear, costuming, to show where their money come from?

JOHNSON: Very libertarian. I think so. I think it`s very libertarian myself. But I do get cross ways with the Libertarian Party once in a while. But, you know, it`s an open debate and discussion --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You can`t say one person one vote when somebody is spending $20 million on a campaign --

JOHNSON: Yes, when one person spends $20 million on a campaign and publicly acknowledges that, then that`s up front and center and that person for $20 million may be able to support --

MATTHEWS: You can`t turn on the television without listening to their advertising. It`s like big brother. It`s relentless. That does affect voting, doesn`t it?

JOHNSON: Well, if it`s coupled, for example, if you have a billionaire that gave half a billion dollars to Bill and I and gets us elected, that`s going to be for the benefit of the country, Chris. And currently, you can`t do that. Currently, you can`t do that.

(APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: I`ve been seeing faces turning in both directions saying they don`t agree with you.

We`ve got more questions from the audience when we return from the University of New Hampshire.

(APPLAUSE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: We`re back at the University of New Hampshire.

What a crowd here with Gary Johnson and Bill Weld, the candidates of the Libertarian Party.

We`ve got a little time left. Let`s get some questions about libertarianism from one of the students. Go ahead.

STUDENT QUESTIONER: Hi. My name`s Elizabeth Gerard (ph). I`m from Marblehead, Massachusetts.

And my question is for Governor Johnson.

I am very worried about my future opportunities. How would you reshape a government for the benefit of my generation?

JOHNSON: So, I think what government can achieve and I did achieve as governor of New Mexico is this notion of equal opportunity. The government can provide equal opportunity for everybody. So, that`s entrepreneurs.

And crony capitalism -- look, it`s alive and well. Government does pick winners and losers, but it doesn`t have to. So as governor of New Mexico, I just put an end to it, period, right from the very start.

Equal opportunity for everybody -- in that context, I had the best record on jobs at least in the 2012 presidential cycle.

MATTHEWS: Next, please? Thank you, sir.

STUDENT QUESTIONER: My name is Matt. I`m Rhode Island. My question is for you, Governor Johnson. You said that you the support the Trans Pacific Partnership in its current form would pass it.

Given that it was passed in secrecy without the scrutiny of the public, would you consider postponing your support for it and passing it when you`re elected president?

JOHNSON: No, I think that -- and here`s a pledge that the two of us have made also is that we`re going to support anything that makes things better, and we do believe that it makes things better. And free trade in our opinion is all about more U.S. jobs, not fewer U.S. jobs. So, this eliminates a whole lot of tariffs.

May there be issues with TPP? Certainly. But I think that it reduces crony capitalism as opposed to promotes it and it excludes China. But I think Bill has some things to say.

MATTHEWS: OK, I want to use this time --

(CROSSTALK)

WELD: From a geopolitical point of view it gives us a beachhead in Asia not including China.

MATTHEWS: Take a couple of minute. Explain -- you first -- libertarianism, what does it mean to young people here who have to make big lifetime choices about the world they`re going to face?

WELD: Well, what we bring to the table is we`re fiscally responsible, so we`re not going to bankrupt the system. We`re going to balance the budget. We`re going to cut down on the national debt, so that there may be some money left over for you all.

And if we, you know, tinker with Social Security, it`s not to kill Social Security, it`s so the system will still be there for you all when you come of that age. Anything we do with Medicaid and Medicare, same purpose.

The two establishment party candidates have said we`re not going to touch the entitlements. It just shows they`re not serious about balancing the budget. It`s a political statement so they don`t take any heat.

We`re willing to take heat, but we`re doing it with you all in mind.

JOHNSON: Socially inclusive. Always coming down on the --

MATTHEWS: Pro-choice, pro-gay rights.

JOHNSON: Pro-gay rights.

MATTHEWS: Equality of marriage?

JOHNSON: Yes, legalized marijuana. Look, we`ll always come down on the side -- always come down on the side of you and I being able to make choices in our lives, period.

MATTHEWS: Live free or die.

JOHNSON: As long as those choices --

MATTHEWS: Live free or die!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: As long as those choices don`t put others in harm`s way. We are against military intervention, against regime change, and we`re for free trade -- believing that ultimately free trade leads to more U.S. jobs.

MATTHEWS: Edward Snowden is a legal case. But, philosophically, where do you stand on what he did?

JOHNSON: Based on what I know about the Edward Snowden case, I would pardon Edward Snowden.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: So, we know where you stand. This hour, we`ve learned that your more dovish than Hillary Clinton. You do, personally, wonder what she`ll do if she has the nuclear trigger in her hands, right?

JOHNSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: You said it twice. I gave you two opportunities to say she wasn`t trigger happy. And you said she was.

JOHNSON: She`s going to be more hawkish. She`s going to be the most hawkish of the --

MATTHEWS: Governor Weld, I`ve known you a good time. You`ve been a great public servant. What`s the worst thing you can say about Donald Trump?

WELD: No, I think he`s delusional. He doesn`t study up on foreign policy. He has no understanding of the international economy. He wants to impose tariffs. He`d take us back to the horse and buggy era.

MATTHEWS: OK, (INAUDIBLE)

WELD: Oh, in personal terms, he`s capable of generosity. He`s not a bad guy. I know him a little bit socially in New York. He`s a good family man. He`s got good personals. That`s why he could do very well if he`d just let go of this obsession with being president of the United States.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Thank you.

We`re at the University of New Hampshire celebrating its 150th anniversary. It`s a beautiful campus and a great school. They couldn`t have been nicer to us.

Thank you, gentlemen, for making this occasion happens. Governor Gary Johnson and Governor Bill Weld.

Thank you to our hosts. We`re at the University of New Hampshire.

That does it for the HARDBALL College Tour here tonight.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

(APPLAUSE)

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Michael Steele, Alex Seitz-Wald

9205 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: America in blue and black.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews up in New York.

Well, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump today addressed the latest cases of African-American men being shot by police. Terrence Crutcher was fatally shot in Tulsa on Friday. He was seen with his hands up in police helicopter video taken moments before the shooting.

Yesterday in Charlotte, Keith Lamont Scott was shot by police, who say he exited a car with a gun and he ignored warnings to drop it. Charlotte police said he was posed -- had posed an imminent deadly threat.

His death sparked protests last night that left 16 police officers injured. Look at it.

This afternoon, Clinton called the incidents "very disturbing," very upsetting.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: There is still much we don`t know about what happened in both incidents. But we do know that we have two more names to add to a list of African-Americans killed by police officers in these encounters.

It`s unbearable, and it needs to become intolerable. We also saw the targeting of police officers in Philadelphia last week. And last night in Charlotte, 12 officers were injured in demonstrations following Keith Lamont Scott`s death.

I know I don`t have all the answers. I don`t know anyone who does. But this is certain. Too many people have lost their lives who shouldn`t have.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, for his part, Donald Trump focused on the shooting in Tulsa, which he said he was troubled by. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: I must tell you I watched the shooting, in particular in Tulsa. And that man was hands-up. That man went to the car, hands up, put his hand on the car.

I mean, to me, it looked like he did everything you`re supposed to do, and he looked like a really good man. This young officer -- I don`t know what she was thinking. I don`t know what she was thinking! But I`m very, very troubled by that.

Did she get scared? Was she choking? What happened? But maybe people like that, people that choke, people that do that -- maybe they can`t be doing what they`re doing, OK? They can`t be doing what they`re doing.

(APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: So we all respect our police greatly, and they will just to have get better and better and better.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Donald Trump was speaking at a predominantly black church in Cleveland at that point to a group of pastors. Anyway, Trump defended saying to African-American voters generally, What do you have to lose, by voting for him? Well, let`s watch that part.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I talked about the crime. I talked about the lack of education, the bad schools. And I talked about jobs. The jobs are just so bad. And I said it three, four, five times. And then one day, I said, What do you have to lose? I mean, what do you have to lose? I`m going to fix it. What do you have to lose? And somehow, that resonated. Some people didn`t like it. But I said, What difference does it make? I mean, it`s -- it`s -- it`s true. What do you have to lose?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that was rough. Trump was introduced, by the way, by boxing promoter Don King. You saw him in the picture there. He called Trump the only gladiator that will take on the system. King got some attention, by the way, for some of the language he used. You watch, you decide.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DON KING, BOXING PROMOTER: America needs Donald Trump! We need Donald Trump, especially black people!

I told Michael Jackson, I said, If you`re poor, you are a poor Negro. I would use the "N" word. But if you`re rich, you are a rich Negro. If you`re a dancing and sliding and gliding (EXPLETIVE DELETED) -- I mean Negro...

(LAUGHTER)

KING: ... you are a dancing and sliding and gliding Negro. So dare not **alienate** because you cannot assimilate. So you know, you`re going to be a Negro until you die.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, joining me right now is Pastor Darrell Scott, a Trump surrogate. Trump spoke at your church this morning. Pastor, give us a thought about what you thought about Trump`s performance today. Generally, what he talks about -- you got nothing to lose in this community if you keep voting -- if you vote for me, rather than keep voting Democrat.

What do you make of that, and also the use of the "N" word and all that by -- by the fight promoter? What do you think?

PASTOR DARRELL SCOTT, NEW SPIRIT REVIVAL CENTER: Well, first of all, we had a tremendous time today. We had an outstanding turnout, and Mr. Trump was very, very comfortable. He was able to unbridle (ph) and open up his heart and share, you know, with the pastors that were there. We asked him some questions about, you know, Supreme Court and school choice and religious liberty and religious freedom. And we had a great time. I thought we had a very great time.

Now, Don King has been a friend of his for over 30 years, and if I`m not mistaken, Don King flew in him from New York. And as a special friend of Mr. Trump`s we allowed him to introduce him. And we all know that Don King is flamboyant.

MATTHEWS: I know.

SCOTT: He`s colorful. He`s outspoken. He`s -- he`s boisterous whenever he desires to be. And he was sharing a personal insight from a conversation he had with Michael Jackson.

And I don`t know if it was an accident or if it was accidentally on purpose, but he -- you know, a certain -- certain -- certain adjective slipped out. I wasn`t offended and the crowd wasn`t offended, and it just seems as if it`s something that the media wants to harp upon.

MATTHEWS: Well, I`m not jumping (ph), I`m asking about it. Let me ask you about -- about the mood in your community, in your congregation. Where`s it stand on this fight? I mean, everybody`s talking about it, Trump versus Clinton. Where`s you -- where`s your folks -- what are they talking about? What do they say? What are you hearing out there in the -- in the -- in the pews?

SCOTT: Well, you know, in the pews, I don`t -- you know, I -- Sunday for me and church time is God`s times, so I don`t use the time that God has given me to speak his word to his people for politics, but -- and I don`t try to influence them one way or another. My congregation knows that I support for Trump, but I do not try to influence their politics. I just told them to make an educated decision and don`t let other people think for you.

However, in the black community, Trump`s message is beginning to resonate more and more and more. I mean, I talk to a lot of people. There was a young delivery man that came to my house. He was a millennial in his mid to late 20s. There actually was two of them.

And he didn`t know who I was. He didn`t know I had any relationship with Mr. Trump. And I asked him, Who do you like for the election? And his reply to me was, he said, Hey, man, listen, there`s something fishy about Hillary. I said, What do you mean? He said, There`s just something fishy about Hillary. It looks as if she`ll say anything to get a vote. And so I said, What do you think about Trump? He said, Well, At least Trump keeps it real.

And you know, I thought that was insightful. You know, here this guy is in his mid to late 20s, but he`s suspect. And millennials as a whole, black millennials, are suspect as far as Hillary is concerned, and they`d rather have someone speak to them that they can perceive is speaking realistically.

And so I think that there are a lot of undercover -- I call them the "incog-negroes"...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

SCOTT: ... a lot of blacks that do support Trump, but they just don`t support him openly because they do not want to experience the backlash from our community. You know, I`ve been called a number of...

MATTHEWS: I understand.

SCOTT: ... names and...

(CROSSTALK)

SCOTT: ... all of that.

MATTHEWS: Pastor, one of the Trump -- one of the Trump comments today was that the black community, African-Americans, are worse off than they`ve ever been. Is that a fair assessment of how things stand in 2016?

SCOTT: Well, he was saying some segments of the African-American community are. I mean, all African-Americans aren`t doing bad. Everyone`s not doing horribly. Everyone doesn`t live in a depressed community. But there is a segment of our community, and it is to that segment he is making that statement.

I mean, to be honest, when you hear a number of African-Americans talk, we all talk about how bad things are for us right now. I mean, our graduation rate is lower than it`s been since 1963. It`s hard for us to find gainful employment. We`re having riots in the street. We`re getting beat up or killed by the police.

These conditions haven`t existed since the Civil Rights movement of the `60s. So for a lot of us, things are really bad.

And so, you know, if this is happening under an eight-year Democratic administration, and we`re saying that Hillary Clinton will be simply an extension of these prior eight years, we`re looking at four more years of the same. So what do we have to lose? I mean, we`re gambling with house money. You know, give him a shot. Give him a chance. See if he can improve it. And if he can`t improve it in four years, move him out.

MATTHEWS: You said something there that I got to ask you about. You said, We`re getting killed by police. What do you -- when you look at all these cases -- they`re all a little different, obviously, but there is a pattern.

What is it (INAUDIBLE) trigger-happy? Do you think police are -- and some of them are African-American policemen themselves. You know, I -- down in Charlotte. What -- what is -- what is it that -- is it more trigger-happy? Are they scared? Is this something that went on before we had videotape, where people were able to have cell phones and take pictures? Do you think it`s always been like this?

What do you -- how do you -- it`s on the news all the time now. What`s going on?

SCOTT: I think you answered -- you know, you asked and answered. Some are trigger-happy. Some are scared, but they`re only trigger-happy when it comes to blacks. Some are afraid of blacks. And you`re right, we`re seeing it more and more because of the advent of videocameras.

Listen, I was raised in the `60s. My very first experience with police, when I wasn`t even a teenager yet, I got beat up by cops. But you know what`s funny? Even in that time -- it was in the early `70s I got beat up by police -- we didn`t think it was unusual...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

SCOTT: ... because I had a lot of friends that had gotten beat up by white police, too. I`ve had friends in the `70s that were killed by the police. I mean, I had two friends that I went to high school with, very loud-mouthed guys. Criminals, yes, but they were arrested, and they hung themselves in jail. We knew that they didn`t hang themselves.

So you know, that was a norm in the black community even when I was growing up, that -- the very real fear of getting beat up or killed by police. It was a reality then, and it`s a reality now. It`s simply getting caught on videotape now. It has to stop.

MATTHEWS: Pastor...

SCOTT: It does indeed have to stop.

MATTHEWS: ... your voice is powerful. Thank you, sir. Pastor Darrell Scott.

SCOTT: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Thank so much for coming on tonight.

Let`s bring in former RNC chair Michael Steele and Stephanie Schriock of Emily`s List.

Well, yesterday, Hillary Clinton talked about the need to improve policing in the wake of recent shootings of African-Americans. Let`s listen to Secretary Clinton right now.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: We`ve got to tackle systemic racism. This horrible shooting again? How many times do we have to see this in our country? We`ve got to do everything possible to improve policing, go right at implicit bias.

There are good, honorable, cool-headed police officers. We`ve seen them action in New York over the last, you know, 48 hours because of the terrorist attacks. We can do better.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, today, New Jersey governor Chris Christie blasted Secretary Clinton for those very comments. Let`s listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R-NJ), FMR. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: She`s a disgrace. She`s a disgrace and those comments are a disgrace. It`s typical of Hillary Clinton. She knows nothing, but the mouth never stops. She has no experience in law enforcement, except for being interviewed by them. She has no background or experience on how to deal with these issues.

And it is just a disgrace. As someone who spent seven years in law enforcement, she`s exactly the kind of politician that law enforcement loathes, loathes her, because she jumps to conclusions for political gain and doesn`t care what careers or lives she ruins in the process.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Stephanie, the question you have to ask -- and also to Michael, I`ll get to you -- is, what`s Secretary Clinton talking about when she talks about implicit bias? And why -- what would that mean exactly? Police officers are implicitly biased? Is that the argument she`s making now?

STEPHANIE SCHRIOCK, EMILY`S LIST: Well, Chris, I think what you`re hearing from Secretary Clinton is what you`re hearing from Americans across the country, which is there`s -- there`s really something that we have to be addressing here. Hillary has spent a lot of time with the mothers of the movement and has heard so many of their stories and has traveled with them. And there is a recognition that a conversation and then some changes need to be made. And she really wants to get to the heart of all of this.

MATTHEWS: Well, what is the implicit bias? Is it police officers, men and women in blue, or is it white people? I couldn`t figure out what exactly she was targeting there.

SCHRIOCK: Well, I can`t speak exactly to what she was targeting there, either, or talking about specifically. I just -- I think what`s really important is stepping back and hearing the -- the entire piece, which is so many of our police officers do fabulous, fabulous work every day. It is such a hard job.

That being said, we are continuing to see things that we should not be seeing in this country, and really we need to get to the bottom of this. We have lost too many men and women at the hands of police officers, and we really need on get on top of this. It`s time. It`s way beyond time. It is decades beyond time.

MATTHEWS: Michael, your thoughts on what Hillary Clinton said there and what Governor Christie said, both of them, back and forth. I mean, it`s the political season.

MICHAEL STEELE, FMR. RNC CHAIR, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes.

MATTHEWS: We know that Donald Trump`s trying to win the support of moderate whites from the suburbs. He`s not really going after the African- American community. We know Hillary Clinton would like to energize the African-American community.

I got no objection to what she`s saying, but I do know the political realities here at work and what they`re thinking politically, as well as what they think in terms of right and wrong. It`s all mixed in together. Your thoughts.

STEELE: It is, and I think, Chris, that they were actually talking past each other. I think Hillary Clinton was talking about race, although she didn`t want to say that term or put in racial -- in a racial context relevant to the police.

And I think that Chris Christie was talking about the police, interpreting what said was somehow speaking against the police. And that is the very nature of our problem.

This is very much about race. It is very much about policing. It is very much about culture. It is very much about communication. If you step back and you listen to the video of the copter -- police officer in the helicopter, how he describes the gentleman as he approaches his car, it`s not a person, it`s a thing.

You know, there is this growing attitude or view within the black community that we`re no longer perceived as human beings, that when a cop comes up to us, approaches us, that they are reactionary because they don`t see us as someone as non-threatening, they see us automatically as a threat. That is not -- that is not a perception for black people, that is a reality. And here we are today...

MATTHEWS: Well, was Trump right today?

STEELE: ... talking about two more...

MATTHEWS: Right. Was Trump right...

STEELE: ... African-Americans...

MATTHEWS: ... in describing this situation in Tulsa, where he said that person who had their hands up in the air...

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... doing what the police officer had apparently directed them (sic) to do, or him to do.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: And he was still shot.

STEELE: And you still wind up dead. So let me -- you do what they tell you to do with your hands up, you get shot. You`re handcuffed, you get shot. You`re down on the ground, and they`re standing on your neck, you get shot, or harmed. You`re in the back of a police wagon, you wind up dead.

So you tell me what environment is safe for an African-American male when it comes in the context with the police because I can no longer -- I don`t even know if telling my kids, do the 10 and 2, turn the lights on in the car, roll the windows down, do everything the officer says, is going to come out on a good end or a negative end.

That is the frustration that you hear and are seeing now expressed more and more openly by black folks. You tell me what we need to do, and we`ll do that.

MATTHEWS: Well, Stephanie, were you -- Stephanie, impressed of course with what Michael says. Stephanie, I`m sure you are, too. Weren`t you impressed a bit by what Donald Trump said today, saying -- I thought that may have been a suspect using that legal or police term. That guy had his hands in the air. He was doing what apparently he was ordered to do by the police officer. He still got shot and killed.

Was Trump right in saying that?

SCHRIOCK: Well, I think we`ve seen...

MATTHEWS: Was Trump right in saying that?

SCHRIOCK: That -- on that -- with regard to the video? I mean, it definitely looked like something went very awry. It shouldn`t have happened. It should not have happened, and...

MATTHEWS: Was Trump right in saying that?

SCHRIOCK: Well, I mean, yes, I think so.

MATTHEWS: That`s all I`m asking.

SCHRIOCK: I think so. I mean, but, you know, for all of us, we are seeing so many videos. And after listening to the pastor just earlier that you interviewed talking about, you know, growing up in the 1970s and then - - and what`s happening now and the fact that all of us -- all of us, me, this -- this kid who grew up in a very safe middle class family in Montana, now is seeing things that I never saw. And it is horrifying. It is horrifying.

And as I have seen Hillary talk about it -- and the vast majority of Americans are saying, Enough. We have to come up with some solutions here. And this is really, really important and...

STEELE: Hey, Chris...

SCHRIOCK: ... and I certainly hope we can get there.

MATTHEWS: Thanks, Stephanie. One last word quickly, Michael.

STEELE: I think we need to step this away a little from the presidential candidates and the federal level.

MATTHEWS: It`s hard.

STEELE: This is something that mayors, governors, city councilmen and women and local police and community leaders have to deal with. Are you just going to get the platitudes and the warm words and the concern at the federal level? We need to get our hands dirty on this issue, and that only happens when you`re on the ground in those communities. That`s the bottom line.

MATTHEWS: Maybe we should urge our kids to become police officers. I don`t know.

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Maybe we need better cops. I`m telling you, it`s a scary job, in some cases, and I liked the way Trump handled it tonight. When you do everything right and you still get killed, something`s wrong.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Michael Steele.

STEELE: You got it.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Stephanie Schriock, for coming on.

Coming up this Sunday, a special edition of HARDBALL at a special time as we get ready for the first presidential debate coming up Monday night. We`ll be on Sunday night at 8:00 o`clock Eastern, that`s Sunday night, the eve of the great first presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

Coming up here tonight next -- just five days to go until the first debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Clinton`s people are putting out word that she`s preparing for Trump`s -- catch this -- multiple personalities. Also, she`s getting ready to deal with what Clinton`s people call a variety of uncomfortable subjects for Secretary Clinton. A lot of interesting stuff being spun out of these back rooms as they both play this psychological battle against each other just five days out.

Plus, last night a night of violent protests, as we said, in Charlotte, North Carolina, after a man is shot and killed by police.

And the HARDBALL roundtable will tell us something we don`t know tonight.

And this is my "Election Diary," by the way. It`s coming up for September 21st, 2016, with five days to go before the first presidential debate.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We have got new polling for the presidential race.

And, for that, we go to the HARDBALL Scoreboard.

In New Hampshire, according to a new Monmouth University poll of likely voters, Hillary Clinton has a nine-point lead over Donald Trump. It`s Clinton 47 in New Hampshire, Trump 38, with Gary Johnson at 10. That`s very little change from the last poll we had.

In Wisconsin, a Marquette Law School University poll has Clinton leading by two points there, just two, Clinton 44, Trump 42, again, no different than a poll in late August, boy, very close in Wisconsin.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

With five days to go until the first debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, Clinton people say that she`s preparing for all different sides of Trump`s personality to show up on Monday night at Hofstra University.

"The Hill" reports -- that`s the newspaper on the Hill -- "In closed- door sessions, the Democratic presidential nominee is prepping for their first presidential debate on Monday against a few different people playing the role of Trump. `The role playing game different surrogates are for his what they call multiple personalities,`" one Clinton confidante said."

And CNN reported she is preparing for Trump to confront her on a litany of uncomfortable subjects ranging from her e-mail scandal to Bill Clinton`s infidelity to her health. "Clinton has spent hours watching a highlight reel of Trump`s Republican primary debates, according to several people familiar with her debate prep. She took notes on what agitated him, particularly in his exchanges with rival Ted Cruz, and studied his style."

Well, On "The Steve Harvey Radio Show" yesterday, Clinton said she plans on standing up to Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I understand it`s a contact sport, but I am not going to take what he says about everybody else, you know, his attacks on African-Americans and **immigrants** and Muslims and women and people with disabilities...

STEVE HARVEY, TALK SHOW HOST: There -- there you go. There you go.

CLINTON: It`s just something we cannot tolerate.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Heidi Przybyla is senior politics editor -- reporter, rather, for "USA Today." Clarence Page, of course, is opinion writer for the great "Chicago Tribune."

Heidi, first, and back and forth. I`m going to ask the same question for both of you, so take some time.

Should Hillary Clinton, Heidi, get in there and mix it up with Trump? Now, he is a great punch-back guy. He reacts quickly. He is good on the stream of consciousness, as we all know. Things come to his mind.

Should she duke it out with him if he starts getting to be smart aleck?

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, "USA TODAY": I think she has to, Chris. There are a couple of reasons why.

First of all, I think it is what her base is expecting. If we have talked a million times on this about there being a potential enthusiasm gap among Democrats, I think that is the one thing that they would really like to see, is that she go on offensive.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Has anybody ever beat her? Has anybody ever -- I`m sorry. Has anybody ever beat Trump at his game? I`m thinking of little Marco and sleepy head Jeb and low-energy Jeb. He seems to like the street corner.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: And if he can get you on that street corner doing a lot of trash-talking, that seems to be his home.

PRZYBYLA: I don`t -- well, she can`t do the trash-talking. But she does have to go on the attack.

And we saw this, Chris, if you look at her past debate performances. She didn`t just stand by and not attack Bernie Sanders in the first debate. And she came out quite successfully as well. She had these surgical strikes against him on issues like guns.

And especially, Chris, when it is unclear at this point just how much actual fact-checking and pushback the moderators themselves are going to doing in this debate, I think Hillary Clinton has to be prepared to do a lot of that job herself.

Of course, this is a certain risk in coming off as attacking too much and being overly aggressive and allowing Trump to kind of counterpunch like that. But if he calls her -- if he starts name-calling, I really don`t think that is going to play as well on this debate stage, where the only other opponent is a woman, than it did it on this crowded, kind of alpha male cage match stage that we saw during the Republican primary.

MATTHEWS: So, Clarence , I give the guys question to you. If you`re Donald Trump, can you whack back at her, even though she`s a woman candidate?

Suppose she says something about your birther thing was a humiliation for the country, it was racist, blah, blah, blah, and he says, well, how come your people were out pushing it first? And then how would you -- how tough would you be whacking back if you were Trump?

CLARENCE PAGE, COLUMNIST, "THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE": Well, I suspect we`re going to see a softer Donald Trump, at least at the beginning of the debate, because if he is wise here, he is going to come off as too shrill if he comes out punching away like some right-wing fanatic.

He succeeds best when we see that Donald Trump that reveals the clever, crafty businessman who built up a fortune with only a mere million dollars or so to start with, and was able to get to where he is, where he has defied all predictions, insofar as being on the brink of possibly winning the White House.

This is a time when he is best off controlling his temper and saving his best verbal shots, his best trash-talking for key moments.

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you a tactical...

PAGE: That`s if he can do that, by the way.

MATTHEWS: Thank you.

Let me ask you a tactical question, Heidi. Here`s the question. If you`re Hillary and you don`t want to give Trump an opening, because you think he`s really good at the opening -- in other words, you don`t slam him on something, because you know he will come back and hit you hard, and everybody roots for the person who defends themselves.

Suppose you go in there like a mongoose or whatever. You just say, you know what? I`m going to let him do -- I will do a little rope-a-dope here. Let him keep punching me. After a while, people are going to realize, he is just punching me. He has got nothing positive to say. I`m just going to put my arms, like in boxing, protect yourself. Put the arms up and say, go ahead. Keep doing that, because people are only going to see Donald Trump smashing away at me.

And after a while, they are going to go, this guy is a bully. She`s talking positively and he`s just doing cheap shots, because unless she attacks him, nobody is going to root for Trump coming back at her, I think.

PRZYBYLA: I think she will have a keen sense when she`s on stage of exactly how that is playing, and whether she should just sit back and kind of let him self-destruct in that fashion.

MATTHEWS: Yes. That`s what some are saying in the paper today.

PRZYBYLA: Yes. But I think when it comes to the attacks on real issues like policy, like her policy on Iraq or Syria, and things like these, that she is going to have to come back and have a pretty strong answer on that.

It is when he goes low, when he goes to the personal stuff, I do think, to a certain extent, she might just let him kind of play it out.

MATTHEWS: Can you win this debate by not going low? Can you go high and talk about the future of the country? I`m going to talk about it at the end of the show, I mean, a real heartfelt love for your country and what you think it needs to do to get better and get through its problems. Would a heartfelt appeal be more -- as impressive as clubber pugilistics?

Question to you, Clarence.

PAGE: Well, it is interesting you talk about the impression, because this is a game of impressions, really.

We know these aren`t debates, for -- issue for issue would put people to sleep, as it were. But that`s Hillary Clinton`s strength, of course -- and Donald Trump`s big weakness -- is knowing a whole lot about the facts.

But if the smarter person automatically won, we would have President Gore, President Adlai Stevenson, a number of people.

MATTHEWS: Dukakis.

PAGE: Dukakis.

You know, the fact is, this is something where people want to know, is this person, is he or her on my side? Will they be out there fighting for me and my interests? So how well you come off as being a real people person can make a big difference here as far as Trump and Clinton are both concerned.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

I think the true patriot who comes across as the true lover of this country in a positive way will win this debate. That`s my thinking. After all the back and forth, I think, in the end, you are going to say, that person has my heart.

We will see.

Heidi Przybyla, thank you.

Clarence Page, I surprised you with that, didn`t I?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Up next, we will go live to Charlotte, North Carolina. Police shot and killed an African-American man. I hate saying it again, because it`s reality.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEVE KORNACKI, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Steve Kornacki some breaking news.

Police in New York City have given the all-clear after a suspicious device was found under an overpass in the Bronx. The bomb squad investigated the scene at the height of rush hour traffic. And sources say the device was a pressure cooker, but was not connected to any wires or phones.

Authorities have been on high alert since bombings in New York and New Jersey over the weekend left dozens injured. Federal officials filed terrorism charges against Ahmad Rahami on Tuesday -- back to HARDBALL.

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

We have some breaking news.

I want to take to you live to Charlotte, North Carolina, where a rally is under way to protest the killing by police of Keith Lamont Scott, an African-American who police said had a gun.

NBC`s Tammy Leitner is in Charlotte.

TAMMY LEITNER, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Chris, this was originally billed as a vigil for Keith Lamont Scott.

It has definitely turned into more of a protest. People started arriving about 90 minutes ago, about 250 people. Most of them have started marching right now. They`re going to march around the courthouse, I`m told, and then head over to a church. There`s adults here. There`s kids, some from as far away as New York.

Most of them have been chanting, "black lives matter, hands up, don`t shoot."

Just a short while ago, the family of Mr. Scott spoke. And they basically said that they respect the right of the protesters to be out here, but they`re asking, please, for a peaceful night. Don`t destroy any property. Don`t hurt anybody.

We will be out here throughout the night with the protesters to monitor the situation -- Chris.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Tammy Leitner, in Charlotte.

Up next: the HARDBALL roundtable.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: You may have heard Hillary`s opponent in this election say that there has never been a worse time to be a black person.

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: I mean, he missed that whole civics lesson about slavery and Jim Crow and...

(LAUGHTER)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: He`s pretty good at that.

Welcome back to HARDBALL.

And that was the president sarcastically last week criticizing Donald Trump for his bleak portrayal of American life in the country today.

Well, we saw Trump double down on that approach again last night, comparing the inner cities of this country to Afghanistan, and again saying that African-Americans have never had it worse.

Let`s take a look back at how Trump has spoken about African- Americans, their communities, and their lack of opportunity in this country.

Here he goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: You`re living in poverty. Your schools are no good. You have no jobs. Fifty-eight percent of your youth is unemployed. What the hell do you have to lose?

It`s just like a total catastrophe, the unemployment rates. Everything is bad. No health care, no education, no anything.

No housing. No homes. No ownership. Crime at levels that nobody has seen. You can go to war zones in countries that we`re fighting, and it is safer than living in some of our inner cities.

Right now, you walk down the street, you get shot. Our African- American communities are absolutely in the worst shape that they have ever been in before, ever, ever, ever. Places like Afghanistan are safer than some of our inner cities.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: He`s not selling real estate, is he?

The latest NBC/"Wall Street Journal" poll shows that Trump`s support among African-Americans is at 7 percent, while Clinton is up at 81 percent among -- in that community.

This comes as NBC confirms that President Obama will hit the campaign trail next month to attempt to motivate his coalition to turn out for Clinton in November.

Not surprise by that, been predicting that. He is the October surprise.

I`m joined right now by the round table tonight, Jamil Smith, senior national correspondent with MTV News, and Annie Karni is political reporter with "Politico", and Alex Seitz-Wald is with us. He`s an MSNBC political reporter.

Jamil, it seems to me that there is a strange thing going on here. Usually, Republicans sty African-Americans, come on, it`s working. You know, keep your faithful keep the dream alive. What`s this?

JAMIL SMITH, MTV NEWS SR. NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Right. I wonder when he started caring about what happens in the inner city. I mean, here, I mean, obviously, we know he`s trying on appeal to white voters.

MATTHEWS: Why does that work with white voters, do you think?

SMITH: Well, I think, really, for them, the standard for apologies for racism is very, very low. I mean, really, there are a lot of people who just don`t want to go into a voting booth thinking that they`re going - - they`re voting for a racist.

MATTHEWS: Of course. But it is like local news. If it leads, it bleeds. He`s given all the bad news.

SMITH: Well, I think, honestly, it speaks to a lot of curiosity on his part, and a lot of people`s part about the African-American experience in this country. I mean, frankly, if you look at what`s happened in the last several years, high school education has gone up, college degrees gone up. All these different things that he`s lying about --

MATTHEWS: I guess, let`s be honest, though. We all hear the headlines coming out of Chicago with the gang killing back there. They`re the headlines.

SMITH: Yes. Well, that`s what black life is to him.

MATTHEWS: Yes. What do you make of this, Annie?

ANNIE KARNI, POLITICO: I think, I mean, the first time he`s made this argument, it was in front of white audiences. So, that`s important to keep in mine here.

MATTHEWS: Explain.

KARNI: It was a completely white rally where he is talking --

MATTHEWS: Why isn`t trash talking life in the inner city?

KARNI: I think it is. I can`t -- I -- to make suburban voters more comfortable. One thing though --

MATTHEWS: Does it justify white flight? Hey, aren`t you glad you got out of those old neighborhoods? That sounds like it might be one of the things he`s saying.

KARNI: One thing, though, that we saw in the clip you just played, one black voter he`s fired up is President Obama, who is so angry.

MATTHEWS: Well, he`s afraid that Hillary might just lose, obviously. That scares the president.

KARNI: So, I mean, I think that Obama are eighth huge part of Hillary Clinton`s strategy to motivate African-American voters. And if anything, I mean, it is back firing in terms of how mad Obama is, the recurring birther story line. I mean, he is now going to be throughout twice as much the candidate for the Republican.

MATTHEWS: OK, excuse me, the Republican candidate for president. He`s got the nomination. Donald Trump came out and basically took side of the victim today in that police shooting in Tulsa. He said the guy had his hands up. He`s doing -- he even said, he looks like a good guy. We don`t know that at all. Totally on the guy`s side and against the police.

What`s that about? Is that because he was in a black church at the time?

ALEX SEITZ-WALD, MSNBC POLITICAL REPORTER: I mean, yes, Donald Trump likes to please whoever is in front of him. He`ll tend to say whatever he thinks that person wants to hear so he`s going to say in a black church. But that`s the exception to what Donald Trump has said.

And also, it doesn`t get at the heart of the issue. He is saying it looks like a good guy. But the whole point is that you shouldn`t be killed for being pulled over for spending, regardless of whether you`re a good guy or not. Remember, there was the whole, you know, no angel controversy around Michael Brown in Ferguson.

But this kind of whole notion that his entire argument to African- Americans is predicated on the idea that they`ve been duped by the Democratic Party and he`s going to come along and tell you what it`s really like and how terrible your life really is, and you know, vote for me because I`m the only who can tell you the truth.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I know, I get that. But how do we know if this works? How do we know if this works? How do we know, if Hillary, and just look at it politically, how do we know if Trump is making any head way with this argument that he cares?

SEITZ-WALD: I mean, we have this new poll out today. And I don`t see any evidence that it is working.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

SEITZ-WALD: The one thing that it maybe possibly could work is, you know, as we already said, appealing to white suburban voters, but also potentially depressing the turnout among African-Americans for Hillary Clinton. I mean, you know, you`re not going to have Barack Obama on the ticket. She absolutely needs the African-American to turnout and there`s a lot of disappointment with the Obama years. They didn`t really, you know - -

MATTHEWS: You know, let`s not overdo, that`s one thing I care about.

Back to you, Jamil, I just saw the African-American support for President Obama, 95 percent. OK? This disappointment compared to what? Compared to what? The other black presidents we`ve had? I mean, I`m sorry.

SMITH: Yes, I mean --

MATTHEWS: Alex, I think I just think that -- I`ve heard that. You hear from Cornell West and all the intellectuals that love because their life -- as H.L. Mencken said, don`t argue with someone whose job depends on not being convinced. Academically they have to take position. It`s not what we want.

SMITH: Yes, I`d like to see the number from enthusiasm from African- American voters in 2000 and 2004, you know, those kinds of candidates, you had Al Gore and John Kerry as their candidates. Frankly, I mean, the enthusiasm for Barack Obama was not going to be equaled by Hillary Clinton. What she is going to do is talk about policy, quit trying to appeal emotion. She is not going to win black voters over by emotion. She`s going to win them over by telling them what she`s going to do for them in office and also telling them that she`s going to be willing to be challenged by them.

MATTHEWS: She`s got a chance to talk to probably every African- American on Monday night.

KARNI: Yes. Well, here`s the thing --

MATTHEWS: Television is powerful. It is democratic. Lower case D. Everybody has got a TV set. Everybody can watch. Everybody has one. And they will watch.

What should she say on these issues?

KARNI: Well, first of all, I think that she -- black voters, there is older black voters and millennial black voters. And I think the hatter half is her problem. Like these older black women are what won her the primary against Bernie Sanders and there`s a lot of trust --

MATTHEWS: What does a 22-year-old want to hear from Hillary?

KARNI: I think they want to hear her say that her husband`s crime bill was wrong.

MATTHEWS: They want that.

(LAUGHTER)

KARNI: That, you know, that they still --

MATTHEWS: That he was wrong to sign the welfare reform bill. He`s wrong to sign NAFTA.

KARNI: They hold that against her.

MATTHEWS: He was wrong to do NAFTA. Yet, my husband was a great role model.

How do you do it all? How do you turn down -- how do you gain support from the African-American community by dumping on the one president that they really liked before Barack came along?

KARNI: Well, I don`t think you dump on him, but I think she ought to distance herself, he has distanced himself from certain parts of that crime bill. She needs distance herself from that. There was some controversy about her use of the term "super predator" back in the `90s.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

KARNI: And I think she has to kind of -- and she`s talked about --

MATTHEWS: I think you may be right because if she wants to energize the black community, she`s got to do a little pandering? Because that`s the word, just change what she did because she was --

KARNI: It is not pandering. It is a different time. I think you can`t take --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Has she said it?

KARNI: What, she`s apologized, she has.

MATTHEWS: She`s apologized. She ought to do it again.

SMITH: I think if she instead just stops pandering and just goes and to say, hey, I`m going to adopt these items from the campaign zero agenda for police reform for instance, that is going to win over the millennial voters. That`s what they`re paying attention to.

MATTHEWS: Yes, anyway. When we come back, we`re going to look at these three and what ahead. They`ll tell me something I don`t know. That`s coming up here.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`ve just got five days now to the first presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, and everybody is going to watch. And you can watch it right here Monday night on MSNBC. This is the place to watch it.

I`ll be joined by Brian Williams, of course, and Rachel Maddow for complete coverage. We`re going to start at 7:00 Eastern that night.

Then, Lester Holt of NBC will moderate the debate starting at 9:00 and we`ll be back with postgame analysis live from spin room at 10:30. Then, on through night with my late night coverage. It`s all coming Monday night. Coming soon.

And don`t forget, we`re on Sunday night as well, the night before. Join me at 8:00 Eastern for a special edition of HARDBALL, as we get ready on the eve of debate night.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the roundtable.

Jamil, tell me something I don`t know.

SMITH: Yes, it slipped under the radar last week that Troy Newman, the president of Operation Rescue, anti-abortion group, endorsed Donald Trump. Now, Troy Newman is a guy who called for the -- he`s endorsed, I guess, the murder of abortion doctors and he`s also said that the California drought was because of abortion. So, we have yet to hear him disavow that endorsement.

MATTHEWS: I see the connection.

Annie?

KARNI: Hillary Clinton gave a speech today in Orlando where she did not mention Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Oh, is that going to drive him crazy?

KARNI: It`s a new aim to be more positive.

MATTHEWS: I think that could be her strategy Monday night. Just ignore the guy. It`s a strange one.

Alex?

SEITZ-WALD: From our new "Wall Street Journal"/NBC News poll, the least popular figure, Vladimir Putin, no surprise. Number two less popular, the media. We are only slightly less hated than --

MATTHEWS: Let`s get to that, because I refuse in my career to be a media critic. People who criticize the media are not what I want to be. So, without getting more enemies than I have.

What do you think, Jamil? Because I think the media is unpopular because half the country who are conservatives have heard their leaders trash it continually. That`s relentless. They blame the messenger.

SMITH: Yes, we`re in a culture against, exactly, you`re blaming the messenger, you`re not actually looking (AUDIO GAP) regarding inconvenient obstacles rather than things we should be discussing.

MATTHEWS: OK. By the way, the media doesn`t include talk radio, does it? Which is vastly conservative. It doesn`t include FOX News, right, does it?

When they say the media, I think movies tend to be liberal. I think they tend to be liberal. I think they`re great, but they tend to have a liberal message, a positive message about equality and all that.

KARNI: When I get negative e-mails or Twitter people yelling at me as the media, it`s always they have this vaunted image of like you`ve desecrated this sacred profession by whatever I`ve written. They seem to have this high bar of what it should be and that none of us are living up to that.

MATTHEWS: No, it`s just they disagree with you.

KARNI: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, your thoughts?

SEITZ-WALD: Yes --

MATTHEWS: The media`s a good word for people you don`t like.

SEITZ-WALD: Exactly. It`s like members of Congress. Everybody hates members of Congress but they keep re-electing the member of Congress from their own district. They keep reading whatever they`re going to be written --

MATTHEWS: OK. Don`t you like when people say, how come you never talk about this and you realize they learned it from your show. Where did you learn about that? From newspapers.

SEITZ-WALD: Well --

MATTHEWS: Anyway, thank you. We all agree here, of course. We`re only here, we`re only the media.

Thank you, Jamil Smith. Thank you, Annie Karni. Thank you, Alex Seitz-Wald.

When we return, my election diary with just five days to go left before the first presidential debate which could change all kinds of wind direction.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary September 21st, 2016.

The debate, by that I mean the big debate, is just five days off. And before we know it, we`ll all be sitting in front of our TV sets waiting for the big moment when we see Lester Holt introduce us to the two familiar people in the country, people who arouse attitudes in millions of people verging from mere toleration to contempt to worse. I forgot to mention, and this is vital, two people who possess the ability in two very different ways to thrill people with the prospect of him or her in the White House, her or him, to keep things balanced.

So, here`s a recommendation from the sidelines. I know the game of big time debating is all about sound bites, all about drawing your rival into a situation where you can let loose with a sledgehammer, sending your rival skyward like Reagan did after catching Jimmy Carter in a nag, "There you go again". Or Lloyd Bentsen cowering young Dan Quayle for comparing himself to one of the few presidents Americans actually love. "Senator, you`re no Jack Kennedy."

But the effort being put into such moments of TV history might, given the mood of this country right now, be matched and to the candidates` advantage with some prep time on which he or she thinks about the country today. Its strengths, its weaknesses, their notion of what it`s good at and how it can best advance into a better country.

In other words, I think winning a debate is less important than winning the hearts and minds of a giant electorate. Roosevelt did it by telling us we had nothing to fear but fear itself, that the worst, the stark early fears let loose by the Great Depression were really behind us.

Kennedy got to us by getting to that part of our souls that felt we were losing a step from the gung-ho spirit that won World War II. He said, we`ve got to get this country moving again. And Obama got us to simply hope. That also worked its purpose.

So, next Monday night, I think the smart presidential candidate will imagine themselves sitting out there on a couch at home and looking for someone to lead us into a better future, not the captain of the zinger, but the true leader of a country. In other words, get to who we are and what we really strive for.

Well, the smart candidate, if he or she is truly smart will get in touch with his or her heart which may be the smartest and best GPS to the country`s heart, because politics, I`m convinced, is all about heart.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

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CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Less than a week.

Let's play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I'm Chris Matthews in Washington.

Well, it's six days now to the first debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, and terrorism is on the minds of many. In response to this weekend's terror attacks in New York, New Jersey and Minnesota, Donald Trump has called for knocking the hell out of ISIS, profiling people here in the USA, and severely limiting **immigration**, also treating terror suspects as, as he put it, enemy combatants.

For her part, Hillary Clinton called for better intelligence gathering, building trust between law enforcement and the Muslim community here, and smashing ISIS strongholds in the Middle East -- smashing them.

Anyway, today the country's current commander-in-chief gave his final speech to the U.N. General Assembly. President Obama never mentioned Trump by name, but it was clear whom he was talking about when he warned of a crude populism gathering around the world.

Let's watch the president.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Today, a nation ringed by walls would only imprison itself.

We must reject any forms of fundamentalism or racism. Instead, we need to embrace the tolerance that results from respect of all human beings.

In Europe, in the United States, you see people wrestle with concerns about **immigration** and changing demographics and suggesting that, somehow, people who look different are corrupting the character of our countries.

I do not believe progress is possible if our desire to preserve our identities gives way to an impulse to dehumanize or dominate another group.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Donald Trump blamed President Obama and Hillary Clinton for the rise of ISIS. Today, he said Clinton's time as secretary of state, quote, "unleashed this monstrous evil upon us." He also blamed our current **immigration** policies.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: These attacks were made possible because of our extremely open **immigration** system, which fails to properly vet and screen the individuals or families coming into our country. It's just a plain fact that our current **immigration** system makes no real attempt to determine the views of the people entering our country. We have no idea who they are, what they think.

ISIS is torturing, murdering, executing and exterminating people in a campaign of genocide. And what is Hillary Clinton suggesting? What is she suggesting? You know what she's -- let's let more people come in.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Clinton today was off the campaign trail. Her campaign said she held a conference call in the morning with her national security advisers to discuss this weekend's attack.

Anyway, yesterday, Hillary Clinton slammed Donald Trump for his rhetoric, which she said was helping ISIS recruit fighters -- helping ISIS recruit.

Let's watch her.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: I don't want to speculate, but here's what we know. And I think it's important for voters to hear this and weigh it in making their choice in November. We know that a lot of the rhetoric we've heard from Donald Trump has been seized on by terrorists, in particular ISIS, because they are looking to make this into a war against Islam.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Donald Trump fired back against that charge today. Let's watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Her claim that my opposition to radical Islamic terrorism is a recruiting tool -- what the -- how does that have to do with -- I'm being tough. Why is that a recruiting -- I'm much tougher than her on this problem, this horrible situation. Because I'm tough, it's a recruiting tool? It demonstrates a level of ignorance about the terror threat that really is disqualifying for a person seeking the presidency.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, how will Trump's tough talk on terrorism play with voters? David Corn is Washington bureau chief for "Mother Jones" and an MSNBC political analyst. Jay Newton-Small is Washington correspondent for "Time" magazine. And Boris Epshteyn is senior adviser to the Trump campaign.

Boris, what do you think this thing's going back and forth on? I mean, I know you're with Trump and speaking for him, but this argument that somehow Trump's rhetoric is galvanizing our opposition against us -- where do you stand on that?

BORIS EPSHTEYN, TRUMP CAMPAIGN SENIOR ADVISER: Well, no one's buying that, Chris. You have to look at the facts, right? Hillary Clinton was secretary of state from 2009 to 2013. Under her watch, ISIS truly grew. It was a failed entity beforehand, under a different name. It became ISIS under her watch.

Eighty percent of people who've been killed by ISIS have been done so since she was secretary of state. And ISIS now is in about 20 countries. So ISIS has become a global threat under Hillary Clinton.

And this is a really sad way for her to try to pivot from this when she knows she doesn't have a leg to stand on. Remember, again, Libya became a failed state on her watch. Syria, Iraq, Egypt have all resulted (ph) to some levels of chaos, even though Egypt now, is after two revolutions, is out of it, but all on her watch.

So Hillary Clinton was a terrible secretary of state...

MATTHEWS: OK...

EPSHTEYN: ... and she's trying to run on a record that simply doesn't exist.

MATTHEWS: Yes, let me -- that's not going to help around here, just saying "terrible" -- those kind of comments. Don't generalize.

Look, here's the question. Trump's running as Mr. Tough. He's running as the guy that's going to be tougher on the enemy, and he's going to somehow discern who the terrorists are before they become terrorists.

Now, this guy involved in the New York thing, the suspect, apparently came here -- he was a naturalized American citizen. He wanted to become a good American, by all estimates, and then somehow became radicalized on trips back to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

My question is, how do you discern the enemy that emerges in its own - - in his own or her own soul?

DAVID CORN, "MOTHER JONES," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, you can't because he came over when he was 7.

MATTHEWS: Right.

CORN: And nothing that Trump has said about profiling would make a difference. And I have to say this...

MATTHEWS: He says...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He wants to know what idea (INAUDIBLE). You're right, at 7 years old, he didn't have any particularly radical ideas.

CORN: And I've got to say, Boris just said something that makes no sense.

MATTHEWS: Go ahead.

CORN: We had Malcolm Nance on this network earlier today saying that yes, we do know ISIS is using Trump's anti-Islamic rhetoric as a recruiting tool. He said (INAUDIBLE) on this network. And then you have Boris come on and say, We all know that's not true.

Boris is spinning. He's a surrogate...

(CROSSTALK)

CORN: He doesn't care about the facts. And we have people on who are experts, and they say the exact opposite of what Boris just told our audience.

EPSHTEYN: May I respond, Chris?

MATTHEWS: Of course.

EPSHTEYN: Well, listen, David, to your point, I disagree with Malcolm. Listen, you may have -- you may have Donald Trump used in a video somewhere...

CORN: You just said no one believes it.

EPSHTEYN: ... somewhere here or there, sure. Fine. But we know that the threat of ISIS has come long before Mr. Trump ran for president. We know that radical Islamic jihadism, radical Islamic terrorism came long before.

MATTHEWS: OK...

EPSHTEYN: And in terms of Mr. Trump wants to do, what he wants to do, part of it is making sure that people who are coming into this country don't want to hurt it...

MATTHEWS: How would you have stopped this guy Rahami from coming into this country? How would -- when would you have stopped him?

EPSHTEYN: Well, you would have to...

MATTHEWS: How would Trump have stopped this act of terrorism?

EPSHTEYN: Listen, he came -- he did come when he was 7 years old. But you'd have to tell (ph) when he came with his family, you have look at the family, look at their backgrounds. But that's just one part of the equation, Chris.

CORN: And?

MATTHEWS: What would you have found? What would you have found?

EPSHTEYN: That -- I don't know. We didn't have the opportunity to look...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: The father called the son a terrorist. The father -- whatever the father, whether he's dealing in hyperbole, angry at his son for having long hair, whatever we got him angry at him, the father was not part of some terrorist plot. Why would say that?

EPSHTEYN: I'm not here to talk about the specific father. I'm here to talk about the specific issues...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, you're using this case as an example of terrorism that would have been stopped had your guy been president, right?

EPSHTEYN: My -- my -- if Mr. Trump were president, what we would do is make sure people who are coming into this country...

MATTHEWS: He's already been here!

EPSHTEYN: ... do not want to hurt this country. And...

(CROSSTALK)

EPSHTEYN: ... specific case...

MATTHEWS: Boris, you're on the show to answer a question.

EPSHTEYN: Sure.

MATTHEWS: What would you do to a naturalized American who you thought might be harboring dangerous thoughts? We have a free country. Somebody's allowed to go on line, watch anything they want, so -- what you can't do is commit crimes. That's all you can do to stop a person.

EPSHTEYN: Well (INAUDIBLE) Hold on. What you can do is you can have a conspiracy to commit a crime. And what you could say is that watching videos that teach you how to build bombs and then talking to people who discussing building bombs, being on chat rooms, as we've seen in numerous...

MATTHEWS: OK, let me go -- let me go to Jay.

EPSHTEYN: ... of these episodes is conspiracy to commit terrorism. And that is something that is a crime.

MATTHEWS: Imagine putting -- imagine putting someone in jail for going on line.

EPSHTEYN: For conspiracy to commit terrorism. I would be happy to do so.

MATTHEWS: OK...

JAY NEWTON-SMALL, "TIME" MAGAZINE: Well, no, and so I spent much of today on Capitol Hill talking to senators about this, and from the Intelligence Committee and from the Homeland Security Committee, and they say that there are troubling signs that were missed, right, that the FBI should have taken the father's warning a little bit more seriously, the fact that he went to Quetta in Pakistan is like going to sort of -- I mean, Quetta really is a hotbed of terrorism, right, so it's like going to Berlin during World War II...

MATTHEWS: Well, where's the crime begin? Where's the crime begin?

NEWTON-SMALL: No, and you're right. If there's not -- it's very hard, and this is something that Congress is going to have to look at, the FBI is going to look at to say, if they're monitoring all of his communications, they saw no reason to arrest him, they saw no reason to detain him, how do you -- how do you stop somebody?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Boris, here's the problem. Boris, you got common sense. Here's the problem. Suppose some kids after a couple beers one night or just for fun in the dormitory, say, Let's look up this bomb-making thing they got on line, see how it works.

EPSHTEYN: OK. No problem.

MATTHEWS: Now, you're going to -- you're going to take those kids and put them in jail because they're having some fun?

EPSHTEYN: No, what you're going to do is you're going to investigate their behavior...

MATTHEWS: You would?

EPSHTEYN: ... and make sure that they don't mean to go and hurt Americans, then nothing happens. But if it's part of a larger plot, if it's part of a conspiracy, of course you have to run down -- that's a lead.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You would send the FBI -- you would send the FBI around to interview kids who checked out something on line? You would do it at that stage.

EPSHTEYN: If kids are looking at bomb-making material for a second...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Maybe they're just curious. Where do we draw the line in a free society?

(CROSSTALK)

EPSHTEYN: You draw the line in making sure people don't build bombs.

CORN: ... because he said the other day, I won't spy on Americans. What Boris is talking about is spying on millions of Americans...

EPSHTEYN: No, it's not.

CORN: And wait a second, Boris. You had your turn. You talk -- he's going to be tough on ISIS? We have no idea what his plan is. He's says he's going to fire the generals, but first ask them to give him a plan in 30 days. All you get out of Donald Trump is talk, no policies...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Jay on this because here's (INAUDIBLE) If we can stop crimes -- a husband shoots his wife, wife shoots the husband, somebody does something like that, a kid robs a gas station -- if we can stop crimes because we knew they were going to commit the crime, we wouldn't have a crime problem.

NEWTON-SMALL:

EPSHTEYN: But Chris, those are lone wolf crimes. These are crimes where people need to be part of a group, and they are part of a group.

MATTHEWS: Well, we're not sure...

(CROSSTALK)

EPSHTEYN: Listen, he -- he had travel. He had relationships. He had contacts. These are warning signs.

MATTHEWS: But they're not illegal.

EPSHTEYN: And you -- they're not illegal...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I just don't think that -- I understand the need to get tough and the requirement politically to say you're tougher than the other person. What Trump has to do and you have to do is explain exactly how you, within the limits of our Constitution...

EPSHTEYN: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... would protect people's rights and also reduce the amount of terrorism.

Now, this terrorism in this country is not regular. It's not frequent. It occurs. And I wonder whether you can actually stomp out terrorism. I don't think you can stomp it out, do you?

EPSHTEYN: You go from San Bernardino, to Orlando...

MATTHEWS: Do you think you can stomp out terrorism? Is that what you're saying?

EPSHTEYN: ... and you're looking at a pattern that's picking up and it's all tied to ISIS.

MATTHEWS: Are you saying every -- every terrorist act could have been prevented?

EPSHTEYN: What I'm saying to you is we can do a better job of preventing it if we looked into these people. Look at San Bernardino. Those -- there were very strong warning signs there, and those people, the wife especially...

(CROSSTALK)

NEWTON-SMALL: I mean, San Bernardino was a husband and wife, and those are very privileged communications. Those are very, very hard to wiretap, frankly. I mean, and a lot of -- I mean, what you're looking at...

EPSHTEYN: Her Facebook was not.

NEWTON-SMALL: ... for a lot of this -- can I please finish? For a lot of this stuff, if it's a conspiracy like it was in France, where you have 15, 20 people, they're communicating all over the place, that is something that is absolutely preventable. And you talk to experts in the United States, that's something that is very hard to happen...

MATTHEWS: Charlie Hebdo, yes.

NEWTON-SMALL: ... here because it's such a mass, huge conspiracy, and we do wiretap enormously. But if it's something where it's just one person logging on...

EPSHTEYN: Well, Ft. Hood, Orlando...

(CROSSTALK)

NEWTON-SMALL: ... and lone wolf attacks are almost impossible to prevent.

MATTHEWS: And I don't like the presumption -- you're here to support Trump, but common sense is also on this table.

EPSHTEYN: Of course.

MATTHEWS: How do you stop every case in a free society, if somebody decides -- someone is deciding to commit a crime? Individuals -- you talk about lone wolves, people that say, You know what? I'm mad at this country. My life's not so happy here, so I'm going to do something that shows my attitude to this country in a violent way.

EPSHTEYN: Well, I disagree with the...

MATTHEWS: You can't stop that, can you?

EPSHTEYN: Chris, I disagree with the premise of a lone wolf. These people are not lone wolves. They're all tied by an ideology. In this case, they're all tied to ISIS in one way or another.

(CROSSTALK)

EPSHTEYN: San Bernardino, these people had Facebook postings, which made it clear that...

(CROSSTALK)

CORN: Donald Trump attacks Hillary Clinton and the president for saying we have to fight the ISIS narrative, right? So he just said, We've got to fight the ideology. You're just saying...

EPSHTEYN: No, we have to fight the people! The ideology is the way we find out...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, I don't think -- I think we've got to get...

(CROSSTALK)

EPSHTEYN: ... access to social media and...

MATTHEWS: I don't think it's a legal conspiracy in our system, Boris, if somebody gets something on line, they're inspired by it in a negative way, a violent way.

EPSHTEYN: (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: I don't think that's a conspiracy.

EPSHTEYN: You know, as an attorney, I'll tell you, if they have one conversation about planning to commit a crime, that's a conspiracy right there.

MATTHEWS: OK, OK. Well, that's -- that gets very close to being a police state.

EPSHTEYN: (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: Thank you very much, David Corn. Thank you, Jay Newton- Small and Boris Epshteyn.

Anyway, coming up this Sunday, a special edition of HARDBALL here at a special time as we get ready for the first presidential debate, which is on Monday, of course. Join me at 8:00 Eastern Sunday night, debate eve. We'll be here.

Coming up, new information on the suspect who set off bombs in New York and New Jersey. Two years ago, the FBI investigated Rahami after hearing that his father yelled, You're a terrorist. So why wasn't he stopped then?

Plus, "The Washington Post" reports that Donald Trump used his charity, his foundation, to settle lawsuits that involved his businesses to the tune of over a quarter million dollars. We've got "The Post" reporter who wrote it, who broke the story coming here.

And with just six days until Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton meet for their first debate, we will debut our special segment tonight, how to win or lose a debate, the HARDBALL rules. We'll have a look at past debates and the great moments, the great lines where you knew one candidate had struck gold and the other was finished.

Finally, my "Election Diary" for tonight, with exactly seven weeks to go before the election. By the way, it is Tuesday, isn't it?

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We've got new polling on the presidential race, and for that, we check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

According to our new NBC on-line poll, Hillary Clinton has a 5-point lead nationwide over Donald Trump. It's Clinton 45, Trump 40, with Gary Johnson moving up to 10. That's interesting.

In Florida, a new Monmouth poll puts Clinton up by 5. It's Clinton 46, Trump 41 and Johnson 6 in the Sunshine State.

Finally, to North Carolina, where a new Elon University poll shows Trump up by 5 -- Trump up by 5, 44, Clinton -- wait a minute, Trump -- 43 - - he's not up by 5, he's up by 1, with Johnson at 6.

We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. Investigators are learning new details about that suspect in last weekend's bomb attacks in New York and New Jersey. Ahmad Khan Rahami appeared on the FBI's radar as far back as August of '14 after neighbors told police Rahami's father called his son a terrorist. He yelled that at him.

We also learned today that Rahami was carrying a notebook when he was captured yesterday. It offered clues about his thinking, including what's been described as rambling thoughts on slain al Qaeda leader Anwar al Awlaki, and prior terrorist attacks in the United States, including the Boston Marathon bombing. Well, today, federal officials are filing terrorism charges against Rahami for those bombings in New York and New Jersey.

For more, I'm joined by -- you guessed it -- NBC justice correspondent Pete Williams. Pete, the federal charges, that means what, that they're just proceeding here?

PETE WILLIAMS, NBC CORRESPONDENT: That's right. They're going to be filed in both New York and New Jersey. And there's lots of new detail in the charges tonight, Chris.

The federal government says that he began -- that Rahami began ordering materials to build bombs in June on eBay using his own name. They say two days before the bombings in New York, he recorded a cell phone video -- recorded by a family member, showing him lighting something in a cylinder in a back yard near or at the home.

But 12 of his fingerprints were found on the 27th Street bomb -- that's the unexploded pressure cooker bomb -- and prints were also found on materials with the Elizabeth, New Jersey, bomb that was set off just yesterday.

And then they say, as far as this notebook that was found that he was carrying, it said -- he included such anti-government -- anti-U.S. statements as this. "You continue your slaughter against the mujahideen, be it Afghanistan, Iraq, Sham" -- meaning Syria -- "and Palestine." He praises Nidal Hasan, the army soldier who shot his fellow soldiers at Ft. Hood, Texas and killed 13 people. And he praises bin Laden and al Awlaki.

And it says that he closes with this. "Inshallah" -- meaning "God willing" -- "the sounds of the bombs will be heard in the streets, gunshots to your police, death to your oppression."

So, he's now facing the federal charges in addition to the local charges. He's charged with setting off a weapon of mass destruction and bombing a public place.

MATTHEWS: So, you may have not heard the somewhat partisan argument we just had here from someone from the Trump campaign arguing that we should be intervening in these cases long before we have the kind of evidence you're talking about.

Is that feasible in the Constitution? Like, can you go after somebody because they traveled to some place in Pakistan? Can you arrest a person for watching something on the Internet from Awlaki? Is there anywhere that you could be more aggressive that's legal and constitutional than what we do?

WILLIAMS: Well, none of those things are crimes.

But here's the issue that you talked about earlier. So, in 2014, a neighbor told the police that, during a domestic violence attack, in which Rahami was accused of stabbing his brother in the leg, while all that was going on, a neighbor said she heard Rahami's father call him say, you're a terrorist, get out of the house.

So, the police told the FBI. The FBI talked to him. And then he said, no, I was angry, I didn't mean it. I just was -- said in the heat of the moment. I don't think he's a terrorist.

Nonetheless, the FBI says it did look at its databases, did look at materials in the government's databases about him, interviewed family members, interviewed friends, and concluded he wasn't a terrorist, talked to the father one more time, who said, yes, I said it and I was mad and I didn't mean it.

So, that was then. And, of course, then he did attractive to Pakistan and Afghanistan to some pretty sketchy areas. And what the government says is that when -- that U.S. citizens can go there, but they are subject to secondary examination. When they come back, they're questioned about the reason for their travel.

Now, he says, of course, that he went overseas, he got married, he was trying to get his wife back here. And, of course, he's from Afghanistan. So it's hard to -- I'm sure some people will say, and I'm beginning to hear members of Congress saying, well, was enough attention paid here? But there's nothing here that would have put him under arrest.

And even if he was on a watch list, that would have meant that they paid a little more attention to him when he traveled. I wouldn't believe that the information that I just sketched out would qualify him for the no- fly list. So that's -- it is always a problem.

MATTHEWS: You have done it the way I thought it was. Thanks so much, Pete Williams.

Let's bring in NBC News national security analyst Juan Zarate.

Juan, there it is.

JUAN ZARATE, MSNBC SENIOR NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST: Yes.

MATTHEWS: This debate we had here, it may have seemed kind of buffoonish at times, but -- from the other said, I have to say -- but the idea that we can somehow arrest someone because they're contemplating a crime.

ZARATE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Contemplating is not illegal.

ZARATE: Yes. And it's a very difficult spectrum for the FBI, because they're looking at not just potential criminal behavior, but preliminary investigations to find suspicious activity that could lead them to individuals who present an imminent attack or a threat.

MATTHEWS: But we're not looking for an ethnic group either. We're looking for a mind-set.

And I think that guy, Boris Epshteyn, finally admitted it, which is the argument that David jumped on him, which is, yes, it's a mind-set, it's an ideology. You could be 22 years old and not buy it, 23 years old and have bought it. And that's a reality.

ZARATE: Yes.

And I think what this notebook reflects is that this individual, Rahami, bought into this ideology, this narrative. He clearly has followed the lineage of it over time, bin Laden, Anwar al-Awlaki, the rest.

And you're right. It's about markers of how this ideology manifests. And that's the difficult part. How does the FBI find those markers? How do they put it together? And, frankly, how do they put it around the array of individuals that they have to worry about?

Keep in mind, they're looking at over 1,000 cases, 50 states, and you can't be on everybody 24/7, even the individuals that they know are potentially problematic.

MATTHEWS: I remember, back in the '60s, a father could yell, when your hair went too long, would yell at you, you're a hippie.

ZARATE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: That doesn't mean you're a hippie.

ZARATE: Right.

MATTHEWS: You're not living on the street corner drugged out just because he is mad at your haircut.

ZARATE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: So, today, this guys yells to his son, you're a terrorist, meaning, I don't like the long hair, I don't like whatever you're stating here. He's not saying you're out making bombs.

ZARATE: Right.

MATTHEWS: And you can't arrest a guy for looking like a terrorist, whatever that means. But I think the father knew what he meant.

ZARATE: And the problem the FBI has is, any time there's an incident like this, you look back. Hindsight's 20/20.

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes.

ZARATE: All of this looks in collection to be difficult, and then you start discovering more about it, and it becomes difficult.

MATTHEWS: Yes, there's a Tom Cruise movie about. It's called "Minority Report."

ZARATE: That's right. It's a great movie, by the way.

MATTHEWS: Yes, but it's totally sci-fi.

ZARATE: But, listen, the FBI's whipsawed, because the time they engage in arrests, where there are sting operations, they get criticized for entrapment, going too far, too aggressively.

When they don't do enough, and when, by the way, by Constitution, law and guidelines, they are required to close cases where they don't find information that leads them to further suspicion...

MATTHEWS: So, they can't just keep watching somebody.

ZARATE: They can't. It's by guideline and law.

So, the FBI agents are required to respect privacy and civil liberties, protect our constitutional rights. They're also charged with preventing attacks. That's a very hard balance. And I think we have got to be conscious of it.

MATTHEWS: You know what Donald Trump calls all that, all that constitutional stuff? P.C., politically correct.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: That is the challenge we're in as a country, how free we are going to remain. If we want zero, zero terrorism, it may require going all the way to the fascistic.

And I think the American people say, you know what, we're going to do our best as Americans.

ZARATE: I think that's right. I think the expectation is zero tolerance. We strive for that, but we certainly don't give up our rights and our Constitution.

MATTHEWS: I know. I know.

Anyway, thank you, Juan Zarate, for being our expert.

Up next: another scoop from "The Washington Post" about Donald Trump's charity. You might call it that. "The Post" reports that Trump used money from the Trump Foundation, money from other people, in other words, to settle lawsuits that involved his businesses. The reporter who broke that story is coming here next right here.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I'm Milissa Rehberger. Here's what's happening.

One Air Force pilot is dead, another injured after a U-2 spy plane crashed shortly after takeoff in California. Pieces of the Cold War era plane were spotted roadside. Pilots reportedly ejected during the training mission. An investigation is ongoing.

And the head of Wells Fargo told Congress today he accepts full responsibility for the unethical sales practices rampant within the company. Lawmakers blasted the CEO after millions of fake accounts were opened in customers' names -- Back to HARDBALL.

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

This morning, "The Washington Post" reported that Donald Trump is using his charity foundation to settle lawsuits involving his businesses. "The Post" found four examples where they say -- quote -- "Trump may have violated laws against self-dealing, which prohibit nonprofit leaders from using charity money to benefit themselves or their businesses."

Well, this comes just a few weeks after the Donald Trump Foundation paid a $2,500 fine to the IRS after it was revealed that the foundation had improperly donated $25,000 to Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi around the same time that her office was considering a fraud investigation into Trump University.

Well, both Donald Trump and Pam Bondi deny any allegation of pay-for- play.

Trump is also under from the attorney general of New York, who is investigating whether the Trump Foundation broke New York's charity laws.

We want to mention that, in 2012, by the way, that MSNBC's parent company, NBC Universal, made a $500,000 donation to Trump Foundation.

Joining me right now for more on this, I'm joined by the author of that article in "The Washington Post," David Fahrenthold, political reporter for "The Washington Post."

David, explain this use of money, use of foundation money for business, personal purposes.

DAVID FAHRENTHOLD, "THE WASHINGTON POST": Well, we looked at two cases where two businesses -- at one time, it was the club in Florida Mar- a-Lago. One time, it was a golf course in New York.

In both cases, they got into legal trouble. And they got out of their legal trouble by making a settlement. And both settlements, that business agreed to make a donation to charity, but it turned out that, in both cases, the business didn't actually pay anything. Instead, Trump used a separate charity, a charity with other people's money in it, to pay those...

MATTHEWS: So it's not Trump's money in the foundation? It's other people's money?

FAHRENTHOLD: As far as we can tell, he hasn't given a donation since 2008. It's other people's money.

MATTHEWS: Well, in other words, he's dipping into money that isn't his.

FAHRENTHOLD: It's not his. It's a charity.

MATTHEWS: And using it.

FAHRENTHOLD: Right.

MATTHEWS: It's just like going into the collection basket at church and give me a handful of that money. Is it any different than that?

FAHRENTHOLD: Well, he's taken this money that is in the charity, supposed to do charitable work, and he's using it basically to pay off obligations that his businesses have already incurred.

MATTHEWS: Why did he stop paying in a foundation years ago, back in, what, '08? Why did he stop giving money to something he gets his name -- he gets the brand.

The Trump Foundation has the name Trump on it. If they give money away, he gives it away, he gets credit for giving money away. But you point out it's not his money. And then occasionally he uses that money to pay bills with.

FAHRENTHOLD: It's really unusual.

A lot of rich people create foundations, put their name on it, and they give their money away. It's really unusual...

MATTHEWS: That's why it has their name on it.

FAHRENTHOLD: That's why it has their name on it. That's the expectation that he trades on.

So, one, it's unusual, in that Trump doesn't put any of his own money in, and that he continues to take other people's money in and give it out, people who are under the impression that it's Trump's money they're getting.

MATTHEWS: What did you make of the fact, since you're reporting on this, what we jumped on last week, and everybody else did? He paid $25,000 to a political action committee, which is politics, with his foundation money.

And then somebody that works for him, I guess a joker, came out and said, oh, that was intended to go to some pregnancy emergency situation for young women or girls who get pregnant who don't want to have abortions out in Kansas City somewhere.

The idea that Trump is giving money to that organization is ludicrous. And that was his -- that was his alibi.

FAHRENTHOLD: It's even more complicated than that.

They say that Trump gives an order to give to this political group in Florida. And, somehow, they first confuse it with a charity in Utah. So they cut the money out of the Trump Foundation. Then the IRS tells -- the foundation's accountants tell the IRS, we didn't give any donation to Pam Bondi, to her group in Florida. Instead, we gave the money to a different charity in Kansas.

MATTHEWS: But what it looks like is, he's giving money to a politician down there, an attorney general, so that they won't prosecute.

So, anybody watching it, they would say, why would you make a contribution to the political action committee of some attorney general down in Florida whose office is investigating or could well investigate and indict you for Trump University? That looks like, you know, politics at its worst.

FAHRENTHOLD: Right.

The real question is, when did Pam Bondi ask Trump for the donation? Because she did ask. And when she did ask...

MATTHEWS: She said she did on the record, by the way. We know she asked for the money.

FAHRENTHOLD: We know she asked for...

MATTHEWS: She had the conversation with Trump: Give me some money.

FAHRENTHOLD: Yes. We just don't know when and what the two of them knew about that possible investigation at the time.

MATTHEWS: You're doing great work.

FAHRENTHOLD: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Follow the money. Bob Woodward, right?

FAHRENTHOLD: That's right.

MATTHEWS: Follow the money.

Thank you, David Fahrenthold.

Anyway, up next: six days to go before Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton meet in the first big debate. That's next Monday night. It's almost like this Monday night, it's coming.

When we come back, the HARDBALL rules about how to win or lose a debate. We have got some of the great, you know, political people. And you are -- I know you are like me -- love these pictures of -- well, it's going to be Reagan going at it and Lloyd Bentsen going at it and all these people doing their best and worst in debates to show you, our panel and the two guys running for president, both Hillary Clinton and Trump, how not to lose a debate and how to win one.

We will be right back. It's coming up Monday night, by the way.

And on Sunday night, on the eve of the debate night, of course, join us, please -- there it is, the big graphic -- 8:00 Sunday night, this coming Sunday night, a special edition of HARDBALL, the night before the first debate.

You're watching it, HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, "THE O'REILLY FACTOR")

BILL O'REILLY, HOST, "THE O'REILLY FACTOR": Would you go into the marital arena if she hits the you with the women thing?

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I don't think I'm looking to do that, Bill. I don't know what I'm going to do, exactly. You know, it depends on what level she hits with you, if it's fair, if it's unfair.

O'REILLY: Right.

TRUMP: But, certainly, I'm not looking to do that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was Donald Trump, of course, on FOX last night on whether he would bring up Hillary Clinton's marriage in the upcoming presidential debates. He said it would depend on conditions.

Anyway, and just six days to go now until our first showdown on Monday. It's sure to be high-stakes television. So we wanted to look at how a candidate can win or lose a presidential debate.

And here's what we learned over the years. Rule number one, one- liners can work, whether they're prepared or not. A well-delivered comeback is often the only thing the audience remembers after the dust settles.

When President Jimmy Carter was criticizing Ronald Reagan in the 1980 debate for his opposition years earlier to Medicare, Reagan famously dismissed Carter's attack with this memorable remark.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, 1980)

JIMMY CARTER, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: These are the kind of elements of a national health insurance important to the American people.

Governor Reagan, again, typically, is against such a proposal.

QUESTION: Governor?

RONALD REAGAN (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: There you go again.

(LAUGHTER)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, in the vice presidential debate of 1988, Lloyd Bentsen famously delivered this devastating blow to Dan Quayle after Quayle compared his experience to that of John F. Kennedy.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, 1988)

DAN QUAYLE (R), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I have as much experience in the Congress as Jack Kennedy did when he sought the presidency.

QUESTION: Senator Bentsen?

LLOYD BENTSEN (D), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That camera angle killed.

Anyway, I'm joined now by the roundtable.

Eugene Robinson is an MSNBC political analyst and columnist with "The Washington Post." Colleen McCain Nelson is White House correspondent for "The Wall Street Journal." And Howard Dean is an MSNBC political analyst and former, of course, chairman of the DNC, and former governor, if not president, of Vermont.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Let me -- Let me ask you. You have been in these debates.

HOWARD DEAN, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: The republic of Vermont, right.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

EUGENE ROBINSON, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Right.

MATTHEWS: You've been in these debates, and it seems to me there that Lloyd Bentsen was ready, he had heard that this guy was going to try that again. And like a good clubman, he said, "You're not getting in the club."

DEAN: Of all of the debates I've ever seen, I still feel terrible for Dan Quayle over that one. Bentsen just absolutely put him in a Texas barbecue and fried him in about 30 seconds. I couldn't believe it.

MATTHEWS: But he needed Quayle -- colleen, he needed Quayle to make the claim. He couldn't have done it if Quayle hadn't said, I'm John Kennedy.

COLLEEN MCCAIN NELSON, WALL STREET JOURNAL: You need your opponent to set you up sometimes, and, you know, debates are made up of moments. And only a few lines survive. And so, sometimes, Hillary Clinton gets mired in the details and it's the one line that actually --

MATTHEWS: OK, Gene, you know this business like I do. Somewhere in New York now or in New Jersey, the golf course, Donald Trump and Roger Ailes are sitting around figuring, how do they construct one of these moments. Ho do we know when the time is right to whack back?

EUGENE ROBINSON, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL: You know, you can only prepare to a certain extent. I mean, you can get some one-liners, you can imagine situations and have a -- you know, have a line prepared, but, you've got to have the opening. The opening has to be there. And you've got to be quick enough to, you know, to jump in.

MATTHEWS: To kill.

ROBINSON: To kill.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, go for the jugular.

Rule number two, show your heart. Candidates who are afraid to open up themselves can pay a price on the debate stage, especially if they appear too rehearsed, unemotional, or just uninspired.

Case in point, 1988, when Michael Dukakis, the governor of Massachusetts, gave a boiler plate answer to this very perm question from Bernard Shaw.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BERNARD SHAW, DEBATE MODERATOR: Governor, if Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered, would you favor an irrevocable death penalty for the killer?

MICHAEL DUKAKIS (D), THEN-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: No, I don't, Bernard. And you know that I've opposed the death penalty during all of my life. I don't see any evidence that it's a deterrent and I think there are better and more effective ways to deal with violent crime.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Colleen? That killed him. I'm not completely sure why, but I think I know why. Why did it do it? Why did it kill him?

NELSON: Well, he didn't even flinch. He showed no emotion about the prospect of his wife being raped and murdered and he just focused on the principle. I mean, people -- viewers want to see someone who looks presidential, but they also want to see someone who's an actual person, with feelings.

MATTHEWS: You know what? That kind of answer worked in Massachusetts. That state, it works.

ROBINSON: But it didn't work anyplace else. It was bloodless, right? I mean, and look, this is a big opportunity, I think, for Hillary Clinton, because, she doesn't often show herself. She doesn't show the heart.

When you get to see the person, as you did, in New Hampshire eight years ago, for example, she does very well. She connects with people.

MATTHEWS: It's so true.

DEAN: I'll tell you one thing she can do. If Trump asks her about her marriage, she's going to turn him into toast. That's something she cares about, she's passionate about. And she can --

MATTHEWS: The fact that she stuck?

DEAN: The fact that she stuck by Bill Clinton. She's going to say, I've been married to the same man for 35 years, or whatever it is. She's going to look at Trump --

(CROSSTALK)

DEAN: I don't think Trump's going to do that. He's not stupid, but if he does do it, he's going to get skewered.

MATTHEWS: When it comes to his marriages, he's judged on the curve.

DEAN: That's the problem, he's judged on the curve on everything.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, rule number three, it's television, stupid. When it comes to style and appearance, we're talking about appearance here, the first debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960 truly revealed the power of television, this medium. Kennedy showed up tanned, rested and ready, his dark suit stood out on black and white television and he projected youth and vigor. Meanwhile, Nixon had spent two weeks before that debate in the hospital with a staph infection, there he is, after banging his knee on a car door.

Anyway, perhaps most famously, Kennedy had the help of a professional makeup artist, his name is Bill Wilson, while Nixon declined full make up and instead relied on something called lazy shave. As a result, Nixon's chin glistened with sweat under the glare of the studio lights, he was gaunt, and his light-colored suit made his pale comparison look washed out.

Nixon's appearance left such an impression that "The Chicago Daily News" even speculated on the front page that Nixon had been sabotaged by a Democratic makeup artist.

Howard?

DEAN: It's true. Appearance matters a lot.

You know, a lot of consultants have showed me this, and I absolutely believe it. You want to see who's going to win the debate? Turn off the sound. Watch how the two candidates portray themselves and hold themselves on the stage. Very powerful.

MATTHEWS: It's not all --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Because Nixon beat Kennedy among women, if that means anything. It's not like, he's a charmer who's going to win the thing.

Anyway, what do you make about preparing. I mean, Hillary Clinton, obviously, appearance is no problem. Trump was the hair.

But, you know, I wonder how much prep they're going to -- I think it's psychological. We'll talk about it at the end of the show. If you come in there self-confident -- of course, Kennedy was bred like this aristocrat. He knew, I'm better than him.

And a terrible performance by Mitt Romney in the first debate, where he walked in like he's a better man than the president. It drove me crazy. I thought it was repellant, but it worked.

ROBINSON: It worked.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: He creamed the president in that debate.

MATTHEWS: That self-confidence.

ROBINSON: Yes, absolutely.

MATTHEWS: What do you know? When you get in the debate, do you ever feel if you're going to win or if you're going to lose based on how you went in?

DEAN: I know it's actually true. You can get stiff -- I've been given a stiff upper cut by a couple of people. The interesting thing of being a frontrunner is I had four really confident people all ganging up on me. That is tough because you're not knowing where the next --

MATTHEWS: We were rooting for you. My whole family.

DEAN: I appreciate it.

MATTHEWS: It wasn't our fault.

Rule number four, stunts are high risk and can easily back fire. Of course, we've got to go back to Al Gore. He made that goofy attempt to intimidate Republican opponent George W. Bush by walking right up beside Bush as he was speaking. It proved to be an awkward, that's understating it, moment. Let's watch this moment.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEORGE W. BUSH, THEN-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I can get something positive done on behalf of the people. That's what the question in this campaign is about. It's not only what's your philosophy and what's your position on issues, but can you get things done? And I believe I can.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That body check of W.'s, I know it's not intellectual, Colleen, but something about most guys I know watching, will go, what a goobah. He walks up -- first of all, men don't like guys coming in their space. They're either robbing him or whatever they're doing, get away from me.

NELSON: He's trying to be too clever by half. And it's a good remember that if you spend all of your energy trying to trip up your opponent, sometimes you actually end up tripping up yourself.

MATTHEWS: Like that long kiss?

NELSON: Exactly. I mean, you need to focus on putting your best face forward instead of trying to make your opponents screw up every moment.

MATTHEWS: I thought that kiss at the convention was almost as weird.

ROBINSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, the roundtable is staying with us.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics. More of these clips, coming up. Having fun.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, is the patriarch of the Bush family backing his party this year to vote -- I'm sorry. I'm ready.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Standby!

MATTHEWS: Anyway, on Monday, the former President George Herbert Walker Bush reported told board members of his Point of Life Foundation that he planned to vote for the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton. However, a spokesman for President Bush told NBC today, the vote President Bush will cast as a private citizen in some 50 days will be just that, a private vote cast in some 50 days. He's not commenting on the presidential race in the interim. In other words, it's a non-denial.

By the way, we're just six days away from the first presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. You can catch it all right here Monday night on MSNBC. I'll be joined by Brian Williams, of course, and Rachel Maddow for complete coverage starting at 7:00 Eastern and Lester Holt moderates, of course, the debate starting at 9:00 Eastern.

We'll be right back, by the way, with the post-game analysis from the spin room at 10:30. That will be me there in the spin room and then stay with us for midnight coverage. I'll be there until 2:00 in the evening, as usual.

And don't forget, we're on Sunday night this week. Join me at 8:00 Eastern for a special edition of HARDBALL as we get ready for debate night. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We're back with our live roundtable, as you just saw -- Gene, Colleen and Howard.

Next up is debate rule number five: avoid condescension. Candidates who are too patronizing can arouse sympathy for the opponent. Case in point was then-Vice President George Bush in 1984, he actually appeared to be lecturing Geraldine Ferraro, his opponent, about the Middle East. Let's watch not to do it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEORGE H.W. BUSH (R), THEN-VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Let me help you with the difference, Ms. Ferraro, between Iran and the embassy in Lebanon. Iran, we were held by a foreign government. In Lebanon, you had a wanton terrorist action where the government opposed it.

GERALDINE FERRARO (D), THEN-VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Let me just say, first of all, that I almost resent, Vice President Bush, your patronizing attitude that you have to teach me about foreign policy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What do you think, Colleen?

NELSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: I know it's a little tired to talk about it. We have the first woman candidate who's probably going to be the front-runner going into next week's debate. Trump, does he have any particularly dangerous territory there in this regard?

NELSON: There's a lot of dangerous territory there for Donald Trump. We've seen him struggled not to say something offensive when women have challenged him. We can think back on the primary debate, Megyn Kelly.

MATTHEWS: Sure.

NELSON: Carly Fiorina's face. I mean, just this week, when he talked about the pastor who asked him not to --

MATTHEWS: What's to stop Hillary Clinton good for the gander, good for the goose, what happens if Hillary Clinton unloads on him with every bad thing he's ever said about women? Puts right in his face? Megyn did it and I think she won that exchange.

ROBINSON: She might look -- obviously, in the Clinton camp they must be trying to figure out how to get under his skin. How to provoke what they know is there just waiting to erupt.

MATTHEWS: How about saying like, you haven't called me crooked yet, Donald. When will you get around to crooked? That's what you call me when I'm not here, but I'm here.

DEAN: She says that after she reminds him about $258,000 that he spent from his charity to bail his out --

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: You've been watching the show tonight.

Rule number six is that gaffes are amplified on the debate stage. Gerald Ford learned that the hard way when he made this outrageous claim about the Soviet Union in the middle of the Cold War.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLI)

GERALD FORD, FORMER PRESIDENT: There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and there never will be under a Ford administration.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'm sorry. Could I just -- did I understand you to say, sir, that the Russians are not using Eastern Europe as their own sphere of influence.

FORD: Each of those countries is independent or autonomous. It has its own territorial integrity.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You imagine the Cold War and the Berlin Wall coming down about 13 years ahead of schedule.

DEAN: He did this by accident, but Trump actually believes this Putin propaganda.

(CROSSTALK)

DEAN: This was an accident.

MATTHEWS: Why did Jerry Ford say that Europe was independent of Russia when we know the Warsaw Pact tanks were right there?

ROBINSON: It had to be like a brain spasm. Just he blanks. I mean - -

MATTHEWS: I heard he was briefed by a guy that briefed him said that he briefed him that the people don't see themselves as part of the Russian world.

ROBINSON: So, they see themselves as German or Polish or whatever, but they definitely know the Russians are there, OK?

MATTHEWS: The tanks will roll. Anyway, thank you, Gene Robinson. This is great fun. I hope the debates are as good as this.

Anyway, Colleen McCain Nelson of "The Journal" and Howard Dean of debates past.

When we return, my election diary for September 20th, six days as I've said before the first presidential debate is coming on this Monday and seven weeks before the election.

You're watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary, September 20th, 2016.

Well, there's a lot of psychology in who wins a presidential debate and psych war for next Monday's first Clinton-Trump encounter has already begun.

Hillary Clinton took much of today off presumably to sharpen herself for the big night. Trump said she took the day off because, quote, "she needs the rest."

Well, Trump's not the first presidential debater to try to get into the other guy's ear. When Kennedy went up against Nixon, he acted like he never met the guy. It rattled Nixon to the core. The two had been working in fairly close quarters in the Congress for 14 years, knew each pretty well, had, in fact, been friends early on.

Nixon expected a duel between old colleagues. Kennedy came across like a Yankee executioner. I don't think Nixon ever got over it.

Mitt Romney did the same thing with President Obama in their first debate. He talked down to him. It may have struck you as repellent, it did me, but it worked. The president just couldn't or wouldn't stand up to him. And that's why Romney won that first debate.

Fortunately for President Obama, he got it right in the second and third debates.

The question for this Monday is who will be most sure of themselves out there when they have to go face-to-face, who will have themselves convinced that they're the most secure person, who will seem in command, who will radiate strength?

Because this is one time there will be no applause to mark success. What will signal who wins is the poise of the candidates themselves, the one who sweats loses, the one who smiles wins. As the great Winston Churchill once put it, "I like a man who grins when he fights."

And that's HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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9557 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: The candidates debate terrorism.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

Well, tonight, once again, the epicenter of the war on terrorism is New York City, the country`s point of entry, its historic melting pot. And once again, we have another name added frighteningly to the vocabulary of violence, another episode to stir fear, the anger that always accompanies one and the instinctive search for greater security, now with two presidential candidates, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton , claiming to know the way.

Well, Ahmad Rahami, the suspect in this weekend`s bombings in New York City and New Jersey, was captured this morning after a dramatic shoot-out with police. Rahami, a 28-year-old **immigrant** from Afghanistan and a naturalized U.S. citizen, was seen in surveillance footage Saturday night near the site of the bomb blast in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. His fingerprint was also reportedly found on another device that failed to detonate. That`s according to a senior law enforcement official.

All told, there were three bombs Saturday. The first went off Saturday morning in Seaside Park, New Jersey, before the start of a charity race. There were no injuries. On Saturday night, a pressure cooker bomb packed with shrapnel exploded in Manhattan, injuring 29 people. A second bomb that failed to detonate was found several blocks away, while on Sunday night, five more explosive devices were found in a garbage can at a train station in New Jersey.

We learned more details about the suspect at a press conference this afternoon with the New York City mayor and law enforcement officials.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO (D), NEW YORK CITY: Based on the information we have now, we have every reason to believe this was an act of terror.

WILLIAM SWEENEY, FBI ASST. DIRECTOR: We have directly linked Rahami to devices from New York and from Saturday in New Jersey.

I have no indication that there is a cell operating in the area and city (ph). The investigation is ongoing. So as we develop more information, we continue to go, but I have no indication that there`s a cell operating here.

There`s nothing to indicate that currently, he was on our radar. We had a report of a domestic incident some time ago. That was -- the allegations were recanted. And I don`t have any other information. We`ll keep digging.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, President Obama is in New York himself today for the United Nations General Assembly . He spoke earlier in the day.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I want to take this opportunity to reassure the people in this city, in this region and Americans across our country that our counterterrorism and law enforcement professionals at every level, federal, state and local, are working together around the clock to prevent attacks and to keep us safe.

By showing those who want to do us harm that they will never beat us, by showing the entire world that, as Americans, we do not and never will give in to fear, that`s going to be the most important ingredient in us defeating those who would carry out terrorist acts against us.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, both of the presidential candidates, Trump and Clinton, weighed in today. On Fox News this morning, Trump said this was due to the fact, this incident, this terrorism, was due to the fact that the country has been weak. Here he is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Well, it`s a mess and it`s a shame, and we -- we`re going to have to be very tough. I think maybe we`re going to be seeing a big change over the last couple of days. I think this is something that maybe we`ll get -- you know, will happen perhaps more and more all over the country.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What do you mean, more terror strikes?

TRUMP: Yes, because we`ve been weak. Our country has been weak. We`re letting people in by the thousands and tens of thousands. I`ve been saying you`ve got to stop it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s that.

This morning, Hillary Clinton also addressed the attack and answered a question about Trump`s approach to **immigration**.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: This threat is real, but so is our resolve. Americans will not cower. We will prevail. We will defend our country, and we will defeat the evil, twisted ideology of the terrorists.

So let`s not get diverted and distracted by the kind of campaign rhetoric we hear coming from the other side. This is a serious challenge. We are well equipped to meet it. And we can do so in keeping with smart law enforcement, good intelligence and in concert with our values.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, for the latest on the investigation, I`m joined by NBC justice correspondent Pete Williams. Pete, what do we know about this guy, this guy who did it?

PETE WILLIAMS, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Well, a fair amount. In terms of his past, he came here in `95 with his parents, when he was about 7 years old. He was born in 1988 in Afghanistan. His parents sought asylum. They were eventually granted asylum.

He became a U.S. citizen, went to high school and college in New Jersey, and then began to travel to Afghanistan. Not surprising, that`s where he`s from, but his friends have said that he became radicalized, or at least he was a changed person after he came back from Afghanistan.

Now, that`s going to be one of the big questions here is, what caused him to take this route? That`s something that the government`s going to have to try to figure out.

But for now, they`re still trying to build a criminal case against him, and that`s a case that`s going to be based on evidence, Chris. And the evidence here -- they`ve got a lot of it for the simple reason that two of the three bombs they say he planted didn`t go off.

Now, one of them was a pressure cooker bomb on 27th Street in New York that they found as they were canvassing the neighborhood for other explosives, and they found his fingerprint on it. Now, that`s really quite astonishing. You know, they always look for that and they seldom find it in these bombing cases. But they say they found his fingerprint on it.

Secondly, cell phones were attached to it. They got the number of the cell phone, they figured out whose cell phone it was, where it was purchased, again leading to him.

And then you have this surveillance video of him -- not that one there, but the surveillance video of him walking around the two places where the bombs were set. So just lots of evidence led to him, and that`s going to be the basis of these charges.

The FBI said today that they can link him to all three of the bombs, the one set at Seaside Park, New Jersey, at the 5K race on Saturday, and then the two in Chelsea on Sunday night.

The question of his radicalization, what caused him to do this -- that`s one they`ll eventually have to answer for the trial. But in terms of filing the criminal charges, really, all they -- their goal now is to say - - to try to show that he did it.

And of course, we haven`t, obviously, heard from him. I`m told that he had surgery today. He was sedated for that. He hasn`t -- they really haven`t had a chance to question him yet. They`ve tried a little, and he wasn`t in a very responsive mood, I`m told.

MATTHEWS: OK. Thanks, Pete. You answered all my questions without me asking them.

(LAUGHTER)

WILLIAMS: OK!

MATTHEWS: Thanks so much, as always.

WILLIAMS: You bet.

MATTHEWS: NBC`s Ayman Mohyeldin is in Linden, New Jersey, where the suspect was taken into custody today. Ayman, thank you. What can we get out of this guy? What do you think the questions will be?

He goes over to Pakistan or Afghanistan or both over the years. You know what disturbs me as an American, and you too, I`m sure, is that when somebody goes through the effort to become a U.S. citizen, and it`s not easy, you have to memorize all the good stuff, understand our culture, at least verbally understand it, you want to become an American. And to go from all the effort to become an American, saluting the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance and everything you`ve -- at least you`ve sweared to, you decide to go the other way. That`s what disturbs I think people like us.

AYMAN MOHYELDIN, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Oh, yes. I mean, there`s no doubt that there`s a lot of very troubling questions about this because, you know, Chris, on one hand, you were talking about something that is very American. You know, on the surface, this was a father who had a small chicken restaurant. So in some ways, it is the American dream.

He **immigrated** to this country, lived in a blue-collar community, worked. His children worked with him, trying to make a better living for himself. So there`s no doubt that there are some characteristics on the surface that would say he was living that kind of American **immigrant** dream that so many people aspire to.

But at the same time, you`re also raising these questions about, Well, what led this individual to carry this out? And all of these will become questions that authorities and investigators will try to piece together. There`s no doubt that we`re using the word "radicalism" right now, given the identity of the individual, but that may be premature as we learn more about the motivations behind that individual.

You know, one of the points that was brought up earlier today when I was talking to one of the law enforcement officials here, is, I was asking him, Why do you think this guy would be sleeping out on the street here...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MOHYELDIN: ... and you know, on the runaway from cops? And one of the things he said to me was because, Well, maybe he didn`t have a network. Maybe he didn`t have this cell that we`ve kind of been talking about in the media, a suggestion that perhaps he carried this out by himself. He didn`t have a network of support. He didn`t have a network of accomplices who were willing to take him in and to try to provide him with that shelter.

So this notion that he was part of a larger cell may be somewhat premature. And as Pete Williams was reporting, he has not been hearing that, as well, from his sources.

But you brought up the point about the American dream and how he fits into it, and those are certainly questions that are going to be asked by investigators. What, if anything, led to this guy carrying this type of attack or wanting to carry these types of attack out? Was it some mental disturbance? Was it purely criminal, or was it radicalization?

MATTHEWS: Or was it just that he didn`t fit in and he was angry at the people who were hassling his family at that restaurant. You heard those stories, of course, too. We`ll have to figure that out over the next couple days.

Ayman, thank you, Ayman Mohyeldin, for this report on site.

Joining me right now is Tara Maller, who`s a senior policy adviser for the Counterterrorism Project to Counter Extremism (sic) and a military analyst at the CIA (sic).

Let me ask you about this. How do you put the motives together, just on what you heard? Apparently, people were -- regular people in the neighborhood were hassling -- although it`s always struck me, if you`re going to run a restaurant, you`ve got to be somewhat social. (INAUDIBLE) but they say this family didn`t talk to anybody. I don`t even know how you do that. I guess it`s a takeout kind of place.

The other thing is, how do you mix together (INAUDIBLE) increasing (ph) these misfit kind of situations, whether it`s somebody in the Army or it`s somebody out in San Bernardino, in a government office out there. These people seem to be just fitting into the category of somewhere up in Connecticut, those kind of shooters, you know what I mean?

Like, it`s a combination of just, I don`t like the people around me. I`m going to blow out against them, or I`m going to send a message internationally. And this guy didn`t even have an escape plan, apparently.

TARA MALLER, FORMER CIA ANALYST: You`re exactly right. And I think, in a lot of these cases, we look to cling to one single motivation. It could be a mix of things.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MALLER: He could have been having problems at home. He could have been having problems psychologically. He could have been having (ph) trips to Afghanistan. He could have been exposed to radical jihadist content on line. All these things created a perfect storm and motivated him to carry out the attack.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MALLER: We don`t know yet. It`s too early to say. But I can guarantee you the speed of this investigation, how quickly they apprehended him, the evidence they have, the computers and the cell phones they`re going to be able to get into -- I can tell you we`re going to have a lot more information about his motivations, who he was in touch with, what he may have believed. If there were jihadist motivations behind it, we`ll see that process of radicalization.

A lot of these people -- it`s not that they`re having contact with ISIS directly. They`re not having meetings. They`re not going -- becoming part of a high-tier (ph) network. They`re becoming exposed to the content, the propaganda on line.

MATTHEWS: They want it.

MALLER: Because they want it. They`re seeking it out.

MATTHEWS: Yes, you know...

MALLER: And it`s out there. You know, the tech companies need to start cracking down on a lot -- that`s one of the things that (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: The largest countries in the world, China and India, have a lots of poor people out there. They`re not coming at us, right? So why do certain groups of people come after us?

MALLER: Well, I think there are a lot of reasons. I mean, you can look...

MATTHEWS: It`s not poverty. The people that hit us on 9/11 were educated technicians. These guys who put that together had careers ahead of them. They were not impoverished or in trouble, have any reason to hate anybody, except they just didn`t fit in somehow.

MALLER: Right. But you do have strongholds in Syria and Iraq where there are -- there is an organization that`s trying to propagate an anti-Western message. And some of these individuals, disenfranchised in different places -- it`s in Europe, too. It`s in Brussels. It`s in Paris.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MALLER: They will grasp onto this, not just in terms of going to fight there as a foreign fighter...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MALLER: ... but just ideologically, messages resonate. And they might have other problems. In many of these cases, they do.

MATTHEWS: Yes, they go looking on line to try to find new -- new allies in life.

MALLER: In this case, it didn`t seem like there was such great planning.

MATTHEWS: No.

MALLER: I mean, he dropped it in a dumpster. There`s plenty of other targets that probably -- we`re fortunate he dropped it in a dumpster.

MATTHEWS: Why`d they find him at a doorstep? I thought he may have done it, being positive, because he didn`t want to incriminate his family or anybody else. So he said, I`m going to go sit -- let them -- let them pick me up.

MALLER: You`re ascribing very genuine and benign motivations. I mean, he might not have anywhere to go.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MALLER: He might not have planned this well. He might not have thought it out. It seems like there were lots of problems with this actual attack itself. I mean, he could have probably put that in a lot of other places and hit more people. Fortunately, he did not.

MATTHEWS: Why`d he attack dumpsters?

MALLER: A dumpster is -- it`s meant to confine an explosive, in a sense.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Yes.

MALLER: It`s barricading it, so...

MATTHEWS: It`s a safe attack, but not a safe escape because he left all the evidence. Thank you, Tara.

MALLER: You`re welcome. Thanks for having me.

Coming up right now, the politics of terror. We`re going to get reaction from former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani , a very prominent Trump supporter, of course, along with Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut, who`s backing Hillary Clinton .

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: With 50 days before the election, Florida`s too close to call. Let`s check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

According to a new Siena College poll for "The New York Times ," Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are tied 43-all down in Florida. It`s a head-to- head matchup, and they`re even. Next to Georgia, where a new Monmouth poll shows Donald Trump`s leading by 3 now. That`s 3 points. It`s Trump 45, Hillary Clinton 42, in a state that Democrats haven`t won by `92, still, Trump`s still leading.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. This weekend`s bombings in New York and New Jersey have pushed national security back to the forefront of the presidential debate and the campaign itself, with each side lobbing attacks at the other.

Donald Trump accused Hillary Clinton of being harder on his supporters than she is on Islamic terrorists. Here he goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Hillary Clinton talks tougher about my supporters than she does about Islamic terrorists, right?

(BOOS)

TRUMP: She calls the patriotic Americans who support our campaign, many of them cops and soldiers, deplorable and irredeemable. And she means it.

(BOOS)

TRUMP: To hear the words Hillary Clinton uses, one could be forgiven for getting the impression that she thinks these hard-working Americans are somehow a greater threat to our country than Islamic extremists.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, Hillary Clinton pushed back, of course, as you might expect, accusing Donald Trump of demagoguery. Here she goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Well, it`s like so much else he says, it`s not grounded in fact. It`s, you know, meant to make some kind of demagogic point. And the facts are pretty clear that, you know, we still have challenges. That`s what I have been talking about throughout this campaign. I am prepared to, ready to actually take on those challenges, not engage in a lot of, you know, irresponsible, reckless rhetoric.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Anyway, for more, we`re joined right now by the former mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani . He`s a big Trump senior adviser. Mr. Mayor, it`s always great to have you on the show.

And by the way, congratulations on having gotten your candidate to say that President Obama`s a legitimate president. That was a big lift...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: ... a heavy lift, and I give you credit for that, even though it was a bit delayed. Anyway, and also, Hillary Clinton`s health -- I hope you just saw her there. She looks very healthy. Do you think she`s back on her feet again, or do you think it`s a more serious injury -- a more serious illness than...

RUDY GIULIANI (R), FMR. NEW YORK CITY MAYOR: I will -- I will -- I will...

MATTHEWS: ... say pneumonia?

GIULIANI: I will -- I will -- will keep silent about it, but shortly after I said I thought she looked ill, she collapsed, so I don`t know.

MATTHEWS: What was the causality there? Were you the cause or just the measurer?

GIULIANI: Maybe I was the cause. It was only four days after, and all you people -- all you people in the media went crazy on me when I said she looked pale. I really meant it. She looked pale.

MATTHEWS: Don`t start saying I`m sick because...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... powers beyond your imagination here, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. Let`s talk about...

GIULIANI: It could be.

MATTHEWS: ... something that you`re really now, well, positively known for, and that`s how to deal with terrible situations. Here again, it`s New York, the epicenter of our fight against terrorism, striking New York and New Jersey, right across from New York, across the Hudson.

And here we are, and yet it`s a person who really disturbs me. I don`t know if you just heard a minute ago. Like you and everybody else in this country, we`d like to think that these people who come to America to make it a better life, become Americans, become naturalized, with all the effort and purpose that that entails, becoming Americans, and then becoming our enemy, potentially. He`s a suspect, at least.

What do we make of those cases?

GIULIANI: Well, I`ll tell you what you make of it in the big picture. We`re fighting a two-front war, but we don`t seem to realize it. We`re fighting ISIS and various other Islamic terrorist groups overseas, in some way -- very minor engagement there.

And then the second front is the homeland. ISIS, unlike al Qaeda, has figured out how to activate terrorist attacks in the homeland. Al Qaeda did one, September 11. And after that, we didn`t have another one until Fort Hood under -- under Obama.

So...

MATTHEWS: Yes, but Fort Hood wasn`t international, was it? They may have been listened to somebody on the Internet, but...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Yes?

GIULIANI: Chris, Chris, if you read bin Laden, if you read Adnani, who is basically the -- was the theoretician for ISIS, this is what they have been talking about for 12, 15 years, how they can self-radicalize people in the United States, in France, in Brussels.

This is not accidental, in the sense that it`s just happening because we`re having a bad year. This is happening because it`s part of their plan. They have always planned a two-front war against us, and they are doing very well right now with the second front of that war.

MATTHEWS: What would you do?

GIULIANI: And they are also located in 28 -- they`re located in 28 countries.

It was kind of odd to hear the vice presidential candidate of the Democratic Party saying that we`re winning the war against ISIS. If this is what it means to win the war against ISIS, go tell that to the people of New York. Go tell that to the people of Minnesota who get stabbed.

MATTHEWS: OK.

But we have an imam who gets on the Internet, and he apparently influenced the guy down in Fort Hood and now the military guy down there that committed the terrorism down there. And then, in this case, this guy is apparently inspired by something he picked up on the Internet.

You say self-radicalized. That`s the right word. But how do you stop this process if you`re president of the United States?

GIULIANI: Well, number one, you don`t put your head in the sand and not say radical Islamic terrorism and talk about how bad it is, and talk about how terrible it is.

Maybe you initiate a Voice of America , like we did during the Cold War, where we talked about how much greater our values were than the values of communism.

President Obama is not fighting the war of words. He`s not fighting the war of ideology, and nor is Hillary Clinton . They are running away from it. They don`t want to say radical Islam. They think it`s going to insult good Islamic people.

MATTHEWS: Why does that help?

GIULIANI: If I followed that, the mafia would still exist.

Why does it help? Because it -- it -- it helps to give good people a place to rally around. You know, when the people of Iran revolted, Obama didn`t do what Reagan did with solidarity, which is support them. He turned his back on them, because he wanted a deal with -- with -- with Iran. He does not know how to fight the battle of values for the United States. And...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Do you think this guy, Rahami, the new suspect who`s in custody now at the hospital in New York, do you think he would not have been radicalized if we had said Islamic terror, radical terrorism?

Do you think the phrase would have stopped him from radicalizing, hearing that on television from you?

GIULIANI: I`m not sure it would have...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That sounds like abracadabra to me. Like you say, abracadabra and something doesn`t happen.

GIULIANI: Well, it wasn`t abracadabra in Poland, Czechoslovakia and all of the Baltic states.

MATTHEWS: No, but just calling -- he knows what it is. But they know what`s motivating them.

GIULIANI: Years and years...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

GIULIANI: Well, if only one side is motivating him, and there`s no counter to that side, we`re going to lose a lot of people.

The only people who are motivating right now online are the ISIS people and the radical Islamic terrorists. Nobody is motivating people online about what a wonderful country this is, what a great country this is, what an exceptional country this is. Would it have stopped him? How do I know? Did it ultimately defeat communism? Yes, it did.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I`m with you.

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: And don`t tell me it`s fighting the battle of words.

MATTHEWS: Mr. Mayor, I`m with you on the Voice of America . I love that stuff. I love the whole thing. I used to listen to it for two years in Africa.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Yes, go ahead.

GIULIANI: Hillary Clinton is particularly defensive on this issue, because she and Barack Obama own ISIS. This is -- this never had to happen.

Iraq was fairly stabilized when they took over because of the surge. Their withdrawal of troops from Iraq...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: That`s not fair. Al Qaeda happened on your watch. You`re not responsible for al Qaeda. I mean, we don`t blame you for 9/11. Why are you blaming them for ISIS?

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: Well, they shouldn`t. I wasn`t -- I had nothing to do with foreign policy ever.

MATTHEWS: Well, W. was head of it. Nobody`s ever blamed -- who`s blamed W. for what happened on 9/11?

GIULIANI: Well, Clinton.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You guys attack other people when it happens on their watch, but you don`t accept it when it happens on your watch.

GIULIANI: Clinton was when al -- look, she made ISIS possible.

And, today, she`s saying that Trump`s words incited the guy. Come on. Stop the phoniness.

MATTHEWS: OK.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, just remember, just remember, the president of the United States...

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: And it`s a critical mistake

MATTHEWS: OK, OK. Just...

GIULIANI: And your side blasted...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You can call it my side all you want. But that`s not going to work.

My side`s America.

Let me just tell you, Mr. Mayor...

GIULIANI: Your side blasted Bush. And so did my side.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK.

In August of 2001, the president of the United States got a note from Condi Rice, who was head of national security, saying, al Qaeda to attack within the United States.

I would consider that a pretty good warning of what was coming on 9/11. But nobody spent the last 15 years attacking W. for that. They have attacked him for a war in Iraq, but not for that.

GIULIANI: Well, I`m going to tell you -- I`m going to tell you -- I`m going to tell you why.

Because there was that one attack, and then we had no more, because he immediately went on offensive.

MATTHEWS: OK.

GIULIANI: He immediately had them back in their caves.

You can`t plan attacks on America when you`re in caves. Obama has withdrawn. Obama has been basically a pacifist. Hillary Clinton announced the other night on the presidential forum that she`s not going to use ground troops. How does a commander in chief take that option off the table?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK.

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: Our weakness -- our weakness is provoking them.

MATTHEWS: OK, let me ask you one question, political question, partisan question.

If 9/11, where you did serve very well -- we have always given you credit for that here. Certainly, I have. And I believe it.

GIULIANI: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: But if that had happened on a Democratic president`s watch, would you have been so generous as not blame it on a Democratic president?

GIULIANI: Of course. I had a...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You would not have blamed the Democratic president for 9/11 if it happened on his watch or her watch?

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: I would not have -- I would not have -- I would not have blamed -- I wouldn`t have blamed anybody -- anybody for it. I had a city I had to save. I worked with Hillary Clinton . I worked with Chuck Schumer.

MATTHEWS: Well, you`re blaming President Obama for ISIS. You`re blaming President Obama for ISIS and Hillary Clinton .

GIULIANI: Well, I am blaming President Obama for being asleep at the switch for eight years in dealing with radical Islamic terrorism.

MATTHEWS: OK. OK.

GIULIANI: I find it mind-boggling that he can`t even say the words.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He doesn`t believe in your abracadabra theory. That`s why, Mr. Mayor. He doesn`t believe saying magic words, open sesame, is going to end terrorism. He just doesn`t believe it, or he would be doing it.

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: Chris, it`s working for them. They`re using social media and they`re winning.

MATTHEWS: OK, OK.

GIULIANI: We don`t use social media and we`re losing. So, I don`t know. You can stick with the losers, if you want.

MATTHEWS: OK.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Mr. Mayor, don`t get personal. I try to avoid that.

(LAUGHTER)

GIULIANI: I`m not getting personal.

MATTHEWS: Mr. Mayor, Rudy Giuliani ...

(CROSSTALK)

GIULIANI: You can stick with the losers, if you want. They`re losers.

MATTHEWS: OK, thank you very much.

And now we return -- thank you so much, Mr. Mayor.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: And now let`s turn to Democratic Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut. He`s a Hillary Clinton backer.

Do you think that`s true, that the Republicans wouldn`t have bashed the Democrats if 9/11 occurred under a Democratic president? There`s no doubt in my mind.

SEN. CHRIS MURPHY (D), CONNECTICUT: Well, you had a memo, right, sitting on his table telling him that...

MATTHEWS: W., right.

MURPHY: Right, telling W. that there were attacks coming.

You don`t think there would have been hearings left and right, north and south all over Congress?

MATTHEWS: I think it`s bigger than Benghazi. Just guessing.

MURPHY: And this idea -- the one thing about that interview that Giuliani has right is that you do need to tell a positive story about America.

But if that`s what he thinks is important here, then he wasn`t at the Republican National Convention. It`s the Republican Party that`s out there bashing this country right now. It`s actually the Democratic Party that`s selling a story about the greatness of this country.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Take over -- it`s always harder to play defense when something bad happens. Even -- this is not the worst thing that`s happened to us, but it`s bad. It scares people. It`s unexpected and terrifying to some extent, because it happens right -- the nearest trash can could be blowing up. Who knows what the sense of this whole thing was?

How do you play defense if you`re Hillary Clinton , because you`re the party of power?

MURPHY: You don`t play defense. You go on offense.

You talk about what`s happening here right now. You are talking about individuals like this guy who was a naturalized U.S. citizen who became radicalized somewhere later in his life, right, and you present the argument to the American people that what matters now is preventing people who are already in this country from becoming radicalized and organized against us.

And Donald Trump`s rhetoric, which is essentially marginalizing Muslim populations, trying to isolate them, tell them that they`re not part of the whole, is exactly what ISIS recruiters want to hear.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MURPHY: And so you go on the offense, if you`re Hillary Clinton , and you what she did today, essentially call Donald Trump an ISIS recruiter, right, which is what his rhetoric is doing.

It`s providing them the fodder they need to turn guys like this against...

MATTHEWS: You really believe that Trump -- I think it`s possible. Do you think Trump is heard in the Islamic world and among the Islamic community here, to the point where somebody would say, damn it, I have had it with this country, this guy Trump is against us, I`m going to go out and blow up something?

Do you think that is really something that would actually happen?

MURPHY: Well, I don`t know that a conversation happens that quick, from something Trump says to the decision to blow something up. But what you see in Europe is a greater level of threat because they have created a situation in which Muslims are essentially told that they`re not part of the greater whole.

MATTHEWS: Look at the bathing suit thing.

MURPHY: Yes.

And so here in the United States, we have been successful at incorporating...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I agree. I would like to think that the melting pot still works.

MURPHY: And, listen, I don`t think it`s a long stretch, I don`t think it`s a long journey being told by the president of the United States, right, which is what Trump is applying to be, that Muslims are not American, from deciding to do harm against this country, when you have these radical...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He just says you should say Islamic -- radical Islamic terrorism. He wants to use the phrase.

Why don`t you use the phrase? Just explain.

MURPHY: Listen, the idea that one term is going to change this debate is ridiculous. And the fact of the matter is, you don`t want to send the message that every member of the Islamic religion is an existing or potential there.

MATTHEWS: You think that says it?

MURPHY: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: OK.

MURPHY: I think that risks communicating that message.

MATTHEWS: OK. Thank you so much, Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut.

We will be continuing to monitor developments in this story, but up next, plenty of politics to get to, including a demand that Republican elected officials get in line or kiss off their political futures.

Plus, President Obama is getting personal about the fight to succeed him.

And another big story tonight. Prosecutors -- this is one of our stories, one of MSNBC`s stories -- he says Governor Christie -- the prosecutors say now Governor Christie knew all about the closing of George Washington bridge when it was happening. He knew it at the time.

That is a big story tonight.

Also tonight, "The New York Times "` great Maureen Dowd is going to be here with us.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Republican Party Chairman Reince Priebus said over the weekend that Donald Trump`s 2016 primary opponents who have not endorsed him so far in the general election could face consequences if they`re planning to run again in 2020, should Trump lose this November. Let`s watch Reince.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REINCE PRIEBUS, REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: Look, people who agreed to support the nominee that took part in our process, they used tools from the RNC . They agreed to support the nominee. They took part in our process. We`re a private party. We`re not a public entity.

Those people need to get on board. And if they`re thinking they`re going to run again some day, you know, I think that we`re going to evaluate the process of the nomination process, and I don`t think it`s going to be that easy for them.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, the chairman`s remarks rubbed the top strategist of Ohio Governor John Kasich the wrong way.

John Weaver issued a statement saying -- quote -- "The idea of a greater purpose beyond one`s self may be **alien** to political party bosses like Reince Priebus, but is at the center of everything Governor Kasich does. He will not be bullied by a Kenosha political operative" -- that is what he means by Trump -- "unable to even look at even core principles or beliefs."

Anyway, Kasich, Texas Senator Ted Cruz and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush still have yet to endorse Donald Trump .

Let`s bring in the HARDBALL roundtable tonight.

Howard Fineman is global editor director of The Huffington Post. April Ryan is White House correspondent for American Urban Radio Networks . And Jonathan Capehart is an opinion writer for "The Washington Post ."

Howard, is this because Republicans are now finally falling in line, and according to -- and he can get away this kind of push?

HOWARD FINEMAN, NBC CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: No, this is because the Trump campaign told Reince Priebus to do it.

MATTHEWS: So, they moved the Priebus question?

FINEMAN: They moved the Priebus question.

(LAUGHTER)

FINEMAN: I will use the pun that you were...

MATTHEWS: I had to sell that.

FINEMAN: No, because I contacted the Trump people and I said, what do you think about this? They said, well, we will just let the chairman speak on this.

And my sense of it is, look, Texas doesn`t matter. Whether Ted Cruz endorses doesn`t matter that much in Texas, where he`s strong. But Ohio and Florida are two states that Trump has to win. Now, the polls are showing that he`s close, if not ahead in those states, but they would like to have at least one smidgen of niceness from either Jeb Bush or John Kasich to give them a better chance.

And that`s why Priebus is out there. I think all of those people, Cruz, Kasich, and Bush, are going to ignore Reince Priebus. They don`t care what Reince Priebus says, but Reince Priebus had to do it, for the sake of the Trump campaign.

MATTHEWS: If -- just talk pure politics here. If you have a future in the Republican Party in presidential politics, if you are a Cruz, or you`re a Jeb, or you`re a Kasich, more importantly, is it the smart move to be out of the party this time through, even if they win a close one, win a close one, lose win a close one, lose a close one, lose a landslide? Is it better to be outside or inside the tent?

APRIL RYAN, AMERICAN URBAN RADIO NETWORKS : Even though his heart or their hearts are saying they don`t want to do it, it may be a bad move, because I have been told by too many people today in that camp that, if, indeed, Kasich wants to run, he is not going to get the support.

They`re saying, even if Trump wins, they are going to blackball those people who have not supported them.

MATTHEWS: Wow.

RYAN: And they are making -- the RNC and the Trump campaign, they are making definite strides, trying to talk to Kasich`s folks, trying to talk to Bush`s folks and Cruz`s folks to get them on board, and they`re not budging.

MATTHEWS: I think that`s true, if it`s close. If it`s a wipeout -- I don`t think it`s a wipeout right now, but if it`s a wipeout, it doesn`t matter who was with him or against him.

JONATHAN CAPEHART, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Right, but I think Jeb Bush and Governor Kasich are on different planets from Donald Trump .

(LAUGHTER)

CAPEHART: I mean, I remember, when we met with Governor Kasich, his whole tone, demeanor, the way he went about politics is completely foreign to the way Donald Trump has run his campaign.

So, to me, the idea that Governor Kasich or Governor Bush would endorse Donald Trump , would even -- what was it, a smidgen of niceness coming from them, if that happens, I don`t know, maybe I will do something on air.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: A lot of Democrats are on different planets than Bernie Sanders, too. They`re still...

(CROSSTALK)

RYAN: That`s true, too.

MATTHEWS: The roundtable is staying with us.

And up next: President Obama says he would personally be insulted if African-American voters didn`t turn out for Hillary. Well, that`s going to be an interesting test of his greatness.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA , PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: There`s no such thing as a vote that doesn`t matter. It all matters. And after we have achieved historic turnout in 2008 and 2012, especially in the African-American community, I will consider it a personal insult, an insult to my legacy if this community lets down its guard and fails to activate itself in this election. You want to give me a good sendoff? Go vote!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

CHRIS MATTHEWS, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was President Obama on fire over the weekend, at the annual dinner for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation .

We`re back with the roundtable, Howard, April, and Jon.

You know, people tell me, if you look at -- to think about it, that script he had, it was a teleprompter, wasn`t that fiery. He got fiery. What`s going on?

JONATHAN CAPEHART, THE WASHINGTON POST : Well, what he`s looking at is his legacy is on the line. It`s all in the words that he said, and we`re like 50 days away from --

MATTHEWS: Is he hearing bad news? Is he hearing low turnout?

CAPEHART: Well, I`ll leave that to April, but that fire that you saw, that`s not put on. That`s not theatric -- that is real.

But the point I was about to make is that, let`s say Donald Trump is, becomes president-elect. The last eight years, in this country`s presidency, would basically be like the second season of "Dallas", as if it never happened.

APRIL RYAN, AMERICAN URBAN RADIO NETWORK: Dallas.

CAPEHART: Because Trump would just undo everything that he worked on.

RYAN: The bottom line --

MATTHEWS: Why`d he do it this weekend? He wasn`t talking like that two weeks ago or a week ago?

RYAN: I don`t think that`s true. The president has been fiery, but this was his -- this was the base. And I`m going to say, I was there Saturday night. And really, the key piece to me is after the dinner Saturday night.

I was walking -- I was watching the people clean up. And many of the congressional leaders came to me, April, you`ve got a good sense, what do you think?

I have one congressional leader that says, I don`t know, he was very upset. He was scared. The president knows intrinsically, he knows what is going on. He knows that a lot of African-Americans are not necessarily as galvanized. His base, the people --

MATTHEWS: So did he do the right thing or not?

RYAN: Yes, it was the right thing. But it`s beyond Saturday night, what he needs to do. And Hillary Clinton -- Hillary Clinton is not her husband who was charismatic and who can get out there and could make you just sit in awe. He was one of the greatest speakers of our time. Barack Obama is one of the greatest speakers of our time, and Michelle Obama .

What needs to happen is, is that Hillary Clinton needs to have standing with her, and the president may have to leave the White House a little more, standing with her to make him know, make the Americans know that he is on the ballot. By standing --

MATTHEWS: How do you transfer charisma?

RYAN: You can`t.

CAPEHART: You stand there.

HOWARD FINEMAN, THE HUFFINGTON POST: Like, very quickly, he was speaking to the Congressional Black Caucus , which is the base, and it`s very important. But the problem for Hillary Clinton is not the people that the Congressional Black Caucus talk to, because they`re the establishment. They`re members of Congress. They`re the establishment.

RYAN: Forty-six.

FINEMAN: It`s the young kids.

RYAN: The millennials.

FINEMAN: The millennials, white, black, brown. That`s where Hillary`s crisis is and those are the people --

RYAN: And she needs Bernie Sanders.

MATTHEWS: And Elizabeth Warren, too.

RYAN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Howard Fineman. Thank you, April Ryan. Great roundtable. Jonathan, thank you, sir.

Up next, prosecutors in the Bridgegate trial say New Jersey Governor Chris Christie knew about -- key phrase -- knew about the plot to shut down traffic lanes to the George Washington Bridge, even though he denied it for years. And that`s coming up. This is hot stuff.

And this is a HARDBALL story, by the way. This network has been big on this. And this is the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, opening statements began today in the Bridgegate trial of two former top aides to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie . And today for the first time, a federal prosecutor told jurors that Governor Christie was told about a plan to close those traffic lanes, leading to the George Washington Bridge, as it was happening.

And he knew about it. Something the governor has denied for years.

MSNBC`s Steve Kornacki is with us with more. Steve, did this surprise you? You`re an expert on this case, that the governor has been named by the prosecutor.

STEVE KORNACKI, MSNBC POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT: Well, here`s the thing. The interesting thing is this David Wildstein, who was one of the Christie appointees, who has now pleaded guilty and he is the star witness. He is going to be the government`s star witness.

He had said through his lawyer, two years ago, that evidence exists that Christie knew about the closures, as they were happening. His lawyers said that. Federal prosecutors had never said whether they believed it, whether they accepted it, whether it would be part of their case.

But now, in bringing Wildstein out as their star witness and making this explicit statement today in the opening statements, they said that, look, Wildstein was basically telling the governor, look, hey, there`s this mayor who wouldn`t endorse your re-election campaign.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

KORNACKI: The traffic is piled up in his town. He`s calling us, trying to solve it. We`re not answering his calls. He`s not getting his calls returned. They`re basically saying in the opening states that Wildstein was laying this out, was bragging about it to Chris Christie , at Ground Zero, on 9/11 in 2013, which is just as the lane closures were happening.

So, it confirms what a lot of people expected. This was sort of introduced by Wildstein`s lawyer a while ago. Now we know the feds believe it and they`re going with it.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Well, this is a holy cow moment, for someone not like you, but almost like you, I`ve been fascinated by this trial. And as a person who`s worked in politics, I never believed that the staffers were pushing something as grand as this effort to whack all those mayors without leadership from the top. It doesn`t sound like anything I know. The fish rots from the head.

Thank you very much, Steve Kornacki.

KORNACKI: Sure.

MATTHEWS: We`ll be right back with the great Maureen Dowd.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: In election season, you`ll often hear crazy stuff. But I got to say, this year, we have been hearing a little more crazy than usual.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: We`re back.

That was President Obama in Philadelphia. He`s witnessed a slew of crazy stuff in the frenzy for most of the show.

Actually, Maureen Dowd, by the way, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the "New York Times " has just published her third book "The Year of Voting Dangerously." Just this week, when it came out, the columnist became part of the show when Donald Trump tweeted, Wacky Maureen Dowd, quote, "who hardly knows me makes things up that I never said for her boring interviews and column. A neurotic dope."

Well, that`s what he says. He couldn`t be more wrong.

MAUREEN DOWD, NEW YORK TIMES : Thanks --

MATTHEWS: You know what? He`s just jealous.

Joining me right now is the author Maureen Dowd. He can`t write as well as you, and you are the best writer for "The New York Times ." Everybody knows that. You delight me when I pick up "The New York Times ". I go looking for the life, the Irish part, the exciting part, the color.

And I`m always wondering about you and who you`ve sort of focused on that day. Now Trump, when you write a column, this is not giving anything away. When you write a column, you have a little shot against him, do you imagine him reading that the next morning and going, ugh? Can you imagine that? Because you know he does.

DOWD: Well, I was very disturbed that he didn`t give more thought to my nickname because he`s recycling it. He gave Mika Brzezinski and Megyn Kelly wacky and crazy and neurotic.

MATTHEWS: Yes, same old, same old.

DOWD: So I would have hoped at least when W. gave me a nickname, it was "Cobra", which had a sort of reptilian glamour to it.

MATTHEWS: Now, this interesting. You know, what you, have you figured him out yet? Because everybody in America is trying to figure out. There`s some things people hate about him, some they`re appalled by, I should say. And then there`s people, the third or fourth or even maybe sometimes low 40s of the country that want what he offers.

Have you figured him out, what his appeals is?

DOWD: Well, I think that`s why I wanted to write the book, because I have covered them since the `90s, Hillary and Trump. One of the weird things about it is they are two of the most famous people on the planet, and yet nobody seems to really know them.

Hillary, it`s reintroducing herself after the pneumonia as someone who likes women and children and we`re supposed to see the real Hillary now. There`s a memo in the book where her aides we are telling her to do that 25 years ago.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

DOWD: So, every week, they are reintroducing the real Hillary.

And with Trump, we don`t know if he`s the bling king, you know, white rapper, crazy, New York.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Why is he catnip for the media? Why is he irresistible to watch? Sometimes.

DOWD: Because as Howard Fineman said, you know, the mask is down, like we`re seeing behind the scenes. It`s like "The Wizard of Oz." We`re seeing a lot --

MATTHEWS: He says, pay attention to the man behind the curtain.

DOWD: Right, exactly.

MATTHEWS: You`re a hell of a writer, Maureen Dowd.

DOWD: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: A credit to your Irish race. You really are. You`re the best. You are the best.

This is going to be fun. Nothing sees it in writing, you know books of columns are great because you get to read one or two a night and go to sleep. And you don`t feel guilty, right? You knock them off.

DOWD: There`s a two essay about my 30 years with the Bush family.

MATTHEWS: Who is your favorite Bush?

DOWD: Poppy Bush.

MATTHEWS: I think most people agree with that. The older they get, the more acceptable. Anyway, I do like him. I`m not a big W. fan.

The book is called "The Year of Voting Dangerously". Thank you, Maureen Dowd.

When we return, my election diary for September 19th, 50 days before election.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary, September 19th, 2016.

The week before the first presidential debate, we suddenly get hit with a new fact. Terrorism has once again struck New York. The country`s chief city, its media capital or as John Lennon once called it, "the consciousness of the center of the universe." To paraphrase the song, if you want to make noise, you make it there. If you want to express your anger to America, you do it in New York -- the Big Apple, metropolis, Gotham.

And here we are with a debate away from the biggest media event of the times with the country`s media capital stirred by terrorism in its midst. So I expect what happened over the weekend will be the "can`t ignore" topic on which we`ll begin next week. If the moderator or Hillary Clinton don`t raise the issue, Donald Trump sure will. The reason: the man knows the moment, senses the zeitgeist.

Hillary Clinton will have done her home work. She will be better prepared on the issues, sounder on the fact. She will be the A student, a straight A student at that.

Donald Trump will be more unpredictable. He will be ready with unpredictability. For him, doing homework will be to find his way to the surprising assault, the surprising counterattack, whatever line of attack opens up to him.

I expect he will position himself on the side of change, for and simple, putting Hillary on the site of defending the way things are. He will lead her on that path and lock her into a trap that lies at the end of it. Why do I think he will be the predator, the aggressor?

One central reason: he will be behind in the polls. His current surge will have exhausted itself. He will know the trend of election is a lack of a trend. The president or candidate ahead will be the one who stays ahead unless something changes things.

So, hje will be the one to watch. The guy still behind, seeing that he will in all likelihood stay behind, unless he pulls something -- something that captures the moment next Monday night, that exploits the country`s current mood of uneasiness that captures the spirit of the times to his advantage to allow him to declare, "You`re fired, Hillary".

I expect Hillary Clinton to be prepared for this moment, the one in which Donald Trump will set his heart. I expect she will be there. Her eyes on him, to face down the man she must defeat head to head, face to face, together in this same moment with 100 million people watching.

That`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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Chris Matthews, Hallie Jackson, Joy Reid, Katy Tur, Eugene Robinson

9884 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: The birth of a president.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

I speak to you now from a capital where the head of state no longer stands publicly accused of being a usurper. Barack Obama`s no longer described as someone who entered the country under the cover of darkness, assumed the identity of an American-born citizen and grabbed through this and other ploys the country`s highest office.

And this is the claim that Mr. Donald Trump has made again and again about this country`s first African-American president. And today, he retracted that historic accusation.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Hillary Clinton...

(BOOS)

TRUMP: -- and her campaign of 2008 started the birther controversy. I finished it. I finished it! You know what I mean. President Barack Obama was born in the United States, period. Now we all want to get back to making America strong and great again.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: It was, of course, a claim based upon a set of irrational possibilities that a young American woman from Kansas married a Kenyan of unstable promise, went to Kenya to have his child, gave that child his name, all while creating a paper trail in Honolulu, birth records, local newspaper reports, that he was born in Hawaii so that the son could be eligible 35 years later for the American presidency.

I`m willing to contend that the only person who would believe such a crazed saga is someone who wants so desperately to believe Barack Obama illegitimate, they`re willing to suspend all rational thinking and submit to their gut determination that no African-American could become an actual American president, that the two-centuries-old color bar was not finally broken in November 2008 when that crowd erupted in tearful joy in Chicago`s Grant Park.

Birtherism is not, has not been, a theory. It has been an insistence of some sort of racial test that Barack Obama failed from the second of his conception.

So what has Donald Trump been defending for five years? What evidence did he ever have that President Obama was born in Kenya? What was it that kept him from retracting his claim five years ago when President Obama went through the indignity of having to show his papers, like some apartheid- area African in an area restricted to whites?

Well, today, with the same lack of information that he offered in making his historic indictment, Donald Trump, employing the same ungranted civil authority, declared that the president is innocent of the charge for which he, Donald Trump, served as the number one plaintiff, the number one prosecutor, the number one judge and jury. So that`s it for that.

Well, the Clinton campaign today called Trump`s actions disgraceful, sickening and appalling. Here was Hillary Clinton this morning.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: For five years, he has led the birther movement to delegitimize our first black president. His campaign was founded on this outrageous lie. There is no erasing it in history. Barack Obama was born in America, plain and simple, and Donald Trump owes him and the American people an apology.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, President Obama today dismissed Trump`s statement. Let`s watch the president.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We`ve got other business to attend to. I was pretty confident about where I was born. I think most people were, as well. And my hope would be that the presidential election reflects more serious issues than that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, it was only last Thursday, however, that Rudy Giuliani told me Trump now believes the president was born in America. Let`s watch Rudy.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RUDY GIULIANI (R), FMR. NEW YORK CITY MAYOR: I confirm that and Donald Trump now confirms that. You know, Hillary Clinton...

MATTHEWS: When did he do that? When did he do that?

GIULIANI: He did that (INAUDIBLE)

MATTHEWS: When did he do that?

GIULIANI: Two years ago, three years ago!

MATTHEWS: When did he -- he has now accepted that birtherism was nonsense?

GIULIANI: Look, Hillary Clinton...

MATTHEWS: When did he do that?

GIULIANI: Chris, Hillary Clinton`s campaign...

MATTHEWS: He did not do that yet. I am waiting for him to do it. I want to know whether you believe that your candidate for president believes he would succeed a legitimate president or not.

GIULIANI: Yes. He believes...

MATTHEWS: Does he believe he would succeed a legitimate president?

GIULIANI: Donald Trump believes now that he was born in the United States.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that was last Thursday. Joining me right now is NBC`s Hallie Jackson, who`s covering Trump`s rally in Miami tonight, Joy Reid, host of "AM Joy" and the author of "Fracture," and Steve Cortex, a surrogate for the Trump campaign and a member of Trump`s National Hispanic Advisory Council.

It`s great -- Hallie -- Hallie Jackson, thank you, sir -- thank you, madam. Let me ask you this. This Trump thing, was it the pressure of Rudy and Kellyanne Conway and others and Mike Pence who`ve (ph) come forward and say, Of course President Obama was born in this country, and not only that, that our candidate for president, Rudy -- Donald Trump, also believes it? Or was it the pressure of the upcoming debates, where they knew, no matter who was moderating those three debates, there`d be no way Trump could get through with birtherism, three big nights of an hour-and-a-half debating?

HALLIE JACKSON, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Oh, why couldn`t it be both, Chris? I think that`s really the question. I think that Kellyanne Conway has made her imprint on this campaign. You have -- by the way, I know it`s loud. That`s because Donald Trump is wrapping up his rally in Miami just behind me here.

But Kellyanne Conway has made her imprint on this campaign. She -- the Rudy Giuliani sound bite you played, Mike Pence, as you mentioned, have all tried to speak for Donald Trump in these last couple weeks. But this is Donald Trump`s campaign. If he didn`t want to come out and say this, he would not have done it.

You`ve also got the pressure of the upcoming debate and potentially, a political calculation. Not that renouncing his birther comments would win him a lot of support with African-American voters necessarily, but that it could potentially help him persuade college-educated white voters that he doesn`t have a strain of racism that he`s often been accused of.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Thank you, Hallie Jackson down there in Florida.

Let`s get back to Joy Reid. Joy Reid and I have shared this issue, this passion, I must say. Anybody who thinks this is small potatoes, anybody who thinks this is not important is ignorant. This is a major issue in our country. First black president is accused of being a usurper, someone who couldn`t possibly fit on that long list of pictures of American presidents, doesn`t belong there. Why? Because of some gut determination to argue that somehow, he`s from some other part of the world.

Joy, take your time on this.

JOY REID, HOST, "AM JOY": Yes, no, absolutely, Chris because it was -- as you know, it was an attempt to essentially say that the election of 2008 didn`t happen, that Barack Obama did not beat John McCain to become the president of the United States, that it was all a fraud, that it was all a lie, that he is a usurper who sneaked into the country, who was sneaked in by his mother, that it was all a conspiracy to put a usurper on -- into the White House.

And by the way, you know, Donald Trump may think that by coming out and doing a seven-second reversal of his years and years of believing this ridiculous conspiracy theory -- there was never an investigation to be done -- if he thinks that that will make people forget the fact, that just saying that Donald Trump somehow has the right to tell the president of the United States to show his papers -- who is Donald Trump to ask the president of the United States...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... a citizen`s arrest...

REID: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: ... an attempted citizen`s arrest without any civil authority -- All right, buddy, buddy, bub, whatever he was calling him, give me your papers and prove you have a right to be here.

The president -- I admit, I was one those saying, Show your papers, Mr. President, get it over with. This is ridiculous. That didn`t work. For five years, he`s insisted on this. He`s played cat and mouse.

And I think -- you tell me. I think he`s been playing to that rathole of his constituency, that part of his constituency which basically -- not everybody. I`m not talking about baskets of deplorables here. I`m talking about a group of people that like it and in every poll say they agree with it, that they do agree that this president is some foreigner who snuck in the country!

REID: And look at the polling that shows that a plurality of Donald Trump supporters and of Republican voters believe the president is a secret Muslim, that he`s lying about his religion, that he holds values antithetical to the American ideals, that he believes in sharia law, as opposed to American, quote, unquote, "values," as if Muslims don`t -- aren`t able to hold American values. These beliefs are now ingrained in a part of the Republican Party.

And what the Tea Party was about, what Donald Trumpism was about, was that we don`t want to just beat this president in an election, we want to humiliate him...

MATTHEWS: Right.

REID: ... bring him to his knees, make him kneel before us because we don`t want to feel that he thinks he`s better than us. And therefore, this president can`t be real. He can`t be legitimate. He`s a liar. And we`re going to make him kneel and hand us his papers, as you said, as if this was apartheid-era South Africa.

That`s what it was about. It was about Donald Trump needing to feel that he was superior to the president of the United States.

And so I will ask again -- Donald Trump should be asked by the next person who interviews him, number one, who do you think you are to tell the president that he`s not an American and that he should show his papers to you? Who do you think you are?

MATTHEWS: And who are you to say...

REID: And what suddenly changed?

MATTHEWS: he is now?

REID: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: Who are you to exonerate him of the charges...

REID: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: ... only you brought against him?

REID: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: Let me go -- Katy Tur is just on. Katy, a lot of people finish college in four years. A lot of people spend more, maybe five years. For five years, we`ve been taught one lesson by Donald Trump, that Barack Obama`s a usurper. And now in one 10-second or seven-second...

KATY TUR, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Seven seconds, yes.

MATTHEWS: ... burp, he thinks he`s going to get out because -- Roger Ailes or Kellyanne or somebody said to him, You got the frickin` debates coming up in a few days. You better get this out of the way because, otherwise, Lester Holt or somebody`s going to be banging you on this for an hour-and- a-half.

TUR: Well, I don`t think it ends this issue whatsoever. I think seven seconds of him going out and saying that I believe the president was born here is just not enough.

He was supposed to take questions from reporters, and had he done so, we would have been able to ask him why he came to this conclusion...

MATTHEWS: Why change your (INAUDIBLE)

TUR: Now. Why now after five years? Why now with 53 days left...

MATTHEWS: What evidence did he have five years ago...

TUR: ... until the election?

MATTHEWS: ... and what new evidence does he have now?

TUR: 100 (ph) percent.

MATTHEWS: Nothing!

TUR: And why, if he realized that millions of Americans or African- Americans specifically...

STEVEN CORTES, TRUMP SURROGATE: Chris...

TUR: ... were offended by this...

MATTHEWS: OK, Steve...

TUR: ... what specifically was it?

CORTES: Chris...

MATTHEWS: Steve`s raring to get in here.

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: I will tell you why he did it now...

MATTHEWS: Let me ask you some -- no, I have to ask the questions first. First, what evidence did Donald Trump have to begin this birther theory? What evidence did he have that this president came from another country? What evidence?

CORTES: Chris, as I`ve told you...

MATTHEWS: What evidence did he have?

CORTES: ... before on this show...

MATTHEWS: What evidence did he have?

CORTES: As I`ve told you on this show and on many shows, I wish he had never gone down this path. This is nonsense...

MATTHEWS: No, I`m asking you. I`m not asking about your opinions.

CORTES: ... and it`s a distraction.

MATTHEWS: I`m asking, what evidence did he have that you know that that justified the claim? What evidence did he have?

CORTES: I don`t know. He shouldn`t have gone down this path. And by the way...

MATTHEWS: Did he have any evidence?

CORTES: ... he has not been -- he has not been going down this path...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He made the charge without evidence.

CORTES: He has not been going down this path...

MATTHEWS: This is important. It`s not about opinion, Steve. Steve, it`s not about opinion.

CORTES: No, this is important...

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: You`re trying to make it sound like...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Tell me what evidence he had.

CORTES: You`re trying to make it sound like that he`s made this a campaign issue, and he has not in any sense...

MATTHEWS: OK.

CORTES: ... made this a campaign issue. It`s only...

MATTHEWS: What American Republican supporter of Donald Trump or independent supporter or Democratic supporter of Donald Trump doesn`t know his position on this birther thing? Which one -- (INAUDIBLE) everybody knows it.

CORTES: Well, and they know...

(CROSSTALK)

TUR: We had this -- Steve, I`m sorry, we had this conversation with another surrogate, Jack Kingston, last week, and he said the same thing, that this hasn`t been a campaign issue.

But that is not true. Donald Trump might not be going on stage and saying, I don`t believe the president was born in the U.S., but his supporters believe that. And they yell it out at rallies and they say that`s why they`re supporting Donald Trump because he`s going to bring back Western values because this president doesn`t represent Americans because he is other, someone that wasn`t born here, someone that upholds, what they don`t call Western values. And when you press them for that, they say, Muslim values.

And Donald Trump might not be on stage saying that the president wasn`t born here, but he`s not dissuading his supporters, and he`s enjoying the support of those supporters that he has whipped up over the past five years.

CORTES: He did today. That`s not fair.

TUR: They support him because...

MATTHEWS: What`s not fair?

TUR: They support him because he doesn`t believe the president was born in this country, or he didn`t, at least until today.

CORTES: He doesn`t believe it...

TUR: That`s part of the reason they support Donald Trump.

CORTES: He -- he doesn`t...

(CROSSTALK)

TUR: ... not fair? How is that not a campaign issue?

MATTHEWS: How do you know?

CORTES: He told us so as concretely as he possibly could today. This has never been a campaign issue. The reason, too, that he had to address this today is because the mainstream media and our opponents on the left are, frankly, in a frenzy because we`re doing so right well right now...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORTES: ... and we have so much momentum in polling...

MATTHEWS: OK, that`s an argument. That`s an argument.

CORTES: ... that all they can go to is...

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: ... smearing and name calling!

MATTHEWS: What evidence do you have...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: What evidence do you have that Joy or I...

CORTES: Trump...

MATTHEWS: ... have discovered a new issue here?

(LAUGHTER)

CORTES: Trump...

MATTHEWS: I have been pounding this issue since the first time it showed its ugly head five years ago.

CORTES: Chris, I...

MATTHEWS: Most people are appalled that the first African-American president would be...

CORTES: Chris...

MATTHEWS: ... relegated to the position of illegal **immigrant** by...

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: Why do you keep try to make it racial? America is not a race! If you`re born here, you`re born here!

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Of course it`s racial! Let`s go back to reality here. They call him from Kenya because he`s African-American. They`re saying, Of course he`s from Kenya.

Joy, obviously, this is ethnic, obviously.

REID: Right. And can I just say that when -- when Barack Obama was first running for president, one of the common features at Republican rallies was to say very pointedly, Barack "Hussein" Obama...

MATTHEWS: Oh, yes.

REID: ... to emphasize that middle name. That was done quite often.

Second point, why is -- why is it that African-Americans, who have not up to now really been the target of Donald Trump`s diatribe -- why is it that African-Americans are the most diametrically opposed to him of any group, moreso than Hispanics, who have been the direct targets? Moreso than any group.

It`s primarily because the humiliation -- the attempt to humiliate the first black president is one of the main charges that African-Americans have against the Republican Party, have against the Tea Party. Donald Trump embodied that and used it to rise.

Ben Carson wouldn`t have even been a thought as a presidential candidate...

CORTES: Joy...

REID: ... had he not tried to embarrass the president at the prayer breakfast.

CORTES: You know...

REID: And one more point, and then I`m going to let you talk. Part of the Putinism that you`re seeing on the right -- what do they say? They say, We think Vladimir Putin is a better leader because he loves his country more than Barack Obama loves his. That was said as recently as today!

And so you have Republicans making the case that President Obama doesn`t love the country he`s president of. And this is all part and parcel of the birtherism...

CORTES: Joy, you...

REID: ... that Donald Trump rode to fame...

MATTHEWS: OK, Steve...

REID: ... and to the presidential nomination.

CORTES: You have not heard -- you have nod heard Donald Trump say that at all during this campaign.

REID: I`ve been listening to Donald Trump since I lived here in the late 1980s, and I think people understand him...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, everybody. Steve, Joy, just a second. I want to see the answer to that very important point you made there, which -- we were -- I watched television all today on this network, and I was watching a lot of members of the Black Caucus. They`re mostly Democrats, I`ll agree to that. But they`re very -- they were outraged. They looked outraged, I assume they are, about this charge of the first African-American president being from somewhere else.

Now, why do you think they`re upset? Why is the president -- or rather, Hillary Clinton -- we`re talking 90 percent here now, something like that, her getting against Trump. Why is that? Why is Trump losing 9 out of 10 African-American votes? What`s going on?

CORTES: Well, first of all, we`re fighting -- and I`m glad we`re fighting. We want to earn their votes. We want to persuade African-Americans that we have answers to a lot of the problems that are facing their community. And I love the way Trump`s doing that and doing it very intentionally.

But historically, we`ve done very poorly as a party. This isn`t new to Donald Trump. So we have a lot of work to do there. But I think this is important, too, because the candidate that you`re effectively backing, by the way, when it comes to highlighting Trump...

MATTHEWS: I`m effectively highlighting?

CORTES: Well, fine, Joy is.

MATTHEWS: Do you ever watch this show?

(LAUGHTER)

CORTES: All right, hold on...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I don`t think I`m exactly a cheerleader for either of these people, but I have to tell you...

CORTES: The Democratic candidate, when it comes to...

MATTHEWS: ... but I do try to bring the news to the public. And you haven`t answered the central charge. Why did I see so many African- American faces today on television outraged at Trump`s calumny against the president or all of our president? Why do you think they`re angry about this? You say they`re not.

CORTES: No, no, I`m not saying they`re not angry. I think they`re probably angry because they`re very proud and -- as they should be, to have the first African-American president. But they also should be very suspicious of Hillary Clinton because when it comes to a candidate...

MATTHEWS: OK. Should be?

CORTES: ... who highlighted the foreignness of Barack Obama...

MATTHEWS: When did she do that? When did she do that?

CORTES: In 2008...

MATTHEWS: Give me the words. We`ll look for the tape.

CORTES: ... she -- she...

MATTHEWS: We will look for the tape.

CORTES: She said...

MATTHEWS: Help us find the tape.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Who`s her chief strategist?

CORTES: Chief strategist Mark Penn said, quote, "Barack Obama is not fundamentally American." That is a direct quote, and it was a strategy piece that they put out in 2008.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: How did Hillary -- in what way did Hillary respond to that memo? Did she ever go out and say, This guy seems foreign or this guy`s exotic or -- I never heard Hillary do that.

CORTES: I didn`t hear her say that, but she -- she...

MATTHEWS: That`s what you`re accusing her of doing.

CORTES: ... -does have to take some responsibility for her chief strategist...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It was a memo to her that she didn`t react to!

REID: Right.

MATTHEWS: She didn`t do!

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

TUR: How is pointing out Mark Penn`s memo, that you just mentioned -- how does that negate five years of Donald Trump beating the drum on not being born -- the president not being born in the U.S.? How are those two things equal? How is one person in a memo, who got fired after that -- how is that equal to a Republican nominee going out for five years...

CORTES: Right...

TUR: ... and questioning the otherness of the president...

CORTES: Sure.

TUR: ... and also insinuating multiple times, and most recently at the Orlando massacre, that he was somehow sympathetic to terrorists? I don`t see how those two things are equal. Please help me understand if they are.

CORTES: Yes, no, listen, fair question. By the way, Mark Penn was not fired. He stayed very active in the campaign. It was a minor campaign official who was fired who was forwarding e-mails. And the campaign, by the way, felt strongly enough about this that the Clinton campaign officially apologized to the Obama campaign about -- for...

MATTHEWS: About what?

TUR: So Steve, should Donald Trump apologize?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... the president -- the presidential candidate -- Hillary Clinton -- do you have any evidence, Steve, that Hillary Clinton ever questioned Obama`s birth in this country?

CORTES: I do not of her directly. I do not, no.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Have you ever heard her in any way allude to it?

CORTES: No. No.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So birtherism is entirely a creation of the other side. Just to get the facts. Go ahead, Joy.

REID: And I`ll say one quick...

MATTHEWS: Hillary didn`t do this.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Facts matter!

REID: It`s just a fact. And the other issue is, is that a lot of the reason it`s so visceral for African-Americans, not only because of how proud people were to have the first black president there to see him, try - - attempt to be humiliated, but the other piece to what Donald Trump has said, up until an interview he did on Irish TV in 2014, where he also said Barack Obama needs to show his college records because we need to understand how it is that he got into Harvard. Was he there legitimately?

If you`ve been black and been anywhere near an institution of higher learning, you have probably at some point in your life heard, You don`t really belong here. You just got in here on -- because Affirmative Action let you in. You`re not qualified to be here.

African-Americans deal with this issue of being otherized and being told that the accomplishments that you worked hard for, the things that you...

MATTHEWS: OK, (INAUDIBLE)

REID: ... earned aren`t yours. He said that about the president`s college degree. He said it about his law degree. And he said it up until two years ago, and he said it about him winning the presidency. My God! It is un-American to make that charge!

MATTHEWS: Joy -- Joy, it gets worse. He says nobody knew him in school, like, Oh, the spooky music. Oh, who was this guy? Was he really in school? Was he really the guy named Barack Obama?

Steve, your response to that kind of talk by your candidate.

CORTES: Look, Chris, I didn`t see that interview, so I can`t comment on that. What he said today, definitively, period, is that the president is an American citizen. We have really important things now to talk about...

MATTHEWS: OK...

CORTES: ... security and prosperity. And that`s what we`re talking about, and that`s what we`re...

MATTHEWS: So you wish he`d never say it. Just to (INAUDIBLE) you wished - - you wished he`d never made this issue for the last five years.

CORTES: I wish he`d never gone down that road at all. Yes.

MATTHEWS: Well, he`s been down it a long time. And I`m not sure he`s come back all the way.

But, thank you, Katy Tur.

And thank you, Joy Reid.

Thank you, Steve Cortes.

Thank you, Roger Ailes, probably. I hate to say it, I guess. Probably, thank you, Kellyanne Conway, because somebody got to this guy and said, the game`s up. You have got to stop this crap.

Coming up -- Katy Tur, thank you. You raced in here.

Why is Donald Trump putting the birther issue back in the front page and why now, just as his campaign has regained its footing? Does he think he can just erase -- I think he obviously does. I`m not going to knock him for telling the truth, finally. It`s just what he`s said for the last five years that`s the issue. We have got our strategists here to talk about it and what Hillary Clinton needs to do right now to take advantage.

Can she take advantage of this birther thing at this point now that he`s closed the door on it for a while?

Plus, first lady Michelle Obama took on the birther lie today. She hit the campaign trail. She`s got the highest approval ratings, by the way, of anyone in politics. Can she convince skeptical young voters to get behind Clinton? That`s a big question. Can she do what seems tough right now?

The HARDBALL roundtable is here with three things you might want to know about the campaign right now.

And, finally, a wild week -- a wild end to a wild week. I will have my election diary for Friday, September 16. What a day this has been.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, the news keeps coming.

Libertarian party candidate Gary Johnson for president and Green Party candidate Jill Stein also for president failed to make the cut for the first presidential debate come September 26. The Commission on Presidential Debates announced that today.

And though Johnson and Stein satisfied two of the criteria necessary to participate, neither met the threshold on polling data. Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump will face off in that first debate 10 days from today, believe it or not. It is coming on, on September 26, while their running mates, Tim Kaine and Mike Pence, will debate on October 4.

And we will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

After five years of peddling that right-wing conspiracy theory called birtherism, Donald Trump today said that Barack Obama was, in fact, born in this country.

Well, his acknowledgement comes with just 52 days to go until the election, 52, amid mounting pressure from both allies and critics to clarify what he now thinks, or at least sort of admitted.

Trump did not say that he had been wrong with all of this. He did not apologize, and at the conclusion of today`s event, he avoided questions by restricting the pool reporters who were supposed to follow him afterwards and ask some questions. Didn`t let it happen.

Just moments ago, Trump made another controversial remark at a rally down in Miami. He was talking about the Second Amendment, of course, and suggested that Hillary Clinton could be the target of violence. Now, listen to what he said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: You know, she`s very much against the Second Amendment. She wants to destroy your Second Amendment.

(BOOING)

TRUMP: Guns, guns, guns, right? I think what we should do is, she goes around with armed bodyguards, like you have never seen before.

I think that her bodyguards should drop all weapons. They should disarm. Right? Right?

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I think they should disarm immediately. What do you think? Yes? Yes. Yes.

Take their guns away. She doesn`t want guns. Take their -- let`s see what happens to her.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: "Let`s see what happens to her" without an unarmed guard.

Anyway, I`m joined right now by Democratic strategist Steve McMahon, as well a Republican strategist Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union.

Well, start with you.

MATT SCHLAPP, FORMER WHITE HOUSE DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS: Sure.

MATTHEWS: We`re going to talk a little bit more about Trump today, but I got to talk about what he said.

Is he off the rails again? Why would he say, take away her bodyguards and see what happens to her?

SCHLAPP: I don`t know. It didn`t look to me like he was reading off a teleprompter.

MATTHEWS: I know, so he`s off the rails. I know. I`m saying, is this what his brain does when he`s thinking loosely?

SCHLAPP: I actually -- you`re not going to like this, but I actually...

MATTHEWS: You can say anything you want.

SCHLAPP: I do think it`s absurd for politicians who are protected by arms every day, because, let`s face it, we live in an unsafe society at times, for them to say that it`s OK for them to be protected, but that every individual doesn`t have the right to do the same thing.

And I think that`s -- he was just pointing out hypocrisy. Does he want something to happen to Hillary Clinton? Hell no. Let me tell you something. We want her healthy and we want to run against her.

MATTHEWS: Let`s see what happens. Let`s see -- what`s he mean by, let`s see what happens to her? What did he mean by that?

SCHLAPP: I mean I want her to be healthy.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, what did Trump mean by, let`s see what happens to her?

SCHLAPP: Look, his point is..

MATTHEWS: You throw that arm up in the air.

SCHLAPP: His point is, is this, which is, she needs to be protected. It`s obvious. And so do everyday Americans. They have the right to protect themselves too. And she shouldn`t...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK. You made the argument. You made the Trump argument, but a little more delightfully than Trump did.

What do you make of the way he said it?

STEVE MCMAHON, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Because that audience was not exactly pro-Hillary safety crowd out there.

MCMAHON: No, this wasn`t.

MATTHEWS: They were not worried about her well-being, this crowd.

MCMAHON: This wasn`t new for him.

And this is a guy who walks right up to the line and then steps over it on a routine basis. And, frankly, he doesn`t get called for it.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, we`re doing it.

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: Do you not watch this show?

(CROSSTALK)

MCMAHON: Well, I think he`s getting called for it right now. And I hope he gets called for it much more broadly, as he deserves to.

And one of the things that I have to wonder is whether or not he`s doing this deliberately, so that he doesn`t have to defend the birther stuff anymore or what he did today. He always comes up with the next outrageous thing in order to brush the last outrageous thing under the rug.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: OK, let me talk about it. Let me ask you about this citizens arrest he attempted five years ago of Barack Obama for being a usurper, of being somebody from Kenya, the whole absurd thing.

I don`t know if you heard the beginning of the show, but you can`t logically follow birtherism. It doesn`t work logically, that a young woman white woman, to be blunt about it, from Kansas said, you know, I want my son to be president some day, so I`m going to marry an African guy who is kind of an unstable guy, drinks a lot. I`m going to go over to Kenya and have the baby over there.

But, meanwhile, I`m going to have the newspapers report in Honolulu and the birth certificates and all say that I had the bay there, so that, 35 years later, he will be eligible for president. It`s Loony Tunes. It`s Loony Tunes.

SCHLAPP: That`s why he closed the book on it.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: For five years, he sold this stuff.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Not you, you. I know you`re upset that he closed the book on it.

I`m happy about it, because I don`t want to talk about it anymore.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You know what? I have been pushing him to do it. I can`t knock him for doing it. I have been pushing him to do it.

SCHLAPP: You won.

MATTHEWS: I have been pushing. Rudy Giuliani, I pushed him every time, stop this nonsense.

SCHLAPP: It worked. It worked.

MATTHEWS: Why did he -- the trouble with it, he didn`t have any new information on which to change his mind.

SCHLAPP: That`s right.

What`s happening in this campaign is this, is that...

MATTHEWS: He did it without information both ways.

SCHLAPP: He has put serious professionals around him, and he`s listening to them.

MATTHEWS: Grownups.

SCHLAPP: And I think he got advice to say, quit talking about this. You`re actually doing effective outreach in the African-American community. Quit talking about this.

MATTHEWS: OK. Great. OK.

Is this about the fact that he faces a debate in 10 days?

MCMAHON: Well, actually, I think he created some questions today that are going to...

MATTHEWS: Oh, you`re not going to let him off the hook, are you?

MCMAHON: Not at all.

MATTHEWS: OK.

MCMAHON: I`m not going to let him off the hook.

SCHLAPP: She has some questions, too.

(CROSSTALK)

MCMAHON: You know, he was supposed to have a news conference today. He parades around the hotel instead and shows everybody his brand-new hotel.

This guy is a marketer. He`s a salesperson.

SCHLAPP: Are you going to attack him for not having press conferences?

MCMAHON: He didn`t answer a single question. He didn`t answer a single question about what new evidence was provided to him that caused him to walk back his outrageous...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let`s drop the ideology and go with you guys what you`re good at, which is winning arguments politically.

I think he lessened the chance that birtherism will be a big topic in the first debate by what he said today. If he hadn`t done it, whoever the moderator, Lester or Martha Raddatz, or anybody that, Mike -- Chris Wallace, any one of those people would most likely say, do you still believe this president is here illegally or got here -- snuck in the country or assumed the president of the office illegally?

That would have been a guaranteed question, I would argue. This way, they can only say, as you`re suggesting, well, well, why`d you say that and then stop it, because then he can always say, look, I cleared that up.

SCHLAPP: As the Clintons always said, I have already talked about this. I have already given my answer.

MATTHEWS: What is it, MoveOn.org.

SCHLAPP: MoveOn.org.

And I also think it just takes the heat out of it generally, which is, yes, he`s going to go through some painful moments with people like yourself saying, oh, but, but, but. He closed the book on it. It`s over.

MATTHEWS: Which way is the momentum going right now in this campaign, right now, this Friday going into the weekend?

MCMAHON: Well, the momentum changes in these things pretty frequently.

MATTHEWS: Which way is it going right now?

MCMAHON: I think it`s Hillary`s.

MATTHEWS: You really do?

MCMAHON: She`s back out on the campaign trail.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It`s going to show in the numbers next Monday and Tuesday?

MCMAHON: Yes. She`s starting to make a positive case. You know, at the end of the day, this campaign...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHLAPP: Positive case? I haven`t heard...

(CROSSTALK)

MCMAHON: At the end of the day, this campaign is going to be decided by the candidate who offers the best and most compelling positive, aspirational...

MATTHEWS: What`s the one-word message of Hillary Clinton? The one word?

MATTHEWS: I know what your guy -- change.

MCMAHON: Together. It`s together.

MATTHEWS: OK. Great. We got it. You answered my question.

Strong together?

MCMAHON: Stronger together is two. But you asked for only one.

MATTHEWS: I know I did.

MCMAHON: Better together, stronger together.

MATTHEWS: You like stronger. You think together is better than change?

SCHLAPP: No, not when 70 percent of the American people think we`re on the track. I`m for change.

MCMAHON: Walls, change, attacking **immigrants**.

SCHLAPP: It`s a nice try.

MCMAHON: Racism, nativism. Those are all the words for Donald Trump.

MATTHEWS: Thank you, Steve McMahon.

SCHLAPP: And Donald Trump is the one that makes charges against people. That`s right.

MATTHEWS: Boston strong, right? Boston strong.

Anyway, thank you, Matt Schlapp. Thank you.

Up next: The HARDBALL roundtable on why Donald Trump can`t put the birther issue -- well, I`m not sure he can. Maybe he has for a while. We will see.

Plus, first lady Michelle Obama with a strong performance campaigning for Hillary Clinton. This is HARDBALL.

I can`t ask the guy to drop the birther thing, then dump on him for dropping it, OK? I think he was terrible doing it for five years. That`s my belief.

Anyway, the place for politics right here.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: No one is happier, no one is prouder to put this birth certificate matter to rest than the Donald.

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: And that`s because he can finally get back to focusing on the issues that matter, like, did we fake the moon landing?

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: What really happened in Roswell?

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: And where are Biggie and Tupac?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: That may have started the fight right there.

Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was President Obama roasting Donald Trump at the White House Correspondents Dinner back in 2011. Back then, we thought the issue of the president`s birth was put to rest then, of course, with the birth certificate. Of course, it was not.

But, today, over five years later, and after days, weeks, and years of refusing to acknowledge that President Obama is, in fact, an American, a natural-born citizen, up until today, Trump now says Obama in fact was born in the United States, and that it`s time, well, he says, now, move on. Here he is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: President Barack Obama was born in the United States, period. Now we all want to get back to making America strong and great again.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Am I wrong, or did he seem to be reading that the way sort of a POW reads something when they`re in captivity?

Anyway, but can Trump put this issue behind him that easily?

Let`s ask the HARDBALL roundtable, Eugene Robinson, Pulitzer Prize-winning opinion with "The Washington Post," Francesca Chambers, White House correspondent for "The Daily Mail," and Paul Singer, Washington correspondent for "USA Today." Big readership between all three of you. Big readership.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Let`s start with this one.

Trump says after five years of accusations, indictments, being the plaintiff, judge, jury and prosecutor of this issue all by himself, believed by a lot of the Trump people that he`s telling the truth that this guy`s a usurper, and now says, never mind.

EUGENE ROBINSON, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Never mind.

MATTHEWS: Does it work, the never mind?

ROBINSON: Never mind. I finished it, he says.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: Yes. I mean, look, you covered this as well as anybody over the years.

MATTHEWS: I know. I have been...

ROBINSON: You pressed him on it.

MATTHEWS: Rudy came through last week.

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: ... from the start, what he was doing with this, and what he continued to do with this.

And let`s just not forget, he kept this up for five years. It launched his political prominence and was, in many ways, the foundation of his political campaign.

MATTHEWS: Isn`t that interesting?

Do you agree, Francesca, this was the foundation on the right that made him a right-wing, to some extent, troubadour, a guy out there selling this stuff?

FRANCESCA CHAMBERS, "THE DAILY MAIL": It was a big story at the time.

MATTHEWS: No, is this part of his political foundation? Do you agree with that? This started him on the road to being a national political figure?

CHAMBERS: To moving to the right, to running for a Republican -- president, Republican, to being a conservative?

MATTHEWS: Yes.

CHAMBERS: Absolutely.

But you were asking whether or not this is something that will continue, will last. This is something that Hillary Clinton has been bringing up on the campaign trail the entire time that she`s been running. In almost every speech, she talks about his bigotry, about how he even questions where the president was born.

So this is not something that is new. And you know who really wants to move on from this is the president of the United States. Today, he didn`t want to talk about it.

MATTHEWS: Well, no, that`s different than not being an issue that helps him.

CHAMBERS: But when the president`s...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: There`s a lot of issues people personally don`t want to talk about.

CHAMBERS: ... shutting it down, Chris...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, he doesn`t want to talk about it himself. That`s different.

CHAMBERS: When he doesn`t want to talk about it.

MATTHEWS: Because he`s embarrassed by the stupidity of it.

CHAMBERS: And the White House gets asked whether the president wants an apology, and they are say no, they`re taking it off the table.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But being -- look, that`s different than wanting it off the table. Just a minute, Gene, because Gene agrees with me on this.

ROBINSON: Exactly. I agree with you on this.

MATTHEWS: This is a...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: It would be unseemly for the president...

MATTHEWS: Yes, to ask for forgiveness.

ROBINSON: ... personally to get involved.

However, if any number of other Democrats might go out, say, today, and bash Trump mercilessly...

(CROSSTALK)

PAUL SINGER, "USA TODAY": But Michelle Obama, I mean...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Because he`s not a whiner, Francesca.

The great thing we all like -- one of the things a lot of people like about him, he`s not a whiner. He doesn`t, oh, woe is me, they call me bad names. He doesn`t do that.

But he doesn`t mind if other people defend him.

SINGER: He doesn`t need to. He can have Michelle Obama on the campaign trail.

MATTHEWS: She made fun of the guy today.

SINGER: Making fun of the guy and cutting the figure that the Democrats want to cut.

MATTHEWS: She`s a winner.

SINGER: She`s a powerful, smart black woman who`s able to go to these communities and say, this is what we`re really all about.

MATTHEWS: And, by the way, it`s better to be a winner than a whiner, or an Anthony Weiner.

(CROSSTALK)

SINGER: If Donald Trump thinks he`s going to reach black voters by doing this thing today, with Michelle Obama doing her thing at the same time...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, I don`t think so.

Once again, here`s what Trump just said about Hillary Clinton. And this, I think -- I didn`t think so until I heard it a couple times. Now I hear the problem with this. It`s a serious problem.

Here`s what he said about guns protecting his opponent in this race from physical violence. Let`s hear what he says.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: You know, she`s very much against the Second Amendment. She wants to destroy your Second Amendment.

(BOOING)

TRUMP: Guns, guns, guns, right? I think what we should do is, she goes around with armed bodyguards, like you have never seen before.

I think that her bodyguards should drop all weapons. They should disarm. Right? Right?

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: I think they should disarm immediately. What do you think? Yes? Yes. Yes.

Take their guns away. She doesn`t want guns. Take their -- let`s see what happens to her.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Let`s see what happens to her.

EUGENE ROBINSON, THE WASHINGTON POST: Let`s see what happens to her.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, it wouldn`t be the first time, because that remark was reminiscent of something Trump said last month about what he called Second Amendment people. Let`s listen to this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Hillary wants to abolish, essentially abolish, the Second Amendment. By the way, and if she gets to pick --

(BOOS)

If she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do, folks. Although the Second Amendment people, maybe there is, I don`t know.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What is about these tags of his? He`ll say something, OK, you can make the argument about judges, and he just can`t resist.

ROBINSON: He can`t resist it.

MATTHEWS: The suggestion, well, if you want to knock her off, that might work. It`s unbelievable. The Second Amendment people, it`s like that woman from Nevada, Second Amendment remedies. Why do they keep talking about Second Amendment action? It`s a right, not an action. You don`t have to suppose to take action like that.

ROBINSON: Every other politician I`ve ever known or even known of has a sort of governor switch in their head, you know, that keeps them from adding that little speculation about assassination, right, because you don`t do that. Trump doesn`t have it. He doesn`t have it. And so he goes there.

And you just wonder, what`s going on inside that head, constantly, right? Is this the sort of thing he fantasizes about?

MATTHEWS: Part of the attraction of Trump, as a show --

FRANCESCA CHAMBERS, DAILY MAIL: You never know what he`s going to say.

ROBINSON: Because he has said things that are sometimes very funny. But he doesn`t have that -- well, there`s a word for it that I can`t use, but it`s a detector, stops you from putting out the crap you shouldn`t be putting before the public and only the good stuff.

CHAMBERS: I think the difficulty for Hillary Clinton`s campaign, though, in capitalizing on a remark like that is that it`s a Friday night, Chris, and the campaign, the news cycle resets itself. By the time she would talk about this on the trail on Monday, I mean, it`s a couple days now.

MATTHEWS: Watch this weekend. I think this is going to reverberate. And I didn`t think so until I watched Richard Lui an hour ago.

PAUL SINGER, USA TODAY: This is his community. This is who he interacts with. They all believe that Hillary Clinton wants to ban your guns and that`s bad and she`s a bad person.

MATTHEWS: Well, you shouldn`t talk about the vulnerability, the violence of anybody, anytime. The roundtable is sticking with us.

Up next, First Lady Michelle Obama hits the campaign trail today to prop up Hillary Clinton and blast Donald Trump`s birtherism claims.

By the way, she may be the best politician out there for a couple of reasons. We`ll get to that in a minute. First of all, she`s not a politician, mostly.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MICHELLE OBAMA, FIRST LADY: There were those who questioned and continue to question for the past eight years, up through this very day, whether my husband was even born in this country. Well, during his time in office, I think Barack has answered those questions with the examples he set, by going high when they go low. And he`s answered these questions with the progress that we`ve achieved together.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. That was the first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, taking a not-so-subtle shot at Donald Trump`s birtherism today as she campaigns for Hillary Clinton in the northern Virginia suburbs. She was at George Mason University, a key battleground area in the race to replace her husband in the White House.

Well, Michelle Obama boasts a 64 percent approval rating according to Gallup, the highest of any of the other high-profile political spouses.

Anyway, so is America`s current first lady the secret weapon for Hillary Clinton, a former first lady herself?

Back now with the HARDBALL roundtable, Eugene, Francesca, and Paul.

Francesca, I thought she was delightful today, your thoughts?

CHAMBERS: She is a very effective advocate not just for her husband, but also Hillary Clinton. And I`ll tell you, the Clinton campaign wishes they could have Michelle Obama out there every day on the campaign trail.

MATTHEWS: Is it youth they`re after? She seems to -- those are kids there -- a very diverse crowd at George Mason, you know? I look at that crowd, they may not be voters unless you push them to vote. I think they need a little push.

ROBINSON: Exactly. You know, she -- you know, for Hillary Clinton to pull this off, they`ve got to activate those young voters. They`ve got to -- they need them.

MATTHEWS: They can be called deciding (ph) vote.

ROBINSON: And when you have Michelle Obama up there, it kind of harks back to the Obama coalition, I think, when young people did come out and support him. And they may be a little lukewarm about Hillary Clinton, but they`ll come to see Michelle Obama.

MATTHEWS: She said, Hillary inspires me. I thought that might be the lead, because Hillary doesn`t inspire everybody.

SINGER: Keep in mind, you said the 64 percent approval rating, I bet it`s a lot higher in the crowds she want her to hit.

MATTHEWS: Why is Michelle popular among college kids?

SINGER: Well, she`s charming, she`s energetic, she`s African-American, she raised these two terrific kids.

MATTHEWS: She seems very youthful.

ROBINSON: Very, very hip in popular culture.

CHAMBERS: She`s very fashionable.

ROBINSON: She`s gone on game shows. She knows the lingo. She has two teenage daughters. She knows the latest dances and music.

SINGER: She`s pals with Ellen. You know, who`s not?

CHAMBERS: And Oprah. And Bey, and Jay-z.

MATTHEWS: The roundtable is sticking with us.

Up next, these three --

SINGER: I want video of that.

MATTHEWS: It`s available.

Tell me something I don`t know. This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, coming up next, Tuesday, we`ve got a great show as we get ready for the first presidential debate. We are calling it thousand win or lose a debate, a HARDBALL rules. We`re going to have a look back at past debates and the great moments, the great lines when you knew one was going to win. One had struck gold and the other was done.

Here`s an example from 1988.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. DAN QUAYLE (R), FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I had as much experience in the Congress as Jack Kennedy did when he sought the presidency.

MODERATOR: Senator Bentsen?

SEN. LLOYD BENTSEN (D), FORMER VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you`re no Jack Kennedy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Boom!

So, catch "How to win or lose a debate: The Hardball Rules", next Tuesday at 7:00 Eastern.

And don`t forget the first presidential debate. That`s coming up on 26, the Monday afterwards here on MSNBC, all night. That`s a big show for us. And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL roundtable.

Eugene, tell me something I don`t know.

ROBINSON: Last month was the hottest August on record. It`s tied for the hottest month on record. This is all according to NASA. In 2016 --

MATTHEWS: It wasn`t dry heat either, was it?

ROBINSON: No. But on the planet, on the planet in 2016 will almost surely be the hottest year on record by considerable margins.

MATTHEWS: Doesn`t it feel different than just hot? Because it`s always the hot wet blanket in Washington. This feel like a Martian heat. It`s different.

ROBINSON: Well, get used to it. But, listen, I just want to point out, there`s in this presidential race, there`s one candidate who takes climate change seriously and that`s Hillary Clinton. The other believes it is a Chinese hoax. So, elections have consequences.

MATTHEWS: Francesca, you`re up --

CHAMBERS: Secretary Clinton and President Barack Obama met for 15 minutes at an event. The White House didn`t talk about any Syria or any serious policy. She showed him pictures of her grandchildren.

MATTHEWS: OK.

SINGER: Donald Trump`s new hotel is opening but it`s probably not actually ahead of schedule. In fact, it might be slightly behind schedule.

MATTHEWS: The one down in Pennsylvania Avenue?

SINGER: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Is he going to be waving there if he loses the election? Is he going to be waving from the hotel as the Hillary drives by?

SINGER: And the Secret Service owning a tower during that little parade.

MATTHEWS: We don`t talk Second Amendment here.

Anyway, thank you, Eugene Robinson, Francesca Chambers and Paul Singer.

When we return, my election diary for the wild end of this week, a wild week. You`re watching HARDBALL, a place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary, Friday, September 16th, 2016.

Well, today was a moment in Donald Trump`s life, like one of those bicentennial moments we used to celebrate way back when. He took back what he insisted upon five years ago, allowed everyone to think he still believe all this time. Why did he give up the sham claim that the president is some sort of impostor, someone who snuck into this country so he could one day pluck from history the part of first African-American president of the United States?

Well, I`ve got a couple of clues. One is that once his top surrogate Rudy Giuliani said he believed President Obama legitimate, and others join him, the pressure will build for Trump to come clean and admit the truth, that being that he doesn`t believe the sham or the claim of birtherism he`s been perpetrating these past five years.

The second pressure is the coming series of presidential debates. There is no way I can imagine Trump getting through the first debate, much less all three, and not have a moderator or Hillary Clinton blast him for his nasty claim about the president. It seems to me someone in this corner, Kellyanne Conway, Roger Ailes, must have come to this conclusion and told Mr. Trump to act now and cut his losses. They certainly don`t want to main headline coming out of the first presidential debate to be about birtherism.

So, consider today trash day, with the man coming to pick it up also being the man who happened to be the man who left the trash on our doorstep in the first place.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Ed Rendell, Howard Fineman, Michael Steel, Robert Costa, Milissa Rehberger

10208 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: He's back!

Let's play HARDBALL!

Good evening. I'm Chris Matthews in Washington.

Did you catch President Obama today? If you didn't, you missed the LeMans start of what could be the wildest barnstorming presidential campaign ever, certainly one by an incumbent and certainly a campaign for someone else.

Barack Obama made it clear today that it is personal. He's in the race to succeed him -- in the race to succeed him because he passionately wants Hillary Clinton to win and fanatically wants Donald Trump to lose, lose humiliatingly, lose in such a mortifying way that he'll disappear from the country's public life.

In a clear sign the president knows how to do it, he chose Pennsylvania today as the place he would plant his stake in Donald Trump's heart, knowing that Trump knows he needs Pennsylvania. He went there today in the 80-degree heat to rouse Philadelphians in the same way he did in getting himself elected in '08 and '12.

He wants to use his presidency now to demolish the man who refuses to retract his celebrated charge that Barack Obama isn't a legitimate president, that he somehow snuck into the country, assumed an identity, and used affirmative action to get his way through Columbia University, Harvard Law and into the White House.

Well, Donald Trump should have been more careful in who he made as an enemy. This one's coming back for payback.

For a second straight day, by the way, Hillary Clinton was off the trail recovering from pneumonia, but we got word late today, just now, in fact, that she will resume campaigning on Thursday.

Well, today, the president showed why many consider him to be the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's best surrogate out there. The president called Clinton tough, prepared, and fit to be commander-in-chief. Here he is in Philly.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Can I just say I am really into electing Hillary Clinton!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: Like, I -- I -- this is not me going through the motions here. I really, really, really want to elect Hillary Clinton.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: I believe there has never been a man or a woman more qualified than Hillary Clinton to serve as our president!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, it was a gorgeous day in the city which is now the Global Heritage City right now of this country. As I said, President Obama seemed just fired up, in fact, more fired up going after Clinton's Republican opponent, Donald Trump. He said Trump's vision of the country is dark and pessimistic. He called Trump out for hiding -- I love this phrase -- hiding his tax returns, and he said Trump isn't fit to be commander-in-chief.

Here he is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: I keep on reading this analysis that, well, you know, Trump's got support from, like, working folks. Really? This guy who spent 70 years on this earth showing no concern for working people? I mean, he wasn't going to let you on his golf course!

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: He wasn't going to let you buy in his condo. And now suddenly, this guy's going to be your champion?

One candidate's family foundation has saved countless lives around the world. The other candidate's foundation took money other people gave to his charity and then bought a 6-foot-tall painting of himself!

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: I mean, I -- I -- you know, he -- I -- I -- he had the taste not to go for the 10-foot version.

He's not offering any real policies or plans, just offering division and offering fear. And he's betting that if he scares enough people, he might scare up enough votes to win this election.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: There are words in that speech that are magical to the political ear. One was, He's hiding his tax returns -- hiding them, not showing to us, hiding them. And the second was, This man of the people, Donald Trump, won't let you even on his golf course.

Anyway, Secretary Clinton could benefit, of course, from the president's help today. Just as polls show the race between her and Trump tightening, President Obama is enjoying some of his best approval ratings ever.

Catch this. In the brand-new "Washington Post"/ABC poll out this week shows, President Obama sits at 58 percent approval. Nobody's got numbers like that but him. And in the NBC/"Wall Street Journal" poll last month, he has the support of 96 percent of African-Americans -- that's not a big surprise -- 90 percent of Democrats, nearly 60 percent of young people.

Well, can the president help Clinton win this race? We'll see. Joining me right now is former governor of Pennsylvania Ed Rendell -- he's an NBC News political analyst -- Howard Fineman, global editorial director for the HuffingtonPost and NBC political analyst. And with me here in Washington, Susan Page, Washington bureau chief for "USA Today."

So we've loaded up our ranks, Governor, with Pennsylvanians who know this state.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I have to tell you, we got a guy so excited, he's in after- glow from the Steelers last night.

HOWARD FINEMAN, HUFFINGTON POST GLOBAL EDITORIAL DIR., MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes!

MATTHEWS: He and his son, Nick, went up to FedEx field, but the fact is, the Steelers did play a hell of a game.

FINEMAN: Yes, they did.

MATTHEWS: There's no doubt about it. And I know the governor likes the Steelers almost as much as he likes the Eagles.

Governor, Republicans have this sort of weird sense -- I don't know what you call it, "heartbreak hill" might be a good phrase for Pennsylvania. They always think they can win it, and they don't. What's going on with their -- why is their thinking so wrong that they think they can knock off this guy, win the election for president by winning Pennsylvania?

ED RENDELL (D), FMR. PA GOV., MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, because in non-presidential years, the Democratic registration edge, which is over 900,000 -- that edge dissipates because Democrats don't turn out in non- presidential years. I was the exception because I was the home town guy when I ran.

But in presidential years, the turnout is extraordinarily good, and President Obama can jack that turnout up better than anybody. I want to refer you to 2010, Chris, when there was a Senate election between Pat Toomey and Joe Sestak. The president came into Philadelphia two times, Michelle came in once, and their message was, They're out to get me.

And he took that message into the city, into different areas of the city. And even though it was a Republican wave year, Sestak lost by a little less than 2 points. And the turnout -- Pat Toomey told me when he saw the turnout in Philadelphia, he thought he'd lost.

So no one can generate better turnout like the president. He is the best. He is the turner-outer in chief.

MATTHEWS: OK. Howard, it's personal with this guy.

FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: I mean, I hope you agree with me. I think he wants to beat Trump almost more than he wants Hillary Clinton to be his successor. He wants this guy disgraced and humiliated. He wants him out of there after what he did to him.

FINEMAN: Well, Chris, a couple things. First of all, I've been covering this a long time, covering presidential politics, and I don't remember an outgoing sitting president campaigning this hard, this early. I think it's almost unprecedented, number one.

MATTHEWS: I agree.

FINEMAN: Number two, the language that President Obama used today in Philly -- that's tough language. That's political, you know, dynamite. And it's still only September. I mean, and he's already got the pedal to the metal. That's number two.

Number three, Philadelphia is the key to Pennsylvania because, in part, as the governor knows, western Pennsylvania has been trending more Republican. And the counties around Pittsburgh have become more Republican. They're sort of part of Appalachia, not the East Coast.

So Trump's going to get his votes out in the western part of the state, and it's crucial for the president to turn out those people that you talked about, African-Americans, registered Democrats, and most important, I think, young people of all colors, White, African-American, Hispanic, et cetera. They've got to turn out to make sure that Pennsylvania remains "heartbreak hill" for the Republicans.

MATTHEWS: You know, it's interesting. We have an incumbent Democratic president who's very popular right now. It's hard to believe we're saying a popular president after all he's been through, but he is, 58 percent the latest -- I can't think of a popular president -- if you go back to Eisenhower, he campaigned very hard for Nixon at the very end.

But Nixon was stupid enough not to bring him in earlier, but he campaigned like -- he'd come into Philly, get a half million, million people on a Wednesday lunchtime. Even in New York, he'd get big crowds.

But this time, we have a popular president who seems to really like the person he's campaigning for. Unlike -- and Bill Clinton and Al Gore had that weird conflicted relationship there.

SUSAN PAGE, "USA TODAY": Well, first of all, he's a popular president so he can do the candidate some good. And the candidate also likes him. I mean, it goes two ways. Look at Al Gore. He didn't want Bill Clinton campaigning for him. John McCain -- George W. Bush at that point was politically toxic. Ronald Reagan had a complicated relationship with George...

MATTHEWS: But he got Pennsylvania for George, Sr.

PAGE: So he did some campaigning for him, but it was not the kind of campaigning that we saw today by Barack Obama or that we'll see through the month of October.

MATTHEWS: Obama was gleeful today.

PAGE: And you know what? He was joyful. It was like, Why don't we - - it's like, we don't see that on the campaign stump, I think, with either of the candidates we've got. They don't seem happy to be there.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I know.

PAGE: He seemed happy to be there.

MATTHEWS: Governor, you're the expert at this because you campaigned like this. You're the happy warrior. By the way, you were the best mayor the city ever had.

Pennsylvania's a weird state. Explain Pennsylvania to the person who doesn't get it because I find it fascinating. You can be in three quarters of the state and think you're in Alabama Republican-wise, in terms of geography, but then you go to Pittsburgh, and especially to Philly and the 'burbs around it, and you realize you're sort of more in Jersey or New York. You're in a different state.

RENDELL: It is. It's too separate and distinct states, urban and suburban versus rural. And there's a lot of rural area. Pennsylvania is a very big state, biggest state east of the Mississippi, in area, and six different TV markets.

But the key -- Howard's right about turnout in Philadelphia. That's key number one. But key number two for Democrats to carry the state is to win the suburbs by significant numbers. Barack Obama in 2012 carried the four suburban counties, which, as you know, Chris, used to be Republican territory. He carried it by a margin of 120,000.

Hillary Clinton is on a pace to carry it by double and maybe even triple that, if the polls are correct. If she carries the suburbs by 250, the city by anywhere near what Barack Obama carried it, she's going to come out of the five counties three quarters of a million votes up, and there just aren't enough votes in the rest of the state to make it up.

MATTHEWS: Yes. And that's a third of the state. That's a third of the electorate. That's 11 in 22 of the burbs.

RENDELL: Right.

MATTHEWS: That's a third of the state.

Howard, let's take a look at Pennsylvania and the country. My argument at the end of the show -- I might as well give it away now -- Lee Atwater, who was one tough political operative -- he worked for the Bushes and Reagan -- he said the best way to win a campaign, if he can do it, is to find the state that the other side knows they desperately need to win, and then early on, yank it away from them, take their heart out early, break their spirit, like Atwater did it with Michigan against the Democrats.

FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: If they take Pennsylvania away from Trump, doesn't he know he's going to lose?

FINEMAN: I think the mathematics, Chris, don't work because Pennsylvania has enough of Appalachia in it, enough of those rural areas that the governor's talking about, and enough of the counties around Pittsburgh -- there are some suburban and exurban counties around Pittsburgh -- Washington County, Fayette County -- that are becoming more Republican.

MATTHEWS: Well, I know that.

FINEMAN: OK. So Trump -- Trump has to win every one of those votes because he's basically maximizing white conservative rural turnout and exurban turnout. He's got to get that maximum to have a chance at Pennsylvania.

And also, the Electoral College mathematics, I don't think, any way you cut it, don't work out without Pennsylvania.

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE)

FINEMAN: I don't see how Trump can win it without PA.

MATTHEWS: I think everybody knows the same scorecard, Susan.

FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, take this one. President Obama today mocked Donald Trump -- his sarcasm today was so rich. He knocked Trump for his apparent bromance with Vladimir Putin, his role modeling of the guy. It was rich stuff today from Obama. Let's watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: You've got the Donald, who just last week went on Russian state television to talk down our military and to curry favor with Vladimir Putin!

(BOOS)

OBAMA: He loves this guy! Loves this guy. And when they interview and ask him, Well, why do you support this guy? He's a strong guy. Look, he's got an 82 percent poll rating.

Well, yes, Saddam Hussein had a 90 percent poll rating!

(LAUGHTER)

OBAMA: I mean, if you control the media and you've taken away everybody's civil liberties and you jail dissidents, that's what happens!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You know, Susan, everybody -- I watched all the faces, like we all do in crowds -- the faces -- those people were having a great time, and they completely got all his shots. They completely -- there was no communication problem. They got the humiliation, the ridicule he was throwing at Trump.

PAGE: You know what's the best way to make a point, to put the knife into somebody? It's with a little bit of humor...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

PAGE: which is what he was doing there by ridiculing the notion that you would have praised...

MATTHEWS: The irony.

PAGE: The irony, yes. And it's, like, and everybody -- and as you say, everybody understood it. And rather than a frontal assault about, Well, you know, Vladimir Putin is a despot, to talk about it that way, it's just -- it engages the crowd. It makes the point. It's what makes politics fun.

MATTHEWS: You know, Governor, I remember you campaigning and your connection with people. And this guy's ability to get the Philadelphia attitude, almost. The attitude -- come on! This is a joke! This guy -- I mean, the rich ridicule that everybody -- I mean, like Eagles fans, for example, they don't like the other side, either, much.

Your thoughts. Is this going to work with some of the Republicans up there? Because he was saying today a lot of stuff like, the president was, like, this isn't the party of Lincoln. This isn't the party of Reagan. This is something outrageous, and basically, you moderate folks watching on television should be thinking about voting for Hillary.

RENDELL: Yes, I think so, Chris. I think that's going to work for suburban Republicans, who are essentially moderate.

I think the president actually laid off a little bit. I thought what Donald Trump said Friday night was the single most frightening thing he's said on the campaign trail, that when the Iranian boats circled our naval ships when they strayed into Iranian waters and they made derisive gestures towards our sailors, that if he was president, we'd blow them out of the water.

Well, we're going to start a potential world war because someone made gestures to us? Good Lord! He's unhinged! He's unhinged!

FINEMAN: Yes, I think, Chris -- I think that all the people in Pennsylvania who would be impressed by that threat -- and I know who those people are -- they're already voting for Donald Trump. I think the governor...

RENDELL: Right!

FINEMAN: The governor's point is partly that you've got these suburbanites, and including a lot of women, you know, who are looking at that, and you know, they don't find that amusing.

MATTHEWS: I know.

FINEMAN: They don't find the threat amusing.

MATTHEWS: Like the Robert de Niro character in "Taxi Driver."

FINEMAN: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: You talking to me! You talking to me!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: That's all we need is a president like that, with a hair trigger.

Thank you, Governor Rendell. Thank you, Howard Fineman. Good luck with those Steelers. Hell of a game last night.

FINEMAN: Thank you. Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Who's that running back? Williams? Unbelievable!

FINEMAN: Deangelo Williams (ph). He's only number two, Chris. Wait until we get Le'veon Bell (ph) back, baby.

MATTHEWS: OK, baby.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Thank you very much...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) shakeup out there!

Anyway, coming up, Donald Trump's trying to make Hillary Clinton pay for her "basket of deplorables" comment, but the Clinton campaign says the issue's a winner for them. That's an interesting development there. Can Trump really claim the high ground for what Hillary said? Maybe not. That fight's ahead.

Plus, we don't see much of Bill Clinton these days. What's Big Bill up to? Journalist Joe Conason spent a lots of time with the former president for Conason's brand-new book, "Man of the World." It's all about Clinton. And Conason's with us tonight.

And Donald Trump's trying to take advantage of Hillary Clinton's absence from the campaign trail these days. He's up in Pennsylvania this hour with his daughter, Ivanka, pushing a plan to give families a tax break for child care expenses. We'll keep an eye on that and whether Trump's going to speak during our hour.

Finally tonight, my "Election Diary" on where the campaign stands right now after what happened today in Philly.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Donald Trump yesterday promised to release very specific numbers from a recent physical he had. Well, today, television host Dr. Oz said that results or some results from that physical will be revealed on his show this Thursday when Trump appears there.

But Dr. Oz made clear today it was up to Trump what he chooses to reveal during that program. Let's listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What if there's some embarrassing things on there? I bet you won't release them.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Well, it's still going to be his decision.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's his decision. It's -- you know, I -- look, the metaphor for me is this is a doctor's office, the studio. So I'm not going to ask him questions he doesn't want to have answered, and I also don't want to talk about anybody else. We're not going to be talking about Secretary Clinton, for sure. And I don't want to talk about things that are outside the health purview.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: While my opponent slanders you as deplorable and irredeemable, I call you hard-working American patriots who love your country and want a better future for all of our people.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I love the gestures he uses. They're like Jesus' gestures in the religious books.

Anyway, welcome -- inappropriately, of course.

Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was Donald Trump today continuing his line of attack on Hillary Clinton for her remark this Friday, this past Friday, that half his supporters are -- quote -- "a basket of deplorables."

Well, Trump has called her remark the biggest mistake of the political season. But while Clinton has said she regrets characterizing half of Trump's supporters -- she didn't like the percentage -- as deplorable, some in the Clinton campaign now say that they welcome this debate.

Deputy press secretary Jesse Ferguson, reached by NBC News today, said: "The Trump campaign is seemingly inviting a debate about the extent to which their campaign has promoted and fueled an alt-right hate movement in this country that many Americans do find deplorable, as we saw Monday night when their V.P. nominee refused to call David Duke deplorable."

Anyway, the Trump campaign's new strategy has started to backfire. That's according to the Clinton administration -- Clinton campaign.

Press secretary Brian Fallon also said, "Ever since Clinton expressed regret," in other words, it's too many to say half, "Trump has been fighting on our turf," their turf, the Clintons'.

As Ferguson mentioned, however, Trump's running mate, Mike Pence, has declined to use the word deplorable in rejecting -- even though he rejected David Duke, he wouldn't use Hillary Clinton's term, deplorable, for whatever ran.

Anyway, Trump campaign manage Kellyanne Conway today said on CNN that Pence should have called Duke deplorable, if only to avoid negative headlines. She's always the sharpie politically.

However, Pence said later today that he would not validate the language Clinton used, validate being his word.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Yesterday, I was asked a question about that. And I repeated that again. And the simple fact is that I'm not in the name-calling business.

But I'm also not going to validate the language that Hillary Clinton used to describe the American people. Hillary Clinton wasn't talking about that bad man.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, I'm joined right now by MSNBC political analyst Robert Costa of "The Washington Post." He's with us now.

Robert, just give us the reportage on this thing -- reportage, rather.

What is -- who's going to win? Whose turn -- my theory is, topic decides who wins. No matter what the argument is, if you're on certain topics, it decides who wins. What's your view on this one, racism, all the other isms that Hillary Clinton mentioned on Friday and how many Trump people meet the description?

ROBERT COSTA, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Chris, talking to Clinton allies, Clinton advisers, there's a sense that that the more they can bring the alternative right into the national debate, Clinton's on good footing. And they want to have that conversation in these final seven to eight weeks of the campaign.

But the other school of thought is, when you talk to the Trump people, they think this reinforces Trump's pitch as some kind of anti-establishment force in American politics, us vs. them, almost a Spiro Agnew, Richard Nixon-type vibe going on with the Trump argument.

MATTHEWS: Who's right?

COSTA: I think, right now...

MATTHEWS: Who's most convinced they're right? I want to ask you a fair reporter's question. From talking to these people, who's the most cocksure that talking about deplorables and who called who deplorable is a victory for which side?

COSTA: It depends how the suburban voters swing.

That's where this is all targeted. If you're in North Carolina in that Research Triangle, if you're in Ohio or Pennsylvania, how do you hear this kind of debate? When you hear deplorables, does it scare you away from the Trump campaign? Do you get skittish? Or does it make Hillary Clinton, the secretary's campaign feel like something that you can't be part of?

MATTHEWS: Yes. Well, thank you much, Robert Costa. Great reporting. We're always watching you, sir.

The Clinton campaign has launched a counteroffensive, as I said, in the wake of Trump's attacks. Let's watch how Tim Kaine today cited Pence's, Governor Pence's comments about David Duke to defend his running mate. Here's Kaine.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. TIM KAINE (D-VA-), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Just in the last couple of days, Trump has been going after Hillary because she gave a speech calling out deplorable comments.

You know, she advanced the notion that if you're chumming around with the head of the Ku Klux Klan or people who have that title, that's deplorable. You have to call that out.

If you can't call it out and you stand back and you're silent around it, you're enabling it to grow. You're enabling it to become more powerful.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

KAINE: We want to be a nation of the positive virtues, not the dark emotions and not the negative virtues.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, I'm joined right now by MSNBC political analyst Michael Steele, former chair of the RNC, the Republican National Committee, as well as former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, who is a senior adviser to the pro-Hillary Clinton group, the super PAC, Correct the Record.

You first, Governor. Who's winning on this one? Because it is the turf -- if you're a progressive, you don't like -- you especially want to go after the alt-right.

JENNIFER GRANHOLM (D), FORMER MICHIGAN GOVERNOR: So, the president today suggested this defines the character of a nation.

This is really a debate about who we are. So, if 87 percent of Trump's supporters believe that Muslims should be banned from this country, which they do, if 65 percent...

MATTHEWS: And a lot of them think Obama's a Muslim.

GRANHOLM: Right. Sixty-five percent think that Obama is a Muslim.

MATTHEWS: And should be banned.

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: And 59 percent believe that he was not born in this country.

And 50 percent believe that blacks and **immigrants** are more prone to criminality. That, that -- the strain that has been...

MATTHEWS: You mean by their nature. They're bent towards crime.

GRANHOLM: Right, bent toward crime, right...

MATTHEWS: Yes. Right.

GRANHOLM: ... by virtue of being African-American or an **immigrant**.

The point is that he has given this movement some voice, some life, and that, to me, is really -- and, to her, is a fundamental issue of who we are, because that's not America. And to say that's not acceptable is really important.

MATTHEWS: Michael, your views?

MICHAEL STEELE, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: No, I think, from a political standpoint, this is advantage Trump, because I think it's a reflection of a lot of -- it's not just Republicans, although they like to cite those polls.

I would say this is a broad swathe of Americans who have this view. Again, when the national poll was taken over the summer, 56 percent of American people, white, black, Hispanic, Republican, Democrat, said that Islam was not compatible with American values.

MATTHEWS: Right.

STEELE: So there is this undercurrent that has that has attached itself to some degree to the campaign.

I think when it comes to the David Dukes of the world, the campaign has certainly recently been much more emphatic about it, but I think -- against it. But I think the reality still plays to the undercard here that this is a topic that still resonates with a lot of people.

When you give a context with respect to how you talk to the American people about this, and when you start blaming them and laying this out at their footsteps...

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: Do you think -- you would say David Duke is deplorable.

STEELE: I would say David Duke is...

GRANHOLM: Deplorable.

STEELE: ... just un-America, is un-American.

GRANHOLM: But why wouldn't you use that word?

MATTHEWS: Because it's Hillary's word.

STEELE: Because it's Hillary's word.

GRANHOLM: Would you say that Hillary is deplorable?

STEELE: I would use something far worse that I can't say on national television.

MATTHEWS: OK.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let's talk about this one.

This is what I find not mystifying, but -- I don't know. This country had 250 years of slavery, legalized slavery...

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... before we have -- even we had a country, we had slavery. We had 150 years of -- or 100 years of Jim Crow.

We had whatever's been since, which hasn't been exactly perfect on racial stuff.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: And now we have a party -- two parties arguing over who's better on race?

It just strikes me as odd that one party says, we're simon-pure perfect, the other side's no damned good. And I wonder about that. I don't think it's clear. I don't think it's true. I don't think people are that simple.

STEELE: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: And I certainly don't think partisan label defines your views about humanity.

STEELE: Absolutely right.

And on all three of those points, you are spot on, because this type of discussion becomes a sidebar discussion, because it doesn't go to what you actually articulated at the very beginning, the underlying current of who we are as American citizens.

When you start -- when pull it into the political, then it becomes a partisan discussion.

GRANHOLM: But that's -- the whole point is that this is not about the Republican Party.

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: It's not about the Republican Party. There is a slice of Trump voters that go way beyond what the Republican Party would ever stand for, the party of Lincoln. So, that's her point.

STEELE: So, let me ask you -- so ,let me ask you, Governor, how, then, do -- should I react as a black man running for the United States Senate in 2006 when I'm called an Uncle Tom by a sitting member of the state legislature, who's a Democrat, in my state, a sitting member of the United States Congress?

GRANHOLM: But that's my point.

STEELE: Well, this is my point. This is my point.

You want to sit there and slide this off into one side of the political pie. What I'm saying is, this speaks to a broader problem that we have in this country. And when you bring it into the political context, you lose sight of the reality that we all deal with every day.

I don't look at this -- when Hillary Clinton said, I didn't put it in political context, I said, you're now talking about a broad swathe of the American people. And that's going to be the problem, not whether it's Republican or Democrat.

GRANHOLM: Listen, I don't disagree with you at all. My point is saying that this swathe, whatever that is, that unacceptable swathe, you could say they're Democrats, independents, or Republicans, but they have attached themselves to Donald Trump. And that's the problem, is that he has..

MATTHEWS: Should Hillary Clinton have said, the candidate, that there's a basket -- I don't even like the word basket -- of people? It's like binders of women. Remember that one?

GRANHOLM: Right. I remember that.

MATTHEWS: A basket of deplorables, half -- whatever the percentage she said she meant to say, she said half. Is that fair?

GRANHOLM: No. No. And she said -- she came back and said...

MATTHEWS: Well, if she said a quarter, is that fair?

GRANHOLM: No. I mean, I don't...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Why is she putting a number on it?

GRANHOLM: Before, she had previously there are two groups, and not putting a number on it. But the point is -- and she apologized for that.

MATTHEWS: Do you think it had anything to do with her health?

GRANHOLM: No.

MATTHEWS: Because they put that in the paper today. Somebody put it out that it was a bad weekend for -- she -- in other words, if she had taken a rest...

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: No, Chris. She would be the last person to use health to excuse that. No, no, no.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I don't know. Who knows, by the way?

GRANHOLM: No, she had previously said two groups. And she misspoke, and she apologized, but the point being...

MATTHEWS: If she had said a fifth, if she had said a fifth...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But the very fact they're using the phrase basket of deplorables, I wonder whether the phrase itself is troubling to a lot of people.

(CROSSTALK)

STEELE: It is troubling, because even when you say two groups, I don't care how you cut it. That's 50 percent.

GRANHOLM: No, that's not.

STEELE: Well, it is. If I say, there are two groups that support you, that means...

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: How big are they, right?

STEELE: Well, but I'm just saying...

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: The point is that -- the point is that this...

STEELE: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Yes, OK.

GRANHOLM: ... this strain of thought is Trump's strain of thought. And that's...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I have been trying to figure it out.

Governor and Mike, I have trying to figure out -- Governor as well, Lieutenant Governor -- I have been trying to figure out if there's an alternative. Like, everything, I always try to figure. Suppose a Republican said this about a Democrat.

And I keep thinking, what would be the worst thing to say about Democrats? Half that party are socialists. I go, wait a minute, that's not so bad. Democrats wouldn't be offended by that. So I'm not sure what you can call people on the left. What would you say?

What would be deplorables on the left to you? What would you say a bunch of Democrats are deplorables? What would you mean?

(CROSSTALK)

STEELE: I would think that, from my perspective...

GRANHOLM: Please be careful.

STEELE: No, I'm -- be careful.

MATTHEWS: Lefties?

(LAUGHTER)

STEELE: No, I would just say, no, I think we tend to look at this thing through just one lens. And my argument would be that this cuts on both sides.

You don't sit there and act like there aren't racist people on the Democratic side.

GRANHOLM: Absolutely. And I agree with you on that.

STEELE: That's the bigger part.

(CROSSTALK)

GRANHOLM: I agree with you on that. But the "Washington Post" poll today said 60 percent of Americans think that Trump is -- not a bigot. What did they say? Sixty percent believe that he is...

MATTHEWS: Is biased.

GRANHOLM: He's biased. That's right, biased against African- Americans and women.

MATTHEWS: You know what? I still got a problem with Trump on that, on -- not on his personal view of people, which I don't know what that is, but why he calls the first African-American president some sort of usurper.

GRANHOLM: Right. Right.

MATTHEWS: He's got to get past that before Election Day. And if that doesn't come up in the debates, I will be amazed.

STEELE: No, he does, because you cannot have a conversation with the community...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: He might as well get it behind him now. If I were him, get it behind you now. Come on here and get it behind you.

Michael Steel, Jennifer Granholm...

GRANHOLM: Come on. Come on.

MATTHEWS: Granholm.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Great guests.

Up next: We haven't seen a lot of Bill Clinton on the campaign trail, so what's he up to these days? Author Joe Conason has been tracking the former president for his new book, brand-new book, "Man of the World."

That's almost like president of the world. Wasn't that our special here?

And he will be here next.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I'm Milissa Rehberger. Here's what's happening.

The attorney general for New York has opened an investigation into the Trump foundation. Eric Schneiderman says he's concerned the charity may have engaged in some impropriety regarding the laws governing charities in

New York state.

And U.S. households got a raise last year for the first time since 2007. Incomes surged 2.5 percent in 2015. That's the largest annual gain since 1968 when the Census bureau began releasing data in 1968 -- back to HARDBALL.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL CLINTON, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: She's doing fine. She -- she was even better last night, before she went to sleep. She had a good night's sleep. She just got dehydrated yesterday. She's worked like a demon, as you know, as secretary of state, and as a senator, and in the years since.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

That was Bill Clinton, of course, last night on "Charlie Rose" in a rare interview talking about his wife's health.

But what is Bill Clinton, the man who revolutionized what it means to have a post-presidency, really up to day to day right now? I find that question somewhat fascinating.

The former president and possibly the first gentleman of the United States sat down with the author Joe Conason for multiple interviews for Conason's brand-new book, "Man of the World." Conason gained access not to the former President Bill Clinton, but also to Hillary Clinton, daughter Chelsea, friends, colleagues, aides, and supporters. He got in the door.

Joe Conason joins us right now.

Joe, thank you. Good luck with this book out there now. It's a nice cover, although his head's cut off. It's a strange thing at the top.

Let me ask you about Bill Clinton.

JOE CONASON, AUTHOR, "MAN OF THE WORLD": Thank you, Chris.

MATTHEWS: And this is something that is just totally "People" magazine stuff.

CONASON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: What does -- what does he -- he's been out of office 15 years. He's still a young guy by post-presidential standards. He's still generally healthy, it seems.

What does he do every morning? Does an alarm clock go off? Does he get up and go to the office? Does he take a shower, have breakfast like everybody else, go to work? What does he do every day?

CONASON: I think his -- I think the days are different, Chris.

There are travel days for him, especially in the campaign season. He's traveling around the country a lot now for Hillary's campaign.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

CONASON: There are, I think, work days at the foundation, especially now because, as I said in the book, they have been considering for months what to do if she does become president with the foundation. They know to have to...

MATTHEWS: But what does work mean for Bill Clinton, work? When he says, got to go to work today, what does that mean to him?

CONASON: Well, work means the work of the foundation, overseeing the work of the foundation.

It means -- at different times, it's meant things like writing books. And you know what that's like. You sit in a room. And he's usually working with an aide, doing something like that.

Work means going out and raising the money for the foundation. They raised, you know, an endowment that's a quarter-of-a-billion dollars over the last few years. So, there's a lot of different kinds of work.

MATTHEWS: Well, you know, I just did some checking. Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton together have ran in 18 elections, actual elections, November, the whole thing, campaign...

CONASON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... do the whole thing, 18 elections, starting when he ran for Congress out in Arkansas, then ran for attorney general. Then he ran for governor, and he lost it. Then he ran and won five times in a row. Then he ran for president a couple times. He won both times.

Hillary Clinton has won now for Senate twice. She has ran for president the second time now. They both, I think, ran for student office.

CONASON: Right.

MATTHEWS: What drives them, in terms of elections? Why do they run so often? What drives them to run as politicians for their whole lives, really?

CONASON: I think -- you know, I don't have a cynical view of them. I think they really want to change the world.

I think they have wanted that since they were kids. And it goes through various permutations of what kind of change they think should happen and at what pace and in what ways. But I think they have always felt they wanted to make things better.

And I think they like the power and the...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

CONASON: You know, he likes campaigning.

MATTHEWS: I think he does.

CONASON: She's -- as you know, she's wonkish. She likes the issues, she likes the study, she likes to get into it.

She's not a natural campaigner the way he is. But I think they both find aspects of politics that are rewarding to them.

MATTHEWS: Well, he's an interesting guy. And you have written an interesting book.

"Man of the World," that's your book. Good luck on the book, Joe Conason. There it is, the cover, with that little bit of head missing up there at the top.

(LAUGHTER)

CONASON: Thank you, Chris.

MATTHEWS: Up next: Donald Trump's in Pennsylvania tonight, trying to cut into Hillary Clinton's support by pushing an issue that is meant to appeal to women voters, of course.

Plus, three things you might not know about this election coming up.

You're watching HARDBALL.

There are the flags already for Trump again. Love those flags.

Be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Tonight, Donald Trump's holding a campaign event in Aston, Pennsylvania. He's enlisted his number one surrogate, his daughter, Ivanka, to help roll out a policy proposal, which the Trump campaign says will help with the cost of child care.

The Trump campaign has taken advantage of Secretary Clinton's absence from the campaign trail today to go after a key voting bloc, educated, affluent mothers.

Ivanka Trump, mother of three, is one of her father's most trusted advisers and is reportedly has helped shape the proposal. According to "The Washington Post," she has, quote, "encouraged her father," that would be Donald Trump, for weeks to detail policies that would appeal to parents who feel overburdened or underserved by existing programs. Ahead the speech, the Clinton campaign released this statement, quote, "After spending his entire career and this entire campaign demeaning women and dismissing the need to support working families, Donald Trump released a regressive and insufficient maternity leave policy that is out of touch, half baked, and ignores the way Americans live and work today."

For more, I'm joined now by our roundtable: Ruth Marcus, a great columnist for "The Washington Post," because I always agree with her, John Brabender, who's a smart guy, if occasionally wrong, Republican strategist, and Stephanie Schriock is president of Emily's List.

I want to start with Ruth.

And to get this picture, clearly, he needs women voters. Clearly he needs younger voters, because they're the one with kids, generally. My kids have kids. And child care is a big deal. It costs a lot of money, people want a break. They need a break.

RUTH MARCUS, THE WASHINGTON POST: Child care is really expensive, it's a huge cost for families. Donald Trump needs more support from women voters. He is not going to get -- it would be astonishing if he got majority support from women voters. But what this is geared to is narrowing that gap a little bit.

And it is really a chasm right now. If you look at any of the numbers, any of the polls, women voters like him less, support him less, than men do. Educated women voters. The kinds who might be going to work and really struggling under child care expenses, even more.

MATTHEWS: Yes. What do you think? Do you think married women look at him? Because married women have kids. Other women do, too, of course. But, we're looking at sort of a target audience here. Somebody with kids of -- not preschool age, school age, who make a moderate income, and for them, it's impossible.

They've got to go into a local neighborhood child care situation, they may like, they may not be able to afford individual child care. That's for better off people, period. So, he's saying they're going to get a tax break.

STEPHANIE SCHRIOCK, EMILY'S LIST: Right, and it's a tax deduction, instead of a tax credit, which is helpful the more you make. For those who are just they starting off and not making much, it's actually not getting - -

MATTHEWS: They say he can make up to $250,000 a year, which is a lot of money by any standard, six times the natural average, and you can do it and you can break up to $10,000.

SCHRIOCK: But it's a tax deduction, not a tax credit.

But I think what's really important to think about, you are exactly right. He has lost so much, never really had it, but with women voters. And particularly, he's even now, in most polls, losing college-educated women, which was not the case. And so, yes, this is a ploy. We're less than 60 days out.

MATTHEWS: How is this a ploy if a Democrat did it?

SCHRIOCK: Well, first off, there isn't much to it. It is the bare minimum.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I think it shows -- he's showing a little leg in a sense. Showing, to use a term, I think he's trying to show he cares.

JOHN BRABENDER, REPUBLICAN STRATEGIST: Well, it's politically incredibly smart, strategically. First of all, he's doing it in Pennsylvania. He's doing it on the eastern side of Pennsylvania. So strategically, that's smart.

Second of all, this is not a conservative Republican plan. There will be some conservatives who say, why are we doing this? He is doing this in a way that a lot of women will say, this makes sense to me.

Unlike Hillary, he's not raising taxes to pay for it. And it is reaching an audience --

MATTHEWS: So where's the money coming from?

BRABENDER: He says he's going to do it from saving money in the unemployment program.

MATTHEWS: Waste, fraud, and abuse, the old canard. The old tricks.

BRABENDER: I know. We can't believe there's waste in the federal government.

MATTHEWS: Can't they get rid of waste first and not have new programs?

BRABENDER: Can't they get rid of waste first and not raise taxes?

MATTHEWS: Yes, OK --

(CROSSTALK)

BRABENDER: You're all talking about this being desperate. The "L.A. Times" tracking poll has Trump over three points over Hillary. Who are these people voting if the women aren't voting for him?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: I love that question. You're right. Let me explain.

John, that's right. These numbers are very close nationwide. And yet every category of people -- women, minorities, younger people, are all voting against him. How can that all be true? And he's running pretty much a little bit behind Hillary? How is that possible?

MARCUS: Because what we really need to --

MATTHEWS: Are men voting for him 90 percent?

MARCUS: Men are not voting for him 90 percent, but men are voting for him more than women are.

I think the answer to your question about "why is this a ploy?" is, because it's coming now. This is the kind of thing, I have to say, that Hillary Clinton has been talking about, A, for months, and B, for her entire career.

MATTHEWS: I agree.

MARCUS: And imagine how smart it would have looked if Donald Trump had raised this, for example, in his convention speech, or months before.

(CROSSTALK)

MARCUS: She's not running for president.

MATTHEWS: I want some news here. Trump's campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, who's very smart about these things we're talking about, earlier today was talking about Hillary Clinton's policy proposals. Let's listen to Kellyanne.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: We can't really find a lot about her child care policy on her website. Maybe they're putting it up now as I speak to you, but we know they talk about it, but we're actually going to do it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, according to the "Associated Press", comparing policy proposals by the numbers, Donald Trump has offered only seven detailed issues on his website, while Hillary Clinton has offered 38. The one title goes to Hillary.

And here comes Ivanka, by the way. We have to take a little peek at this thing in Pennsylvania, eastern Pennsylvania, here's Ivanka, the daughter of the candidate.

IVANKA TRUMP, DAUGHTER OF DONALD TRUMP: Good evening, everyone.

A few years ago, I read about a single mother facing homelessness, whose child care arrangement failed her the morning of a final job interview. Out of options, she made the tragic choice to leave her young children in a hot car while she attempted to secure the job in order to better the life of her family. She returned to the parking lot following the interview to find her vehicle surrounded by the police. Her children had been hospitalized and she was jailed and charged with felony child abuse.

As I have traveled around the country with my father, stories about the hardships caused by our existing child care system, one that is too expensive, too outdated, and too inaccessible, come up time and time again. Just last week, I spoke military spouse who recounted the vicious cycle responsible for holding so many of American families back economically. She relayed to me the frustration I've heard all too often of not being able to work and bring home a second income because she can't afford quality and reliable child care.

Stories like these go straight to my heart, and they've steeled my belief that there has to be a better way. I have three young children myself, and I'm grateful daily for the means to pursue two of my dreams, being a mother and investing in a career that fulfills me.

I recognize that far too few women can say the same for themselves, and that I am more fortunate than most. This must change. As a society, we need to create policies that champion all parents enabling the American family to thrive. My dad agrees, and he's in a very unique position to do something about this problem and the numerous other problems facing tens of millions of parents and caregivers across our country.

Today, child care is the single-greatest expense for many American families even exceeding the cost of housing in much of the country. It's depleting the hard earned savings of men and women across our nation and it's at the root of wage inequality by disproportionately affecting women.

The federal policies that are in place to benefit families were written more than 65 years ago to serve a primarily male workforce that no longer exists. Dual income families were not the norm in 1949 when the current tax code provisions regarding families were established. Today, however, women represent 47 percent of the U.S. labor force, and in almost two-thirds of married couples, both spouses work outside of the home. Seventy percent of mothers with children at home also work in a professional capacity and 64 percent of these moms have kids age 6 and under.

The number of households led by single mothers has doubled in the last 30 years and approximately two-thirds of these women work in low wage jobs that offer neither flexibility nor benefits. My father has created a plan that is designed to bring relief and to provide working parents with options so that they can make the decisions that are in the best interests of their families. Safe, affordable, high quality child care should not be the luxury of a fortunate few.

Historically, this has not been an area that has received nearly as much attention in the policy world as it deserves. While there are systems in place for older children, hardly any intellectual energy has been devoted to addressing the needs of families with children from birth to 4 years old. In particular, little focus has been put on determining how best to alleviate the enormous financial burdens child care places on low income and middle income families.

At the same time, the United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that does not provide new mothers with paid maternity leave. My father's policy will give paid leave to mothers whose employers are among the almost 90 percent of U.S. businesses that currently do not offer this benefit. This is a reform that is of critical value and long overdue.

My father's plan also recognizes and supports the many women who may not be mothers but have left good paying jobs to care for elderly dependents. This is another example of people who have been routinely ignored by federal policies. Having employed and empowered thousands of women at every level of his company throughout his entire career, my father understands the needs of the modern workforce and is offering a new and innovative solution where others have not.

My father's plan also acknowledges the vital contribution of stay-at- home moms and parents, fathers and mothers, who will ensure that they, too, will receive these new tax benefits. Raising children full-time is one of the hardest jobs anyone can do, and it's essential that our policies recognize and honor that reality. As an employer, a mother and a woman who works both inside and outside the home, these are topics I consider of critical importance.

The policy my father is about to outline is one that I'm proud to have helped conceptualize and ensuring its enactment will be one of my top priorities when he's elected come November.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MATTHEWS: OK, let's get back.

What do you make of this, Ruth?

MARCUS: I think that Ivanka Trump is a terrific surrogate for her father and she's making an argument, a reasoned argument about an important issue, but it's not an issue that Donald Trump has paid any attention to or will be paying any attention to now absent her.

MATTHEWS: Stephanie, can he jump into something like this two months before an election and say I really care about child care, Donald Trump?

SCHRIOCK: We're 56 days out. And already through his rhetoric **alienated** women so badly that, A, minor policy that I really think is a ploy here that's minimal is not going to fix this problem with women voters.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It's like Hillary Clinton saying, I'd like to open -- I'd like to get into the casino business. It's a little bit odd, John.

BRABENDER: But this is not about child care. This is about --

MATTHEWS: Let's watch him. Here's Donald Trump.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Thank you, everybody. That's very nice. Beautiful. Thank you very y much.

And I want to applaud my daughter Ivanka for her work and leadership on this issue. She has been working so very hard. Ivanka's been deeply invested in this since long before the campaign began, I can tell you that.

And I'm very grateful to her for her work, her efforts and this proposal which we're going to be outlining right away. I think it's going to make a lot of people very, very happy. A lot of moms very happy.

(APPLAUSE)

I want to also take a moment to recognize Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rogers, the chairwoman of the House Republican Conference, and a mother of three small children, who has been such a leader and worked so hard with us. So, Cathy, we want to thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

Also, we're joined tonight by some amazing members of Congress in our audience, Congresswomen Blackburn, Lummis, Black, Hartzler and Ellmers. Come on up. Just come on up here. Come on, they worked so hard on this. Come on up.

(APPLAUSE)

Come on. Somebody, get up and say something.

REP. MARSHA BLACKBURN (R), TENNESSEE: Well, I won't tell you -- my name is Marcia Blackburn, and I'm from the great state of Tennessee. And I want to say thank you to all of you for the warm reception that you have given to us, and I want to say a special thank you to Mr. Trump. Focusing on the issues that affect working women --

MATTHEWS: Well, election diary Tuesday, September 13, 2016, we're watching it.

Mark down today as the date President Obama entered the 2016 election and showed his stuff. That stuff is his light, joyous, mischievous assault on the person of Donald Trump. Obama wants this one.

He wants it for Hillary Clinton because she'll protect his legacy personally, protect what he's for politically. She'll do for him what any president needs once he's left the trappings of the White House and the immediate power of the presidency. President Obama once said privately that the two things he'll miss when out of office are the plane, Air Force One, and the valet who sets out his clothes in the morning and keeps his room neat.

Well, one thing he's determined not to be without is having a president in the White House speaking well of him and carrying on his basic policies. The last thing he wants is to go down in history as the president whose terms of office the American people rejected, with such gusto, they were willing to replace him with Donald Trump.

The vital importance of today is that, despite a surrogate for Hillary Clinton, who was unmatchable by the other side, a surrogate who knows just where to strike at the opposition, Lee Atwater, a terrifying smart political operative for the Republicans once developed a method for breaking the other side's heart. Find a state that they know they need to win, then early on, take it away from them.

Today, we watched the president of the United States, a man from the other party execute the Atwater tactic with unalloyed glee. Pennsylvania is mine, he essentially said today, that means you lose.

And that's HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHRIS HAYES, "ALL IN" HOST (voice-over): Tonight, on "ALL IN" --

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Do you mind if I just vent for a second?

HAYES: Hillary Clinton calls in backup.

OBAMA: I really, really, really want to elect Hillary Clinton.

HAYES: The president lets it fly in Philly, dressing down Donald Trump.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Kristen Welker, Jonathan Capehart, Hallie Jackson

9732 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Sick day.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

Hillary Clinton is in Chappaqua tonight, resting from a weekend that wasn`t supposed to go this way. Diagnosed with pneumonia on Friday, she decided to, as they say in big-time sports, play hurt.

As can often happen, that turned out to be a bad call. Under the hot sun of Sunday morning, her condition turned for the worse. You can judge the pictures for yourself because video surfaced of Clinton waiting to get into her van after leaving the ceremony early yesterday. She was unsteady and clearly required support. She seemed to be losing her footing there.

She went to her daughter`s apartment next, later emerging and waving to the crowd. Unfortunately, a second decision was made to keep the whole matter from the public. That`s when a bad day took a turn for the worse. The Clinton campaign put out word that because of the heat down at that ceremony for 9/11, Secretary Clinton had simply left the occasion earlier than scheduled. Her people now say that keeping what actually happened secret was, as they said, a bad call. Here they are.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BRIAN FALLON, CLINTON CAMPAIGN SPOKESMAN: I think that in retrospect, we could have handled it better in terms of providing more information more quickly. In those 90 minutes, we were putting priority on making sure she was OK. I should say that as soon as she got into the vehicle, she was alert the whole time and was telling staff that she was fine.

But I do think that in those 90 minutes that elapsed, we could have gotten more information out more quickly, and that`s on the staff. That`s on us, and we regret that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, it wasn`t until Sunday evening, however, that the campaign disclosed that Clinton had been diagnosed with pneumonia on Friday. To tamp down concerns, of course, her doctor put out a statement that Clinton was recovering "nicely."

Well, the other side raises two questions, I think, one that can be resolved quickly if dealt with honestly. That is Hillary Clinton`s health prognosis. If her pneumonia is of the type that can allow her to continue her campaign at the robust pace that`s needed, candidate or not, is it OK for her to get out there and keep being a candidate? And that`s a question for the doctors themselves.

The other question yesterday`s incident raised can only be answered by the voters` attention to the candidate. Are they willing to accept her instinct -- Hillary Clinton`s instinct for rigidly controlling information about herself? Are they open, given her other strengths as a possible president, to live with her propensity to release news only when releasing has grown to be the only option?

Are they ready to accept what`s called in politics "rolling disclosure," admitting to the truth only when the truth is out in the public already -- for example, when there`s an iPhone video airing that shows you being lifted into a car?

Well, this afternoon, Clinton tweeted, "Thanks to everyone who`s reached out with well wishes. I`m feeling fine and getting better." She also said, "Like everyone else, everyone who`s ever been at home sick from work, I`m just anxious to get back out there. See you on the trail soon." Well, that`s good campaign flackery.

Anyway, we do wish her well. Who doesn`t? Anyway, Clinton has canceled a trip to California for a fund-raiser. The campaign announced that Bill Clinton -- well, that makes sense -- will go in her place.

Meanwhile, both the Clinton campaign and Donald Trump are both promising additional medical information`s going to be released later in the week. We`ll believe it when we see it. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

FALLON: It is our intention that in the next couple days, we`re going to be releasing additional medical information about Hillary Clinton. We`ve been in touch with her physician this morning to get those materials together. We`re going to be releasing that to further put to rest any lingering concerns about what you saw yesterday.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Last week, I took a physical, and I`ll be releasing when the numbers come in. Hopefully, they`re going to be good. I think they`re going to be good. I feel great. But when the numbers come in, I`ll be releasing very, very specific numbers.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I`m joined right now by NBC`s Kristen Welker. Let me ask you, Kristen, one simple question that`s going to linger. Did the Clinton campaign intend to keep secret, for whatever reason, her pneumonia prognosis from Friday until it became obvious something was wrong?

KRISTEN WELKER, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Well, I think there were discussions about how and when to disclose the information. I think you had a couple problems, Chris, behind the scenes. One, all of the controversies that were being spun up by some Republicans questioning Secretary Clinton`s health, and number two, the 9/11 memorial.

I have been told by Democratic sources close to the campaign, close to Secretary Clinton, she was not going to miss the 9/11 memorial. She was a senator on September 11. This was personal for her. So I think there was a sense in the campaign that the candidate was feeling pressure from all sides, and that`s part of what delayed it.

And you also had Secretary Clinton saying she could power through. She wasn`t coughing on Saturday, and so she felt as though she could go to the memorial. Now, based on my conversations with sources, there was an intention to at some point divulge the information to the public. But the question is when, how would that have happened, and would we know at this point if we didn`t have that video? Those remain open questions.

The campaign obviously pushing back on that, but it does feed into the broader questions about transparency. And I think that`s why you`re seeing her campaign officials come out today and say, Hey, we could have done a better job. I anticipate when Secretary Clinton gets back out on the campaign trail, Chris, she`s going to need to address that head-on to put this criticism to rest.

MATTHEWS: You know, the problem for me out there -- I`m not a big part of this story. Obviously, I`m a minuscule part of it. I`m just one of the people commenting on the campaign. And I`ve been saying there`s no real evidence of Hillary Clinton having a serious health problem.

And we were arguing that -- I was arguing that, of course, with former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani as recently as Thursday, and he was saying, Oh, no, look at the internet information, which is not very valuable, of course -- in fact, not reliable. But also, look at all the coughing spells she`s had.

When you covered, did you see any extreme coughing that would suggest pneumonia?

WELKER: Well, that cough that we saw about a week ago in Ohio in which Secretary Clinton really struggled to catch her voice and to catch her breath -- it was a coughing fit that went on for over two minutes. It was quite notable. She tried to joke about it. She said, I`m allergic to Donald Trump. But being there in the crowd, you knew that the cough was significant.

Now, of course, she said that that was a cough due to allergies, but now we have this diagnosis. The Clinton campaign, part of why they want to release the medical records is to make the point that the only thing that is wrong here is pneumonia and this is obviously something that is treatable with antibiotics.

Worth pointing out, Chris, a number of her campaign staffers also got sick with serious colds, and I know at least two of them who also had pneumonia. So it does seem as though there`s something going around the Clinton campaign. But other than that coughing spell, I didn`t see any signs that she was dealing with something serious.

MATTHEWS: I didn`t know we`d be doing so much work on the medical front, but we certainly are this campaign.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: We`ll have to hear from Trump later this week, too. He`s also promised to put out his latest medical report from last week, his examination. Anyway, thank you, Kristen Welker.

Anyway, this morning, President Obama`s former chief of staff -- former chief strategist, rather, David Axelrod, ripped the Clinton campaign for its failure to fully disclose her illness. Quote -- he said, "Antibiotics can take care of pneumonia. What`s the cure for an unhealthy penchant for privacy that repeatedly creates unnecessary problems?"

That was a tough statement, and a crafted one, which shows he really wanted to say this. It wasn`t off the cuff. It was a tough comment by Axelrod about the Clinton campaign, which means Clinton.

Anyway, joining me right now is Jonathan Allen, the co-author of "HRC," a great book about Hillary, and Heidi Przybyla, senior political reporter for "USA Today" who wrote the main front story, the main bar (ph) story today.

Heidi, you first. I will get to the biographer here. What does this say, in all fairness, objectively? Does Hillary Clinton have a penchant for privacy beyond the usual normal American penchant to keep your own personal health to yourself?

HEIDI PRZYBYLA, "USA TODAY": Well, the answer to that is yes. But is this going to be a case that magnifies that and makes it a deal breaker for the American people? Probably not because you can look...

MATTHEWS: How about a week breaker?

PRZYBYLA: You can look -- you can -- you can look at -- a weak breaker, maybe. But you can look at the pieces of this and look at what Brian Fallon said and kind of put this together and figure out what happened here, which was she knew on Friday she was sick. She thought, I can take the antibiotics and power through this, and we`ll see what happens on Monday. Well, that didn`t exactly work out, and instead...

MATTHEWS: Do you think she was ever going to disclose, if she could get away with it?

PRZYBYLA: Who knows? Given the narrative that was already out there and being pushed -- by the way, I don`t think many people know this, but this has been going on for many months. "The National Enquirer" wrote a piece back in October saying she`d be dead in six months. There`s been stuff -- OK -- stuff like that out there that`s been circulating, but...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You shop in Safeway, you read the stuff in those papers, right?

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Horrendous!

PRZYBYLA: Unfortunately for her, this takes some of that stuff mainstream.

MATTHEWS: I know.

PRZYBYLA: These people feel empowered.

MATTHEWS: How are they going to jump this, crosswalk this to a serious question of health beyond pneumonia? I had pneumonia about five or six years ago. It is very -- let me put it clearly. I`ve had malaria and pneumonia, pneumonia feels worse. It just makes you feel terrible. I ended up getting steroids to get through it. Or what are they called? Steroids, yes. And it was great.

JONATHAN ALLEN, CO-AUTHOR, "HRC": Did you hit a lot of home runs the next season?

MATTHEWS: No, no. It was only three or four days. But I`ll tell you, it took something like that to shake you out of the very bad feeling you have.

ALLEN: Yes, I mean...

MATTHEWS: It`s not crippling, it`s just bad.

ALLEN: I think that it really depends on what the Clinton campaign does from here. They say they`re going to release more medical records. I think that`s very important right now. The problem is that they weren`t being forthcoming.

MATTHEWS: Does this make Rudy look right?

ALLEN: No.

MATTHEWS: OK, explain why it doesn`t because he was hinting all last week and before about how you got to go on the internet, you see how bad her sickness is. And I said, There`s nothing on the internet worth reading. But he kept talking about the coughing spells.

PRZYBYLA: That`s all they have, the coughing spells.

ALLEN: Look, four years ago, three years ago, Karl Rove went out and basically suggested she had brain damage. Remember "Benghazi flu"? The last...

MATTHEWS: Well, you`re getting further out. I`m saying, does a cough lead (ph) to a sign of pneumonia? Yes or no.

ALLEN: A cough is a sign of pneumonia.

MATTHEWS: OK.

ALLEN: I`m not a -- let me say I`m not a doctor. I may have stayed at a Holiday Inn Express, but I`m not a doctor.

MATTHEWS: I never said you were!

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Anyway (INAUDIBLE) incident has only amplified previous questions about her health. Just last week, as I said, former mayor Rudy Giuliani on HARDBALL brought up concerns -- I`m not sure "concern" is the right word from Rudy -- about Clinton`s recent coughing fits. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Do you think there were any signs of illness last night by the former secretary of state -- signs of illness?

RUDY GIULIANI (R), FMR. NEW YORK CITY MAYOR: No, but I thought there were the day before...

MATTHEWS: No.

GIULIANI: ... when she coughed for about, I don`t know, 15 minutes, and then she coughed on the airplane and then she spit something up and -- I don`t know what`s wrong with her, but they kind of hide her and...

MATTHEWS: Mayor, Mayor, Mayor -- have you got any evidence besides...

GIULIANI: I don`t!

MATTHEWS: Do you have any evidence that she`s ill? What is the evidence?

GIULIANI: I don`t. All I do is see all these incidents of her coughing all the time. I don`t know what it is. And I`ve seen her in several other situations where she didn`t look healthy.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, I say this in the crassest possible way, score one for Rudy, OK, because they did say the coughing suggested something more serious than just, you know, sort of you had a cold.

PRZYBYLA: Well, they didn`t have anything until now, and as you noticed today...

MATTHEWS: They`re going to run with this baby!

PRZYBYLA: ... they`re not talking about it because they think there actually might be -- might be -- a kernel of truth to it. So that is why it`s so important within the next few days for the Clinton campaign to come out with something more conclusive, to back up what Brian Fallon said, which is that there is no underlying condition.

MATTHEWS: OK. Why did they run on this thing months ago? Why have they been running, ranting on the topic of health care -- not health care...

PRZYBYLA: You mean of her health?

MATTHEWS: Yes! Why did they get onto this thing?

PRZYBYLA: Look at who some of the advisers are. I mean, this is a tried and true tactic. Didn`t they try to do the same thing in 1988 with Dukakis, kind of like just subtly? It`s not what...

MATTHEWS: They said he was seeing a shrink.

PRZYBYLA: It`s not what`s true that matters, it`s the suggestion. It`s the power of the suggestion. They even had Reagan say, you know...

(CROSSTALK)

PRZYBYLA: ... an invalid, right?

MATTHEWS: Exactly.

PRZYBYLA: And so it helped create the impression, and that was what was...

MATTHEWS: Well, it didn`t create her pneumonia, though. So that`s just what you`d call gratuitous or serendipity on their part.

Anyway, on Sunday, Donald Trump was characteristically -- uncharacteristically silent about Secretary Clinton`s abrupt departure from the 9/11 ceremonies. And this morning, he called in to -- you knew he`d do it -- Fox News and CNBC and addressed the incident. Here`s what he said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: I hope she gets well soon. I don`t know what`s going on. I`m -- like you, I just -- I see what I see. The coughing fit was a week ago, so I assume that was pneumonia, also. I mean, I would think it would have been. So something`s going on. But I just hope she gets well and gets back on the trail. And we`ll be seeing her at the debate.

Well, it`s interesting because they say pneumonia Friday, but she was coughing very, very badly a week ago and even before that, if you remember. This wasn`t the first time. So it`s very interesting to see what is going on. I want her to get better. I want her to get out there. I look forward to seeing her in the debate.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Where are we going on this?

ALLEN: Well, look, if you`re Donald Trump, this is the best moment that he`s had in the campaign in terms of discipline, right? He has been tweeting about her health. He`s been talking about it on the campaign trail, saying she`s got no stamina. And right now Hillary Clinton had the worst weekend of her campaign so far. And by the way, there`s some competition for that. She has the worst weekend of her campaign, and he`s getting out of the way of a story that she does not have control of.

PRZYBYLA: You know what, though? As long as there is not an underlying health condition with Hillary Clinton -- we`ve already seen a lot of her records. And now -- you know, this is double-edged. He`s going to have to release his fuller medical report right now because right now, all we have is a four-graph statement from a doctor saying he`d be the healthiest president in the history of the U.S., even though he would also be the oldest.

ALLEN: A doctor who had a five-minute writing of that.

PRZYBYLA: Right.

MATTHEWS: OK, we`re going to finish up this topic because we have a much bigger one coming up right now, and that`s this question of "deplorables," the basket of deplorables that Hillary Clinton has done I think one of these snafus you make in politics where you discredit a whole bunch of Americans, like 47 percent, or people relying, as the president said, on their guns and their religion. Every once in a while, a politician makes a real mistake.

Anyway, joining me -- I want to thank you, Jonathan Allen and Heidi Przybyla.

As I said, coming up -- Trump isn`t talking about Clinton`s health. Instead, he`s hitting her for her comments that half his supporters are from, quote, "the basket of deplorables." Trump`s calling it the biggest mistake of the campaign, but it doesn`t compare to some of his own sugar plums.

Plus, new questions about the Trump Foundation. "The Washington Post" reports that Trump himself hasn`t contributed anything to it in years. Instead, the charity regifted other people`s money -- isn`t that nice? -- so that Trump himself would get the credit for the giving.

And the HARDBALL roundtable tonight`s here on the need for transparency from both campaigns.

Finally, my "Election Diary" for September 12th with just two weeks to go before the first presidential debate. Do you believe it? September 26th, coming on strong.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`ve got new polling showing a close race in some battleground states, but also in states that were not battleground at the start of the campaign. Let`s check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

According to our own NBC News/"Wall Street Journal"/Marist polling, Hillary Clinton has a 1-point lead over Donald Trump up in New Hampshire. It`s Clinton 42, Trump 41. And that`s a state that was expected to be close, but Clinton held a wider lead in earlier polls.

Anyway, next to Nevada, and it`s close there, too. Clinton is up by a point over Trump, 45-44, another close one.

Now to two red states that Clinton has put into play. This is good for Clinton. In Arizona, Trump`s lead over Clinton is 1 point. It`s Trump 42- 41, again nastily close. And in Georgia, a state Republicans have won since 1996, Trump`s lead is 3. It`s Trump 46, Clinton 43, another one close to catch.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump`s supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables.

(LAUGHTER)

CLINTON: Right? The racists, sexists, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic, you name it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: You name it. Anyway, she just did.

Welcome back to HARDBALL. Donald Trump is slamming Hillary Clinton for that remark, which she made on Friday, describing half of Trump`s supporters as what she called "deplorables," a basket of them.

Anyway, here`s what Trump said in Baltimore today about that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: She divides people into baskets as though they were objects, not human beings. After months of hiding from the press Hillary Clinton has revealed her true thoughts. That was her true thoughts. She revealed herself to be a person who looks down on the proud citizens of our country as subjects for her rule. The disdain that Hillary Clinton expressed toward millions of decent Americans disqualifies her from public service. You cannot run for president if you have such contempt in your heart for the American voter. And she does.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, in a statement over the weekend, Secretary Clinton expressed her personal regret for her comments, but did not actually apologize.

Here`s what she said: "I was grossly generalistic, generalistic, and that`s never a good idea. I regret saying half," in other words, not some other percentage of the Trump vote. "That was wrong."

I love the way she took back half.

Anyway, now the Trump campaign is out with a new ad to capitalize on what Hillary Clinton said. Here it goes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NARRATOR: Speaking to wealthy donors, Hillary Clinton called tens of millions of Americans deplorable.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: You could put half of Trump`s supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables, right, the racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic, you name it.

NARRATOR: People like you, you, and you deplorable. You know what`s deplorable? Hillary Clinton viciously demonizing hardworking people like you.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: I`m joined right now by NBC`s Hallie Jackson from Donald Trump`s rally in North Carolina right now, where moments ago, Trump invited some of his supporters up on to the stage so that they could rebut Clinton`s remarks. There they are.

HALLIE JACKSON, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Yes.

MATTHEWS: So, Hallie, that`s show business. Go ahead. What do you make of it? Is he exploiting this through the roof?

JACKSON: Yes, definitely a moment kind of thing.

So, first of all, obviously, it is over. It wrapped up maybe 45 minutes ago, Chris. So, the room is being cleared out. But up on that stage behind me, Trump pulled up about 10 people, all of them to talk about how Hillary Clinton shouldn`t be calling them deplorable.

There was one couple that came up and said, we are the face. We are not the deplorable supporters, basically. So, Trump kind of letting other people do the talking for him. And he then took the stage and continued to go after Clinton in a way that saw him do in Baltimore.

And this was something that was echoed by Rudy Giuliani, by the way, who, as you talked about in the last segment, I think, had been one of the folks really pushing some of these discussions, these conspiracy theories, as the Clinton calls them, about her health, but who didn`t touch on that here tonight.

Instead, he also went after Clinton for the deplorables line. Here is the Trump campaign strategy. They believe they`re making this political calculation that this will be as damaging to her as Mitt Romney`s 47 percent comment, remember, last cycle was to Romney. And they`re also saying...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Sure. How could we forget it?

JACKSON: ... it`s not just that -- well, really. They`re not just going after the half that -- you noted she walked back saying half, leaving sort of an unknown percentage up there.

But they`re going after the other -- quote, unquote -- "basket." You heard Giuliani say, hey, she described this other basket as the poor people, the desperate people. That is something that RNC communications director Sean Spicer has been echoing today, clearly a line that surrogates are deploying to say that Hillary Clinton thinks all Trump supporters are essentially worthy of having her attention.

Now, that is obviously not exactly what Clinton said when you go back and look at the verbid. But there is a calculation being made that this is going to be ultimately beneficial to Donald Trump.

Does it come with political risks, Chris? Of course it does. A conversation about racism and sexism could potentially be damaging to Donald Trump. You look at that new "Washington Post"/ABC News poll showing that some 60 percent of voters believe that Donald Trump is biased towards women and minorities.

And, yes, while the distinction is drawn that while Clinton didn`t go after Trump himself for being deplorable, but his supporters, any conversation that involves racism and sexism -- a lot of political analysts are talking about this on both sides of the aisle -- could end up hurting Trump in the long run, unless he`s making the right bet here that people will see Clinton as more out of touch and as somebody who doesn`t care for them before November.

MATTHEWS: Yes, I just think a lot of people don`t like being called racist, no matter what their thinking is or their heart is. They don`t like it. They`re going to get angry about this, I think, from the other side.

Anyway, thank you.

You did a great job, by the way, on that aircraft carrier. That was great last week.

JACKSON: Thank you. Thanks. Appreciate that.

MATTHEWS: It was really great. Well, you got all those people involved. You got a lot of military service people involved in the conversation. I thought that was great.

JACKSON: Yes. Thanks.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, while Clinton said she regrets -- Secretary Clinton regrets characterizing half of Trump`s supporters as deplorables, a PPP poll from May -- this is not long ago -- showed that, among Trump supporters, catch these numbers, 65 percent, almost two-thirds, said they think President Obama is a Muslim, 65 percent of Trump supporters; 59 percent, three out of five, said they think he was not born in the U.S.

In other words, they`re birthers. Three out of five Trump people are birthers. And, as Hallie Jackson just said, a new "Washington Post"/ABC News poll finds that a majority of American voters, 60 percent, say they believe Donald Trump is biased against women and minorities.

So there`s a lot of numbers out there that do not look good for Trump.

I`m joined right now by Trump surrogate Steve Cortes, as well as MSNBC political analyst Jonathan Capehart, opinion writer for "The Washington Post" and host of a new podcast, "Cape Up."

It plays off your name, I guess.

JONATHAN CAPEHART, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Yes, it does.

MATTHEWS: Yes, it does.

Let me go to Steve.

Steve, what`s your thinking about the fact of these polls that show -- forget words like deplorable, baskets of deplorables or binders of women the other stupid phrases -- isn`t it true that we have polls out there showing a substantial majority of Trump supporters, self-identified supporters, have these attitudes about President Obama, the fact that he`s from some other country? They have this belief he`s a Muslim.

These are not nice things to be saying about someone who is clearly an American and has been going to Christian churches his whole life.

STEVE CORTES, TRUMP SURROGATE: Right. Right.

MATTHEWS: Your answer?

CORTES: Well, Chris, it`s not just that they`re not nice. They`re not true. OK? That`s what`s more important.

And I will tell you this. You have never heard the campaign talk about any of this lately. So, the president...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Lately, you snuck that little grace note in there. Trump is known as Mr. Birther.

CORTES: The campaign hasn`t talked about it.

MATTHEWS: OK. OK.

CORTES: Look, the president is clearly a Christian American.

I have many, many reasons -- I have many issues with the president, but they are not his birth or his religion.

MATTHEWS: Why won`t Trump say so?

CORTES: I think he will. And, by the way, I am and many of his surrogates have.

MATTHEWS: What makes you think that, Steve? What makes you think he will say something he has refused to say for years?

CORTES: Well, I think he will.

But, look, here, I think, too, we can`t major in the minors. This is such a -- Donald Trump hasn`t mentioned his birth in an extremely long time. And no one credible in his campaign has at all this whole time in the campaign.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: So, when he gets in the car if he wins and rides up to the Capitol, he believes he`s going to be sitting in the car next to a president, a person who is not a legitimate president.

CORTES: No.

MATTHEWS: That is not an insignificant belief on his part, if he believes it, if he really believes. But you say he doesn`t. But you say he doesn`t believe it.

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: No. He -- listen, a very long time ago, he asked for proof. Proof was given. OK? The president is American. Case closed. Case closed.

MATTHEWS: And then?

CORTES: We don`t worry about it anymore.

MATTHEWS: Then? And then? And then?

CORTES: And he stopped talking about it. And he stopped talking about it. What we want to talk about, by the way -- listen, this is a red herring, because what we have is him not talking about that.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No. It`s a creation of your candidate...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... he could dispense with in 10 -- we`re on live television. In two minutes, he could come up and say, I don`t believe that anymore. I believe this president was American-born. I think he`s native-born. He has a right to be president of the United States. I don`t believe he`s a Muslim. End it right there. That`s all he has to do.

But he`s not calling, if you listen for the next few minutes.

Jonathan, let`s go back to the issue at hand, this deplorables basket.

CAPEHART: Yes. Right.

MATTHEWS: She basically condemned the whole -- let me get it right. I`m not going to say a whole basket. A whole percentage around Trump voters, around 50 percent, she said are in this deplorable category, Islamophobes, xenophobes, whatever.

CAPEHART: Homophobes, yes, yes.

MATTHEWS: Yes, OK.

CAPEHART: I`m sorry, I cannot...

MATTHEWS: Is that good politics?

CAPEHART: Well, politically, you want to call it a gaffe. I don`t -- if she made a mistake...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: No, I think it`s wrong. You don`t describe a quarter or a fifth of the American people as the bad guy.

(CROSSTALK)

CAPEHART: Her mistake was putting a number to it, saying half.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: She has called them it deplorable. These people are deplorable.

CAPEHART: You just showed, Chris...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Just saying they`re deplorable as human beings. I`m just saying.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: She`s running to lead the whole country.

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: Calling tens of millions of Americans deplorable is incredibly disrespectful. It`s incredible elitist.

CAPEHART: You know what`s incredibly disrespectful, Steve?

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: And it`s utterly out of touch.

CAPEHART: Having a candidate for president of the United States denigrate an entire group of people, suggesting an immoral and unconstitutional plan to deport 11 million people, including American-born **immigrants**, because they`re undocumented.

Don`t get into a conversation with me about what`s deplorable when you have a Republican nominee for president who...

(CROSSTALK)

CAPEHART: And that`s just one of the things in the so-called basket of deplorables.

(CROSSTALK)

CORTES: Illegal **immigrants** don`t have constitutional rights, first of all. Legal **immigrants**, who we love, and Americans have constitutional rights.

CAPEHART: Oh, no, no, no.

(CROSSTALK)

CAPEHART: Your candidate suggested that American-born **immigrants** whose parents might happen to be undocumented **immigrants** would also be a part of his deportation plan.

So, until you can -- until, Steve, you can come to me and to this conversation with an actual **immigration** plan, you have nothing to say.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Guys, I want to get back to a narrower question which we have on the table.

Trump`s running mate, by the way, Mike Pence, was asked on CNN this afternoon whether David Duke would qualify as one of those deplorables. Let`s watch that exchange.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

WOLF BLITZER, CNN: There are some supporters of Donald Trump and Mike Pence who -- like David Duke, for example, and some other white nationalists, who would fit into that category of deplorables, right?

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Well, as I have told you the last time I was on, I`m not really sure why the media keeps dropping David Duke`s name.

Donald Trump has denounced David Duke repeatedly. We don`t want his support and we don`t want the support of people who think like him.

BLITZER: Well, you call him a deplorable? You would call him that?

PENCE: No. I don`t -- I`m not in the name-calling business, Wolf.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, later on FOX News, Pence said of that interview: "They wanted me to start using terms that Hillary uses."

So, Steve, is that the issue, using Hillary-like words, rather than your own words, or is it he doesn`t want to condemn somebody like David Duke?

CORTES: Look, Chris, I don`t know how -- I don`t know how many times the campaign, Donald Trump and all of us need to say we denounce David Duke for the mainstream media to believe it.

Do we have it to beat him senseless on live air? Is that the only way that people are going to believe we denounce? David Duke endorsed Donald Trump. Donald Trump never endorsed him or his stupid bigotry. And we don`t support that at all.

And, a matter of fact, quite the opposite. And I`m very proud of Trump for this. We`re making a very deliberate and intentional outreach to African- Americans and Hispanic Americans to try to tell them that we have answers for the problems that are plaguing their communities and that we humbly and respectfully want to earn their votes. This has been the opposite of a racist campaign.

MATTHEWS: Well, in an apparent show of solidarity with fellow supporters, several Trump supporters, including Donald Trump Jr., posted this had image parodying Clinton`s remarks on social media.

But as NBC News points out, the picture included the image of a cartoon frog -- there he is, the green guy there -- that has become a popular symbol of white nationalists.

I didn`t know this. I`m learning it. As Heidi Beirich of the Southern Poverty Law Center told NBC News -- quote -- "The white nationalists are going to love this because they`re going to feel like, yes, we`re in there with Trump. There`s Pepe the Frog."

I know none of this stuff, but I now know it. I have just learned it today. Pepe the Frog is apparently some icon you put in your pictures to show solidarity with the alt-right.

CAPEHART: Right, with white supremacy.

It`s -- we have gone from dog whistles to full-on barking. No one is trying to hide anything anymore. And one of the things I was about to say at the beginning of the last answer is that this campaign has built its support and gotten the nomination because people gravitated towards Donald Trump because he -- quote -- "tells it like it is, he is against political correctness," and he -- quote -- "says things that I can`t say."

MATTHEWS: Like President Obama should not be president.

CAPEHART: Should not be president because...

MATTHEWS: Constitutional violations by him because he snuck in the country.

CAPEHART: Right, and he is an illegal occupier of the Oval Office.

MATTHEWS: You know, I wish they would drop it, because I would like to drop it.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But your guy, your candidate refuses to drop the issue of the legitimacy of this question. And it is not a nonessential question. It`s pretty darn fundamental.

CORTES: Chris, that`s not fair. He hasn`t mentioned that at all during this campaign.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: What do you mean he hasn`t mentioned it?

CORTES: He hasn`t mentioned it.

And, Jonathan, what are you getting at? Are you saying that Donald Trump Jr. is a racist? Is that what you`re saying, because he retweeted something with an image that he probably knew nothing about? I certainly didn`t know anything about it.

CAPEHART: I didn`t even talk about Donald Trump Jr. We were talking about his father.

CORTES: OK. So his father is a racist?

CAPEHART: Oh, I`m on record as saying that.

CORTES: And are we going to just play the same old card...

MATTHEWS: No, it`s his son that is involved with that, retweeting that stuff.

CORTES: ... that the Democrats have played? Every time you guys get tired of talking ideas, you start name-calling, you call us deplorable. You call us racist.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: When I accuse you of being an illegal **immigrant**, and you say -- and then I say I haven`t talked about it lately, why are you still mad at me, you will understand -- when you make a shot like a guy snuck somehow into the United States, who is the first African-American president, who doesn`t belong on the pictures of all the presidents in history, that somehow deserves not even an asterisk, that`s something you can`t just walk away from, you have got to walk back.

And your guy won`t do it. You can yell all you want and attack "youse guys, youse guys" but the fact is your guy won`t tell the truth about Barack Obama, the current president, yet he wants to be the next.

Jonathan Capehart, Steve Cortes, thank you.

CAPEHART: Thanks.

MATTHEWS: Up next: New questions surround the Trump Foundation. An investigation by "The Washington Post" finds the charities re-gifting donations and taking credit for giving money away.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

"The Washington Post" reported over the weekend on their investigation into the Donald J. Trump Foundation, which they call a threadbare, skeletal operation.

Hmm.

According to "Washington Post" reporter David Fahrenthold, nearly all the money comes from people other than Trump. In tax records, the last gift from Trump was in 2008. Since then, all the donations have been other people`s money, an arrangement that experts say is almost unheard of for a family foundation.

One expert on charity, Leslie Lenkowsky, a former head of the Corporation for National Community Service, told "The Post": "Our common understanding of charity is, you give something of yourself to somebody else to help them. It`s not something that you raise money from one side to spend it on the other."

Joining me right now is Dana Milbank, the opinion writer for "The Washington Post."

Dana, what do you make of this -- it`s not a Ponzi scheme. It`s totally different. The money just comes in one door and out the other, and you get credit for it.

(LAUGHTER)

DANA MILBANK, OP-ED COLUMNIST, "THE WASHINGTON POST": It`s been a little bit like Trump`s overall business plan, which is basically take something of value, add your magical brand to it, and you have not actually added anything to it at all. Then you have...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You franchise the money.

MILBANK: Yes, basically, although it sounds like he was in some cases doing this without people actually realizing that all he`s doing is taking in their money and giving it to somebody else.

MATTHEWS: Did he give ever money to that charity for the veterans that he talked about when he had that big -- when he wouldn`t show up for the debate during the primaries, and then he ended up having an evening where he said, I`m going to give a million bucks to this thing?

MILBANK: He did, but only because my colleague David Fahrenthold was banging away at this thing, saying, where is the money? And finally he was forced to give away the money.

And that -- what David did here is went through all of the charitable records going back some 17 years, and there were cases like that there. He found five cases of these phantom contributions, where they say they gave the money, but the people who were supposed to receive it didn`t receive didn`t actually receive it.

MATTHEWS: How about giving the money to that attorney general after she decided not to prosecute the Trump University case?

MILBANK: And he`s already -- the foundation has already paid a fine for that one.

I think the most damning ones in here are the self-dealing ones, the one where they used charitable money to buy for Donald Trump a self -- a portrait made of Donald Trump and a Tim Tebow helmet. So, that...

MATTHEWS: What did they do with that? Give it away?

MILBANK: Well, we don`t know.

If he hasn`t given it away to somebody, that`s illegal.

MATTHEWS: These are carrying costs?

MILBANK: So, if we Donald Trump with an orange Gators helmet out there somewhere, we know that there`s a problem.

MATTHEWS: You mean that this foundation has costs?

MILBANK: It does indeed have costs.

The thing is, it`s a tiny foundation. He hasn`t put any money into it since 2008. They have something like $1.3 million total.

MATTHEWS: So, how much money did the Clintons give to their foundation? I`m just asking.

MILBANK: Well, I don`t know what -- I don`t know what they give to their foundation, but their foundation gives away $250 million a year. And this is orders of magnitude smaller.

This is really penny-ante stuff, and particularly in this days of Clinton`s...

(CROSSTALK)

MILBANK: ... deplorables.

MATTHEWS: What do you think of this?

There`s a lot of -- there`s a lot of enterprise reporting going on like this, which always seems to happen when nothing else is going on. People say, OK, time to do some research.

Have you got a sense, as a journalist, an opinion guy, have you got a sense that any news about Trump or Hillary changes anybody`s mind at this point? Does anything work to change opinion, shake loose people?

MILBANK: Certainly...

MATTHEWS: Are the minds made up?

MILBANK: Certainly about Trump, it doesn`t.

All along, there have been all kinds of things that, for anybody else, would have been deadly and disqualifying. No, I don`t expect this one will either. But that`s not a reason not to do it. This is really first-rate journalism my colleague has done.

MATTHEWS: Well, you have to do it now, rather than once somebody is elected.

MILBANK: Well...

MATTHEWS: But then they will really be mad at us.

MILBANK: They will really be mad at us, or maybe we will actually see the tax returns. We don`t have the returns, which is why you have to pore through the record books.

MATTHEWS: OK.

Response to the reporting here. Late today, "The Washington Post" reported that Hope Hicks, spokeswoman for Donald Trump`s presidential campaign, of course, said that Trump has given away tens of millions of dollars over his life. But according to "The Post", Hicks offered no details about that number. Well, here we are. That`s how the lay of the land right now.

Thank you, Dana Milbank.

Up next, the HARDBALL round table is coming here with the need for more transparency, don`t you think, from both the Clinton and Trump campaign. How about some tax returns? How about some medical information on time?

Plus, three things you might not the know about the presidential race coming up from our experts.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Sunday`s confusingly slow trickle of information from the Clinton campaign, the Hillary campaign, has left the team vulnerable to criticism that the campaign is not transparent. But some, many of the same transparency questions applied to Donald Trump and his campaign as well. To date, we have yet to see his tax returns and his own medical records, of course, although Trump says he plans to release the results of a physical exam he had last week.

Well, a recent NBC News/"Wall Street Journal" poll shows both candidates with high unfavorables, when it comes to being honest and straightforward, Hillary Clinton gets a combined 22 percent, very good, good rating, and a 56 percent very poor/poor rating. For Trump, it`s 35 percent very good/good, and 46 percent poor/very poor.

Well, you get the gist. It`s not good for either.

Joining me on tonight`s roundtable, Anne Gearan, national politics reporter to the aforementioned "Washington Post", Ken Vogel, chief investigative reporter for "Politico", which is always challenging "The Post," and Yamiche Inside -- Insider -- Alcindor, she`s also an insider, is a reporter for "The New York Times."

Yamiche, thank you and sorry for my foolish complaint about your name, my mistake about Alcindor. We know you so well.

Anyway, let`s talk about why the press is nonpartisan that covers a candidate like Hillary Clinton is concerned that she went off the grid, went off the scope on Sunday. We didn`t know where she was.

ANNE GEARAN, THE WASHINGTON POST: Yes, I mean, several things happened that are pretty disturbing. The first is that the reporters who were there with her -- some distance away from her but assigned to cover her as part of the protective pool, as we like to call it, noticed that she was gone and no one had told them that, and it was several minutes after they noticed she was gone that the campaign confirmed that, in fact, she was gone.

MATTHEWS: She made it on her own two feet all the way over to the van where she apparently collapsed.

GEARAN: She was away from where she had been standing. It`s not clear that she was in the van at that point, but then it was an hour and a half after that before the campaign explained where she was and what had happened.

MATTHEWS: Now, do you get, just the traveling pool has a ready car to chase the candidate or do you normally get a heads up they`re going to the next location and you follow them? Is that what happens?

GEARAN: A little of both. There`s a dedicated van that carries the reporters that goes along behind her.

MATTHEWS: Why didn`t they go behind her this time?

GEARAN: That is the question.

MATTHEWS: Who stopped them?

GEARAN: They were never told she left.

MATTHEWS: Didn`t they see her getting in the van?

GEARAN: No. They`re back where they were supposed to be and never knew she left.

MATTHEWS: A civilian took the picture with the iPhone.

GEARAN: Exactly.

KEN VOGEL, POLITICO: Right. And the press didn`t know where she was.

MATTHEWS: Suppose there was no civilian there that took the picture with the iPhone, would we know any of this, that she had pneumonia, would she know -- we know that she collapsed, would we know anything if it weren`t for that individual?

GEARAN: All we can say that we would know for sure that she left the location where she was supposed to be because there was a camera --

MATTHEWS: And showed up an hour and a half later and said it`s a beautiful day in New York, Mr. Rogers.

(CROSSTALK)

VOGEL: We wouldn`t necessarily know until she`s back --

MATTHEWS: So, do we now salute social media for doing their work or what?

VOGEL: I mean, that`s sort of one of the takeaways from this, but certainly they should under the rules we traditionally cover presidential candidates, they should make accommodations. That`s how -- I mean, your question about, do they provide, how does --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, does ever disappear for an hour or two and head back to his hotel or Trump Tower?

VOGEL: And Trump also does not have the protective pool arrangement. So, yes, theoretically, he could and, you know, that`s why we and the press are sort of putting forth this concerted effort, this pressure campaign --

MATTHEWS: Yamiche, is this the norm that the presidential candidates after they win the nomination are expected to be available 24/7? In other words, they`re on -- they`re somewhere like a GPS we can spot where they are and know what they`re doing?

YAMICHE ALCINDOR, THE NEW YORK TIMES: From my understanding, if you have a pool and you`re being covered by the media, that we`re supposed to know where you are, we`re supposed to be updating us regularly. If you go missing in the middle of a 9/11 ceremony, you`re supposed to tell us this is where she`s going.

I -- I mean, as a reporter you can`t say whether or not we would have found all this information out. The fact that a civilian is the reason we see her getting into the van is problematic for the Clinton campaign and in some ways the protective pool and the pool is all based on trust. The reporters are trusting --

MATTHEWS: What came first, the chicken or the egg? Did they know about the iPhone when they came clean about where she was and what was going on? That she fainted?

(CROSSTALK)

GEARAN: Right. In the intervening hour and a half when she went to Chelsea`s apartment and recuperated, the video came out. So, by the time she left that apartment building they knew.

(CROSSTALK)

VOGEL: In fact, we report that had when she gets in the car to go to Chelsea`s, this is from Clinton campaign sources, she`s drinking water, cooling down in the back seat, it`s air-conditioned, but then she automatically very quickly starts strategizing about how to handle this and what the blowback is. So, you can imagine they`re discussing.

MATTHEWS: OK. Well, here`s Bill Clinton, an expert on all things, talking about his wife`s health in an interview with Charlie Rose I guess for tonight`s broadcast on CBS.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL CLINTON, FORMER PRESIDENT: She`s doing fine. She was even better last night before she went to sleep. She had a good night`s sleep. She just got dehydrated yesterday.

CHARLIE ROSE, HOST: Is that what happened, she got dehydrated?

CLINTON: Yes.

ROSE: Because when you look at the collapse, the video that was taken, you wonder if it`s not more serious --

CLINTON: Oh, no.

ROSE: -- than dehydration.

CLINTON: She`s been -- well, if it is, it`s a mystery to me and all of her doctors. Today she made a decision, which I think was correct, to cancel her campaign day.

ROSE: Right.

CLINTON: To take one more day to rest.

ROSE: Is it possible she will be away weeks from the campaign trail?

CLINTON: No, not a shot. I`ll be lucky to held her back another day.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, the roundtable is staying with us.

And up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, you can play HARDBALL all week long. Online, follow the show on Twitter and Instagram and "like" us on Facebook. You`ll get access to interviews, videos and behind-the-scenes photos as we cover this wild presidential campaign.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: We`re back with the HARDBALL round table.

Anne, tell me something I don`t know. And you know everything.

GEARAN: Hardly. Well, no, Bill Clinton stole my tell me something because his office announced that he`s going to fill in for his wife at a fundraiser in California.

MATTHEWS: Well, you always a have spare, don`t you?

GEARAN: So, I have a spare, which is that the health information that Hillary Clinton will release either later this week or perhaps it`s looking more likely next week is not just going to be an update on the current situation. It`s going to be more of a retrospective, a full update on the overall health --

(CROSSTALK)

GEARAN: Yes, exactly, from more than a year ago.

MATTHEWS: I don`t think they need forever. They need recent history.

Yes?

VOGEL: Donald Trump now talking about releasing more detailed medical records of his own, clearly trying to use this to his advantage. But he and the people around him are very sensitive to questions about his health to the point where we wrote in a story, we called him a 70-year-old corpulent junk food gabbling -- I had one of his people call me and say he could do more push-ups.

MATTHEWS: OK, Yamiche?

ALCINDOR: Mine is that I was talking to some battleground organizers for the Trump campaign and they are still frustrated that they are not getting the resources that they`re getting. So, even now, two months outside of the campaign, people are saying we don`t have enough offices, we don`t have enough volunteers, we don`t have enough money. So, that really tells you just how the Trump campaign is still kind of struggling to get set up.

MATTHEWS: I think he wants to win on television, just him, you know. The guy used to fight the machines, was it John Brown, or whoever the guy was.

Anyway, thank you, Anne Gearan, Ken Vogel, and Yamiche Alcindor.

When we return, my election diary for where this race stands right now just two weeks before the presidential debate.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Election diary Monday, September 12th, 2016.

Well, there`s nothing you don`t know about the term this weekend worked on the campaign for president. The question is what it will do to voters` loyalties. Will the decision by Hillary Clinton to keep the country in the dark on her medical condition matter to people or will it feed the concern that she prizes her privacy above all, that given a choice she will choose to keep matters from the public, basic human facts, like her having a case of pneumonia?

Well, this question took his position in the cue however, right ahead of her condemnation last week of the basket of deplorables, the phrase she chose to describe half of Donald Trump`s supporters. A friend of mine who worked for President Jimmy Carter once told me a rule of a former president, you get nowhere politically calling people racist. It doesn`t shame them and most certainly it doesn`t win them over to your side.

And yes, it does remind us of when President Obama, then a candidate, told that well-off San Francisco crowd about those benighted folks who cling to their guns and religion because they like the progressive awakening. And yes, it does remind us of when Mitt Romney four years later, insulted that notorious 47 percent as leaches on the body politic.

As an old TV commercial advises, it`s not nice to fool Mother Nature, it`s also not nice to fool a substantial bloc of the electorate whose basic human concerns you promise to depend when you run for president of the entire country. So, a good beginning of the week for Donald Trump because he showed the courtesy or at least the political facsimile to cool it.

And that`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Chris Matthews, Andrea Mitchell, Chuck Todd, Eugene Robinson

9768 speakers\_end

CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Master and Commander.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Welcome to a night of political combat on an historic warship. For the first time in the final two months of the campaign, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton will both take seats on the same spot to face the most central question of this campaign, who should serve as the next U.S. commander-in-chief?

I`m Chris Matthews right now on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier Intrepid, today the site of Sea, Air and Space Museum up in New York.

An historic warship which saw in the battles in Okinawa and Leyte Gulf plays host tonight to a joint appearance of the two major candidates, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Well, the set-up is as follows. The two candidates will be questioned before a live audience of U.S. service members on national security, military affairs and veterans issues. Hillary Clinton will go first. Donald Trump won the coin toss, choosing to go second and being able to counterpunch what his opponent has said. The moderator tonight is NBC`s Matt Lauer.

Well, tonight`s first forum of the fall campaign comes as a new on-line poll by NBC News finds that Trump leads Clinton by 19 percentage points among active and former members of the U.S. military, 55 percent to 36 percent. That`s among military veterans and currently serving officers and men and women, of course.

In his speech today in Philadelphia, Trump proposed a massive build-up of the U.S. military while at the same time calling Hillary Clinton "trigger happy."

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Unlike my opponent, my foreign policy will emphasize diplomacy, not destruction. Sometimes, it seemed like there wasn`t a country in the Middle East that Hillary Clinton didn`t want to invade, intervene in or topple. She`s trigger happy and very unstable. Whether we like it or not, that`s what`s going on.

She talks about her experience, but Hillary Clinton`s only foreign policy experience ended up in absolute failure. Everywhere she got involved, things got worse.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: While noting that Trump`s charges appeared to mimic the same attacks on Clinton, the ones he`s -- that leveled on Trump, Clinton`s communications director responded today saying, "Trump has only one way of responding to legitimate criticism of his own vulnerabilities. I know you are, but what am I?"

Well, so what will the evening tell us tonight about who is better prepared to be commander-in-chief of our country? Joining me right now is NBC`s Chuck Todd, moderator of "Meet the Press." Andrea Mitchell is chief foreign affairs correspondent for NBC News, and Eugene Robinson`s an MSNBC political analyst and columnist with "The Washington Post."

Let me start with Chuck and work our way across here. It seems to me that today, Trump is up to something which I think he started his campaign with, by challenging the Iraq war, challenging our involvement in Libya, challenging our attempt to knock off Assad in Syria, saying, I`m tired of all this nation building, all this regime change. Cut it out.

Is that going to work as an attack on Hillary tonight?

CHUCK TODD, MODERATOR, "MEET THE PRESS": Look, I think this is her biggest challenge. Their whole campaign, they`re trying to -- the new team has been trying to simplify the message for Trump, change versus more of the same, and apply that -- apply that prism to everything.

And in this case, in national security, he` saying he`s changed and she`s - - if you didn`t like the Iraq war, Bush and Obama, the Middle East, it`s all the same. She`s part of that same establishment that you haven`t been happy with this whole time.

So I think that`s her chief challenge. He`s got a different challenge. Her chief challenge tonight is beating back this notion that she is just part of...

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s go...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Let`s go one time. What is Trump up to tonight? It`s to accuse Hillary of the way things are, accuse her of being more hawkish than she`d like to maybe be, more of a neocon, if you will? What -- is that how you see it, what he`s up to?

ANDREA MITCHELL, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Absolutely. But also to question her judgment on the e-mails, on, you know, the other aspects of national security...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

MITCHELL: ... to bring up those other issues and say that she`s the one, just as he`s been mimicking her attacks, so that she`s the one...

MATTHEWS: Do you think bringing up e-mails on an aircraft carrier makes any sense?

(CROSSTALK)

TODD: I don`t buy -- I don`t think that is going to happen tonight.

MATTHEWS: It just sounds a little small.

EUGENE ROBINSON, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: (INAUDIBLE) he may do it, but (INAUDIBLE) going to work out here.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: This is about heroism and courage under fire and winning the big wars and American history.

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: What could work here...

TODD: He brought it up today in his previous speech at the Union League in Philadelphia. He went after her hard.

ROBINSON: Well, I think that`s a mistake on his part. What could work is an attack on...

MATTHEWS: At the (INAUDIBLE) Union League, where we won the Civil War?

(LAUGHTER)

TODD: They`re still fighting it.

ROBINSON: I mean, an attack on Libya policy, for example.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: Now, if he can mount that sort of sophisticated attack, I`m not sure, to tell you the truth. And he has another problem. He wants to portray himself as more dovish and more restrained. It`s at the same time that he is proposing 20,000 or 30,000 ground troops for...

TODD: I know.

MATTHEWS: Well, look at this. Look at this...

ROBINSON: ... Iraq and Syria.

MATTHEWS: Look at this now. Today`s poll that we put out also found that Secretary Clinton has a slight advantage over Trump when it comes to the use of nuclear weapons, obviously, a very dangerous question. 34 percent of current and former members of the United States military say they trust Clinton, 33 percent say they trust Trump. This is like nothing. This is nothing. It`s a dead heat for who`s going to cause...

(CROSSTALK)

MITCHELL: And don`t forget...

TODD: This is a Republican-leaning -- this is actually more of a negative number for Trump...

ROBINSON: It is.

TODD: ... but if you see the overall number among these people, Trump led by 19 points. So there is a group of voters who are picking Trump over Clinton who are, like...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Is this not a question of dove versus hawk?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... nervousness.

TODD: No, this is the temperament issue, which is Trump -- this is where I think Trump -- Trump has an easier task tonight than Clinton. Trump has the low bar of, Can he do the job? Now, I don`t know if he can meet it. He`s struggled to meet it with many voters up to this point.

But he has very basic -- he has a very basic problem, the idea that he`s up to the job with many voters. So that`s his -- she`s got a more complicated challenge in that she`s got to -- she -- everybody knows she knows -- she`s got the resume for the job. The question is, Does she have a new idea on how to fix the Middle East and what America`s role is in it?

MITCHELL: What she is talking about -- what she was talking about in her previous speech yesterday was that he`s too reckless and that he doesn`t know anything. When she said, I will not put ground troops on the ground in Syria, not on my watch, then when he talked about having a free space for ISIS in Syria, she said, Look at the map, Donald.

She is so disparaging of him. That`s what you`re going to hear.

TODD: I`ll tell you...

MITCHELL: She has one big disadvantage, though. She goes first. He can come second.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Well, Secretary Clinton yesterday ratcheted up her criticism of Donald Trump on nuclear weapons. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: He`s even talked about using nuclear weapons. He`s very loose in his talk about nukes. He says he doesn`t care if other countries get them, doesn`t know why they haven`t been used already. After all his talk, the only thing that is clear is he has no clue about what he`s talking about!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Gene, you know, one thing I think they overstepped with this super-PAC backing her. It said -- basically, they`re quoting Trump in one regard, in one occasion, saying, yes, I sort of like war in certain ways. And then they show -- that includes nuclear war. And that was a totally different occasion. I know they spliced it together, an old political cheap trick.

I`m surprised -- we`ll talk about with it Kellyanne tonight and the general, General Flynn. I`m amazed that the Trump campaign hasn`t rapped (ph) back at that and said, That`s totally a cheap shot.

ROBINSON: Well, they`ll probably...

MATTHEWS: Because it was spliced together.

ROBINSON: They`ll probably get around to that, I guess...

MATTHEWS: I don`t know why it`s taking so long.

ROBINSON: ... calling it a cheap shot. But look, there are legitimate questions about Trump`s temperament, and the president is in charge of the nuclear weapons. I mean, this is -- this is...

MATTHEWS: But why say something he didn`t say?

ROBINSON: No, look, I get you. It`s the kind of distortion that we usually call out in politics.

You know, there`s one danger that Trump has in going last. And generally speaking, it`s an advantage, certainly. But if he makes a big blunder, if there`s something he really doesn`t know -- and we know that he doesn`t know a lot of this stuff...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

ROBINSON: ... if he gets asked a question and he completely, you know, mixes up Shia and Sunni or doesn`t know the difference or something like that, that`s what people will remember.

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s talk about the usual -- you know, we all -- I think -- we`re all familiar with the cold war, right? It was about who`s the strongest, who`s the toughest. I get -- it`s almost like Billy Crystal on "Saturday Night Live," who`s got more macho? Who`s more macho?

Tonight, it doesn`t seem to be that because at the same time, they`re both trying to say, Don`t worry. I`m the restraining force. I`m not going to be the one to jump in and start all these mission building -- nation building, regime change. Enough with all that stuff.

But at the same time, they want to be seen as stronger, but also as more restrained, and they also want to make the other side look not stronger but (INAUDIBLE) other side more dangerous.

MITCHELL: But...

MATTHEWS: How do they -- how do they fine tune this thing?

MITCHELL: Well, what he did today in this speech was to talk about a military budget that was out of sight. We haven`t seen anything like that since Ronald Reagan. He kept quoting the Heritage, you know, Foundation...

MATTHEWS: Well, where`s he get the money?

MITCHELL: Well, he never explained where he gets the money. And they both want to get rid of the sequester that is hampering the military, but not saying where to take it -- which part of defense you take it out of. But he`s talking about a military build-up that would be extraordinary, without any...

TODD: And by the way...

(CROSSTALK)

MITCHELL: No pricetags.

TODD: This Trump speech today was totally different than everything he said during the primaries!

MITCHELL: Exactly!

TODD: I mean, look, it is -- one thing you can say is this new team has put some discipline on him in ways that I don`t think...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TODD: ... anybody thought was possible. He`s -- you saw -- he`s -- he looked like a tennis match, but he`s getting a little more comfortable, reading faster off a teleprompter.

But he didn`t own that speech, and because there are so many ways that he`s contradicted some of the things that he said in it -- you know, this is why tonight, number one, he`s got to view it as a very important opportunity.

ROBINSON: Yes.

TODD: But he`s not going to have a teleprompter up there tonight.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TODD: And -- but there are a lot of people that are skeptical if he is up to the job. So there are a lot of love viewers at home that are going to be grading him on a curve. That`s an advantage to him if he does it right. But by the way, this speech today -- none of it was his! You just said...

MATTHEWS: OK, let`s...

(CROSSTALK)

TODD: ... Heritage Foundation...

MATTHEWS: Let`s give everybody a scorecard. Is this a battle, of who`s going to be the strongest commander-in-chief, the smarter commander-in- chief, the what? What is it a battle -- do they agree on even what the battle`s about?

TODD: No. I mean, I don`t think either one of them outlined that correctly. I think Hillary Clinton will think a successful night is his temperament became the issue.

MITCHELL: The most calm.

TODD: And I think...

MATTHEWS: Keep calm and (INAUDIBLE)

TODD: That`s right. Trump will believe this is a good night if everybody says, Oh, how about that, Donald Trump seemed like he was -- can do the job, and he really -- he really did -- you know, that`s the scorecard for me tonight.

MATTHEWS: What is it? Who do you trust?

MITCHELL: It`s who you trust, who has the temperament. And I don`t think she has to prove her toughness. She`s answered the 3:00 o`clock phone call question. I think she`s got to prove...

MATTHEWS: In that room -- you mean in the room when they killed Osama bin Laden.

MITCHELL: Yes. But you know, the advertisement from eight years ago. She`s proved her commander-in-chief bona fides in terms of being tough, as a gender issue. That`s no longer on the table.

Now she`s got to prove that she`s got the judgment and that she is not willy-nilly getting into regime change, pulling (ph) Mubarak out, getting into Libya...

ROBINSON: I would -- I would say that she has less to gain and less to lose than Trump does tonight. Trump -- you know, Trump...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: ... could gain a lot. He could lose a lot. It makes the night more of a referendum on Trump. That sort of schematic has been good for Hillary Clinton.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and the guy...

ROBINSON: (INAUDIBLE) referendum on Trump, it`s generally been...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: And the dangerous thing about the guy, or the person in this case, who`s behind, clearly behind in the polling -- they`re the ones that take the Hail Mary shots. They`re the ones that take the wild moves to catch up.

And the question is tonight, will he accept the fact he can catch up a little tonight, but be careful. Anyway, I think that`s the question tonight, how careful will Donald Trump be tonight? Chuck Todd says he`s being careful. We`ll see if he can carry it through the night -- Chuck Todd, of course, Andrea Mitchell, of course, Eugene Robinson, of course. Everybody`s of course.

Coming up...

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: ... we`re going to hear from both the Trump and the Clinton campaigns on the big night tonight. We`re going to get the pre-game from the people fighting (INAUDIBLE) their seconds, their surrogates. They`re all coming here.

When we come back, Trump campaign manager Kellyanne Conway and his top military adviser, General Michael Flynn, will be sitting right here with me with a preview of what they want their guy to do tonight. And maybe he`s ready to do it.

This is HARDBALL, live at the Intrepid aircraft carrier in New York City.

We`ll be right back

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: The city is alabaster tonight. But we`re now 45 minutes before the start of the NBC News commander-in-chief forum, and we`ve got some interesting new polling on the presidential race. For that, we check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard.

First to Florida, where a new PPP poll shows Hillary Clinton with a 1-point lead over Donald Trump in a two-way matchup. It`s Clinton 47, Trump 46.

And look at this from Arizona. A new poll from "The Arizona Republic" newspaper shows Clinton leading Trump out there by a point. That`s in Arizona! It`s Clinton 35, Trump 34, in a state that hasn`t voted for a Democrat for president since 1996.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: In a Trump administration, our actions in the Middle East will be tempered by realism. The current strategy of toppling regimes with no plan for what to do the day after only produces power vacuums that are filled simply by terrorists. Unlike my opponent, my foreign policy will emphasize diplomacy, not destruction.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL, from the flight deck of the Intrepid aircraft carrier ahead of tonight`s NBC News commander-in-chief forum right here on this aircraft carrier.

That was Donald Trump today laying out his vision of war on terror and contrasting it with his opponent, Hillary Clinton, of course. Moments ago, Trump himself arrived here at the Intrepid for tonight`s forum. There`s a picture of him coming here.

Joining me now is Donald Trump`s campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, and also retired general Michael Flynn. He`s the former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and now an adviser to Donald Trump. Thank you so much for joining me (INAUDIBLE) a big night here.

If you -- when I first heard Donald Trump running for president on the issue of foreign policy, I heard a very clear condemnation of this pattern in which we`ve gone into countries like Iraq, we`ve toppled their government, gotten rid of their military, driven the military officer corps into ISIS. And then we went into Gadhafi land. We knocked off Gadhafi, chased him into a sewer pipe, but had no idea what to do next or what was coming next. Then we started going for Syria, and we sort of slowed down at that point.

Kellyanne, is your candidate against that pattern?

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Yes, he is. And he makes very clear that Hillary Clinton owns that pattern. A lot of this happened on her watch, Libya, Syria, Russian reset was a failure, obviously in Benghazi. But I think even more importantly, that Hillary Clinton`s tenure as secretary of state is back in the news, whether it is the pay-for-play, the concierge at the State Department, letting people give to the Clinton Global Initiative, otherwise known as the Foundation, foreign donations.

But also really, I think, what`s being scrutinized now, Chris, is she says, I`m experienced. President Obama said she`s qualified. What does that really mean, though? If this is what experience and qualification means, then I think many Americans are preferring his "peace through strength." You know, the new NBC poll shows that he`s winning military and veterans` households...

MATTHEWS: I know.

CONWAY: ... by 20 points. There`s a reason for that.

MATTHEWS: Most people, General, care about their kids having to fight wars.

GEN. MICHAEL FLYNN, U.S. ARMY (RET.), TRUMP ADVISER: Absolutely.

MATTHEWS: And we`re going to spend a lot of time tonight and over the week talking about people coming home with limbs missing, with all kinds of mental and horrible emotional problems...

(CROSSTALK)

FLYNN: I`ve had -- I`ve had a -- I have a son -- one of my sons has deployed three times.

MATTHEWS: Well, you know all about it.

FLYNN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: And they don`t want us fighting wars because the courage and the discipline of our -- they will fight the war we tell them to fight.

FLYNN: They will fight.

MATTHEWS: So we better damn well pick the right fights.

FLYNN: Exactly. And we have to decide, too. I mean, one, we have to stop being in these perpetual wars. They are costing -- a report just came out, I think, in the last 24 hours that showed this -- this conflict has cost the United States of America just over $6 trillion, Chris. So we have to get ourselves out of this.

We have to decide if we are going to go to war, we have to have very clear objectives for how we`re going to, you know, deal with the -- with the day after. We have done a great job...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

FLYNN: ... getting rid of these leaders. Gadhafi is probably the most dramatic. And to me, we end up with nothing but a big mess.

MATTHEWS: Well, what have we learned -- What have we learned that Donald Trump can put to use?

FLYNN: Well, I think we learn to be smarter about the decisions that we`re going to make when we -- when we decide to go into these conflicts. And I do think that when we talk about -- I mean, Donald Trump talked about today, particularly about defeating ISIS, and -- and looking for the right kind of advice coming in from the Department of Defense, the general officer corps...

MATTHEWS: Yes.

FLYNN: ... as such -- I mean, I -- those are the kinds of things -- that`s the smart decision making that we need, unlike what we have experienced, frankly, over the last couple of administrations.

MATTHEWS: OK. Let`s talk politics for a second. Now, this is politics.

The pro-Clinton super PAC group called Priorities USA put out a new ad this week attacking Trump for his statements on war and on nuclear weapons. Let`s watch this ad. Kellyanne will critique.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I`m really good at war. I love war in a certain way, including with nukes, yes, including with nukes.

I know more about ISIS than the generals do, believe me.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that ad is clearly misleading, if you know where those tapes came from.

Trump`s mention there of nukes in that second part of that statement had nothing to do with the statement before it. It was from a completely different event. And he was answering at that point, in that second area, a question about Japan wanting to acquire nuclear weapons as a defense against North Korea.

Let`s watch the part of that it that the Clinton people -- or the Clinton PAC people grabbed from that quote and attached to a statement about war.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: So North Korea has nukes. Japan has a big problem with it. They have a big problem with it. Maybe they would in fact be better off if they defend themselves from North Korea. Maybe they would be better off.

QUESTION: With nukes?

TRUMP: Including with nukes, yes, including with nukes.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Kellyanne, that was tied together to the earlier statement about like certain things about war, a clear -- well, I wouldn`t call it a distortion. I would call that a lie. What do you make of it?

(CROSSTALK)

CONWAY: Chris, thank you so much for calling them out.

I was on your show months ago.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: They did it yesterday, too.

CONWAY: Listen, I was on your show months ago when you called out the other distortion and lie when he had made a comment about China and they were pretending he said it about a woman.

But, look, I think voters see right through this. What do you think voters expect and deserve? A policy speech on military readiness like the one Donald Trump delivered in Philadelphia today, and a town hall like the one NBC News is sponsoring tonight, or a 30-second ad which is sliced and diced and cherry-picked and totally misleading?

I have my faith in the voters that they will know that that is complete desperation. Donald Trump is rising in the polls. He went to Mexico last week. Then he gave an **immigration** speech on the same day. He was in Louisiana, he was in Detroit. He`s looking presidential.

After the Democratic Convention, they said he`s not presidential. We have responded by showing he`s presidential.

MATTHEWS: Well, let`s get moving. Here`s more from the -- Trump today, the Trumpster today, talking about his plan to counter ISIS. I want General Flynn to answer this one. Let`s watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Immediately after taking office, I will ask my generals to present to me a plan within 30 days to defeat and destroy ISIS. This will require military warfare, but also cyber-warfare, financial warfare and ideological warfare.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: General, will the military meet an order like that?

I understand they always like to give you option one, option two, option three. Well, if you said to the Joint Chiefs, a month from now, I want to plan to kill these guys, we will take care of the diplomatic part of it later or the other part, the psy-war, I want to know how to beat them up on the battlefield, could they do that? Would they come back with a plan to do it?

FLYNN: Yes, absolutely.

And I think the four components that he just said, cyber, financial, ideological, and military, are four great strategic areas.

MATTHEWS: Why haven`t they done it yet?

FLYNN: Because the ideological component of this thing, the president of the United States, Hillary Clinton, they won`t even call this enemy what it ISIS.

MATTHEWS: Well, is that stopping us from winning?

FLYNN: It does, Chris.

MATTHEWS: How? Explain how it does it.

FLYNN: If you don`t clearly define the threat that you`re up against, you cannot conduct a coherent strategy.

MATTHEWS: It is ISIS.

FLYNN: It is radical Islamism. And they have attacked in 22 to 25 countries.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: But on the battlefield, what difference does it call...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Whether you call your enemies the Nazis, the Jerries or the Germans or whatever, what difference does it matter what you call your enemy?

(CROSSTALK)

FLYNN: Just like we called the Nazis out and just like we called the communists out. For 40 years, we beat them ideologically more than we beat them on the battlefield. And we have to be able to do that.

And this is a big component of it. From the military piece of this, this is where Donald Trump said today, hey, look, I want -- in 30 days, I want a plan that shows we can beat these guys.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: You man to tell me that the generals would...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... a month-long plan to defeat ISIS, say, wait a minute...

(CROSSTALK)

FLYNN: Not a month-long plan.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: Come up with a plan.

FLYNN: Yes.

MATTHEWS: First thing with -- you have to call them Islam fascists or Islamofascists? That`s important?

FLYNN: It`s very important. It`s very important.

And the other part of this, the other part of this, Chris, is that we have to be able to demonstrate that we can actually beat these guys. And we know we can. Our military is not able to unleash the capabilities that they have today.

(CROSSTALK)

CONWAY: If it is not a big deal, why doesn`t Hillary just say it? We can ask it the other way. If it`s not a big deal -- she called them our determined enemies at the convention speech. That`s crazy.

MATTHEWS: All right, Churchill mispronounced their names, it didn`t bother the Nazis any. I think he actually did bother them. He called them Nazis.

Anyway, thank you.

I`m not sure the name matters.

FLYNN: But he called them what they were.

MATTHEWS: I know. I know. I know.

Thank you, Kellyanne, thank you, General Michael Flynn, for the Trump campaign.

Up next, by the way, we`re going to hear from the Clinton side about what to expect from Secretary Clinton tonight. The NBC News Commander-in-Chief Forum set to begin, by the way, at the top of this hour.

And this is HARDBALL, live at the Intrepid aircraft carrier. There we are on the West Side of New York in the Hudson River. There we are.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: This election shouldn`t be about ideology. It is not just about differences over policy. It truly is about who has the experience and the temperament to serve as president and commander in chief.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL live from the Intrepid aircraft carrier for tonight`s NBC News Commander-in-Chief Forum, which is coming up very soon now.

Well, that was Hillary Clinton, of course, Secretary Clinton last night before the American Legion making the case for why she is best equipped to be commander in chief.

Well, today, Donald Trump questioned her qualifications. Let`s listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: She can`t even remember whether she has trained in the use of classified information. And she said she didn`t know the letter C means confidential or at least classified. If she can`t remember such crucial events, and information, honestly, she`s totally unfit to be our commander in chief. Totally unfit.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, tonight, Secretary Clinton will get a chance to take her policy proposals directly to the American veterans who have fought for this country.

So, just where does the potential first female commander in chief stand on the war and national security? What is her plan to defeat ISIS? And how will she address lengthy wait times at VA hospitals which are out there now?

For more, I`m joined by the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, top Democrat from Rhode Island and Clinton supporter Jack Reed, and retired Brigadier General Loree Sutton, a Clinton supporter.

General, I want to ask you about this question of Hillary Clinton. Now everybody is trying to figure out Hillary Clinton, because that`s what we do for the last 20 years is figure out any of these politicians, especially perhaps probably, in fact, many cases, we would say the first woman president of the United States.

Andrea Mitchell, I respect dramatically over the years. I have watched her. She studies Hillary Clinton a lot. She knows her. And she said she doesn`t to have prove anymore that, because I`m a woman, I`m going to be tough. She says she`s past that. She`s already proven whatever she had to prove in terms of toughness. Do you buy that? Does being the first woman president put on you a place of a burden wouldn`t be put on another president just to say you`re as tough as the guys?

BRIG. GEN. LOREE SUTTON (RET.), U.S. ARMY: Any pioneering role always puts a certain load that wouldn`t be there for someone who is not that minority, in this case a woman.

So, I think, with Hillary, she`s been dedicated to service her entire career. Her life of service reflects that. Her relationships around the world reflect that. She studies. She`s prepared from day one.

MATTHEWS: Let me to go Senator Reed.

Where would you put Hillary Clinton? Because you were a colleague of hers for all those years. Where would you put her in terms of dove vs. hawk compared to the president right now? Is she more hawkish than the president?

SEN. JACK REED (D), RHODE ISLAND: I think she is the foreign policy realist. I think she understands the use of diplomacy, but necessarily buttressed by force in limited cases.

She`s someone who I have worked closely and recall fondly traveling to Afghanistan for Thanksgiving in 2003 and seeing her with troops, inspiring them, while also being inspired by them.

So, she is someone who is superbly prepared. Great interest in the field, knowledge, personal knowledge of world leaders, of world issues.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

REED: She is someone who is going to be an extraordinary first president of the United States, female.

MATTHEWS: When you see this tape, I think you will be struck by it,as you will be, General, I think.

I talked to her about our history of involvement in assassinations over the years, in knocking off leaders like Mosaddegh in Iran, and Allende, and Arbenz in Guatemala, and Patrice Lumumba, and all these guys we -- we undercut.

We have a history of changing leaders we don`t like and some assassinations. Well, look at this. During a town hall back in March, I asked Secretary Clinton about America`s involvement in overseas assassinations. And here`s what she said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: If somebody could have assassinated Hitler before he took over Germany, would that have been a good thing or not?

You cannot paint with a broad brush. Individual situations and most of the ones you named are ones that I think in retrospect did not have a very defensible kind of calculation behind them.

But I think it is a mistake to say you can`t ever prevent war, you can`t ever save people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What do you make of that, General?

SUTTON: I think she is a steady presence.

MATTHEWS: No, about assassinations and not willing to just rule them out completely.

SUTTON: Precisely.

MATTHEWS: You don`t think we can?

SUTTON: She is someone who takes a measured approach. She knows that there are some actions, like, for example, when she recommended to President Obama that it was time to take chance and go after Obama (sic).

MATTHEWS: Osama bin Laden.

SUTTON: Or, actually, Osama bin Laden.

MATTHEWS: I understand. It`s a mistake too often made, yes.

SUTTON: But the other piece of this is, talk to folks like Secretary Bob Gates, who was secretary of defense, who talked about in his biography, when he -- his autobiography, he talked about how he was not really -- because of all the things he had heard about Hillary, he was not sure he would like her.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

SUTTON: He talked about how much respect he has for her, how well they worked together...

MATTHEWS: I heard that.

SUTTON: ... how knowledgeable she is and how well her background, her life of service has prepared her for this moment in history.

MATTHEWS: Back to you, Senator, about the broad strokes.

Voters deal in broad strokes. They can`t into the -- they don`t get to know candidates personally. They have to decide where they think we have gone wrong on the last presidency. Most elections are correcting the previous presidency. We all know that. Oh, W. wasn`t smart enough, so we bring in Obama.

Was Obama tough enough? We bring in somebody maybe a notch tougher than him. I think that`s why Hillary is population, because they see her as a notch tougher.

Where do you see her in the spectrum? I mean, is she going to learn from Obama, be a little different from him or not, or be the same as him?

REED: I think she has the ability to bring together extraordinary experience.

Few people have ever spent eight years in the White House at a point, as she did, watching everything happening. In fact, she is the only one I can think in history. She served in the United States. She knows the armed forces. She served on the Armed Services Committee.

She`s got all those skills. And, in fact, I think people -- you`re right, Chris. They`re looking for someone that is going to face a difficult world with experience, realistic, tough-minded, but very conscious of our role in the world, very conscious that diplomacy should be our leading edge, not our following edge, and also someone who I think will make an attempt to bring together the entire country, not separate them, not build walls, but unite people.

And I think that`s a powerful force that is bringing people to her. Again, I can`t think of any person who is as well-prepared to be president of the United States than Hillary Rodham Clinton.

MATTHEWS: Well, I`ll tell you what. I think this country has been educated in the last 16 years by these wars in Afghanistan which have become open-ended, with Iraq that cost us that entire officer corps that went off and joined ISIS, unintended consequence there, by de- Baathification, something the American people had nothing to do with that decision, going into Libya, getting involved in that civil war, and without any man for what would come afterwards, getting involved in Syria in an area where we are once again stuck in the mud, or in the sand, rather.

The American people have been educated too. And what they don`t want are a lot more wars. That`s my hunch. And I think the candidates are responding to that.

Senator Jack Reed, thank you, sir, for coming on, ranking Democrat on Armed Services from up in Rhode Island.

REED: Thanks, Chris.

MATTHEWS: And Brigadier General Loree Sutton, thank you, General. We hope to see you a lot, General.

SUTTON: Thank you so much.

MATTHEWS: Thank you very much.

MATTHEWS: You are a trailblazer yourself, I`m sure.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Are you not?

SUTTON: A bit.

MATTHEWS: OK.

SUTTON: I`m the luckiest general on Earth, Chris. Thank you so much.

MATTHEWS: OK. Thank you.

Up next: The fight against ISIS and the unrest in the Middle East will be a big challenge for whoever gets to be the next commander in chief, the next president.

When we come back, our chief foreign correspondent, Richard Engel, will join us from Istanbul. And he`s going to tell us what the big story is, what the big worry is for the next president, as we await the start of the NBC News Commander-in-Chief Forum right here on this aircraft carrier coming up at the top of the hour.

You`re watching it, HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back. Welcome back to HARDBALL live from the Intrepid aircraft carrier. It`s now a museum up here in New York, on the West Side of New York, on the Hudson River. Look at these amazing pictures. That`s where we are right now.

We`re awaiting the start right now of the NBC News Commander-in-Chief Forum. It`s the top of the hour at 8:00 Eastern.

And with all eyes around the world focused on this election right here in the U.S. this fall, tonight, we expect to learn more about how both of the candidates view world events and troubled areas throughout the globe.

Richard Engel to my right here is chief foreign correspondent for -- no, he`s not. He`s the other guy over -- for NBC News. Richard Haass to my right is president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former special assistant to the President Herbert Walker Bush.

Now, let`s get ready for the national anthem.

(NATIONAL ANTHEM)

MATTHEWS: Well, that`s the national anthem, of course, sung tonight by the marine combat veteran turned actor, J.W. Cortes, star of the primetime hit series, TV series, "Gotham".

Anyway, right back to where we were with Richard Haas. First of all, if you`re president of the United States, you`re coming in office January 20th this year, what is your biggest thing you should be worried about?

RICHARD HAASS, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS: One way to answer the question, there`s a lot of things to worry about. This president is going to inherit the messiest world and the most difficult inbox of any president in modern times, just the sheer number of difficult times, a Middle East that`s unraveling. A Russia that`s challenging Ukraine and possibly elsewhere, potential conflicts in the South China Sea, East China Sea. A North Korea that will soon have small nuclear warheads on missiles that can reach the continental United States, ongoing --

MATTHEWS: Really. They`re ready to do that?

HAASS: That could be one of the big crises of the next presidency, certainly by the end of the first term or early in the second term if there is one. I think North Korea will reach that point.

MATTHEWS: When do we get to know that? When they test, the range?

HAASS: We`ll see the range and we`ll probably have intelligence of miniaturization of warheads. One of the questions is, will we have advance warning?

Or will we simply have one day with the new director of national intelligence, goes into the Oval Office and goes, Mr. President, Madam President, we now believe North Korea has crossed this threshold? We are then going to have to decide, this next commander in chief is going to have to decide, is that something the United States can live with, Kim Jong-un with nuclear weapons that can reach the United States? Or is this simply something that`s beyond the pale?

MATTHEWS: Beyond the pale, deterrence even.

HAASS: Well, whether you trust deterrence or defense to work --

MATTHEWS: Let me go to Richard Engel.

Richard Engel, you`re usually on the there on the battle front or the war front. What is -- if you had to go to sleep at night as president, what would you wake up thinking about in the middle of the night?

RICHARD ENGEL, NBC NEWS CHIEF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: Well, as Richard Haass was saying, I would be concerned that Russian expansionism. There are a lot of troops, tens of thousands of troops very close to the Ukrainian border. There`s some concern that they could use this period well while the U.S. is focused on its elections to even move into parts of Eastern Ukraine. That`s an immediate concern right now.

Obviously, the situation in Syria where every day, there is a new atrocity and just over the last two days, these allegations of yet another chlorine gas attack on the people of Aleppo. And then longer term, it`s all the failed states, all of the failed states that have been hemorrhaging **refugees** across Europe. How is Europe going to absorb them? Can Europe absorb them?

Will we see the rise of more right wing parties which we`ve already started to see in Eastern Europe? Will we see more of that? More Brexits? The collapse of the E.U.? An incredibly complex situation for the next commander-in-chief --

MATTHEWS: So, everybody can go to sleep -- everybody is listening to all these lists. What can a president begin on wrap up? A great American president? Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump? What can they reasonably expect to wrap up to shorten this agenda of hell we have to face in the world? What can get done?

HAASS: Well, one thing would be trade. He or she is probably going to inherit the Trans Pacific Partnership. That trade agreement has been negotiated and saving that. It`s been signed.

Can you somehow come up with a bipartisan support? If we can, it would help economically, tremendously, strategically --

MATTHEWS: You`re for it.

HAASS: Absolutely. If we can`t do it, it will really I think -- it may be a major problem to the United States and Asia, not just economically but strategically. Fundamental questions about American political, the ability to function and raise major questions about American political reliability. I would look at that. Venezuela, depending on what happens there. It could be something wrapped up.

MATTHEWS: We could reestablish our relations with that country.

HAASS: Potentially. It might have to go through a failed state.

I would think though something Richard said, Syria is going to be test case. Not to wrap it up. Syria won`t be wrapped up in your lifetime or mine.

But one of the tests the entire world was going to have for this president, is he or she willing to do things Barack Obama didn`t? I don`t mean reckless things. Maybe attack the Syrian air force on the ground, maybe create a no-fly zone. Something to differentiate them, to say there is a new sheriff in town. We can`t wrap it up but it is a powerful signal to send.

MATTHEWS: What is Obama leaving for the next president? I`ve been reading about a potential once again, a Mideast peace attempt before he leaves. Is that something the next president will have to continue or drop? Richard?

ENGEL: Well, I think there is a lot of effort to try to come up with a framework. There are supposed to be talks next couple days between Secretary Kerry and the Russian counter parts to yet again close a cease fire deal. But in reality, even if they do sign some piece of paper, it seems very unlikely that we`re going to see U.S., Russian, Syrian, Iranian, Hezbollah coordination in a way that also satisfies Turkey and the Kurds and all of the other parties in the next several months.

So, I think Richard is right. Trying on ride out this ceasefire and hope that it works and build on it in the next administration is probably a failed policy. I think a different approach is one that --

MATTHEWS: Gentlemen, I expect in the next several months during this interregnum as we go into the new presidency, there will be people testing and getting ready to test us even further, regardless of who we pick as our next president.

Thank you, Richard Engel, as always. Thank you, Richard Haass, of the Council of Foreign Relations.

ENGEL: Of course.

MATTHEWS: When we return, the issues that most concern our veterans. Montel Williams is going to be with us with the challenges facing men and women when they get home.

Well, that`s the big part and we ought to get to that and we`re going to get closer right now as we do to the start of NBC News Commander-in-Chief Forum which is coming. You see it right there on the screen at the top of this hour. And this is HARDBALL, live at the Intrepid, in fact on the flight deck of the Intrepid aircraft carrier up in New York.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, we`re about ten minutes away right now from the first candidates` forum of this general campaign season featuring both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on the same seat, I think, alternating, of course. Moments ago, Secretary Clinton arrived here at the Intrepid. There`s a picture.

And at the top of the hour, NBC`s Matt Lauer is going to moderate the NBC News Commander-in-Chief Forum and you can watch it right here on MSNBC. Don`t turn the channel. Right here. It`s all going to be here for that hour. We`ll come back afterwards. Rachel will be leading the show when we come back.

And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Well, the hall is ready, we`re just now a few minutes away from the start of this NBC News Commander-in-Chief forum. Really, it`s the first big event of this fall season, live from the Intrepid aircraft carrier up here in New York. A dramatic spot for a dramatic evening.

We`re joined once again by NBC News political director and moderator, of course, of "Meet the Press" Chuck Todd, there he is. NBC News chief foreign affairs correspondent Andrea Mitchell. We got the big guns in the aircraft carrier tonight -- and retired Air Force Army colonel and MSNBC military analyst, Jack Jacob. We got to get the service right.

And with us from L.A. is former Navy lieutenant commander and talk show host, Montel Williams.

Montel, I`ll be with you in a minute.

I wanted you to do this, just as analysts, reporters, without a lot of interpretation. Hillary Clinton, how is she presenting herself as the next Commander-in-Chief in broad strokes?

COL. JACK JACOBS (RET.), U.S. ARMY: Even-tempered, reliable, experienced and grown-up is probably how she`s trying to put herself.

MATTHEWS: Andrea?

ANDREA MITCHELL, NBC NEWS CHIEF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT: Not trigger-happy. Trying to make up for the criticism of the Iraq war and that she, according to the trump people, was too eager to get involved in Libya, Egypt, and other regime removals.

MATTHEWS: So interesting.

CHUCK TODD, NBC NEWS: Methodical preparedness. Like that is -- it`s never going to be showy with her, but she`s a grinder, and I think they believe that it`s not always an asset when you need charisma, but for her, I think it`s an asset.

MATTHEWS: It`s like when you put your money in an investment, the people that cover your money, not take any chances. We`re going to protect your money.

TODD: Diversify, diversify. Don`t put me all in the crazy funds.

JACOBS: I think if she were running against somebody other than Donald Trump, her pitch would be slightly different.

MATTHEWS: Let`s talk about Trump. What`s his self-presentation? What`s he offering us that you hear?

JACOBS: Tough. He presents himself as the tough guy. His perception is that we face a large number of threats around the world and the only thing that these people understand is toughness.

MATTHEWS: I`m going to shove back. That`s how he strikes me.

MITCHELL: But also change, I`m different, I`m not going to go along with these old treaties, with trade deals. I`m going to shake things up. I can make deals, the deal-maker.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

TODD: It`s almost ditto. I do think tonight his goal is to present himself as capable of the job.

MATTHEWS: And knowing all the words.

TODD: And showing some sophistication about it. But I think overall, it`s sort of a toughness with, hey, putting America first.

MATTHEWS: What do you think Matt`s going to try to do tonight?

TODD: I don`t want to get into Matt`s head.

MATTHEWS: No, what do you think he`s going to -- what is the goal tonight if you`re the moderator? What is the goal? That`s not a tricky question.

TODD: No, it`s not. Especially with Matt, but Matt is so good at this format. And the conversational aspect of this can actually trip you up if you`re not careful, if you`re a candidate. Because he can be very effective at getting you off of your scripted talking points. I think that`s Matt`s gift in general, because think about it. He only does a three-minute interview. He has the hardest job of interviewing anybody in our business, because he only gets about three or four minutes. So, he knows the tricks of keeping people up talking.

MATTHEWS: Let`s move on to the condition in which our servicemen and women come back home after they fought the good war, the bad war, whatever.

Let`s go to Montel Williams.

Give me a sense of what you would want to hear, what would you grill these two candidates on tonight?

MONTEL WILLIAMS TALK SHOW HOST: You know, Chris, one of the things that surprises me, when each candidate talks about their policies, or about how they`re going to deal with all the crises around the world, remember the tip of their spear are the soldiers, sailors, airmen, coast guard men and marines that are out there fighting the battle for them. We have yet to hear from either candidate, though I`ve heard Donald Trump and I`ve read their online policies of what they intend to do.

But one of the things I`d like to hear from them tonight, we`re going to go and make sure that each house, the House and the Senate will pass a resolution that states that we are going to fund a bill that will take care of the V.A. problems. We don`t need to destroy it or privatize it, we need to fix it. And we`ve not done that or made a hard attempt at doing so. And I want to hear from them how they`re going to do that.

MATTHEWS: Well, I`m going to bring in Colonel Jacobs, too, because I`m looking at these numbers here, we just got to pull together, 600 -- almost 700,000 service people coming back with mental disorders. These are individual people, 600,000, 700,000 -- 600,000 with nervous system problems, plus all the other stuff, the amputees, the blindness, the deafness. I mean, you meet some of these guys, they`ve given it all.

JACOBS: It`s very sad and some of us are old enough to remember what the world looked like after the Second World War. I lived in a neighborhood in New York, where some of my friends didn`t have fathers, and others were missing bits and pieces because of the war. We grew up in that environment. And now we have it again.

I think the V.A. is not fixable as a medical institution. And I think that if somebody serves this country, shows up with an honorable discharge, you say, thank you very much, and you give them a Medicare card and he goes to whatever doctor he wants to, gets taken care of, and then you don`t have to get an appointment to get an appointment, and none of this stuff would occur.

MATTHEWS: So, you get first class treatment.

(CROSSTALK)

WILLIAMS: Chris, I got to disagree with that.

MITCHELL: Just to say, in a volunteer system, with the economy we`ve had for the last decade, what you`re talking about is service from the smallest percentage, 2 percent of Americans --

MATTHEWS: They do it all.

MITCHELL: And often from lower income levels. For them, this is the way to climb out and get the G.I. bill and it`s just not right.

MATTHEWS: Everybody knows that we are not served and protected by the general population. We`re served and protected by a very small portion of the population, that not necessarily hangs out socially with the rest. You`re talking about the top 1 percent. What about the 2 percent that save us? They`re isolated in many ways.

WILLIAMS: And the colonel made a very good point. When he entered the service and when I did in 1973, we lived in a time when our Congress and Senate, about 80 percent of them had a dog in this race. They either served themselves or a family member did.

If you look at our Congress and Senate right now, you have less than 20 percent that did. And you take a look at both candidates, neither one of them have a family member that did.

So, what we`ve got to do is remember that we have people who are very quickly ready to put troops on the ground, where they wouldn`t even let their own children be those troops. If they`re willing to send your children off to die that quickly, that means they don`t care that deeply in your heart.

I want to go back to the question of whether or not the V.A. is fixable. Let`s remember, some of the top technologies we have right now, as civilians, where technology is learned from the battlefield and learned through the V.A. So, the V.A. is not the problem. The leadership of the V.A. is the problem and if we fix that, we fix the problem.

MATTHEWS: Why do we have a V.A., and why don`t we just have Medicare cards?

JACOBS: Well, this is an outgrowth of the Second World War, we had 20 million people under arms, the war was over, we gave them the G.I. bill, we give all the V.A. stuff to make sure they got taken care of. Now, we`re in an environment where less than one-half of 1 percent of the American public is currently in uniform.

MATTHEWS: Right. OK.

JACOBS: There`s no need to have a parallel redundant system of medicine.

MATTHEWS: Thanks so much. Chuck Todd, Andrea Mitchell, Colonel Jack Jacobs, and Montel Williams, it`s going to be an exciting night here on this aircraft carrier and it begins right now with NBC`s Matt Lauer and the Commander-in-Chief Forum.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

Steve Kornacki, Milissa Rehberger, David Corn, Hugh Hewitt, Kristen Welker, Beth Fouhy, Jonathan Alter

9131 speakers\_end

STEVE KORNACKI, GUEST HOST: Game time for Clinton and Trump.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Steve Kornacki, in for Chris Matthews.

The Labor Day weekend is upon us. And while that means Americans are going to have a three-day weekend to celebrate the waning days of summer, it also marks the traditional kickoff of the general election campaign, the home stretch.

Now that means less than 10 weeks to go until election day, and all indications are that the candidates are entering this home stretch on an uneven playing field, Politico reporting today that the Clinton campaign is, quote, "displaying unchecked confidence," noting that advisers to Hillary Clinton`s campaign have identified so many paths to an election day victory, they`re now focusing not only on the one or two battlegrounds that would ensure a win, but on opening up the possibility of an Electoral College landslide. That`s the view from Clinton world.

Meanwhile, the Trump campaign has yet to answer some fundamental questions about how they can pull this thing off. Quote, "The plan to get to 270 electoral votes remains unclear. The battleground state deployment plan is a work in progress. Money from big donors is slowing to a trickle, and aides are confused about who is calling the shots. Donald Trump`s campaign is teetering, threatening to collapse under the weight of a candidate whose personality outweighs his political skill." That is from Politico.

So with that in mind, let`s take a look over here at the big board about where things stand in this race as we hit the Labor Day home stretch. So what you`re looking at right here -- this is not where the race stands right now. This is where Republicans wanted the race to stand right now.

When this general election campaign began a few months ago, when Donald Trump locked down the Republican nomination, if you had said then to Republicans, Where do you hope this presidential race stands at Labor Day, they would hope it looked something like this, a very close race in terms of electoral votes and a battleground that would look something like this, basically a 50-50 chance for Donald Trump to get to 270.

But we`re going to show you now piece by piece what it actually looks like, and that`s because there have been some developments over the last few months. We`re going to start with two states that everybody -- and I mean everybody -- at the start of this campaign said were swing states that no longer look like swing states.

I`m talking first about Virginia. Latest poll there, Hillary Clinton up 12 points. Virginia -- this is a state Republicans won clear through 2004. In 2008, Obama won it narrowly. In 2012, he won it narrowly, you can see here, by 4 points. But Hillary Clinton`s lead has exploded into double digits in that state right now. Not looking like a swing state. Neither, for that matter, is Colorado. Our most recent poll there has Hillary Clinton running 14 points ahead.

So what does that do to the map? Two states we thought were swing states right now are looking a lot more like Hillary Clinton states.

Here`s something else that`s changed in the last few months. Some of these red states, states we all just penciled in at the start of this and said they`re going to be Trump states because they`re always Republican states - - they`re not looking like red states right now. I`m talking about North Carolina, a state Mitt Romney won by 2 points in 2012. Most recent poll, Hillary Clinton up by 2 in North Carolina.

How about Georgia, a state Mitt Romney won by 7, a state that last voted for a Democrat for president back in `92? Most recent poll there`s got Trump up 4, not a very comfortable lead for Donald Trump. It is a lead, but you can`t call that a safe red state with a margin like that.

How about Missouri? Mitt Romney won this by 10 points. Donald Trump`s up a single point in the most recent poll. How about Arizona? Again, double digits for Romney four years ago, 3 for Trump right now.

So what does that do to the map? It takes these four red states we`re talking about here, you can`t call them red states now. You can`t say Carolina is in the bag for Trump, you can`t say Georgia is, you can`t say Missouri is, you can`t say Arizona is. Look how that starts to change the electoral map.

Now, some of those other battleground states, let`s give you a quick view of what it looks like on the ground in those states. You can start with New Hampshire. Look at this. Remember, Donald Trump won this in the primary. Four years ago, Barack Obama won it by 6. Hillary Clinton -- new poll out just in the last few hours, an 11-point lead. There have been a couple polls like that for her in New Hampshire.

Pennsylvania -- how much talk have we heard from Republicans about Trump competing in Pennsylvania? It was 5 points in 2012. Most recent poll this week, 7 points for Hillary Clinton. There have been polls, some putting her double digits ahead in Pennsylvania.

You can go right through them. Hillary Clinton leading, small but leading in Florida, a state Obama won by a point. Hillary Clinton leading, again, it`s small margin but it is bigger than Obama`s margin in 2012, a 4-point lead for Hillary Clinton in Ohio. Wisconsin, down to 3. Democrats would like that to be more. That`s actually good news for Donald Trump. But still, bottom line, that is a Hillary Clinton lead in Wisconsin.

Iowa -- best news for Donald Trump in any swing state, the best news right now, is right here, a tie. He`s not ahead, he`s in a tie in the most recent poll. This is a state Obama won by 6 points. Nevada also, Hillary Clinton, a smaller lead than President Obama had, but still a lead.

Keep that in mind. All those battleground states, you can`t point to a single one right now where Donald Trump is ahead. These are states he`s got to be flipping. In fact, you look at it and you say she`s up double digits in New Hampshire, high single in Pennsylvania, those are looking blue right now.

Bottom line, heading into the home stretch, look how close she is to 270. Look how far he is. The gray states left, Trump would basically have to run the table to get to 270. He needs a shakeup to get back in this race and to have a path to the White House.

I`m joined now by MSNBC political analyst David Corn, Washington bureau chief of "Mother Jones." Amy Holmes is a political analyst with RasmussenReports. Hugh Hewitt, conservative radio host, MSNBC political analyst.

Hugh, let`s start with you. Home stretch is here. Donald Trump is down. He has trailed consistently in the national polls all summer. What is the single most important thing he has to do to get back in this game?

HUGH HEWITT, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: I think you said there needs to be a shakeup. Wisconsin, Iowa and Nevada are the three states where he`s got the best news. I think it does come down to Pennsylvania in the end.

But luckily today -- I know you are coming to this later in the program, Steve, so I don`t want to spend too much time on it, but on October 20th, 1973, there was a Saturday night massacre. Well, September 2nd, 2016, is a Friday night massacre of the DOJ and the FBI`s narrative and reputation on Hillary Clinton and the e-mails.

It`s a disastrous story for Hillary Clinton, and it will change the race beginning Monday. And I don`t think the old Labor Day -- take a siesta, take a snooze -- I think we`re all going to be studying this report over the weekend. She had a terrible week. He had a very good week. That shakeup is beginning.

KORNACKI: OK. Well, you`re right, Hugh, we will be getting to that a little later in more detail. But David Corn, a version of the same question I asked Hugh, I`ll ask you, but from Hillary Clinton`s standpoint. She`s ahead. What is the biggest threat that Hillary Clinton faces in the home stretch of this campaign? Is it the e-mail story? Is it the DOJ?

DAVID CORN, "MOTHER JONES," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: No.

KORNACKI: Is it something else? What is the biggest threat, in your mind, that could trip her up?

CORN: I read the report. Other people read the report by now. It doesn`t go any further than what we`ve already heard, that she was careless or reckless with handling the e-mail, which she`s apologized for. It`s a real problem, it`s a real issue, but not -- she didn`t know something about classified material? Donald Trump didn`t know what the nuclear triad was.

MATTHEWS: OK...

(CROSSTALK)

KORNACKI: So you don`t think that`s a threat. What is? What is?

CORN: I think -- well, I think the -- I think the thing she needs to worry about the most is that Donald Trump becomes sane. He had a chance this week. He went to Mexico. He got kudos because he didn`t drool while standing next to a foreign leader.

But then he came back and gave a speech that was supposed to be part of a pivot, a minority outreach. He lost, I don`t know, half of his Latino advisory board. So he`s not doing anything to reach those voters in the swing states that you just went through.

So I think now she`s like Muhammad Ali playing rope-a-dope, just let him flail. And if he stays where he is, she`s in a good position. So basically, make no mistakes, do well at the debates, which are the next possible turning point, if they happen, in this campaign. But really, let him go around and around like a Tasmanian devil who can`t even keep his own Latino advisers aboard!

KORNACKI: Well, after a campaign meeting at Trump Tower yesterday, top aides were confident of victory following his speech Wednesday night. According to "The Washington Post," Trump`s tough talk on **immigration** combined with a whirlwind trip to Mexico on Wednesday had, in the words of one adviser, won him the election.

But "The New York Times" reported yesterday that several associates close to Trump have told his son, Eric, that Trump is in real danger of losing. Quote, "RNCstrategists indicated to the younger Mr. Trump his father`s already narrow path to 270 electoral votes he needs to win could vanish. Going through the swing states one by one, party officials showed Eric Trump that his father was drastically underperforming other Republicans in the polls."

Amy Holmes, that`s sort of a version, I think, of what we just walked through there in terms of what the state-by-state map looks like right now. But they mentioned, the first article we have there, the **immigration** speech. Trump`s campaign apparently, according to this reporting -- they feel they took a big step forward with the **immigration** speech this week.

Given the polling realities, the swing state realities, all that he`s up against, do you think he helped his cause at the end of this week by what he said this week on **immigration**?

AMY HOLMES, RASMUSSENREPORTS: I think he helped his cause by the trip down to Mexico. And in answer to David Corn`s question, yes, Donald Trump looking presidential is a big threat, and even Howard Wolfson, a former communications director for Hillary Clinton, said that Donald Trump`s trip to Mexico was a home run.

Now, the media is analyzing Donald Trump`s speech in Phoenix in very different ways. I watched it, and I heard a tough tone, but in fact, in terms of substance, I thought that he was actually kind of, you know, strained (ph) -- the middle of the road and the middle line there. And many of the things that he outlined are, in fact, actually U.S. policy and administration policy.

I understand that the speech was fiery, but I think a lot of voters listening -- they like that message from Donald Trump that he`s going to be putting America first. And I`d be surprised if Hillary Clinton disagrees with that.

KORNACKI: Let`s stay on that for a second, Hugh Hewitt, because it`s interesting, we talk about the tone of this speech and the emphasis Donald Trump had there on crime. He had the parents of victims of crimes that had been committed by illegal **immigrants**.

I`m looking, just when I sort of slice and dice the demographics here, trying to figure out why Clinton`s winning, why Trump`s losing. And I`m not the only one to look at this, but it comes down to these white suburbanites. It comes down to people who are a little bit more conservative economically, pocketbook issues. They worry about their taxes. But they don`t like the idea of being associated with somebody who says the inflammatory things Donald Trump has.

And I`m just looking at the tone of that speech this week, and I`m having a hard time seeing how those voters warm up to him because of it.

HEWITT: Well, it depends if they listen to it or to the coverage. I was on with you on Wednesday night, Steve, and I agree that I thought it was a very energetic speech, but comprehensively in the middle of the Republican position on **immigration**.

And going back to your I think very completely accurate assessment of the map -- Wisconsin, Iowa, Nevada are where Donald Trump has to shake the map up. How does the speech play in those three states and in Pennsylvania? I think it plays very, very well.

It`s not going to get you back Colorado. That`s gone. You know, I think it`s a completely blue state right now. Nevada is a funny state because of Trump`s presence there. But how does it play in Iowa, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin? He promises security to a country worried about security.

He elevates for the media to understand the victims of crime of those not in the country legally. And he does so with a little bit more humor and grace than we`re used to, and especially the visit to Mexico. It was his very best day of the campaign, in the middle of a week where Hillary Clinton began with the Gilbert Chagoury on the front page of "The Los Angeles Times," ended up with this terrible report today.

So I think by this time next week, we will see a much tighter race.

KORNACKI: All right. So some senators this week, meanwhile, sounded like they believe a Hillary win is in the cards for November. Senator John McCain, who won his primary in Arizona on Tuesday night, is now using the prospect of a Clinton presidency in a new TV ad. Check it out.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R), ARIZONA: If Hillary Clinton is elected president, Arizona will need a senator who will act as a check, not a rubber stamp, for the White House.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: And in Louisiana, Senator Bill Cassidy said on C-SPAN last night that it`s not the Republican message that`s at fault, but the messenger at the top of the ticket.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. BILL CASSIDY (R), LOUISIANA: The message that we have is pretty good. It may turn out that Mr. Trump is not the messenger. Maybe he is. But it really seems to boil down to Mr. Trump`s personality being not what people like, as opposed to some of the issues. I think where the issues are, Republicans are kind of where many of the American people are.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: Well, Amy, that McCain ad -- it just takes me back, 1996, when the Republicans concluded Bob Dole was toast in the presidential race, they wanted to save the Congress, they started campaigns saying, Hey, give us a check against a second term of President Clinton. Seeing shades of that right now in that ad.

HOLMES: Well, I think that ad has a lot more to do with John McCain being in a tough reelection battle, and he`s trying to appeal to the moderates, his moderates, in Arizona.

But you also always have to ask the question in politics, "compared to what?" We`re talking about Donald Trump and his tone or his demeanor. Well, Hillary Clinton this week, it was reported by "The Washington Post," is at her highest negativities and unfavorability in her career!

And the bad news that has come out over last week and this week, including the Clinton Foundation and the revelations by the AP that half of the people that she met with who were outside of government came -- were donors to the Clinton Foundation -- this has not been good for her.

And I would actually say that that very fiery speech that she gave attacking Donald Trump and Donald Trump voters -- I thought that that was a sign of weakness. Typically, the top of the ticket, they`re the good cop, and the vice presidential candidate -- they`re the bad cop who slings the mud.

Well, Hillary Clinton was willing to sling that mud because I think she`s afraid of Donald Trump and she`s trying to frame him as unacceptable and is afraid that his message is getting through.

KORNACKI: And David Corn, just very quickly on that -- I mean, this is a story we`ve been talking about, I`d say `96 -- since the `90s -- Hillary Clinton, those high negative numbers, those high unfavorable numbers -- I mean, are we at a point, though, where we have to say whatever happens in this election, she may still win, that problem for her in particular is just unfixable?

CORN: It may be. But her negative numbers, as high as they are, are still lower than Donald Trump`s. And I still can`t get over how anybody can look at his speech, which drove his own Latino advisers out of the campaign kicking -- you know, screaming and running, as something that would play well with the general electorate and put him in a better position. It`s ludicrous to think that he gained when he lost his own supporters!

So I think there`s a long way to go before Donald Trump shows any of those voters that you talked about, Steve, those suburban Republicans and moderates, that he`s a guy with the temperament, the knowledge or the ability to talk in a way that doesn`t cause them to pull their hair out of their head.

KORNACKI: All right, David Corn, Amy Holmes, Hugh Hewitt -- thanks for the time. Appreciate it.

HOLMES: Thank you.

HEWITT: Thanks.

KORNACKI: OK, and we are -- Hugh Hewitt mentioned this. We talked about it a little bit. We are going to get a full report on those FBI notes on Hillary Clinton in just a minute.

Also coming up, on the eve of Trump`s trip to a black church in Detroit, basketball star Dwyane Wade says Trump used his cousin`s death for political gain. That`s ahead.

Plus, the first presidential debate now just over three weeks away, and we`re learning more about the two big things Hillary Clinton is planning to do when she takes the stage against Donald Trump.

And the inside story of how Trump changed his **immigration** speech Wednesday night to try to stick it to the Mexican president after learning that the president had tweeted that Mexico wouldn`t be paying for Trump`s border wall.

And finally, the HARDBALL roundtable is going to be here to tell me and you three things about this presidential race that you might not know.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: The FBI today released documents of its interview with Hillary Clinton on the investigation into her use of a private e-mail server that contained classified information. Clinton told investigators that she had used a personal e-mail address as secretary of state out of convenience and that she did not remember anyone raising legal concerns about it.

With the details, we go to NBC`s Kristen Welker at the White House. So Kristen, what are the headlines coming out of this?

KRISTEN WELKER, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Well, there are a lot of headlines, Steve. Let me give you a few of the big ones. One, Secretary Clinton saying that she didn`t remember all of the briefings that she received on how to handle sensitive information because of that concussion that she suffered back in 2012. That`s one of the revelations from these documents that`s raising some eyebrows.

Another one, she told FBI investigators that she didn`t know what the letter "C" meant on some of the e-mails. Well, it stands for "confidential," and she said she wasn`t clear about that.

I spoke with a former federal official who said that is really hard to believe, given that she was secretary of state, given all that -- the briefings that she had.

And then finally, the FBI saying that they had no evidence that her server was ever hacked, but at the same time, that`s inconclusive because she had so many different devices that she used, as many as 13 over a period of time. And so they say it`s not conclusive that her server was never hacked, but they just don`t have any evidence to suggest that it was.

This, of course, all providing fodder for Donald Trump. He called her a liar, of course. You guys just had that conversation in which Hugh Hewitt seized upon this controversy.

And the bottom line here, it keeps the e-mail issue in the headlines for yet another day, heading into Labor Day, and it continues to fuel those high unfavorable ratings and voters` lack of trust of her. So this is something she`s going to need to address after Labor Day, and particularly in the debates, Steve.

KORNACKI: That`s right, the story that started well over a year ago.

WELKER: Indeed.

KORNACKI: We`re entering the home stretch of the presidential campaign, still there. Kristen Welker, thanks for the time. Appreciate it.

Be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: You have tremendous numbers of African-Americans that have really had a hard time, I mean, beyond belief.

And, you know, I read the numbers where you have so many in poverty, and the crime is horrible, and the education is terrible, and they live terribly.

And I say, what do you have to lose? I say to them, what do you have to lose? Give it to me. I`m going to fix it.

And a lot of people are agreeing with me. What do you have to lose? The Democrats and the Hillary Clintons of the world have done a terrible job. She`s been there for 35 years. She`s done a terrible job.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

KORNACKI: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

After a week of trying to shore up the Hispanic vote, Donald Trump is now focusing on the African-American community. Today, he sat down with a roundtable of business, civic and religious leaders in Philadelphia. Tomorrow, he heads to Detroit to visit with Great Faith Ministries. That`s a primarily black church.

Yesterday, "The New York Times" reported that the normally unscripted Trump would leave nothing to chance in Detroit -- quote -- "Mr. Trump had planned to be interviewed by its pastor in a session that would be closed to the public and the news media with questions submitted in advance. Instead of letting Mr. Trump be his freewheeling self, his campaign prepared lengthy answers for the submitted questions, consulting black Republicans to make sure he says the right things."

This morning, that pastor, Wayne Jackson, said he would have new questions. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PASTOR WAYNE JACKSON, GREATER FAITH MINISTRIES: These answers -- I mean, these questions are not going to be just -- as a matter of fact, I have questions that they don`t know about, no one knows about. I have changed them after that came out.

Now, I want to make something very clear. There was no conversing with the Trump campaign and myself to try to get him up in hand on these questions.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: And late tonight, there is now growing confusion about tomorrow`s meeting. The campaign is saying Trump will address the congregation. Pastor Jackson is saying he will not.

For more on Trump`s visit, I`m joined by Deana Bass, former press secretary for Ben Carson, and Jonathan Allen, co-author of "HRC: State Secrets and the Rebirth of Hillary Clinton."

Well, Deana, let`s start with you.

So, Donald Trump, the interesting thing in this outreach he`s been doing the last few weeks, outreach to the black communities, he really hasn`t spoken in front of a predominantly black audience. He`s delivered this message largely in front of white audiences.

And we played a clip of it there of what he has been saying, at least until now, where he stresses sort of negative aspects, as he sees it, of black life in America, talking about crime, talking about poverty, things like this.

If he goes to a black church in Detroit tomorrow with that message, how do you think that will go over?

DEANA BASS, FORMER BEN CARSON CAMPAIGN PRESS SECRETARY: You know, I think first of all, it`s important to recognize that we have been complaining about the fact that Donald Trump has not gone to the black community. Now people are complaining that he actually is going to the black community.

It`s a great thing that he`s going there. And when he gets there, I hope that he will talk about these issues that he`s raised before, but I think that he should also talk about jobs and the economy. These are areas where black Americans are struggling, and we do need more jobs and economic opportunities in places like Detroit.

But we also need -- you know, economic opportunities in place of educational opportunities as well. So, I think it`s very important that Donald Trump is going there. I think that it will be helpful if he changes his language so that it`s not as negative, but he`s pointing out the fact that, for 30 years, Hillary Clinton has been talking to the African- American community and has earned the vote of African-Americans, but she`s done very little to improve the plight of people in areas like Detroit and areas like Chicago.

So I`m excited to see what happens after this meeting with Bishop Jackson`s church.

KORNACKI: Well, in terms of the politics of this, there`s a new national poll from "USA Today" and Suffolk University. It breaks down the respondents by race.

And among black voters, Trump is getting just 2 percent of support. You can see it there. That puts him not just well behind Hillary Clinton, but also behind Gary Johnson and Jill Stein, the Libertarian and Green Party candidates, just two points there.

Jonathan Allen, there was also a poll, an NBC News/"Wall Street Journal" poll a few weeks ago that put him at 1 percent, had Hillary Clinton 91, Donald Trump 1 percent with black voters.

I know there`s a school of thought out there that, while this is on the surface outreach to black voters, Donald Trump is really using this as a way of reaching a different segment of the electorate, white voters. Do you think there`s anything to that?

JONATHAN ALLEN, CO-AUTHOR, "HRC: STATE SECRETS AND THE REBIRTH OF HILLARY CLINTON": Absolutely.

So, first, let`s take this in a couple parts. Number one, when you have got -- when you are polling at 1 percent or 2 percent among African- Americans, what that really means is, you are within the margin of error of zero, Steve.

It`s possible that -- obviously, it`s not going to be zero, but it`s going to be very low. Number two, I do think he`s absolutely trying to communicate to white moderate Republicans that he`s not a bigot, that he can go talk in African-American communities about issues of importance to African-Americans and perhaps also to Latinos later on.

But I think the idea is to make them more comfortable with the idea that they are not voting for someone who is a bigot. But this interesting thing he`s doing at Great Faith Ministries in Detroit, it`s somewhat surprising.

The whole idea for him is to go in there and show that he`s got comfort with and he is comfortable with the African-American community, to be able to go into a black church and speak about issues in a way that is reassuring about his intentions.

And yet we find out that all of the questions and answers are scripted, which shows the exact opposite, that he`s so uncomfortable, that he`s not willing to go in there and actually have a real discussion.

BASS: I don`t see it -- you know, with all due respect, I don`t see it as an issue of him being uncomfortable.

I think that what we have to understand is -- Jon, you have been there. We have seen this happen with other candidates. It is very common for campaigns to receive questions in advance. And it is very common for staff to prepare remarks.

But we know this of Donald Trump. He is not a scripted candidate. And so even if he takes these comments and reads over them and reviews them, we know that Donald Trump, in most situations, he is going to speak from his heart and he is going to say what he wants to say. I think that Kellyanne Conway has done a great job. I`m glad that Steve Bannon is there.

But the bottom line is that, from the very beginning, this has been Donald Trump`s campaign. And Trump will be Trump, whether you give him a script or not.

ALLEN: That`s terrible for Donald Trump.

KORNACKI: And, again -- again, right now, we are still trying to figure out exactly what is going to happen at this church tomorrow. We are hearing something from the Trump campaign, something else from the church itself.

The original reporting they have told us at times is wrong. So, we`re going to find out when he gets there exactly what this is.

But, also, since the beginning of this outreach Trump has been making the last few weeks, he has stepped on his own message a few times. Last weekend, after NBC -- NBA star Dwyane Wade`s cousin Nykea Aldridge was shot to death in Chicago, Trump tweeted: "Dwyane Wade`s cousin was just shot and killed walking her baby in Chicago. Just what I have been saying. African-Americans will vote Trump."

This morning, Dwyane Wade finally broke his silence and responded. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DWYANE WADE, NBA PLAYER: I was grateful that it started a conversation.

But, on the other hand, it just -- it was a -- it just -- a bad taste in my mouth because of what my family is dealing with and what our city of Chicago is dealing with. And it looks like it`s been used as a political game.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: Deana, there is this particular example.

But here`s what I`m curious about. The Republican Party in general, more than a half-century now -- you go back to Barry Goldwater in 1964 -- you can`t find a Republican nominee for president who has broken 20 percent of the black vote.

So, in general, Republicans do not do well with the black vote. But Donald Trump, 2 percent in this poll we put up tonight, 1 percent in ours. He`s doing even worse. Diagnose the problem, as you see it. Why is he doing even worse than Republicans who normally don`t do well at all?

BASS: You know, Donald Trump`s rhetoric in the black community has not been helpful. I will completely admit that. I will not co-sign on the language that he`s used.

But what I cannot stand is this idea that, this week, we have had, I think, 90 deaths in Chicago, and these are cities that have been led by Democrats. So, the only thing that I can say to that is, I don`t understand why the message doesn`t resonate, that we continue to give our loyalty to Democrats and we have gotten very little in return.

So, I think it`s very important that candidates like Donald Trump raise awareness and speak in ways that may be a little controversial, but Dwyane Wade said it. He`s brought attention to this situation. And I think that is very important.

KORNACKI: All right.

Deana Bass, Jonathan Allen, thanks for the time.

Up next: the first presidential debate just over three weeks away now. We have got new details about the two things Hillary Clinton is planning to do when she finally meets Donald Trump on that stage.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Milissa Rehberger. Here`s what`s happening.

Tropical Storm Hermine continues bringing heavy rain and damaging winds to the Southeast. The storm is now in the Carolinas after sweeping through Florida and Georgia earlier today with winds of up to 70 miles per hour.

At least one person was killed in Florida and tens of thousands were left without power. The storm is expected to dump more than -- more heavy rain on the Mid-Atlantic states this weekend, as tropical storm watches are in effect as far north as Rhode Island -- back to HARDBALL.

KORNACKI: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

The first presidential debate now just over three weeks away, and we now know who the moderators are going to be for these three potentially blockbuster bouts between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Our own Lester Holt, the anchor of "NBC Nightly News," is going to be at the helm for the first debate. That`s going to be on the night of September 26. Other moderators include Martha Raddatz, Anderson Cooper and Chris Wallace.

Politico reports that Clinton around her advisers are consumed by the challenge of preparing to debate a man they see as the ultimate wild card, while at the same time not doing further harm to her image.

According to Glenn Thrush -- quote -- "Hillary Clinton has expressed frustration, even a little trepidation about her first face-off with Donald Trump later this month, recently telling one person close to her that she`s perplexed about which Donald Trump will show up. And she has told friends since the spring at fund-raisers and in private huddles that she`s especially worried about the new scurrilous attacks on her family fed by Trump -- fed to Trump by allies like Roger Stone."

Thrush also writes -- quote -- "Over the past two or three weeks, advisers have been peppering her with Trumpian attacks, including awkward wild card shots at her family."

Politico`s Glenn Thrush, who wrote that story, joins me now.

Glenn, thanks for taking a few minutes.

So, they want to know which Donald Trump will show up. We know there`s the bombastic Donald Trump who would say, little Marco Rubio. We know that guy. What`s the other Trump, though, that they think could be out there?

GLENN THRUSH, POLITICO: The Trump that we saw in Mexico with the tranquilizer dart sticking out of his neck, Steve.

(LAUGHTER)

THRUSH: I mean, this domesticated version of Trump.

Hillary told a crowd at a fund-raiser in the Hamptons earlier this week that she was concerned that he would attempt to project gravitas.

And, frankly, that`s actually a much more difficult sort of debate for her. Their whole game -- and I think this is a weakness. And I think people on their team, on Clinton`s team, are trying to compensate for that weakness. They have really been relying on Trump acting like a wild man.

If the guy comes out and tries to behave presidential, as he seems to be getting in terms of counsel from Kellyanne Conway, his new campaign manager, and Roger Ailes, that is -- that, in and of itself, is a tame wild card that will be more difficult to deal with.

KORNACKI: So, what`s the thinking there? Do they then try to rile him up? Do they give her some lines to try to provoke a response? How do they handle that?

THRUSH: Yes, absolutely.

I think, you know, well, part of the point of my piece was, she really has a two-fold challenge. The first is to deal with him if he`s crazy. The second is to make him crazy, so that they can deal with him if he`s crazy, because she will look better by comparison.

But the second component of that is to really deal with these trust issues. And we just saw this whole batch, this 11-page summary of her discussion with the FBI. We have seen a real erosion in her trust numbers. "The Washington Post" reported a couple days ago that it`s at a 25-year high.

She`s got business of her own to do with the American people. And, frankly, for a really long time, their strategy has just been to beat the hell out of Donald Trump and pray for the best.

But we have seen significant erosion in her numbers. Interestingly enough, Steve -- and you look at the polls just as well as I do -- Donald Trump has not picked up the support that Hillary Clinton has lost, the three or four points nationally. So, they are just kind of laying out there.

So, she -- what she really needs to do is what she has always needed to do, make the case, the affirmative case with the American people that she`s trustworthy and likable.

KORNACKI: I`m trying to picture -- I`m trying to remember a national debate with as much anticipation as this one.

(CROSSTALK)

KORNACKI: The only thing I can come up with is Sarah Palin in `08. But I think this is that times 10.

Glenn Thrush, excellent reporting. Very good to have you on the show. Appreciate it.

Up next: new details about how Donald Trump changed his **immigration** speech after a tweet from the president of Mexico saying that Mexico won`t be paying for that border wall.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEVE KORNACKI, MSNBC ANCHOR: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

"The Wall Street Journal" has shed new light on Donald Trump`s **immigration** speech Wednesday, reporting that Trump revised his speech at the last minute after seeing a tweet by Mexico`s President Enrique Pena Nieto. The tweet was the Mexican president`s public vow not to pay for Trump`s proposed border wall which Trump had previously said he had not discussed in their earlier meeting.

"The Journal" reports that Mr. Trump was peeved that Pena Nieto had gone public and the Mexican president had broken what Trump considered a deal, to keep the question of paying for the wall off the table, at their initial meetings.

So, Mr. Trump hurriedly inserted a new sentence into his **immigration** speech, after noting his usual style of the U.S. would build a great wall along the southern border, Trump then added this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: We will build a great wall along the southern border. And Mexico will pay for the wall. Believe me, 100 percent. They don`t know it yet but they are going to pay for the wall.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: Hey, and joining me on the roundtable tonight, Catherine Rampell, opinion columnist with "The Washington Post", Jonathan Alter, columnist for "The Daily Beast", and Beth Fouhy, senior politics editor here at MSNBC.

So, Beth, end of the week, I`m trying to put in perspective a little bit what Trump got, what he didn`t get out of that Wednesday in Mexico. That night in Arizona. The speech itself obviously the headlines from the hard line rhetoric from Mexico earlier in the day, it was the image, it was having him stand on the same stage there and try to project a different image.

Which of those do you think ends up having more resonance at the end of the week?

BETH FOUHY, MSNBC SENIOR POLITICS EDITOR: I think that meeting with the president is going to be just wiped from history basically. Except for their sort of proxy Twitter war, that was such a tiny little moment compared to that speech that happened in prime time, that big speech in Phoenix. Prime time carried live by us, by CNN, by others, so much incendiary material there that Hillary Clinton can chop up into ads and certainly will, we will probably start seeing them next week.

In my opinion, that speech was basically, could spell the end of the Trump campaign. It`s not -- it was a speech that basically pushed away everybody but his base. And unless his base can somehow materialize and redouble and re-triple into a winning coalition, I don`t see where he goes from here.

KORNACKI: Speaking of the point you just raised, in response to Trump`s visit to Mexico, the Clinton campaign has a new web ad. Take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Who`s going to pay for the wall? Who?

(MUSIC)

TRUMP: We did discuss the wall. We didn`t discuss payment of the wall.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: OK. Putting everything else aside, I will defend Trump on a very, very narrow point. I don`t think he ever claimed he was going to negotiate payment for the wall in his first meeting during a campaign.

CATHERINE RAMPELL, THE WASHINGTON POST: When he has no leverage because he`s still a candidate and doesn`t actually occupy the oval office?

KORNACKI: I will give him that without being commentary on anything else.

But to the point Beth was just raising, we talked about this earlier in the show, in terms of the politics of this for Trump, when you look at the voters who have been defecting from him, the traditional Republican voters, the sort of culturally moderate suburbanites. I tend to myself watching every speech he gives now with those voters in mind, are they hearing something new that might win that, win them back --

RAMPELL: I think he`s given up on them. I really do.

KORNACKI: So, does he just drive it up with everybody else? Is that --

RAMPELL: I guess. That speech as Beth noted was very much a play to his base. Even Lewandowski, his former campaign manager, who may or may not still be being paid by Trump, went on TV and said this was an attempt to get white male voters. So, I think he`s basically given up on anybody on the fence at this point.

JONATHAN ALTER, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: I don`t agree with that. I think he was very erratic which didn`t help him. He lied which didn`t help him, clearly in the short term. But he lies every time his lips move, so I don`t think that was particularly out of the ordinary.

What he did here rather interestingly to me was appealing to two constituencies. He threw red meat for the base. He secured that business because he needs the sporadic white voter who doesn`t usually come out and is not being counted by any polls except "The L.A. Times" poll which shows Trump even. He needs them to be motivated to come out. That`s what that speech was about.

KORNACKI: Do you think that could work?

ALTER: It could work. Absolutely could work. Nate Silver agrees that it could work, the pollster, or the poll aggregator.

KORNACKI: Right. The one who said Trump had no shot at winning the Republican nomination.

ALTER: He`s spot-on in 2008 and 2012.

So -- but my larger point is that what he did for the white women suburban voter, who I do not believe he`s given up on, is he did what in the military is called covering your retreat with fire. So that speech was like a military force is withdrawing, they don`t want to be seen as cowards in retreat so they lay down a huge barrage of fire to cover their retreat.

What was he retreating from? A commitment all year long to deport 11 million people immediately. That was not in the speech. So when he and Hillary are discussing this in the debate, he will have a semi-rational policy on **immigration**.

KORNACKI: I think the question, though, Jonathan is saying there`s about five million or so undocumented in the country right now that are not visa overstays, no criminal record, anything like that, and Trump in this speech, if you listened very carefully, he`s basically saying nothing about legal status or anything, he`s basically saying we will leave them alone.

FOUHY: I didn`t hear --

(CROSSTALK)

KORNACKI: Can he now, in a debate, can he be more moderate on this?

FOUHY: Honestly, I don`t really understand why the focus on how many people he would deport and when has become such a discussion. I mean, there was so much else in that speech to offend suburban women. I mean, characterizing so many **immigrants** as criminals, taking away jobs, murdering people. He has a whole group of women coming up onstage talking about the illegal **immigrants** who murdered their children.

He could not have painted **immigrants** to this country in a more negative light. The disagreement about who and when they would be deported just seems to be a tiny fraction of the point he was making that night.

KORNACKI: Right. What he said and what they said the day after, too, was it`s nothing about giving legal status or giving citizenship to anybody. It`s saying that a few years from now, down the line, after we have done all the priority deportations that he outlined, they would then revisit it. I`m just thinking if your goal in doing that is to sound more moderate, is to change your tone and appeal to those voters, if that`s all you`re offering and it`s couched in all this other rhetoric, I don`t see how you win those voters over.

RAMPELL: Again, I feel like every time he does an interview about this, he changes his mind about what`s happening to the 11 million.

FOUHY: He`s changed it twice since Wednesday night.

RAMPELL: Exactly.

ALTER: He can now say or people can ask him rationally, isn`t your policy of deporting criminals first the same essentially as Barack Obama`s policy? And when he says, well, in that respect, yes, it is the same, in a debate that might sound appealing to moderate voters.

KORNACKI: All right. I`m just trying -- let`s picture Donald Trump saying, I agree with Barack Obama in the debate, I`m not sure that one`s going to happen.

But the roundtable is staying with us. More to talk about.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: You can play HARDBALL all week long online. Follow the show on Twitter and Instagram, like us on Facebook. You`ll get access to interviews, videos, and behind-the-scene photos, as we hit the road covering the wild presidential campaign in 2016.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: Back now with the HARDBALL round table -- Catherine Rampell, Jonathan Alter, Beth Fouhy.

So, when we started to talk about -- Jonathan was talking about the debates here, what Donald Trump`s strategy might be. We had Glen Thrush earlier today.

Catherine, what do you think? The Donald Trump who shows up to debate Hillary Clinton, is he going to try to reenact what he did in Mexico City, try to be more calm and a different guy?

RAMPELL: I don`t think so. I think where he feels comfortable, where he feels like he`s in his element is where he`s a little more off the cuff, a little more off the cuff, a little bit more of a bullying personality. I think his campaign is probably going to want to keep him on script and prep him for those debates. But all the reporting that I`ve seen on this has indicated that he has resisted, you know, reading policy briefs and doing a structured mock debate and things like that.

So, I think his preference is probably going to be a little more off the cuff, which may or may not work.

KORNACKI: Well, it sounds like that`s what the Clinton campaign wants. They don`t want Trump to show up and try to look presidential. They want Donald Trump to show up like he did in the Republican primary debates.

FOUHY: And I want to give a shout-out for our Commander-in-Chief forum here on NBC on Wednesday. That will be a dry run for Donald Trump, to be standing in front of an audience getting questions. They won`t be on a stage together, but he will be getting questions that are much deeper and much more policy-focused than he is getting anywhere else.

And he will be pressed to go deeper than he has been especially on issues, on matters of foreign policy. So, he`ll get a taste of that and decide what`s the best way to go? To go back to his natural state, or that he actually can play in the policy arena and can get to the point where he could stand and go toe to toe with Hillary Clinton.

KORNACKI: And it`s interesting, Jonathan, we keep looking back to these Republican primary debates. And we forget sometimes, ten candidates on the stage, they had commercial breaks every 15, 20 minutes. Donald Trump could stand there and disappear for 20 minutes at a time. The whole conversation could play out around him, totally different dynamic. One-on-one commercial-free against Hillary Clinton.

ALTER: It`s going to be harder for him. He doesn`t know really much about the issues in detail. He can make gaffes that reveal his ignorance.

But remember, for the last couple of weeks, he`s had this stump speech that he`s been reading from a teleprompter. He has 25 days between now and the first debate. Three times a day, he`ll be reading that speech which is full of one-liners that are pretty effective.

It`s a pretty good speech, whether one agrees with it or not, and he will be able to take elements of that stump speech, which he has pretty much committed to memory now, because he`s read it so many times and slot them in in answer to various questions.

KORNACKI: Sounds like the evolution after many, many months into something resembling a conventional candidate. The roundtable is staying with us.

Up next, these three will tell me something I don`t know. This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: All right. We`re back with the HARDBALL round table. Just a minute left.

Catherine, tell me something I don`t know.

RAMPELL: This November, a record high number of states are considering expanding legalization of marijuana. So, right now, California, Nevada, Arizona, Massachusetts and Maine are thinking about legalizing recreational marijuana. Florida, North Dakota, medical marijuana. So, it could be a big thing.

KORNACKI: Something to watch for in election night.

Jonathan?

ALTER: "The Wall Street Journal" building on a Yahoo story reports about Donald Trump`s mob connections. He wasn`t in the mob, but he did not take proper precautions when he was in New York real estate to isolate -- insulate himself from mobbed up characters. He even went to the birthday party of the daughter of a big mobster.

KORNACKI: All right. Beth?

FOUHY: Something we actually do know but we don`t talk about enough, is that Hillary Clinton does not have a cakewalk to this election. Her polling numbers have been cut in half just in the last couple of weeks, from a high of ten points, separating her and Donald Trump down to five. She`s going to have a tough autumn.

KORNACKI: OK, the home stretch. It`s Labor Day weekend.

Catherine Rampell, Jonathan Alter, Beth Fouhy -- thank you.

Chris Matthews returns Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Eastern. He`ll be joined by special guest Tom Hanks, star of the new movie "Sully".

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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Ari Melber, Eugene Robinson, Milissa Rehberger, Rick Tyler, Nick Confessore

8821 speakers\_end

ARI MELBER, GUEST HOST: Meet the new Trump, same as the old Trump.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening to you. I`m Ari Melber, in for Chris Matthews.

And after talk of potentially softening on **immigration**, Donald Trump last night, as well as today, doubling down on the hard-line approach that did help him win the Republican primaries, particularly when it comes to his trademark proposal. Here`s Trump at a rally today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

AUDIENCE: Build the wall! Build the wall! Build the wall!

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Don`t worry. We`re going to build that wall. That wall will go up. It`s going to go up.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: We`re going to build the wall. Mexico`s going to pay for the wall. We`re going to stop drugs from coming in.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Late today, the Trump campaign also announcing the launch of what they call a new on-line store with new merchandise reading, of course, "Build the wall."

But after that conciliatory joint appearance yesterday, Mexican president Enrique Pena Nieto now pushing back against Trump. He published a new op- ed -- you may have seen this -- saying, quote, "I was also very clear in my conversation with Trump on the border. Mexico will not pay for any wall," end quote. He later addressed Trump directly on Twitter, saying, "I repeat what I told you personally, Mr. Trump. Mexico will never pay for a wall."

Now, here`s what Trump had to say when asked about the diplomatic dispute this afternoon.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Oh, it`ll happen at the right time. It`ll happen. I mean, this is just the beginning of a negotiation. If I win, if I become president, Mexico will pay for the wall. He, you know, rightfully said I know that position for a long time. They say they don`t want to pay for the wall. They`re not going to pay for the wall. And every negotiation starts that way. But Mexico will pay for the wall.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: That`s the explanation. I`m joined now by Jeanne Cummings, political editor for "The Wall Street Journal," Paris Dennard, a Trump surrogate and former adviser to former president George Bush, as well as Eugene Robinson, MSNBC political analyst and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist with "The Washington Post."

Good evening, everybody. Obviously, plenty to get into. We are in the thick of the real campaign, the general election, obviously, the international trips.

Jeanne, let me start from you, your perspective here. Did Donald Trump win or lose out of these two appearances together?

JEANNE CUMMINGS, "WALL STREET JOURNAL": I don`t think it went well for him at all. I think he lost ground in a very serious way. The campaign right now should be about adding supporters. He has people, high-profile conservative Hispanics who are leaving his campaign and making those kinds of headlines. That was the opposite of what he was trying to accomplish yesterday.

MELBER: Yes. I mean, some of those advisers resigning officially today. That made a lot of news. We`re actually going to have one on HARDBALL.

Paris, I want you to take a listen to sort of the two Donald Trumps you got in one day. Everyone understands diplomacy can involve nicer words or euphemisms, but this was head-spinning even, I think, for some diplomats to watch. And this was again the Trump campaign`s choice. They didn`t have to double-book that hard-line Arizona speech with the trip, but they did.

Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: We recognize and respect the right of either country to build a physical barrier or wall on any of its borders. Cooperation toward achieving this shared objective, and it will be shared, of safety for all citizens is paramount. We did discuss the wall. We didn`t discuss payment of the wall. That`ll be for a later date.

Are you ready?

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: We will build a great wall along the southern border!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: And Mexico will pay for the wall, believe me.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

TRUMP: They don`t know it yet, but they`re going to pay for the wall.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Paris, as a campaign professional, why have those two messages run right into each other on the same day?

PARIS DENNARD, TRUMP SURROGATE: It`s the same message. The message is the same on both occasions. When you are president of the United States, you have got to be able to go in different circumstances, one, be diplomatic and have a Q&A or have a press conference with a fellow head of state, and then be able to go to a rally, then be able to deliver a speech to your base, to your supporters, all in the same day. And so...

MELBER: But you see the problem with that, Paris, is the speech to his supporters is not the exact same message because to the supporters, he said, I`m going to be so tough, I`m going to tell them how it`s going to be, they`re going to pay for it. That`s one message.

Then the very same day, he goes down there and doesn`t say anything, at least according to the Mexican president, about them paying at all, which seems like for something he`s been promoting for a year, that would have been the time to bring it up.

DENNARD: Well, I think we are getting down into the weeds about one particular part about this illegal **immigration** issue, about paying for the wall. The greater point is that he put out a 10-point plan to curb this issue about illegal **immigration**.

In addition to that, what we did not see on the diplomatic stage -- what we did not see was Secretary Hillary Clinton go down there and make herself to be seen as presidential. One would think that a former secretary of state would have jumped at the opportunity to go down and present her message to the Mexican people and Mexican government with the Mexican president. But yet and still, she did not.

Mr. Trump showed great leadership, great diplomacy and great judgment in going and doing that speech and then going to the American people directly in Arizona, my home state, and speaking to them about his 10-point plan to fix this issue of illegal **immigration**.

MELBER: Gene Robinson, how about that. Does Hillary not have enough frequent flyer miles here?

(LAUGHTER)

EUGENE ROBINSON, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: I think Hillary Clinton has met a whole lot of world leaders, and you know, she`s done a whole lot of summits. So I don`t think we need to worry about that. I don`t think she has to convince anyone that she can perform in that setting. She obviously can.

But back to your original point, no, those were two totally different messages. The tone was completely different and the content was different, as well. There was this sort of "hands across the Rio Grande" aspect when he spoke with President Pena Nieto. He spoke not really in terms of America first, but the hemisphere first.

MELBER: Right.

ROBINSON: In fact, he talked about hemispheric trade and keeping manufacturing in this hemisphere. None of that in the Phoenix speech, that`s for sure. It was, you know, the Mexicans were bad again and they`re going to have to pay for the wall, they`re too dumb to know it yet. And by the way, Mexican **immigrants** are committing crimes at just a historic pace and have to be kicked out. I mean, it was -- it was a hard-line speech. And so that`s -- you know, he`s -- those are his cards. That`s the way he`s decided to play this hand.

MELBER: Well, and one of the funny parts about that is there is sort of this macro, meta conversation about what he`s doing. So in the absence of policy details, which he himself, Donald Trump, has said aren`t the most important thing to him, there`s a lot of talk about whether this is hard or soft, tough or weak and all the rest.

Here he was in an exchange with Laura Ingraham about whether this hard speech, according to him last night, will have more softening later. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LAURA INGRAHAM, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST: The line last week, you were softening on **immigration**. Then you come out with a very specific, very pro-enforcement plan last night. Where`s the softening?

TRUMP: Oh, there`s softening. Look, we do it in a very humane way, and we`re going to see with the people that are in the country -- obviously, I want to get the gang members out, the drug peddlers out. I want to get the drug dealers out. We get a lot of people in this country that you can`t have, and those people will get out. And then we are going to make a decision at a later date, once everything is stabilized. I think you`re going to see there`s really quite a bit of softening.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Jeanne Cummings, I mean, I cover this stuff. I know a little about **immigration** law. I have no idea what he`s saying there. And I don`t mean that rudely. Politicians sometimes are deliberately vague for various reasons. Diplomacy, as well, can be vague.

But what is he talking about? And do you see a softening after what was such a hard-line speech?

CUMMINGS: Well, I also am confused about precisely what is his policy now because he`s said so many different things over the last few days.

One thing I think is clear, and that`s the overall message that the Hispanic community heard, based on our interviews with many people today, and that is he may call it soft, he may call it hard, he can describe his speech and his rally any way that he may wish to, but to them, the message is, Every one of you that`s here illegally could now be deported.

And we may not get to you first. We may not get to you until the end. But we`re coming.

MELBER: Right.

CUMMINGS: That`s the message that the Hispanic community got. How you characterize it, that`s up to them. But I think that that was -- that`s a message that has driven Hispanic advisers away from his campaign, and it could narrow his path to victory, making Florida much harder than it might have been.

I mean, this is a significant moment for his campaign and how they manage it going forward.

MELBER: Yes. And to your point, the policy balance you strike has got to happen in real time. You can`t say, Oh, we`re going to do massive deportations on a scale this country has not seen in decades -- that`s the current proposal on the table -- and then later, I promise there`ll be something humane after that. I mean, that just doesn`t necessarily make internal consistent sense.

Paris, I want to give you the chance to respond and also take a listen to Corey Lewandowski here and his view of who this speech was really targeting. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

COREY LEWANDOWSKI, CNN CONTRIBUTOR, FMR. TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Look, I think Donald Trump`s message tonight was the message that he started with back on June of 2015, which was America first. That`s what he believes and what he is playing to. And if you look at the polling data, he`s had about an 18 point lead in the demographic of white males who are voting in this election. They have a high propensity of voting. And so he`s got about an 18-point lead on Hillary Clinton in that particular demographic.

This speech is clearly geared at those individuals right now to make sure that they`re there. He`s locked them in for the election.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Lewandowski saying the key is locking in white males. Another demographic would be white female conservative pundits. I could show you Ann Coulter, very happy with this speech, saying, "I think I`ll watch this speech every night before going to bed so that I will sleep like a baby."

Paris, does this do enough, if those are the only groups it`s speaking to?

DENNARD: Well, I just disagree. I believe that Mr. Trump was speaking to the American people. He was speaking -- listen, Corey was the campaign manager. He did a good job getting Mr. Trump to and through the primary. Manafort came on. Kellyanne is now there.

And since they`ve been on, there`s been a deliberate effort to have specific engagement with the African-American community and especially the Hispanic community. I will say it was continued engagement with both of those communities.

This speech is no different. His policies are no different than what he campaigned on, what he said down in Mexico and what he said in Arizona. The American people understand his position. The Mexican government understands. The Mexican president understood his position long before he invited him down there to go there.

This was a good day for Mr. Trump. Liberals in the media and you are upset that he had a good day and...

MELBER: I`m not upset. Do I seem upset? I`m not upset at all.

(LAUGHTER)

DENNARD: He looked presidential. He was presidential. And he showed extreme leadership. And the people of this country, especially those who live across -- along the Mexican border, Hispanics, Mexicans included, understand the problems that are lying on that border.

MELBER: Right.

DENNARD: And they appreciate someone like Mr. Trump speaking to it and having the leadership and the courage to go straight to Mexico, speak to the people and to the government and say, I`m going to work with you. He`s a negotiator. This is the first step, and it`s a positive step. And he`s going to win.

MELBER: Paris, if you were here at the glass table with me in New York, I think you`d see I`m feeling good. I`m not upset about it. I`m enjoying it.

DENNARD: (INAUDIBLE) tingle (INAUDIBLE) up your leg, too, that speech?

MELBER: I want to give Eugene a chance to get back in. Eugene, the other piece of this is whether there`s sort of a fantasy football style aspect to the way Donald Trump envisions his presidency, and "Saturday Night Live" famously made fun of that with the idea that you`d snap your fingers and everything would just happen.

And yet in the political math, there is some appeal to that, right? I mean, to the extent that he boils things down very simply or says a lot of problems are other people`s fault or a lot of things will be handled by other people -- look, if you could prove that Mexico would pay for anything, it`d be great. If they wanted to pay for our school system, that would be great as a budgetary matter. I`m just not sure it`s going to happen.

So speak to the political path he`s on here, trying to appeal to people.

ROBINSON: Well, generally speaking, simple and understandable is good in politics unless it`s completely crazy, right? And so you know, Paris spoke of Trump`s outreach to African-Americans, which consists of screaming, you know, What do you have to lose? Your lives are a living hell! What do you have to lose? That`s not a good approach. That`s never going to work.

And similarly, I`m going to kick your Aunt Belinda out of the country, is not a great approach to Latino voters. It`s just not. It`s simple and understandable, but it`s not going to work.

MELBER: We`re out of time. Paris, quickly, though?

DENNARD: It`s going to work and it`s working because the American people appreciate the fact that he`s speaking directly to them in language they can understand instead of lying and trying to hide behind things, like Secretary Clinton is doing. It`s going to work. He has 8 percent of the black vote percentage right now, which is ahead of what Romney got and ahead of what Senator McCain got. Give him time. This is the first step. It was a good day for Mr. Trump.

MELBER: Paris Dennard, Eugene Robinson and Jeanne Cummings, thank you all for joining us on HARDBALL tonight.

And coming up, we`re going to talk, as I mentioned, to that former Trump surrogate and supporter. He was on the Latino advisory Council, resigning after last night`s speech. He says based on what he heard, it`s clear that Trump doesn`t even want to win this election. That is ahead.

Also, Hillary Clinton seems pretty happy to lie low lately and let the campaign be some kind of referendum on Trump. Is that a smart strategy? Will it last, or does it prevent her from actually getting where she needs to go in an affirmative case?

And later, we don`t yet know the political consequences of Trump`s hard- line speech, but if you look at what`s happening right now in the state of Arizona, Republicans -- they may have reason to worry.

Finally, the HARDBALL roundtable will be here to tell me something about this presidential race that I don`t know.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MELBER: We got new polling from some key battleground states. We`re going to check the HARDBALL "Scoreboard."

According to new Public Policy Polling, Hillary Clinton with a 7-point lead over Trump in Wisconsin. That is 48 to 41. Good news for the Clinton camp.

She`s also got a lead in New Hampshire there. That`s 46 to 40 for Trump. Over in Missouri, tighter, though, Trump leading there 47 to 41 percent. And in North Carolina, a virtual dead heat, 45 to 44, Hillary Clinton with that narrow edge within the margin of error.

We`ll be back right after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I call it extreme vetting, right? Extreme vetting! I want extreme! It`s going to be so tough! We are going to triple the number of ICE deportation offices.

Two million people, criminal **aliens** -- we will begin moving them out day one, as soon as I take office, day one!

You can call it deported if you want. The press doesn`t like that term. You can call it whatever the hell you want. They`re gone!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Welcome back to HARDBALL. There, Donald Trump last night once again taking that hard-line stance on undocumented **immigrants**. And today, several Hispanic Trump surrogates said they are now in response reconsidering their support for him, Massey Villarreal, a former supporter, telling NBC News, "I`m going to flip but not flop. I am no longer supporting Trump," Grace Flores Hughes, member of Trump`s Hispanic advisory council telling Fusion today she`s withdrawing her support.

Romiro Pena, a Texas pastor, also a member of that council, telling Politico, "I don`t have the time or energy for a scam." Meanwhile, Alfonso Aguilar, the president of the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles saying he`s inclined to pull his support, and quote, "It`s so disappointing because we feel we took a chance, a very risky chance. We`re disappointed. We feel misled."

And then today, there was Jacob Monty, an attorney who made headlines resigning from Trump`s national Hispanic advisory council directly in response to that speech. And he joins me now.

Good evening to you. And why did you resign from advising Donald Trump?

JACOB MONTY, FORMER TRUMP HISPANIC ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER: Well, I had a lot of hope. Ari, I was defending him six hours before I resigned.

So, this speech was really built up as his definitive statement on **immigration**. I thought he was going to articulate a Republican, compassionate, realistic idea on **immigration**.

And some of the proposals, I was totally on board with, more security, better vetting, build a fence, all of that. That`s great. But when we sat down with Donald Trump, we talked to him about the 11 million that aren`t criminals. And he assured us there was going to be a way to give them some benefits to be able to work.

I mean, that`s what they want. They are not seeking welfare. They want to work. And when we met with him...

MELBER: Do you think he misled you in that meeting?

MONTY: I don`t know. I think he was genuine in the meeting. I think he took notes. He asked all the right questions.

MELBER: So, if you think he was genuine in the meeting -- I just want to get this exactly right.

You think he was genuine in that meeting, so, at that point in time, he wanted some path to work possibilities to labor options for the undocumented. And since that time, he`s now genuinely changed his mind and is going back to mass deportation that he outlined last night?

MONTY: Yes, something happened on the way to Phoenix.

And either he listens to the last person who talks to him or, as I suggested earlier, he doesn`t want to win, and he wants to sell baseball caps and T-shirts.

MELBER: You don`t think Donald Trump, who you were until today advising to become president, you don`t think anymore that he actually wants to be president?

MONTY: He`s coming off the two best weeks of his whole campaign. He`s going up in the polls. He looks presidential. People are coming around. I had been recruiting people on to the Hispanic Council.

He goes to Mexico, which was bold. He looks like a leader. And then he comes to Phoenix. He warns us that it`s not going to be a rally speech. So, I`m thinking, great, here`s the final explanation on how he feels on **immigration**. And he gives us populist propaganda that wasn`t even written by him.

FAIR and Numbers USA, these think tanks that masquerade as conservative groups, those are the talking points that he read from. So...

MELBER: But you`re saying -- just to be clear -- and you have spent time with him. You were a former supporter. You may be saying things the critics have said, but you are coming from being an adviser to Donald Trump. You think he`s trying to take a dive right now in this election and lose?

MONTY: It`s either that or he listens to the last person who spoke to him, and he must have been listening to the special interests, FAIR and Numbers USA, that somehow convinced him that this is a winning strategy, even though it`s failed in the last two elections.

(CROSSTALK)

MELBER: You talked about this being a turning point for you, and it`s clearly been a turning point for a lot of people.

And yet I got to push you on that, because Donald Trump`s views on these issues and even on what he thinks of basically Mexican **immigrants** as a category or class have been well-known.

Here are some examples. I want to play some sound of him speaking about this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: When Mexico sends its people, they`re not sending their best. They are bringing drugs. They are bringing crime. They are rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

We have to have assimilation. To have a country, we have to have assimilation. This is a country where we speak English, not Spanish.

ANDERSON COOPER, CNN: The original tweet said Jeb Bush has to like Mexican illegals because of his wife. Now, somebody else said that. You retweeted it.

TRUMP: Do I regret it? No, I don`t regret it. You know, I would say that he would. If my wife were from Mexico, I think I would have a soft spot for people from Mexico.

He said, you know the name anchor baby is very insulting. I said, what would you call them? And he gave me like nine words, a baby of illegal **immigrant** who was brought to the country to this -- I said, how can I say that? It`s too long. It`s anchor baby.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Jacob, you are telling us you have left the Trump campaign because of what he said yesterday on these issues.

Another question for you would be, what took you so long?

MONTY: Well, this speech was heralded by the campaign as the seminal speech on **immigration**. Comments about criminal **aliens**, there are criminal **aliens**, and they have got to go back.

Do we need more security? Yes. But this speech was heralded as the definitive rest of the story on what he planned to do with all facets of **immigration**.

And what did he give us? Just more populist propaganda that wasn`t even written by his campaign, but was copied from FAIR and Numbers USA.

So, yes, I was disappointed, because I had the -- I guess the naivete to believe that this guy was a businessman, that this guy was a Republican. And we didn`t hear a Republican last night. We heard a populist propaganda con artist. And I`m done with it.

MELBER: Do you feel that, in some sense, he was conning you and other supporters who were told it was going to be a different kind of general election set of policies?

MONTY: I don`t know.

He appeared very genuine in the meeting. Something happened after August 20. And we saw the fiasco that happened last night. When the obituary on this campaign is written, August 31, 2013 (sic), will go down in history. And we need to give appropriate credit to FAIR and Numbers USA for taking down yet another presidential candidate with lies and -- lies masquerading as conservative principles.

MELBER: Well, I`ll tell you, we cover these campaigns. A lot of times, we don`t hear about what`s going on inside them or these fights over, as you put it, principle, until well after the election.

So, Jacob Monty, for standing up and sharing some of your perspective tonight, we appreciate it.

MONTY: Thank you.

MELBER: Up next: Is Hillary Clinton taking too big a risk by keeping such a low profile lately and letting, as you may have noticed, Donald Trump dominate so much of the airwaves and discussion?

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MILISSA REHBERGER, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: I`m Milissa Rehberger. Here`s what`s happening.

Florida is bracing for its first hurricane in more than a decade. Hurricane Hermine is expected to make landfall in Florida`s Big Bend region around midnight. High winds that could spawn tornadoes and a storm surge of up to eight feet are expected.

And SpaceX is blaming a propellant anomaly for the dramatic destruction of one of its Falcon 9 rockets on a launch pad at Cape Canaveral this afternoon. Fortunately, no one was hurt in that explosion -- back to HARDBALL.

MELBER: Welcome back to HARDBALL, Ari Melber here for Chris Matthews.

With 67 days before the election, we have seen a lot more of Donald Trump than we have of Hillary Clinton. Yesterday, she made her first public appearance -- get this -- in six days. She is running for president, but spent the past few weeks focusing on fund-raising and some private events.

Today, her campaign announcing she did raise $143 million combined. That`s campaign and DNC funds. And earlier today, one of her chief surrogates, Vice President Joe Biden, defended her absence on the campaign trail talking to our own Kasie Hunt.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KASIE HUNT, NBC CORRESPONDENT: Hillary Clinton obviously is out here on the trail. You are here in Ohio. Do you think she needs to be out front with the American people a little bit more?

JOSEPH BIDEN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Oh, she is out front with the American people. And...

HUNT: She has been fund-raising for a couple weeks.

BIDEN: Well, she has to, but she has also been doing an awful lot of events.

And what I told her was, I will -- I campaigned with her in Scranton. We got a whole bunch of places we are campaigning together, and some places where maybe I can help and not have her have to be with me.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Of course, in the past three weeks, Donald Trump did -- he launched that major campaign reshuffle. He has been dominating the airwaves.

Last week, Politico reporting the Clinton camp was basically content at this point -- quote -- "running out the clock."

In that time, though, her national lead over Donald Trump is narrowing there from nine to six points. And we`re heading into Labor Day weekend, the unofficial start of the formal general election and the debates. So, will it be smart politics if Clinton continues to keep such a low profile?

I`m joined by EMILY`s List president Stephanie Schriock and MSNBC political analyst and former Republican strategist Rick Tyler.

Stephanie, let me start with you. Is Hillary Clinton in some sort of candidate witness protection program? Is she the first candidate to ever have to balance fund-raising with public appearances? Because, just to be real -- and you know we do real talk here -- when you are going to fund- raisers, that doesn`t mean you can`t hold any public events for six days.

I say this to you upbeat. It`s not the biggest story in the world, but what`s going on here?

STEPHANIE SCHRIOCK, PRESIDENT, EMILY`S LIST: Well, let`s start with it`s really easy to get headlines like Donald Trump when you are using divisive and angry rhetoric every day. And so that is part of this.

But I do want to say, yes, you have got to balance all the aspects of the campaign. But I want to talk about this week. Earlier this week, Hillary Clinton and her campaign rolled out a mental health proposal that was really extraordinary. One in five Americans are dealing with mental health issues.

And this is an issue talked about on both sides of the aisle. This is what we are talking about on the ground. And she also, keep in mind, is not in this alone, like you get the sense Donald Trump is. She`s got Vice President Biden out there. Goodness, I was in New Hampshire yesterday. And you know what we were talking about? Equal pay, paid leave, child care with great women voters in New Hampshire who are going to decide this election.

MELBER: So, you -- I just want to be clear, though. You are making basically the argument that the national press is focused on a candidate- centered view of the campaign, and if the candidate isn`t out there or isn`t out there in an outrageous or newsworthy manner, then we tend to view it as, oh, nothing`s happening.

And what you are saying is, there`s a ground game, there`s a policy game, there`s stuff in the field, and that that is a broader Clinton campaign, in contradistinction to a candidate-obsessed lens at the Trump side. Is that right?

SCHRIOCK: Well, I think you are looking at a Hillary Clinton campaign that is incredibly strong on the ground.

I mean, she has hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of organizers every day getting volunteers by the thousands, having phone calls, door knocks. It is extraordinary. Every time I go out -- I was in Iowa last weekend. I`m going to North Carolina on Saturday, I hope.

There`s that little tropical storm thing I just realized, as you are talking about.

MELBER: Yes.

SCHRIOCK: But it is really an incredible organization on the ground.

And, again, we are talking about how Hillary Clinton has the vision to ensure that the economy is going to work for everybody, and not just the top few. And that`s the conversation that is happening voter by voter across this country.

MELBER: Rick Tyler?

RICK TYLER, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes.

MELBER: What do you think?

TYLER: What do I think?

Well, look, Hillary Clinton has been running sort of a conventional, traditional campaign, sort of taking the summer to raise money, so she will have plenty of money in the fall. That`s a rational strategy.

Her problem is, the polls show that so many people distrust her, and there`s this drip, drip, drip of scandal when you -- with the e-mail, the server, now the Clinton Foundation, now the Clinton Foundation taking GSA money to pay staff, that her strategy of sort of staying out of the limelight is probably starting to be counterproductive.

When Trump was getting earned media that was actually negative for him, it was probably working. But I think, after Labor Day, she -- and her not holding press conferences, this just leads into Trump`s central argument.

(CROSSTALK)

MELBER: Let me see if I understand. So, you are saying that her strategy will always be dependent on how Trump is doing. So if she`s laying in the cut and laying back, and he`s getting terrible press, like he was getting right after the convention, attacking a Gold Star family, just in sort of a freeform meltdown of personal grievances, then her strategy does work, in your perspective, but it doesn`t if he steps up his game?

TYLER: Yes, that`s right.

But I don`t think -- I don`t think that was a deliberate strategy. I think their strategy was actually to take the summer and raise money, so they would have it closer to the election and after Labor Day.

But when Trump was getting earned media, except the earned media in the primaries, he was getting so much positive media, now he`s getting a lot of negative media, although he`s had a couple of good weeks here. And it`s the next revelation or the next shoe to drop on the e-mail scandal.

So now we just learned that we have 15,000 new e-mails, and 30 of them actually deal with Benghazi. Those are e-mails that she was supposed to turn over to the State Department, and she didn`t. So, what did she have to hide?

She doesn`t take press conferences, so what does she have to hide? So, I think, after Labor Day, she is really going to get out there and change her game up a little bit, or Donald Trump`s central argument is she can`t be trusted to be president.

MELBER: Right.

TYLER: Of course, her central argument is, he`s not competent to be president. And it`s the winner of that argument that is going to win this race.

MELBER: Right. When you put it like that, it`s mildly depressing.

And, Stephanie, we are almost out of time. But Rick makes the point it is bonkers that she won`t hold press conferences. She knows, when she becomes president, you are supposed to hold regular press conferences, right?

SCHRIOCK: But she`s talking to the press all the time.

TYLER: Oh, we have heard that.

(CROSSTALK)

MELBER: That is so, so beside the point.

SCHRIOCK: She is having interviews with the press, and she`s doing that.

(CROSSTALK)

MELBER: Stephanie, we hear that talking point so much.

TYLER: That one is not working.

MELBER: It`s like if you -- just -- just -- I hear this so -- I don`t know why the Clinton campaign thinks it works.

TYLER: It doesn`t.

MELBER: If there are parent/teacher conferences, right, and you keep skipping them, and then, when you run into the teacher at the mini-mart, and you say, well, I talk to the teacher all the time, that`s fine.

The question here is, are you going to the parent/teacher conference? And presidents from JFK on have held regular press conferences for a reason. I don`t just say this as, oh, I`m in the press. It`s a larger thing.

And so when you say, oh, well, she also interacts with the press, you do know that`s just crazy, right?

(LAUGHTER)

SCHRIOCK: No, I think that`s a part of the campaign function.

And I think we have got 67 days here where you are going to see a lot of campaigning going on and a lot of conversation. I also want to note, as you were just talking about, I want to note that there`s been a couple of headlines, AP and Politico today.

The Politico headline about the charity today was just flat wrong. And they had to change it. And so we are continuing to get these questions that are like made-up scandal which just aren`t true. And the facts are wrong. And that`s a whole `nother piece of this conversation, too.

(CROSSTALK)

MELBER: We are out of time. We are out of time. That`s not a reason not to hold press conferences. That`s a reason to hold press conferences.

TYLER: Exactly.

MELBER: Take a question from Politico and say, ah, I see what you said about the GSA funding. Here`s our response. We can handle a dialogue. That`s what presidents do.

We are out of time.

Stephanie Schriock and Rick Tyler, thank you both for joining.

TYLER: Thanks, Ari.

MELBER: Up next: A lot of vitriol on Donald Trump`s **immigration** speech, we have been covering that, but there wasn`t as many facts.

The HARDBALL roundtable will tell you what you need to know next.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: We take anybody, come on in, anybody. Just come on in. Not anymore.

You know, folks, it`s called a two-way street. It is a two-way street, right? We need a system that serves our needs, not the needs of others. Remember, under a Trump administration, it`s called America first.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ARI MELBER, MSNBC GUEST HOST: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

Last night there, Donald Trump saying the United States will not be letting just anybody into the country anymore. Critics saying the speech is aimed at fear-mongering rather than solving a complex **immigration** policy problem. Now, Trump claimed President Obama and Hillary Clinton support open borders that would be flooded with **immigrants**.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: President Obama and Hillary Clinton in gross dereliction of duty by surrendering the safety of the American people to open borders. And you know it better than anybody right here in Arizona. You know it.

President Obama and Hillary Clinton support sanctuary cities. They support catch and release on the border. They support visa overstays. They support the release of dangerous, dangerous, dangerous criminals from detention. And they support unconstitutional executive amnesty.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: Each of those claims is false. Donald Trump does not always have the facts on his side. We`re going to fact-check one item for you.

NBC`s Leigh Ann Caldwell dug into the past budgeting scenario and notes that over 24 years, that includes the Obama tenure, the amount of money spent on border security has actually increased 14 times. Border patrol agents increased 500 percent. The amount of border wall has grown from 77 miles to about 700. That`s just since 2000 over Bush and Obama. The number of people being apprehended trying to cross the border has decreased by 4/5.

And our fact-checking is just getting started. We brought some more factual people. Joining the HARDBALL roundtable, Nick Confessore for "The New York Times", Jennifer Epstein, reporting for Bloomberg Politics, and Jamil Smith, a senior national correspondent for MTV News which is still a thing.

JAMIL SMITH, MTV NEWS: Still a thing.

MELBER: Still a thing.

I`m going to start with the "New York Times" and we`re going to go around the horn.

On the facts, we discussed politics, I had people who support Trump on tonight, I had some people who support Clinton. Let`s start with the facts, though. From your perspective, how factual was this speech and how much does that matter?

NICK CONFESSORE, THE NEW YORK TIMES: I think it was probably half and half, right? So, he overstates the idea that President Obama has not been tough on illegal **immigration**. Obama has deported two million people. The border is militarized. We are prioritizing the deportation of people here without papers who are criminals, who are security risks.

In that sense, he and the current administration are actually aligned in certain ways.

SMITH: Agree. Right.

CONFESSORE: So, he`s taken a problem that`s real and he exaggerates it in various ways I think to fan the fears of his followers.

MELBER: But, Jennifer, he also does this thing where he says, I have got this great idea. No one`s ever heard of this before. Guess what I`m going to do. Prioritize the deportation of convicted criminals which is the number one enforcement priority of ICE under the current administration. So, you either know that and are lying about it, or you don`t know that, which positions you as shall I say an imperfect reformer of these issues.

JENNIFER EPSTEIN, BLOOMBERG: Right. And certainly also top priority for Secretary Clinton. That`s what she says she would do as her number one thing as well.

What it speaks to is really I think either -- a combination of Donald Trump and his team kind of assuming that the average voter won`t go back and check the facts and doesn`t realize what the law and what the practice is already, and then some kind of willful ignorance or just pretending that they -- that what`s going on right now isn`t actually what`s going on or it isn`t happening well enough, thus you have to go and do it.

MELBER: And, Jamil, this idea infused through Trump`s speech last night that America shouldn`t just take in anyone.

SMITH: Right. I mean, hopefully, it`s not up to him, frankly. But at the same time, when you look back at how much he links **immigration** and crime, frankly, we didn`t hear anything about domestic terrorism. We didn`t hear anything about preventing the next Orlando, the next Charleston, the next San Bernardino. I mean, frankly, if this world is so dangerous and only undocumented **immigrants** are making it so, I mean, it just doesn`t fit with the facts.

MELBER: He also doesn`t seem to have a firm handle on how visas work.

ESPTEIN: Right. Yes, it`s another thing where he`s sort of saying people are overstaying their visas and that`s something that Secretary Clinton supports or President Obama support, and that something that also is kind of something that it`s going to continue and has continued and it`s not something that she`s doing or he`s doing, it`s some of a way of life.

MELBER: Right. And you go to the politics of this which is I don`t know that visa regulations are a huge general election issue.

CONFESSORE: Well, the enforcement of the visa regulations is a problem and has been for 20 years, 30 years, you know, the overstayers, finding overstayers.

Look, I think that in a sense, he`s being swallowed up by the politics of this issue the Republicans have created. They led their own base to believe the problem is worse than it seems for years and years. They have convinced their own party that Obama has been terrible on this issue, so their proposed solutions are always, well, first, be tougher on **immigration**. It`s a way to assuage their own base.

He`s taken that ten steps further. It`s a nightmare, anarchy. They are coming all the time. It`s just not true.

MELBER: Yes. And, Jamil, I thought the most rhetorically thing he said was, hey, we keep hearing about the 11 million, that`s a distraction, we don`t need to worry about that.

That`s certainly comforting, right, to people. I mean, the gang of eight, all the stuff that hasn`t worked broke down over that issue. So, it would be nice if he didn`t have to talk about it.

SMITH: I mean, selective discrimination is still discrimination. Whether or not it`s 11 million the first day, or a few here and a few here, 6 million at the first, it doesn`t really matter. I mean, what we`re talking about is a policy that cannot be implemented either fiscally or just frankly realistically.

(CROSSTALK)

MELBER: All right. We`re going to take a quick break. Roundtable stays.

Up next, how worried should Republicans be about their chances of keeping control of the whole Senate? A new poll has some Democrats dreaming big.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MELBER: The HARDBALL team wanted to share with you something that is truly uplifting. Civil rights leader, Congressman John Lewis, an inspiration to so man Americans on the late show with Stephen Colbert deciding to get to know the room. He got a lift of his own crowd surfing the studio audience. Look at that. You don`t see that every day.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MELBER: Welcome back to HARDBALL.

A new poll out of Arizona, Donald Trump spoke there last night, it shows John McCain now tied with his Democratic opponent Ann Kirkpatrick. The poll also showing a tight race for president, Trump leading Hillary Clinton by just three points.

Now, think about that. Arizona hasn`t supported a Democrat for the White House in two decades. McCain urging voters there to stick with him, even if they have concerns about Donald Trump.

Take a look at this new video out this afternoon.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R), ARIZONA: My opponent, Representative Ann Kirkpatrick, is a good person. But if Hillary Clinton is elected president, Arizona will need a senator who will act as a check, not a rubber stamp.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MELBER: We are back with Nick, Jennifer, and Jamil. That ad not -- it`s not a barn-burner. Like it doesn`t get you a fire emoji or anything big.

CONFESSORE: No, it`s a please help ad.

MELBER: Well, it`s -- you can argue --

(LAUGHTER)

MELBER: It`s John McCain trying to say, hey, remember me, I`m a nice guy, she`s a nice person, this is a nice time, I just need another term, and I`m not sure how that plays in a season where people don`t feel that nice.

CONFESSORE: Look, here`s the problem. Arizona, I believe, has the highest pro portion of voting age Latinos in the country. If they register, if they turn out because they`re angry at Trump, it`s very bad news for John McCain and he could lose.

EPSTEIN: Yes, I think his message in that video and I think this will be a message we hear from him for the next few months is please split the ticket, please consider the fact that even if you`re voting for Hillary Clinton, you probably don`t love her, so she needs a check on her. So we need to keep the Senate majority Republican and that`s the way to do it.

MELBER: And, Jamil, what story does that tell, that the Republican Party and its standard bearers, if we go from McCain leading the party in 2008, to Romney in `12, to Trump now potentially being part of, according to Nick`s theory, why McCain, who was once the party standard bearer, might lose his seat?

SMITH: Part of this is his fault. He introduced Sarah Palin into the Republican equation. And so, you have Sarah Palin, followed then by Donald Trump, and all people who are just not that serious within the Republican Party, and here`s what he`s got to contend with.

Frankly, I`m more interested to see how Clinton uses this. She`s got a huge ad buy in Arizona. I want to see if she starts to tie him to Donald Trump.

MELBER: You`re saying with Palin, McCain began the seeds of legitimizing wings of the party that shouldn`t have been?

SMITH: Without a doubt.

MELBER: So you`re saying he was the sword the good knights use?

SMITH: I mean --

CONFESSORE: He was also the guy who sponsored **immigration** reform bill and tried to fix this problem for his party.

MELBER: Well, on policy, you can argue he`s the most moderate.

CONFESSORE: So, in a way, he`s tried very hard to fix his party`s problem with the people who are now going to be angry at Trump and maybe hurt himself in the process, which is just the whole --

EPSTEIN: And at the same time, he`s continuing to not really step away from Trump all that much and to still --

MELBER: And isn`t that amazing, that the guy who was the maverick here at what could be the end of his career would risk his whole seat and career over supporting someone who he doesn`t believe is in the party, but out of party loyalty. That takes some gymnastic.

The roundtable stays and we, of course, the end of HARDBALL, where these three will tell me something I don`t know, that`s not hard to do. But stay tuned and you`ll see it.

You`re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MELBER: We`re back with the HARDBALL round table. You know what time it is.

Nick, tell us something we don`t know.

CONFESSORE: All right. A few weeks ago, Trump had a meeting with his Latino advisory board, where they asked him to consider a path to citizenship. I`m told the people in that group pay out of their own pockets to survey the results of their proposal and see if it would improve his standing with Latinos. Apparently, there were so few Latinos whose minds it would change about Trump, that this may give you some reasons as to why he didn`t pivot at all.

MELBER: Wow.

Jennifer?

EPSTEIN: This is something you touched on a little bit, so you might know it, is just that I think there is going to be some backlash from Democrats in the outer circles of the Clinton campaign, saying, what did she do all August? And did she squander the lead that she had after the convention? They`ll say, OK, she raised $140 million, but what else did she do?

MELBER: I speculate on it, but I didn`t know. It counts.

Jamil?

SMITH: I thought I was headed to Detroit to see Donald Trump have an interview in front of a black church audience. It seems like he`s not going to do that. He`s going to do it behind closed doors and apparently it`s going to be scripted, according to "The New York Times."

MELBER: All right. Jamil, Jennifer and Nick, thanks so much.

That is HARDBALL. Thanks for watching.

"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts now.

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