

[Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / We're All "a Little Bit Dumber": A Night Among GOP Hopefuls

You know, horses are interesting because if you look at all the presidents, they all drove horses until, you know, cars became the most important thing.

This is Walter Clap.

Be careful.

And the horse is urinating and it definitely just splashed all over my pants.

I met him in the parking lot of a strip mall where he was wearing a cowboy hat and sitting inside of a covered wagon being pulled by two horses named Liz and Lynette, who promptly urinated on my pants.

This is really good immersive audio.

He's running for president in 2024.

My campaign was meant to actually begin with me driving horses through Yellowstone National Park, but the bureaucrats of Yellowstone put an end to that.

Clap has maybe 600 followers on Twitter.

Something is interesting because it requires that the pollsters put your name in the poll, which presently they have not elected to do.

His main campaign issue is opening the cap on the House of Representatives.

In other words, he thinks there should be 11,000 representatives instead of the current 435.

To be honest with you, I didn't even know this was an issue to care about.

But according to Clap, it's what George Washington would have wanted.

One of the things that uncapping the House does is it would allow legislators to replace some of the bureaucrats.

If you took George Washington's formula, we would have approximately 11,000 representatives, which seems like a lot.

We currently have 435 pursuant to a law passed in 1929.

But you consider we have 2.5 million non-DOD federal bureaucrats, and 11,000 is like one half of 1% of that.

It's actually a relatively small amount.

Now, if you're anything like me, you've probably never heard of Walter Roger Clap until this very moment.

But in a way, Clap might be the perfect symbol for this Republican campaign.

This random guy, who no one knows, may well have as decent a chance as any of the seven GOP candidates who took to the stage Wednesday night at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.

That's where I am right now, where I'm coming to you live along with my colleague, Peter Savodnik.

Hi, Peter.

Hey, Barry.

Who's sitting with me here in the now empty spin room as the clock approaches midnight.

I'm Barry Weiss.

This is Honestly.

For now, it's still Wednesday.

And I'm coming to you from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, where we just witnessed

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the second GOP debate.

Welcome to the second Republican debate of the 2024 primary live from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.

We're inside the spectacular Air Force One pavilion where the stage is set for a showdown.

Thank you for speaking while I'm interrupting.

It was two hours of, I don't even know what, a hot mess.

We have a focus on issues that matter.

We know we did this in China.

Everybody knows that.

If I may address.

If I may address.

Joe Biden accountable.

That's what we need to be talking about.

I actually agree with Ron DeSantis.

And I will say something.

I think you have more than time to explain your point.

Well, if I was interrupted by a lot of people here, and I want to be respectful because

I believe you were respectful last a bit, but I do not believe in these two hours of

Ron DeSantis, Vivek Ramaswamy, Nikki Haley, Mike Pence, Chris Christie, Tim Scott, and Doug Burgum.

I'm sorry, Doug.

I still don't get who you are sparring over major issues like union strikes, inflation, income inequality, the cost of childcare, the border, drugs, TikTok, gun violence, education, Russia, Ukraine.

But of course, the man they really wanted to spar with Donald Trump is missing in action.

He should be on this stage tonight.

He still refuses to show up and play ball.

Donald Trump he hides behind the walls of his golf clubs and won't show up here to answer questions like all the rest of us are up here.

So while I sat in Simi Valley with seven people trying to play the president, we sent free press reporter Michael Moynihan to Michigan.

Michael Moynihan in Detroit, and we're here for a Trump rally on the night of the second Republican debate.

To find out what Trump was saying at the very same time as the GOP debate to a crowdful of striking auto workers.

But I'm thrilled to be back with the workers, UAW members, and proud patriots of the great state of Michigan, great state, great people here in Michigan across the country tonight.

Trump's visit came just one day after President Biden went to the picket line in Wayne County to march with auto workers outside a General Motors plant.

You guys, UAW, you saved the automobile industry back in 2008 and before.

Made a lot of sacrifices, gave up a lot.

An unprecedented move by a sitting president.

Now they're doing incredibly well.

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And guess what?

You should be doing incredibly well, too.

So on today's episode, as the two likely 2024 candidates battled this week to portray themselves as the voice of blue collar Americans, what exactly were the seven candidates on stage here tonight trying to achieve?

Why were they hanging out at this shrine to free markets and not marching with auto workers in a place like Michigan?

Who were the biggest winners and losers of this very strange tale of two cities?

And with nearly 60% of GOP voters backing Trump, has anyone emerged as a viable Trump competitor?

Or is it time to face the facts that were tumbling toward a 2020 rematch between two very old men that no one wants?

Stay with us.

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If my dogs could order what they want for dinner, they would choose pillows and my sneakers 10 times out of 10.

But their second choice, I'm sure, would be food from the farmer's dog.

The farmer's dog is fresh, healthy food made with whole meat and veggies.

And it's cooked in human-grade kitchens to preserve its nutritional value.

So say goodbye to those dry-stale pellets, it's 2023.

If your dog isn't on a custom meal plan, you're doing it wrong.

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Plus you'll get free shipping.

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That's thefarmersdog.com slash berry.

Peter, I've never done cocaine, but this seems like an occasion where it would be very, very welcome.

It's nearing midnight.

Yes.

And where are we?

We're at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, about 45 minutes north of LA.

The media's clearing out.

It was a bit of a tornado tonight.

Mailstrom of media cameras, reporters, screens, all that.

It was a lot of fun.

It's winding down.

It's winding down.

I think we might be the skeleton crew here.

So we got on this shuttle from the parking lot, and it sort of wound up these gorgeous sun-dappled hills.

And what did you say to me when we were on that little bus?

Yeah, it felt like a movie set.

It felt like a movie set.

It felt like sort of the Reagan mythology.

This is the America, the California that he evokes in his speeches, his soaring rhetoric.

Reagan, more than any politician of his age, could pull off.

And you feel that.

You get to the library and you feel like this is a magical place.

It felt like a piece of theater.

It felt like one of the movie sets that Reagan made his name on.

And the question, I think, tonight, was, were we watching something that was real or were we watching something that felt like it was more produced or make-believe?

Well, I think that is the question that a lot of voters are coming away with tonight, certainly.

And we'll get to this.

What we saw in the spin room with people with their sort of caked-on makeup standing in front of soapboxes, creating like a mosh pit around candidates that will easily sit down for a two-hour podcast, all of this is sort of like a vestige from an earlier era that makes absolutely no sense to me as a journalist.

But I think the big question that voters have is, was anything that they just watched on television tonight at all relevant?

If Donald Trump is polling the way he's polling and Biden is amazingly going to be the nominee, what were they actually tuning in to watch tonight if not a piece of theater?

I mean, none of it would make any sense if the voters were really happy, if a large majority of voters were content with their sort of the two front runners and with the choices, you know, that they're faced with.

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But the reality is that a very large majority of Americans who tend to agree about nothing these days are agreed on not wanting a 2020 rematch.

And so the debate tonight, yes, was very important because what we're looking for, what everyone is looking for is, is there any path, any world in which we don't go through a Biden-Trump rematch?

I don't know if tonight revealed that or pointed the way forward, but yes, that's what we're all looking for, that's what we're all wondering.

And it's not just a media story, it's a story that I think 70, 60, 70 percent of Americans are following closely.

I think that we count ourselves in this number, but I think voters of all stripes are just dreading the idea that our choice is going to be between these two old men, between, you know, Biden who's now 80, Trump who is 77, and sort of the rematch from hell.

And I think the reason that we showed up here tonight as journalists is because, and frankly, as citizens and voters is because we're curious if anyone has the ability to step out and sort of catch fire.

Did you see that happen tonight?

No.

I mean, I think, look, there are candidates who were perfectly competent tonight.

I think Ron DeSantis had a better night than he did the first debate.

I think Nikki Haley was the same as she was last time.

She was, you know, again, very competent.

I thought, you know, the VEC was a kinder, gentler, the VEC, and the rest were basically forgettable.

Okay.

So obviously no one broke out in the way Ronald Reagan may have on that stage.

Let's talk about some of the moments, Peter, that do stick out from the chaos that ensued.

And I have to say, I've watched a lot of presidential debates.

I think that was the most poorly moderated of any I've ever seen.

Yeah, it was terrible.

You're very serious.

Okay.

Let's start with the VEC, Ramaswamy.

You know, we, the last time we were sort of having this late night conversation was at the last Republican presidential debate in August.

The piece that we published the day after that debate was Knives Out for VEC was the headline. He sort of emerged as the front runner.

And there was a big debate sort of in our company Slack that night between people who felt he was the out and out winner of the debate.

And those who felt, okay, maybe he had a lot of great lines, but he just came across as like a bit of an ass.

Tonight we saw a very different VEC, talk to me about that.

Clearly the Ramaswamy campaign agreed with the latter take.

They clearly thought that he came across poorly in the last debate, which is why they obviously

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tone things down a lot tonight.

And you know, and maybe, maybe that works.

I don't know.

He was less punchy, less irreverent, less, you know, combative, and maybe he was trying to invoke that kind of Reagan-esque flavor or tone, that kind of more soaring rhetoric that, you know, statesman like, you know, sort of appeal.

I don't know that he had captured that.

I thought that the best line he had was, was that very introspective moment when he said, you know, like, I realized I'm viewed as a know it all.

I'm not actually.

What do you see?

You see a young man who's in a bit of a hurry, maybe a little ambitious, bit of a know it all it seems at times.

I'm here to tell you, no, I don't know it all.

I will listen.

I will have the best people, the best and brightest in this country, whatever age they are advising me.

We will be probably many of the people on this stage included.

That's how I built my companies.

I want to be challenged.

I want people who disagree with me.

That's what makes America great because we're not a perfect nation.

I think one of the most interesting moments this evening was when he, he was more introspective, more self-aware and tried to portray himself as a newcomer who was, you know, much more respectful of his fellow Republicans.

I think that one thing Donald Trump has shown is that Republican voters, especially the base, want to fight her.

And perhaps Vivek's negatives will be slightly less negative after tonight's debate.

I'm not sure if it was the, you know, time will tell if that was actually a smart pivot for him.

If there was one breakout line from the night, we know that Chris Christie really wanted it to be that incredibly rehearsed line about calling Donald Trump, Donald Duck, which I have to say landed like a lead balloon, even in the press room, certainly not a room of Trump fans.

And I want to look at that camera right now and tell you, Donald, I know you're watching.

You can't help yourself.

I know you're watching.

Okay?

You're not here tonight, not because of polls and not because of your indictments.

You're not here tonight because you're afraid of being on the stage and defending your record.

You're ducking these things.

And let me tell you what's going to happen.

You keep doing that.

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No one up here is going to call you Donald Trump anymore.

We're going to call you Donald Duck.

All right.

I think the actual line that might be remembered, if any, was Nikki Haley saying to Vivek.

I honestly, every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber for what you say because

I can't believe they hear you.

Honestly, every time I hear you, I feel a little bit dumber and the kind of, she drew blood yet again in the way that she did after the first debate.

Let's talk a little bit about that moment.

Yeah, I love that moment.

I mean, I think in general, Haley's had like a very strong run.

I don't know if that's going to catapult her into, you know, a serious position, but look,

I think she did a very good job again tonight.

What I liked about it was, I think she very subtly underscored or underlined his relative youth and inexperience while not actually calling it out.

And I think what was smart about that line was that it came in the middle of this exchange about TikTok, which is really an exchange about foreign policy since TikTok is this Chinese-run social media platform, and it gave Haley a chance again to demonstrate her foreign policy credentials and then to subtly, or not so subtly, put this distance between her and the much younger Rama Swami.

All right.

Let's talk about Chris Christie.

Yeah.

Poor Chris Christie.

Okay, right.

The former New Jersey governor, his entire campaign is based on the idea of prosecuting the former president, but it turns out, Peter, that that is very hard to do when that person is not on stage with you.

It's really tough to like do battle with like an invisible foe, who's actually really not a foe since he's like ahead of Christie by something like 60 points or something.

Yeah.

I mean, Christie desperately wants to go mana imana with the former president, and Trump is I think gleefully denying him that opportunity.

And the bigger problem I think that Christie faces is you can't win over Trump voters by just hammering away compulsively at Trump.

You have to make the case that you're a better way forward, but you can't demean Trump to the point that any Trump voter feels kind of by extension demeaned, and I think that's the cul-de-sac he's running into.

I generally think Chris Christie has been a very clever candidate.

I think he's funny.

I don't know what he was thinking with the Donald duck line.

It was cringe, but I have to say he was out cringe tonight by former vice president, Mike Pence.

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My skin is crawling when I'm thinking about this moment.

Okay, so Chris Christie tried to knock Biden for sleeping with an avatar of the teachers union and it took a moment for that to land.

Christie meant just Jill Biden, his wife.

And when you have the president of the United States sleeping with a member of the teachers union and then sort of like in a delayed response, Mike Pence said, my wife isn't a member of the teachers union, but I got to admit, I've been sleeping with a teacher for 38 years.

And the full disclosure.

Peter, what was that?

It was one awkward moment followed by another awkward moment.

And it was a reminder that this is the guy who refers to his wife as mother and isn't allowed to be in a room alone with another woman, you know, lest he, you know, lose control of himself.

Look, at this point, I think like, you know, no one in America actually wants Mike Pence to run for president, except maybe Mike Pence, and I think you don't even get the sense that he wants it that bad.

No, he doesn't.

He looks unwell.

Actually, he looks tired and spent.

And look, he's in an impossible position, right?

He has to distance himself from Trump while at the same time reminding people that he was Trump's vice president and at the same time sound like a social conservative in a country in a party even that seems much less interested in the issues that used to animate social conservatives starting with abortion.

I just, I don't, I don't see any viable path for the former vice president, and I actually think that like, you know, like Walter Clap is a better shot at this point than, than Mike Pence.

All right, let's talk about the strong horse, such as it is, still dozens and dozens of points behind the front runner, Donald Trump, and that's Ron DeSantis, right?

The story going into tonight's debate, and this has been a sort of brewing story for a while, is that a lot of powerful donors inside the GOP believe that Ron DeSantis was the guy who was going to unseat Trump, poured a ton of money into his campaign, and whoops, didn't seem to be a bet that paid off well.

Did Ron DeSantis recover?

Does he live to see another day based on tonight?

Yeah, I think, I think tonight was a good night for, for Ron DeSantis.

And if, if anyone can claim victory tonight, it's the Florida governor.

I think that he did come across as, as very competent.

He does have a really strong record to run on, and we shouldn't forget that the super pack that is supporting DeSantis has a lot of money.

So he's going to be in this for a long time.

There's no reason to think that he's going to bow out before South Carolina.

Peter, if you're anything like me, you think that Kate McKinnon's impression of Kellyanne

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Conway on SNL was all you really need to know about Kellyanne Conway.

And tonight, I met her for the first time in person, and I asked her, you know, you know, she's a political animal, you know, was, was anyone sort of a breakout star? Here's what she said.

I think anybody on the stage tonight would do a better job than Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

The question is, what did they do to cut into Donald Trump's lead?

Anything?

He's like a hologram hovering over the whole place, doesn't even need to be here.

Probably not.

I think they're all trying to make a moment.

They're trying to be funny, reach for the rafters, get a big headline.

But that's not the way you overtake a 40-point lead, and that's not the way you solve the very vaccine-perplexing issues of a broken nation.

I also found myself face-to-face with Carrie Lake, who is an election denier sort of two times over.

She's an election denier of 2020, and she's an election denier of her own election.

So I can't really think of much that I agree with Carrie Lake on, and yet I found myself face-to-face with her as she said what we saw tonight was a JV debate.

We came down here to talk to the media, and hopefully they'll cover it for what it was, which was a D-list debate with a bunch of people who are taking part in a vanity project. And if they really love America, if they really love America, they'll realize we need to jump behind President Trump now as Americans, as Republicans, frankly, as independents as well.

Get behind President Trump so we can turn this country around.

One thing that just struck me as being so emblematic of the divide between sort of the historic Republican Party and the current political realignment is the fact that the two front-runners were spending their time this week trying to outvie each other to prove to Americans and especially blue-collar voters that they are the beacon, that they are the right candidate for the working class.

And we of course saw that with Biden showing up to the UAW thing.

We saw that Trump in his decision to be in Michigan tonight.

And yet where was the Republican debate?

It was at the Reagan Presidential Library, and you had this very strange, very 2023 moment of the vape Ramaswamy hitting out against Jack Welsh, who listeners will remember took over GE the same year, 1981, that Ronald Reagan took the White House and sort of applied these free market principles, someone call it union busting, will leave it for listeners to decide, and sort of lamenting the way that his father languished at GE under Jack Welsh.

I'll say that I don't have a lot of patience for the union bosses.

I think that's where he and I actually have a common view.

I do have a lot of sympathy for the workers, however.

People are going through real hardship in this country.

I've been through hardship growing up.

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My father stared down layoffs at GE under Jack Welch's tenure at the GE plant in Avondale, Ohio.

My mom had to work overtime in nursing homes in southwest Ohio to make ends meet and pay off our home loan.

So I understand that hardship is not a choice, but victimhood is a choice.

And we choose to be victorious in the United States of America.

You know what, if I was given advice to those workers, I would say go pick it in front of the White House in Washington, DC.

That's really where the protest needs to be, disastrous economic policies.

And I just watched that and thought to myself, this never would have happened on a Republican presidential debate stage even a decade ago.

Yeah.

I mean, that moment, I think perfectly captured the tension.

So on the one hand, all of them, including Ramaswami, are paying homage to Reagan.

At the same time, Ramaswami is lashing out at Jack Welch, who really is the living embodiment of Reaganomics.

He's the guy who lives it, breathes it, loves talking about sort of the creative destruction of markets.

He was a frequent contributor to the Wall Street Journal, op-ed page.

Just loved sort of the whole Reagan ethos deeply.

And I think it captured sort of this bind that they found themselves in with, on the one hand, wanting to, they still feel, all Republicans still feel the need to bow down to genuflect before Reagan and at the same time remain cognizant of the fact that Donald Trump in 2016 shifted that paradigm.

And I don't know that, I was actually, I should say, I was surprised by Ramaswami's tone tonight because I thought that Trump doesn't bother with those kinds of pleasantries.

And I think that's because he gets that the Republican base is no longer enamored of Reagan.

Ramaswami tried to have it both ways, which was surprising.

I asked him in a spin room if he was a Reaganite after the debate.

How are you?

It's really nice to meet you.

Can I ask you a few questions?

Sure.

Is it like camera or just?

No, just audio.

Vivek, we're here at the Reagan Presidential Library.

You're speaking very, very florid terms about Ronald Reagan.

I wanted to ask if you identify as a Reaganite because tonight on stage you talked about how your father sort of languished under Jack Welch's rule of GE.

Obviously, he was a union buster like Reagan.

So how do you square Ronald Reagan's sort of free market policies with your America first economic policy?

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Yes.

So I think the spirit of Reagan that I think is most inspiring to me is that he did challenge orthodoxies in both parties in his era to do what was needed.

But I actually, you think about America as a long arc of history.

Let's go back to my favorite Republican of all time, Abraham Lincoln.

What did he say?

I think it was 1863, height of the Civil War.

The dogmas of a quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present.

Reagan did not just parrot slogans.

He memorized from 40 years before him.

And so I think the dogmas of 1980 are inadequate to address the unique challenges we face in 2023.

But that doesn't mean we can't learn from the people who came from us to actually channel that same spirit.

Some of the threats to liberty today aren't just through Congress and traditional legislative big government.

It's first of all the administrative state, a fourth branch that's bigger now than it was then.

It's a merger of private power and state power that together do what neither can alone.

That's different than the challenge that Reagan faced.

I don't think Ronald Reagan today would be parroting Ronald Reagan slogans, even though many people who think of themselves as Reaganites are.

Think about communist China.

The USSR doesn't exist anymore.

Something a fact that people forget sometimes.

Communist China, I say the same thing to them that Reagan said to the USSR.

My strategy is we win, they lose.

That's my strategy to the communist Chinese party.

We win, they lose.

But here's the difference.

We never depended on the USSR for the shoes on our feet, the phones in our pockets, the pills that we take, the F-35s that we build, the semiconductors, the power art, this camera that's recording us right now.

We never depended on the USSR in that way.

So that's a unique challenge today.

And so I think I'm the candidate to first unite this Republican party and then use that as a springboard to unite the rest of this country.

Partly because I don't even see the real divide in this country as being between Republicans and Democrats.

I alluded to that several times tonight.

I think the divides in this country, you could divide them up a lot of different ways.

I think there's the managerial class versus the everyday citizen.

I think there is the pro-American movement in this country that transcends partisan politics.

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And then I think there's a fringe minority that has much of the Democrat party held hostage, even though the rest much of the Democrat party doesn't agree with that, that it's fundamentally anti-American at its core.

But those are the real ways we have to see the actual national divide.

And I think you need a commander in chief who gets that rather than just parroting poll tested slogans against Biden or parroting slogans memorized from 1980.

Donald Trump showed that you don't need to play by the rules to catch lightning in a bottle and win.

And I look at someone like Vivek who talks a big game about not playing by the rules and doing things his own way.

And yet he's sort of like playing the part.

And I wonder what it would look like for one of these people to say, now I'm not doing it that way and just do something kind of radically different.

Right.

That would have been, I think, like a smart move.

It's odd to me that somebody who has literally nothing to lose, like a Chris Christie or God and Mike Pence or any of these guys, I mean, just to say, you know what, I'm not going to see me valley tonight.

I'm not going to try to like give a speech in the shadow of the former president, but I am going to do something bold and again for looking and I'm going to try to articulate a vision.

And it may be that look like the sad reality may be that none of the people on stage tonight that no one running, including Trump and Biden has the capacity for that kind of vision or leadership and that what we're suffering through is just this protracted moment of leaderlessness in America.

We've got leaders, people who can get votes, raise money and all that, but don't know how to build a new politics, do not have any clue about or any desire to chart a new vision.

Even though that's so obviously what a large majority of Americans crave.

Michael Moynihan reports from Michigan right after the break.

We'll be right back.

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Last night I went to Detroit.

Michael Moynihan in Detroit.

To a room full of plumbers, pipe fitters, electricians and supposedly some auto workers on strike who support Trump, not Biden.

And we're here for a Trump rally on the night of the second Republican debate that Trump has skipped in favor of speaking to UAW workers, union workers here in Detroit who are on strike.

So Trump is speaking on a kind of factory floor at Drake Industries, which is a non-union shop and they make components for various auto makers, including non-American auto makers.

But he's hoping to draw union people into the shop, which is, again, not a union shop.

It's a very, very sort of pointed place to actually have a speech.

Joe Biden came yesterday and spoke in the first American president to ever speak on a picket line, spoke to UAW workers.

The head of the UAW is very strongly pro-Joe Biden.

So we're here to talk to union workers who are bucking their union and actually supporting Donald Trump.

What's up?

Tell me about the hat.

What's that?

Tell me about the hat.

We're in a crisis, man.

What's the crisis?

The crisis?

Biden's the crisis.

And everyone that's been in politics for the last, I don't know, my whole life.

I'm 32.

You've got that probably a hundred years.

Yeah.

You keep going, you know.

But those union auto workers were pretty hard to find.

Do you work in the auto industry?

No.

But you're a union guy.

Yeah.

Did you work in the auto industry by any chance?

No, I have not.

No.

Okay.

Are you?

You're not in the auto industry, are you?

I am not.

Auto workers.

Okay.

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No, but I have bought an American made car.

Okay.

Instead, I've talked with a lot of non-union workers, like this guy named Tyler.

The head of the UAW says, this guy is a billionaire, he hates workers, you're a worker.

Well, he doesn't look at the last couple decades, obviously, you know, and what's been going on.

And there's obviously money just going around in a circle, you know.

What do you think the biggest problem is right now?

What's the thing that animates you more than anything else?

I would just say just pressure, honestly, it just feels like pressure.

I feel like I've watched Trump get shit on for four years, you know, even more before that.

Yeah.

And you can see the double standards, the zero accountability, and it's just, it's a bit of pressure, you know, it's like some mental pressure.

And some non-auto industry workers too, Sean is in a union.

Sean.

Sean.

The last name.

Are you from Elginac too?

Actually.

But he doesn't like it much.

He's a union worker who hates the union.

Kind of.

Yeah, pretty much.

They've done nothing for you?

I don't feel like it.

And they take a chunk of your paycheck?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Every week.

Yeah.

I could buy about, well, before inflation, I could buy five Tim Horton's coffees a week with that.

So you measure presidential success by Tim Horton's coffees?

That helps.

That's a Canadian of you, by the way.

Everyone I spoke to was unanimous in the opinion that Biden is taking the country in the wrong direction.

So Biden comes here yesterday, right?

Joins the Pigano.

He says union people vote for Democrats, right?

I mean, if you're a union guy, he says you should vote for Democrats, right?

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Definitely probably vote in red.

Who did you vote for last time around?

Last time I did not vote.

So this time I am going to.

So what got you so amped up to vote this time and to come out here to see Donald Trump?

Uh, I don't know, this is the first time in my life I've like been more paycheck to paycheck, I guess, or maybe bank fees and shit like that.

So in the past four years have not been good to you economically?

No, not necessarily.

Yeah.

Not like Trump's warriors.

And if the Republican Party is now the party of the working class.

Not like Trump's warriors.

You know.

So tell me about that.

A lot of car got engaged.

Had a kid, you know.

All during Trump's time.

I'm not going to give him all the credit, but still it's, you know.

I met a woman named Beverly who had no ticket to the event, but showed up anyway.

Are you going into the rally tonight?

No, I don't think we can.

Oh, you didn't have to.

You didn't get tickets?

Yeah.

So why did you come just to support Trump?

Absolutely.

And did you come by yourself?

Yes, I did.

To wave a large flag declaring Michigan Trump country.

She's always been a Republican, but says she likes the Trump Republican Party much more than the so-called globalist Bush Republicans of the past.

Do you like this Republican Party more than the Republican Party of George Bush and, you know, Marco Rubio, the people that Trump calls rhinos?

What's the difference to you?

Why do you like this one better?

Because we are America first.

The Bushes were globalists, and they still are.

And I'm not a globalist.

Was that a word that you used before Trump or did Trump kind of enlighten you to that?

No, no.

Bush himself talked about New World Order.

And I never liked that.

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No.

But I didn't have a choice.

So you're not going to be watching the debate tonight?

Oh, I might.

I might check it out for a little bit.

What do you think of all those other candidates running against Trump?

They got no chance.

They don't have a chance.

I met a woman wearing a t-shirt with Trump's mugshot on it.

There were so many people that thought when the Trump mugshot happened that it was like, oh, it's going to be everywhere.

It's going to be a humiliation.

I see it on posters here.

I see it on your shirt.

He's good.

You love that.

He's good.

Yeah.

So the mugshot is a positive thing for you?

Yep.

They're not going to take them down.

No.

So you think all the charges against him, that's people trying to get rid of Trump?

I think they're all, they're not real charges.

I mean, it's ridiculous.

Who says she misses the Trump years?

What was the difference, the big difference for you?

Everyone was proud to be American.

I know everyone's all, all Trump that and Trump this and they're all sensitive.

It's just ridiculous.

It's ridiculous.

So, you know, when everyone was proud to be an American.

When I finally got into the plant, the base is pretty packed, but it's a pretty small venue of all the Trump rallies that I've been to.

This is by far the smallest.

It's on the shop floor of a manufacturing company called Drake, a non-union shop here in Michigan that makes auto parts for various auto parts manufacturers.

And this is supposed to be union members for Trump.

And apparently union members were canvassed and asked to come here and give in tickets for anyone else.

And they're all kind of milling about, waiting for the main event.

And it is decidedly smaller than normal and a lot calmer than normal, I have to say and a lot older than normal.

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I talked to some more died in the world Trump supporters, like Chipper.

So I'm a Trump supporter, you're a Trump supporter, but you have friends that are at UAW.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Quite a few.

Because I, you know, because yesterday Joe Biden was here, you're pretty psyched about that, I'm sure.

So I heard, yeah, he's not welcome as far as I'm concerned.

Do you work in the auto industry though?

No.

I'm an auto fanatic though.

I make rat rides, hot rods, customs.

Yeah, I'm semi-retired totally.

So the inflation, things like that, haven't hit you?

You know, I was raised to understand making a living long term, not relying on social security or the government.

So I just always had my ducks in a row, but I hate spending the cost of everything, of course.

I mean, it affects, but it's not like I can't afford it, but I just hate to pay some of the prices and they're still going up.

Are you a conservative?

Yeah.

You know, I used to be a Democrat and I guess it was through not really knowing enough about politics.

When did that stop?

That stopped pretty much when Obama got in.

I voted him for him for the first time, thinking that he's going to really make a great change, but he didn't do anything he said he was going to do, I don't think.

So did you vote for Trump the first time around?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Well, how do you think he did?

I think he did fantastic.

I mean, come on, the lowest unemployment rate in how many years?

You know, it not to bring the racial card out, but the blacks were happy, the whites were happy, the Hispanics were happy, everybody was happy, even the whole border wall was being built.

And then a little after 8 p.m., Trump came on stage.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the next president of the United States of America, Donald J. Trump.

This is great.

We're in this room where we wanted to keep it small and outside we have thousands and thousands of people.

Have you seen what's going on out there?

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I'll be generous and estimate the crowd at around 100 people.

So let me say to every UAW member and skilled workers all across our nation, Joe Biden, the Democrat Party and their political cronies, cease to serve your interests a long time ago.

They don't care about you.

I mean, he came here yesterday.

What did he have?

Nine people, right?

Nine.

We have 9,000 people outside.

Again, really, they were about 100 people.

And that's because they didn't know we were coming.

They didn't even know we were coming.

They just found out.

In reality, they don't represent you.

They represent a deep state bureaucracy, a global financial class and a political class that have taken control of this country for their own enrichment and self-purposes.

Stealing your wealth and stealing your labor while shipping off our best and brightest to die in expensive, exotic, you know, it was a unique Trump rally in the sense that Donald Trump talks almost exclusively about cars, electric vehicles.

Joe Biden and the UAW's political leadership talk about a fair transition to all electric cars.

American labor will be under siege.

It's not going to work for you.

It can't work.

Unions, the UAW, union negotiations.

By most estimates, under Biden's electric vehicle mandate, 40% of all U.S. auto jobs will disappear.

Think of this in one or two years.

Think of one or two years.

That's what you have to be talking about.

Not you're going to get X dollars an hour.

It doesn't matter what the hell you're getting an hour.

Do me a favor.

Just get your union guys, your leaders, to endorse me.

And I'll take care of the rest.

And it's an interesting thing because it's very, very different than any other Republican conservative rally that I've ever seen in the past because you have someone up on stage essentially making left-wing economic arguments.

That's why I'm here tonight to lay out a vision for a revival of economic nationalism and our automobile manufacturing lifeblood which is sucking out of our country.

The future that puts American dreams over foreign profits and a future that raises American wages, that strengthens American industry, that builds national pride and that defends

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this country's dignity, not squanders at all to build up foreign countries that hate us.
That we have to shut off all trade to other countries and prevent Chinese cars.
Look at the money he got from China.
Look at what's coming out, China.
Crooked Joe backed NAFTA.
He backed China's entry into the World Trade Organization.
He backed the horrendous trend.
Chinese manufacturing, Chinese batteries from coming into this country.
He's selling you out to China.
He's selling you out to the environmental extremists on the radical left.
People have no idea how bad this is going to be also for the environment.
You know, those batteries when they get rid of them and lots of bad things happen and when they're digging it out of the ground to make those batteries.
And you know, I mean, this is the Republican Party of 2024 and there's literally no one that can rest it from Donald Trump's hands.
I'll give you the return of the United States of America as the greatest and strongest industrial nation in the history of the world.
Together we will dismantle the corrupt power structure that has feasted on the suffering of the American auto worker.
And the thing about the Republican Party now is it's a party of extreme economic populism.
And you know, the people that you talk to here love that kind of talk.
They believe that the economy can be saved by preventing trade, by putting walls up around this country to prevent both immigrants and trade.
And they also believe in a lot of conspiracy theories.
When you tell someone here that they're a conspiracy theorist or something they believe is a conspiracy theory, they say, no, no, no, it's facts.
We're doing an end run around the traditional media.
Usually then they make a barbed attack on you as being a traditional media.
But keep in mind, what you get in a Trump rally is people who are committed.
These are people, these are not persuadable voters.
There's people who made up their mind in 2016 and they've never turned back.
And nothing that Donald Trump does, no amount of indictments, no amount of criminal proceedings can change their mind about this.
They are very, very committed voters.
I've been to a number of these rallies since Trump announced in 2015.
And amongst the old school conservatives, economic populists and anti-globalists, one is never surprised to find the occasional belligerent anti-Semite.
Who are you with?
The Free Press?
Not Detroit.
No, no, no.
Not Detroit.
That's right, that's right.

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Barry Weiss?

Yeah, yeah.

Get the fuck out of here.

When I told this guy I worked for someone with the last name Weiss, he asked me where my yarmulke was.

What's your yarmulke?

I don't know.

Well, yeah.

I guess that would be.

Wow.

Okay, but what you thought about it?

About what?

About what you thought?

No, no, no, no, no.

I don't trust you guys.

I don't trust you guys.

I'm sorry.

Well, who do you trust, then?

Nobody.

I don't know.

I get it.

Nobody.

I mean, how am I supposed to trust any of you guys?

I don't know.

I'm sorry.

You got Fox News.

Oh, we're conservative media, and Fox News is like, who do you trust, then?

Right, watch.

Yeah.

Like, where do you get your media?

NJP.

NJP?

Span out.

Spell it out.

What?

NF.

Nick.

Who?

Oh, Nick fucking Fuentes.

Yeah.

I didn't say.

Nick Fuentes is a shit.

At the very end of the night, I finally found a Trump-supporting member of the UAW willing

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to talk to me.

Are you UAW?

She's UAW.

What did you think?

You know, I love Trump, okay, and I have been supporting him for years.

She wouldn't give us her name.

Biden comes down on the picket line.

What did you think about that?

We heard on Facebook that Biden's the one.

I'm going, no, not for me.

I would say most of the people that I know where I work, most of us are Trump supporters.

But most of them don't want to speak out about it either.

So what do you think about the leadership who's making, saying Trump's a billionaire, and he's the guy that's not on your side, he's not for the working class, he's a rich guy.

When you hear your union leader say that, what do you think?

I think they need to wake up and do some research and find out what Trump is really about.

He's one of the few politicians that are not making money by being in political office.

Actually, he's going broke, or not broke, but he's losing money the longer he stays in office because he's working to restore America to its greatness.

It is a great country, or the founding principles of it, they're great.

But it's being sold out by politicians, corrupt politicians.

Are you UAW a person yourself?

I'm actually not, no, I do work for the government though.

Well, I won't hold it against you.

The question that I was thinking about UAW people when I was sitting in the audience, when he said, if they endorse me, they're going to have an easy time, but if they don't endorse me, they're going to have a hard time.

What did you think about that?

If they don't endorse Trump, we probably won't have a place to work.

Well, I know they endorse the EV, the truck, and I have to say this, but I do know that thing's not selling.

Turn to electric bills, you think it's a stupid idea, a pointless idea.

We'll find out.

Do you mind me asking what you do at the plant?

I work on the assembly line.

You work on the assembly line?

Yeah.

So a long time ago, like Mali's robots came in, did you fear that your job was going to go away?

I don't fear my job.

I got enough time in there.

I don't fear my job is going to go away.

Are you a conservative?

Are you a Republican?

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Are you just a Trump voter?

I'm a conservative.

You've always been one.

Yes, and definitely a Trump supporter.

So was it the UAW invited you to come?

Well, I'm on the auto workers for Trump Facebook page.

And we got invited through that.

How many problems at work when people are like very much, you know,

Biden supporters very much with the union on their stance?

No, I wear my Trump shirts to work.

And I got a hat that says I'm a Trump girl, get over it.

Really?

Oh, yeah.

No, people don't give a shit about that.

I don't care if they do.

It's freedom of speech, you know.

Freedom to express myself.

The people I spoke to in Michigan had a pretty standard slate of concerns.

Wages, immigration, inflation, factories moving overseas.

But the thing that no one was concerned about.

The seven also ran Republicans debating at the Reagan library.

Because the Maccabees in Detroit knows that Trump has already won the nomination.

Everything else is a needless sideshow.

So maybe it's time for the rest of us to accept this pretty obvious fact.

No indictment, no mugshot, no scathing MSNBC segment can rest control

the Republican Party from Donald Trump.

Thanks for listening and thanks especially to Peter Savodnik and Michael Moynihan for staying up late

and joining me on today's episode, which was a real blast to make with my colleagues.

I was struck being in the spin room after the debate,

sort of about the mission of why we're doing what we're doing.

We don't want to tell you what you expect to hear.

We want to surprise you.

We want to provoke you.

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