

Wrong kind of 'energy'? Bloomberg takes on the 'Bernie Bros'... using Hillary Clinton-style tactics

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Democratic candidate Mike Bloomberg has deployed a new tactic against Bernie Sanders: accuse his supporters of harassment and mean tweets. Hillary Clinton used the same strategy in 2016, and suffered a devastating loss.

In little over two weeks, the race for the Democratic nomination has shifted to Bernie Sanders versus everyone else. Destroying former Vice President Joe Biden's lead in the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries, the progressive senator from Vermont is now the frontrunner in nearly every national poll, with centrists like Biden, Pete Buttigieg, and now former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg, nipping at his heels.

Bloomberg's candidacy in particular seems the antithesis of Sanders'. Bloomberg is a billionaire, while much of Sanders' campaign message rails against the excesses of the super-rich. Bloomberg thrust himself into the 2020 race by spending half a billion dollars on TV ads, while Sanders touts his grassroots support from small donors. Bloomberg has never taken part in a televised debate, while Sanders has been on every stage since last year.

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Bloomberg didn't even contend the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries, and will sit out Nevada and South Carolina too.

Sanders' left-wing base sees Bloomberg's entry as a blatant attempt to "buy" the nomination. Sanders himself told a crowd in Las Vegas on Saturday that *"Mayor Bloomberg, with all his money, will not create the kind of excitement and energy we need... to defeat Donald Trump."*

Bloomberg responded on Monday, with a video attacking Sanders' "angry army" of online supporters, the so-called 'Bernie Bros.' It presents a collection of cherry-picked abusive messages allegedly from Sanders supporters, along with some scaremongering headlines from mainstream media outlets. The video ends, puzzlingly, with a clip of Sanders himself calling for "a civil discourse."

"We need to unite to defeat Trump in November. This type of 'energy' is not going to get us there," Bloomberg added in the tweet.

With Bloomberg and his fellow centrists trailing Sanders in the polls, the New York billionaire is not the only candidate seeking to tar Sanders for the behavior of some of his fans. On Saturday, Biden called on Sanders to condemn the *"vicious, malicious, misogynistic"* rhetoric of his supporters.

Sanders' policies are popular. A majority of Americans [support](#) his proposed 'Medicare for All' plan, two thirds [back](#) his proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, and a majority [agree](#) with his plan to wipe student debt. Opposing such 'populist' policies is difficult, especially for a Wall Street-friendly politician like Bloomberg who told his own news website in 2015 that he has *"never been in favor"* of a higher minimum wage, but attacking the electorate is a risky move.

Just ask Hillary Clinton. As Sanders' popularity grew during the 2016 primaries, Clinton embraced the term 'Bernie Bros,' using it to smear Sanders' supporters as a whole as young male misogynists, who refused to switch sides to Team Hillary because of perceived sexism. The term was originally coined by Atlantic writer Robinson Meyer, who [described](#) the prototypical 'Bernie Bro' as a *"white, well educated, middle-class"* male who *"hectors their friends"* online into supporting Sanders' *"pie-in-the-sky progressive policies,"* and shouts down all opposing voices.

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Clinton seized on the stereotype, as did establishment media. As Sanders and Clinton were locked into a dead heat in February of 2016, the Clinton campaign issued a warning to Sanders, asking him to curb the *"demeaning and insulting"* language of the *"Bernie Bros."* Alienating the electorate was Clinton's weapon of choice in 2016, exemplified by her infamous branding of Trump supporters as a *"basket of deplorables."*

In reality, there was nothing to suggest that the most *"nasty and vitriolic"* of Sanders' supporters were anything but a tiny minority. Many of them too were women. As Clinton accused his supporters of sexism, female voters [flocked](#) to team Sanders, with women 29 and younger giving the socialist senator six times as many votes in Iowa.

After Clinton clinched the nomination in July, a large swathe of these 'Bernie or Bust' voters stayed at home on election day, or gave Donald Trump a protest vote. Frustrated with how the Democratic party muscled Sanders out of contention, prominent Sanders supporters like journalist and activist [Cassandra Fairbanks](#) publicly got on board the Trump train.

Bloomberg's latest stunt looks set to drive away more voters than it attracts. The ad was met with derision and a backlash on Monday, with journalist Glenn Greenwald tweeting: *"That nobody – even those with \$60 billion – can yet figure out a better attack on Sanders than the primitive, cheap 2016 tactic of highlighting mean tweets from random, anonymous, ostensible supporters should be highly encouraging to the Sanders campaign."*
