AND THEY SPENT A WEEKEND TOGETHER
These voters — representative of all Americans who are registered to vote — were invited to spend a weekend in late September at a resort outside Dallas to show that there might be a better way to disagree. And, as furor in Washington was just beginning to build over the possible impeachment of the president, Donald Trump’s name barely came up.

The New York Times took a portrait of nearly every participant.

Collectively, their faces are a reflection of all American voters.

BY EMILY BADGER AND KEVIN QUEALY | PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHAD BATKA AND CELESTE SLOMAN
GRAPES. TEXAS. - The voters arrived from all over
the country: nine of them named John, 10 who'd
come from mobile homes, four who lived in South
Dakota. Twenty-seven considered themselves
extremely conservative; 30 said they were extremely
liberal. Twenty-one were out of work and looking for
it. Two came with service dogs. At least one did not
tell her parents she was coming here, because
talking politics is so hard at home that she didn't
want to admit she was flying to Texas to talk
politics with people she didn't know.

There were 516 of them, leading a survey
by the Stanford political scientist James
Frisken and Larry Diamond. For a diver-
sed group of people in a room, the
researchers say, they're likely to
raise their hand and say, 'What
more deeply with each other. They be-
came more interested, even more sympa-
thetic. And in this setting, politicians
get a jolt of what people believe
when they're not just relying on sound
bites and sound bites.

Each voter was asked from a nationwide survey of thousands of
households to resemble the country's
demographic diversity. "America in One
Room," the event was called. In the con-
venerations that followed, it was often
hard to tell which ideological camp to
place listeners in.

"There has to be a better way," she said.
"I can see myself being truncated in a
mattress."

Asked how these conversations had moved
them, many voters said they preferred
people running clothes, not their views of
Each time here was selected from a nationwide survey of 1,800 American household to resemble the country’s demographic diversity. “I was part of the ‘Baby Boomers,’ so I was part of the first group to be interviewed.” The event was called “The Centenarians” and it was often hard to find a poignant memory or event that influenced the lives of anyone other than their families.

A national group named Heinz raised about $3 million to bring everyone here to a hotel and convention center with cocky-lime carpet and an indoor river walk. The research institute, NOBC, at the University of Notre Dame conducted surveys of the group and worked to find the right representation of votes, calling some of them twice, three, four times to make sure they were not on phones or away from home.

Many of the votes were easy at first that theInvoker was a way — an all-expenses-paid trip to a Texas resort to — give the group an overview.

Over four days, mostly in small groups, they debated policy proposals in a 10-page briefing booklet that made little sense to whom the proposals came from. Parlor politician’s — Democratic, Republican, progressive, conservative — went, by design, unspoken from the last. The image voters themselves used was often personal rather than political.

“You have to tell them to listen to them,” Mr. Fishman said. “They don’t take the way policy works, talk about an issue. They bring their personal experience, their observations. But they’re not making arguments when they tell a story.”

In one room, the debate among a dozen voters about the Affordable Care Act moved from not personal financial impact to another. One man’s total monthly cost $2,500 from $300 after the law took effect. Another man’s family premium had gone up to $3,000 a month. Across the table, one woman said her father had been found to have cancer right after the law forced him to acquire insurance for the first time in his life. “I can help you from personal experience,” he said. “I know how bad it is.”

In a different room, a middle-aged man was that being brought on China was necessary to encourage a young woman who believed the talks were hurting her family’s South Carolina farm. In another bodied inside, the talks of cancer covering them.

“Then there is the better way,” she said. “I can see myself being transported in a mattress.”

A few of these conversations had moved many, many votes and their preferred policies before dictated, but the views of each other had.

“I never have changed my position,” said Donita Dunning, 74, from Woodland Park, Colo. “But after changing my understanding of the issues in the group, I said, ‘I know what I read great health care, if we could do for the bill, the Affordable Care Act changed things, and I’m worse off now.’

In the final survey data, however, it appears that some could have changed.

The National Organization of Socialists, NOBC, specifically that issue before the conference, and says the same questions at the end. Votes on both the left and the right appeared to emerge toward the center. Democratic support moved to a $15 federal minimum wage and for “Medicare for all.” Republican support grew for joining the Paris climate agreement and for giving more aid to refugees, each of whom brought to the United States as children.

Then answer, Mr. Fishman said, better approximate public opinion in a society where more people are informed and from inside that carefully constructed model of democracy in Texas, the share of participants who said they thought American democracy worked well doubled, to 69 percent.

In principle, there is something hopeful in these findings. But an essential part of what happened here will be harder to replicate than the structured discussions. During meals and at the break, there were unlikely pairings of people everywhere, just talking, with no moderators.

James McLean, a 73-year-old microsurgery from Nebraska, walked away from dinner on the last night and said that the people around him had, in the end, changed his thinking about something. He considered himself a free-market guy, but he now believed a public option could make more competitive in the health care market.

“They explained it to me in the way I think,” he said. And he seemed pleased to have changed his mind.
I don’t think the purpose of this conference was to change people’s minds. I think the purpose of this conference was to get people to accept each other’s points of view in a civil manner and to realize that basically, many people are inherently good and want what’s best for the country.

ZUBIN ROSCO, 74, FAIRFAX, VA.
‘When you can bring 500-plus people and sit strangers in a room, and nobody’s yelling, nobody’s disrespecting anybody, nobody’s throwing anything, nobody’s using foul language — it is a contrast to what I’ve seen in the media.’

JASMINE WILLIAMS, 56, GREENSBORO, N.C.
'I'm a liberal, and I want to hear what a conservative thinks. Not only do I need to know what the other side thinks to have a healthy debate, but also these are my neighbors, this is my family, this is America.'

Zoé Flores, 52, San Antonio
‘Everybody seemed to have some misgivings about trusting the government. In all kinds of ways, we just do not believe that we can trust them to speak for us, to have our backs, to do anything that’s beyond their self-interest.’

DON WHITTINGTON, III, PRATTVILLE, ALA.
The Americans in One Room, on One Map

The map shows the states and towns that the respondents reported coming from.

'Ve have two grown children. I'm very happy to say that one of them is a

[Names and pictures of respondents]