

Democratic Party crisis explodes in wake of Brazile revelations

Patrick Martin
6 November 2017

The political crisis in the Democratic Party, brought to the surface with the publication Thursday of excerpts of a campaign memoir by the former interim chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Donna Brazile, erupted into mutual denunciations over the weekend.

Brazile made public an unprecedented agreement between the DNC (under previous chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz) and the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign that involved Clinton paying off the DNC's debts and providing it a monthly subsidy in return for gaining control over the appointment of DNC officials and the right of approval over key operational decisions.

The deal was concluded in August 2015, six months before the first votes were to be cast in caucuses or primaries, when the DNC was required by its own rules to remain neutral in the contest between Clinton, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and several other candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

A further revelation from Brazile's book was made public Saturday: she acknowledged discussions among leading Democrats in September 2016, after Hillary Clinton had collapsed at a ceremony in New York City marking the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, over whether Clinton should be replaced as the presidential candidate because of health concerns. Brazile writes that she herself considered Vice President Joe Biden as the logical replacement, but did not make the proposal.

Within hours of this report, 100 former Clinton campaign aides, headed by campaign chairman John Podesta and campaign manager Robby Mook, put their signatures on an open letter denouncing Brazile's criticism of the Clinton campaign.

The "Open Letter From Hillary For America 2016 Team" makes use of the same Russia-baiting technique employed by the Democrats in their political conflict with the Trump White House, but this time directed against a former top Democrat. In assailing Brazile, the first

paragraph of the open letter declares: "It is particularly troubling and puzzling that she would seemingly buy into false Russian-fueled propaganda, spread by both the Russians and our opponent, about our candidate's health."

The health questions about Clinton were fueled, however, not by Moscow, but by video broadcast over American cable television networks showing the candidate being lifted into a vehicle by aides and Secret Service agents, in visible distress. The characteristic duplicity of top campaign officials, who initially sought to conceal the incident, added to the ensuing furor.

Even more revealing is what is missing from the Clinton camp's "Open Letter": there is no reference whatsoever to the main revelation stemming from Brazile's book—the secret joint fundraising agreement between the Clinton campaign and the DNC, six months before the first caucus in Iowa, giving Clinton effective control of the party apparatus. The Clinton aides do not dispute that this backroom deal occurred and make no attempt to justify it.

On Sunday morning, Brazile appeared on the ABC News program "This Week with George Stephanopoulos." The host, himself a former top political aide in the White House of Bill Clinton, provided a platform for Brazile to repeat her exposure of the collusion between the Clinton campaign and the DNC and discuss the "Open Letter" from the former Clinton campaign officials.

She bitterly denounced the Clinton camp, both for its treatment of the DNC while she was in charge, and for their ferocious response to her new book. "George, for those who are telling me to shut up, they told Hillary that a couple of months ago," Brazile declared. "You know what I tell them? Go to hell! I'm going to tell my story."

Brazile also touched on a topic of intense but largely behind-the-scenes discussion in official Washington: the July 2016 murder of Seth Rich, a low-level IT staffer at

the DNC, who was shot to death in what police called a failed robbery attempt. The Trump White House and ultra-right media allies, including Alex Jones of InfoWars and Sean Hannity of Fox News, have portrayed Rich, rather than Russian hackers, as the likely source for the DNC emails obtained by WikiLeaks, and his killing as a retaliatory “hit” ordered by the Clinton campaign.

Brazile reportedly suggests in her book—which will not be available to the public until Tuesday—that Rich’s death, warnings from the Obama administration about Russian hacking and repeated online threats from Trump supporters had made her extremely concerned about security issues, to the point where she had her home swept for bugs and installed multiple security devices. In her interview Sunday with Stephanopoulos, she spoke of her fears for her own personal safety. Her mention of Seth Rich, entirely unsolicited, seemed a veiled warning to the Clinton camp that more revelations about 2016 campaign skullduggery could be forthcoming.

Current DNC Chair Tom Perez was interviewed Sunday on “Meet the Press” on NBC and directly rejected the two main issues raised by Brazile. He maintained, “The charge that Hillary Clinton was somewhere incapacitated is quite frankly ludicrous,” although he did not attribute that concern to Russian propaganda.

He went on to argue that Clinton won the Democratic primary contest by four million votes, and the DNC was not in control of those elections, which are run by the state governments, while noting that the caucuses, which *are* controlled by the party apparatus, were mostly won by Sanders, not Clinton. Perez would concede only that “the DNC fell short during critical moments of the primary,” in terms of openly favoring Clinton over Sanders.

Significantly, neither Sanders nor any of his top aides or supporters made an appearance on any of the Sunday television talk shows. Sanders issued a statement on Brazile’s revelations suggesting that the conduct of the 2016 campaign was a diversion from the effort to mobilize opposition to the Trump administration.

The fact is that Brazile informed Sanders of the joint fundraising agreement and the takeover of the DNC by Clinton more than a year ago, and he has chosen to say nothing about it. This is part of his effort to prop up the Democratic Party and prevent the millions of working people and youth who supported his campaign from drawing the political conclusion that it is necessary to break with the Democrats in order to conduct any genuine struggle against the billionaires who dominate the US political system.

The conflict within the Democratic Party has erupted under conditions where the Republican Party is bordering on civil war, with several Republican senators denouncing Trump as a threat to American democracy—and then announcing they would retire from office rather than oppose him—and a vicious conflict developing between the party establishment and the fascist-minded elements around Trump, spearheaded by his former chief political aide and campaign manager, Stephen Bannon, now returned to his position as chief executive of the ultra-right *Breitbart News*.

In recent days, it has been reported that in an upcoming book titled *The Last Republicans*, the author cites interviews with George H. W. Bush and his son George W. Bush in which the two last Republican presidents before Trump denounce the current occupant of the White House and reveal that they refused to vote for him in 2016. In response, Trump tweeted an attack on his Republican presidential critics.

The ABC “This Week” program on which Brazile was interviewed began with the presentation of a new Washington Post/ABC News poll showing public support for Trump falling to its low point for the year, only 37 percent, with 59 percent opposing. Trump’s showing was the worst for any first-year president since modern polling began. Other polls have shown public support for the Republican-controlled Congress hitting new lows as well.

The vast majority of working people are increasingly alienated from the two-party political system in the United States, correctly regarding both the Democrats and the Republicans as tools of the super-rich and looking for an alternative. The central political question is the building of a political movement of the working class that will fight the capitalist system as a whole and advance a program to defend jobs, living standards and democratic rights, and oppose imperialist war.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact