

Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes's *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign*

## An inside look at Bernie Sanders's role in the Democratic Party primaries

### Part One

By Eric London  
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Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes's book, *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign*, is an unintended exposure of the right-wing aims and methods of the Democratic Party in the 2016 elections.

The authors of *Shattered* were embedded with the campaign and given access to high-ranking staff on the condition that they only quote staffers anonymously and withhold publication until after the election. Though this results in a high level of petty gossip, it also gives the book an insider post-mortem character. In spite of the authors' shortsightedness, the book contains facts that shed light on the essential political role and class character of the Democratic Party.

*Shattered* details how the Democratic Party sought to elect Hillary Clinton, the preferred candidate of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, in the face of deepening popular opposition to war and social inequality. The book contains new revelations detailing how Democrats—including the Obama White House, Bernie Sanders and the Clinton campaign—consciously sought to overcome this social opposition, directing it behind Clinton's general election campaign and blocking it from developing outside the safe channels of the Democratic Party.

This task initially seemed routine to the billionaires, intelligence operatives and political hacks who comprise the party's decision-makers. But the logic of political developments revealed a working class that was much less willing to accept the usual lies and platitudes. Blinded by their own impressionism and shortsightedness, and terrified by the depth of social opposition, the Democratic Party relied on Sanders to temper opposition and save the party from total collapse.

However, despite Sanders's own best efforts to provide a phony populist veneer to the pro-corporate Democratic Party, record numbers of workers, young people, and racial minorities abstained from voting rather than support either right-wing candidate in the general election, paving the way for the election of Donald Trump.

#### **Bernie Sanders: political transmission belt for the Democratic Party**

*Shattered* exposes the fact that the Democratic Party and Sanders conspired from early on to use his campaign to provide the Democratic Party with a "progressive" cover.

Before announcing his run, Sanders met in early 2015 with a handful of advisers and Democratic Party operatives to consider his options. The discussion turned to whether Sanders should run as an independent:

"No, no, no," Sanders said, "I would never be a Ralph Nader. I would

never do anything to hurt a Democrat's chances of winning the White House."

Sanders was also interested in advancing his own career. Allen and Parnes write:

"For Bernie, winning wasn't the only thing. I'm a backbencher in Congress, he told Devine. I want to come out of this in a better position to push the issues I care about. He wanted a higher profile in the Senate if he ran and lost. 'A presidential campaign, if done well, can accomplish that,' [adviser Tad] Devine replied."

The Obama administration quickly became involved in mediating the possibility of a Sanders campaign. Alyssa Mastromonaco, who served as Obama's deputy chief of staff from 2011 to 2014, worked her first Capitol Hill job as Sanders's intern in the late 1990s. Though *Shattered* does not state that the visit took place with Obama's knowledge, Mastromonaco was the perfect go-between.

Sanders asked his staff to set up a meeting with Mastromonaco, where, as Allen and Parnes note, "one of Obama's most trusted aides found herself in a ninety-minute meeting with the man trying to foment a national political revolution from tiny Burlington. Seated in the senator's office the next day, Mastromonaco listened to her former boss talk about the prospect of running."

Sanders asked Mastromonaco if she thought he should run.

"Do you think there's a place for me?" Sanders asked.

"I think there's a place for everybody," Mastromonaco replied. "I don't think it's good for the Democrats if there's no challenge during the primaries."

Mastromonaco's statement followed recent Democratic standard operating procedure whereby party leadership encourages left-wing fringe candidates to compete in the primary to trap left-wing voters in its orbit, maintain the illusion that the Democratic Party is a "popular" party with a "progressive" pole, and give the favored candidates the ability to tack left, broadening their base for the general election. Such was the model followed in 2004 with Howard Dean and in 2004 and 2008 with Dennis Kucinich.

Key sections of the Clinton campaign apparently agreed with Mastromonaco. There was concern about how Hillary Clinton's immense wealth and extraordinary speaking fees for speeches to Wall Street would be seen by voters.

When Clinton's aides advised her to launch her campaign in early 2015, "Hillary was in much less of a rush," Allen and Parnes write. "She'd

been amassing a fortune giving paid speeches to private companies, including Wall Street banks, and she didn't see the need to prolong what would be a grueling campaign." Clinton had a "love of the dollar," and she accumulating millions of dollars after leaving the State Department in 2013.

"For some," the authors note, "her education, privilege, and perceived sense of entitlement were more off-putting than her agenda, her secrecy, or even the way her voice hit their ears. She wasn't like them. And that made it harder, if not impossible, to get them to listen with an open mind."

The working class does not hate Clinton simply because of her personality, but rather because she epitomizes the corruption, nepotism and mendacity of an American financial oligarchy that is incapable and unwilling to advance any program of social reform.

Under these conditions, Sanders emerged as the transmission belt between the Democratic Party and a population growing deeply hostile to the political establishment. Clinton campaign manager Robbie Mook "was overheard at one meeting saying he wasn't sure whether he'd rather have Bernie in the race—which could give Hillary a workout before the general election—or not."

Clinton's staff and the Democratic Party massively underestimated the level of support his campaign would receive.

### **Sanders's primary victories**

Clinton, Sanders, and the Democratic Party were all surprised by Sanders's success in the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary. The support Sanders rallied among young people and working class primary voters struck fear in the Clinton campaign. At this point, they became acutely aware—and fearful of—the depth of social opposition, in particular caused by Clinton's support for Wall Street and the American war machine.

In preparation for one primary debate, Clinton reflected: "I'm really trying to put my finger on what the electorate, the Democratic primary electorate, the broader electorate is thinking and feeling right now," Clinton told an aide. "What is the appeal of a Sanders and what are their concerns about me?"

The incredulity of Clinton and her supporters to the growth in support for Sanders and to anger over her speeches to Wall Street is a product of the vast material chasm that separates the Democratic Party from the broad masses of the population. To the privileged social layer surrounding Clinton, corrupt kowtowing to Wall Street is not problematic, it is a way of life.

Clinton "was infuriated by the way Sanders had made his attacks against her personal and about her character," the authors note. She "thought it was unfair" when Sanders attacked her paid speeches to Wall Street. "She truly believed she couldn't be corrupted and that she hadn't done anyone favors for money."

"The whole bought-and-paid-for thing came from Bernie. That did her damage," one Clinton aide told Allen and Parnes in the fall of 2016.

Bill Clinton also "couldn't stand Bernie Sanders." Allen and Parnes paraphrase the former president: "To [Sanders], everything that's wrong with America, especially our social problems, are a direct result of whatever bad policy I set in motion."

Hillary Clinton personally feared discussion of economic inequality and consciously sought to prevent discussion of these issues during the primary. During one early debate, "her fear was that Sanders would be able to slide in between [Clinton and Martin O'Malley] and talk about the real issues confronting the American public. ... He could win the exchange that way."

She had the support of the bulk of the trade union bureaucracy, but Allen and Parnes note that "the fact that she'd had to push unions to whip up their members to vote was indicative of how little natural support she

had in the ranks."

As the Clinton campaign came to the realization that Sanders was gaining much more support than previous token "left" primary candidates, largely due to growing interest in socialism, Clinton's campaign debated whether to undertake a strategic shift.

### **Identity politics and the Clinton campaign**

*Shattered* conveys the sense of genuine concern in the Clinton campaign following each major Sanders victory, especially the New Hampshire primary in February and the Michigan primary in March. After each defeat, the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party were confronted by their own unpopularity and by a groundswell of opposition from working class voters and youth.

"We should have figured out a way to deal with Bernie earlier," Clinton told her staff after losing the New Hampshire primary. A debate emerged within the campaign, with one side, led by Bill Clinton, arguing that the campaign was ignoring questions of social inequality and would drive working class voters away.

The overwhelming majority of Clinton strategists and Democratic Party operatives ignored Bill Clinton's proposals. After the New Hampshire election, Clinton rolled out a new campaign tagline, devised by her marketing department, aimed instead at appealing even more openly to questions of racial, gender, and sexual identity: "Breaking Barriers."

The decision to focus more intently on identity politics was taken to allow Clinton to build a voting base centered among wealthier voters, so as to ensure that she would not be obligated to issue any proposals for social reform that might turn off her backers in the financial aristocracy and the wealthiest 10 percent of the population.

After New Hampshire, she launched a new round of right-wing attacks against Sanders, pegging him as insensitive to racial issues. This attack was a deliberate attempt to avoid "the real issues," as she previously stated in debate preparations, by directing attention away from discussion of social inequality and war.

Clinton attacked Sanders's mild criticisms of Obama's pro-corporate administration, telling African-American voters this was "an act of disloyalty." Clinton "would make damn sure every black voter had heard" about the Vermont senator's criticism of Obama, the authors write, in an attempt to portray these criticisms as racially motivated.

Clinton was "pinning Bernie into a white base and refocusing her attention on minority voters," aimed at portraying opposition to economic inequality as a racially motivated attempt to limit discussion on racism.

Nevertheless, when this strategy failed in Michigan, Clinton was personally furious. The authors write: "Hillary couldn't put her finger on the problem. 'Is it my stance on guns?' she asked."

In fact, the loss in Michigan and later in the general elections nationally was an indictment of her racist strategy, which won support among more affluent layers in the minority community but inspired little enthusiasm among working-class African-Americans, Latinos and women.

Clinton felt most personally at ease when making the identity politics appeal, and the campaign once again intensified this orientation in the wake of the Michigan defeat. She made the most overtly racial appeal of the campaign in Harlem, the historically black neighborhood in northern Manhattan. The authors write:

"The Harlem speech just felt right to her. For the first time in weeks, maybe months, she was at home on the campaign trail. 'I am so comfortable speaking about this stuff,' she told [an aide] on the plane back to Washington for a fund-raiser in Northern Virginia. 'I feel like these are things I need to be talking about.'"

With this strategy, Clinton limped through the primaries and secured the Democratic nomination. As she pivoted to the general election, the Democratic Party leadership pressed Sanders to turn his voting base

behind the Clinton campaign.

*To be continued*

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