

Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-ins and Breakdowns That Put Donald Trump in the White House

An insider's view of the crisis-ridden Democratic Party

By Andre Damon
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Donna Brazile's recently released book, *Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-ins and Breakdowns That Put Donald Trump in the White House*, is an account of the 2016 election from the standpoint of a high-level Democratic Party functionary.

Exuding factional backbiting and vindictiveness, Brazile's book makes no analysis of the social forces that underlie the factional struggles gripping the Democratic Party and the wider crisis of the US two-party system, which manifested itself in the election of Donald Trump. However, the author's very subjectivity and her description of the hothouse atmosphere of intrigue pervading the party apparatus point to the narrow and highly privileged social base of the Democratic Party, of which she is a part, and its alienation from the broad mass of the population.

Following the lead of Hillary Clinton's account of the election campaign, *What Happened*, Brazile attributes the victory of Trump primarily to the actions of the "Russians," who allegedly hacked into the servers of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the emails of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta and provided their contents to WikiLeaks.

After Russia, she blames a series of tactical blunders by the Clinton campaign itself, for the most part related to Clinton's refusal to follow the advice of Brazile to focus more on black inner-city neighborhoods of Detroit, Milwaukee and other cities. In those areas, the Democratic "base vote" fell significantly, allowing Trump to carry Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania and win a narrow victory in the Electoral College despite losing the popular vote by three million.

Brazile never considers, let alone explains, why the 2016 contest against Trump—a fascistic billionaire who was the most unpopular major party presidential candidate in modern history—was so close that factors such as the WikiLeaks leaks, the intervention of FBI Director James Comey or less-than-stellar Clinton campaign tactics could tip the outcome.

Brazile was the acting chair of the DNC from the time of last year's Democratic Convention, in July 2016, until February 2017. She is a veteran of decades of Democratic Party politics, including a stint as campaign manager for Al Gore in 2000. When the 2016 campaign began, she was a vice-chair of the DNC and a media pundit for CNN and ABC News.

The WSWS has already written on two important aspects of the Brazile book that came to light before it was available to the public: her revelation that the Clinton campaign took control of the DNC in August 2015, long before the first presidential primary votes, through a secret deal in which the Clinton campaign financed the DNC in return for decision-making authority over personnel and policies; and her numerous references to the unsolved July 2016 murder of Seth Rich, an IT staffer at the DNC.

Brazile's exposure of the Clinton campaign's deal to take de facto control of the DNC and her pointed references to the Seth Rich case have infuriated the Clinton wing of the Democratic Party. One hundred people involved in Clinton's presidential bid, including Podesta and campaign vice-chair Huma Abedin, signed an open letter denouncing Brazile and accusing her of spreading "Russian-fueled propaganda."

Brazile includes Rich among those to whom she dedicates her book, calling him "my DNC colleague and patriot." She reports that the death of Rich, who was shot twice in the back a block from his apartment in Washington DC, "made [people in the DNC office in Washington] feel unsafe."

DC police quickly called Rich's murder a failed robbery attempt, even though none of his possessions were taken. Since then, the major newspapers, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, have denounced any questioning of the official narrative of his death as "fake news" and "conspiracy theory."

In an interview on the ABC News "This Week" program just prior to the release of her book, Brazile, unprompted by host George Stephanopoulos, raised the Rich case, comparing his death to burying a child and saying that, as a result, she feared

for her own life.

In her book, she speculates on possible political motives for his murder, naming as possible perpetrators Russian agents and enemies of the Democratic Party. These statements indicate that she does not accept the official story that Rich was simply the victim of a street crime.

The violent death of Rich, who had served for several years as data director of voter expansion for the DNC, is bound up with the central narrative of the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party since Clinton's defeat—that she was the victim of a campaign of hacking and leaking of DNC and Clinton campaign emails carried out by agents of the Russian government. Rich was killed just two weeks before WikiLeaks began publishing highly damaging emails showing that top DNC officials worked to undermine the primary challenge of Bernie Sanders in order to ensure Clinton's nomination.

In her book, Brazile refers to statements by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange suggesting that Rich, not Russian agents, was the source of the hacked emails leaked by WikiLeaks.

Despite the significant portion of the book that Brazile devotes to Russian “hacking,” she never attempts to prove to a skeptical reader that the Russian government was behind the hacking of the DNC and campaign chairman Podesta. She simply asserts it again and again, citing the authority of the FBI and other intelligence agencies.

Her attitude to the intelligence agencies combines awe and utter loyalty. Brazile describes her visit to FBI headquarters on August 11, 2016 in hushed, reverential tones, never revealing the actual content of the briefing she and other DNC officials were given on supposed Russian hacking, which she treats as confidential even today.

In her account of the fall campaign, Brazile vents her fury at Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook, a leading advocate of the Clinton campaign's insular targeting of a small layer of affluent upper-middle-class voters, based on a heavy reliance on feminism and identity politics.

Brazile provides a retrospective critique of this approach, noting that young people with whom she spoke “disliked identity politics.” She continues: “They thought that Hillary spent too much time trying to appeal to people based on their race, or their gender, or their sexual orientation, and not enough time appealing to people based on what really worried them—issues like income inequality and climate change.”

This is a devastating self-indictment of the Democratic Party. While Sanders had won broad support on the basis of his appeals to anger over social inequality—that is, class questions relating to jobs, economic insecurity, etc.—the Clinton campaign was determined to suppress these issues. This demonstrates the extent to which the Democratic Party is a party of the bourgeoisie and a narrow and privileged layer of the upper-middle class and is organically alienated from and hostile to the working class.

Much of the narrative in the book revolves around the constant struggle for resources between the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign, with the latter dominating the former. She explains that, as president, Barack Obama had “stripped the party to a shell.” He “never had seen himself as connected to the party. He had not come up through it the way Joe Biden and Hillary had, but had sprung up almost on his own and never had any trouble raising money for his campaigns.”

Obama, whose meteoric and unprecedented rise to the White House suggests that he had assistance from outside the formal structures of the Democratic Party, had little need for the party machine except to use it as a piggybank. He “used the party to provide for political expenses like gifts to donors, and political travel,” Brazile writes.

Once Obama left the party as an indebted, hollowed-out shell, “Hillary bailed it out so that she could control it,” Brazile writes. This included efforts to rig the Democratic primary, a process to which Brazile herself contributed when she exploited her position as a CNN commentator to feed debate questions to Clinton, but not Sanders.

Brazile's narrative, for all its subjectivity and reactionary biases, provides further confirmation that the military-intelligence apparatus now dominates the functioning of this 170-year-old bourgeois political institution. The ability of the Democratic Party to effectively serve its late 19th and 20th century role of subsuming and dissipating left-wing social opposition to capitalism has been severely eroded. It has largely lost any connection to the popular base, including large sections of the working class, it had in an earlier period. In the period since Obama took office, the Democratic Party has lost roughly 1,000 state legislative seats, squandered large majorities in both houses of Congress, lost the majority of governorships and ceded control of the White House.

Beyond the environs of the feuding factions of the Democratic Party, popular opinion is moving to the left amid growing opposition to war, social inequality and attacks on democratic rights. But throughout her book, Brazile offers not a single substantive critique of the policies of Clinton. Brazile's statements are limited to squabbling over tactics. All factions of this deeply corrupt party of the American financial oligarchy support the policies of military escalation and the upward redistribution of wealth that characterized the Obama administration.

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