

Hillary's "Dirt Machine", Warring Against Bernie Sanders. Totalitarian Thinking, Feminism and the Clintons

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"I can tell you that shaming me and essentially calling me misinformed and stupid is NOT the way to win my vote." - Zoe Trimboli, Feb 9, 2015

The Clinton campaign is showing signs of desperation. Bernie Sanders is not only putting in a fight, but offering firm punches in the electoral bouts. The days are early: a narrow Clinton victory in the Iowa caucus; and a very convincing showing by Sanders in the New Hampshire primary.

Rattled, the dirt machine was bound to get busy against the septuagenarian Vermont socialist. Fittingly, the issue of sex and gender had to come into play, showing how the ideas factory had run dry in the winter months. "Obviously," suggested stormy dissident feminist Camille Paglia, "they are desperate because Hillary's numbers are falling, so they are really pulling out the heavy artillery."

In this rhetorical scrap within the Democratic spread, the matter of gender seems to be coupled with generational politics. Older women are more likely to go for Clinton, another factor that simply adds to the ennui of the issue, while the younger generation are gravitating towards Sanders. They claim to have wiser heads, hoping to direct the younger ones off the path with Bernie.

This is the key rule of corporate feminism in action.[1] In 2008, such a form found expression in the endorsement by the National Organization of Women (NOW) for Clinton's "long history of support for women's empowerment." A collective of 250 academics and activists, calling themselves "Feminists for Clinton" found her "advocacy of the human rights of women" to be "powerful".

Such views presuppose that Clinton has a record of making policy that combated gender inequality. It is a far from sustainable point, given her history of corporate coddling and Big Town smooching. Her refusal to question Walmart's campaign against labour unions in their quest to represent store workers while on the board (1986-1992) is a glaring case in point. Walmart continues to exert a pull on Clinton, with Alice Walton donating the permitted maximum amount in 2013 to the "Ready for Hillary" Super PAC in 2013.[2]

It has become incumbent, then, to suggest that the Clinton aura is distinctly against establishment politics, that she is herself permanently fighting it in a battle of attrition. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright claimed last Saturday, in a rally introducing Clinton, that voting for Sanders was hardly revolutionary while putting a woman in the White House (no matter whom) would itself be a truly revolutionary gesture.

Albright then moved into the chiding phase of her address. “We can tell our story of how we climbed the ladder, and how a lot of you younger women think it’s done.” They, she insisted, had gotten it wrong. “It’s not done. There’s a special place in hell for women who don’t help each other!”

This has been a theme of the Hillary camp: assume that women do not want to vote for her because she is, in fact, a woman. Convince women voters, in fact, that they ought to vote for her because of the grand sisterhood, gunning for the big White House win. The fact that she might be an appalling establishment candidate, whose perpetuation of unaccountable power and links to Wall Street turns off voters, have not figured in that analysis. Shallowness reigns in absolute gracelessness.

Clinton has instead relied upon gender inequality as an argument that she was never an establishment figure, and could never be. In the Democratic debates, she decided to plough the line that she could not “imagine anyone more of an outsider than the first woman president.”

Paglia has had little time for the dynamics of Hillary-styled feminism, which she regards as a Gloria Steinem notion of “blame-men-first feminism, which defines women as perpetual victims requiring government protections.” The candidate has come across at times as “impatient” even “patronizing” in her “tone about men”, something which limits appeal.[3]

Unsurprisingly, Steinem has pinned her own colours to the mast, and they are not favourable to Sanders. In a Friday interview with Bill Maher, taking a dump on young women’s motivations to even be politically active, let alone vote for Sanders, seemed to be in vogue. “When you’re young, you’re thinking: ‘Where are the boys? The boys are with Bernie.” Yes, it’s all about mating, the pheromone count and the erotic moment.

Such comments did return to haunt her. “In a case of talk-show Interruptus, I misspoke on the Bill Maher show recently, and apologize for what’s been misinterpreted as implying young women aren’t serious in their politics.”

Even husband and former President Bill Clinton has decided, in a gesture of awkward ridiculousness, to use a misogynist card to favour his wife’s chances. This is where politics moves into farcical gear, a discordant register. He did his utmost best in Iowa to link Sanders to the “Bernie Bro” grouping which has trolled female Clinton supporters with claims of “voting with their vaginas”. Somewhat ironically his wife’s campaign has done little to dissuade the theoretical basis of that assumption.

Clinton’s tactical thinking has proven distinctly totalitarian in flavour. It presupposes a lack of thought on the part of voters, and determines that anyone who is a woman (the wonders of gender politics come full circle) cannot, by the Albright-Steinem code vote for anyone other than Clinton.[4] This is a neat, and gruesome defanging of ideas, supplanting it with the most sinister one of all: that gender is excusing in its form, providing a shield against valid criticisms of credentials.

This is logic that carries across. Will there be, asks Frank Bruni, a “special place in hell” for him if, as a gay man, he did not support a hypothetical openly gay presidential candidate?[5] This is diktat masquerading as reason.

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Notes:

[1] <https://www.solidarity-us.org/node/4390>

[2] <https://www.solidarity-us.org/node/4390>

[3]

http://www.salon.com/2016/01/27/camille_paglia_hillarys_blame_men_first_feminism_may_prove_costly_in_2016/

[4]

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/08/us/politics/gloria-steinem-madeleine-albright-hillary-clinton-bernie-sanders.html?src=recg&_r=0

[5] <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/10/opinion/feminism-hell-and-hillary-clinton.html>

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