

Donna Brazile brings tell-all tour about 2016 presidential election to South Florida



In her book "Hacked," former Democratic National Committee Donna Brazile blames her predecessor at the DNC -- South Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz -- for many of the party's failures in recent years.



By **Anthony Man**
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Donna Brazile, visiting South Florida to promote her insider, tell-all book about the **2016 presidential campaign**, knows how to grab attention.

-- When the **Hillary Clinton** campaign wouldn't let her make her own spending decisions about the money she'd raised as chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, "I just kept my mouth shut and seethed. Feeling every moment like Patsey the slave being whipped, being told I couldn't spend money."

-- She's more conservative than many people might expect from a prominent Democrat, and owns guns. "I'm from Louisiana. My mother used to tell us when we'd go to the zoo, 'Don't focus on species, think about the recipes.'"

-- After months hoping that President **Donald Trump** would redeem himself and change his ways, she's given up on him – though she says she continues to pray for him because he's the nation's president. She said he is “not doing anything but looking at himself in the mirror and giving us 280 characters,” referring to the new longer maximum-sized messages people can post on Twitter.

During an interview Wednesday at the **Miami** Book Fair, Brazile also said **Democrats** can win elections next year in Florida – if her party pays attention to its tactics and its message, and avoids the mistakes that resulted in massive failures last year.

Brazile, who served as chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee during the final months of last year's campaign, has received praise for the book about the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign – and been vilified by others who see her reopening wounds from 2016 in order to cash in and shift blame for the losses to others.

Looking forward to the 2018 midterm elections and the 2020 presidential contest, Brazile said it's critical for her party to do more than simply run against Trump. Brazile said Democrats need to “persuade and inspire people to vote. We cannot just have an anti-Trump message, although that's going to be a big part of what we say to voters.”

“Democrats have to have a strong message, a strong economic message. We need to have a message of inspiration. If we have that, we will find ourselves back in the driver's seat and winning,” she added. Brazile also said Democrats need to focus on campaign basics, such as registering voters and talking to people “where they live, where they work, where they play and where they pray.”

In “Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-ins and Breakdowns that Put Donald Trump in the White House,” Brazile describes visiting Florida shortly after she became party chairwoman last summer and discovering African-American and Caribbean-American voters who weren't interested in the election or the Clinton campaign, and who weren't getting the kind of outreach that might have turned them into Democratic voters on Election Day.

“I found that for a battleground state there was no enthusiasm,” she said. Brazile said her pleas to the high command of the Clinton campaign in Brooklyn went unheeded.

Lots of attention has gone to the explosive disclosure in the book that the Democratic Party was so hobbled by debt from previous elections that the Clinton campaign essentially took over much of the party's operations long before she prevailed over **Bernie Sanders** and became the presidential nominee. She also said that after Clinton collapsed during a ceremony to mark the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, she contemplated the prospect of replacing her as the party's candidate with President Joe Biden.

In the book, Brazile offers some scathing criticisms of her predecessor as Democratic chairwoman, U.S. Rep. **Debbie Wasserman Schultz** of Weston, who held the job from May 2011 through July 2016. Wasserman Schultz resigned on the eve of the presidential nominating convention after hacked party emails show party staffers favored Clinton over Sanders in the primaries.

Brazile accused Wasserman Schultz of a series of management and fundraising failures and heaped blame on her for Democrats' losses during the years Barack Obama was president. The author wrote that Wasserman Schultz "liked the power and perks of being a chair but not the responsibilities."

Brazile was somewhat more tempered in her comments about Wasserman Schultz in an interview Wednesday evening at the book fair.

Brazile said she does not believe that Wasserman Schultz ever personally acted in a way that benefitted Clinton over Sanders. "I took a look at everything that Debbie did. I walked into her office and I can tell you I saw no evidence of anything that would make me suspect of Debbie's motives," she said.

Still, she said Wasserman Schultz "has to take ownership" over the decision to turn to the Clinton campaign when the DNC was in desperate financial shape and over the response to the hacking of the party's computers.

She declined to take sides between Wasserman Schultz and her primary challenger Tim Canova. "I'm sure the voters here will judge her on her record. And not just her record at the DNC. But they will judge her as a congresswoman."

Brazile said she still considers Wasserman Schultz a friend. She said they last spoke in October 2016.

Although Brazile said she said the fundraising arrangement with the Clinton campaign was the wrong thing to do, she said that doesn't mean the primaries were rigged. Clinton won more primary votes than Sanders, and Wasserman Schultz didn't set the primary dates.

Brazile, who was more than an hour late for news interviews at the book fair at [Miami Dade College](#), said she now understand that Miami traffic rivals Boston and New York, which she'd long thought of as terrible traffic cities.

Later, Brazile appeared before an audience of about 700 people, where she had a chummy, hour-plus conversation with Ana Navarro. Though Navarro is a Republican and Brazile is a Democrat, they forged a deep friendship while serving as political commentators for CNN. (Brazile lost her gig when hacked emails revealed she provided questions in advance of a presidential candidate forum to Hillary Clinton's campaign. On Wednesday, she said she'd done the same for the Sanders campaign.) Like Brazile, Navarro doesn't like Trump; she refers to him on Twitter with the hashtag #PresidentLoco.

aman@sunsentinel.com, 954-356-4550 or Twitter @browardpolitics

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