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October 5, 2016

Political Leadership

The Route to Hillary Clinton's Leadership Position

Hillary Clinton is a woman that never gives up on what she cares about. She never gave up on school, never gave up on love and has never given up in politics. The position that Hillary Clinton currently holds is the Democratic Party candidate and nominee for President of the United States of America. Hillary has held numerous positions leading up to this that has shaped her into a formidable candidate and a very capable leader. Hillary Clinton will likely go on to be elected President of the United States this November, because she has been strategically working towards that goal for a long time and has never given up.

Though perhaps not fully consciously, Hillary first became interested in running for President at a young age. Both of Hillary's conservative parents fostered her interests in public service, and encouraged her to take on a leadership role (Bernstein, 2007: 16). In her junior year of high school she was elected vice president, but when she ran for the presidency against two boys and lost, they told her that she was stupid to think a girl could be president (Bernstein, 2007: 30; Gerth and Van Natta, 200: 21-22). This was a critical event in Hillary's life that defined and shaped her. The adamant belief that these two boys were wrong, and that she was more than capable enough to be president regardless of her gender, is what first sparked in Hillary the interest in someday being the first woman to hold the highest political position in the land.

Before she went on to graduate at the top of her high school class she participated in a youth church group lead by Methodist Don Jones who took Hillary to hear Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. speak-- it was also where she first really learned about the pain of segregation (The Choice). Like so many people of that generation, hearing Dr. King speak had a profound effect on young Hillary and this was the beginning of her change from a conservative young academic achiever to a more liberal activist who would never stop fighting tirelessly to do what she believed was right.

In 1965, she entered Wellesley College where she began her major in political science as a freshman and joined the Young Republicans (Wellesley College). During her time at college she became even more active in the ongoing national civil rights movement and her political leanings as well as her opinion on the war in Vietnam continued to change and liberalize. In her junior year, she worked to support the campaign of the antiwar Democratic presidential nominee, Eugene McCarthy (Leibovich, 2007). That year, she was also elected president of the Wellesley College Government Association (Kenney, 1993). Although at this time she had only just begun her political career, many classmates believed she would become the first female President of the United States (Leibovich, 2007).

When Dr. King was assassinated in April of 1968, it sparked a fire in her and she attended an anti war protest in Chicago that gave her a first hand look at the tumult and need for change, and politicized her even further (The Choice). Later that year, she attended the 1968 Republican National Convention in Miami and when she felt that the convention was filled with “veiled” racism, she left the Republican Party for good (Leibovich, 2007). During her graduation ceremony in 1969, Republican Senator Edward Brooke, the first African-American man to be elected to the United States Senate, gave the commencement speech in which he essentially condemned the Vietnam war (and by extension civil rights) protestors (The Choice). She was the

first student to ever speak at a graduation ceremony and she used her short and eloquent speech to totally rebutt what the Senator had said. She noted in her poignant speech that “the challenge now is to practice politics as the art of making what appears to be impossible possible” (Clinton, 1969).

As a student at Yale Law School from 1970 to 1973 she excelled and continued to take on as many opportunities as she could to be a political force. She joined groups, worked on many cases and continued to support different Democratic political candidates campaign efforts. It was at Yale that she met Bill Clinton and they began dating in 1971 (Bernstein, 2007: 82-83). She continued to take on many political charged roles and upon graduating with her law degree, she was afforded the opportunity to have one of her first major positions-- serving as a member of the impeachment inquiry on the House Committee on the Judiciary during the Watergate scandal in 1974 (Bernstein, 2007: 94–96, 101–03). This first high-profile political position outside of school was an event that served as the final nail in the coffin of her politically conservative origins. By this time she was a full fledged Democrat who was quickly moving up in the Party’s ranks.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton continued to seek out her hand in marriage and when she failed the bar exam in the District of Columbia, but passed the Arkansas one, she took it as a sign to go be with Bill Clinton and made a decision that impacted the rest of her life (The Choice). She left her growing political career in Washington D.C. to join Bill in marriage and in Arkansas, where she became one of only two female faculty members in the School of Law at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (Bernstein, 2007: 92). Though one can understand how at this cross road

in her life Hillary may have felt that she made a choice that put her spouse in front of her career, this move turned out to send her on a path that did just the opposite.

Bill Clinton has been an immensely influential character throughout Hillary Clinton's life and career and has fostered her interest in leadership and many of the opportunities to lead, since they began their relationship. They were married on October 11th, 1975 in Fayetteville, Arkansas (First Lady Bio). She continued to practice law, specializing in children's advocacy, until her husband's November 1978 election as Governor of Arkansas, when she became First Lady of Arkansas. Once elected, Bill Clinton appointed her chair of the Rural Health Advisory Committee, where she was instrumental in healthcare reform in the state (Kelly, 1993; Bernstein, 2007: 147). The couple would continue to play off each other's strengths to help the other climb his or her respective political ladders. In 1979, she became the first woman to be made full partner of Rose Law Firm (Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 60).

During Bill Clinton's second election for Governor in 1982, Hillary was his main political advisor and further assisted the campaign effort by emphasizing to the press her name was Hillary Clinton or Mrs. Bill Clinton, and by permanently removing her glasses and changing her hair to make more prominent her femininity (The Choice). This decision about her appearance assisted in her popularity as First Lady of Arkansas-- a state that preferred a traditional look for the wife of their governor. However, she was still the same go-getting Hillary and she continued to be a main policy and political advisor to Bill Clinton during his time as Governor. Also during this time, Hillary took on an Arkansas-based company and client of the Rose Law Firm called Wal-Mart-- and went on to become the first woman to sit on the board (The Choice; Barbaro, 2007). She pushed successfully for Wal-Mart to adopt more environmentally friendly practices

but unfortunately was mostly unsuccessful in her proposal for more women to be added to the company's management positions (Barbaro, 2007).

Finally, in 1992 her husband, who had decided not to run for Governor again in 1990, ran instead for President of the United States and in January of 1993 she became the First Lady (First Lady Bio). She was a unique woman for the role because she was the first First Lady with a postgraduate degree and the only one to ever have her own office in the West Wing (First Lady Bio). In fact, she is widely regarded as the second most influential First Lady in our nation's history, the first being Eleanor Roosevelt (The Choice).

Some critics believed that she had too much influence over her husband's Presidency, but as Bill was often quoted as saying, the nation was getting "two for the price of one" (Kelly, 1993). It was this close-proximity to leadership that made Hillary so capable of becoming the President herself. By working alongside her husband to manage the country she learned about the inner workings of a White House administration. She interacted with thousands and learned the needs of the people of the United States. She also learned from constant travel how to interact and build mutually beneficial relationships with leaders and publics abroad.

In 1993, President Clinton named Hillary to chair a Task Force on National Health Care Reform, based on her work spearheading healthcare reform during her time in Arkansas (Bernstein, 2007: 287–89, 400–02; Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 139–40). Under what became known as "Hillarycare" employers would be required to provide health coverage to their employees through individual health maintenance organizations. She also privately urged her husband to put health care reform above NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, in his national priorities (Bernstein, 2007: 287–89, 400–02). Despite her best efforts, "Hillarycare"

did not not garner enough support in the Houses of Congress and Republicans used its failure as a campaign platform for the 1994 midterm elections (Bernstein, 2007: 287–89, 400–02).

Nevertheless, she continued to be politically active during her husband's administrations. In 1995, she attended and gave a speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing where she famously first said that women's rights, are human rights (Tyler, 1995). At home, she continued pushing for the President to veto welfare reform bills until there was one that was politically agreeable, The Welfare Reform Act of 1996 (Bernstein, 2007). Over the next year, Clinton helped create the Office on Violence Against Women at the Department of Justice and initiated the Adoption and Safe Families Act (First Lady Bio). Then in 1999, she dedicated herself to passing the Foster Care Independence Act, which doubled federal funding for teenagers transitioning out of foster care (First Lady Bio). Throughout her time as First Lady, Hillary ended up visiting 79 countries total, becoming the most travelled First Lady of her time, and preparing her well for her future role as Secretary of State (Healy, 2007).

In 1998, the First Couple came under serious scrutiny in the wake of a scandal surrounding one White House intern, Monica Lewinsky (Troy, 2006: 176-177, 183, 187). It was discovered that the President had engaged in an extramarital affair, a choice that led to the impeachment of President Clinton (Troy, 2006: 176-177, 183, 187). This event had an immense impact on Bill and Hillary's personal lives and marriage and also led to a lot of negative speculation about Hillary's decision to stay married to her adulterous husband (Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 195). Nonetheless, she loved him and did remain married to him, another decision that was emotionally-based, not necessarily rationality-based, but that ultimately enabled her to

fulfill the trajectory that her career has taken (Bernstein, 2007: 512, 517–18, 521; Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 195).

In late 1998, New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan announced his retirement and Hillary, still First Lady, decided to run for the open seat in 2000 (Bernstein, 2007: 530). In 1999, the couple purchased a home in New York State and became residents and Hillary became the first First Lady to ever run for public office (Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 204). Though originally her opponent was supposed to be then Mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani, he withdrew when he was diagnosed with cancer. Clinton ran against Republican Rick Lazio instead and won with 55% of the vote, becoming New York's first female Senator and the only First Lady to ever hold public office (Bernstein, 2007: 6; Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 212-213).

Soon after Hillary became the Junior Senator of the State of New York, the September 11th attacks occurred. Immediately afterwards, she worked closely with her counterpart Senior New York State Senator Chuck Schumer to secure \$21 billion in funding for the World Trade Center redevelopment project (Bernstein, 2007: 548; Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 231–32). She also placed heavy focus on investigating the health issues that the first responders of the 9/11 attack experienced (Gerth and Van Natta, 2007: 238–39). She strongly supported the war in Afghanistan and in particular the fight to help Afghan women (Clinton, 2001). She also supported the war in Iraq, a decision she later went on to regret (Balz and Johnson, 2009; Lerner, 2015).

During her time in the Senate, the United States elected a Republican to Executive Office, President George W. Bush. Hillary went on to vote against President Bush's tax cuts, against Bush's conservative appointments to the US Supreme Court and, in 2004 and 2006,

against the Federal Marriage Amendment, that would have banned same sex marriage (Project Vote Smart). She easily won her second term, and began fighting against the expanding war efforts in Iraq (Project Vote Smart). Then, during the 2007-2008 financial crisis, Hillary supported the bailout (Project Vote Smart). This decision is one that continues to associate her (for some) with the very wealthy of Wall Street.

In 2007, she announced that she was running for President of the United States. During her first run for President, Senators Barack Obama and John Edwards were her strongest competitors and though she was ahead in the polls for a time, she was not able to overcome Obama's overwhelming popularity and inspiring hope (Balz and Johnson, 2009: 74, 76–77, 87–88). She was able to win the big states like California, Massachusetts and New York, but Obama won the rest (Balz and Johnson, 2009: 188–89).

After Obama became President in 2009, he soon appointed Hillary as Secretary of State (Allen and Parnes, 2014: 58–60). Her main strategy during her tenure as Secretary of State was a “smart power” approach -- combination of hard and soft power -- with a focus on the empowerment and welfare of women and girls worldwide, known as the “Hillary Doctrine” (Calabresi, 2001; Lemmon, 2011). She was instrumental in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the mass protests of young Muslim activists in the Middle East who opposed their governments, and was largely responsible for the capture and assassination of one of those government leaders, Muammar Gaddafi, in Libya (The Choice). As a result many people consider her a ‘hawk’ - someone who favors war, however she unwaveringly opted for diplomacy on most issues (Allen and Parnes, 2014: 117–21).

Soon after the death of Gaddafi, on September 11, 2012, 4 members of the US State Department, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens, were killed in Benghazi, Libya and as a result, Hillary underwent eight congressional investigations about her participation in the events that lead up to the murders in Libya (The Choice) At the same time, she also was undergoing intense media scrutiny about the disappearance of official emails and use of her personal emails (The Choice). As she noted in the first presidential debate of 2016 when the questions of her stamina came under attack by Donald Trump, during her time as Secretary of State she travelled to 112 countries and stood questioning for 11 hours straight during her congressional testimony (Kelsey, 2016).

The culmination of her lifetime of experience has caused Hillary to go through multiple behavior styles. Over time, and critics cannot emphasize this enough, she has changed her positions on certain issues, including the War in Iraq and her stance on LGBT rights. In becoming a national public figure and a candidate that represents the entire country, she has developed a somewhat stoic, sometimes considered ingenuine, demeanor. Furthermore, being a woman who has been cheated on, she is sometimes more reserved when faced with public scrutiny (The Choice). Power and her route to leadership continually influence Hillary's personality because there is a great weight of responsibility resting upon her shoulders and she has suffered many political scars along the way.

All this experience has led to her current position, as the Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. She has been attacked for numerous reasons through this election cycle including her email mistakes, her actions in regard to Benghazi, her prior stances on issues and votes as Senator, the way she looks, the way she talks, the way she laughs. She is loathed by

many-- nearly all Trump supporters and many Democrats as well-- including Bernie Sanders supporters who do not like her stoicism and find her not progressive enough. They call her many derogatory names like “Killary” and “Billary” and support the notion of “Hillary for Prison”, and these are just examples of what I see on my Facebook feed. There seems to be many people who will only be voting for her to stop Trump from winning and some that won't vote at all because they can't bring themselves to do so.

However, she is also loved. Many Democrats support her wholeheartedly and many women (and men) want to see her become the first woman President of the United States. All in all, most people call this historic race an example of choosing the lesser of two evils, and this makes many lovers of democracy angry. Nevertheless, her opponent Donald Trump has done much to prove that he in fact is the worse evil, and many believe that Hillary will only win because Trump will lose (Cillizza, 2016).

During the first Presidential debate, Hillary was the clear winner, but it was in part because Donald Trump was so lacking in any policy proposals, and at times so belligerent, that there was only one way to go with the results (Cillizza, 2016). Throughout the debate, she stayed professional and composed in the face of Donald Trump's near constant interruption (Cillizza, 2016). She even managed to get a few poignant zingers in against Trump, that resonated with the audience and seemed to solidify their belief that he is unqualified (Kelsey, 2016). Though she has worked for this her whole life, is more than qualified, was thoroughly detailed on her stance on the issues and her plans to solve problems, and cares deeply about this country and its future, she still struggles by conveying her message with such a lack of charisma that people continue to question if her personality will diminish her ability to govern.

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