

The Hillary Clinton rehabilitation tour

Carl Golden 3:55 p.m. CT May 9, 2017



(Photo: Andrew Harnik/AP)

In the immediate aftermath of the most demoralizing defeat of her public life, Hillary Clinton displayed grace and dignity, congratulating Donald Trump and urging the nation to unite and move forward.

She went into semi-seclusion, aloof from the “we wuz robbed” chorus of her supporters, and appearing at social gatherings rather than political events.

Now, though, some six months after losing her second attempt at becoming president, and in the midst of a swirl of books, interviews with friends and campaign staffers and speculation by presumed insiders depicting a dysfunctional campaign beset by internal strife, Clinton has embarked on a public appearance tour to rehabilitate her image and shift responsibility for her loss to outside influences.

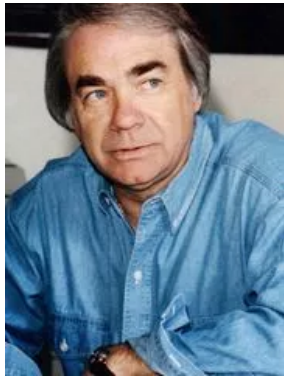
Of all the post mortem commentary, perhaps the most damning was the repeated assertion that she was unable to articulate a clear, concise rationale for her candidacy, other than that of her supporters that “it’s her turn.”

The presidency is not a rotating position like the chairman of the local Rotary Club — the American voters decide whose turn it is based on their assessment of who speaks more directly and credibly to their hopes, aspirations, fears and concerns.

To rebut the narrative of her shortcomings along with poor decision-making of her campaign staff, Clinton has blamed FBI Director James Comey, WikiLeaks and Russian interference in the election for snatching away what was rightfully hers.

Last summer, Comey exonerated her use of a private email server; unexonerated her in mid-October, and exonerated her again in late October.

His actions, she said, combined with the disclosure of hundreds of thousands of emails hacked from the accounts of her campaign operatives, was enough to “scare off” and change the minds of voters who initially supported her.



Carl Golden (Photo: Cagle Cartoon Syndicate)

While she accepted some responsibility (“I was the candidate, after all”), her effort to distract from the campaign’s mistakes, missteps and miscalculations demonstrate she’s been stung by the suggestions she booted an election already in the bag.

Consider, however:

— She used the private email server in her home periodically to conduct official State Department business despite its vulnerability to hacking. Comey, WikiLeaks and the Russians didn’t do that.

— She offered conflicting explanations for using the system, raising doubts about her judgment and veracity. Comey, WikiLeaks and the Russians didn’t do that.

— *While she was Secretary of State, the Clinton Foundation took in hundreds of millions of dollars from foreign governments and individuals, raising troubling ethical questions. She herself accepted millions in appearance fees after leaving government. Comey, WikiLeaks and the Russians didn’t do that.

— She chose to dismiss campaigning in Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio — among others — despite warnings her support there was eroding rapidly. Comey, WikiLeaks and the Russians didn’t advise her to do that.

If voters were “scared off”, their fright could be construed as a loss of trust and a belief she was out of touch with Americans.

Trump showed up at his rallies wearing a red baseball cap emblazoned with “Make America Great Again,” and delivered a message that no longer would he allow American jobs to flee overseas, the United States wouldn’t be snookered by foreign countries who reaped enormous economic benefits from lopsided trade deals, that he’d build a wall on the southern border to halt illegal immigration.

In her change the narrative tour, Clinton reminds her audiences that she won the popular vote by more than three million, another indication that more people felt it was her turn.

It’s instructive to note that she carried California and New York by more than five million votes, accounting for her plurality.

In making this argument, Clinton seems to argue that if those working stiffs in middle America and the Rust Belt listened to the smarter people on the east and west coasts, she would be president.

But, it was Trump who spoke to those working stiffs, empathizing with their plight and pledging to ease it. His message resonated because desperate hope overwhelmed instinctive skepticism.

Clinton delivered policy wonkish commentary and, in perhaps the most insulting remark of the entire campaign, called them “a basket of deplorables.”

Clinton will continue to blame Comey, WikiLeaks and the Russians to a media audience that is eager to hear it to justify its failure to grasp the national mood and foresee the outcome.

Losing an election — particularly one in which victory seemed assured — is a traumatic experience and difficult to deal with. Clinton's initial reaction was the proper one. She should have stuck with it.

© 2017 Carl Golden. Email him at cgolden1937@gmail.com.

Read or Share this story: <http://www.baxterbulletin.com/story/opinion/2017/05/09/hillary-clinton-rehabilitation-tour/101451170/>