

# The DNC's Right Realignment

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On July 26, concurrent to the Democratic National Convention's star-studded attempt to make everybody forget everything that transpired during the primary, *New York Mag* published a great piece on the Florida senatorial race. What they call "the second-strangest campaign of the season" is worth reading about for a few reasons; because the general election might be able to defeat Marco Rubio's mercurial reentry into national politics and hand a rare Florida win to the Democrats; because Alan Grayson — the \$16-million-tax-haven owner, who, policywise, lands on the left wing of the Democratic Party — is great entertainment; and because Grayson's primary rival, Patrick Murphy, is a quiet, but powerful, signal of where the Dems are headed.

According to *NY Mag*:

The son of a construction magnate, Murphy initially followed his father into the GOP. In 2007, he made a \$2,300 campaign donation to Mitt Romney's presidential campaign.

Strange. What's he doing in a Democratic primary?

Murphy explained that the subsequent rise of the tea party persuaded him to become a Democrat. In 2012, he decided to run for Congress. Fortified by \$550,000 in donations from his father, Tom, to two super-pacs supporting his candidacy, Murphy beat the tea-party darling Allen West by fewer than 2,000 votes in what was that year's most expensive House race. He was assigned to a seat on the Financial Services Committee, which he used to Hoover up campaign donations. With a campaign war chest of \$5.2 million in 2014 — the second-largest of any Democratic House candidate that year — Murphy won reelection by almost 20 points.

Wow! So what's he done in office?

Ranked among the most conservative House Democrats by National Journal, Murphy voted in favor of the Keystone XL Pipeline and tougher security checks on Syrian refugees.

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Democratic kingmakers [...] also respected the elbow grease he showed in seeking their endorsements. "We busted our tail trying to get that support from everybody," Murphy told me. It didn't hurt Murphy's cause that his father began giving generously to other Democrats. In the past few years, Tom Murphy has given hundreds of thousands of dollars to Democratic candidates and their affiliated super-pacs.

Patrick Murphy represents the perfect confluence of establishment Democrat strategy and

establishment Republican meltdown. He didn't switch parties because he saw the light of liberalism — he switched because he, like many old-guard conservatives, was outflanked by the Tea Party. And the formidable institutional support he's won from the DNC seems to come from two things: their insistence that the only way to win in red states is to appear as indistinguishable as possible from the conservatives they oppose; and his father's money.

Bernie Sanders's primary run had a lot of people predicting, and hoping for, a left-wing Democratic realignment. At times, Hillary Clinton has tried to take advantage of that hope, selling the idea that really, she wants what Bernie supporters want — she'll just be better at implementing it.

But with an avalanche of national conservative figureheads flocking to Hillary Clinton — former Reagan aide Donald Elms, billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Charles Koch, to name a few — the great Democratic realignment might run in the other direction.

While none of these figureheads have actually changed their party affiliation, they're sending a powerful message to young conservatives with political ambitions. They're validating, and creating a national voice, for the Patrick Murphy route, a route that on a district-by-district basis has a lot of power to shift Democratic policy rightward and bring the party ever closer to corporate control. And with Clintonites still firmly at the helm, there will be no institutional resistance to this drift — in fact, they'll salivate over the chance to recruit more red-state-friendly Murphys.

Meanwhile, the labor movement, through their inability to unify around Sanders during the primary, has already signaled that whatever happens, they're along for the ride.

This poses a dilemma to a socialist left that's only just come to prominence in the wake of Sanders and is trying to figure out how to relate to the Democratic Party now that it has a tiny bit of power.

Contra Harold Meyerson, left realignment is not the "reality based" option. Sanders's campaign demonstrated the power of using a Democratic platform to disseminate left-wing ideas and cohere a scattered left. It reflected the reality that overwhelmingly, the average person's political experience is filtered through electoralism, and that the Left's ability to reach those people depends in part on maintaining an electoral presence. But it did not demonstrate the feasibility of reforming the Democratic Party.

Not all of the Bernie or Busters who had the gall to boo (boo!) the DNC's glitterati were convinced of the first two points. But they were convinced of the third, and they weren't wrong. And they showcased an independent and uncompromising approach that socialists should cultivate and focus, not dismiss.

Because of the intractable two-party system, socialists will have to keep using Democratic platforms and running in Democratic races in order to influence the electorate and win power, but they shouldn't do so with the intention of reforming the party. For this reason they'll need both Bernie or Busters and people organizing in labor, in Black Lives Matter, and in the community in order to build up organizations of popular power independent from the election cycle, and to keep third-party power in their long-term vision.

Our job is to win both realignment cheerleaders and Bernie or Busters to this vision.

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