

Requiem for a Democratic Campaign Nightmare

Editoriale

Now they don't tell us. The Democratic National Committee on Thursday "released" its long-hidden post-mortem examining [Kamala Harris](#)'s presidential loss in 2024. We need the skeptical quotation marks because even now it's not publishing a full, finished version of the report—because Democrats don't seem to have prepared one.

The main theory in the report prepared by party strategist Paul Rivera is that the Harris-Walz campaign didn't attack Donald Trump enough. Yes, really. There are also some process complaints that Ms. Harris didn't bother campaigning aggressively enough in rural areas, and long passages about insufficient or inefficient campaign spending.

Our favorite howler is the theory that Democrats were too rational to win in that cycle: "Democrats operate in an ecosystem defined by reason even in cycles when the electorate is defined by rage."

What's missing is any discussion of the many obvious reasons Ms. Harris lost. The draft report makes no attempt to examine [Joe Biden](#)'s decision to stay in the race for as long as he did despite public evidence of cognitive decline, or to investigate the political consequences of the hasty handoff of the campaign torch to Ms. Harris, by resigned acclamation, without a party competition.

Also absent is any discussion of the Democrats' problems on the issues. The election showed that interest groups and party leaders are out of step with the general public on climate and transgender issues. The latter garners only a single, oblique mention when discussing Mr. Trump's most effective campaign ad ("Kamala is for 'they/them,' President Trump is for you"). Israel and Gaza, which divided Democrats, don't rate a mention.

Presumably this is because to analyze Ms. Harris's loss convincingly, the DNC would have to explain to its progressive base that they're the problem. Which, in a way, is

why anyone should care about this report. Voters decided in November 2024 that Ms. Harris deserved to lose, and books by reporters and memoirs since and still to come flesh out how the debacle happened. No one needs a report from the DNC to tell them. This is really about whether Democratic leaders are willing or able to wrest their party back from interest groups out of step with most voters. DNC Chairman Ken Martin's attempts to delay publication of this thin report augurs poorly. It's a bad sign for anyone who thinks American democracy benefits from having two viable, competitive parties.