

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO INSTITUTE OF POLITICS & CNN PRESENT

# THE AXE FILES

## The Axe Files - Ep. 28: Jonathan Martin

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[00:00:09] UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: And now, from the University of Chicago Institute of Politics, "The Axe Files" with your host David Axelrod.

DAVID AXELROD, "THE AXE FILES" HOST: There is no more storied position of American political journalism than that of the chief political writer of "The New York Times". Jonathan Martin holds that position today. And he's a guy who is steeped in both the practice of politics and reporting on politics which makes him someone close to my own heart coming from that same background. J Mart as his friends known is also married to a fund journalist, Betsy Fischer Martin formally the producer of "Meet the Press" and the co-host of a great new podcast "Masters in Politics." I sat down with him in Manchester New Hampshire before the New Hampshire primary to talk about this very, very interesting election year.

Jonathan Martin, you and I have a lot in common starting with the fact that we both were geeks about politics from an early age.

JONATHAN MARTIN, CHIEF POLITICAL WRITER, "THE NEW YORK TIMES": Yup.

AXELROD: And that led us into journalism.

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: So tell me how you got to be a geek in an early age.

MARTIN: Well, I grew up in Northern Virginia and my parents were both very passionate about politics and history and I always kind of joke that --

AXELROD: What they do?

MARTIN: My dad was a lobbyist, mom was a teacher. And I always kind of joke that we're growing up instead of going to the Caribbean or going skiing for holidays we went to battlefields and museums. And that was kind of our idea of a really, you know, fulfilling spring break was, was going to Appomattox or Gettysburg.

So, it was kind of inculcated in me in an early age that this stuff is important. It's -- it is enriching and it's a kind of thing that I think you accept it or you reject it as a kid when you're exposed it and obviously I accepted it. And I've got great memories of every Tuesday on our house. Time, Newsweek and U.S. News coming in the mail, and then Thursday were Sports Illustrated.

And so, you know, having those magazines the "Washington Post" with our hometown paper and, you know, having those magazines in that paper around were hugely influential and then you have -- my parents and my older brother they'll love this stuff too. And so I brought it to him much of my choice.

AXELROD: And were you around campaigns?

MARTIN: Yeah. So, right after college, I worked in Virginia on a gubernatorial campaign. I had the best first job in politics. I was the driver.

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AXELROD: It's a good job.

MARTIN: As you know, there is no better job because you're 22 years old and you're exposed to the good, the bad, and the ugly. You really see how politics and campaigns work. You are behind the scenes, you see the candidate (ph) interact with donors, with voters, with other staff. You overhear the phone conversations and it is really --

AXELROD: So one thing you learned is discretion.

MARTIN: Yeah. Discretion but also you kind of learn how politics really works.

AXELROD: No. There's no doubt. There's no doubt. Dr. Reggie love who travel with the Barack Obama all those years and transformed his life.

MARTIN: And doing what I do now, it has given me I think a brilliant opportunity to sort of, shall I say discern when it comes with a campaigns or saying what they're saying and what actually is happening behind the scenes. Because I can't have an appreciation for the true conversation taking place because, you know, at some point --

AXELROD: You heard them?

MARTIN: I was there. Yeah.

AXELROD: Yeah. Well, who was your candidate?

MARTIN: And he was a guy named Mark Hurley who was the A.G. Virginia who ran and lost thankfully for me and I won. He lost to --

AXELROD: He lost to --

MARTIN: Mark Warner.

AXELROD: Yeah. And I remember that race.

MARTIN: And that I was right after 9/11 and there were two gov races in the country. It was Jersey and Virginia. And so everything was transformed by 9/11 and it basically froze the race. But it was wonderful. I was exposed politics with my own home state and I learned a lot including that I loved politics but I even want to do it for the rest of my life.

AXELROD: Yes, I was going to ask you about that. You were --

MARTIN: What happened was --

AXELROD: You spend off the track in 22.

MARTIN: Well, what happened was I was exposed to the state capital press corps which then was more robust than it is now sadly.

[00:05:08] But I just saw these guys who were having so much fun. And they were all a bunch of smart

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asses and they had these for intellectual freedom to follow this stuff and engage in it like I wanted to. But do so from the standpoint of trying to figure out the how and why.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: And, you know, I was just not that passionate about one side of the other. I was not illogical. I was just sort of curious about how the stuff all worked. You kind of went what all meant. And what's what I wanted to do. And so I was looking at those guys and trying to figure out how do I get over there and do that.

And look, I didn't know from the whole wall how to do that. And so it actually took me four more years before I actually following got a first dig in journalism. I ran up going to the hill, I work on a house campaign. And it was fine. I like politics but I just really wanted to write about it, and talk about, and think about it. And finally I got an opportunity at the Hotline. I had no connections. I had no in of a cold cone --

AXELROD: And there was Chuck Todd there?

MARTIN: It was cold calling, I was emailing you --

AXELROD: He is the editor:

MARTIN: And I got a break from Chuck Todd. Chuck Todd was then the editor of the Hotline. He had me over and said basically I can pay you peanuts, you're going to work your ass off and I can't promise you anything more than that but not opportunity as it is. So --

AXELROD: Yeah. And the Hotline was like a forerunner of Mike Allen --

MARTIN: Politico absolutely. Yeah. It was a big deal. And we started actually when I was there a blog, because the Hotline basically was a compendium of the political news from around the country. And what Chuck started was some actual original (ph) reporting. And so it was neat because I was doing this for the clip stuff in the morning, but then I had an opportunity to actually do my own reporting for this blog. And that led to donors some stuff for the National Journal magazine which was then part of the Hotline. And that got me some freelance opportunities elsewhere and that was it.

AXELROD: So interesting because, you know, I was -- kids always asked me like how do you become a political writer, how do you going to in to politics and so on. And I was telling just do it.

MARTIN: Yes.

AXELROD: There's no substitute for doing it.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: You have to learn at that way.

MARTIN: Yeah. And also read everything that you can get your hands on. And what I tell students now is you -- you guys have a leg up on with I had because you have an opportunity on your phones to every thing in the world that you can find online. You can read every paper that you want on your phone every single day.

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AXELROD: It's a problem actually because I can't get off my phone.

MARTIN: On the same way.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: But if you're -- if you're an aspiring journalist. I mean, you have so much access to information and you can make yourself really smart and informed by just reading stuff and learning that the world didn't start by the way away in 2008. There was stuff living up to this. And if you know that and I you go in to journalism with that kind of knowledge, that going to help you.

AXELROD: You went on to the -- to Politico --

MARTIN: I did.

AXELROD: -- and you did very, very well there. Now, you're the lead political writer for "The New York Times ". And, you know, when I think of that role, you know, I and I think of Johnny Apple and I think of Adam Nick Gurney and I think of Tom Wicker.

MARTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

AXELROD: And I think of some real giants in journalism. I'm sure the Nick Gurney would be surprised to hear me refer to him that way. But I do. But they all came up a different way.

MARTIN: Yeah. I know.

AXELROD: They all came up first as reporters.

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: And, you know --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: --like we all did when I was kid --

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: -- you know, chasing ambulances and fire --

MARTIN: Cops and courts. Sure.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: And do you feel like you missed something by not doing that?

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MARTIN: It's a great question. And first of all I'm humbled to think about the people who came before me and obviously Adam was a great friend and mentor.

There are times where I do wish two things. A, I had covered cops and courts that I had done to kind of small town. B, covering, you know, city council and the sort of learning how to write that way. There are other times I kind of look back.

AXELROD: By the way, if you would lived in Chicago as I did --

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: -- started working there. Cops and courts and politics are all the same thing.

MARTIN: It's all the same place, right.

AXELROD: Because some politicians often end up in court. So --

MARTIN: With cops.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: It's a one stop shop.

AXELROD: Yeah, exactly.

MARTIN: So, there are times where I kind of wish I had done that and there are times where I wish I go into journalism school and, you know, I probably could've come out a better writer. But then there are other times David where --

AXELROD: You're not good writer. Come on men, you're a great writer.

MARTIN: Well, then there are other times where I'm happy of how I started because I combat to what I said of earlier covering politics. It helps to have a morbid and perspective as to what actually happens in the car, in the room.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: What is the candidate and the staff. And I think, you know, I was just trained differently. And in some ways it offers better preparation and other ways it doesn't help us much, you know.

[00:10:05] AXELROD: Do you -- you said you're humbled by having this august (ph) position.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: Is it intimidating, is that you feel a burden for -- because you're the paper of record.

MARIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: And people look to it. I wrote a piece for the times a few weeks ago. I couldn't believe the

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amount of response I got even it was time of deluded, you know, circulation.

MARTIN: It's still the biggest driver in the world. I mean and -- well, that was a good story.

AXELROD: Thank you.

MARTIN: Remedy versus Replica.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: The Axe trademark. Yeah. Look, it is humbling and there are times when I stop and think about it there was kind of a holy shit. If I can say that on this podcast.

AXELROD: Yes you can. This is one of those podcast where you can say that.

MARTIN: A family bucket.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: But to tell you the truth, most of the time you're so busy and you're running around that you don't sort of stop and think like that. You're just trying to get the story. But yeah, when you have kind of a moment to stop and reflect, it's pretty neat. And I actually had one of those recently.

A friend of mine sent me the page one and you'll love this from the day after the 76 Iowa caucuses where Carter came in second to --

AXELROD: Mo Udall?

MARTIN: No.

AXELROD: No. Wait, wait. Carter came --

MARTIN: Came second to no choice.

AXELROD: Oh no choice. Of course, of course, of course. Yeah, he was the first candidate but, yeah, I didn't recall coming in second.

MARTIN: Exactly.

AXELROD: That's right. He was second to no choice.

MARTIN: And that's what put the caucuses on the map really.

AXELROD: Yeah. He put the caucuses on the map.

MARTIN: Absolutely.

AXELROD: Jimmy Carter made that event what it is today.

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AXELROD: Absolutely.

MARTIN: And, you know, travel across the states thing in private homes. He really created Iowa, anyways. So, a friend of mine sent me the page one from the next day after Carter went at the caucuses in '76. And he have to like zoom here like five times to find the story because back then the page one had, you know, 11 stories first on the front, smaller type. And there is the headline below the fold bottom right corner. One column had to be very, very small. It totally overshadowed by all kinds of news of the day. And it was not big of a deal then. But then you also stop and think "Oh my gosh, I just wrote the story about the Iowa caucuses, it was on page one." And you look back and sort of see the history of that.

The other men with then I had that was kind of a, my god moment, was not long after I took the job. I visit Gettysburg and have redone the visitor center there. It's fantastic now. And were walking around and we're looking at the museum (inaudible) there and you see the New York Times account of the Gettysburg address.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: And you just stop and think for a second. I am now working at a place that covers the Gettysburg Address.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: On page one the next day they had this account of the speech. And that's the amount of work you realized that you're -- you should be part of this American history that's extraordinary.

AXELROD: Now that they also have the online coverage of the Gettysburg Address or --

MARTIN: The first edition was a much shorter story actually, yeah, exactly.

AXELROD: So, let me ask you this --

MARTIN: They telegraph to me that exactly.

AXELROD: You are a student of history. So put this campaign that you're covering right now in context. What strikes you about this campaign that the marks it as different?

MARTIN: Sure. Well, first the two obvious points. We have not had a non-politician who appears as formidable as Donald Trump in a long time.

AXELROD: Persons who Wendell Wilkie maybe.

MARTIN: Potentially. Yeah. I mean, you know, Eisenhower wasn't a politician.

AXELROD: Yeah. But he was this public person who was a statesman. Yeah.

MARTIN: That's right. And so for him to finish second in Iowa and potentially --

AXELROD: I always love by the way that piece of a history that Roosevelt when he was picking the

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commander --

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: -- for Normandy understood that whoever he picked would likely be president of the United States someday because it was of such moment.

MARTIN: So fast night (ph). Yeah.

AXELROD: So, anyway, I'm sorry.

MARTIN: No. No, it's fine. And so, Trump obviously has the potential to go a lot further but most non-politicians have in the history of this country. And he's not just a non-politician. He is someone who was merging entertainment and politics in the way that we haven't seen in this country for a very long time. You know, in some ways Trump as modern of a figure as he has with his incessant tweets and he's kind of, you know, ubiquitous T.V. presence. He is also a throwback to what you're aware in the 19th century.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: And before as, you know, politics was entertainment.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: There wasn't the NFL. There wasn't like really baseball. There wasn't reality T.V.

[00:15:04] You know, people went to political debates and rallies and --

AXELROD: You sat four hours.

MARTIN: You torchlight parades.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: Because that's what -- that was the civic activity outside of the church. I mean actually you did usually.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: And so in some ways sort of Trump bring into entertainment politics together, recalls an earlier time my American politics, although I don't think that the head folks calling sort of dummies at the -- at the torchlight parades.

AXELROD: Yeah. I don't know it yet. It seems a little coarser in some ways. Although, those are brutal campaigns back in 19th century.

MARTIN: They were talking page.

AXELROD: But they also --

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MARTIN: The language was more decorous, yeah.

AXELROD: I also think the country was young and there was the sense in these campaigns. The stakes were very --

MARTIN: Oh my gosh.

AXELROD: -- large, you know.

MARTIN: Absolutely.

AXELROD: But --

MARTIN: You know, obviously, the second point is we have the possibility the first female president running. And she ran obviously eight years ago in a campaign. I think they were called it.

AXELROD: I do that. I do remember that.

MARTIN: But the possibility of breaking the gender barrier of the presidency is extraordinary too.

AXELROD: So, let's take that side first and then --

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: -- let's go back to Trump because everybody was puts Trump first and I think we had it like make him wait before we talk about him because he's probably listening to this podcast.

MARTIN: Have a seat Donald.

AXELROD: Yes exactly. Someone has to say it. So, why is there this heated race or seemingly heated race? And I have some doubts --

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: -- ultimately about where this whole thing goes after you leave --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- New Hampshire. But Bernie Sanders has been a surprisingly strong candidate. Is that because of Bernie, is it because of Hillary or is it because of both?

MARTIN: I would say it is some of C and also I would present to you a new possibility D, which is the fact that the country is increasingly polarized and the two parties are increasingly polarized. And the expectations in the base of both parties has become so outsized about what is possible in politics that you've got obviously a radicalized, you know, Republican party. But you also have, yeah, the sort of heightened expectation on the left of what's possible in American politics.

And I think because of that, there is frustration with what people see as the kind of timidity or the

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incrementalism of the establishment that Hillary reflects. And I think part of that is borne out with frustration that Obama couldn't get more done even though he obviously did a lot. And you add to that the fact that Hillary is seen as kind of the ultimate insider. And the Clintons are seen as sort of calculating political figures. And then comes along this figure who is totally liberated from calculated politics who is, you know, somebody who speaks bluntly about what he sees as the biggest crisis today in the American experience and that's going to have some real appeal.

AXELROD: Meaning the whole, the flattening of wages and coming equality and so on.

MARTIN: And come in equality. And of the fact that the rich are getting richer and then, you know, everybody else is not.

AXELROD: Handling fast something.

MARTIN: Yeah. And so I think that he has kind of met the moment. I did a story this summer when Bernie and Trump are both really coming on. I talked to a really smart historian at Georgetown named Michael Kazin who has read a lot about the history of the left. And he made a really good point to me.

He said that if you look the history of presidencies that were very ideologically ambitious, often times they created groups that were even more sort of assuming and expecting of intense progress and action. The example he used was how JFK and LBJ created the new left, because they sort of gave the possibility of real progress.

And so, you know, Tom Hayden and Black Panthers come out of not a right-wing presidency. They come out of more of a liberal presidency. That's what created them and the point Kazin was making was that Black Lives Matter for example comes out of the Obama presidency because the Obama presidency has created the prospect of more action and expectation that much more as possible. And those are really smart observation that these kind of movements don't just come out of sort of reaction to the opposition, but come out of the possibility presented by your own for ideologically --

AXELROD: It's interesting Bernie himself is a product of the activism of the '60s. So there is a continuum there.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: You know, the things is that I -- you're so right that you have -- you have the right and the left both aggravated because they feel like their represents -- representative in Washington have been to -- willing to compromise.

MARTIN: That's right.

[00:20:05] AXELROD: But we live in a system that was sort of set up that way.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: We've got to polarized country --

MARTIN: Right.

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AXELROD: -- and the system was set up to actually create gridlock --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- to make it difficult --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- to do things. So, you know, it's really sort of a challenging situation here because there is all of this pent-up energy, and the system itself is a break on, on bold action. I think you talked about Obama.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: My feeling is that it's kind of remarkable that he got then as much as he did, given the polarity of the country and the nature of the system.

MARTIN: And look how he did it for the most part. He did in the first two years of his presidency when he had the --

AXELROD: These are majorities.

MARTIN: -- when we had Democratic majorities.

AXELROD: And then once where the ironies, you know we -- when I was involved in the campaign so much of it was about bringing Republicans and Democrats together. And people so loved that vision that they delivered these huge Democratic majorities --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- that sort of led to more polarities, you know?

MARTIN: Yeah, no, it's exactly right. And it's probably looking -- you know, looking back, it's hard to concede him doing the kind of things that he did without those -- those Democratic majorities. You know, you just don't have --

AXELROD: This is one of the reasons why he wanted to do healthcare in the first two years.

MARTIN: Absolutely. Even in those on -- the folks were on them who are more skeptical about that from -- but I understand.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: Not much --

AXELROD: Guilty.

MARTIN: So, the country was designed around the ideal of not giving anybody too much power and so that inherently those great gridlock. And that very is sort of constitutional fact of life has been

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exacerbated by the increasing tribalism of American politics. If you just walk around the Capitol these days in not -- you know, when I'm not on the campaign trail I'm probably in the Capitol once or twice a month because as you know, it's about place in Washington to actually see people with no staff around them.

You can scope to the principles and talk to them, it's great. The last bit sort of preserved in Washington to grab principles with in those staff filter you. And even if you just walk --you just sort of see the Democrats and Republicans, you know, they're just not much in the way of middle ground. They just don't have a lot in common.

And you'll see a lot of crossover votes in a way that you would have years ago. And, you know, part of the Obama Presidency has -- sort of, you know, increased that purification of the two parties.

You know, you just don't have a lot of the red state members of Congress who are Democrats and you have fewer blue state Republicans. And so the parties are just now, you know, much more reflective of their primary constituency. And I say primary meaning like the primary election. You know, they reflect the liberal base or the conservative base and often times that's who they're thinking about, you know, when they vote.

It used to be when those guys voted, they were concerned about folks back home. Often times now when they vote, they're thinking about, what will the interest groups say about this vote who matter in my primary?

AXELROD: Because at the end of the day and this I think is -- you know, it's a truism but we don't focus on it enough. Fundamentally, you know, politicians first rule is self-preservation.

MARTIN: Right, right.

AXELROD: I mean, there are -- I would say profiles encourages a slim volume --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- for a reason, you know. I mean most politicians prize their jobs first.

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: And so the things that threaten their jobs --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- are the things that are going to be attentive to, so the interest groups, the funders, the --

MARTIN: Absolutely. And, you know, increasingly now of the action in the House races and Senate races, is in primaries. And so, you know, that's the kind of thing where, you know, these guys are not begging about the possibility of general election because they got a safe seat. That's more in the House and the Senate but you see that's the creep down in the Senate too.

AXELROD: Bernie Sanders -- so Bernie in addition to tapping into this sort of side (ph) guys that we talked about. Are you surprised that he is performed this well? You know, on the hill he is --

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MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: He is not regarded as a rock star. But you go out of here, when we had him at the University of Chicago like 5,000 kids signed up in two hours. How did this happen?

MARTIN: Right, he is going from (inaudible) at the Bobby Kennedy. I am surprised that he has been perceived in a sort of rapturous way because he's not in the political world, an unknown commodity, right? I mean Bernie has been in the Congress for 25 years.

[00:25:02] Everyone can know Bernie and kind of knew what he was passionate about and knew that he would give this sort of impassioned speeches. But seeing it translate out there has been a bit of a surprise. But I just think it speaks to the fact that young people especially they are so hungry for a 140 proof, you know, unfiltered raw political truth or at least in their mind is political truth, and he brings them and --

AXELROD: You know, authentic guy.

MARTIN: Totally authentic guy. And he is what he is, you know? The hair is messed up --

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: He is not worried about his tailoring. He is what he is.

AXELROD: He's my role model actually.

MARTIN: But he has kind of a throwback, too, by the way. I think our friend Glenn Thrush wrote this. I hear him call but he is --

AXELROD: In the Politico.

MARTIN: He is sort of that -- It's Deb Z (ph) in figure. He's like -- he thinks that like the way we do approach politics is like obviously going to give of an hour long speech. I'm going to really let it wrap, right? Like, that sort of his approach. It's like a one -- a one-page picture, all he has a fastball. It's really good fastball but it's like he recalls a day when these guys went well to the stump (ph) and they just spoke for an hour, and I just dripping in sweat afterwards.

AXELROD: And I think he may have actually seen Deb's , right? Deb's (ph) who is only a 100 years ago.

MARTIN: And you can sort it like imagine Bernie going to the paper and looking for the action they are like -- they plan of the entire speech, you know they don't like my (inaudible) talking about (inaudible), right? Because that's kind of the world (ph) he comes from, it's like, you know, powerful persuasive oratory.

AXELROD: Yeah. He's also shown us some self-effacing humor and --

MARTIN: He's come around. Yeah.

AXELROD: Yeah.

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MARTIN: Really come around.

AXELROD: So what about Hillary as a performer?

MARTIN: You know, Hillary is never going to be great politician. And I think the folks around her know that. And they kind of put her in positions that reflect her strengths.

AXELROD: Which is smart.

MARTIN: Yeah. Look, when she does the Anderson Cooper conversation, like she did in New Hampshire recently. That place to her strengths. When she is standing up there next to Bill Clinton at parking (inaudible) in a crowd of couple thousand people, that ain't playing her strength.

AXELROD: Yeah, insight. I think in Iowa -- the Iowa caucuses were interesting because they had her in small room.

MARTIN: Yes, smart.

AXELROD: They had her doing one-on-one kinds of encounters with potential caucus goers. And she is very effective in those -- those settings. She's not --

MARTIN: Much better.

AXELROD: -- effective as a stump speaker. She is not an inspiring speaker.

MARTIN: No.

AXELROD: That was served a raise of perspiration versus inspiration.

MARTIN: It will. It was.

AXELROD: And she ground out, you know, the tiniest of margins. So how do you think this whole things plays out?

MARTIN: It's pretty straightforward to me that unless Bernie can fucking find a way to make inroads with nonwhite Democrats, he's going to have a problem over the long haul because the rest of the Democratic Primary does not look like Iowa and New Hampshire, it's a Barack Obama party. It's not Ben and Jerry's party. And that ultimately is a challenge for Senator Sanders unless he can find a way to make inroads with Black and Hispanic Democrats. I'm not sure that he can.

AXELROD: It's interesting the other night in that Anderson Cooper town hall. The spent quite a bit of time on criminal justice issues of the racial disparity --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- and so on. He was not talking to New Hampshire. He was talking to South Carolina and others --

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MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: More diverse states.

MARTIN: But David, as you know, and in fact, you and I talked about this in June of last year when my colleague Pat Healy and I got a story. There's a history and the Democrat primary in this country of candidates on two very different tracks.

And one of them is much more of the kind of latte liberal shall we say, track of upscale or at least middle class, white liberals who are passionate about issues like campaign-finance reform. Either (ph) matter of process that sort of impact the political system and there's another track of Democrats who are much more concerned about basic daily life issues.

And Barack Obama was the first one who actually up ended that dynamic for a reasons that we're very similar with because he was able to sort of fuse white liberals with black Democrats in a way that nobody else had previously. But that history though is very tough for Bernie to overcome. And it's the history of Gary Hart, of Paul Tsongas, Howard Dean, of Bill Bradley, where they have a hard time broadening their coalition beyond way levels.

AXELROD: Yeah. You know, one interesting thing about the Iowa results though where he did very well in the Eastern Iowa --

MARTIN: That's drought (ph) man.

AXELROD: -- and some of these white working class areas.

MARTIN: I don't know.

AXELROD: And that was a harbinger of something.

MARTIN: It was. And then, you know, it's funny you mentioned. I was looking at the map and after election is I love looking at the maps. And we have on -- but on New York Times website now, fantastic color-coded maps. (Inaudible) by killing maps, so you can really dive into this stuff if you are a nerd.

I was just struck by how well he did in some of those counties on the Mississippi River.

AXELROD: Yes.

[00:30:02] MARTIN: And of taking a place just like Scott County.

AXELROD: Absolutely.

MARTIN: The Muscatine --

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: With Davenport and the Muscatine. Blue color river towns.

AXELROD: Yes.

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MARTIN: And, you know, the fact that he call on air where there is still a strong labor presence or at least the sort of history of a labor progresses to me was very interesting. But again, you know, can he expand the coalition.

AXELROD: I mean that doesn't take him into -- into the black --

MARTIN: It doesn't.

AXELROD: -- and Hispanic.

MARTIN: And that's going to be challenge for him. But that said, that said, he is raising astonishing amounts of money.

AXELROD: Enough to go the whole route to June?

MARTIN: If he wants to.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: If he wants to. I mean to me the question is, A, can he make in the roads with the nonwhite communities. And if he can, this is going to be a hell of a race. If he can't, what does he do? What's his ultimate endgame here? He is lord now, so he's got the money to stay until June. Does he run to try to beater or does he basically use those resources to return to how he started which is a message candidate.

Somebody who wants to hold her accountable, get his worldview out there, use that as a vehicle to sort of try to talk about income and inequality in a rigged system.

AXELROD: And he has impacted on the party in her.

MARTIN: Well, yeah.

AXELROD: I mean when you heard her try and in that the same town hall setting in New Hampshire, really try to out populace Bernie in some ways and talked about the fact that he didn't go far enough. He was only taking on the bank. She would take on all these other big entities insurance companies and -- yeah. So, I mean, his impact is good.

MARTIN: Undeniable. Undeniable. And his money makes his impact potentially last thing and it raises the possibility in both parties of simultaneously draining primaries where you got money sustaining the candidates in either side. And a similar dynamic in both in which each side is pushed to be ideological extreme, you know, of their party. Bernie pushing Hillary to the left and then Cruz into some extent Trump pushing Rubio/whoever else from the establishment stays in the race to the right.

AXELROD: Here is my -- you know, this is not a partisan point. This is a clinical point.

MARTIN: I know.

AXELROD: Though, you know, people may take it as a partisan point. I think the differences that Bernie

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is not pushing Hillary in places that would jeopardize her in a general election. I think the Republican Party, because the internal dynamics of the Republican Party and we should shift over and talk about the Republicans.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: It creates a much more difficult situation for their nominees, because to win up --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: To win the nomination you have to be ardently anti-choice. You have to --

MARTIN: It's culture. It's culture.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: Yeah, and I know, I --

AXELROD: Oh yeah, you have gay rights.

MARTIN: That's right.

AXELROD: And the whole panoply of issues that --

MARTIN: Right, Bernie pushes Hillary further left on economic issues for the most part. And I think --

AXELROD: But I think the country itself maybe --

MARTIN: The one danger zone -- but the one danger zone for Hillary in the primary, I thought is where she had actually run the Bernie's right and that is on taxes. You know, Hillary is not taking the bait on middle class taxing crisis.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: In fact there's the opposite.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: She tend (ph) to hit him on that.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: And so, that to me is the one economic piece where she actually could have be vulnerable for general and she has not necessarily done so. You know, there's no question about it that -- the Republican primary activity pushes them further right on culture. And the Democratic primary activity pushes them for left on economics for the most part.

AXELROD: Yeah.

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MARTIN: And that is a challenge for Republicans because the country is changing in -- and demography matters. And it's going to be harder for them rhetorically to sort of move on from some of the things that have been said.

AXELROD: I mean they did report after the last elections and we've got to have more aggressive outreach to Hispanics, to women, and young people. So how has that working?

MARTIN: The day that Sarah Palin endorsed Donald Trump. I was thinking about the so-called autopsy which came out after the 2012 race talking about how the party can move forward. I mean, you can script a more opposite scenario.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: From that --

AXELROD: From the autopsy, yeah. There was in a movie once called "Dead Again".

MARTIN: Yeah, exactly.

AXELROD: I think that's --

MARTIN: It's a --

AXELROD: You know -- no, I think it's a big problem for them. But let's talk about them.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: So Donald Trump, he dominated the preseason.

MARTIN: Right. Right.

AXELROD: And --

MARTIN: He's friend of yours, right?

AXELROD: Yes, we're close. We -- I actually do know Donald Trump and we've an interesting kind of relationship over the years. I met him when I was in the White House, that's a story for another day. And he was -- and I always say this that he was -- he gave \$100,000 when I did my slash to stash thing, shaved off my mustache for epilepsy research and I shame Donald Trump into -- I challenge him. I didn't shame him. I challenge him on television to donate and he sent me \$100,000.

MARTIN: Those bucks don't come easily either.

[00:35:00] AXELROD: No, I know. I know. And I took it and I went to Mark Cuban and I said you can't let Donald Trump out, do you --

MARTIN: Yeah, you know and I'm just in thought --

AXELROD: -- he gave me \$200.

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MARTIN: Here you go.

AXELROD: So I've got the reality show guys on the side here. But this reality show guy dominated the preseason.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: Completely.

MARTIN: I know.

AXELROD: Completely.

MARTIN: I know.

AXELROD: How and why did that happen and how complicit was the media in all of that?

MARTIN: There is no question that he made for an incredible box office and at some point the temptation became overwhelming to just have at it. And I think you're going to see a lot of after action, papers, and stories about what exactly the media did in the rise of Donald Trump.

I would say that the T.V. media was more complicit because at a time where, you know, they're kind of trying to figure out their way, use to guarantee eyeballs. That's not to say that he was not obviously good for traffic on print website, he was. But the (inaudible) was present on T.V. You cannot argue that it did give a real leg up.

The coverage was overwhelming. I mean he had more than everybody else combined. That said, you can't say to all about the media. He had a message that people were responding to.

AXELROD: Yes, yes, he did.

MARTIN: And look, he had a hell of a megaphone for it. But he wasn't just, you know, saying gibberish. I mean some of his staff --

AXELROD: Well, some of them was gibberish.

(CROSSTALK)

MARTIN: It's not what gibberish but his central points, more basically a kind of economic, you know, nationalism. That looks like a lot this sort of European far right parties.

AXELROD: Nativism.

MARTIN: Yeah -- it's not called (ph).

AXELROD: Anti-trade.

MARTIN: Yeah, and there's an audience for that.

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AXELROD: There is no doubt about it.

MARTIN: And if you infuse it --

AXELROD: And he presented it with such audacity and force.

MARTIN: And let's be brutally honest, that he would fuse that with racially provocative images. It's going to sell even better in some quarters.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: And he did.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: You're talking about banning Muslims from coming to America. At a time where, you know, the country had just seen what? Fourteen people slaughtered in California, had a real response. I was in South Carolina the night that he announced that proposal. I talked to a lot of people. And you saw a lot of heads nodding, not because, you know, they wanted to create some kind of a blanket Muslim band (ph) though some did. But just because -- let's just do something.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: Let's just do something. We're scared and look, he's talking at least taking action and it's sort of classic strongman politics, right?

AXELROD: Yeah. Yeah.

MARTIN: So that has an audience. How big an audience is it? It's not totally clear but he's definitely got an audience. And by the way, what's fascinating, it's not really a right-wing audience in a lot of ways. I mean, it's culturally. They're not kind of movement conservatives as --

AXELROD: No, is it -- yeah, he is --

(CROSSTALK)

AXELROD: The exit polls from Iowa --

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: -- were really interesting and all the polling you see on him, you know, it does very well with moderates --

MARTIN: Right.

AXELROD: -- which is kind of shocking.

MARTIN: It is. But, you know, his audience is much more that disaffected parole like audience that's not

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going to involved in politics. It's not the kind of, you know, county community activist who licks envelopes every two years for their candidates on the ballot. It's someone who was pissed off, who -- in some cases hard with racial resentment, who believes the system is really corrupt and want somebody to go there and blow it all up.

AXELROD: But as we learned in Iowa the one thing they may not be are people who are going to come out and vote.

MARTIN: Well, some of them obviously but it wasn't, you know, often Iowa and part because Iowa culturally is a better state for a traditional --

AXELROD: Would did he make mistakes (inaudible) by going in there at all. It seems like he got inveigled into -- he so inflates himself and everything who is involved in, that he went in there and sort of suggested that he is a winner and he would win. But it was never a set up for him to win particularly. The 63 percent evangelical vote in Iowa.

MARTIN: That Donald does expectations that do well because the very nature of the Donald is, everything is outsize and great, the best, the biggest, and it's hard to have that persona, and then try to set, well we're going to try to come in of -- you know the top three. It doesn't work that way.

AXELROD: But you are a political writer and not a psychologist. But having watched him --

MARTIN: All the times, yeah.

AXELROD: If he -- you got to do it both.

MARTIN: Great crossover.

AXELROD: The -- do you think if he begins to loose raises that he will leave the campaign rather than have his popularity put up week after week for a vote?

[00:40:01] MARTIN: There goes seem to be, a scenario where if he is not winning, it doesn't go forward. I had kind of like very shrewd observation and that is Donald Trump has never sounded more like a politician than in the last couple of days after losing Iowa because he was spinning and -- well they had never really thought I had a chance there. I was told not to go there, and it's not the state for me.

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: It's like oh my gosh, suddenly he is reading all the talking points, right? And trying and sort of, you know, temper of the expectations, exposed fact though. So, look I think it was jarring for him. He hasn't like to loose. If you watch that speech he gave in Iowa, his voice was subdued.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: He sounded like somebody who never expected to be staying there being a loser.

AXELROD: Well, that's a hit to the main engine for him. His whole brand is winning.

MARTIN: Winning. And then you lose, you know, when you expect to win, and I think it has been

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unpleasant for him and if you look his reaction since then, I think that's kind of revealed, right, you know what happened.

AXELROD: So let's forward in the -- and in the last couples of minutes.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: We have here -- you've got Ted Cruz having won Iowa. He probably been gone if he had -- I mean it would have been very tough for him --

MARTIN: He was stayed then for awhile but a little harder, yeah.

AXELROD: Right. You've got Marco Rubio who did surprisingly well in Iowa.

MARTIN: Yeah.

AXELROD: Who seems to be making a play to be the so-called establishment candidate even though he rejects the term --

MARTIN: He won't claim that. He won't claim that right.

AXELROD: Yes. I mean it seems to want to ride every one of the horses. But -- how you see this thing --

MARTIN: The love that they are not speak it's name, David.

AXELROD: Huh?

MARTIN: The love that they are not to speak its name as a establishment.

AXELROD: Exactly.

MARTIN: Right, it's kind of the --

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: The scarlet-e.

AXELROD: Yeah. But there is no doubt that is what's happening, is that the establishment is eyeing, he hits that's --

MARTIN: Of course. You raise more money from (inaudible)

AXELROD: The last helicopter out of saga (ph) is what I mean.

MARTIN: It's like grabbing the rotor, exactly.

AXELROD: Yeah.

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MARTIN: So, look, he raised more money at the end of last year to any key (inaudible) in the race more than Jeb from Washington lobbyist. He won't say he's the assessment (ph) candidate because that bad odor in today's Republican Party but of course he's the only acceptable candidate outside of Bush, Kasich and Christie who all kind of rotting on New Hampshire.

What Rubio has tried to do from the start of his campaign and he is now -- is avoid the label and then present himself as a unifier. So he kind of bridge those factions and put together kind of movement conservatives and the establishment. And to do that, you have to have kind of have bridge in both worlds and that construct your -- a foot in both worlds rather and that can kind of stretch your legs.

AXELROD: Yeah, the question is, are those factions bridgeable?

MARTIN: Well he did show on Iowa that he have the possibility to put it together. If you look at the exit data in Iowa, he was able to actually do fairly well among Evangelicals. And if he can make inroads with Evangelical lanes, so to speak, and then really consolidate --

AXELROD: He is doing a lot of signifying in a less --

MARTIN: He sure was. He had -- not talking about Jesus Christ on the air in Iowa, two mentions during the debate of Christianity. If he can do bridge the Evangelicals and -- kind of somewhat conservatives, he'll be a formidable (inaudible). He's not going to be all the Evangelicals, obviously. But if he can get some of them and really consolidate the somewhat conservatives --

AXELROD: So what does he have to do New Hampshire?

MARTIN: I think he has got to be Bush, Kasich, and Christie here. And in doing so, he will emphatically put all the statement that, you know, he is --

AXELROD: He is the guys. He is the establishment guy.

MARTIN: He is the guy. And look, that might not stop at least one of them from going on the South Carolina.

AXELROD: Bush has the resources to Kasich and Christie.

MARTIN: Right. But I think it'll send a pretty loud message given the fact that Bush, Kasich, and Christie has restake (ph) their campaign here.

AXELROD: And if he doesn't?

MARTIN: The race goes on for a while and it's much muddled context. I have New Hampshire --

AXELROD: And maybe to Trump's advantage, if the larger the field.

MARTIN: It's so true David. I've been talking about this. It's much more in Trump's interest to be nicer to his rivals. He needs a fractured race.

AXELROD: Yeah.

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MARTIN: It's better for Trump to have a multi-candidate race.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: If gets into a binary twist, it's harder for Trump because there's so many folks in the party who were opposed to him. So the answer to me it could be the great clarifier. It could determine whether or not we've got a clean three-way race, Trump, Rubio, Cruz reflecting kind of blue-collared nationalism, traditional, evangelical/hard right conservatism and then there's kind of hybrid of establishment with some evangelicals.

AXELROD: But could enough for the other? Exactly the other faction.

MARTIN: Or something more muddled where you've still got other candidates hanging on trying to get their slice.

AXELROD: But Cruz and Trump are going to be with us for awhile.

MARTIN: Absolutely. Unless the scenario that you raised earlier covered back which is that Trump looses and doesn't, you know, doesn't want to go forward. But I think New Hampshire --

AXELROD: It doesn't look it's going to happen to New Hampshire.

[00:45:00] MARTIN: It does. I think New Hampshire is set up pretty well for Donald Trump. You drive around some blue-collar neighborhoods in Nashua, you see if Trumps unto there. I mean this is a good state for him demographically. And again, you don't 51, they got 31 here.

AXELROD: Right.

MARTIN: It's probably a pretty good night. So I think Trump stays in, and Cruz, my gosh (ph) has got the resources to stay here for a long time. He'll be a good --

AXELROD: And it's set up for South Carolina is a good state for him.

MARTIN: Yeah, and South Carolina is a --

AXELROD: You got the SCC Primary in March 1st. A lot --

MARTIN: In Texas.

AXELROD: -- of seven states, yeah.

MARTIN: Yeah. So you got a solid state in South Carolina where he set up to do it well. And then March 1st you got a lot of good states. So he's going to be around for a while. And, you know, he will have strong support and he's a good debater. And once these debates become 3 or 4 people --

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: -- you know, he's got more opportunities to kind of stand out.

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AXELROD: So, let's leave it here. What's going to happen? Who is going to win this thing?

MARTIN: So, I am not in the prediction business because --

AXELROD: Sure you are.

MARTIN: No. I think it was (inaudible). I think (inaudible) I learned Sabbath that has this saying, he who lives by the crystal ball whines up eating class.

AXELROD: That's good.

MARTIN: A pretty good line, right?

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: But two things I will say. I think Hillary still has to be considered the favorite to win the Democrat nomination.

AXELROD: Yes.

MARTIN: Structurally, she has advantage and if Bernie can't make interest with nonwhite Democrats, it's hard to see a path for him going forward. In Republican side, I have never seen a race where there was this much uncertainty and confusion. It's very hard to figure out.

That said, if Rubio does emerge from New Hampshire as the dominant establishment can live and can make inroads with evangelicals, I think he will be potentially vulnerable.

AXELROD: He will be, although he is yet to be tested fully in this race. And --

MARTIN: Which is why I raise -- you know, the issue of those debates, once we got three --

AXELROD: Yeah.

MARTIN: -- to put people on stage, scrutiny will be much more --

(CROSSTALK)

AXELROD: It'll be very hot.

MARTIN: Very hot. And by the way, Trump has not really been tested.

AXELROD: No, he has and now he is --

MARTIN: You know, in those debates either.

AXELROD: Or by the way, by the media. I think that, you know, he hasn't been vetted in the way normal candidates are vetted. He's been treated as kind of a media sensation, you know?

MARTIN: Right.

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AXELROD: So, anyway, speaking of media sensations, you are a podcast sensation. So, appreciate you sitting here.

MARTIN: Well it's an honor to be on the "Axe Files." The hottest thing out there in podcast.

AXELROD: All right, you write it just like one --

MARTIN: But one exception because my wife is not podcaster.

AXELROD: Yes. Yes your wife is a great (inaudible).

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