

Why these witnesses?

## The racist and anti-Semitic subtext of the Senate impeachment trial

Barry Grey  
30 January 1999

Why Sidney Blumenthal, Vernon Jordan and Monica Lewinsky?

Is it purely a coincidence that two of the witnesses called by the Republicans in the Senate impeachment trial are Jewish and the third is black? Or is something else, something more sinister, involved?

It is true, of course, that all three figure prominently in the web of speculation and half-truths that was woven by Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr and augmented by the House prosecutors. The Republicans hope to extract from Lewinsky a remark or two that can be portrayed as a major piece of new and damning information against Clinton. And as far as they are concerned, her mere presence on the witness stand has the value of appealing to the most prurient instincts of the public.

Jordan, according to Starr and the Republican prosecutors, is the man who pulled the strings to buy Lewinsky's silence with a job.

Blumenthal has testified that, shortly after the scandal broke last year, Clinton described Lewinsky to him as a "stalker" who tried to force herself on the President. The House managers hope to use such testimony before the Senate to portray Clinton as a sexual predator and enemy of women's rights.

The *Wall Street Journal*, in a choice example of the cynicism that pervades the impeachment campaign, ran a column on Friday pushing this line. Its columnist Paul Gigot, a leading ideologist of the extreme right, feigned outrage over Clinton's alleged attempt to blackguard Lewinsky, and argued that his "anti-woman nastiness" provides additional reason for removing the president. This touching concern for the sensibilities of Monica Lewinsky is something new for the *Journal*. Some

months back, prior to the immunity agreement reached between Lewinsky and the independent counsel, the *Journal* urged Starr to "indict the tart."

Lewinsky, Jordan and Blumenthal will be testifying under enormous pressure. The threat of indictment hangs over all of them, and Starr has gone out of his way to demonstrate his readiness to prosecute witnesses who don't provide the testimony he wants, e.g., the jailing of Susan McDougal, multiple indictments against Webster Hubbell and the indictment earlier this month of Julie Hiatt Steele.

But there is another side to the prosecutors' calculations. Consider the social types that abound in what the media politely calls the "conservative base" of the Republican Party. It is by now well-documented that this base includes the Council of Conservative Citizens, a racist and anti-Semitic outfit formed 14 years ago by veterans of the segregationist White Citizens Councils, the John Birch Society and the George Wallace movement.

Among the prominent supporters of this organization are several Republicans at the center of the impeachment proceedings: House manager Bob Barr of Georgia, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, and North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms. The *Washington Post* reported Friday that the CCC had to cut off e-mail postings by members to its electronic "mailroom" after being inundated with messages supporting former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke and defending his denunciations of Jews.

Typical was a message from "Tom," which read: "There is no question in my mind that organized Jewish groups are out to destroy anything they find offensive. That includes southern culture, Christian based

principles taught in school, and white-dominated governments at every level."

Among the calculations of the right-wingers who dominate the Republican Party is the knowledge that grilling Vernon Jordan, a wealthy and influential black lawyer, humiliating Monica Lewinsky, and bullying Sidney Blumenthal, a liberal Jewish journalist turned presidential aide, will, as the saying goes, "energize their base."

In these circles, a commonly used epithet for people like Jordan begins with the word "uppity."

But one suspects there is even more venom directed at Blumenthal. Before he became an aide to Clinton in August of last year he was a political writer for the *Washington Post*, the *New Yorker* and the *New Republic*. He earned the hatred of Republicans and many in the media by denouncing the attacks on the Clintons as the work of extreme right-wing forces.

The Republicans consider Blumenthal to have been a prime mover in Hillary Clinton's statement on nationwide television a year ago that the Starr investigation was part of a "vast right-wing conspiracy."

Last February Starr hauled him before his grand jury and threatened to prosecute him for obstruction of justice, because he provided reporters with information about abusive tactics carried out in the past by some of Starr's deputies. Starr's prosecutors demanded that he name the reporters he had spoken to and the information he had provided. Blumenthal refused to answer, citing executive privilege. When he emerged from the grand jury he told reporters, "If they think they intimidated me, they have failed."

Blumenthal was called back and forced to testify before the grand jury in June, after the executive privilege claim had been struck down by the courts. There can be no doubt that he is high on the list of Starr's future victims.

The decision to haul him before the Senate cannot be separated from the bigoted views of those forces on which the Republican Party is increasingly based, and to which it appeals.

Just two weeks ago, the Rev. Jerry Falwell declared that the Anti-Christ is, at this very moment, roaming among unsuspecting Christians and preparing to unleash havoc. But it may not be too late to take countermeasures: Falwell, though not disclosing the

source of his inside information, has managed to narrow the search for the Anti-Christ. "Of course," Falwell asserted, "he is male and Jewish." Sidney Blumenthal, perhaps?



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**