

The New York Times continues to flog Whitewater

Barry Grey
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Just days before the *New York Times* published its September 26 statement on Wen Ho Lee, it published two articles exonerating itself from any wrongdoing in connection with its promotion of the Whitewater scandal. These pieces followed the September 20 announcement by the current independent counsel, Robert Ray, that there was insufficient evidence to charge the Clintons with any criminal acts in connection with the 1970s Arkansas land deal, and that the Office of Independent Counsel was officially closing the Whitewater investigation—after more than six years and over \$50 million in expenditures.

Ray's announcement amounted to an acknowledgement that the entire Whitewater affair—which provided the legal pretext for all of the probes that followed, up to and including the Monica Lewinsky investigation—was a monumental fraud perpetrated on the American people. Yet the *Times* published an editorial on September 21 placing the blame for the witch hunt on its victims—the Clintons. The *Times* charged that the White House was responsible for the interminable length of the investigation because it “stonewalled the investigators and defamed the Clintons' critics”—that is, because the Clintons refused to confess and took legal measures to defend themselves.

The editorial was followed in the September 22 *Times* with a column by James B. Stewart, the author of an anti-Clinton book entitled *Blood Sport: The President and His Adversaries*. Stewart's piece echoed the previous day's editorial in denouncing the Clintons and added a gratuitous bouquet to reporter Jeff Gerth, calling his March 8, 1992 *Times* article launching the Whitewater scandal “a model of investigative reporting”.

Gerth's reporting on Whitewater was subjected to a

devastating critique by Arkansas journalist Gene Lyons in his 1996 book *Fools for Scandal: How the Media Invented Whitewater*. This is how Lyons recently described Gerth's modus operandi in an interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*:

“He finds sources with an axe to grind—in the case of Whitewater, Clinton's old political nemesis in Arkansas, Sheffield Nelson, and the Clintons' disgruntled former Whitewater partner, Jim MacDougal. He then omits any facts or exculpatory evidence that argue against the line he is promoting.”



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