

"I didn't have a trial, I had a political process"

An interview with Julie Hiatt Steele, victim of Kenneth Starr's witch-hunt

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It has been two years since the only criminal trial in the Monica Lewinsky affair came to an end, as a federal jury sitting in Alexandria, Virginia failed to reach a verdict on charges of making false statements and obstruction of justice filed against Julie Hiatt Steele. The verdict was a stunning blow to Kenneth Starr, who announced shortly afterwards that he was stepping down as head of the Office of Independent Counsel (OIC).

The treatment of Julie Hiatt Steele was a flagrant abuse of power. The police-state methods employed against her demonstrated the threat to democratic rights embodied in the Starr investigation. A woman with no connection to any alleged presidential misconduct was dragged through the media and threatened with imprisonment and the breakup of her family, simply because she refused to give false testimony and serve as an accomplice in the right-wing campaign to oust an elected president on trumped-up charges.

The OIC witch-hunt has had a drastic impact on Steele's life. She was among dozens of people who faced huge legal expenses, loss of privacy and threats of prison terms as a result of the politically motivated Starr investigation. Steele lost her job because of Starr's baseless charges and the attendant media publicity. She has been unable to find work since, and was forced as a result to sell her house.

A 54-year-old mother with three children, Steele was an acquaintance of Kathleen Willey, the Richmond, Virginia woman who claimed to have been "groped" by President Clinton at the White House in 1993. Willey told her story to a national television audience in 1998 on the CBS television program "60 Minutes," at the height of the media furor over Monica Lewinsky. Willey was one of the few Whitewater/Lewinsky witnesses to be personally interviewed by Starr.

Willey became a key witness for the OIC, which hoped to add a perjury count to its proposed impeachment referral after Clinton categorically denied under oath making any sexual advances towards Willey. Steele was the main obstacle to such a charge, because she severely undermined Willey's credibility.

By Steele's sworn testimony, Willey had called her up in early 1997 to say that a *Newsweek* correspondent, Michael Isikoff, was coming to interview her. Willey asked Steele to confirm to Isikoff that Willey had told her of a Clinton sexual advance immediately after it happened in late 1993. Willey told Isikoff she had gone to Steele's house in tears on the night of the incident. Steele went along with the request to confirm this account, but later called back Isikoff to tell him that the story was untrue.

In subsequent testimony under oath, Steele steadfastly maintained that she knew nothing of any sexual encounter at the White House and had only agreed to lie to the reporter against her better judgment, at Willey's insistence, and before she knew the issue was related to any legal proceeding, let alone the independent counsel investigation into President Clinton.

Prosecutors working for Starr threatened Steele repeatedly, suggesting that she had retracted her initial account under pressure from the White House. There were leaks to the media that a White House "hit man" was stalking her, and claims that she was in hiding for fear of a murderous attack.

The browbeating and intimidation reached an extraordinary level—at one point, reports circulated in the media that the FBI was looking into Steele's adoption of a Romanian infant in 1990, to see if any irregularities could be found. The clear implication to Steele was that if she did not cooperate with the OIC, she could lose her son Adam, now 10 years old.

Steele could not be charged with perjury, because her sworn testimony was consistent from her first affidavit on: she knew nothing about any contact between Willey and Clinton. Starr sought instead to prove her guilty of making false statements under oath, by bringing forward a number of witnesses who claimed that she had told them about the Willey incident before it first appeared in *Newsweek*.

In January 1999, during the opening week of the Senate trial of President Clinton, the OIC had Steele indicted on four counts of making false statements and obstruction of justice, with a potential sentence of up to 40 years in prison. The charge and the possible sentence were so grossly disproportionate to the alleged offense that the action amounted to prosecutorial misconduct.

By a truly novel legal theory, Starr based one count of obstruction of justice on Steele's appearance on the CNN program "Larry King Live," where she contradicted Willey's interview on "60 Minutes." Steele's exercise of her right of free speech was branded a crime, on the ground that she was seeking to "taint" the jury pool for upcoming trials.

The timing of the indictment demonstrated its political purpose. It was a clear attempt to intimidate other potential witnesses in the inquiry and to send a message that the Starr investigation would continue in full force, regardless of the now-expected acquittal vote in the Senate.

But in the summer of 1999 Steele's perjury trial ended in a hung jury, despite a frantic effort by the prosecution and the federal judiciary to insure a guilty verdict. The trial was moved from Washington, DC, where prosecutors feared a largely black jury would be hostile to the Starr investigation, to suburban Alexandria, Virginia. The jury included several CIA and law enforcement-connected members, and the jury foreman was later revealed to be in contact with the ultra-right FreeRepublic.com web site, a center for anti-Clinton conspiracy theories.

Nonetheless, even this jury could not be persuaded to convict Julie Hiatt Steele. Kathleen Willey proved to be an extremely unconvincing witness. It emerged that she had received a second grant of immunity from the OIC to cover lies which she had told under oath in her first sworn statements about Clinton. The case was so obviously flimsy that Steele's lawyers decided not to call any witnesses, and let the jury begin deliberations immediately, without putting on a defense. After the hung jury, Starr

decided not to seek a retrial.

Recently a writer for the *WSWS* traveled to Richmond, Virginia and spoke with Steele. Below we reprint portions of this discussion.

WSWS: Starr's office and the right-wing media portrayed you as someone who was acting out of loyalty to or fear of the Clinton White House. What was your background before you became caught up in the Starr investigation?

JHS: I was born in Ashland, Kentucky. My father was with Ashland Oil, and my mother grew up across the street from the family who founded Ashland Oil. My family were mostly Republicans. Williamson, West Virginia is named for my mother's family. My great-grandfather was the president of the bank, and then my grandfather was. When I was a child, I would go to Williamson with my grandfather on the train. My family had land there in Mingo County that was leased for coal mining. I read the book by Jerry White about the killing of John McCoy, and three of the companies mentioned in the book had mined on our property.

WSWS: So you were definitely on the other side of the tracks from the working poor?

JHS: Yes, my mother came from a wealthy family. When I was growing up we had someone who worked for us and then for my grandparents until she died, whose name was Catherine McCoy, one of the original McCoy's. Her people looked like the people did when I went to Romania. It's that same hard-life look.

I was married for almost 20 years. My husband worked in the oil industry, first all around Ohio then Kansas City and then Richmond. When we came to Richmond, I tried to buy the Willey house, which was how I came to know Kathleen Willey.

I had first worked outside the home in Kansas City. For a number of years in Richmond, I had my own cell phone business, Hiatt Communications, not through my own brilliance or anything, but when cellular was just starting to go up. I thought it was a fabulous business, because it was at the beginning, and you were still educating people on the use of it. When I adopted Adam I had to give that up. I couldn't be running out the door on Sunday morning for a client. After that I worked at several different jobs.

I also got involved in foster care, and spent some months collecting luggage for foster children. I found out that when they moved from family to family, they carried their things in trash bags because they had no suitcases. I could not bear that. It's such a despicable message, that a child should be relegated to the trash, somebody who can't protect themselves.

WSWS: What were your attitudes when you were growing up? Obviously you have a different understanding of how American society is governed today. How did you look to the world then? It sounds fairly all-American.

JHS: "I like Ike," and all that. Apple pie. I didn't care much about politics. I never voted for a Democrat until last year. It was just sort of a rote thing. I voted for Nixon. I voted for Reagan. In 1992 I voted for Bush. I walked in, however, not knowing who I was going to vote for, and might have just seen his name first and voted. In 1996 I didn't vote, I don't know if it rained or not.

Neither me or my husband gave five cents to politics. I know I thought the people in Washington are smarter on these things than I am. I was idealistic, very naive. I didn't dream I had to pay attention to politics. I voted because it was the patriotic thing to do, for president, probably for governor, sometimes for Congress. That's why it's so funny that they claim I'm for Clinton. They had so much trouble finding a motive.

WSWS: When you came to Richmond were you still of the same mindset as originally? When did your political understanding start to change?

JHS: Somebody at the *Washington Post* said I've been an unconventional woman trying to live a conventional lifestyle, and that's probably pretty accurate. First it was the foster care thing. Then it was

deciding to have a baby by myself, and then, after Ben died, going to Romania by myself.

When I had Ben, in 1990, who died, that really led me to deciding to adopt, after I was going through fire for a long time, from the loss. I went through full delivery, all the right tests, and he was a perfect, normal baby boy, but born with a major AV malformation in his neck. We went through two hospitals here and then Johns Hopkins, and after four days he died in my arms at Hopkins. It was an awful, hideous experience.

I was so excited about having this baby. I was 42, 43, and I really thought this was going to be great. My other kids were already grown and married. It was just the right thing for me. My daughter Liza said that we were sure the baby would be born laughing because that's all I did for nine months was laugh. With his death, my intent was still to have another child in my life, and since Ben couldn't be it, maybe he could open that door for another child who can have the life I can offer. Of course I didn't realize I was going to have the OIC in my life.

Realistically, if I was going to be a single parent and adopt, it wasn't going to happen here with an infant. The young mothers now pick you. They're choosing the parents, and I'm not going to be chosen. I'd be wasting my time trying to do that. But we were beginning to hear about Romania, although when I went there was nobody there yet. It was September-October 1990.

It was Ben's death that allowed me to go as a woman by myself. I wasn't afraid and the reason was the worst had already happened. The Romanian police did at one point raise a gun at me, when I got out of my car and tried to take a picture of something I wasn't supposed to. I didn't even know what it was. When the trial came on and the whole Ken Starr thing, I still said, the worst has already happened.

WSWS: After meeting Kathleen Willey while trying to buy her house, did you subsequently have a social relationship with her? How often did you see her?

JHS: They were not social in that way. Her husband, Ed, was 15 years older, and they would not go out to dinner much. They just were not interested in that. I saw her through the years—she'd call me. She's the kind of person who would call you a lot, and then you wouldn't hear from her for two years. She'd call every day, and then suddenly, you wouldn't know why, you couldn't find out, you just wouldn't hear from her.

She'd just breeze in and out, and I let her. My attitude was, if ever I'm down to my last dime, she is not the call I would make. I thought everybody could afford to have one friend who does not reciprocate. She could count on me, but I couldn't count on her, if something bad was happening.

WSWS: What did you think when Willey called you up and asked you to lie to the *Newsweek* reporter?

JHS: It was out of the blue. I had not heard from her from the previous summer until just before this. She called me, saying to me that she's in Dan Gecker's office sitting with Michael Isikoff of *Newsweek*. He would like to have a few comments with me, would that be fine? I say, "You *are* going to call me back and tell me why this man's coming to my house." She was about to hang the phone up, and she said, "right," or "yes," hands him the phone, and the next thing I know I'm giving him directions.

She called me back and said, "I need you to confirm to Michael Isikoff that the president groped me and I came to your house." I said, "I can't do that." She said, "No, it's off the record, I'll explain later, just do this." It was a quick two-minute phone call. Now I wasn't thinking about it being about the president, and I'll tell you why. They had his pictures all over the house. They were lifelong Democrats. Ed's father was a state senator, but probably the most influential state senator in Virginia history, I'm told. Her identity came from this going to the White House every week, when she would meet new people. She made it sound like the White House could barely get along without her, that it would be a miracle if it could function without her helping.

Now, on the other hand, what I have seen her do is punish men. There was the soccer coach—that would have been a more recent one. He quit calling her after a month. That’s his crime, for which he was punished by being told she was pregnant by him, and left to believe that for quite a while. So I thought this was something to do with Michael Isikoff, that he was being set up for having the story of the century, and then it would be yanked out from under him just when he was ready to go to press or something. So I was feeling badly for him, not at all for Clinton, and making sure it was off the record, and that she was going to deal with it afterward.

WSWS: So you let yourself to be pressured by her to give this account?

JHS: Really, I was only affirming two things. One was the grope. I didn’t say grope—I was supposed to—I said grapple, I was just so nervous. Then he went on to tell me the rest of it. Neither of them, interestingly, would tell me what year that she supposedly came to my house, but he told me it was in the afternoon, and how hard it was for her to tell this story, and how she tried to hold herself together to stop herself from crying. And I’m just sitting here thinking, “Oh my God, what is this?” and nodding a lot.

He told the whole story, until we got to grapple, and then I did my part. I only had one other thing. She had said, tell him that we were in an office right across from the Oval Office, and there’s a door, and she thought Hillary or Chelsea might come in. I was quite interested to hear that’s where the family quarters are. I didn’t learn for another year that they’re not even in the same wing of the White House. He must have known this and he didn’t use it. So you’ve never seen “grapple” or that layout in print—my only two details.

When he left, he assured me it was off the record, and I said to him, “If in this lifetime you have any thought that you’re going to do anything with any of this, I would ask that you call me. You and I will need to talk a little bit more about Kathleen Willey.” Now that’s pretty obvious. He heard me and he said he would call me.

WSWS: Several months later you learned that Isikoff was about to publish an item in *Newsweek* based on Willey’s story?

JHS: By now I think he’s a reputable journalist who’s about to get egg all over his face if I don’t stop it. I called and told him: “The thing you don’t know, Michael, is that I never heard this story in my entire life. She didn’t come to my house at all. I’m sorry that she didn’t straighten this out, and I thought she would have a long time ago, but I can’t do this, and you’re going to end up looking like an idiot, and I don’t want any part of the responsibility for making that happen.”

He was a perfect gentleman. He was gracious. He asked a couple of questions. He thanked me for letting him know that I felt badly that I had any role in this and certainly couldn’t allow him to go to print with something that would make him look so bad. He was great about it. And then he called back later. I thought we were off the record. When he was questioning me, something he said made me think he was going to print it. I said, “Surely, you’re not going to print an off-the-record retraction of an off-the-record story. What are you thinking? Surely you’re not going to print this.” Well, *he* wouldn’t, but his editor, and his publisher would. And I’m thinking, “The only thing worse than her asking me to do this is that I would have been stupid enough to do it, or foolish enough to do it. So, too bad for me.”

WSWS: When was the next time that this issue came up?

JHS: During the fall Isikoff would call me, asking me am I being followed, and have I been subpoenaed. It was never clear to me who would be subpoenaing me. I have nothing to do with any of this. And as to being followed, I hope they’re getting hazard pay because it’s embarrassing to me and it would be boring to them. I don’t do anything. Who would want to follow me?

Then toward the beginning of the year, in January, everything hit all at once. I started getting press calls. On the 12th of January, Isikoff calls me

again and says, “I’m calling to let you know—it hasn’t been generally reported as yet—that Kathleen Willey has been deposed in the Jones case.” And I’m waiting for the rest of the story. I wasn’t even sure what I’m supposed to say. So I said, “Thanks.” I got off the phone, and I thought, he must be telling me that she’s stayed with this business of coming to my house. Why would she do that? Why?

WSWS: How did the Office of Independent Counsel come to be involved in the issue of Kathleen Willey? What relevance did this have to the Whitewater case which Starr was charged with investigating?

JHS: If you remember when Willey testified in the Jones case, it was just the Jones case. She testified on January 10. Who knew that on the 16th, Monica would come into our lives? It’s sort of ironic. Willey must have about died that before she ever got in the spotlight it went away. Then the case was referred to Starr. The OIC immunized Willey on March 6. If you recall, Jackie Bennett said, referring to Monica, it would be improper to immunize without talking to her. But when it came to Willey, a short time after that, they immunized her without talking to her, and it was retroactive to the Jones case. It’s a very different immunity. It never says she can’t lie. It’s very broad, very unusual, transactional. It needed to cover Jones, and the 63 times she said she didn’t know or couldn’t recall details that she was only too eager to tell us by the time “60 Minutes” came around. This was a travesty.

The entire reason for my indictment was to raise Willey’s credibility and destroy me. Starr never said I was peripheral. Starr needed my conviction to raise her credibility. The indictment was really about that. It was about me, but it wasn’t really about me. It was through me and it had consequences for me. They didn’t let us know ahead of time they were going to indict me. I literally saw Bob Franken on CNN, an obviously shaken Bob Franken, announcing that I had been indicted on four counts. He knew what they were, but nobody had even read the indictment yet.

WSWS: What do you think was the motivation of Starr, Jackie Bennett, and other the prosecutors in the OIC?

JHS: Hell-bent on getting the president out of office, at any cost—I think that’s how most of those people were. I never met Starr. Nancy [Nancy Luque, Steele’s lead attorney] did, twice, and she said never, for no other client, would she do such a thing again.

After the hung jury, when Nancy went in to meet with him, they had to schedule a second meeting. The reason is he looked like a truck had hit him. That was a huge, huge, huge blow. One of my attorneys had overheard Willey’s boyfriend on the phone, quoting one of the prosecutors, saying, “Barger says we have it in the bag,” right before that.

The reason that we couldn’t have that meeting is that Starr couldn’t settle on what they were doing there. He couldn’t stop slamming the desk with his fist, saying, “Bill Clinton’s getting away with it.” That kind of stuff. Well, Nancy said, “We’re here about Julie.” I think I sent Starr home. He quit right after that. It was the last straw.

WSWS: When did you first come to understand the broader implications of the Jones case, the Willey case and the Lewinsky case? You weren’t initially aware of the right-wing-inspired legal campaign against the White House?

JHS: No, I wasn’t. At the time I went into the deposition, I thought Willey was trying to get on the Jones train. There’d have to be more to it, because otherwise where’s she going to get paid? Where’s the money going to come from?

I don’t think I saw it until, probably, when it continued after the Jones case had been dismissed on summary judgment. That was April 1, 1998. I hadn’t even been called, yet they’re still having me come to the grand jury about Willey. That’s when it started to click to me that it was much bigger than that. Once I saw it, I went to the head of the class, even ahead of Nancy. Then I saw they were trying to bring the president out of office.

WSWS: Your position was widely compared to that of Susan McDougal, who went to prison for refusing to testify against Clinton, and who also

won release after a hung jury.

JHS: My case was different from any other because I didn't know anybody. I'd never been to Little Rock, or Madison Guaranty, or the White House, or any of it. I don't know all the details with Susan McDougal. All I know is she feared prosecution if she testified. She was afraid she would be indicted. And of course I did testify and I was indicted, so that was true. It was important that this was exactly what the OIC does. They give you a chance to change your story or, they tell you, they'll indict you, and they will.

There was one time we had a meeting at the OIC. I was there with Nancy and Eric [her lawyers]. There's a room there with my name on it, the Steele Discovery Room. I'm glad my parents didn't live to see this. We're over there and they're outlining that they have this witness who said I'm afraid of the White House. Did I want to comment on that, or tell them about that? Had I not talked about a hit man. I said, "No. It has not even crossed my mind, not then, not any other time, no." So we go through that: "There's at least one witness who remembers you're saying that." I said, "That's fine, but that's not what happened. It didn't happen. Say what you want, I didn't know about this."

We're going on and on. Finally I just stood up and I'm about to cry, and I said, "You know I didn't do anything. You know and I know that this didn't happen. It never happened at all. You know that there's no crime here and that I've done nothing. What possible motive could I have had, unless I'm completely a masochist and trying to destroy my own life and that of my child. I'm missing the upside. Where's my benefit? I don't get it." I just rattled on a bit. I was shaking. By then everybody's stood up. Nancy has tears falling off her chin. She just was stunned. Everybody was quiet. Eric said maybe we could let Julie go downstairs. I started to walk past Barger, and the only time he was thinking about being a human being for an instant, was he touched my shoulder and said something about having kids too. Not that it stopped him, but he wanted me to know that he has those children.

WSWS: How did the issue of questioning your adoption of Adam arise? Did the FBI or OIC ever ask you directly about your son?

JHS: Never. They asked people at the grand jury. They asked people in their travels through the neighborhood. Which is the most effective way to do that, by innuendo. Because other people wouldn't really know much about it, but they might say, well, now that you mention it, it was really fast. I hadn't thought of it that way. And why did she go there? Why Romania?

Adam was the first child ever in the state of Virginia to have a second, local adoption filed after a foreign adoption. It does cross the t's and dot the i's, which is why I did it. My attorney had never done one, and the state had never done one, but since then they've done quite a few.

WSWS: What were your experiences with the media in the course of this political persecution?

JHS: There were media people who were sympathetic—Bob Franken, Anthony Lewis, Florence Graves—there were people who tried, but it wasn't significant. There were people who you thought would have gotten it but didn't. "60 Minutes," of course, was the worst, since they had done the interview with Willey. It was so orchestrated. There she was, the widow weeping. If he had groped her in 1993, it's now 1998. Would you still be sobbing around about somebody? Couldn't you have just said then "Watch out Bubba, get away from me." It was so orchestrated.

Later "60 Minutes" came right to my house. They came in the early morning before it was even light out. They were in the middle of the street, with the satellite truck and the tripod on my driveway. I called the police to see what my rights are, but it turns out that you can't run over their tripod or knock down their satellite dish. I called the newspaper and they came out and took a picture. I was a wreck. That incident probably affected me for a longer period of time than a lot of other things that were really bad. You feel like a trapped animal. It's so invasive.

The police came in and said, you have a back door. They went out the back door with my suitcase, up through the woods and crossed up to the private road, staying behind the house so they couldn't be seen, dropped the bag, then came back the same way and went out the front door, hassled them a little bit more, then drove around back and picked up the bag. Then they called and gave me a phone number to call when I was ready, and I was to say, "The package is ready." So I called up and said the package was ready, and these two officers met me in the back, and let me lie on the floor, and they drove me to a rent-a-car place so I could get away. I thought then, "Now I know why I pay taxes." Can you believe that "60 Minutes" did that to me?

What scared me was then I had to go get Adam, and I was afraid they would know where he was and get there with cameras. I got somebody to go get him and bring him to me at another location. Plus Adam doesn't know we're going somewhere. So I tell him, I've got a surprise, we're going on an adventure. I don't want to tell him we're on the run from the media.

Then if you can believe it, the new "60 Minutes II" wanted me to come on. Don Hewitt and Dan Rather came to see me. They said I'd be their first show. I couldn't even stand to be in the same room with these people, because they had been so scary to me before.

WSWS: How has your understanding of the American political system changed as a result of your experiences?

JHS: Oh, dramatically. I no longer think that Washington is taking care of Washington and I can collect suitcases for foster kids and ignore Washington. I don't think any of us can afford any more not to pay attention to every single election, and to every single elected official, whether it's the president, the senator, or whoever represents you in your state.

WSWS: Were you ever contacted by the Democratic Party or the people who were defending Clinton, to either ask what you were doing, or to express sympathy, to try to break you out of isolation?

JHS: They never gave me any help. I hold that against them. I certainly never expected to be rewarded, but I did not expect to be severely punished in the way that I have been. I called the Democratic Party, in Virginia. I wanted a job and with the campaign coming, I thought there would be something I could do. He acted like he didn't know me, but I was sure he did. He said, "We really don't have anything very glamorous." I said, "Excuse me, you recognize who I am, right? Do you think I'm too politically hot, are you saying this?" He said yes. I said, "Thank you, but who said anything about glamorous? I was thinking about a paycheck." They didn't do anything.

In the election campaign, the Democrats chose not to talk about Starr and impeachment. They were not forthcoming at all. They had no position. Over and over it was: "Let's just put that behind us. Let's just put that behind us." I called impeachment manager Bill McCollum's opponent [Democrat Bill Nelson, now the US Senator from Florida] and asked, "Why would you put that behind you? Look at what these people have done." I said, let me send you this stuff I've got here on McCollum. This is ridiculous.

WSWS: What sort of confidence or faith do you place in the Democratic Party?

JHS: We have two parties—or three, the Greens, the Republicans and the Democrats. The Republicans, they knew what was going on. They could at any time have stopped this, or raised their voices. Any decent one, any understanding, law-abiding anybody could have said, "Whoa, can this make sense?" But they didn't.

Neither did the Democrats really speak out. I will say that the Democrats in the Judiciary Committee hearings were good. You had several—Bob Wexler, certainly David Kendall, Maxine Waters, the people who spoke out about Adam's adoption to Starr. Kendall's the one who got Starr all redfaced and making fists over questions about me. People

did bring me up then, but that's been it, literally. Nobody said thank you, or I'm sorry you had to go through that. They don't really act like they remember that anything happened.

I think I would relate more to the Democrats today than I would the Republicans, but because the only thing worse than doing nothing about it was doing it in the first place. That's how that works. There are no choices if that's the choice.

WSWS: There's no choice if it's between those who persecute you and those who stand by and do nothing to help you.

JHS: It's a sad day. It's a sad choice. The media leads the way for this stuff. They're saying, put it behind us. But that's not what people are saying to me. And I don't think it's an isolated thing, either. I don't think my trial or the impeachment were things that happened individually and in a vacuum. They all happened together and were tied together, right up to the appointment of the latest president. It continues. I think it is a mistake to ignore that history.

WSWS: What conclusions have you drawn from this experience?

JHS: I hope people are going to look back and see this as a wake-up call for what's happening to the judicial branch of our government, because I didn't have a trial, I had a political process. The same thing happened with appointing the president. It was a political abuse of the judicial system. I think it needs to be a wake-up call to all ordinary Americans. You should be glad you're not me, because this shouldn't be happening to anybody.

The truth is, if they can reach out of their ranks like that, get somebody that they know hasn't done anything, and go to the extent they did, then human beings and American lives and ordinary taxpayers are not very important to these people. We're without value. The end is going to justify the means, and that isn't the way it's been in this country, at least I didn't think so.

They knew I had done nothing, because first of all there's no crime. That's the first problem. We do send people to jail, and worse, to death, when they're innocent. Usually, however, there is some connection that placed them in somebody's mind there. In this case—it certainly was not a death penalty case, and I didn't end up going to jail, but I could have—but tell me again what is the crime? I'm supposed to have known something I didn't know, that I don't even believe happened.

It's a little scary that you could get 40 years for that, or I could get obstructing justice for a jury that's never going to be seated. It was the extension of their authority. They had to fit my crime into how their authority was extended by Reno and the three-judge panel at the time they went with the Lewinsky request. That's who authorized them to look further into things like obstruction of justice, false statements and so that's why I had to obstruct justice.

I didn't recognize it at the time, but I still believed the court was about truth. For me it's important to know who, and why, and what. I just have to have the answers. It was too difficult an ordeal and it was too harsh and too surreal to not understand how every single little bit of it occurred. I would hope I never, ever lose that rage, because this wasn't about truth. We should be outraged.



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