

Victim of anti-Clinton witch-hunt denounces independent counsel's report on Lewinsky affair

An open letter from Julie Hiatt Steele

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Earlier this month Independent Counsel Robert Ray released his office's final report on its investigation of former President Clinton's relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Predictably, Ray—who resigned his position six days later to announce his intention to run as the Republican candidate for US Senate in New Jersey—upheld the charges by former Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, which provided the legal pretext for the right-wing campaign to impeach Clinton in 1998-99.

Ray claimed there was enough evidence to prosecute and possibly win a conviction on charges that Clinton impeded justice and gave false testimony about his relations with Lewinsky, although, he declared, his office would not pursue further legal action.

While giving widespread coverage to Ray's conclusions, the media paid little, if any, attention, to one finding—published in an appendix of the report—which acknowledged that one of the key witnesses Starr hoped to use to entrap Clinton had been found to have no credibility at all.

Kathleen Willey, a one-time Clinton supporter, achieved notoriety by going on the 60 Minutes television program in March 1998 and accusing Clinton of making unwanted sexual advances nearly five years earlier in November 1993. Willey also alleged she faced threats and intimidation, allegedly from Clinton supporters, prior to her January 1998 deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit against Clinton.

Starr had initially hoped to charge Clinton with perjury after the president denied Willey's charges in his *Jones* deposition case and in testimony before Starr's grand jury in August 1998. The Republican right also sought to use Willey's claims to further discredit Clinton and accuse his supporters of using threats and intimidation to obstruct justice.

Standing in Starr's way, however, was Willey's former friend Julie Hiatt Steele, who in February 1998 submitted an affidavit in the *Jones v Clinton* case undermining Willey's credibility. In March 1997 Steele had told *Newsweek* journalist Michael Isikoff that Willey informed her about being fondled by the president, the night of the alleged encounter. Steele later recanted her statement and said she had lied to the reporter because Willey had asked her to. Steele consistently maintained this position, during legal testimony, media appearances and in FBI interviews.

Steele was subjected to a vicious legal witch-hunt by Starr's office for refusing to say what he wanted. She was dragged before two grand juries and forced to turn over tax and bank records, credit reports and telephone records. The Office of the Independent Counsel went so far as threatening to move against Steele's parental rights, making public the fact that it was looking into the procedures—which were, in fact, entirely legal—by which she adopted her son Adam in Romania.

As the Senate trial of Clinton got under way in January 1999, Starr's office announced with a great deal of publicity that it was indicting Steele

on three counts of obstructing justice and one charge of making false statements. The charges carried a possible penalty of 35 years in jail and a \$1 million fine. Starr's office pursued its vendetta against Steele to trial in May 1999, but the case ended in a hung jury and mistrial. After the humiliating defeat, Starr's office decided not to pursue a retrial.

In Ray's final report on the Lewinsky affair, the independent counsel acknowledges there was no evidence to convict Clinton of perjury for refuting Willey's charges. Ray acknowledges that Willey was so discredited by repeatedly changing her stories—during the *Jones* deposition, grand jury testimony and interviews with Starr's own investigators—that no jury would ever believe her. Willey's "testimony at trial would be subject to further challenge based on the differences between her deposition and grand jury statements, as well as her acknowledgement of false statements to the Office of Independent Counsel. Concerns about the probative effect of Willey's testimony would likely be sufficient to negate a conclusion that "the person [charged] probably will be found guilty by an unbiased trier of fact."

As for Willey's claims that Clinton supporters threatened her, Ray stated, "This Office investigated whether [real estate developer and Democratic Party fundraiser Nathan] Landow or others had engaged in any criminal acts such as obstruction of justice or witness intimidation with respect to Willey, and determined there was insufficient evidence to support the filing of criminal charges." Accordingly, Ray concluded, "the Independent Counsel declined prosecution and the investigation of potential criminal wrongdoing relating to Willey's allegations is now closed."

(To read the Independent Counsel's entire report on Kathleen Willey's testimony, go to:

<http://icreport.access.gpo.gov/lewinsky/appb.pdf>)

Ray's admission about Willey only underscores the spurious character of the whole impeachment campaign. While Julie Hiatt Steele was dragged through the courts and subjected to financial ruin for telling the truth, Starr relied on a proven liar to pursue his vendetta against Clinton.

Shortly after Ray released his report Julie Hiatt Steele posted an article on the Internet, entitled "The Final Report." Below, the World Socialist Web Site reprints the article.

The Office of Independent Counsel only now admits that Willey was a liar because they have to explain why, if she had been anything else, they did not indict President Clinton on the strength (?) of her testimony and her grope allegation. What they fail to point out is that they were so driven to remove a twice-elected President from office that they were covering for her all along. They point out only the tip of the iceberg in terms of her discrepancies. In fact, she was unable to keep any of her long and over-complicated stories straight.

The grope alone was material for a game of Clue. Did it happen in the study, the dining room or the hallway? Take your pick, at one time or another it happened in all three.

Then there was what "he said" or what "she said," never the same thing twice. And never mind the famous jogger story, that one was right over the edge. We were to believe that pre-dawn, in pouring rain, post-surgery, she could not sleep on that early winter morning and went walking with a neck brace and three dogs. There, in the pre-dawn, pouring rain, January cold, waited a jogger clad in black, face somewhat obscured by pre-dawn light, hopeful she would not be able to sleep and would walk his way with three dogs and a neck brace. There he was, just waiting to scare her. What a guy, what a story!

Sometimes he was identified as Jack Palladino, other times as Cody Shearer. Sometimes it was Nate Landow that sent the mysterious jogger, other times it was the Clinton White House. The last time she spoke of this incident we did not get to hear the identity of the jogger, only that "evil Hillary" ("evil," sound familiar?) sent him. Naturally his words varied as well.

Sometimes it was, "You are just not getting the message are you Kathleen?" Other times it was, "Aren't you getting the message?" Sometimes he called her children and the cat by name, sometimes he didn't. One time he threw in her attorney's name along with the names of the attorney's children for good measure. His purpose, in case by now you wonder, was to explain the difference, material difference, in testimony in at least four venues.

The first being *Jones v Clinton* where she "didn't know" or "couldn't recall" 63 times and going on through FBI interviews, grand jury appearances, and of course the tearful performance that was "60 Minutes." He scared her into becoming inconsistent! Naturally she didn't call the police or tell anybody about the mean old jogger, at least not until she was asked about the many differences in her account of events she had alleged as fact(s).

But it gets better. Did you know that the jogger is alleged to have killed the missing cat? Well, that is what she said. Naturally she did not tell anybody at the time about this one either. It seems that the jogger turned up two days before her *Jones* deposition and the dead cat's skull turned up on her porch one day after the deposition. She did not want to tell anybody it seems because the cat was such a real member of the family that it would be too painful for anybody to hear about. You can just imagine how hurt the police would have been had she called them!

Instead of inflicting that kind of pain, she just bravely, and quietly, buried the skull in her backyard. Wasn't that thoughtful? But no, the FBI would not be able to recover it because the dogs dug it up.

She then had to throw poor old Bullseye's skull over the fence and into the woods. Determined, nevertheless, the FBI dispatched a forensic team (your tax dollar at work) to Richmond to scour the woods. They managed to uncover bones but after hauling them back to Washington, it turned out that they had retrieved *raccoon* bones and no remnant of the "missing cat" was ever found.

Heck, no wonder her testimony was all over the board with terror surrounding her like that!

The real question for the OIC [Office of the Independent Counsel], and for every news organization in this country, is why was it necessary to nearly destroy my life and that of my son because I dared to dispute the words of a woman they absolutely knew was lying when she alleged that President Clinton had "groped" her.

They tore our lives apart all the while knowing that Willey, their star witness, was a liar and that I had told the truth. Of course they don't mention the "star witness" part either.

Let me do that for them...

There is no "high road" that Ray wants us to believe he had taken, are you kidding?

What part of that even makes sense?

They admit to more than \$65 million of your tax dollars going to the "cause" and then try to tell us that they have grounds for an indictment of the last elected President but are too kindhearted to use them!

I own the Golden Gate Bridge and want to sell you shares if you believe any part of this nonsense!

The fact is that they never expected to be able to indict President Clinton on the strength of the Paula Jones civil case deposition. And, for that matter, I have seen the entire Paula Jones case as part of my pre-trial discovery, it was an absolute sham designed to cripple President Clinton.

The grand jury, with its federal venue, was always their planned and "best odds" ticket to destroying the President. They needed one thing to happen for that to be orchestrated successfully.

They needed to convict me and lock the truth away in prison for 40 years. The result would be the raising of Willey's credibility and a chance to indict the President for "perjury" in his August 17, 1998 grand jury testimony regarding Willey. As it stood, the President and I were saying the same thing, "it did not happen, there was no grope." We were saying the same thing because it happened to be the truth. The OIC knew that from day one, and still they threatened, bullied, punished, and ultimately prosecuted me because I dared to stand up to them and to tell the truth despite their best efforts to silence me.

The problem was that they did not get a conviction; not even in the notoriously conservative Fourth Circuit were they able to convict. They could not get a conviction with the foreman, a Freeper [i.e., supporter of the right-wing web site freerepublic.com], who posted on the Internet via a buddy during the trial (and yes, Pete Yost of the AP and quoted in the report knew that, so did Judge Hilton). They could not get a conviction when another juror (as an example of the Fourth Circuit jury pool) was the wife of a CIA attorney, the mother of an intern with [right-wing Georgia congressman] Bob Barr, and she herself worked for an extreme right-wing "right to life," group. They still could not get a conviction and the "party" was over as a result. Starr packed it in and Robert Ray was left to explain their over zealous prosecution of me.

Or, he could take the path he chose and explain why they did not use Willey as a tool to indict the President. He could not do both and save any shred of the OIC's credibility. He could not say they believed Willey and came after me in true Nazi form but then decided not to indict the President for speaking the same words I had spoken and I had been indicted for speaking. That would never fly. They had to admit that Willey was a liar to explain not using her testimony for their ultimate goal. And if you notice, they carefully avoid admitting why they needed her and why they went to such lengths to protect her.

They are still protecting themselves by protecting her, even with the admissions made in the report. For your information, the result of her first polygraph question about me was not "inconclusive" and did not involve only one "confusing" question, as she has stated. The results were "consistent with deception." The Government not only lied about these results, but allowed my grievance against Ken Starr in the Eighth Circuit to be partly determined, and thrown out of court, on the strength of this lie. This lie, and that of Michael Isikoff who claimed I kept changing my story.

I assume that reporters are under oath as they write and that Michael Isikoff was not influenced by the \$600,000 check he had in his pocket as an advance on the book he was writing about a story he certainly had no need to influence. Nevertheless, the claim that I kept changing my story was never even attempted by the OIC. In fact, Robert Ray, and David Barger (my prosecutor) before him, were careful to say that I was consistent. A "consistent serial liar" was Barger's description of me.

Robert Ray, who inherited a mess, did not go that far. He simply stated that I was consistent and described the various venues where I said the same thing over and over. Having admitted to at least some of Willey's

lies, having admitted that she would not hold up in court but not that she was their only chance in court, the OIC was backed into a corner. They simply made my prosecution a footnote in the Willey story and offered no explanation beyond a feeble attempt to make me sound guilty based on the lies of witnesses they attempted to use in order to bolster their case.

Had these witnesses been credible, including Willey, they would have retried my case in a heartbeat! They weren't, and the OIC knew that. My attorneys did not even need to present a defense.

They knew that would happen only once, they knew because [Steele attorney] Nancy Luque, Esq. told them so. She told them that the next time their witnesses would be lucky to "slither out of court on their bellies, especially Willey who crawled out the first time." They opted to forego a second trial because they knew she could do it, there was no case and no crime...

Speaking of "crime," do you actually know what the charges were for or about? I was charged with three counts for "Obstruction of Justice," and one count for "False Statements." All four counts were for the same "crime" and would net 40 years in Federal prison per Federal guidelines for criminal conviction. When asked, I told the FBI agents who came to my door that Willey did not come to my house as she was still claiming, that she never told me anything about a grope, and that I did not believe it happened. That was Count one, "false statements" to federal agents.

When asked by the prosecutor to do so, I repeated this same thing, the truth, in two grand juries, once in the district and once in Virginia. That brought about two more counts, this time for "Obstruction of Justice." It seems I was somehow impeding justice in the *Jones* case when I said Willey hadn't come to my house or told me about her alleged "grope."

And that was not even the end of my crime spree, no sir, I went right on the "Larry King Show" and said all of it all over again! This time it appears that I was trying to influence potential jurors all over the country. These were the jurors who might have presided over *Jones v Clinton* and would certainly have been influenced by an ordinary American that most of them, if the case had ever gone to trial, had probably never heard in August 1998. The power of my spoken word might even be impressive except for one little thing, I was telling the truth and the OIC knew that.

They, not I, had the real power, the power to indict, the power to destroy. They were protecting Willey and they could not afford my honesty or credibility. They had become an out of control freight train driven by Ken Starr and his partisan allies. It was a train loaded with all of the power and resources of the United States government, it was also headed straight for me.

I never even saw it coming...

So, you tell me, why am I sitting here in a rented second floor walk-up, albeit at the beach, awaiting the outcome of possible condemnation resulting from six violations of the city housing code? The owner has made no effort to make repairs or to even get bids on the work. I want to know why is it okay for me to be 55 years old, the single parent of an 11-year-old son, and be left like this, left damaged and to "start over"? We are a long way from our former life on Arsenal Drive.

Is this America today?

Please tell me in a way I can understand, why has a government I once respected made Adam and me their "collateral damage" in a failed coup to overthrow two elections? And why does the media continue to look the other way? They might write that Willey lied, but where is the part about the havoc caused, and lives nearly destroyed, by those lies and an overzealous prosecutor who was willing to cover them up?

Do they have any idea, could anybody really know, of the damage that has been done to us?

I think not. One thing is clear though, Ken Starr "got out while the getting was good." He left Robert Ray to clean up after him, are we surprised? Again, I think not. The real question here is will the media be willing to step to the plate and write the truth, the jury is still out on that

one.

I thank you for the opportunity to address at least some of the issues that extend far beyond the "final report." I ask you to think about them and about the aftermath in the context of your own lives.

If this could happen to me, it could happen to any one of us.

We need to throw down our partisan swords and work together to make certain that it doesn't happen to one more American citizen. None of us is safe from a government with too much power and too many of our resources. Think about it...

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Hiatt Steele



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact