

A letter from a Massachusetts attorney

Continue your coverage and protests of the Julie Hiatt Steele indictment

12 January 1999

To the editor,

I was most gratified to see your swift response to Starr's latest outrage--the indictment of Julie Hiatt Steele. Most of the media is too preoccupied with the process of legitimizing the Senate show trial to pay any attention to the matter. I am convinced, however, that if the spotlight can, ever so briefly, be turned on the timing and substance of Starr's latest outrage, he will, at long last, be revealed as the partisan and dangerous hack that he is.

To that end, it is essential that the facts underlying the indictment of Julie Steele be fully explored and explained. That exposition will fully substantiate the conclusions and alarm voiced in your editorial. I would, therefore, entreat your publication devote the time and energy necessary to develop that record in greater detail.

In that regard I would like to direct your attention to an op-ed piece authored by Tom Oliphant which appeared in the *Boston Globe* this morning (January 10, 1999). I would also offer my own modest observations on the subject, as follows:

In an effort to elevate the charges against Ms. Steele over a dispute between Ms. Steele and Ms. Willey, the indictment filed by Starr alleges that Steele repeated Willey's allegations to a John Doe and a Jane Doe. Conspicuously absent from the lengthy indictment is an allegation as to the precise time when Ms. Steele made the alleged statements to them. The omission of that specificity in the indictment is a clear indication that the indictment is a farce.

Background: Ms. Steele's position is that Ms. Willey never mentioned the matter to her until March of 1997. At that time, Ms. Willey called her and asked that she tell Michael Isikoff the following: That she (Willey)

had told her (Steele) of the alleged incident right after its Nov. 1993 occurrence and that Willey was very upset at that time. Ms. Steele contends that she initially acceded to Willey's request but that in July of 1997 she contacted Isikoff and recanted her original story.

Obviously, if Ms. Steele had told third persons of the incident before the alleged March 1997 phone call from Willey, Steele's credibility would be severely damaged. If, however, she reported the gossip to third persons between the alleged call from Willey in March 1997 and her July 1997 renunciation, her statements to the third parties would prove nothing.

Clearly, the date(s) that Steele made any statement to John Doe and/or Jane Doe would be a critical factor in assessing whether or not a prima facie case could be made that Ms. Steele had committed the crimes for which she has been indicted. I would, therefore, submit that the omission of the dates from the indictment simply cannot be ascribed to inadvertence. Rather the omission was an intentional ploy to paper over the absurdity and political motivation of the indictment.

While the constant machinations and pseudo-constitutional hogwash of Starr and the Republican jihad leave me in a state of constant outrage, there is something profoundly venal in their decision to crush and destroy an innocent bystander like Julie Steele. It is clear that a la Susan McDougal, Ms. Steele faces financial and personal devastation unless in return for immunity she testifies that Clinton operatives threatened to destroy her unless she recanted her original "truthful" statements to Isikoff.

I also would note that Ms. Steele has a legal case pending against Isikoff and *Newsweek*. While I frankly believe that her claims in that regard are not well founded, the case does provide an avenue to explore

the somewhat questionable relationship between Isikoff and Starr's office. That is an inquiry that Mr. Starr and, to a lesser extent, Mr. Isikoff and *Newsweek* must stop at all costs.

In summary, I believe that, for whatever reason, Starr has flagrantly overstepped his office by persecuting Ms. Steele. Seize the moment and explore the matter in depth. Starr cannot hide behind pious platitudes to justify this latest affront and will be revealed as the odious partisan thug and bully that he is.

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P.S. Your coverage and analysis of the Clinton matter are excellent. I would offer, in the spirit of constructive criticism, that I believe your case would be better made with more facts and less polemic.

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