

VIEWPOINTS

Scandal Women: Cut the Hypocrisy

By Joan Konner

THE SERIOUS working women I talk to agree. Kathleen Willey is the last straw. We're mad as hell, and no one is saying what we are saying to each other. We are outraged and enraged by the entire cast of characters in the White House scandal, from the apologists to the pundits, but especially all of the supposed president's women headlined in the Clinton sex scandal, those claiming sexual harassment and those consenting adults who invited sexual engagement and then exploited it.

Can you imagine, we ask, Kathleen Willey going to the president to ask for a paying job? Based on what? Her education. Her experience? Her untested abilities? Or her looks? Consciously or unconsciously, Kathleen Willey wagged her good looks and financial access for favor, and every woman knows that a flourish of that kind invites exactly the response she claims she received — a sexual advance, not a professional one.

The unfortunate Willey needed the money. In fact, her sad petition paid off. She landed a job in the White House counsel's office and, when that and several honorary commissions ran out, she asked for more. Even then, she was offered a pay-

ing job in fund-raising, the one area, if any, suitable to her connection. But she turned it down regardless of dire financial need.

We know that kind of person. Indeed, we know that, if Kathleen Willey were now an ambassador, as she presumed to suggest in a letter to the president, she would not now be making her charges of sexual misconduct against him.

We would never knock on the White House door and ask for such a job because we know we wouldn't get it. We know connections count, but we also believe, as we have been persuaded to believe, that connections should be backed by performance. And we also ask, incidentally, just how much any politician owes to a contributor, the wife of a contributor or, for that matter, to the daughter of a friend of a contributor? If it's what Kathleen Willey believes, that is reason enough for campaign finance reform.

On the other hand, we aren't ceding points to the White House based on the flattering letters from Willey to the president. We working women and, I'm sure, many men have written ingratiating letters to men and pigs who had the power over our professional advancement.

I hear from my friends and colleagues the same lack of support and sympathy for Monica Lewinsky. There are and always will be women, young and older, like Monica, a modestly educated, professionally unproved, ambitious and aggressive personality who aim, by any means, to consort with the powerful. Monica is a type any sober woman can spot in a minute but who easily manipulates men. How? You know how. By playing the sex card. No real credentials for them. Only the

sexy and connected need apply. She, too, is an embarrassment to women who are paying their dues and playing it straight in the workplace.

Paula Jones? We are not now and never have been sympathetic to her case. Hers is not our definition of sexual harassment and, believe me, we all know sexual harassment when we see it. And we all have. Paula Jones attracted the then-governor's attention, not by her job performance or accomplishments. What made her think she might advance her career by meeting the governor in a hotel room? She was expecting, maybe, a job interview? Or was she hoping to impress him enough to advance her status? By what, we wonder.

Women in a workplace dominated by men have to take some responsibility for and control over their own actions, and most of us do. Paula Jones did not, and all of my women colleagues and friends pray, for the good of working women and the country, that Judge Susan Webber Wright throws the case out. Which isn't to say that men shouldn't also take responsibility for and control over their actions.

We believe that women are capable of executing any job in the workplace from CEO to president to Pope. But we don't believe every woman is capable of it or qualified for it. Women are individuals. Some women are serious and sober about their work. Some are frivolous, manipulative and drunk with dreams. Some women are gifted. Others are limited. Many women deliver fair work for fair pay and, by means of it, more and more women can look forward to equal opportunity, financial independence and some power over their own lives. Other women will do anything to get it.



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