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Fact Check: Was Hillary Clinton fired from Watergate investigation?

By Carole Fader Sat, Mar 8, 2014 @ 8:48 pm | updated Sat, Mar 8, 2014 @ 9:01 pm



Pat Carter/Associated Press
Hillary Rodham Clinton was criticized for her conduct during the Watergate investigation.

Times-Union readers want to know:

An email says that Hillary Clinton — then Hillary Rodham — was fired for lying and being unethical when she was a 27-year-old working on the Watergate investigation. Is this true?

The viral email is mainly derived from a column published on March 31, 2008, by Dan Calabrese, founder of North Star Writers Group, according to fact-finder TruthOrFiction.com. North Star was a newspaper syndicate that provided services until early 2012.

Calabrese's information came from Democrat Jerry Zeifman, a counsel and chief of staff of the House Judiciary Committee, who

supervised Clinton on the Watergate investigation. Zeifman's 2006 book, "Hillary's Pursuit of Power," states that she "... engaged in a variety of self-serving unethical practices in violation of House rules."

On his now-shuttered website, Zeifman said, "Hillary Clinton is ethically unfit to be either a senator or president — and if she were to become president, the last vestiges of the traditional moral authority of the party of Roosevelt, Truman and Johnson will be destroyed."

Specifically, Zeifman contends that Rodham and others wanted Richard Nixon to remain in office to bolster the chances of Sen. Ted Kennedy or another Democrat being elected president.

Zeifman said that in 1974 a young lawyer who shared an office with Clinton came to him to apologize that he and Clinton had lied to him. The lawyer, John Labovitz, is quoted as saying

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that he was dismayed with "... her erroneous legal opinions and efforts to deny Nixon representation by counsel — as well as an unwillingness to investigate Nixon."

Zeifman charges that Rodham regularly consulted with Ted Kennedy's chief political strategist, a violation of House rules.

Hillary Rodham's conduct, according to Zeifman, also was the result of not wanting Nixon to face an impeachment trial because Democrats worried that Nixon might bring up abuses of office by President John Kennedy.

Zeifman — ironically, a consultant to a member of the Judiciary Committee that impeached President Bill Clinton — said Democrats feared putting Watergate break-in mastermind E. Howard Hunt on the stand. Hunt, Zeifman said, might report on his knowledge of nefarious activities in the Kennedy administration "including Kennedy's purported complicity in the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro."

Zeifman also asserts that Rodham joined Burke Marshall, Ted Kennedy's chief counsel in the Chappaquiddick affair and Rodham's former law professor; special counsel John Doar; and senior associate special counsel (and future Clinton White House counsel) Bernard Nussbaum in trying to gain enough votes on the Judiciary Committee to change House rules and deny counsel to Nixon.

In order to pull this off, Zeifman said that Rodham wrote a fraudulent legal brief, and confiscated public documents.

After the Nixon impeachment investigation was finished, Zeifman fired Rodham and said he refused to give her a letter of recommendation.

According to the Calabrese column as reported by TruthOrFiction.com, Zeifman said he regrets not reporting Rodham to the appropriate bar association.

So what are we to make of all this? Calabrese's interview with Zeifman has been published around the Internet and repeated by pundits such as Rush Limbaugh and Neil Boortz. But there is nothing to out-and-out confirm Zeifman's rendition. That doesn't mean it couldn't be true, but it makes it difficult to arrive at the truth.

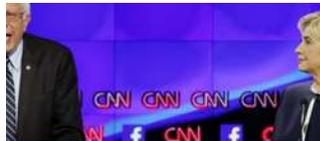
In addition, neither www.TruthOrFiction.com nor we could find any response from Hillary Clinton to Zeifman's book or to his accusations.

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