

'Enabler' Hillary Clinton haunted by efforts to 'destroy' husband's accusers



25 years ago, Hillary Clinton lead the effort to discredit women who came forward with stories of harassment or assault by her husband, then-Gov. Bill Clinton. (Associated Press) [more >](#)

By Kelly Riddell - *The Washington Times* - Thursday, January 14, 2016

Running to be the first woman president, Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton has taken a stern stand on combating sexual harassment and assault — and has insisted that every accuser who comes forward has “the right to be believed.”

But Mrs. Clinton took a very different approach herself 25 years ago as the wife of then-Gov. Bill Clinton, leading the effort to discredit women who came forward with their own stories

of harassment or assault by her husband.

Campaign narratives written by reporters detailed how she honchoed the campaign team that handled “bimbo eruptions,” digging up personal papers and official records that could be used to undercut the stories told by a series of women. One top aide later recounted Mrs. Clinton’s intent to “destroy” the story of one accuser, while former adviser Dick Morris said Mrs. Clinton engaged in “blackmail” to try to force women to recant their stories.

The disconnect between Mrs. Clinton’s historic campaign and her own past is quickly becoming an issue in the presidential election, driven in part by Republican opponent Donald Trump’s vow to make her husband, the former president, an issue for her.

And the women who lodged some of the worst complaints against Mr. Clinton are likewise intent on making sure Mrs. Clinton answers for her actions.

“Was dreading seeing my abuser on TV campaign trail for enabler wife but his physical appearance reflects ghosts of past are catching up,” Juanita Broadrick, who in 1999 accused Mr. Clinton of having raped her decades earlier, tweeted last week.

A day later she wrote: “I was 35 years old when Bill Clinton, Ark. Attorney General raped me and Hillary tried to silence me. I am now 73 it never goes away.”

And Paula Jones, who sued Mr. Clinton for sexual harassment, winning an \$850,000 out-of-court settlement to drop the case, said earlier this month that Mrs. Clinton enabled her husband in his abuse.

“Well, she stood by her man, all right. And she allowed her husband to abuse women, to harass women, possibly other things that he did wrong to women. And she allowed it to happen. As a matter of fact, she would go out and she would try to discredit these women, including me,” Ms. Jones told Breitbart Radio.

Now, with Mrs. Clinton in full campaign mode, analysts are debating whether Mrs. Clinton will suffer for her scorched-earth tactics toward the accusers.

“That’s what people do in political campaigns,” said lawyer and author Wendy Kaminer, who writes on feminism, religion and popular culture. “That Hillary is somehow complicit in whatever her husband did may resonate with people who oppose her anyway, but for people who support her, they will not be persuaded not to support her.”

Some feminists are rallying to Mrs. Clinton, dismissing the questions as politics.

“This whole conversation is irrelevant to Hillary’s ability to run the country,” said Martha Burk, former chair of the National Council of Women’s Organizations. “Trump’s just trying to be a sensationalist. This doesn’t have any place in the discourse about somebody’s ability to run the country; it’s a complete red herring. He’s trying to find something to take the attention away from the fact he doesn’t have the qualifications to be president.”

But the issue is clearly on some voters’ minds. Mrs. Clinton, at a town hall in New Hampshire last month, faced the first pointed question about her husband’s accusers.

“I would say that everyone should be believed at first until they are disbelieved based on evidence,” Mrs. Clinton said, quickly moving on to another question.

Neither Ms. Broaddrick, who accused the former president of rape, or Kathleen Willey, who accused Mr. Clinton of sexual assault, have had their stories disproved. And Ms. Jones’ husband said they considered the settlement the Clintons paid an “apology” to her.

This week, in an interview with CNN, Mrs. Clinton said she wouldn’t engage with Mr. Trump, who has said the former first lady must answer for her enabling of her husband.

“I have no response. I’m going to let him say whatever he wants to say. He can run his campaign however he wishes,” Mrs. Clinton said.

Mr. Clinton last faced voters 20 years ago, and an entire generation of voters has never had the chance to cast a ballot for him. Many of them did get a look at Mrs. Clinton during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, but her husband has become a bigger campaign issue this year, particularly with similar accusations being raised about comedian Bill Cosby.

Ms. Kaminer said younger women who weren’t old enough to vote in the 1990s probably have no memory of the scandals.

What they do have, however, is a modern take on definitions of what constitutes sexual harassment and the impermissibility of any breaches.

“Younger voters have a much more expansive view — and a punitive one — of sexual misconduct than we had 25 years ago,” Ms. Kaminer said. “Now some define ogling a woman as an act of sexual aggression — that’s one I don’t agree with, but still, the norms are out there. Whether or not that affects the way they vote remains to be seen.”

In the most recent New York Times/CBS poll released Wednesday, Mrs. Clinton trails rival Vermont Senator Bernard Sanders by a 2-to-1 ratio with primary voters under the age of 45 — though the poll doesn't have a breakdown by sex for that age group.

Hoping to reach that demographic, Mrs. Clinton has paraded singer Katy Perry and feminist Lena Dunham out on the campaign trail this season.

In Iowa Ms. Dunham said backing Mrs. Clinton is a pro-feminist move.

"I can't talk about Hillary Clinton without also acknowledging that she has survived horrific, gendered attacks on nearly every single aspect of her character with tremendous grace and aplomb," Ms. Dunham, 29, said in Iowa last week. "The way she's been treated by the media is just more evidence of the anger that exists toward women, particularly ambitious women, and the way we are not allowed to exist on our own merits rather than extensions of powerful men."

And speaking to People magazine, Ms. Dunham said it was wrong to force the former first lady to answer for her husband's actions.

"I think that women should not be forced to constantly answer for the rhetoric around their husbands' lives," Ms. Dunham said. "It's really important to view Hillary as an independent candidate and as a person who has her own really interesting and beautiful track record of supporting and protecting women. While she's clearly very connected to her husband, it's fully her that I'm so excited to be talking about."

Some voters do have concerns about Mr. Clinton himself, but the questions Mrs. Clinton is fending off suggest voters are also interested in her role in fighting the accusations — and tarnishing the accusers.

"This is all about Hillary Clinton's treatment of women who may have been sexually abused," MSNBC host Joe Scarborough said on his show this week. "Can she move forward in this campaign, talking about a war on women, as she did in Northern Iowa, that women who claim to be sexually abused have the right to be heard and the right to be believed? Do we have to examine what she did to protect herself and her position of power when women came forward and claimed sexual abuse on her husband's part?"

Mrs. Clinton's own former confidantes do not cast her behavior in a flattering light.

"There could be no question that Hillary was Bill's fiercest defender in preventing his other women from causing trouble," journalist Carl Bernstein wrote in his book "A Woman in

Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton." "She never doubted that if the women, and the enemies who used them, succeeded or became too visible and credible, the whole edifice could come down, including their marriage."

Mrs. Clinton would work side by side with Betsey Wright, then her husband's top aide, to collect personal papers, correspondence and any official records on the women that could be used against them. The team also hired detectives to dig up whatever they could to snuff out what Mrs. Wright dubbed the "bimbo interruptions" before they could become a threat to his presidential aspirations, Mr. Bernstein reported.

While at the White House, Mrs. Clinton also took the lead in fending off damaging press inquiries.

In his book "All Too Human," George Stephanopoulos, a chief adviser in the Clinton White House, recalls the story of Connie Hamzy, who told people she had shown her breasts to Mr. Clinton in a hotel in Little Rock.

"Clinton seemed to take great pleasure in picturing the scene again," wrote Mr. Stephanopoulos, an anchor and political analyst for ABC News. "Hillary was less than amused. 'We have to destroy her story,' she said from her seat next to him on the plane. I was with her. Hamzy's story didn't sound funny to me either. It was flimsy, but it could do some damage if we didn't snuff it out fast."

Mr. Clinton's most famous indiscretion was lying about having relations with then-22-year-old intern Monica Lewinsky in the Oval Office. Although demonstrating "extremely bad judgment," there were no accusations of rape, Ms. Burk said.

It also had nothing to do with Mrs. Clinton, she added.

But the aggressive tactics in silencing some of the women broke the Clintons' ties to some of their closest aides and friends, including Mr. Stephanopoulos, who said he had to go after the Lewinsky affair came to light.

"I refused to vouch for Clinton's credibility, and I couldn't buy the party line that this was more about Clinton's accusers than his own actions — which meant I was the enemy now. That's the way it was with the Clintons — you were either for them or against them," Mr. Stephanopoulos wrote.

Another casualty was Mr. Morris, their longtime pollster and friend.

"What really turned me off was what I call secret police," Mr. Morris said in an interview with

Larry King on Ora TV's "PolitickKing" last year. "When she [Hillary] hired this fleet of detectives to go around examining all of the women who had been identified with Clinton. Not for the purpose of divorcing Clinton. Not for the purpose of getting him to stop, but for the purpose of developing blackmail material on these woman to cow them into silence that had a Nixonian quality to it that I hold against her, and I continue to."

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