

Our Accountability Moment

By Eileen McCabe, April 28, 2007, Impeach Rally

In September 1973, Linda Ensminger walked into my 8th grade English class. She informed us that she was a member of SDS, had a file with the FBI, and was proud of it. She also said that her job was not to tell us what to think, but to teach us how to think. We kept journals, to record our thoughts, and write poems and essays about the world around us. There was a lot to write about in those turbulent times of Cold War theatrics, social upheaval, visible and vocal opposition to an increasingly unpopular war. And then Watergate exploded onto the scene.

In retrospect, the reports of the Watergate break-in sound more like frat boys stealing a mascot. But at the time, it was unthinkable that there could be such corruption, and such manipulation of the electoral process. We weren't thinking of (we barely knew anything about) the US subversion of the Chilean government, or the illegal bombing of the sanctuaries along the Viet Nam/Cambodia border, or of COINTELPRO, or any number of the now-known illegal acts of the Nixon Administration, only of the events of the Watergate break-in and cover-up themselves. My journal was filled with newspaper clippings of Martha Mitchell's testimony, of erased tapes, of speculation and evidence. Tidbits on then-minor White House functionary Karl Rove and a brilliant attorney named Hillary Rodham. Every day there was a new revelation of corruption and cover-up at the highest levels of government. It shook our confidence as a nation to the very core.

I was shocked, and in some ways relieved, when Nixon resigned. I believed that now that he had resigned, that he would be tried for his crimes, justice would be done, and we could close this unfortunate chapter in our history. I was shocked and appalled when President Ford pardoned Nixon, thinking to myself, "you don't pardon someone, unless he's guilty."

Fast forward to the present. President Ford recently passed away, and in the newspaper elegies, he was praised for the great healing moment of pardoning Richard Nixon. There was no healing in that moment for me. It was the beginning of my cynicism and suspicion of our government. It was a political awakening of the most negative kind. As an impressionable adolescent, I was aware of the cognitive dissonance between what my parents were teaching me about accountability and consequences, and the seeming immunity of those rich and powerful enough to escape them.

We have evidence of crimes by the Bush Administration that make the events of Watergate sound trivial by comparison. We have allegations of breaches of international treaties, of tolerance and even sanction of torture, obvious violations of international law, such as the Hague Conventions, subversion of intelligence agencies and processes and violation of constitutional protections. But instead of our Representatives and Senators asking the famous question "What did the president know, and when did he know it," we have the Speaker of the House saying that "impeachment is off the table."

Fortunately, we have a few brave individuals such as Mayor Rocky Anderson, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and the leadership of the Green Party of the US who are willing to risk their own political careers to ask the difficult questions. The Mayor's actions are well known in Salt Lake City. Congresswoman McKinney's last official act was to submit articles of impeachment against Mr. Bush, Mr. Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Congressman Kucinich has submitted 3 articles of impeachment against Mr. Cheney, under House Resolution 333. His website <http://kucinich.house.gov> has extensive supporting documentation for these articles of impeachment. I urge you to read the resolution, check out the supporting documents, and come to your own conclusion. The Green Party of the US called for impeachment of President Bush in 2003; more information may be found on www.gp.org, on the press, action and impeach pages. The Desert Greens, Green Party of Utah, are joined by local Green parties across the nation in events scheduled for April 28, 2007.

As a people we carry unhealed wounds with us whenever justice is not done. We still carry scars from the Nixon Administration, when those responsible at the highest levels were not held to account for their actions. There can be no healing without accountability. This is not about partisan rancor, or about retaliation; it is about accountability, and respect for ourselves and our ideals. Will we teach another generation of Americans that it is not only acceptable, but business as usual to subvert and twist and violate the laws of this nation for power or private gain? Let us start the healing. **Investigate! Impeach! Indict!**