

THE POWER HOUSE,

Susan Trento, St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 193 - 200

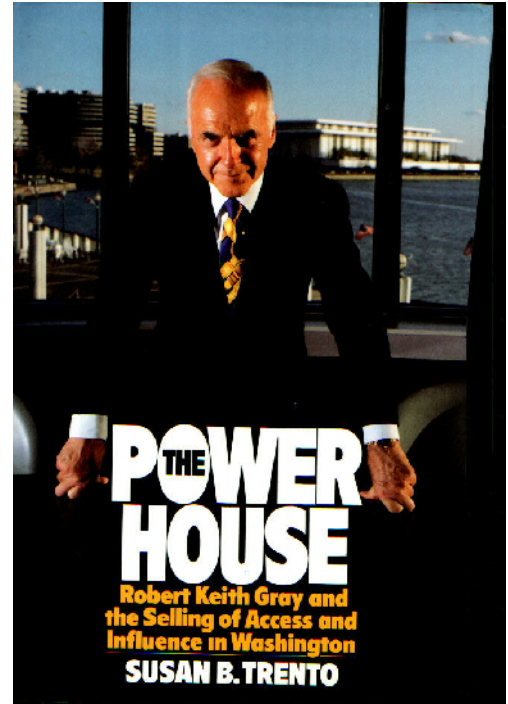
Gray was just the type to impress Meese. "At the heart of a lot of his [Meese's] problem [was] essentially social insecurity, that the people who preyed on Ed Meese bet on the fact that Ed didn't feel comfortable in the real establishment social world. Ed was kind of a grown up young Republican Kiwanis. He wasn't a natural for the Georgetown cocktail, dinner party set. He just wasn't. So people who had that kind establishment flavor, albeit conservative establishment flavor, as Gray was, he was impressed," explained a former Meese staffer.

Under Reagan, domestic social issues were quite important to the movement conservatives but the White House realized how politically volatile they were. "The decision making, I think, a lot of times was pragmatic, not sort of a two-faced ideological decision making. And if a Gray could come in and make pragmatic arguments about why you don't want to overdo, they would listen to him," said a Reagan political appointee. Although Reagan and Meese constantly espoused the philosophy of the right, the conservative agenda was never truly pursued, a victim of the reality of Beltway politics. **The travails of Judith Reisman make a good case study of why this happened.**

Judith Reisman, Ph.D., had a background in music and performance art. She had written children's songs for PBS and Captain Kangaroo. In the mid-1970s, she returned to college and received her Ph.D. in communication from Case Western Reserve. While completing her graduate work, she started looking at pornography: the relationship between pedophiles and what they were reading. She came to believe that there was a relationship between juvenile sex abuse and the use of children in pornography. A Jewish feminist, she left for Israel to teach and began doing research on Alfred Kinsey, the father of sexology. Occasionally she traveled back to the United States to discuss her work.

One night, in 1983, she was on a local radio show in Washington where a Department of Justice official heard her talking about connections between sex education, sex educators, and the pornography industry. She had recently created quite a controversy with allegations about Kinsey's work, especially as it related to children. She thought he was a fraud and, worse, had employed and had relied on pedophiles for his research. Her views ran counter to everything professionals in the field of sexology had learned and stood for. It was like telling physicists that Albert Einstein was a fraud and that every theory on which they had based their careers was wrong, and, worse, immorally obtained.

Although her opinions were discounted by most professionals in the field, they struck a common chord with the conservatives now heading the Justice Department, especially those opposed to sex education in the schools. They called her and asked if she could back up her views with concrete evidence. She went down and showed them her work. They looked it over and told



her that they were very interested in her returning to the United States and doing further studies for them. Reisman was inclined to accept, but sought assurances that they would back her up. According to Reisman they agreed, saying, "Yes, we're behind you all the way." Today, she laughs and says, "And they were behind. W-a-y behind. When the bullets started flying, I said, 'Wait, I don't want you behind me, I want you in front of me.'"

The Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) told Reisman to apply for a grant as they had discretionary funds available. She did apply and won the grant without competition. It was the right wing's first real volley on the pornography issue, and it did not go unnoticed. Reisman had no knowledge of the infighting between the liberal bureaucracy and their new conservative political bosses. She thought she was in the right spot, that OJJDP was the perfect place for research into the effects of sexually explicit magazines on child exploitation and abuse. The grant eventually evolved into a project where researchers catalogued activities involving children, crime, and violence in pictures and cartoons found in *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler*. It made the publishers of these and other magazines very nervous.

"The people that initially attacked Judith Reisman really were out to get Al Regnery [the new head of OJJDP]. Al came from a conservative background. He had made it pretty clear that he wasn't going to continue to give the grants to the same left, liberal network that had been getting the grants out of that office over its history. All Judith really amounted to was kind of a juicy target. Here's somebody that wants to look at *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, and *Hustler* So the fact that we were looking to give her a grant just was kind of irresistible to these people," said James Wootton, Reisman's boss at OJJDP.⁴ "She was a convenient target to try to get to Meese and ultimately to Reagan. And she had no idea."

Reisman moved her family to Washington to begin her work, The Justice Department told her that she needed an academic institution to sponsor her grant. Her publisher at the time, Jack Martin, was on an Advisory Board of American University (AU) and encouraged her to take the large research grant, \$734,000, there. All she wanted was a quiet place to do her work. She met with the vice provost, who seemed very excited. Since the grant would go to AU and not to Reisman, the university carefully checked her academic credentials and the feasibility of her project.

OJJDP approved the grant in December 1983 and sent it to Congress for approval, where it breezed through over the Christmas holidays. But just as the money was made available to begin the research, American University began to hesitate. AU officials said that it had gotten calls from Jack Anderson and from Congressional staffers who said that there was a possibility that the grant was illegal because there had been no competitive bidding. It took two more months before the University finally signed for the grant, and only then after pressure from a top Meese aide at the White House.

When Reisman finally began her work, there was no welcome party, no photo opportunity, no press release, even though she brought with her American University's largest federal research grant. "It was very tangential, sort of side operation. She didn't teach any classes. She had no students. She was over on Wisconsin Avenue, a mile away from the main campus in a small office over there," recalled former American University president Richard Berendzen.⁶ Although Reisman had expected resistance from traditional sexologists, she was not yet suspicious of AU's lack of support for her. She thought it was not intentional, that they were just incompetent. She was wrong.

During her first month investigative reporter Jack Anderson wrote a critical column. The second month, in April, the Congress held hearings on OJJDP. Then an internal Justice Department memo was leaked to the media stating that Reisman's grant could be done in-house for \$60,000. In July, there was a flurry of bad publicity on Reisman, personally, and on her grant. In August, senators Arlen Specter and Howard Metzenbaum held hearings on her grant. They said they had received complaints that Reisman was not rational, that she was an incompetent researcher, that she was a right-wing nut who was being paid to look through dirty magazines, that she had falsified *her academic credentials, and that she was nothing more than a songwriter for Captain Kangaroo*. Reisman had not falsified any of her credentials, and the other characterizations were designed for a deliberate effect.

No one would help Reisman prepare for the hearings. She had no media training or a lobbying firm to coach her for her congressional debut. She thought the hearings would be unbiased, fact-finding procedures. She was not prepared for the hostile questions or the attacks on her credentials. She did not realize that the politicians were posturing for the press or that she could not sue them later for slander. The hearings undermined the public's faith in her work, and worse, frightened her staff, some of whom quit.

Berendzen was also called to testify. "In due course her work began to get very controversial. It got controversial because allegedly the funding was somehow a special favor of some sort to the Meeses or something. To the best of my knowledge, the Meeses knew precisely nothing about it," Berendzen said. "It was people trying to make connections where it is all in their minds, not in reality."

Reisman had no idea that the charges made against her, once they appeared in the media and in the congressional record, would take on a life of their own. From then on, anyone wanting background information on her would look to these sources and be convinced that what they were reading was true. "These things have a way of taking on a life of their own. Everybody gets the idea that this person doesn't have credibility or that their credibility is vulnerable, which is more really the case with Judith, and so everybody gets down on them, kind of group-think," Wootton said. She began receiving hostile inquiries from the media. The antagonism against her grew. AU wanted to drop the grant unless someone else was put in charge. She and OJJDP said they would sue.

President Reagan announced the formation of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography on May 20, 1985. Ed Meese, recently appointed Attorney General, was in charge. "Pornography" is often considered a red flag for censorship. The Commission sent shivers down the collective spines not only of pornographers, but also civil libertarians and others *concerned* about First Amendment issues. The concern that the Commission's work and the conservative attack on pornography could result in censorship became a reality in April 1986, when The Southland Corporation, then owners of 7-Eleven Stores, decided to stop selling *Playboy and Penthouse*. They cited Reisman's work as one of the bases for their decision.

No longer were Reisman and the Meese Pornography Commission pesky problems. They were now costing these magazines money. It was time to take drastic action. It was time to hire Gray and Company.

Reagan administration policies, especially on conservative issues, were often inconsistent with the President's rhetoric. While Reagan was espousing pro-family values, his administration did not move in substantive ways on these issues. Why? "Vested interests derailed political

commitments," a Reagan Justice Department official said, "Bob Gray was in the business of representing vested interest. There was money at stake for them. They were willing to pay him a lot of money."

Specifically, *Playboy* and *Penthouse* hired Gray and Company to discredit Meese's Pornography Commission.* Now Gray's company was working to "discredit" Gray's friend's commission. Gray and Company proposed creation of a "broad coalition" of people and groups to provide opposition to the proposals and conclusions of the commission. This new association would be called something like "Americans for the Right to Read" or "The First Amendment Coalition." Such an organization, the proposal went on, "would assist in countering the idea that those who opposed the commission's efforts were motivated only by financial self-interest or were "somehow 'pro-pornography.'"

This was the front organization for the campaign. The proposal also outlined high-pressure lobbying tactics of the most cynical kind.

Quiet efforts should be undertaken to persuade the Attorney General, the White House, and the leaders of both political parties that the forthcoming report of work of the Commission is so flawed, so controversial, so contested and so biased that they should shy away from publicly endorsing the document. The more doubts that can be created about the objectivity and validity of the Commission's findings and recommendations, the more difficult it will be for anti-pornography crusaders to use the reports as an effective tool for achieving their objectives.

Last, but not least, an intensive propaganda blitz was proposed, featuring "advertorials" and "placing spokespersons on national and local television and radio news, public affairs, and talk shows, holding a series of news conferences in major cities across the country" and to follow up with politicians to point out any "misrepresentations" and "errors" the media might have made. Since the media was predisposed to accept the coalition's arguments, the media campaign was the easy part.

Dealing with Judith Reisman was not much more difficult. She had already been battered by bureaucratic and political sniping. So the groundwork had been laid for Gray and Company, whose proposal included this chilling sentence in a section outlining long-term strategic goals: "A way must be found of discrediting" people and organizations whose activities threaten publishers' businesses. Since **Reisman** was without political savvy and lacked allies even at the University at which she worked, she **made a most appealing target for "discrediting."** **Gray and Company charged The Media Coalition between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per month for the campaign. For this particular account, much of the cost was borne by *Playboy*; *Penthouse* also provided funding.**

The larger Gray and Company strategy involved underplaying the pornography element of the controversy and refocusing media and political attention onto First Amendment issues. A Gray and Company executive explained how the people who worked on the account came up with the name of the new front group. "You sit down with a sheet of paper and some very smart, crazy, creative people, and you play with words. You try to come up with an organization whose name will be as attractive to as many people as possible and sounds like something you'd like to be involved in and support. We played around with words like liberty, speech, freedom, constitution, Bill of Rights, American, citizen. By the time you work all that through, you come up with Americans for Constitutional Freedom. You register the name.

Register with Congress, if you're going to lobby."

Not all Gray and Company employees were so enthused about the account. Carter Clews objected to working for what he felt were pornography magazines, but his protests were overridden. "They said, 'You don't have any choice. When you work here, you serve all the clients.' [The Americans for Constitutional Freedom] was one of those covert activities that Gray and Company was so good at setting up--dummy front organizations."⁸

Aside from standard PR and lobbying techniques like press conferences, testifying on Capitol Hill, personal lobbying of congressmen, and hiring spokespeople for The Americans for Constitutional Freedom, Gray and Company got personal. "We attempted to call into question the motives, motivations, the values of the people on the Commission, raise questions about their own backgrounds. Tried to shoot holes in the report, itself, and in the hearing process," explained a Gray and Company executive, who worked on the account.

The campaign was a smashing success. Remarkably, when the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography issued its report in July 1986, Meese, himself, encouraged by Gray, disavowed it. He turned his back on his own commission. The former California prosecutor, renowned for his toughness, actually agreed to stand up in public and say that *Playboy* and *Penthouse* were not obscene. He said he had read *Playboy* in his youth. The Gray and Company account executive explained the tack Gray took with Meese. He characterized Gray's advice as being, "Mr. Attorney General, you need to back away.., because this is not doing you or the administration any good. You're going to end up looking like a fool. So why don't you just skip and go away while nobody is looking?"

Meese responded to Gray's advice. "As soon as he was made to see the folly of it, he very quickly disengaged himself," the Gray and Company executive said. But while his backtracking may have kept the Reagan administration out of an ugly battle it could not win, Meese's personal credibility was damaged. "It made Meese a laughing stock," the PR man chuckled.

In the meantime, AU made efforts to rid themselves of Reisman, and the new head of OJJDP refused to publish her final report. She was told she was "damaged goods here in Washington." "One of the things that you have to live with in this town is you're in one of two situations. You've either got the resources to fight the scurrilous attacks or you don't. Judith didn't," Wootton said. After spending years developing an expertise and doing what she thought was an excellent job in the public interest, Reisman had been thoroughly discredited and felt helpless to do anything about it.

Reisman was bitter about the experience. "I'll never work again. Universities will never hire me. I am unemployable at this point. I should be teaching at a college, teaching people how to critique and how to read this stuff, how to teach about it, how to show the kids the way they're being manipulated. That's what I should be doing. And I can't do it," she said. Whatever the merits of her research, this was a harsh fate for an academic who saw herself performing a public service. The right wing helped some, but after all, politically, she was a Jewish feminist, hardly someone who would have been welcome or happy at conservative institutions like the Heritage Foundation or Liberty University.

A former Justice Department official tried to explain that the attacks were not personal, and that Reisman was not the only victim. "It isn't just Judith. It's whoever's not going to help you. People don't want to support anybody who's not going to help you get the money and power and access. And the minute you are an impediment to that, they're not going to help you because they

can't afford to be associated with you. It's just the way this town works."

Today Reisman still appears occasionally on talk shows and as an expert witness for law enforcement in pornography cases. Many in law enforcement say she is often the only person willing to come forward and testify on the subject. The ultimate irony is that a woman who wanted to express her views was browbeaten by those ostensibly supporting First Amendment freedom of speech.

As for Gray and Company, it did not, as one might expect, pay a penalty for helping to discredit the Attorney General's pet commission. Indeed, the firm received its own grants from the Justice Department to promote some of the department's other programs. "But that again is something which I think the general public does not understand on two levels. One is that a public relations firm may represent, as it turns out, almost opposing sides Second, in this city, and I don't know why the press can't understand this, Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, will work together on the same issue. They may stand in the hall of the Senate and shout at each other and then that night have dinner together and be the most jovial friends. That's the way it works. People try to put people in these stereotypic boxes and it doesn't work," Berendzen said.

Berendzen's experiences with Gray and Company extended beyond the Reisman affair. Gray and Company were, in fact, AU's PR firm for a time. "We [American University] looked around town and Gray and Company was, I think, the preeminent place certainly in those days extraordinarily well-connected, also very expensive. Bob Gray is about the most gracious, charming person you could ever meet. He is an extraordinary human being," Berendzen said.

Almost simultaneous to Reisman's grant, Adnan Khashoggi, the wealthy Arab arms middleman and a key Iran--Contra figure (and another Gray client), gave American University \$5 million to build a new sports arena. Gray and Company liked to take credit for the contribution, though Berendzen denied that the PR firm had anything to do with it.

Ed note from Dr. Reisman:

[Adnon Khashoggi is also is on record as employing *Playboy* and *Penthouse* centerfolds to serve as sexual favors for political advantage.

President Berendzen was arrested and confessed to engaging in sexual harassment of a pedophile nature via obscene phone calls. According to his victim's lawyer, Dr. Berendzen kept child pornography in his office when he conducted these calls. The following is an excerpt by Dr. Reisman in her exchange with Dr. Paul McHugh, Dr. Berendzen's doctor following the arrest:

Seventh, there is no indication that you [Dr. McHugh] tried to assist Mrs. Allen [Dr. Berendzen's victim] and her family through this terrible trial. Nor that Johns Hopkins offered free medical and therapeutic aid for Mrs. Allen and her children after this trauma. Richard Vatz and Lee Weinberg address some of these issues in their commentary, "Not a 'victim' to his victim":

What a pile of drivel. Here is a man who has been caught and who now is grasping at medical straws which psychiatrists are all too eager to

deliver. And Dr. McHugh, chair of Psychiatry and behavioral science at Johns Hopkins Medical School did deliver. He stated flatly, "Dr. Berendzen did not place the calls for prurient interests." Moreover, Dr. McHugh stated, "[Berendzen] was seeking answers to unresolved issues related to his own abuse..."

Still, Dr. McHugh said after the weeks of treatment that *Mr. Berendzen will "never indulge in that behavior again."* How did Dr. McHugh know? "*He's chastened, hurt, remorseful – and adamant that he will never do that again.*"

"Chastened, hurt, remorseful?" Mr. Berendzen...referred to himself as a "victim," in such a way as to fuzz over whether he was referring to his sexual abuse or the fact that he had an "illness" ... [and] repeatedly referred to his behavior as a health problem (emphasis added) (*The Washington Times*, September 19, 1993, B4).

Dr. Elliot McGinnies, head of the AU psychology department was also arrested for having sex with a adolescent girl in his trailer at a nudist colony in Maryland. After having signed himself into what appeared to be a sex therapy clinic, Dr. McGinnies' case was cleared.

**American University Professor Faces Sexual Abuse Count
The Washington Post
June 19, 1986**

A psychology professor at American University was charged yesterday with sexually abusing a 9-year-old girl on four occasions in his trailer at a nudist colony in Anne Arundel County, police said.

Police spokesman Richard Molloy said Elliot McGinnies, 64, of 8321 Sligo Creek Pkwy., Takoma Park, was charged after turning himself in to authorities. He was released after posting a \$25,000 secured bond.

McGinnies was charged with child abuse and third-degree sex contact, which involves fondling and touching, as the result of a police investigation initiated May 7 after the girl told a counselor at her school of the alleged abuse, Molloy said.

Molloy said the abuse allegedly took place at Pine Tree Associates Nudist Colony in Crownsville, Md. Anita F. Gottlieb, director of University Relations at American University, said McGinnies, a former chairman of his department, is a tenured professor and has been with the university "a substantial number of years."

The arrest took place after the girl told her teacher about the abuse. McGinnies is still on faculty, though not teaching.

Dr. Reisman had observed that her work was being "sabotaged" at American University. Indeed.]