

## **Lies, More Lies, and Media Bias**

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### **Introduction**

Is there media bias? Certainly many critics on the political right believe so, claiming that this question constitutes one of the most significant no-brainers since the discovery of the Piltdown Man was declared a hoax in 1953, over forty years after its “discovery.” Conservatives also have thrown into the same category what they regard as overheated rhetorical fusillades about the dangers of global warming—now conveniently changed to “climate change,” which covers more territory—caused by humanity’s oversized carbon output. Indeed, absent media bias, many of the news items we do hear about, such as environmental concerns, and many that we hear about considerably less, such as the fact that the overwhelming majority of African-American homicides are committed by other African-Americans, would not be treated in the ways they are without significant media bias. Thus, it is only a matter of time before Piltdown Man-type hoaxes perpetrated by a biased mainstream media (MSM) come to light, allowing us all to have more confidence about the news we consume through television, newspapers, and the internet. But before that happens, the arrogant MSMers will have to be exposed as the biased propagandists they are.

Nonsense, say defenders of the MSM, which includes most of those who work for the major media outlets in America, especially including network news programs and significant national newspapers, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. In fact, although most—some 95% or so—national news reporters may vote for liberal candidates, 1) this doesn’t affect their professionalism in reporting the news objectively, and 2) so-called “liberal” journalists are drawn politically to the left because that is where the truth resides. Further, as

everyone in the MSM knows, *Fox News* network, the darling of those on the political right, isn't a "real" news station, anyway, right? I mean, really, who listens to those yahoos, Koch brother puppets, and suspiciously attractive women anchors—they must be dumb or under the patriarchy's thumb—on that preposterously self-proclaimed "fair and balanced" network, besides rednecks, Republicans, radical right-wing-nuts, and the, ahem, intellectually challenged?

And so the debate goes on. Of course, the sad thing about the above claims is that each side too often looks upon the other in rather derogatory and sometimes scathingly contemptuous terms. So there isn't really a "debate" taking place at all, since there seems little communication between conservatives and liberals on the vital topic of how news is reported. Liberals dismiss conservative accounts as not worth their time, while conservatives say the journalism deck is stacked against them. On this latter point, conservatives probably have the stronger argument, in that the political inclinations, at least in terms of party identification and issue preferences of national journalists, are demonstrably to the left, with no apologies offered. Indeed, the argument presented here is that media bias exists, usually in a liberal direction and pretty much as conservatives have been saying for the past several decades.

Does this assertion make our comments politically biased? Well, yes, it does, if by that one means presenting evidence about how the reporting of principal media outlets disproportionately supports positions taken by liberals and Democrats. In addition, we shall summarize the research of Tim Groseclose, an outstanding economist who has produced the seminal scholarly work on media bias in this generation. He also affirms that media bias exists and furthermore he can prove it. In fact, many liberals agree with his conclusions, even though they might not like them.

That being said, questions remain about where the bias comes from and how is it manifested in American news reporting. Exploring this question requires plunging into the vagaries of academic life and imbibing the speech atmosphere lived in and breathed by a huge complement of the country's young people. As many observers have pointed out, especially those committed to the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, the picture that is drawn is not a pretty one. In fact, it's downright frightening.

### **Slouching Towards Stalinism: Freedom of Expression in America's Universities**

On September 1, 2015, a group of academicians wrote an open letter to President Obama about the dangers of climate change, asking him specifically to pursue the following policy: "One additional tool—recently proposed by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse—is a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) investigation of corporations and other organizations that have knowingly deceived the American people about the risks of climate change, as a means to forestall America's response to climate change."<sup>1</sup> That same day, *The New York Times* published an op-ed that compared human-caused climate change deniers to Hitler. It gets worse. Dr. Walter Williams, a distinguished economist at George Mason University, found it necessary to respond to a frustrated writer who questioned him about why six other professors at his institution were signatories on this letter. Professor Williams answered by pointing out that his university, unfortunately, was not unique with regard to the presence of those on the faculty who are contemptuous of free speech. He then went on to point out that other professors along with some media mavens had called for "war crimes trials for these bastards—some sort of climate

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<sup>1</sup> Jagadish Shukla, et al., "Letter to President Obama, Attorney General Lynch, and OSTP Director Holden," *Climate Depot*, September 17, 2015, <http://www.climatedepot.com/2015/09/17/twenty-climate-scientists-including-top-un-scientist-call-for-rico-investigation-of-climate-skeptics-in-a-letter-to-obama-argue-skeptics-guilty-of-disinformation-like-tobacco-companies/> (accessed October 23, 2015).

Nuremberg,” as well as executing global warming deniers or strangling them in their beds.<sup>2</sup> Not a very tolerant bunch when it comes to coping with opposing points of view.

In fact, this is perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of the letter’s signers. Hans von Spakovsky at The Heritage Foundation remarked, “They seemed totally oblivious to the fundamental infringement of free speech” that they were recommending. He went on to state that the heads of the universities where these signers taught should be “*embarrassed* [his emphasis] to have professors on staff with such a profound ignorance or intentional disregard for the First Amendment and the need for robust, unchecked, vibrant debate not just in the university setting, but in American society, culture, and politics.”<sup>3</sup> The problem is, although familiar with the academic setting, von Spakovsky (and many others) write as though they were dealing with an unusual or atypical problem.

The fact is, of course, that they are not. Indeed, if there is one group of people in the country who are incapable of being embarrassed or shamed, it is a large coterie of academicians, college administrators as well as students who are contemptuous of freedom of expression and refuse to tolerate any views that are contrary to the ones they hold dear. It is standard operating procedure for such campus personnel to prevent the expression of alternate points of view when it comes to inviting outside speakers to address important issues on their campuses. There are many cases that have become notorious in the annals of commencement addresses that were never given, involving individuals of extraordinary accomplishment and courage, such as Condoleezza Rice, for instance, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Williams, “Suppressing Free Speech,” *Townhall*, October 7, 2015, <http://townhall.com/columnists/walterewilliams/2015/10/07/suppressing-free-speech-n2061331/page/full> (accessed October 23, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Hans von Spakovsky, “Skeptical Climate Change is Real? These 20 Academics Think You Should Be Prosecuted,” *The Daily Signal*, October 9, 2015, <http://dailysignal.com/2015/10/09/skeptical-climate-change-is-real-these-20-academics-think-you-should-be-prosecuted> (accessed October 23, 2015).

The case of Condoleezza Rice is especially instructive in light of speakers who were invited to campus, in this case, at Rutgers University, prior to Dr. Rice's disgraceful treatment, as pointed out in the disillusioning though entertaining account provided by Mary Katharine Ham and Guy Benson.<sup>4</sup> In 2011, the student activity fund ponied up \$32,000 for the privilege of listening to "Snooki," an MTV, "Jersey Shore" cast member (calling her an "actress" probably constitutes noun abuse), who showered her acolytes with such pearls of wisdom as, "study hard, but party harder." As if any college student in America needed to be told that. But she wasn't done. She also instructed her eager seekers of wisdom in the delicacies of the "Jersey Shore" fist pump and something known as a "tree branch" dance. It is perhaps at this point in the conversation where one interjects with the comment that you can't make this stuff up, when referring to her parting words about the main inspirational act in her life, which was getting tan, because that makes you feel good about yourself. No doubt that it does, but one still can reasonably expect more for the money, especially for those students who seriously desire to cut their intellectual teeth on more meaty philosophical topics.

Which brings us to Condoleezza Rice, whose record of accomplishment can hardly be surpassed, particularly given her humble origins and spectacular career, the stuff from which American dreams are made. Fast forward to 2014, when her invitation to give the commencement address was made public. Campus radicals, students and professors, became enraged, several marching with signs that said, "Cancel Condi!" and "War Criminals Out!" Fifty students occupied the President's office; another 100 students charged into a student senate meeting to protest; and the Rutgers-New Brunswick faculty council passed a resolution insisting that her invitation be rescinded. This in a student body numbering 45,000 undergraduates, whose

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Katharine Ham and Guy Benson, *End of Discussion: How the Left's Outrage Industry Shuts Down Debate, Manipulates Voters, and Makes America Less Free (and Fun)* (New York: Crown Forum, 2015), 122-133.

graduating seniors among them were denied the privilege of listening to a living historical legend because it might upset the delicate outrage sensors of a miniscule minority, or, heavens' sakes, give a handful of radicals a case of the vapors. But there seriously is no way to make light of the case, particularly since expunging people of huge accomplishment from your invitation list has attained epidemic proportions in recent years, according to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). This organization noted that from 1987 to 2008, there were 62 cases of cancellations for invited speakers, this period of 21 years; but that number was the same for 2009 to 2014, a mere six years.<sup>5</sup> In short, intellectual bigotry without question is on the rise.

And it has tremendous costs, especially to those deprived of witnessing, first hand, as it were, major historical personages entering their young and naïve lives, if only for a short time. Consider the case of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, whose bravery demonstrated in harrowing, life-threatening circumstances should earn her the Medal of Freedom. Ali's story is well known to those who follow Islamist radicalism, as it involves her birth in Somali in 1969, undergoing the hideous practice of genital mutilation, being elected to the Dutch Parliament, where she was an outspoken critic of Islam's treatment of women, especially after her film partner was murdered by a resident jihadi, and living a life under death threats ever since. She has been under security protection for much of her adult life, especially since her collaboration in the film *Submission* and the publication of her book *Infidel*. But she continues to plunge forward, and if there is any living exemplar of a fearless fighter for women's rights throughout the world, it is Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

Not that any of that mattered, even to feminists whose trademark cause, it would seem, should be the protection of women's rights under any social or political system, including Islam. Indeed, as Ali has demonstrated so courageously, *especially* Islam. But after her invitation to

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<sup>5</sup>Kirsten Powers, *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2015), 7.

deliver the commencement address at Brandeis University was announced, an uproar ensued in the blog world and major news outlets, all of which insisted that she was a “notorious homophobe” engaged in “hate speech,” whose views could not be tolerated in the enlightened halls of academe at Brandeis University. So the university cancelled its invitation to her, along with its offer of an honorary degree, and the hubbub simmered down to its usual status of professed “tolerance” for diverse points of view.<sup>6</sup>

But Brandeis University’s denial of her presence on campus, along with the bestowing of an honorary degree of course did not succeed in silencing the indefatigable Ali. On April 10, 2014, in the *Wall Street Journal* she published an abridged version of her speech, entitled “Here’s What I Would Have Said At Brandeis.” Although the entire speech is worth careful attention, several comments stand out:

We need to make our universities temples not of dogmatic orthodoxy, but of truly critical thinking, where all ideas are welcome and where civil debate is encouraged. I’m used to being shouted down on campuses, so I am grateful for the opportunity to address you today. I do not expect all of you to agree with me, but I very much appreciate your willingness to listen.

I stand before you as someone who is fighting for women’s and girls’ basic rights globally. And I stand before you as someone who is not afraid to ask difficult questions about the role of religion in that fight.

The connection between violence, particularly violence against women, and Islam is too clear to be ignored. We do no favors to students, faculty, nonbelievers and people of faith when we shut our eyes to this link, when we excuse rather than reflect.<sup>7</sup>

And her parting comments, perhaps given with twisting the knife a little bit into the tolerance and diversity conscience of all those who opposed her appearance, are worth particular

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<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note what a *Google* search on Ali turns up on the first page. Rula Jebreal, “Ayaan Hirsi Ali is Dangerous: Why We Must Reject Her Hateful Worldview,” *Salon*, May 4, 2015, [http://www.salon.com/2015/05/04/ayaan\\_hirsi\\_ali\\_is\\_dangerous\\_why\\_we\\_must\\_reject\\_her\\_hateful\\_worldview/](http://www.salon.com/2015/05/04/ayaan_hirsi_ali_is_dangerous_why_we_must_reject_her_hateful_worldview/) (accessed October 24, 2015). Rabia Chaudry, “Ayaan Hirsi Ali is Obsessed with Muslims,” *Slate*, May 4, 2015, [http://www.slate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2015/05/ayaan\\_hirsi\\_ali\\_time\\_article\\_beware\\_of\\_michiganistan\\_what\\_she\\_doesn\\_t\\_understand.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2015/05/ayaan_hirsi_ali_time_article_beware_of_michiganistan_what_she_doesn_t_understand.html) (accessed October 24, 2015). And my favorite, Carla Power, “What Ayaan Hirsi Ali Doesn’t Get About Islam” (!), *TIME*, April 17, 2015, <http://time.com/3825345/what-ayaan-hirsi-ali-doesnt-get-about-islam/> (accessed October 24, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Ayaan Hirsi Ali, “Here’s What I Would Have Said.” *Wall Street Journal*, April 10, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304512504579493410287663906> (accessed October 24, 2015).

emphasis: “The motto of Brandeis University is ‘Truth even unto its innermost parts.’ That is my motto too. For it is only through truth, unsparing truth, that your generation can hope to do better than mine in the struggle for peace, freedom and equality of the sexes.”<sup>8</sup> Enough said, on her part, at least, about the university’s hypocrisy.

Although recounting incidents like these could be continued with little effort, some in particular stand out because of the irony involved, almost to the point of head-shaking amusement. For instance, Williams College has an “Uncomfortable Learning Speakers’ Series,” and its sponsors, who are students, decided to invite Suzanne Venker, a well-known critic of contemporary feminism. The whole point of the lecture series was to expose students at this school to views they ordinarily would not encounter in their academic experience, and for this purpose Venker’s proposed address hit the target, spot-on: “One Step Forward, Ten Steps Back: Why Feminism Fails,” was the title of her lecture. Of course, the title alone could be sufficient to propel some less-than-intrepid listeners to the fainting couch, and again, a familiar story emerged. When the student body became aware of her invitation, a number of traumatized critics registered their objections, which inspired the group’s contact with Ms. Venker to warn her in an email: “Dear Ms. Venker, A quick heads up.... We’ve been advertising the event, and it’s already stirring a lot of angry reactions among students on campus. We just wanted to make you aware of the current state of students before your presentation....”<sup>9</sup> The following day Ms. Venker was notified that her invitation had to be withdrawn, because the college had never

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<sup>8</sup> Ali, “Here’s What I Would Have Said.”

<sup>9</sup> Steven Hayward, “Wimps at Williams and Wellesley,” *Powerlineblog*, October 21, 2015, <http://www.powerlineblog.com/archives/2015/10/wimps-at-williams-and-wellesley.php> (accessed October 24, 2015).



“experienced this kind of resistance” to a person invited to speak at Williams, and “things got a little out of hand.”<sup>10</sup>

What kind of resistance? One student registered the following complaint: “When you bring a misogynistic, white supremacist men’s rights activist to campus in the name of ‘dialogue’ and ‘the other side,’ you are not only causing actual mental, social, psychological and physical harm to students, but you are also—paying—for the continued dispersal of violent ideologies that kill our black and brown (trans) femme sisters ... you are dipping your hands in their blood...”<sup>11</sup> Faced with rhetoric like this, the student in charge of the event concluded the group would not have time to make arrangements for all the security that might be needed, especially if people start throwing things, and “destruction” ensued. But this amounted to “hysterical, insane nonsense,” fumed Guy Benson, who also added “such intolerant, sub-moronic delirium must be aggressively defied and mocked, not coddled and indulged.”<sup>12</sup> And, of course, he’s right.

It is difficult to resist another tidbit, before moving on to campus. Faced with situations like this, a rational observer could properly ask, what more could one expect from institutions of higher learning in America today? Consider the effort at Wesleyan University, which took pains to create a special dorm for the LGBTTQQFAGPBDSM “community,” a tongue twister that cultural critic Roger Kimball first thought was a joke, until he learned that its advocates were dead serious. It stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, Flexual, Asexual, Genderf\*\*k, Polyamorous, Bondage/Disciple, Dominance/Submission, Sadism/Masochism and people of sexually or gender dissident

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<sup>10</sup> Guy Benson, “End of Discussion: Feminism Critiquing Speech Canceled at Williams College Following Student Uproar,” *HotAir*, October 23, 2015, <http://hotair.com/archives/2015/10/23/end-of-discussion-anti-feminism-speech-at-williams-college-canceled-following-student-uproar/> (accessed October 24, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Benson, “End of Discussion.”

<sup>12</sup> Benson, “End of Discussion.”

communities.”<sup>13</sup> Certainly the university has gone to great lengths here to combat the “dominant white-heterosexual tradition,” and it is hard to see how its leaders could have left anything/anyone out. But Wesleyan, like Williams, Brandeis, Rutgers, and over half of America’s other institutions of higher learning who enforce speech codes as well as “safe spaces,” “trigger warnings,” “free speech zones,” and prohibitions against “microaggressions” have by their efforts opened up a window into their souls. And what America sees is not just far from pretty; the substance of these souls too often is abhorrent from the perspective of those who cherish constitutional government and a society based upon freedom of expression.

Indeed, issue positions on which students may not deviate in the slightest degree without suffering career-ending consequences constitute a sort of secular-progressive *Sharia*, and include such familiar topics as abortion, homosexuality, feminism, gun-control, conservatism, race, affirmative action, American foreign policy, the Republican Party, liberalism, Black Lives Matter, campus rape, illegal immigration, climate change, and Islam, to cite the usual suspects. Consider the first item on the list, abortion. Among an abundance of cases that could be cited, a particularly revealing incident took place at the University of California at Santa Barbara in March 2014, when a member of the feminist studies faculty attacked a sixteen-year old girl who was promoting her pro-life views, in the designated “free speech” area, by handing out anti-abortion materials. Dr. Mireille Miller-Young screeched that she had a right to her assault because of the disturbing and offensive nature of the abortion signs that were displayed and basically she just couldn’t tolerate that.

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<sup>13</sup> Roger Kimball, “The Campus Assault on Free Speech, Wesleyan Edition,” *PJ Media*, October 23, 2015, <http://pjmedia.com/rogerkimball/2015/10/23/the-campus-assault-on-free-speech-wesleyan-edition/> (accessed October 24, 2015).

But that wasn't all. The pro-lifers also probably violated university policy, she claimed, along with her own right "to go to work and not be in harm."<sup>14</sup> In other words, dissenting from campus orthodoxy actually is tantamount to violence, in Miller-Young's view, shared by many in academia, and justifies counter-violence in the form of expunging any "offensive" views. This, from a professor whose actions were expressive of her "kindness combined with her commitment to social justice," according to one of her supportive colleagues.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, according to this approach, just about anything done by those whose views run counter to liberal-progressive orthodoxy can amount to "violence," even if committed by a "kindly seventy-year-old professor," who made the mistake of extending his hand to touch a disturbed young man in one of his classes, and was subsequently accused of battery.<sup>16</sup> Strong words for a slight action, to be sure, but it makes a huge difference who the perpetrator is—a distraught feminist "studies" instructor, or a soon-to-be-octogenarian, nationally recognized professor, whose attempt to extend a soothing gesture to a troubled youngster likely proceeded from a temperament acquired during an era long gone and almost completely forgotten.

So, it is clear that words can hurt, violence can be justified, and trivial movements can be criminal, but perhaps all of these things pale in comparison to the practice of offending others when you're not even aware of it. Such is the case with higher education's latest craze, called "microaggressions," cited above, and we have Mary Katharine Ham and Guy Benson to thank for ferreting out this definition from the American Psychological Association's website, which declares that in its racial version, it is "racism... so subtle that neither victim nor perpetrator may entirely understand what is going on."<sup>17</sup> Not exactly the Nazis invading Poland—that would be

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<sup>14</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 70.

<sup>15</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ham and Benson, *End of Discussion*, 106.

*real* aggression—but this is, after all, a *micro*-aggression, and it is being taken with increasing seriousness in universities today. Kirsten Powers offers what she says is a common definition, which involves “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color.”<sup>18</sup> Powers goes on to give an example of a student who felt “disrespected” when a professor corrected her capitalization of “indigenous” to lowercase in a paper she had submitted for grading. One can only imagine the reaction of such sensitive individuals to a viewing of Mel Brooks’ *Blazing Saddles*, a film that either has you holding your sides in laughter, or, for many of today’s students, propelling you in great anguish to some university designated “safe place.”

Again, behind this is a deadly earnest approach on the part of university “diversity and inclusion” administrators to stamp out every perceived insult and bias, as best illustrated by the efforts of the University of California’s president, Janet Napolitano, in her requirement made public March, 2014, that all deans and department chairs undergo a new round in sensitivity training.<sup>19</sup> This required attending seminars based on the university’s “Fostering Inclusive Excellence: Strategies and Tools for Department Chairs and Deans,”<sup>20</sup> which entailed further a “Recognizing Microaggressions Tool,” a very handy linguistic gadget that arms faculty members, who are perhaps bewildered how to make unbiased judgments about what constitutes bias, with the proper standards. Thus, we learn that statements like “I believe the most qualified person should get the job” or “America is the land of opportunity” constitute microaggressions.

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<sup>18</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 82.

<sup>19</sup> Heather MacDonald, “Microaggression, Macro-Crazy,” *City Journal*, Summer 2015, [http://www.city-journal.org/2015/25\\_3\\_snd-bias.html](http://www.city-journal.org/2015/25_3_snd-bias.html) (accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Scott L. Waugh, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, “Fostering Inclusive Excellence: Strategies and Tools for Department Chairs and Deans,” *UCLA*, <http://evc.ucla.edu/announcements/fostering-inclusive-excellence-strategies-and-tools-for-department-chairs-and-deans>.

Same thing for “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough,” which, in addition to being grammatically incorrect, is a microaggression. And, going beyond the language offenses, assigning a black student to escort a black visiting professor on campus also constitutes a microaggression.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, forcing incoming students to choose either male or female is no longer accepted at the University of California, perhaps on the grounds that doing so constitutes a microaggression against members of the LGBTTQQFAGPBDSM “community,” as pointed out earlier. Although the university system has not gone that far, in fact, as of the fall semester 2015, the institution now recognizes half dozen new gender self-identifications, in deference to LGBT interests.<sup>22</sup> Welcome to the brave new world of purging microaggressions.

One of the interesting characteristics of this new category of politically correct offenses is that it opens up an endless variety of possibilities for expansion and censorship, nearly to the limits of the language use. For instance, MSNBC’s Melissa Harris Perry, who is also a college professor, objected to the expression “hard worker” because she believed it was offensive to slaves: “I actually keep an image of folks working in cotton fields on my office wall, because it is a reminder about what hard work looks like.”<sup>23</sup> Even Mike Rowe of CNN remarked that by Perry’s standards, there is “No Limit to What People Can Be Offended By.”<sup>24</sup> Certainly Ms. Perry seemed unruffled by the possibility that *she* might give offense, since her tampon-wearing-earrings appearance on live television in 2013, which was apparently an attempt to make some point about feminism. Still, it can hardly be said that Ms. Perry went too far, when considering

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<sup>21</sup> MacDonald, “Microaggression, Macro-Crazy.”

<sup>22</sup> Lilledeshan Bose, “UC Enacts Measures to Make Campuses Inclusive for LGBT Students, Faculty and Staff,” *UCR Today*, July 14, 2015, <http://ucrtoday.ucr.edu/30352> (accessed October 26, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Alex Griswold, “MSNBC’s Melissa Harris Perry: Don’t Say ‘Hard Worker,’ Because It’s Offensive to Slaves,” *Mediaite*, October 26, 2015, <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/msnbcs-melissa-harris-perry-dont-say-hard-worker-because-its-offensive-to-slaves/> (accessed November 2, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Alex Griswold, “CNN’s Mike Rowe Takes on Melissa Harris-Perry: ‘No Limit to What People Can Be Offended By,’” *Mediaite*, November 2, 2015, <http://www.mediaite.com/online/cnns-mike-rowe-takes-on-melissa-harris-perry-no-limit-to-what-people-can-be-offended-by/> (accessed November 2, 2015).

the complaint made by a University of Vermont student who grumbled that the use of the word “too” was sexist, having rarely heard that adverb being used about men.<sup>25</sup> Surely, tiptoeing through the minefield of politically correct language is an increasingly perilous exercise in today’s America.

Further, without question the cumulative impact of these developments in American education is considerable, as discovered by Young America’s Foundation in its poll of 1,000 college students about their views on free speech. What the interviewers discovered is chilling. While the vast majority of students supported free speech and “diversity of opinion” in the abstract—93%—when it comes to dealing with specific cases of individuals expressing their points of view, the support dropped off precipitously. Thus, 77% of students believed that people should be allowed to fly the gay pride flag, but only 41% agreed when it came to the Confederate flag. In fact, only 42% thought that using the terms “redneck” and “Bible thumper” should be allowed, and nearly half supported compulsory sensitivity training, while slightly more than half believed that “choosing to use or not use certain words can constitute an act of violence,” buttressing one of the political left’s most adamant and cherished arguments.<sup>26</sup> This, from a generation of perhaps the most pampered young people in American history. Worse, in the mordant phrase of Greg Lukianoff, American college students have been “unlearning liberty” for the past two generations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cameron Schaeffer, “The 3-Letter Word That Cuts Women Down Every Day,” *Huffington Post*, October 26, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/cameron-schaeffer/the-3-letter-word-that-cuts-women-down-every-day\\_b\\_8234202.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=women&ir=Women](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/cameron-schaeffer/the-3-letter-word-that-cuts-women-down-every-day_b_8234202.html?utm_hp_ref=women&ir=Women) (accessed November 2, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> David French, “Students Learn What Teachers Teach,” *National Review*, October 27, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/426129/poll-says-students-support-censoring-politically-incorrect-speech> (accessed November 2, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Greg Lukianoff, *Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate* (New York: Encounter, 2012). Lukianoff’s survey is a true horror story of the Gestapo-like tactics perpetrated in higher education to destroy free speech on campus.

All of which culminates in what is usually referred to as the Liberal-Progressive or Secular-Progressive Narrative about America, a country that can only be understood by emphasizing its disgraceful and often horrific treatment of peoples divided by race, gender, class, and ethnicity. Indeed, America's record of oppression against minorities offers few parallels in human history, according to this view, especially involving whites against blacks, men against women, "European invaders" of all stripes against indigenous peoples, American government's wars of imperialism against innocent victims abroad, straights against gays (of all varieties), and Republicans against the country in particular and humanity in general. The "good guys" (or, forces for progress) are easy to figure out: left-wing African-Americans, women, Democrats, immigrants (especially illegal ones), Muslims, and minorities in general. Anyone not on this list (which could be expanded easily) doesn't count; or, worst of all, cannot be really who they claim or seem to be, by their own definitions. Thus, an African-American conservative is abhorrent, as is a Muslim Republican; and a pro-life woman isn't really a woman at all. Finally, and perhaps most important, the "melting pot" concept is dead, was never true to begin with, and has been replaced by a "boiling pot." That is, America consists of a menagerie of quarreling and often violent social components over which presides a Hobbesian Leviathan, The State, which is regarded as an omniscient and eventually omnipotent force for progress. Indeed, although The State may not be understood exactly as a sort of Hegelian march of God on earth—secular progressives generally do not believe in God—it certainly comes as close to an object of worship as they are willing to go.

In summary, it is important to emphasize that the problem of many of the best American colleges and universities today cannot be reduced to singling out the biases of this or that particular administrator, professor, or student, but rather understanding the academic

environments that permit only one opinion on a variety of vitally important matters in the public sphere. Further, it is from those who have been immersed in speech environments that are often ferociously hostile to freedom of expression, from these crops of bright and eager graduates, America recruits its future leaders—business people and bureaucrats, office holders at all levels, judges and counselors, congressmen and senators and their staffs.

And, of course, journalists.

### **Shaping the American Mind: All the News That Fits The Narrative**

On August 26, 2015, Bryce Williams, a former reporter for a CBS affiliate, WDJB, in Roanoke, Virginia, aimed his Glock 19, 9mm pistol at Alison Parker and Adam Ward, firing eight rounds and killing them both. The two employees of the station—Parker was a reporter and Ward a cameraman—were interviewing Vicki Gardner from the local Chamber of Commerce, and she was also hit but managed to survive. Although during the previous twelve months the nation had seen numerous riots and killings—Ferguson and Baltimore come to mind—the nation was still shocked at this cold-blooded murder.<sup>28</sup> Alison Parker was described as “the most radiant woman I ever met,” according to a coworker, and Adam Ward was remembered as “vivacious and funny, the sort of person you never saw without a smile.”<sup>29</sup> The on-air mourning and tributes by all the members of the station were poignant and heart-breaking.

So, how was this story reported in the national news? Of course, it depends on the source in question, but a few representative headlines and lead paragraphs capture the main points.

Consider *The New York Times* account first:

EX-BROADCASTER KILLS 2 ON AIR IN VIRGINIA SHOOTING; TAKES OWN LIFE

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<sup>28</sup> “Journalists Killed During Live Broadcast,” *CBS News*, August 26, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/journalists-killed-during-live-broadcast-wdbj-tv/4/> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Todd Leopard and Emanuella Grinberg, “Friends, Family Mourn WDBJ’s Alison Parker and Adam Ward,” *CNN News*, August 27, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/26/us/alison-parker-adam-ward-wdbj-profile/> (accessed October 27, 2015).



*He was a fired television reporter with a history of conflicts at work and rage apparently stoked by racial grievances.*<sup>30</sup>

And this entry from the *Washington Post*:

IN ALLEGED SHOOTER’S MEMO, RAGE AT CO-WORKERS AND CHARLESTON SHOOTER

*Vester Lee Flanagan II [aka Bryce Williams] shot and killed two former coworkers because of workplace grievances and anger from the massacre at a black church in Charleston, S.C., Flanagan wrote in a suicide note he sent to ABC News shortly after the killings Wednesday morning.*

*In the document, obtained independently by the Washington Post, the writer makes reference to several previous mass shootings that have captured national attention.*

*He seems to admire some previous shooters. But Flanagan, who writes extensively about his experiences as a black man in the memorandum, was enraged by the Charleston massacre at a black church.*

*“What sent me over the top was the church shooting,” he wrote. “As for Dylann Roof? ... You want a race war... ? BRING IT THEN.”<sup>31</sup>*

The picture painted here is that of an angry African-American (who was also gay) with “racial grievances,” whose accumulation of previous indignities had finally caused him to snap, thus propelling him on a murderous spree, though one that was carefully planned, even involving a live recording. Although mentally disturbed and unstable, as can be gathered from the full

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<sup>30</sup> Michael D. Shear, Richard Perez-Pena, and Alan Blinder, “Ex-News Broadcaster Kills 2 on Air in Virginia; Takes Own Life,” *New York Times*, August 26, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/27/us/wdbj7-virginia-journalists-shot-during-live-broadcast.html> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Julie Zauzmer, “In Alleged Shooter’s Memo, Rage at Co-workers and Charleston Shooter,” *The Washington Post*, August 26, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/liveblog-live/liveblog/live-updates-tv-shooting-leaves-two-dead/#f964fc50-33bb-4694-b637-26215a7382f9> (accessed October 27, 2015).

version of these reports, nowhere was he highlighted as a homosexual racist who had committed a hate crime, which was the case. On the other hand, one of the murderers to which Bryce referred, in the rant he compiled for police consumption, involved Dylann Roof, a despicable psychotic who killed nine parishioners in a Charleston Church on June 17, 2015. This is the account about that horrific event from *The New York Times*:

NINE KILLED IN SHOOTING AT BLACK CHURCH IN CHARLESTON

*CHARLESTON, S.C. — A white gunman opened fire Wednesday night at a historic black church in downtown Charleston, S.C., killing nine people before fleeing and setting off an overnight manhunt, the police said.*

*At a news conference with Charleston’s mayor early Thursday, the police chief, Greg Mullen, called the shooting a hate crime.*<sup>32</sup>

The *Washington Post* headline on that same day read: CHURCH SHOOTING SUSPECT DYLANN ROOF CAPTURED AMID HATE CRIME INVESTIGATION.<sup>33</sup> Without question, the reporting for the Charleston murders from both sources was accurate and well written, including appropriately chosen comments from the mayor of the city: “To walk into a church and shoot someone, is out of pure hatred.”<sup>34</sup> President Obama even got into the act by proclaiming “that insufficient gun laws were partially to blame. ‘Once again innocent people were killed because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun,’” the President said. He went on to emphasize, “Let’s be clear: At some point we as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced

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<sup>32</sup> Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southhall, “Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> *The Washington Post* Web site, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/06/17/white-gunman-sought-in-shooting-at-historic-charleston-african-ame-church/>.

<sup>34</sup> Horowitz, Corasaniti, and Southhall, “Nine Killed.”

countries.”<sup>35</sup> The veracity of his last statement is open to dispute, but certainly he had to address the matter; whether using this incident as a forum to pontificate on one of his favorite talking points is another question. At all events, the reporting on these events indicated that in one case a group of innocent and morally upright citizens, African-Americans, were gunned down by a deranged white devil, an unrepentant racist who belonged in a mental institution. Indeed, the outstanding virtue of these honorable men and women at that Charleston church was further exemplified by the reactions of their friends, families, and loved ones afterward; none called for “revenge” against whites; they counseled peace and forgiveness, which is surely a tribute to this righteous group of Americans. It is hard to resist tears in reading their gripping, though soothing, comments against one of the most vicious mass murderers in American history.<sup>36</sup> Which is as much to say that at least two papers of record got the story right.

But reporters flinched when it came to dealing with Bryce Williams, perhaps even imparting the impression that his murders could perhaps be understood better, once you got into his mind. But Williams’s rant made no more sense than Roof’s “manifesto”; both were products of racist claptrap, and neither deserved any benefit of the doubt with regard to what was going through their twisted minds. And the accounts of their actions differed because one case involved white racism, while the other entailed a person who was African-American as well as homosexual, which put him into two categories that require special treatment by academics and journalists. As Dennis Prager put it, it is the “left’s position that only whites can be racist,

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Costa, Lindsey Bever, J. Freedom du Loc, and Sari Horwitz, “Church Shooting Suspect Dylann Roof Captured Amid Hate Crime Investigation,” *The Washington Post*, June 18, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/06/17/white-gunman-sought-in-shooting-at-historic-charleston-african-ame-church/> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Borden, Sari Horwitz, and Jerry Markon, “From Victims’ Families, Forgiveness for Accused Charleston Gunman Dylann Roof,” *The Washington Post*, June 19, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/south-carolina-governor-urges-death-penalty-charges-in-church-slayings/2015/06/19/3c039722-1678-11e5-9ddc-e3353542100c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/south-carolina-governor-urges-death-penalty-charges-in-church-slayings/2015/06/19/3c039722-1678-11e5-9ddc-e3353542100c_story.html) (accessed October 28, 2015).

because only the powerful can be racist, and whites have all the power.”<sup>37</sup> Especially white cops, which is why the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the death of Eric Garner in New York, and the passing of Freddie Gray in a Baltimore hospital, although rare events in terms of what causes most African-American deaths, produced such an uproar. All this regardless of the fact that the three men had police records, were apprehended in the process of committing crimes, and the officers reacted by applying standard police procedures—in the case of Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, to save his own life. In short, how the events in question are reported depends very much on the extent to which the facts in the case are congruent with The Narrative.

The situation of unbiased reporting becomes especially tricky when there are videos involved, as was the case with Senior Deputy Ben Fields, the “student resource officer” at Columbia, South Carolina’s Spring Valley High School, when he was summoned as a last resort to deal with a student who had defied requests from her teacher and an administrator to leave the room after she refused to put away her cell phone. The officer asked the student to leave; she refused; Fields put his hands on her to remove her; she hit him in the face, whereupon he completed his mission by wrestling her out of the chair and onto the floor, putting on handcuffs, and taking her out of the room. The video of the incident went viral on the Internet, and naturally, there was a media-feeding frenzy over his treatment, with those on the political left huffing about the affair as a typical case of a white police officer assaulting a black youth, and a female, at that.<sup>38</sup> David French, however, offered a different perspective, observing, “This is

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<sup>37</sup> Dennis Prager, “The Left Sees Only White Evil,” *Townhall*, September 1, 2015, <http://townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/2015/09/01/the-left-sees-only-white-evil-n2046237> (accessed October 28, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> David French, “The Spring Valley Arrest Video Isn’t Disturbing: Here’s Why,” *National Review Online*, October 27, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/426142/spring-valley-arrest-video-police> (accessed October 28, 2015). Holly Yan and Mariano Castillo, “Arrest Video Fallout: Spring High Officer Ben Fields Fired,” *CNN*, October 28, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/28/us/south-carolina-school-arrest-videos/> (accessed October 28, 2015).

what happens when a person resists a lawful order from a police officer to move.” He went on to say:

America’s opinion and law-making classes—walled off in doorman-fronted buildings, gated communities, and generally growing up in the best educational environments—are making judgments about behaviors and police reactions that are utterly alien to their experience. Having little to no exposure to physical conflict, they have no idea how difficult it is to move an unwilling person, and having blessedly lived in the absence of physical fear, they have no real idea how a human being responds to physical danger. But that won’t stop them from opining about police conduct, condemning cops because they’re insufficiently graceful when exerting physical force on a defiant person, and then being self-righteously certain that dissent from their authoritative view is motivated by hate and bigotry.<sup>39</sup>

None of this helped Ben Fields, unfortunately; he was fired from his job, and as of this writing, the FBI has been summoned to look into the situation for possible civil rights violations. In short, in events that pit whites against non-whites, journalists have too often found it necessary to tread very carefully in such territory, even to the point of conveying misleading information, largely because everything that most of them have learned from their college and graduate school experience emphasized the special place that minority groups have in the American experience—a place defined by The Narrative.

But it is not just minority groups that have elicited special treatment in mainstream media reporting; Republicans and conservatives also fill the bill, and at no time was this more clearly put on national display than at the third Republican presidential candidates’ debate, which was held in Boulder, Colorado on October 28, 2015. This debate likely will enter the annals of history for demonstrating the most blatant MSM bias against the Republican Party ever recorded before a huge national audience, in an event moderated by three journalists from CNBC—Becky Quick, John Harwood, and Carl Quintanilla. Agreeing to have Republican candidates questioned by this trio makes Pete Carroll’s decision to pass on the Seahawk’s last possession of Super

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<sup>39</sup> David French, “Spring Valley Arrest.”

Bowl XLIX look like a stroke of genius; why Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus approved this station, which is an affiliate of NBC, to moderate the Republican debate will likely remain a mystery.

This is especially the case considering the credentials of just one of the moderators, John Harwood, who also reports for *The New York Times*. Indeed, as we have seen, much about the political bias of a reporter can easily be detected by noting the headlines that lead into the stories (as well as the first few sentences). Consider Harwood's contributions drawn from some stories he reported on a few weeks prior to the debate: "On the Economy, Republicans Have a Data Problem"; "Tax Plans of G.O.P. Favor the Rich Despite Populist Talk"; "Outsiders Stir Politics, but Often Fail to Win or Govern Well."<sup>40</sup> Although not exactly smoking guns, there was little doubt going into the debate about Harwood's political convictions, or those of his two companions. The question was whether he possessed the professionalism to suppress his ideological commitments to perform as a moderator for a group of people whose views he loathed.

As it turned out, Harwood wasn't up to that task, which was made quite clear shortly after the questions began. Following the opening pleasantries started by Carl Quintanilla, Harwood took up the next question, directed at Donald Trump. The exchange went as follows:

HARWOOD: Mr. Trump, you've done very well in this campaign so far by promising to build a wall and make another country pay for it.

TRUMP: Right.

HARWOOD: Send 11 million people out of the country. Cut taxes \$10 trillion without increasing the deficit.

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<sup>40</sup> *New York Times* Web site, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/h/john\\_harwood/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/h/john_harwood/index.html).

TRUMP: Right.

HARWOOD: And make Americans better off because your greatness would replace the stupidity and incompetence of others.

TRUMP: That's right.

HARWOOD: Let's be honest.

(LAUGHTER)

Is this a comic book version of a presidential campaign?

TRUMP: No, not a comic book, and it's not a very nicely asked question the way you say that.<sup>41</sup>

Of course, the unspoken premise of this question was that the presence of many millions of illegal immigrants in the country due to President Obama's refusal to enforce immigration laws was not the issue; only a Republican candidate's reaction to what most in the party regarded as an unconstitutional act was at issue—a “comic book” issue, at that.

At all events, Trump's remark didn't affect Harwood's kind of questions, which were continued by his fellow moderators in a fashion that finally provoked Senator Ted Cruz to put his answer to an inquiry about the current budget deal on hold, so he could interject the following observation about how the CNBC crew had handled the debate so far: “The questions that have been asked so far in this debate illustrate why the American people don't trust the media,” said the U.S. senator from Texas, instantly earning applause.

“This is not a cage match,” he continued. “Look at the questions. ‘Donald Trump, are you a comic book villain;’ ‘Ben Carson, can you do math;’ ‘John Kasich, will you insult two people

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<sup>41</sup> *Washington Post* Web site, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/10/28/the-third-republican-debate-annotating-the-transcript/>.

over here;’ ‘Marco Rubio, why don't you resign?;’ ‘Jeb Bush, why have your numbers fallen?’ How about talking about the substantive issues people care about?”

Before Cruz was done speaking, the cheers from the crowd almost drowned him out.

“I’m not finished yet,” Cruz continued. “The contrast with the Democratic debate, where every fawning question from the media was, ‘Which of you is more handsome and wise? ...’”<sup>42</sup>

This outburst likely warmed the hearts of every Republican observer in the country, many of whom had become enamored with Donald Trump precisely because of his scathing and unapologetic fashion of dealing with what he regarded as unfair or politically correct questions.

In fact, Senator Cruz was not the only one to protest how the debate was proceeding in terms of their moderators’ biased questions. Two other candidates also had their say, including Governor Chris Christie, who complained at one point that a particular comment made by the moderator would be considered rude, “even in New Jersey,” which apparently is saying quite a bit, as he should know. And after a moderately rapid-fire exchange, Christie pummeled John Harwood with his own question, “No, John. John, do you want me to answer or do you want to answer?” The boisterous governor wasn’t done with this quip, either. He complained to Carl Quintanilla about a particularly ludicrous line of questioning: “Carl, are we really talking about getting government involved in fantasy football? We have—wait a second, we have \$19 trillion in debt. We have people out of work. We have ISIS and al Qaeda attacking us. And we're talking about fantasy football? Can we stop? ...Enough on fantasy football. Let people play, who cares?”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Bond, “Ted Cruz Slams the Media During GOP Debate,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 28, 2015, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/ted-cruz-slams-media-gop-835340> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> *Washington Post* Web site, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/10/28/the-third-republican-debate-annotating-the-transcript/>.



Throughout all this, probably the killer line of the evening, one that likely resonated around the country in Republican circles, was provided by Senator Marco Rubio, who by all accounts was one of the major winners of the debate, along with Cruz and Christie. After a lackluster response by Donald Trump involving the financing of political campaigns, Rubio took up the challenge:

RUBIO: Since I've been mentioned, can I respond?

(CROSSTALK)

QUICK: Yes, you can.

RUBIO: OK. I know the Democrats have the ultimate SuperPac. It's called the mainstream media who every single day...

(APPLAUSE)

... and I'll tell you why. Last week, Hillary Clinton went before a committee. She admitted she had sent e-mails to her family saying, "Hey, this attack at Benghazi was caused by Al Qaida-like elements." She spent over a week telling the families of those victims and the American people that it was because of a video. And yet the mainstream media is going around saying it was the greatest week in Hillary Clinton's campaign. It was the week she got exposed as a liar. It was the week that she got exposed as a liar...

(APPLAUSE)

But she has her super PAC helping her out, the American mainstream media.

QUICK: Senator Rubio, thank you very much.<sup>44</sup>

And so it went, culminating in an evening where the CNBC moderators, according to Roger L. Simon, "were so obviously biased you would have thought it was a parody, if you

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<sup>44</sup> *Washington Post* Web site, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/10/28/the-third-republican-debate-annotating-the-transcript/>.

hadn't known it was real, a kind of black comic nightmare out of a leftwing theatre of the absurd."<sup>45</sup> Reince Priebus remarked that the performance of the moderators was "disappointing" and that they had acted in an "unprofessional" manner.<sup>46</sup> Even some left-wing commentators were unhappy. For instance, Emily Atkin from the liberal website, *THINKPROGRESS*, remarked that "reporters from both conservative and liberal-minded news organizations seem to agree: the CNBC Republican presidential debate was kind of a trainwreck."<sup>47</sup> Lloyd Grove from *The Daily Beast*, another liberal website, agreed: "From silly and inaccurate questions to just plain awkward interruptions, Team CNBC stumbled in Boulder—and was absolutely clobbered by the Republican presidential field for it."<sup>48</sup> Not everyone agreed with that assessment, however, including one of the participants, the loquacious and rambling John Kasich, who remarked that he thought the moderators did a good job.<sup>49</sup> Chris Matthews, one of the Republicans' most acerbic antagonists, groused that it was "revolting" how the candidates directed their fire at the CNBC hosts.<sup>50</sup>

But a short time after the debate, ideological lines seemed to be drawn in dark, bold brushstrokes. Thus, Dana Milbank of the *Washington Post* complained about "a peevish pack of

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<sup>45</sup> Roger L. Simon, "CNBC and Jeb Bush Commit Suicide in Boulder," *PJ Media*, October 29, 2015, <http://pjmedia.com/diaryofamadvoter/2015/10/29/cnbc-and-jeb-bush-commit-suicide-in-boulder/?singlepage=true> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Hadas Gold, "Reince Priebus Blasts CNBC: 'They Should Be Ashamed,'" *Politico*, October 28, 2015, <http://www.politico.com/blogs/live-from-boulder/2015/10/reince-priebus-blasts-cnbc-215323> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Emily Atkin, "The CNBC Republican Debate Was A Total Trainwreck," *THINKPROGRESS*, October 28, 2015, <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2015/10/28/3717186/cnbc-debate-moderators-yelling/> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Lloyd Grove, "Lamestream GOP Moderators' Total Debate Fail," *The Daily Beast*, October 29, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/10/29/lamestream-cnbc-moderators-blamed-for-gop-debate-debacle.html> (accessed October 29, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> Matt Vespa, "Kasich: 'Yeah I Thought CNBC 'Did A Good Job' Last Night,'" *Townhall*, October 29, 2015, <http://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2015/10/29/everyone-was-critical-of-cnbc-moderators-except-john-kasich-n2072787> (accessed October 31, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Ken Sheppard, "Matthews: 'Revolting' How GOP Candidates Turned Fire on Liberal Media at CNBC Debate," *Newsbusters*, October 28, 2015, <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/ken-shepherd/2015/10/28/matthews-revolting-how-gop-candidates-turned-fire-liberal-media> (accessed October 31, 2015).

GOP contenders,”<sup>51</sup> and Jonathan Cohn of *Huffington Post* insisted “flash and fibs were GOP debate’s big winners.”<sup>52</sup> John Harwood, the principal villain in this scenario according to the Republican candidates, refused to apologize for his performance, and, in a complicated exchange he had with Marco Rubio about the Senator’s tax plan, remained adamant as “apparently the only person in America who doesn’t understand he was wrong,” according to Sean Davis, a writer for *The Federalist*.<sup>53</sup> As the Halloween weekend approached, Michael Walsh, a brilliant analyst from *PJ Media*, who also had spent twenty-five years as a reporter in the mainstream media, including sixteen years at TIME magazine, thereby gaining an insider’s look at how many reporters think and write, believed “the American people got a chance to see the true, ugly, partisan, smug, self-righteous face of what we used to call journalism, but now is simply political advocacy employing computers and television cameras under the shield of the First Amendment.”<sup>54</sup> In short, he knows well the hearts and minds of his former colleagues in the MSM and has acquired an acute understanding of what makes them tick.

As accomplished as he is, however, Walsh still is numbered among several in the mainstream media, which in his summary includes “the Big Seven — the three nets, *Time* and

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<sup>51</sup> Dana Milbank, “A Peevish Pack of GOP Contenders,” the *Washington Post*, October 28, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-peevis-pack-of-gop-contenders/2015/10/28/f7c8766c-7de8-11e5-afce-2afd1d3eb896\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-peevis-pack-of-gop-contenders/2015/10/28/f7c8766c-7de8-11e5-afce-2afd1d3eb896_story.html) (accessed October 31, 2015).

<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Cohn, “Flash and Fibs Were GOP Debate’s Big Winners,” *Huffington Post*, October 29, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gop-debate-policy-spin\\_56320d39e4b00aa54a4ccae5?ncid=edlinkushpimg00000090](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gop-debate-policy-spin_56320d39e4b00aa54a4ccae5?ncid=edlinkushpimg00000090) (accessed October 31, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> Sean Davis, “CNBC’s John Harwood Is Still Refusing To Admit He Was Wrong,” *The Federalist*, October 29, 2015, <http://thefederalist.com/2015/10/29/cnbc-john-harwood-is-still-refusing-to-admit-he-was-wrong/> (accessed October 31, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Michael Walsh, “The Media’s Potemkin Village Starts to Topple,” *PJMedia*, October 30, 2015, <http://pjmedia.com/michaelwalsh/2015/10/30/the-medias-potemkin-village-starts-to-topple/?singlepage=true> (accessed October 31, 2015). I refer to Walsh as a brilliant analyst because of his impressive career as a music critic, media critic, author of fiction and non-fiction books as well as a screenwriter. See especially his most recent book, *The Devil’s Pleasure Palace: The Cult of Critical Theory and the Subversion of the West* (New York: Encounter, 2015). It is an incisive treatment of cultural decline in the United States over the past half-century. Warning to readers: Be prepared to wrestle intellectually with Milton and Goethe.

*Newsweek*, plus *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*”<sup>55</sup>—who left their posts for employment elsewhere, thereby becoming subject to great heaps of calumny dumped onto their professional names by former colleagues who remained in the MSM “bubble,” or strongly affiliated with the political left. Thus, Campbell Brown, for instance, who had a distinguished career as a CNN host as well as a co-anchor for *NBC Weekend Today*, was vilified by the political left after she departed journalism and created a nonprofit educational organization that criticized such sacred cows as teacher tenure. Suddenly, Brown was characterized as a “mindless parrot” steeped in right-wing political radicalism (Radicals seem always to be on the Right, never the Left). In fact, Brown was for most of her life a Democrat, leaning toward Independent, and she remained, of course, a very accomplished person. Still, Diana Ravitch, a professor at New York University, dismissed her in a *Washington Post* commentary by saying, “I know it sounds sexist to say that she is pretty, but that makes her telegenic, even if what she has to say is total nonsense.”<sup>56</sup> On the basis of this comment, one could suppose that to many observers, Brown sounds like a future *Fox News* anchor.

Perhaps, at this writing, the same fate awaits the attractive (can we say that again?) and award-winning journalist, Sharyl Attkisson, who had worked for CNN for three years before her stint with CBS as an investigative reporter, from 1993 to 2014. But winning the coveted and prestigious Edward R. Murrow award, along with five Emmy awards, and putting her life in danger during combat missions in Kosovo did not exempt the tenacious Attkisson from being journalistically spat upon by colleagues in the MSM. Her unforgiveable sin? Investigating fraud and abuse of power perpetrated by *Democrats*, as well as Republicans. “She is definitely not being truthful about being non-partisan,” grumbled a CBS news colleague, who wished to

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<sup>55</sup> Walsh, “Media’s Potemkin Village.”

<sup>56</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 21-23.

remain anonymous. “She has an agenda and a political bent.”<sup>57</sup> *Media Matters*, a politically left-wing nonprofit organization that has a particular animus against *Fox News*, quoted several other anonymous sources who questioned Attkisson’s professionalism, suggesting further that she left CBS under a cloud of suspicion.<sup>58</sup> Further, she must be nefarious indeed to receive praise from *conservative* sources.

Attkisson herself remained as tough as ever and was nonplussed, though perhaps disappointed and certainly enlightened by her former colleagues in the MSM. In her fascinating treatment of her days with CBS during the Obama Administration—her book reads like a novel—she had this to say, which is worth quoting in full:

When left-wingers praised my work, it didn’t seem to ruffle any feathers among my colleagues at CBS. But when conservatives expressed support for my stories, some insiders viewed me as the enemy. [The enemy!] *She’s not one of us. Or else she wouldn’t be pursuing stories like that* (emphasis in the original).

So the theory apparently goes something like this: I was a fair reporter when I examined the Bush-era controversies. But when I started digging into Obama administration problems, I was suddenly a fanatic bent on destroying the president and all good things liberal.

Not even Obama folks believe that.

But successfully deploying that storyline was part of a primary strategy: fight indisputable, damaging facts by controversializing the reporter and politicizing the subject matter. Harassment. Intimidation. Obstruction. And the Obama administration had many willing advocates and believers to help, both outside and inside CBS.<sup>59</sup>

Game, set, match. A straight line can be drawn from professors petitioning the federal government to expunge freedom of speech on climate policy, through universities preventing certain speakers from lecturing on their campuses, adopting speech codes, trigger warnings, “free speech” zones, prohibiting opposing views, stamping out microaggressions and “offensive”

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<sup>57</sup> Lloyd Grove, “Was Reporter Sheryl Attkisson Too Right-Wing for CBS?” *Daily Beast*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/29/was-reporter-sheryl-attkisson-too-right-wing-for-cbs.html>, quoted in Powers, *Silencing*, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 43.

<sup>59</sup> Sheryl Attkisson, *Stonewalled: My Fight for Truth Against the Forces of Obstruction, Intimidation, and Harassment in Obama’s Washington* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 352.

words, through, in the real world, biased reporting on racial matters, treating opposing political party candidates with contempt, and ending with smearing Sheryl Attkisson for trying to engage in objective news reporting.

These are just some of the characteristics of media bias directed at other *reporters*; how do those on the political left—we’re talking about commentators and pundits now—refer to their opposite numbers who write for conservative publications? The answer is that much of what has been heaved out in the public domain is, or should be, unprintable; but we’ll print some of it anyway, based on a gleaning of epithets about race and gender, many drawn from Kirsten Powers’ overview, which is supported by a blizzard of sources.<sup>60</sup> Thus, non-conforming African-Americans are referred to as self-loathing “Uncle Toms,” racial “sell-outs,” “race traitors,” the resident “house n\*gers,” “token negroes,” “SAMBOs,” “cynical tokens,” or racist whites trapped in black bodies. If the person in question happens to be a woman, she is an “Aunt Jemima” (referring to Condoleezza Rice), or, in the case of Mia Love, “a dirty, worthless whore.”<sup>61</sup> Michelle Malkin has been characterized as a “crypto-fascist hater,” an “Aunty Tom,” and a “sellout Asian bitch.” Republican women have also been referred to as “female impersonators,” and Laura Ingraham specifically as a “right-wing slut.”<sup>62</sup> Other gems include referring to conservative women as “bimbos,” the c-word, a “dumb twat,” or falling into the category of individuals who should have been aborted. Perhaps one of the most venomous verbal assaults against a Republican presidential candidate appeared in *GQ* magazine, authored by

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<sup>60</sup> Powers, *Silencing*, 26-33.

<sup>61</sup> Erica Ritz, “RNC Star Mia Love’s Wikipedia Reportedly Changed to ‘Dirty, Worthless Wh\*re’ Who Is a ‘House Ni\*\*er’,” *The Blaze*, August 29, 2012, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2012/08/29/rnc-star-mia-loves-wikipedia-reportedly-changed-to-dirty-worthless-whre-who-is-a-house-nier/>, quoted in Kirsten Powers, *Silencing*, 28.

<sup>62</sup> “Ed Schultz: Laura Ingraham A ‘Right-Wing Slut’ (AUDIO),” *Huffington Post*, July 7, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/25/ed-schultz-laura-ingraham\\_n\\_866909.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/25/ed-schultz-laura-ingraham_n_866909.html) (accessed November 3, 2015).

Drew Magary, who titled his essay, “F\*\*k Ben Carson.”<sup>63</sup> Very imaginative, all. One may only suppose that the accusers in question attended some of the finest universities in the land.<sup>64</sup>

There is at least one individual, a college professor, however, who has built up a fortress of research able to withstand even the most malicious attacks from every quarter imaginable, academic or editorial, scurrilous or otherwise, and that is Dr. Tim Groseclose, who at this writing is holder of the Adam Smith Chair at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Based upon work he and a colleague had completed in an earlier article published in 2005,<sup>65</sup> Groseclose spent the next eight years investigating, testing, and refining his ideas about how one could quantitatively measure media bias. The results were contained in a book that likely will be the standard scholarly treatment of the subject for many years to come, and is titled *Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind*.<sup>66</sup> By the time this work appeared, Groseclose had no illusions about how it would be received, at least among many in the punditry.

The reason for this is that he lost his innocence earlier when the landmark paper authored by him and Jeffrey Milyo attracted attention beyond the relatively narrow confines occupied by the economics profession’s brainy readers. He thought many would greet their study with a sense of relief, and even appreciation: “Finally, an answer to the age-old debate.”<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, nothing of the sort took place; quite the contrary, he and Milyo were skewered by the political left all across the country, in a public relations blitz Groseclose referred to as a firestorm: “Our

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<sup>63</sup> Drew Magary, “F\*\*k Ben Carson,” *GQ*, October 8, 2015, <http://www.gq.com/story/fuck-ben-carson> (accessed November 3, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> Conservatives and Republicans call liberal names, too, of course. I am not aware, however, of anyone who has a national reputation descending to the level of potty-mouthed obloquy cited above, at least not in national media. That doesn’t mean many of them are immune from displaying their anger (or rage) in public, of course, but I’ve not heard of any spewing forth of profanity to a national audience. Perhaps I have missed some juicy episodes somewhere.

<sup>65</sup> Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo, “A Measure of Media Bias,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120:4 (2005): 1191-1237.

<sup>66</sup> Tim Groseclose, *Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts The American Mind* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Groseclose, *Left Turn*, 2.

study was denounced by hundreds, and maybe thousands, of left-wing blogs, including *Media Matters*, the *Daily Kos*, and *The Huffington Post*. At one point if you Googled ‘crap UCLA study,’ most of the first ten listings would refer to our study.”<sup>68</sup> Some were so angry that the publicist at UCLA said that she hoped his home address was not made public.

She had good reason to worry. Emails poured into the university demanding he be fired and assailing his work as asinine and a “cockamamie load of bulls\*\*t.”<sup>69</sup> Another writer from *Media Matters* dismissed the paper as a sort of vile offspring from rightwing think tanks, which assured that the results were determined before the study was even written, rendering its methodology and conclusions laughingly irrelevant though still likely appealing to those primitive minds on the Right. Indeed, it was as though a couple members of the economics profession at a nationally respected university had published, with the institution’s blessing, a *conservative* version of *The Communist Manifesto* and the thing had gone viral on the Internet. Which would be an unforgiveable sin in higher education, a realm predominantly controlled by the political left, though probably somewhat less so in economics.

Fortunately, however, the response of the professoriate to their work, though intense, was professional and respectful. In fact, Groseclose was even offered a promotion and several other job offers at prestigious universities, which is extremely encouraging to the rest of us who long for an academy that can transcend partisan bickering and reward scholars on the merits of their work. Such was the case with Dr. Groseclose, who, of course, continued his research to produce the book-length version of the paper he and Milyo had published earlier.

The result was a study that confirmed, in great detail, the worst suspicions of those who had condemned the 2005 paper, while substantiating what many conservatives had been saying

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<sup>68</sup> Groseclose, *Left Turn*, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Groseclose, *Left Turn*, 2.



all along: The media is biased in measureable ways, and that bias makes a considerable difference in American politics. To summarize his main points:

\* A person's political bias can be measured with accuracy by a statistical tool known as a PQ, which stands for Political Quotient and ranges from one to one hundred, with higher numbers representing more liberal scores and lower numbers more conservative. The "measuring rod" he used was based on issues chosen by the *Americans for Democratic Action*, one of the most widely known and respected liberal interest groups. To aid readers who wish to know their own PQs, Groseclose created a website, [www.timgroseclose.com/calculate-your-pq](http://www.timgroseclose.com/calculate-your-pq). He has computed the PQs of members of Congress for those interested in learning more about their elected officials.

\* A media outlet's Slant Quotient (SQ) is a measure of the extent to which it leans politically left or right, on the basis of citations to think tanks that are used as sources for reporters' stories. On this basis, Groseclose produced dozens of charts illustrating the PQs and SQs of scores of politicians and major news producers, including, for instance, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *TIME*, the *Washington Times*, and the *Drudge Report*, as well as network shows, such as *NBC Nightly News*, *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Early Show*, and *Fox News*. Surprisingly, on the basis of his analysis, "every (his emphasis) mainstream national news outlet in the United States has a liberal bias."<sup>70</sup> Further, the news outlets that probably many Americans believe are distinctly rightwing, such as *Fox News Special Report*, are not as conservative as one would suppose. Indeed, *Fox News* is not as conservative as, for instance, *CBS Evening News* is liberal, which makes it more "centric" than its competing news networks.

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<sup>70</sup> Groseclose, *Left Turn*, ix.

\* Perhaps his most devastating finding for conservatives and Republicans is that overall news media bias benefits the Democrats more than the Republicans to a very significant degree, about eight to ten percentage points in a typical election. Which means that, absent media bias, John McCain would have won the election in 2008 against Barack Obama by a 56—42% margin, instead of losing 53—46%. And since leftwing media bias has existed at least since the 1950s, the country likely would have had more Republican presidents than Democrats, naturally yielding vastly different policy outcomes. No wonder those on the political left went ballistic when Groseclose and Milyo had first published their findings, which were, of course, extensively confirmed by Groseclose’s eight year project that culminated in *Left Turn*: He had let the cat out of the bag, so to speak. Or, to employ another image, he proved that the “fairness” claims garment so often worn by the political left really was without substance, and perhaps the liberal emperor wearing it didn’t have any clothes, either. Either way, the news for those discouraged by media bias gets worse, if that’s possible.

\* The PQ score of an average voter in the country saturated by media bias is 50, but Groseclose surmises that in a political environment without media bias, the average voter’s PQ would be somewhere between 25 or 30, which is much more conservative, of course. In short, the country would lean to the right, not left, if its political opinions were not distorted by a constant barrage of liberal political slants that saturate most of the MSM. But even given that supposition, Charles Krauthammer may have been correct with his quip that *Fox News* appealed to a “niche” audience in the media—half the country.<sup>71</sup> Of course, this still leaves those troubled by the MSM grinding their teeth about what America would be like if the entire media establishment were “fair and balanced,” which is perhaps an unattainable ideal under even the

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<sup>71</sup> Seth Mandel, “Aiming at Ailes—And Missing Badly,” *Commentary*, January 15, 2014, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/culture-civilization/aiming-at-ailes-and-missing-badly/> (accessed November 4, 2015).

best of circumstances. Though Professor Groseclose states that his political views didn't matter "one whit," since the methods he used are "completely objective" and executed by a computer, he still admits, "I don't think I would have written a book about media bias if I didn't have conservative views or if I hadn't received a Central Time Zone upbringing."<sup>72</sup> And he is right. Full disclosure about such important matters is always refreshing. Too bad we don't find more of it in the so-called mainstream media.

All of which puts ordinary consumers of news, average Americans, in something of a quandary about how best to proceed during the daily struggles of trying to keep up with what's going on in the country. If all, or most of the news leans to the political left, how can a person counteract biases for the purpose of arriving at informed decisions about the state of the country and the important issues of the day? Probably the best answer to this question also places a considerable burden on consumers of news, and it is this: Equip yourself as well as you can by noting the sources of information that you receive and try conscientiously to study both sides of any story. Obviously, this is a very demanding requirement, and most people are unlikely to follow it, for the excellent reason that there are too many demands on a person's time to evaluate the news in a "fair and balanced" way. Most individuals are more likely simply to listen to or read one source, because that's all that their time permits. Which is why news bias in America is such a serious problem, especially considering that the overwhelming majority of journalists receive their training in academic institutions that increasingly have contempt for free speech, for considering alternate points of view. And this means that one would have to investigate further how the journalists in question were affected by their intellectual upbringing. But adding biographical analysis to news evaluation is going a step too far for most Americans.

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<sup>72</sup> Groseclose, *Left Turn*, 27.

So, where does this leave us? Perhaps the best answer is, in a state of heightened awareness of the obstacles one must surmount in order to become an informed citizen. Although not insuperable, such obstacles will remain formidable for the indefinite future, because the extraordinary influence that the secular-progressive left has on most of the American academic establishment is as close to a permanent aristocracy that our country is ever likely to endure. And, as we have seen, this aristocracy is usually committed to perpetuating The Narrative to the exclusion of competing points of view, or at least to making alternate ways of looking at the world very difficult for college students to experience. For conservatives, the rise of talk radio and *Fox News*, though regarded with unbridled derision by most of the liberal establishment, offers some respite, though as Professor Groseclose points out, *Special Report* would not be considered particularly conservative in a bias-free world.

Still, receiving news from this outlet, along with what is offered by at least one of the other networks, could generate a more intelligent set of reactions that, if not fair, are at least more “balanced.” And dipping into the nether regions of MSNBC as well as reading *The New Republic* or the *Nation* wouldn’t hurt to counter the impressions left by listening to Limbaugh, Hannity, Beck, or Levin. Which is probably as much as anyone can expect in America today. Indeed, what more can conscientious citizens do in a news environment filled with media bias?