

Media Bias In the Age of Trump

Almost 20 years ago, after my first book *Bias* came out, I made a lot of speeches – some of them to conservative organizations.

The book was about liberal bias in the mainstream media. I had been a journalist at CBS News for 28 years and so it was a behind the scenes expose about how the sausage was made, about how bias made its way into the news.

I said that despite what many conservatives think, there was no conspiracy to slant the news in a liberal direction. I told them that there were no secret meetings, no secret handshakes and salutes, that anchors like Dan Rather never went into a room with his top lieutenants, locked the door, lowered the blinds, dimmed the lights and said, “OK, how are we going to screw those Republicans today.”

It didn't work that way, I said. Bias was the result of groupthink. Put too many like-minded liberals in a newsroom and you're going to get a liberal slant on the news.

Liberal journalists, I said, live in a comfortable bubble and didn't even necessarily believe their views were liberal. Instead, they believed they were moderate, mainstream, and mainly reasonable views – unlike, of course, conservative views which, to them, were none of those things.

But what I wrote and spoke about then – mainly about how there was no conspiracy to inject bias into news stories – is no longer true today.

Yes, liberal groupthink is still a problem in America's newsrooms. But now, in the age of Trump, I believe there actually is a conspiracy.

Smoking gun or no smoking gun, memo to the staff or no memo, everyone understands what the rules are, especially on cable TV (which has much more influence today than in 2001 when *Bias* was published): Tell viewers what they want to hear. Tell them what they already believe. Validate their biases. Toss them red meat. Entice them to come back for more.

Pandering is good for business.

And it's not only opinion shows. All day long CNN and MSNBC play up negative stories about the president while Fox plays them down. And all day long Fox plays up good news about the president while CNN and MSNBC play them down – or ignores them altogether.

There's supposed to be a line between news and opinion, but too often that line is blurred – or blown up.

Exhibit A. Jim Acosta, CNN's chief White House correspondent. In that role, he's supposed to deliver the facts and leave it up to his audience to draw its own conclusions.

Yet he says things like, "I don't think a reasonable person could watch what we just saw over the last hour and conclude that the president is in control ... he was ranting and raving for the better part of the last hour"

Ranting and raving? This is objective reporting? Maybe that's how his "reasonable" liberal audience sees it, but to "reasonable" conservatives the president may simply have been defending his position against unfair news coverage.

Or he reports that, "The President seems to harbor racist feelings about people of color from other parts of the world."

According to who – besides Jim Acosta and his fellow liberals?

And Jim Acosta is hardly alone in his disdain for the president. Consider a page one story that appeared in the New York Times on May 19, 2019.

On that day, two of the paper's top political reporters, Jonathan Martin and Alexander Burns, wrote that in 2016, Donald Trump ran an "unabashedly racist campaign."

They easily could have written that "some claim" he ran an "unabashedly racist campaign," but among the many liberals at the Times, it's not an opinion that Donald Trump is a racist – it's a fact.

As Kimberly Strassel puts it in her book, *Resistance at All Costs: How Trump Haters Are Breaking America*, "Sure, when it comes to the Trump administration, the press rides herd on every issue. But when it has come to former Obama officials (Jim Comey, Andrew McCabe, John Brennan), the media has swallowed everything it is told. It's hard to explain just how big a dereliction of duty this is."

And bias shows itself not only in what's reported – but also in what's ignored.

When Tara Reade went public with an accusation that then-Senator Joe Biden sexually assaulted her when she worked in his Washington office in 1993, "ABC, NBC, CNN and MSNBC all invited Biden on their airwaves for interviews, but they refused to confront him even once about these allegations," the conservative Media Research Center reported. "Out of 77 questions, not a single one asked the former Senator and Vice President about Reade's charges."

As for Tara Reade, the mainstream television media pretty much ignored her.

For over a month, Tara Reade says she hadn't been invited to tell her story on ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN or MSNBC. Only Fox asked her on. Now that Biden has told his story publicly, it's a safe bet that some other TV news organizations will finally discover her. At least one, CBS News, says it already has asked for an interview.

And while we may never know the truth about her allegation, we do know this: Too many journalists have an unholy alliance with the Democratic Party and its liberal values.

No, that isn't breaking news. But bias is worse today than it's been in quite some time – certainly more blatant than when *Bias* came out in 2001. And the downward spiral started in earnest on Election Day 2016.

In the age of Trump, the press no longer tries to hide its biases. It embraces them. The so-called mainstream media have joined the Resistance. And the worst part is that they're not troubled by it.

Do journalists actually go into dark rooms and conspire to bring down the president? I have no idea if the room is dark or not.