

NBC News, the KKK and the State of Journalism

✘ By now you probably have heard about the MSNBC drive-by aimed at Mitt Romney; the one that said he used the same slogan on the campaign trail as the Ku Klux Klan used to use.

Well, not really.

MSNBC got the “story” from a liberal blog which claimed that Romney had used the term “keep America American” during a campaign speech. The blog said he did it twice, once last year and then against this month. The blog then said, correctly, that “Keep America American” was a phrase used by the Ku Klux Klan back in the 1920s.

Get it? Mitt Romney, a frontrunner for the GOP nomination for president, spouts the same hatred as the racists in the KKK.

What Romney actual said was “Keep America America” on both occasions, but frankly it doesn’t matter all that much. Let’s say he did use the same term as the Klan used: Are we supposed to really think he did it on purpose? Why would he do that – because he wants to be associated with the Ku Klux Klan?

You would have to be nuts to believe that. So then, how can something this irresponsible happen at a cable news network run by the once iconic NBC News.

Corruption of this type almost always starts at the top. Management at MSNBC has set the tone, which pretty much comes down to this: Progressive and liberal Democrats = good; conservative and Republican = bad.

In that atmosphere, some chucklehead anchor and his equally brainless producer thought it was okay to smear a front-

running candidate for president; he's a Republican, after all. Of course, they'd never do this to a prominent liberal Democrat. Not simply because it would be morally and journalistically wrong, but also because it doesn't fit the MSNBC business model.

MSNBC management has apologized, calling the smear "irresponsible and incendiary" and said that it "showed an appalling lack of judgment."

True enough, but make no mistake: MSNBC management created the atmosphere in which this "irresponsible and incendiary" smear was allowed to happen – because they're the ones who over the years have "showed an appalling lack of judgment."

NBC News has announced that it has formed a series of partnerships between its local stations and several non-profit news organizations.

"The partnerships will in some cases allow the stations to cover more news and conduct more investigations without adding more staff directly," according to the New York Times.

One of the non-profits NBC has aligned itself with is an outfit called Pro Publica, which the Times simply described as, "the acclaimed investigative journalism nonprofit organization."

Well, yes – and no. Despite the fact that Pro Publica has won two Pulitzer Prizes, it isn't simply a journalist organization; it has a political agenda – a distinctly liberal one which is funded by liberal money bags. On its Web site, Pro Publica explains its mission this way:

"ProPublica is an independent, non-profit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest. Our work focuses exclusively on truly important stories, stories

with 'moral force.' We do this by producing journalism that shines a light on exploitation of the weak by the strong and on the failures of those with power to vindicate the trust placed in them."

This is a variation on an old journalism theme – that our role is to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.

No. That may be the work of priests and ministers and rabbis, but not of journalists.

Pro Publica may do outstanding reporting but only when it fits its liberal agenda. Don't hold your breath waiting for Pro Publica to go after progressives and liberal Democrats – unless, perhaps, if they're not progressive enough.

In a way semi-news organizations like Pro Publica are like semi-media watchdog groups like the Media Research Center. I say "semi-" because while the MRC does great work in exposing liberal bias in the media, it goes deaf, dumb and blind when it comes to conservative bias. Fox News may legitimately have MRC guests on the air commenting on liberal bias, but it should never go into business with the Media Research Center. MRC is not made up of journalists. It's made up of conservative activists.

And NBC News shouldn't have gone into business with left-wing activists, no matter how many Pulitzers they may win for stories about the "exploitation of the weak by the strong"

I know that in this hyper-partisan media age in which we live, it sounds corny to say journalists should go after the truth, whether it helps or hurts Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives; that journalists should never have an agenda. It may sound corny, but it's true.