

Warning: Jim Acosta Is Hazardous to Honest Journalism

It's a fundamental, common sense rule of journalism: Hard news reporters don't cover their friends. It's just too difficult to be loyal to the truth when the truth makes a friend look like a jerk, or a crook. The same rule holds for commentators. Can they really give thoughtful, unfiltered opinions about a friend who, to use one easy example, is President of the United States? No, they can't.

So anything hyped as an "exclusive interview" involving Donald Trump and Sean Hannity, Laura Ingraham, Jesse Watters, Judge Jeanine Pirro or the entire staff of Fox & Friends, isn't really an *interview*. It's more like a *make-out session*.

Unlike hard news journalists, commentators have more leeway; they are, of course, entitled to their opinions. But being in the opinion business doesn't give a commentator license to morph into a PR man or woman on behalf of a friend, especially when the friend sits in the Oval Office.

You'd think the people who run a business like the Fox News Channel would know this. If they do, they don't care.

Liberals, I'm sure, would cheer every word you just read. But there's another fundamental, common sense rule of journalism that the Left either doesn't grasp or doesn't care to grasp: Just as people in the news business can't cover someone they've fallen head over heels for ... neither can they fairly cover someone they viscerally detest.

Let's start with an easy target, the poster boy for biased journalism, Jim Acosta, CNN's senior White House correspondent. In that capacity, he's a hard news reporter

who's supposed to keep his opinions to himself. But it's obvious that Acosta is incapable of doing that. He loathes the president and he's determined to make a name for himself by showing anyone watching how much he loathes the man who calls CNN "fake news."

So before the president's recent immigration speech from the Oval Office, Acosta asked Mr. Trump's senior advisor, Kellyanne Conway, on camera, this loaded question: "Can you promise that the president will tell the truth tonight? Will he tell the truth?" And after the speech Acosta was just as snarky, telling the CNN audience: "I think that address probably should have come with a surgeon general's warning – it was hazardous to the truth."

It's a safe bet that Acosta came up with that line before the president ever opened his mouth. You do that when you're in the smart-ass business. Would Acosta ask President Obama's press secretary if Mr. Obama was going to tell the truth in an upcoming speech – even after Mr. Obama told a whopper to the American people, promising lower insurance premiums and guaranteeing we could keep our doctors and our health care plans under his ironically-named Affordable Care Act?

I don't think so, either.

Let me detour for a brief personal note. In 1996, when as a CBS News correspondent I had had enough of liberal bias at CBS and at other mainstream news organizations, I took on my colleagues in an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal. Who at CNN, I wonder, is going to take on Jim Acosta? Who's going to tell CNN chief Jeff Zucker that what Acosta does isn't tough journalism; it isn't even analysis. It's nothing more than Trump bashing commentary masquerading as straight news reporting (which, by the way, is just what Jeff Zucker, who is desperate to boost his network's pathetic ratings, wants).

CNN, of course, isn't alone. We have the New York Times, a

once proud newspaper that now, on a daily basis, shows us how hatred for the president motivates their journalism. Take the page one "News Analysis" piece by Peter Baker. "So it has come to this," he writes in the lead paragraph. "The president of the United States was asked over the weekend whether he is a Russian agent. And he refused to directly answer."

There's no mistaking the implication in that last sentence – that maybe, just maybe, the president really is a Russian mole. But the next paragraph explains that Mr. Trump found the question too insulting for any kind of "direct answer."

So why would a page one editor allow such a toxic line to get into the supposed newspaper of record? Because, starting at the top, a large percentage of the men and women at the Times just plain can't stand the president, that's why! He's not sophisticated. He's crude. He's not well read. *He's not one of them!*

Just one day later, another Times front-page story puts the president once again in the crosshairs. Here's the headline: "At Inauguration, Spending Money At A Record Pace." And the sub headline: "\$10,000 Just on Makeup."

This "scoop" appeared on page one *two years after the inauguration*. And who cares how much they spent on makeup? It's as if the Times has a quota: Every day on page one there has to be at least one and preferably two or three stories that bash the president that the newspaper of record finds unfit for office.

And then there are the opinion pages of the Times where the wise men and women reside, the gods who on a daily basis tell us that American democracy is on life support because of a president who they believe must be impeached for the sake of the country. They constantly tell us how uncivil he is, how his name-calling lacks dignity.

Fair enough. But then they go and run a Paul Krugman column

under the headline, "Donald Trump And His Team of Morons."

Morons? I thought the Times was against incivility and name-calling, that such behavior offended the sensibilities of decent people.

In 2016, the same Paul Krugman wrote in the Times that thanks to Trump's election, " ... we are very probably looking at a global recession, with no end in sight." So who's the moron here?

The people who run the New York Times have been in a funk ever since the impossible happened on Election Night. Relentlessly going after the president on page one and on their opinion pages is a way to show their liberal customers how sorry they are.

Mea culpa, fellow Trump-hating progressives. We screwed up by allowing this idiot to become president; we didn't grasp the anger, frustration and hatred of his many deplorable voters. But we will redeem ourselves. We will attack him relentlessly in every section of the newspaper until he leaves office, voluntarily, or better yet, involuntarily.

There ought to be a sign in big bold letters at the door of every newsroom in America: You can't report on or give honest opinions about the friends you love ... or the enemies you hate. We won't let you do that here in this newsroom. It's unprofessional.

And there ought to be another sign in big bold letters on the entrance to the Oval Office: Mr. President, please stop handing out ammunition to journalists who hate you ... and stop doing "interviews" with TV sycophants who love you. It's humiliating – to them and to you.