

Essay Title:

Media Bias – How Certain Stories Are Told, and Certain Stories Are Told Too Much

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“The biases the media has are bigger than conservative or liberal. They’re about getting ratings, about making money, about doing stories that are easy to cover.” This may seem like a trite saying but it holds an enormous amount of truth. As Americans, we trust what reporters write in the newspaper, and say on television and radio stations. We expect them to report the truth. However, current media outlets distort stories and certain news reports are getting too much attention. The most important stories are never seen on television, or read in the newspaper, or heard on the radio stations, while minor and trivial stories get the most news coverage. Hence celebrity engagements, divorce, entrance in rehabilitation centers and DUI cases, are sold to the media. American people are then left without valuable information contrary to what story is getting 24-hour news coverage.

Media bias is a “term used to describe prejudice in news and media reports, in which it is perceived as an imbalance or unfair presentation of facts or selective reporting of which events or facts are reported.”¹ The main point here is when biases in media distorts certain stories, and other stories are spoken about entirely too much, it hurts democracy in America. The media, in that case, fails to focus on real issues that underlie the American culture, it has one-sided opinions, favoring a liberal’s point of view, and it caters to the majority, favoring the wealthy.

Media biases causes the America people to become misinformed or too well informed, often due to the tendency of the media covering unimportant stories about celebrities, while overlooking issues like war, poverty, disease, violence, and education. The media content and news coverage rarely display the underlying issues that the

¹ Reporting The News, “What is Media Bias & News Bias,” *Media Bias*, 2005-2007, http://www.reportingwars.com/media_bias.php (accessed July 12, 2007).

American people face. Rather, it only acknowledges news that may appeal to the audience “because of its dramatic or entertainment value.”² Senator Barack Obama recognizes the failure of the American media in updating America with real issues at Southern New Hampshire University Commencement: “We see it in a media culture that sensationalizes the trivial and trivializes the profound - in a 24-hour news network bonanza that never fails to keep us posted on how many days Paris Hilton will spend in jail but often fails to update us on the continuing genocide in Darfur or the recovery effort in New Orleans or the poverty that plagues too many American streets”³ The media bonanza on Paris Hilton’s 14 day jail sentence was among one of most overplayed (unimportant) stories recently because TV news ran hundreds of hours of news coverage, while only showing 60-second sound bites of yet another death of an American soldier in combat in Iraq. Paris Hilton, a hotel heiress and the star in the media spotlight, was sentenced to a 14 day jail sentence at Century Regional Detention Centre in Lynwood, California on a traffic violation. The news media made the story seem so valuable and significant to report for so many hours. Some reporters believed that she deserved to be placed in jail because too many celebrities don’t receive the justifiable punishment they deserve like ordinary citizen because they are wealthy. Others believed that her jail sentence was too cruel just for a DUI charge, it was unfair and that she became the victim because of her prestige and as a famous figure in America. While Fox News, MSNBC, CNN, and ABC were breaking in the entertainment news, debating whether her punishment was too cruel or justifiable, they failed to inform the American people about

² Benjamin Ginsberg, et al, “The Media” in *We The People: An Introduction to American Politics*, ed. Stephen Dunn. 266 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

³ Obama’ 08, “Remarks at Southern New Hampshire Commencement,” *BarackObama.com*, May 19, 2007, <http://www.barackobama.org>, (accessed July 13, 2007).

the 22-year old African-American female from New York who disappeared in Miami during Memorial Day. They failed to note that three American combat soldiers died. They failed to inform the American people that while Paris Hilton was sentenced to a 14 day jail sentence by LA County Court House they missed the big story. This was the story about the recovery of Hurricane Katrina victims.

When Hurricane Katrina unfolded in New Orleans, the media placed a lot of dramatic biases on the issue and missed the underlying point, misinforming the public. On August 23, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck down in New Orleans becoming one of the most devastating natural disasters to hit the United States. The media unfolded the events that those most effected in the black community, remained in New Orleans looting stores in search of food and water that weren't available by any other means. On the other hand of the issue, white Americans were "wading through chest-deep waters finding soda and bread floating in the water from a grocery store". But while Paris Hilton was hogging the headlines the media failed to report that during that week the Washington Post reported "that about \$854 million offered by allied countries worldwide after Hurricane Katrina. To date, the Post reports, only \$40 million in foreign aid has been funneled to the Gulf Coast. The story goes this way: Apparently the Bush administration was stymied on what to do when offered this aid, since the U.S. is not usually in a position to need or accept such assistance. (How, and from whom the \$40 million was accepted is unclear, but what is eminently clear is that \$800 million could have put the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast into fast forward mode)." ⁴

⁴ The Voice of Hurricane & Disaster Recovery, "[Beyond Katrina: Media Coverage](http://www.hurricane-katrina.org/2007/06/normal-is-so-ye.html)", *Katrina Media Coverage*, June 29, 2007, <http://www.hurricane-katrina.org/2007/06/normal-is-so-ye.html> (accessed July 14, 2007).

This goes to show that the media is filled with close-mindedness in which entertainment news surpasses “hard news every time.”⁵ Instead of bringing American people together to work in effort to make children lives better, the economy better, the living welfare of families better, the media devours our interest to support a difference by resembling soap operas and commercial television shows. “*Dateline* is the same as *ER* or *Friends*. They all have to compete for prime time audiences. CBS and *48 Hours* is the same as *Everybody Loves Raymond*.”⁶

“Notice how importance never enters into the equation. Notice how there isn't even a pretense to public interest. TV "news" has become celebrity trials and runaway brides, and sex -- while foreign bureaus are closing and news budgets are shrinking and we become a people ever more thoroughly entertained than informed, even as we live through the most dangerous and portentous days in recent history.”⁷

The media also has the tendency to uphold one-sided opinions, favoring liberals, whereas the mainstream media holds liberal biases. Liberals in a political sense relate to ideas and theories of government in which they advocate individual liberty, for example, race, abortion, affirmative action, homelessness, and gay rights. They use liberal principles and ideas that influence their news coverage and or selection of stories.

Liberal biases undermine the American value. In the controversial book, “Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News,” Bernard Goldberg said “journalist doesn't see their views as liberal but merely reasonable and civilized.”

⁵ Bernard Goldberg, *BIAS: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News*. (Washington, D.C: First Perennial, 2003).

⁶ Bernard Goldberg, “Where Thieves and Pimps Run Free” in *BIAS: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News*, 160.

⁷ Pitts, Leonard Jr., “Too much Paris, not enough news,” *TV Reporting*, June 20, 2007, <http://www.miamiherald.com/285/story/145242.html> (accessed July 13, 2007).

This is how they view the world and not just “going hard on Republicans and soft on Democrats”⁸ They attack conservatives with extreme speeches backing up their issues of poverty, economics, welfare reform and gun control, however, then distort the news. For example, Dan Rather, CBS news anchorman and outrageous liberal bias, was recently let go from *CBS Evening News* in 2005 after using forged documents in a one-sided *60 minutes* piece aimed at President Bush’s 2004 campaign election. Dan Rather is greatly criticized for the distorting of news in reporting on the polls on Bush’s tax-cut plan. “The President calls the tax cut necessary. Democrats call it a campaign for the wealthy. So far, it’s a problematic sell for the President. In a CBS News/*New York Times* poll out tonight, less than half the respondents thought the Bush tax cut would actually help the economy.”

— **May 13, 2003 *CBS Evening News*. Rather failed to report that the poll he cited showed twice as many said tax cuts would help the economy (41 percent) than said new tax cuts would hurt (19 percent).**⁹

According to co-director of the web site *RatherBiased.com*, “Rather’s *CBS Evening News* gives opponents of Bush’s tax cuts far more airtime than supporters of the plan get.”¹⁰

This shows that the media holds one-sided opinions and won’t inform the people on both sides of the issue whereas the opposing side of the liberals may tend to be what the country needs, rather its scrutiny. Moreover, liberals get away with distorting the news and making assertions those [conservatives] on the other side could never report. Great

⁸ Bernard Goldberg. “They Think You’re A Traitor” in *BIAS: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News*, 9.

⁹ Newsmax.com. “Studies Show Dan Rather’s Leftist Bias,” *NewsMax: America’s News Page*, 2001, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2001/3/23/163106.shtml> (accessed July 14, 2007).

¹⁰ Newsmax.com. “Studies Show Dan Rather’s Leftist Bias,” *NewsMax: America’s News Page*, 2001, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2001/3/23/163106.shtml>.

example of liberal bias! “*USA Today* columnist Julianne Malveaux says of Clarence Thomas [American Jurist and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, “I hope his wife feeds him lots of eggs and butter and he dies early like many black men do, of heart disease,” and she gets invited back on TV talk shows all the time.”¹¹ If a conservative columnist were to say the same to a prominent black figure like Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, or any of the likings, “he’d rightly be seen as a nasty right-wing nut and compared to the Grand Wizard of the KKK.”¹²

While the media’s primary goal is to provide an objective and disinteresting reports, time and time again the news gets shifted to the “left-wing”. There are many types of bias in the media and a good example of the media entertaining bias is the biggest issue that isn’t touched on, which is racial bias. Whereas if you’re of the majority race and have a significant amount of money, the media will cater to your story quickly and with prestige.

Issues of racial bias in the media persuade our views on the news we are bombarded with daily. For example, racial bias is all the time on television and in newspaper. Missing women stories are predominately reported by white women, when the white women are the one’s missing. This speculation shows that the media favors the majority race of attractiveness and wealth as oppose to the less fortunate, minority race. Two years ago, 24-year-old Latoiya Figueroa “far from blonde blue-eyed belle of the Bible Belt south, a petite housewife from a California suburb. But like Natalie Holloway, the missing Alabama teenager who was last seen in Aruba over Memorial Day weekend,

¹¹ Bernard Goldberg, “Liberal Hate-Speech,” in *BIAS: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News*, 190.

¹² Bernard Goldberg, “Liberal-Speech,” in *BIAS: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distorts the News*, 190.

vanished without a trace, like Laci Peterson, her love ones are concerned about her whereabouts as they are for her unborn child she is carrying.”¹³ Two weeks had pass and the disappearance of Latoiya Figueroa story did not gain any national spotlights like Holloway, or Peterson in the days of their respective disappearances. Her story, according to blackamericaweb.com appeared on CNN news ten days after she was reported missing. Richard Blair, a white male, is credited for his help getting national media coverage on the missing pregnant victim. “To me, this whole story speaks of socio-economic divides, as well as race divides.”¹⁴ Blair is correct because if a pregnant black woman or any woman of a low-income family disappear there will be no means of getting the report out nationally. Fair news coverage! However, race, income, and stature are the components in the media’s racial bias.

In contrast, the media, for the most part, is helpful in feeding the mass with stories that reflect America. In fact, America has never been provided with a broad arrangement and providers of news. However, government cannot solve the problems of media bias because part of the media bias is in part of political [government] decadence. The government embraces liberal views! The media only identifies problems for the government to solve, such as poverty, disease, and violence. To solve the problem of media bias, educational groups are needed to education people about wanting to understand the truth and demand a balance in media coverage through advocacy and petitioning.

¹³ Lewis, Monica, “Pregnant Black Woman Missing: Where’s the Laci Peterson-Like Coverage.” *Black News Media*, 2005, <http://www.blackamericaweb.com/site.aspx/bawnews/figueroa801> (accessed July 14, 2007).

¹⁴ Lewis, Monica, “Pregnant Black Woman Missing: Where’s the Laci Peterson-Like Coverage.” *Black News Media*, 2005, <http://www.blackamericaweb.com/site.aspx/bawnews/figueroa801> (accessed July 14, 2007)

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