

Bias

A CBA Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News

By Bernard Goldberg

[Fertig notes]

- When it comes to arrogance, power, and lack of accountability, journalists are probably the only people on the planet who make lawyers look good. Steven Brill
- One reason they're all losing viewers by the truckload is that fewer and fewer Americans trust them anymore.
- A little introspection could go a long way.
- I am not a traitor, nor am I the enemy.
- I said out loud what millions of TV news viewers all over America know and have been complaining about for years: that all too often, Dan and Peter and Tom and a lot of their foot soldiers don't deliver the news straight, that they have a liberal bias, and that no matter how often the network stars deny it, it is true.
- Writing about the evils of business or the military or the church is like taking a walk in the park. I had just taken a stroll through a field of land mines. Taking on the pope is one thing. Taking on the media elites is quite another. And taking them on from the inside – violating their sacred code of *omerta* – is a sin. A mortal sin.
- This brought me in contact with a good ol' boy named Jerry Kelly, a chain-smoking, fifty-something building contractor who grew up in Enterprise, Alabama, and who makes Gomer Pyle sound like Laurence Olivier.
"The problem," he said, "is the you got too many snippy wise guys doin' the news, that's what the problem is."
The reporter was Eric Engberg, a Washington correspondent whose "Reality Check" was about presidential candidate Steve Forbes and his flat tax, which was the centerpiece of the Forbes campaign.
But the more I watched (the tape) the more I saw that this story wasn't simply about a presidential candidate and a tax plan. It was about something much bigger, something too much of big-time TV journalism had become: a showcase for smartass reporters who don't even pretend to hide their disdain for certain people and certain ideas that they and their sophisticated friends don't particularly like.
- Television news anchors enjoy using words like "substance," mostly because a half-hour newscast (about twenty-one minutes after commercials) has so little of it.
- Engberg interviewed three different tax experts. Every single one of them opposed the flat tax. Every single one! Where was the fairness and balance Rather was always preaching about? Wasn't there any expert – *even one* – in the entire United States who thought the flat tax *might* work? Of course there was. There were Milton Friedman and Merton Miller, both of the University of Chicago and both Nobel Prize winners in economics. There was James Buchanan of George Mason University, another Nobel laureate. There were also Harvey Rosen of Princeton, William Poole of Brown and Robert Barro of Harvard. All of them were on record as supporting the flat tax to one degree or another. Engberg could have found a bunch of economists to support the flat tax, *if he wanted to*. But putting on a supporter of the flat tax would have defeated the whole purpose of the piece, which was to have a few laughs at Steve Forbes' expense.
- A TV reporter could get it wrong from time to time. He could be snippy and snooty. But he could not be boring.
- The problem is that so many TV journalists simply don't know what to think about certain issues until the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* tell them what to think.
- From top to bottom the Engberg piece was breathtaking in its lack of fairness. So how could CBS put it on the air? Well, news fans, here's one of those dirty little secrets journalists are never supposed to reveal to the regular folks out there in the audience: a reporter can find an expert to say anything the reporter wants – *anything!* Just keep calling until one of the

experts says what you need him to say and tell him you'll be right down with your camera crew to interview him. If you find an expert who says, "You know, I think that flat tax just might work and here's why..." you thank him, hang up, and find another expert. It's how journalists sneak their own personal views into stories in the guise of objective news reporting. Because the reporter can always say, "Hey, I didn't say the flat tax stinks – the guy from the Washington think tank did." It happens all the time.

- I knew that to Dan Rather dissent was betrayal. As Andrew Hayward, the president of CBS News, once told me: "Dan can't distinguish between mainstream, legitimate criticism and criticism coming from extremists. It's all the same to him. He just can't separate one from the other." Hayward also said, "If anyone around here ever takes Dan on, he'll find a way to get even."
- You can't talk directly to the anchorman about such things, because anchormen in general don't do well with criticism. They're like royalty. Which means everyone is always kissing their royal ass, and after a while they behave more like kings than journalists.
- Too many news people, especially the ones at worldwide headquarters in New York, where all the big decisions are made, basically talk to other people just like themselves. That's one of the biggest problems in big-time journalism: its elites are hopelessly out of touch with everyday Americans.
- Criticizing, publicly, what as I saw as a bias in network was (he said) like *raping his wife and kidnapping his kids*. This is how self-centered the media elites can be. These are people who routinely stick their noses into everybody else's business. These are people who are always telling us about the media's constitutional right to investigate and scrutinize and a lot of times even embarrass anyone who winds up in our crosshairs. These are people who love to take on politicians and businessmen and lawyers and Christians and the military and athletes and all sorts of other Americans, yet when one of their own writes an opinion piece about *American Journalism*, then you've crossed the line...because taking on the media is like *raping their wives and kidnapping their kids!*
- I could have taken out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* saying Dan Rather wears black stiletto do-me heels and red miniskirts behind the anchor desk, and he wouldn't have gotten as mad as when I said we have a bias problem in the media. Dan Rather, the ex-marine, felt as if he had just been shot...*by one of his own troops*.
- This was the strategy Dan had settled on. Protect your own image by ripping your accuser. If Dan could discredit me and divert attentions from what I wrote about the media elites, if he could focus attention instead on my newly discovered right-wing ideology, then – who knows? – maybe he could convince people that there really is no liberal bias in the news. Isn't this exactly what politicians do all the time – often with great success – when they get caught doing something they shouldn't be doing? They attack their accusers. If politicians could get away with it, why not big-time television news stars?
- Why is it when journalists write something tough about *other* people, it's called "news," but when someone writes something tough about *news people* like Dan Rather, it's called "intimidation"?
- I understand that a journalist has to be loyal to his own bosses, the people who sign the paychecks, but is there's a conflict, the viewer or the reader has to come first. But while newspapers all over the country were writing about the furor my column caused, the *New York Times*, the newspaper of record, did not see fit to print a single word about the issue I had raised. The world's most important newspaper, which would make room on page one for a story about the economy of Upper Volta or about the election of a lesbian dogcatcher in Azerbaijan or about affirmative action in Fiji, didn't think a story about media bias, leveled by a network news correspondent, was worth even a few paragraphs.
- The media elites were circling the wagons. I could have shot a Christian Fundamentalist at an anti-abortion rally in Times Square at high noon, and they would have been more sympathetic than they were now that I had written about bias in the media.
- When Dan wanted to get rid of his evening news coanchor, Connie Chung, because he felt she was getting uppity by demanding more airtime, he and his friends ripped her to shreds in the press – *but you rarely saw his name attached to the story*.

- “Let’s do a piece about whether there really is a liberal bias in TV news,” I said in his office on West 57th Street in Manhattan. I persisted, telling Andrew that we do stories about everything else, about every other institution in America; why not a story about ourselves? A few days later Heyward came back with the answer. There might be a middle ground. I could do the story, he said, “but you can’t ask Dan any tough questions.” At first I thought he was kidding. *You can’t ask Dan any tough questions?* When has an executive producer or news president *ever* said a reporter *can’t* ask somebody tough questions? A reporter would be in hot water if he or she *didn’t* ask tough questions on a controversial issue. Can you imagine if I said I wanted to do a profile of Rush Limbaugh and Heyward said, “*Okay, but you can’t ask Rush any tough questions?*” Or Newt Gingrich. “*Sure, Bernie, you can do a piece but make sure you don’t ask him any tough questions.*” “You have got to be kidding,” I said to Heyward. “You can’t possibly be serious!” Heyward said he was not kidding and he was serious.
- This was unfair to Dan, who speaks reasonably and articulately all the time about the news business. Couldn’t he make a case that the bias charges were bogus? His handlers weren’t about to find out by putting Dan Rather in the very same hot seat he had put so many people in during his career.
- There was one other thing Andrew Hayward told me. “Look, Bernie,” he said, “of course, there’s a liberal bias in the news. All the networks tilt left.” He said it in such a way as to indicate, “Come on, we all know it – *the whole damn world knows it* – but that doesn’t mean we have to put it on the air!” And Heyward said one other thing I will always remember: “If you repeat any of this, I’ll deny it.”
- A news director at a television station CBS owns wrote to say, “I can’t figure out people who claim to love journalism but when someone comes along and points out something that needs attention, they can’t handle it.”
- Then I opened an interoffice envelope and on bright yellow paper was a short not from a CBS News colleague. “In the future, if you have any derogatory remarks to make about CBS News or one of your co-workers... I hope you’ll do the same thing again.” It was signed, “Regards, Andy Rooney.”
- I see myself as an old-fashioned liberal. I’m liberal the way liberals *used to be*.
- I noticed that we pointedly identified conservatives as conservatives, for example, but for some crazy reason didn’t bother to identify liberals as liberals. The Christian Coalition is identified as a conservative organization – so far, so good – but we don’t identify the National Organization for Women (NOW) as a liberal organization, which it surely is.
- There’s a better chance that Peter Jennings, the cool, sophisticated Canadian, would identify Mother Teresa as “the old broad who used to do work in India” than there is that he would call a liberal Democrat...*a liberal Democrat!*
- On that particular day, Peter identified the conservatives because he thought it mattered. He thought his viewers needed to know. And he was right. He didn’t identify the liberals, obviously because he thought it didn’t matter. And he was wrong.
- In the world of the Jenningses and Brokaws and Rathers, conservatives are out of the mainstream and need to be identified. Liberals, on the other hand, *are* the mainstream and don’t need to be identified.
- This is the essence of the problem. To Dan Rather and to a lot of other powerful members of the chattering class, that which is right of center is conservative. That which is left of center is middle of the road. No wonder they can’t recognize their own bias.
- The reason we don’t recognize NOW as a liberal group is that, by and large, the media elites don’t see them that way. It may be hard to believe, but liberals in the newsroom, pretty much see NOW as middle of the road. Not coincidentally, just as they see themselves. When you get right down to it, liberals in the newsroom see liberal views as just plain...reasonable.
- To mainstream America, these are major elements of the liberal agenda. But to the liberals in the media, these aren’t liberal views at all. They’re just sensible, reasonable, rational views, *which happen to coincide with their own*.
- If you hooked up network news reporters and producers to polygraph machines and asked them, “Do you think you are guilty of liberal bias?” most would almost certainly answer,

“No.” And they would pass the polygraph test because they’re not lying. They honestly believe what they’re saying. And that’s the biggest problem of all.

- No matter how bad a problem really is, advocates think they need to portray it as worse. This is standard operating procedure with lobbies. We have come to expect this of advocates. They know their cause is worthy, so what harm can a little exaggeration do? But reporters – *when they also see the cause as worthy* – buy into it. There’s an old saying in the newsroom: Don’t let the facts stand in the way of a good story!
- In a story, groundbreaking for its candor, on May 22, 1989, Gina Kolata, wrote on page one of the *New York Times* that “drug and alcohol abuse have emerged as a major reason for the homelessness of men, women and families. As my young daughter, Catherine, might put it...*Duhhh!*”
- Only one source in twenty-five blamed homelessness on the personal problems of the homeless themselves, such as mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, or lack of skills or motivation. The other 96 percent blamed social or political conditions for their plight. The primary culprit cited was the housing market, including forces like high mortgage interest rates, high rents, downtown redevelopment, etc. Next in line was government inaction, especially the government’s failure to provide adequate public housing.
- Scaring the hell out of people makes for television even when it makes for shallow journalism.
- Don Hewitt, the creator and executive producer of *60 Minutes*, loves to tell the story about how, when the show first went on the air, Bill Paley, the founder of CBS, told him, “Make us proud!” “Now, Hewitt says, “they tell us: Make us money!”
- If the news could actually make money, the suits who ran the network would expect just that. Sure they would want quality, in theory. But they wanted ratings and money, in fact.
- If any of the answers had been “yes,” it would have made a great story, which also might have done some real good. But to get the facts for a story like that would be hard, time-consuming, expensive work. The *CBS Evening News* in New York didn’t send Doyle to Alabama to spend money and time. He was there to get a good picture story, fast. Image is what the TV producers in New York were concerned about. Let’s not make it look like it really is. That might cause problems. That might make us look insensitive and short on compassion.
Distort the images. If those black men in Alabama were actually being railroaded simply because of their race, let someone else, with more time and money, worry about that. Being compassionate in television news these days means never having to get your hands dirty.
- White producers are very sensitive to what black colleagues feel. Partly because white news people understand that they can’t see things in quite the same way that black journalists can and partly because they don’t want to be seen as racists.
- Suddenly newsrooms had de facto caucuses organized by gender, race and ethnicity. Suddenly coverage of controversial stories had to be negotiated within the newsroom as well as outside.
- “I thought our job was to tell the truth,” Doyle told me. Apparently, it’s not that simple because reporters and producers in the field got the same song and dance from the Sensitivity Patrol in New York over and over again. This business of playing with the images and being ultrasensitive to what we label people is not about *actually* doing good. If doing good was what it were about, we’d spend lots of money investigating why so many blacks end up on the chain gang. That might *really* accomplish something. When you get right down to it, the compassion wasn’t for the downtrodden at all. It was for us. All this concern wasn’t about injustices. It was about feeling better about *ourselves* – and making as little personal sacrifice as possible.
- Redemption for America’s – and the media’s – deplorable racial history never came so cheap. They love affirmative action, as long as their own kids get into Ivy League schools. They love handing out jobs based on racial preferences, as long as they get to keep theirs. It’s a great deal: it’s always somebody else who has to make the sacrifice – sometimes Asian-American kids, sometimes other white students who don’t get into places like Harvard and Yale and Princeton – while the white liberal elites get to claim credit for being so decent, the saviors of black people in America.

“What the liberal really wants is to bring about change which will not in any way endanger his position,” is how Stokely Carmichael once put it.

So in the end, the liberals who command the highest positions among the media elites are not generous at all. They’re quite selfish, really. They distort images *not* to ease the pain of oppressed black Americans, but to ease *their own pain*, to make themselves feel less guilty, and, most important, to prove how good and caring *they* are.

- Liberals in the media – who would have come down with the vapors if a conservative CEO had so much as given a reporter a dirty look – didn’t flinch when CBS News executives took me off the air and suggested I might be fired because they saw me as a whistle-blower, which, the best I could figure, made me the first whistle-blower in history who wasn’t turned into a national hero by the media.
- One of my few remaining friends on the *CBS Evening News*, a young producer named Mitch Weitzner, who didn’t approve of what I had done or how I had done it, told me that writing the op-ed “wasn’t courageous. It was stupid.” “What do you think would have happened to you if you had worked at IBM and did something like this?” Technically it was a question, but Mitch was really making a statement, not just about the wisdom, but about the morality of airing your own company’s dirty laundry in public. All I could say was, “But this isn’t IBM. Or General Motors. They don’t look down everybody’s throat for a living. This is CBS News. We do. And that makes all the difference in the world.
- Taking sides isn’t good journalism. Taking care is.
- The *New York Post* said, “CBS News, which prides itself on its bold willingness to expose the dark secrets of corporate America, has apparently discovered that the truth hurts. “CBS is working itself into a state of high dudgeon over Goldberg’s decision to go public with his views. *Evening News* anchor Dan Rather ‘deplores’ the whole situation. CBS News president Andrew Heyward is said to be livid. No one, however, appears ready to dispute the details in which Goldberg’s analysis is grounded. “We can sympathize with the suggestion that trust within a company is undermined when isolated individuals bare dirty laundry in public. But it comes with little grace for CBS News to take refuge in this line of argument. After all, many Americans were introduced to the concept of corporate ‘whistle-blowers’ by CBS journalists.”
- Jon Klein, the executive vice president of CBS News and Heyward’s number two in command is very creative, but at CBS News he had a reputation as the kind of guy who thought people who tell the truth do it mainly because they lack imagination.
- Private universities, for example, are not constrained by the Constitution, but must choose to follow it anyway, because they recognize that the change of ideas – no matter how wrongheaded or obnoxious – is good for education. You’d think the media would look at it the same way.
- Only a fool wouldn’t get Klein’s message: You hurt us...and we hurt you. A hundred times over. We use all the big guns in the arsenal to hurt you. I understood this was nothing personal. Just business.
- I do think it’s convenient for some to focus on the messenger – why not? – it conveniently deflects attention from the message.
- Not only would I continue to stand by what I had written, I was more convinced than ever that I was right.
- Rather doesn’t believe there is a liberal bias in the news. “It’s one of the great political myths, about press bias. Most reporters don’t know if they’re Republican or Democrat, and vote every which way.” Is the boy just toying with us or does he really believe it? “*Most reporters don’t know if they’re Republican or Democrat*”? On which planet, Dan, would that be? “*...and vote every which way*”? I don’t think so. They vote overwhelmingly Democratic. Could Dan Rather really be the only person in the entire United States of America who doesn’t know this?
- Reporters and editors are only human, which means they bring all their biases and life experiences to their stories. And it shows.
- The way reporters and editors see the world, the way their friends and colleagues see the world, matters. What do journalists’ backgrounds have to do with their work? In general, the

way we were brought up and the way we live shape our view of the world. It sounds fairly obvious. News, after all, isn't just a collection of facts. It's also how reporters and editors see those facts, how they interpret them, and most important, what facts they think are newsworthy to begin with.

- Some right-wing ideologues do blame “the liberal news media” for everything from crime to cancer. But that doesn't detract from another truth: that, by and large, the media elites really are liberal. And Democrats, too. And both affect their news judgment. None of this should seem as an argument against liberal values, or as an endorsement of conservative values. This is a big country with a lot of people, and there's room for all sorts of views. This is nothing more than an argument for fairness and balance, something liberals ought to care about as much as conservatives, because if by some unimaginable series of events, conservatives wind up in control of not just a cable network here or there, but hundreds of America's newsrooms, if history is any guide, they will slant the news to *their* liking. And the Left in this country will scream about how unfair things are – and they will be right. But they ought to realize that that's how reasonable, honest conservatives feel today.
- 89 percent of the journalists said they voted for Bill Clinton in 1992, compared with just 43 percent of the nonjournalist voters. This is incredible when you think about it. There's hardly a candidate in the US of A who carries his or her district with 89 percent of the vote. This is way beyond landslide numbers. The only politicians who get numbers like that are called Fidel Castro or Saddam Hussein.
- 50 percent said they were Democrats. *4 percent* said they were Republicans.
- One of the things about being a professional is that you attempt to leave your personal feelings aside as you do your work.
- Journalists, being as terribly witty and sophisticated as we are, are always putting someone down.
- If women really earned 59 cents (or whatever it supposedly is up to now) to the dollar for the same work as men, how could a business compete with its competition by hiring men *at any level?*” In other words, wouldn't all businesses hire *only* women if everything else was the same, and they really did work for less money?
- But images really do count, even in such seemingly small, unimportant matters. The way we portrayed women in the media – cleaning toilet bowls in those old black-and-white TV commercials, grinning like children when their much smarter husbands let them drive the new '55 Olds – shaped not only the way we saw women, but the way we treated them, even if way back then almost no one found anything particularly offensive about the images. It's the same with men today.
- If the networks' research departments did studies discovering that ABC, CBS, and Fox could make more money with black shows than with white shows, the whole fall lineup would look like Harlem.
- They're not bigots, these Titans who control so much of our pop culture. They give money to charity and they love their families. They're just businessmen doing what businessmen do. It's in their nature to make the bottom line the top priority. The color they care most about is green. How else should we explain CBS's shameless decision to put Howard Stern on its owned and operated TV stations on Saturday night? CBS airs Howard Stern because the TV show costs next to nothing to produce and brings in lots of money.
- The cultural liberals believe in civil rights as all decent Americans do. They just believe in their success more.
- The problem is that, over the years, news has morphed into entertainment. To the network brass, *Dateline* is the same as *ER* or *Friends*. They all have to compete for prime-time audiences. At CBS, *48 Hours* is the same as *Everybody Loves Raymond*. At ABC, *20/20* is on the exact same prime-time schedule as *The Practice* and *Who wants to Be a Millionaire*. *They're all shows!* They all have to get good ratings to survive. News isn't special, the way it was in the early days of television. News magazines aren't on the air to perform some public service. Maybe they were when *60 Minutes* got started, but not anymore. Prime-time news magazines are on TV to make money, just like everything else on television. So they have to play by entertainment's rules.

- Bad things happen to news people who tell stories about their own newsrooms, especially when the stories are embarrassingly true.
- Back in the 1950s, Ed Murrow told us that TV could go in one of two directions: it could teach, illuminate and even inspire us, he said, or it could be nothing more than wires and lights in a box. Let's be real generous and say the jury is still out on that one.
- Thanks to TV news, I knew that John Wayne Bobbitt had surgery to attach his detached you-know-what, but I didn't know that a sociologist named Arlie Russell Hochschild discovered that "a study of nearly five thousand eighth-graders and their parents found that children who were home alone for eleven or more hours a week were three times more likely than other children to abuse alcohol, tobacco or marijuana." To which Eberstadt adds: "There is also the related question of what those hours of uninterrupted access to the violence and pornography of the Internet are doing to adolescents nationwide."
- Neither did I know that, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, in 1970 fewer than 5 percent of girls under age fifteen had had sex. Today, about *one out of every three girls* that age is having sex.
- While I knew that Korean and Japanese kids, generally speaking, score higher than American kids on standardized tests, the evening newscasts never shared with me the fact that the scholar Francis Fukuyama looked in to this and concluded, "Part of the reason that children in both societies do so well on international tests has to do with the investments their mothers made in their educations." It's not that there's been a television news blackout on all the bad things happening to our kids; we do get a story here about teen suicide and one there about test scores. It's just that the elite journalism in network television have no desire to connect the dots. They don't report the really big story – arguably one of the biggest stories of our time – that this absence of mothers from American homes is without any historical precedent, and that millions upon millions of American children have been left, as Eberstadt puts it, "to fend for themselves" – with dire consequences. "of all the explosive subjects in America today," Mary Eberstadt writes, "none is as cordoned off, as surrounded by rhetorical landmines, as the question of whether and just how much children need their parents – especially their mothers." The subject "is essentially off-limits for public debate."
- I've come up with several other reasons why this major event of our time has produced a great big yawn, at least as far as TV news is concerned. One is that national TV reporters, as a group, are lazy. The second reason is equally "benign." Unlike O.J. and JonBenet and Chandra and the Bobbitts, stories about the loneliness and sadness of children and what happens when they don't have parents around, aren't sufficiently mysterious or sexy, two of the major ingredients that go into a good story in the often shallow world of television news.
- The third reason is a little trickier and has to do with the similarities between network anchormen and politicians, both of whom from time to time must go to their constituents for votes in order to keep their jobs. Here's what I mean: while a congressman asks for your vote every two years, and the president every four years, and a senator every six years, anchormen ask for your vote five nights a week. As with politicians, if you don't believe they understand and sympathize with you, there's a good chance you'll vote for the other guy. If working mothers are the majority, and if they are "disinclined to make caring for their children their primary occupation," then running stories about how badly their children are doing is not going to be popular, is it? Especially given that the not-so-subtle implication is that working mothers aren't doing a very good job raising their children. That implication might first induce guilt (which probably isn't too far below the surface), but then morph into anger. That anger will be aimed squarely at the messenger, and the TV newsmen or woman who delivers the story will be seen as uncaring or unsympathetic to the plight of working moms. This is not a good way to get votes, Nielsen or otherwise.
- There is one more reason, closely tied to that fear of being seen as hostile to women-as-underdog-working-mothers. It is that the media elites will not take on feminists. Feminists are the pressure group that the media elites (and their wives and friends) are the most aligned with. Feminists tend to see any discussion that raises troubling questions about latchkey kids or younger children in day care not as an opportunity to learn and discuss something important, but as an out-and-out attack on women and the freedom they've won since the 1970s. That fear is not completely groundless. Because it is true, as Eberstadt writes, that

“Once...staying at home with one’s children was judged the right thing to do, both intrinsically and for reason of the greater good by mothers, fathers and most of the rest of society. Today, the social expectations are exactly reversed.” But that doesn’t mean that reasonable people who worry about what’s happening to our children are calling for a return to old days, when women – partly because of custom and partly because of sex discrimination – stayed home all day, preferably in the kitchen, preferably baking cookies. One can be in favor of women’s advances and still be concerned about attendant costs, especially when the costs are borne by children. If the media were open-minded, there would be a true debate about this issue.

- A government study on day care that came out in April 2001 concluded that toddlers who are put in day care for long stretches of time tended to be more aggressive and defiant, *regardless of the quality of the day care*. The study was done by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and says that 17 percent of the kids who are left in day care centers for more than thirty hours a week argue a lot, demand a lot of attention, act cruelly, show explosive behavior, talk too much and get into lots of fights. So would Tom and Peter and Dan use this study to launch a serious discussion about whether some kids might be better off with mom at home? Or about whether dad should be paid a “family wage”? Or about how this report is a vindication for stay-at-home moms? No. On CBS, Dan Rather called the study “controversial” – twice. This seems like a good time to point out that whenever you hear an anchorman or reporter use the word “controversial,” it is usually a signal that the idea that follows is one the media elites do not agree with.
- “We are willing to do anything ‘for the children,’” Lowry says, “except suggest that their mothers should stay with them; we are committed to ‘leaving no child behind’ unless it is by his mother hustling off to make her career.” You won’t hear that voice on the evening news, television news has kept its viewers ignorant of one of the biggest and most important social changes of our times.
- If arrogance were a crime, there wouldn’t be enough jail cells in the entire United States to hold all the people in 1:47 PMV news.
- *USA Today* columnist Julianne Malveaux says of Clarence Thomas, “I hope his wife feeds him a lot 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. If Robert Novak, the conservative columnist and CNN commentator, had said, “*I hope Jesse Jackson’s wife feeds him lots of eggs and butter and he dies early like many black men do, of heart disease,*” he’d rightly be seen as a nasty right-wing nut and compared to the Grand Wizard of the KKK.
- Why is it that when liberal media stars say nasty things they’re merely sharing their thoughts with us and (even more important) their feelings, but when the same sentiment comes out of a conservative’s mouth, it’s seen as mean-spirited?
- It’s a good thing arrogance isn’t a crime.
- In the 1979-80 season, 75 percent of all TV sets that were on in the early evening were tuned to a network news program, either ABC, CBS or NBC. But twenty-one years later, in 2001, the share of the audience watching network news had sunk all the way to 43 percent. If the networks were selling shoes instead of news, they’d be out of business by now. But instead of voting with their feet, Americans began voting with their remote control devices. They haven’t abandoned the news. Just the news people they no longer trust.
- The poll finds what seems to be at least a circumstantial link between viewers noticing “a liberal media tilt” and their defection to cable. “And just as their overall broadcast entertainment ratings have dropped, broadcast-television network newscasts are losing to cable channels, especially those cable channels with name brands in particular news categories.” I spoke to Bill O’Reilly about this just before Christmas 2000, and he told me his viewers “perceive Rather and those guys as being left, but even more, they see them as being elitist, as not being in touch with them.” Whenever I tune in *The O’Reilly Factor*, I hear opinions and arguments about the news of the day coming from the right and from the left. And this is what throws the critics of O’Reilly and Fox. They’re just not used to hearing so many diverse views on TV, most of them fairly intelligent.
- Just because Americans, starting in 1980, elected Republicans president four times and Democrats only two times doesn’t prove, as Mike Wallace seems to think, that there’s no

liberal bias. A more likely explanation is that TV news viewers simply aren't influenced by the bias they're being fed from network anchors and reporters whom they lost trust in a long time ago.

- We'd rather watch a bad sitcom than read a good book. Bad sitcoms get millions of viewers; good books get thousands. In an "entertainment culture," even the news is entertainment.
- According to the media elites' rulebook, when liberals rant it's called free speech; when conservatives rant it's called incitement to terrorism.
- There was an article by Fiamma Nirenstein, an Italian journalist based in Israel, entitled "How Suicide Bombers Are Made." In it, she tells about a "river of hatred" that runs through not just the most radical of Arab nations but also much of what we like to think of as the "moderate" Arab world. She tells us about a hit song in Cairo, Damascus and the West Bank with the catchy title, "I Hate Israel." On television, only CNN reported the "I Hate Israel" story. On radio, NPR did a piece. So did the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Chicago Tribune*. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a short wire service story that said "'I Hate Israel'...made an overnight singing sensation of a working-class crooner." Can you imagine if the big hit song in Israel was "I Hate Palestine" or "I Hate Arabs"? The *New York Times* would have put the story on page one and then run an editorial just to make sure we all got the message – that the song is indecent and contributes to an atmosphere of hate.
- If the networks can give us months and months of Chandra and JonBenet and Lorena Bobbitt and Joey Buttafuoco, then they can give us more than they do about the river of hatred that breeds suicide bombers.
- "You have to understand that Dan Rather is Richard Nixon," Jon Klein told me. "If he sees you as an enemy *even for a second*, you're an enemy for life. And like Nixon, Rather must destroy his enemies. Now Rather has become what he detested.
- CBS News decided to take me back. But my agent at the time, Richard Leibner, whose biggest client is Dan Rather, warned me that it's never the same after such turmoil, that the bad blood lingers for a very long time. He was right.
- Day in and day out, they would scrutinize politicians and business people and doctors and lawyers and put what they found on television for millions to see. But they would "never" let me off the hook for scrutinizing them. What a bunch of hypocrites...
- The Dan Rathers of the world don't try to crush you if they think you're full of crap. They simply ignore you. It's when you taunt them with the truth that they get really frantic and try to inflict pain, if for no other reason that to show everybody else in the newsroom that the cost of breaking the code of *omerta* will be very high.