



## Correction, Please!

### In the Business of Bias

**Item:** *On January 29, the same day Fox television show Empire star Jussie Smollett claimed he had been the victim of a brutal “hate crime” on a Chicago street, the New York Times published an online article under the headline “Jussie Smollett, Star of ‘Empire,’ Attacked in What Police Call a Possible Hate Crime.” The article — in a prime example of a rush to judgment — describes the “attack” on Smollett, stating, “Jussie Smollett, one of the stars of the Fox television show ‘Empire,’ was attacked in Chicago early Tuesday morning by two people who yelled racial and homophobic slurs and wrapped a rope around his neck, according to the police, who said they were investigating the incident as ‘a possible hate crime.’”*



AP Images

*Describing the “attack,” the Times’ Sopot Deb wrote, “Smollett, who is black and publicly came out as gay in 2015, was walking on a downtown street when two people approached him and yelled the slurs, according to a statement from the Chicago Police Department. The attackers then began hitting Smollett in the face and poured an ‘unknown chemical substance’ on him.”*

*And in a one-sentence paragraph (for greater emphasis), Deb wrote, “One of the attackers also wrapped a rope around Smollett’s neck before the duo fled.” And quoting from the Chicago Sun-Times, the article reported that “the attackers yelled ‘this is MAGA country,’ a reference to President Trump’s campaign slogan.” The attackers were presumed to be white Trump supporters.*

**Item:** *On February 1, even as Smollett’s web of deceit began to come unraveled, the Times — apparently just getting warmed up in its role as Smollett’s PR department — reported in another online article under the headline “Jussie Smollett Releases First Statement About Chicago Attack” that Smollett issued a statement through his publicist (presumably someone separate from the writing and editorial staff of the New York Times) that began, “Let me start by saying that I’m O.K.” and continued, “My body is strong but my soul is stronger. More importantly, I want to say thank you. The outpouring of love and support from my village has meant more than I will ever be able to truly put into words.”*

*The article reported that Smollett “went on, acknowledging some social media theories that the attack might not have occurred in the way Smollett said.” That acknowledgment — as quoted in the article — was in the form of a denial lacking any particulars. “I am working with authorities and have been 100 percent factual and consistent on every level,” Smollett said. “Despite my frustrations and deep concern with certain inaccuracies and misrepresentations that have been spread, I still believe that justice will*



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*be served.” The remainder of the article serves to paint a picture of Smollett’s credibility and forthrightness. Conspicuously absent is any reference to the inconsistencies in Smollett’s story.*

**Item:** *On February 3, the Times published yet another online article reporting on what the article described as a “defiant concert” Smollett gave “days after reporting [the] attack.” The article, written by James Montgomery, reads like a promotional pamphlet for Smollett’s new singing career. “Jussie Smollett, the singer and actor who said he was attacked by two men yelling racial and homophobic slurs, struck a defiant tone at a concert Saturday night, his first public appearance since he reported the assault last week,” the article states.*

*Montgomery quotes Smollett as telling the sold-out crowd at the Troubadour nightclub in West Hollywood, “I have so many words on my heart that I want to say, but the most important thing I can say is thank you so much, and that I’m O.K.”*

*The article also states, “Smollett said that although he was not yet fully healed, ‘I had to be here tonight.’ He said he couldn’t let his attackers win, referring to them with an expletive.” And “Throughout his hourlong performance, Smollett made clear his desire to move on from the assault. ‘We’re not going to harp on’ what happened, he said. Other than a small mark below his right eye, he showed no signs of injury, confidently commanding the stage along with black-clad dancers and a backing band.”*

*The article also regurgitates the stock description of the “attack” including references to the beating, the racial and homophobic slurs, the rope, the chemical substance, and the shouting of “This is MAGA country” by the two attackers.*

**Correction:** It is now well-known that Smollett’s “attack” was a well-orchestrated fraud that was planned, rehearsed, and financed by its star, Jussie (who played himself in the role), and co-starred (as the attackers) his personal trainer and an extra from *Empire*.

Perhaps such actions from someone such as Smollett are not surprising. The music video for his song “F.U.W.” (F\*\*\*ed Up World), which he produced, shows Smollett’s attitude toward America. One scene shows what appear to be Smollett’s hands holding an apple pie against the background of the U.S. Flag. As he sings “It’s a f\*\*\*ed up world — Here we are in it — I ain’t going nowhere — Til’ we’re finished,” he crushes the apple pie, symbolizing the destruction of America.

And while many of the facts related to this truth have only come to light since the *Times* reported as if the attack were an established fact and a “hate crime,” there were reasons for any writer or news organization with an iota of journalistic integrity to be cautious in reporting on the “attack” right from the beginning. Prudence warns against a rush to judgment.

For instance, as The New American’s Selwyn Duke wrote in an article published on this magazine’s website on February 19:

At 2 a.m., on a Chicago night with a wind chill the better part of minus 20, in a liberal neighborhood that’s largely black and homosexual, two white guys attacked Smollett — yelling slurs relating to his race and sexual bent — and then splashed him with bleach and tied a rope around his neck.

So they just happened to be carrying bleach and a rope because, well, like the American



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Express card, you just don't leave home without them.

The kicker? Smollett was still wearing the rope when the police arrived at his apartment 45 minutes later.

Oh, the alleged attackers also yelled "This is MAGA country!" — in Chicago — where 88 percent of the electorate voted against President Trump. Now that's the hate-crime-hoax version of jumping the shark.

It seems evident that journalistic integrity, prudence, and caution were jettisoned at the *Times* by the simple fact that Smollett's scripted play ticked off all of the liberal media's favorite boxes: black, homosexual, and liberal on the one side, and white, straight, and Trump on the other. Given a choice between the two, the *Times* — without hesitation — jumped at the story without anything resembling detachment.



Then, as if the good folks over at the "Newspaper of Record" were running their own version of "Correction, Please," they switched gears as soon as the story broke that Smollett's accomplices had confessed everything to Chicago police and had told police that Smollett paid them \$3,500 to stage the attack to boost his publicity just before the release of his new music album. Smollett was indicted and arrested for filing a fake police report — a class 4 felony. If convicted, Smollett faces a maximum penalty of three years in prison.

Headlines such as "Jussie Smollett and a Perfect Crime" (February 18), which carried the subhead "An object lesson in what happens when people in positions of political and cultural authority indulge their biases by suspending disbelief," and "Enough With the Hot Takes," bearing the subhead "The Jussie Smollett case is the latest reminder: Don't be too eager to make pronouncements" (February 19), appeared on the Gray Lady's website, pretending that the *Times* somehow occupied the moral high ground of journalistic integrity.

The hypocrisy is almost too much to bear: It was, after all, the same *Times* that laments "what happens when people in positions of political and cultural authority indulge their biases by suspending disbelief" and being "too eager to make pronouncements" that indulged, suspended, and pronounced before pretending otherwise.



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Noah Rothman is the writer of the *Times*' "Perfect Crime" article referenced above. He wrote that the "details [of Smollett's story] also strained credulity from the very start" and listed many of the same logic-bending challenges that are quoted above from Selwyn Duke's online article. He continued, "Indeed, many politicians and journalists seemed to suspend all critical thought in a campaign to indict not just Mr. Smollett's attackers but the country as a whole."

Fortunately for "the country as a whole," Smollett pulled up short of the elusive "perfect crime." The street camera he made sure to stage the attack under was facing the opposite direction. One is left to wonder what the outcome would have been if that camera had caught the "attack" and the video had inevitably been played in an endless loop by liberal networks.

It is almost certain the streets of America would have burned. And Smollett — who clearly hates America anyway — would have sold lots of records and canonized himself as a true-blue social-justice warrior.



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