



## Media's Double Standard in Coverage of Trump and Alt-Right

The media has been frenzied in its coverage of the alt-right and its support for president-elect Donald Trump, as well as Trump's failure to immediately repudiate the group for some of its radical views. While many of the alt-right's stances are indefensible, it has to be said that the media has employed a significant double standard in its coverage of Trump's support from the alt-right when compared to its coverage of President Obama's supporters in 2008 and 2012. Likewise, the media has dissected Trump's Cabinet choices with a fine-toothed comb but wholly embraced president-elect Obama's very radical Cabinet choices without ado.



On Tuesday, for example, CNN's anchor Chris Cuomo criticized Trump for failing to denounce the alt-right movement — which has thrown its support behind Trump — by name.

"It's about being a leader," Cuomo said on *New Day* Tuesday. "You denounce things that are wrong. That's what leaders do."

For Cuomo and the mainstream media, Trump's calls to end hate crimes and his repudiation of all racism is not enough if he does not directly call out the alt-right. Take for example what the *New York Times'* Alan Rappeport wrote on November 21:

Mr. Trump has been accused of fanning the flames of hate groups with his hard-line positions on immigration, his hesitance to denounce the former Klansman David Duke and his occasional promotion of white nationalist accounts on Twitter. While Mr. Trump has called for an end to hate crimes and said he wants to bring the country together, he has not been full throated on expressing disapproval of the alt-right, a rebranded white nationalist movement.

But in 2008, the media seemed to take a far more lax and forgiving approach in its coverage of then presidential-candidate Barack Obama and the support he received from liberation theologian and pastor Jeremiah Wright, who was Obama's pastor for decades and the inspiration behind his book *The Audacity of Hope*. During Obama's campaign, Wright was exposed for his radical sermons against whites, the U.S. government, and America itself, and while the media did not necessarily ignore the story, it instead presented a far more accepting view of Obama's defense that he was unfamiliar with Wright's more controversial sermons — hard to believe given the close relationship between Obama and Wright — and that the uproar over Wright's sermons was part of an orchestrated effort to cost him the presidency.

In fact, during his presidential campaign, Obama refused to denounce Reverend Wright, willing only to repudiate some of his sermons. "I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I



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can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother. These people are a part of me. And they are a part of America, this country that I love,” Obama said in a speech in Philadelphia on race and politics.

When CNN asked Obama why he did not denounce Wright’s controversial comments sooner, his bizarre response was that he did not believe he had to because Wright was approaching retirement. “I told him that I profoundly disagreed with his positions. As I said before, he was on, at that stage, on the verge of retirement.... You make decisions about these issues. And my belief was that given that he was about to retire, that for me to make a political statement respecting my church at that time wasn’t necessary.”

Had Trump made the same statements about ex-Klansman David Duke, whose support of Trump prompted the media to immediately demand that Trump repudiate, one has to assume that the mainstream media would have been far less accepting.

Yet that was good enough for the mainstream media when Obama did it in 2008. A quick perusal of some of the headlines from that year read, “Obama Denounces Former Pastor” (NBC News); “An Angry Obama Renounces Ties to His Ex-Pastor” (*New York Times*); “Obama ‘Outraged’ by Wright’s Remarks” (CNN).

Sure, Obama eventually distanced himself from Wright, but Wright himself said it was for “political reasons.” Is that really enough to forgive decades of listening to and presumably embracing (after all, why continuing attending the church if he didn’t) sermons that were riddled with anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and racism?

What’s more, the mainstream media actually took painstaking efforts to deflect attention away from Obama’s relationship with Wright, according to documents discovered by the *Daily Caller*, which wrote in 2010:

According to records obtained by *The Daily Caller*, at several points during the 2008 presidential campaign a group of liberal journalists took radical steps to protect their favored candidate.

Employees of news organizations including *Time*, *Politico*, the *Huffington Post*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Guardian*, *Salon* and the *New Republic* participated in outpourings of anger over how Obama had been treated in the media, and in some cases plotted to fix the damage.

The orchestrated efforts by the media to bury the story came following an ABC News debate in April 2008 moderated by Charlie Gibson and George Stephanopoulos in which Gibson asked Obama why it had taken him so long to dissociate himself from Wright’s sermons and Stephanopoulos asked, “Do you think Reverend Wright loves America as much as you do?” *The Daily Caller* writes:

Watching this all at home were members of Journalist, a listserv comprised of several hundred liberal journalists, as well as like-minded professors and activists. The tough questioning from the ABC anchors left many of them outraged. “George [Stephanopoulos],” fumed Richard Kim of *The Nation*, is “being a disgusting little rat snake.”

It was then that the liberal media employed an “all-hands-on-deck” strategy to mitigate the damages caused by Obama’s relationship to Wright:

In one instance, Spencer Ackerman of the *Washington Independent* urged his colleagues to deflect attention from Obama’s relationship with Wright by changing the subject. Pick one of Obama’s conservative critics, Ackerman wrote, “Fred Barnes, Karl Rove, who cares — and call them racists.”

Michael Tomasky, a writer for the *Guardian*, also tried to rally his fellow members of Journalist: “Listen folks — in my opinion, we all have to do what we can to kill ABC and this idiocy in whatever



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venues we have. This isn't about defending Obama. This is about how the [mainstream media] kills any chance of discourse that actually serves the people."...

Thomas Schaller, a columnist for the *Baltimore Sun* as well as a political science professor, upped the ante from there. In a post with the subject header, "why don't we use the power of this list to do something about the debate?" Schaller proposed coordinating a "smart statement expressing disgust" at the questions Gibson and Stephanopoulos had posed to Obama.

"It would create quite a stir, I bet, and be a warning against future behavior of the sort," Schaller wrote.

The members began collaborating on their open letter. Jonathan Stein of *Mother Jones* rejected an early draft, saying, "I'd say too short. In my opinion, it doesn't go far enough in highlighting the inanity of some of [Gibson's] and [Stephanopoulos's] questions. And it doesn't point out their factual inaccuracies.... Our friends at Media Matters probably have tons of experience with this sort of thing, if we want their input."

Jared Bernstein, who would go on to be Vice President Joe Biden's top economist when Obama took office, helped, too. The letter should be "Short, punchy and solely focused on vapidity of gotcha," Bernstein wrote.

In the midst of this collaborative enterprise, Holly Yeager, now of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, dropped into the conversation to say "be sure to read" a column in that day's *Washington Post* that attacked the debate.

Columnist Joe Conason weighed in with suggestions. So did *Slate* contributor David Greenberg, and David Roberts of the website Grist. Todd Gitlin, a professor of journalism at Columbia University, helped too.

It was Ackerman, in fact, who came up with the notion of labeling all of Obama's critics as racists to draw attention away from the Wright controversy, a strategy that has been applied indiscriminately and successfully throughout the past eight years, as it has effectively silenced many of Obama's critics, but also ironically forced many of Trump's supporters into hiding only to surprise the world on November 8. Ackerman stated,

I do not endorse a Popular Front, nor do I think you need to. It's not necessary to jump to Wright-qua-Wright's defense. What is necessary is to raise the cost on the right of going after the left. In other words, find a rightwinger's [sic] and smash it through a plate-glass window. Take a snapshot of the bleeding mess and send it out in a Christmas card to let the right know that it needs to live in a state of constant fear. Obviously I mean this rhetorically.

And I think this threads the needle. If the right forces us all to either defend Wright or tear him down, no matter what we choose, we lose the game they've put upon us. Instead, take one of them — Fred Barnes, Karl Rove, who cares — and call them racists. Ask: why do they have such a deep-seated problem with a black politician who unites the country? What lurks behind those problems? This makes \*them\* sputter with rage, which in turn leads to overreaction and self-destruction.

And in 2008, the mainstream media was largely silent regarding Obama's endorsement from the New Black Panther Party, despite the group's very public endorsement on Obama's "MyObama" campaign website. No calls for denouncement. No angry CNN anchors.

Trump has also taken a lot of heat for his decision to name Steve Bannon as White House chief



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strategist despite Bannon's connections to the alt-right. Again, however, the media seems to forget about the radical cabinet president-elect Obama named following his 2008 election and his unconstitutional "czar" positions held by Marxists and pro-eugenicists. Such names include Eric Holder as attorney general, despite Holder's deep-rooted support of the Black Panthers; John Holdren as Obama's science czar, despite his advocating of population control and compulsory sterilization; and Van Jones as his green jobs czar, despite his admission to being a communist — just to name a few.

Holder's position is particularly troublesome, as his racist inclinations seemed to [impact](#) his ability to apply impartiality to his decisions as attorney general.

But not one of these appointees was scrutinized by the mainstream media the way Bannon has been.

Long ago, the mainstream media stopped being a source of impartial news and has arguably served for some time now as the communications arm for the Left. Ironically, however, it is the media's double-standard that helped Trump win an overwhelming victory on Election Day. Americans are tired of the mainstream media and its bias, sickened by the new age of political correctness embraced by the media that likens anyone who is critical of liberal or leftist ideologies to homophobes, racists, and xenophobes and equates all Trump supporters with a movement like the alt-right. Americans have had enough of an administration whose rhetoric has been ignored by the media though it has deepened the racial divide in this country, yet points the finger at Trump and his supporters for allegedly inflaming racial tensions.



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