



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 2, 2011

White House Bullies San Francisco Reporter

Last week's clash between the Obama administration and a San Francisco reporter has laid bare the White House's bullying tactics and may prove to be a turning point in the President's relationship with the media.

On Friday, April 22, President Obama was in attendance at a Democratic Party fundraiser in San Francisco covered by print pool reporters (those carefully approved by the administration who are responsible for feeding coverage to all outlets). During the meeting, a short protest that broke out was captured on video by several people present, including Carla Fatwa, a San Francisco reporter who then posted her video online. In response, the White House banned her from future pool coverage and even threatened to exclude affiliated reporters if the ban were publicized. Unwilling to be intimidated by the White House, Fatwa exposed the ban.

The White House now denies blackballing the reporter and threatening other reporters, and has apparently reinstated Fatwa.

Ward Bushee, editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, excoriated the White House for not telling the truth:

Sadly, we expected the White House to respond in this manner based on our experiences yesterday. It is not a truthful response. It follows a day of off-the-record exchanges with key people in the White House communications office who told us they would remove our reporter, then threatened retaliation to *Chronicle* and Hearst reporters if we reported on the ban, and then recanted to say our reporter might not be removed after all.

The *Chronicles* report is accurate.

If the White House has indeed decided not to ban our reporter, we would like an on-the-record notice that she will remain the San Francisco print pool reporter.

Likewise, *Chronicle* publisher Phil Bronstein wrote:

So whats up with the White House? We cant say because neither Press Secretary Jay Carney nor anyone from his staff would speak on the record.

Other sources confirmed that Carla [Fatwa] was vanquished, including *Chronicle* editor Ward Bushee, who said he was "informed that Carla was removed as a pool reporter." Which shouldnt be a secret in any case because its a fact that affects the newsgathering of our largest regional





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paper ... and how local citizens get their information.

Whats worse: more than a few journalists familiar with this story are aware of some implied threats from the White House of additional and wider punishment if Carlas spanking became public. Really? Thats a heavy hand usually reserved for places other than the land of the free.

This is not the first time that the Obama administration has been publicly called out for limiting press access to Obama fundraisers. CBS News reporter Mark Knoller has called the policy inconsistent, particularly in light of a 2009 blog by the White House Media Director stating that President Obama is committed to making his administration the most open and transparent in history.

Similar contradictions were evident in March when the President received a transparency award at a *secret meeting* in the Oval Office. *Politico* [reported](#) at the time that the ceremony was supposed to be open to the press, but was inexplicably postponed and rescheduled without notice, without disclosing the meeting on the Presidents public schedule or letting photographers or print reporters into the room.

Likewise, in September 2009, human rights groups [targeted](#) the Obama administration for its refusal to confirm or deny the existence of documents regarding the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

Furthermore, in January 2010, the Obama administration was fined by a federal court for the lack of transparency in the case of *U.S. v. Sturdevant*.

Not long ago, FavStocks.com [reported](#) that the White House may have employed political operatives to screen Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests:

[U]ncensored emails newly obtained by the AP show that employees within the Homeland Security Department were warning that senior Obama administration appointees were delaying the release of government files. Department employees emails described the appointees behavior as “meddling” and even “crazy.” One email from the deputy to the departments chief privacy officer said of the political appointees, “They dont like to abide by the law or be reminded that they are breaking it.” That employee has since been replaced, a move that has raised questions of “retaliation.”

While the lack of transparency was certainly at issue in the situation involving the San Francisco reporting, the major underlying issue was the threatening behavior of the administration.

The Blaze asserts that the White Houses actions against the reporter are typical, as this administration has often behaved inappropriately when in adversarial positions. According to *The Blaze*:

Just about a year ago, Energy Secretary Ken Salazar appeared on CNN and talked about “putting a boot on the throat of BP” and Robert Gibbs repeated the tough talk and reinforced the pledge at a press briefing the next day.

And then there is the pending [Executive Order](#) which would mandate that any company hoping to win a government contract would have to reveal all political contributions made by the company, as well as those made by officers and board members of the company. While not stating that these contributions will hold any sway in deciding which companies will win these lucrative government contracts, it certainly raises eyebrows as to the motives of such an order. This order is even more suspect when you take note of the exception given to certain unions that are bidding on government business.

After nearly three years of the Obama administration, a growing number of Americans are realizing that assurances of transparency in the White House no longer hold any credibility. While critics of the



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administration came to this conclusion long ago, those in the mainstream media have until now appeared unwilling to face that reality. According to *The Blaze*, however, this latest incident with the San Francisco reporter may bring about a marked transition:

This might be a turning point in the alleged love affair between mainstream media and the Obama administration. The Press needs to know that it can be vigilant and unfettered, or the words printed, videos posted, and televised reports will always be suspect.



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