

OPINION: The death of objectivity

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Regardless of who wins the presidential election, one outcome of the 2008 campaign is decided. This will go down in history as the year the mainstream media came clean, throwing all pretense of objectivity and fairness out the door to indulge a no-holds-barred mission to elect the Democratic ticket. The Fourth Estate will never be the same. It's not a bad thing, because Americans have a more honest relationship with the media than they have ever enjoyed.

The vast majority of reporters and editors at the big three networks, the wire services and the nation's major newspapers and magazines have historically been liberal Democrats proclaiming objectivity while providing biased coverage. That's one reason right wingers do so well on A.M. radio. It's a niche born of blowback against the establishment press.

It's the last refuge of Joe the Plumber, whose radio plays while he solders pipe.

Journalism faculties at major universities are overwhelmingly and radically liberal. It's the nature of the beast. The liberal Democratic politics of taxing, spending and redistribution are interpreted as populist policies that will give comfort and aid to people who have the least. That makes liberalism the obvious refuge for journalists who embark upon their careers to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

A famous 2004 report by the Media Research Center summarized media bias just four years before the façade came down: "Surveys over the past 25 years have consistently found journalists are much more liberal than the rest of America. Their voting habits are disproportionately Democratic, their views on issues such as abortion and gay rights are well to the left of most Americans and they are less likely to attend church or synagogue.

When it comes to the free market, journalists have become increasingly pro-regulation over the past 20 years, with majorities endorsing activist government efforts to guarantee everyone a job and to reduce the income gap between rich and poor Americans." (They should love Obama, who says he'll take from the rich and give to the poor).

Way back in 1986, when there was an effort at balance in the nation's leading news rooms, three leading political scientists surveyed 240 journalists at ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report. In no election they asked about did the percentage of journalists voting Democrat ever dip below 80 percent.

Historically, however, the liberal Democrats who staff major media organizations have made concerted efforts to at least feign objectivity. Not anymore. By mid-August, Obama had graced the cover of Time, the country's premiere weekly news magazine, seven times in one year! John McCain had been featured twice. Newsweek gave Obama the cover for the 10th time in mid-August, but suffice to say he's on the cover of Newsweek and other major slicks pretty much every week these days. Newsweek editors have rendered their once-great magazine a national laughing stock. Newsweek's Obama covers are reportedly tweaked to make the candidate look flawless. One Obama cover features a white light shining down on his head, creating the image of a halo around his hairline. An unflattering cover of Sarah Palin, by contrast, features every wrinkle and every flaw, and the headline: "She's one of the folks, and that's the problem."

The Media Research Center reported Oct. 2 that ABC's "Good Morning America" skipped reporting the

results of its own poll, which showed at the time a tight race between Obama and McCain in Florida and Ohio. Instead, it reported a Quinnipiac poll that showed far more favorable results for Obama.

The mainstream media have rightly given scant attention to silly GOP-driven scandals, like the one that portrays Obama as the bosom buddy of some loser who tried to terrorize his own country when Obama was 8. Journalists have taken the high road with that story, preferring to focus on more substantive policy issues. Yet mainstream journalists burned substantial print space and air time this week alerting us that donors spent \$150,000 to outfit Palin for the campaign - the biggest "who cares?" ever told in a national campaign.

In one classic last-minute effort to ensure an Obama landslide, CNN's Drew Griffin used an interview with Palin to fully distort the text of a National Review article written to expose media bias. National Review's Brian York wrote: "Watching press coverage of the Republican candidate for vice president, it's sometimes hard to decide whether Sarah Palin is incompetent, stupid, unqualified, corrupt, backward, or - or, well, all of the above."

Clearly, he was criticizing the press. But York's words were parroted back to Palin as an example of criticism she's receiving even from conservatives. He asked Palin to answer to the fact a National Review writer had penned: "I can't tell if Sarah Palin is incompetent, stupid, unqualified, corrupt or all of the above." He reversed the message of a tiny niche magazine in order to fool an enormous, mainstream TV audience into believing that even conservatives think Palin is awful.

The anecdotal evidence of bold, overt and unapologetic mainstream media bias seems endless. That's why a Pew Research Center poll released Oct. 22 showed that by a whopping 70 percent margin Americans say "most journalists want to see Obama, not John McCain, win on Nov. 4." Only 9 percent think the media favor McCain. Rarely has an opinion poll about anything shown such overwhelming and decisive results.

The pretense of objectivity, long a part of our country's Fourth Estate, has been sacrificed at the altar of Obama. A majority of mainstream journalists have given up on the illusion of objectivity. They want the Democrats to win, they don't have the time or energy for fairness, and they'll give their professional lives for the cause if necessary. And that's OK. The genie has emerged from the bottle and she's never going back. At least Americans see her and know her better than ever.