

Opinion

The 'fakes first' media

By L. BRENT BOZELL III
AND TIM GRAHAM

The left would expect mere mortals to understand that as opposed to them, the left rises above the rumormongering and misinformation of social media. As with so much else regarding the left, that's nonsense. It cuts, pastes and amplifies the unsubstantiated ardor of liberal Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at will—if it advances the narrative. See the case of Jussie Smollett, actor/singer in the Fox hip-hop drama *Empire*.

Smollett's "MAGA country" hate-crime hoax is just the latest example. Coming on the heels of the smears of Covington Catholic High School MAGA hat-wearing teens, we must conclude the left is too blind, or too stupid, or maybe just doesn't give a hoot. Nothing says "viral" like a black gay celebrity claiming he was beaten by Trumpster thugs. For two weeks, the left went nuts. Celebrities took to the celebrity talk shows, politicians to the political talk shows and the "news" media to the "news" media to denounce racist conservative Trump World. Now the actor's "modern-day lynching" narrative, as Sen. Cory Booker declared it, has imploded. As we've come to expect, the arrogant defenders of the "high-quality news organizations" are once again refusing to take responsibility for the gasoline they tossed on the fire.

See *Reliable Sources* host Brian Stelter of the so-called "Facts First" network. He claimed, "ultimately, this is not about the media, or about politicians or activists, or any other people that might have been fooled. It's about Jussie."

Translation: It's all about the fooler ... not the fools.

Later, in his email newsletter, Stelter asked: "Was it newsworthy when the police opened an investigation into Smollett's accusation? Yes. Did high-quality news organizations approach the case with caution? Yes."

This is pure nonsense, and Stelter knows it. The national media jumped into the allegations like children jump into a mud puddle. Only ABC, CBS and NBC have devoted 157 morning and evening minutes to the Smollett fraud. Some of these stories call the fraud "alleged." Some didn't even bother.

guest
opinion

Compare. Two years ago in that same city, there was another attack. Four black thugs bound and gagged an innocent, defenseless 18-year-old mentally disabled white man. He was beaten, kicked, made to drink from a toilet bowl and bloodied from cuts to his scalp. The suspects laughed at him and shouted, "F--- Trump" and "F--- white people." The entire attack was captured on video—and streamed live on Facebook. They were arrested; he went into the emergency room. "If it bleeds, it leads"? Not on your life, not something like this. The networks gave the story and all its gore a whopping 27 seconds that night.

Smollett's story collapsed shortly after ABC's Robin Roberts gave him an embarrassingly supportive interview. Call the show "Good Fawning America." Roberts did not approach with "caution." She chose not to use the word "alleged." It was true because he said so, and she wanted to believe him because she believes this is what Trump supporters do. She asked, "What do feel people need to hear the most from this story?" Smollett said, "just the truth." Her most ridiculous question was this: "If the attackers are never found, how will you be able to heal?"

Oh, he knew the attackers. Very well.

Kudos to Michelle Malkin, who called out the media early for not asking these obvious questions:

How many racist homophobes wander around an upscale neighborhood of liberal Chicago at 2 a.m. carrying rope and bleach and yelling about "MAGA country"?

How many racist homophobes have heard of "Empire" and could recognize Jussie Smollett from his gay character on the show?

Red flags were visible everywhere, including the fact that the Chicago police told Malkin they initially hadn't heard the "MAGA country" claims. Early claims that Smollett had broken ribs were false.

President Trump, no doubt advised not to mutter "fake news" about the story, called the story "horrible." But in the end, it underlined why so many conservatives feel the "news" business isn't defined by the maxim "Facts First." It's "Fakes First."

(Creators Syndicate)

I-5 Crossing at Columbia River To the Editor:

Presently, there isn't enough money available to replace the aging I-5

bridge in the manner currently envisioned. But there still might be a way to build the badly needed replacement by constructing a new crossing in stages.

Phase one: Build a northbound span. Include an emergency access lane.

Phase two: Open the new northbound span and convert the existing steel bridge to southbound only traffic. This change will immediately cut the traffic flow over the old bridge by one half which will greatly extend the life of the bridge. Provide for emergency access.

Phase three: Construct a new southbound span when future funding becomes available. Include an emergency access lane.

Phase four: In time, dismantle and remove the existing and worn steel bridge. Or adapt it to accommodate light rail to create an experimental light rail link between Portland and Vancouver.

By building the new crossing in stages it may be easier to align existing and new roadways and lanes which will minimize the need for right-of-way purchases.

Designers and planners will argue that there is no project engineering economy by having to mobilize for construction more than once and in an ideal situation this would be correct. But realistically, there may be no alternative to constructing the project in phases. There simply isn't enough money available to build a complete replacement all in one step.

Jim Parr
Keizer

Senior park rents out of control

To the Editor:

Well, they've done it this time. This mobile park and many others

letters

have been bought by two different investor groups from California. All of us have been seething over the rent increases in the last several years.

Over the last three years our space rent has been increased a total of \$150 a month over an already high space rent. What's worse is water and trash used to be included and now none are. The rent is at least \$220 a month above the two highest parks in the area. After researching, I found that the two highest parks are also owned by the same group of investors. Some of the residents in this park are 85 to 90 years old and most are on Social Security fixed income. The tenants here own their own homes and many thought they could live out their days with minimal space rent increases in a senior park.

Several of us are trying to sell our homes and the space rent is so high that homes are sitting on the market for months. As soon as prospective buyers hear what the monthly space rent is, they walk. If we can't pay the high rent and can't sell, what are we to do? Is their intent for us to just leave and then take our homes?

Something has to be done through our state legislators to put a ceiling on rent increases in manufactured home parks, as well as apartments and other rentals, with a lower cap on senior rentals who are mostly on fixed incomes. We are all captives and are like sitting ducks. Let's get the word out, appeal to our legislators, lobby for this cause and fix this atrocity.

It has now gone beyond a problem. It is become inhumane and should be considered criminal. Sure, if this would cause a hardship, a senior could file for Medicaid with the state, but how long would that take and should our state pay, once again, while the greedy fatcats get richer on our backs? Help people. Let's do something!

Debra Martinez
Keizer



The emergency? Triviality of politics

By E.J. DIONNE

When House Speaker Nancy Pelosi learned that President Trump would declare a national emergency to shift around money to finance his border

wall, her denunciation was predictable. But her way of expressing outrage was not. The issue she used to make her point was important on many levels.

Observing the "unease" even among many Republicans over Trump's abuse of his power, she noted that "if the president can declare an emergency on something that he has created as an emergency—an illusion that he wants to convey—just think of what a president with different values can present to the American people."

And then she recalled the slaughter at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on Feb. 14, 2018, when 14 students and three staff members were gunned down.

"You want to talk about a national emergency?" Pelosi asked. "Let's talk about today, the one-year anniversary of another manifestation of the epidemic of gun violence in America. That's a national emergency. Why don't you declare that emergency, Mr. President? I wish you would."

Our nation's deadly permissiveness toward firearms was very much on Pelosi's mind because the House Judiciary Committee had voted 21-to-14 the night before to send a bill requiring background checks for all gun sales and most gun transactions to the House floor.

It was the first serious vote on a gun-reform measure since 2013, when the Senate fell six votes short of the 60 needed to advance a back-

other
voices

ground-checks bill proposed by Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Pat Toomey, R-Pa. It was also the most significant gun-sanity measure to move through the House Judiciary Committee since 1993.

Yet as important as this step was, it received scant media notice. The drowning out of news that mattered tells us a great deal about our political moment. It also underscores the challenge confronting those speaking for the vast majority of Americans who want action in the face of what Pelosi was right to call a national emergency on gun violence.

In counting the many costs of the Trump era, we focus too rarely on the president's success in pushing divisive trivialities and self-interested contrivances to the center of national concern. He manufactures crises, and then uses his manufactured crises to create new ones.

There is no crisis at our nation's border. To the extent that there are border problems, his wall would do little or nothing to set things right. And Congress' decision not to finance Trump's monstrous waste of money in no way justifies his seizing of national emergency powers. His vast overreach really *does* create a crisis, which dominates the news and shoves aside all other concerns. But it is all part of the Triviality Feedback Loop that is the Trump presidency.

In the meantime, problems that should engage our energy are forced to the back of the queue of public attention. The normal constitutional approaches to governing -- bills passed through committees, compromises reached in conferences involving both parties and both houses of Congress --

Speaking lies and untruths in D.C.

One of the earliest life lessons I learned was that, if fear and self-loathing were to be avoided, it was best to tell the truth the first time any delicate subject was broached. The matter of not telling the truth, however, seems to be frequent in far too many human exchanges nowadays:

Its presence for example has become an annoying condition of the president of the United States—his lies, half truths and downright fabrications too often in abundance.

Take the recently declared national emergency at the southern U.S.

border by President Trump. While announcing it, he commented that the rapid construction of a wall was not necessary, simply his preference. What?

Trump said, "I've built a lot of wall. I have a lot of money, and I've built a lot of wall." Facts disclose he's built no new walls. Any wall construction to date has simply replaced existing walls, fences and any other barriers. Additional construction will get underway soon. It will entail 14 miles of fencing in Texas along the Rio Grande River but results from money approved by Congress a year ago.

Trump said, "There's rarely been a problem (with declaring a national emergency) presidents sign it; nobody cares. And many of those are far less important than having a border." Facts disclose that previous national emergencies were mostly inconsequential and did not involve a former president overriding the Congress with its power over spending. The previous four presidents used the national emergen-

cy to deal with overseas crises that denied terrorists access to federal funds and nations abusing human rights.

Trump said, "The big drug loads don't go through ports of entry. When you listen to politicians—certain Democrats—they say it all comes through the Port of Entry. It's wrong. It's just a lie." Facts disclose that the Trump administration itself says illicit drugs come mainly through ports of entry. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration reported last year that the most common technique by criminal organizations is hiding drugs in passenger and tractor-trailer vehicles driven into the U.S. at border crossings. These and other means are not stopped by any form of border wall.

Trump said, "Take a look at our federal prison population. See how many of them, percentage-wise, are illegal aliens. Just see. Go ahead and see." Facts disclosed by Bureau of Justice statistics report that the majority of foreigners being held for immigration violations did not commit violent

or no longer respected.

And no matter how much journalists investigate and expose Trump's misconduct (we should be grateful for this), his I'm-The-Only-One-Who-Matters approach to politics fits well with the needs of modern media, both social and traditional. Clicks and page views and ratings encourage everyone to dwell on individuals more than on issues.

This aggravates a profound pre-existing cynicism about the possibilities of political action. And defeatism is especially damaging when it comes to guns.

For decades, as one massacre cascaded into another, the gun lobby beat back even the most modest efforts to control access to firearms. The sense of doom about any progress is so deep that it obscures overwhelming evidence that the politics of guns has changed. Even the most moderate Democrats made opposition to the gun lobby a key component of their campaigns in 2018 -- and in district after district, they prevailed.

These victories led directly to last week's Judiciary Committee vote. Organizing worked. Elections mattered. Public sentiment prevailed. Democracy made a difference.

This is why what happened in the House last week on guns deserved far more coverage than it got, and why Pelosi was right to use Trump's phony emergency to highlight a real one. The only cure for political cynicism is to show that the steady and painstaking work of grassroots action can bear fruit. And the only alternative to a politics of spectacle is for elective officials and the media to lift up problems that actually need solving.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

or property crimes.

What about other false claims by President Trump. Well, in the last seven days alone, truth checkers report that he made false claims 25 times. His false claims record since sworn into office as president add-up to 4,350 examples. On the subject of Trump's national emergency: 30 percent approve, 70 percent disapprove.

It is difficult to relate to or understand why President Trump finds it so difficult, if not impossible, to address matters of national importance without lying about them. What happened to him that resulted in an inability to be anything other than mendacious. Was he never given "time out" as a child, never confronted by other persons who threatened with a "knock it off!" His ego-first and country last not only subverts the Constitution's principles and design but sabotages our democracy and the best of our values. (Gene H. McIntyre shares his opinion frequently in the *Keizertimes*.)

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