

#1451 The Foxification of American Media (Fox News 25th Anniversary)

Intro 10-27-21

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning Best of Left podcast in which we shall take a look at some of the ways that 25 years of Fox news has reshaped our media and political landscapes, crucially understanding Fox. Isn't just about their influence on their conservative viewers, but how they've managed to hack the political conversation for the rest of us as well.

Clips today are from the young Turks from way back in 2013, you are wrong about the Bradford. Vox the David Pakman show the new abnormal all in with Chris Hayes and impeachment explained. So first up is that 2013 clip from the young Turks. I'm starting with this because I find it fascinating. The perspective of media matters the organization practically dedicated to exposing the conservative bias of Fox news.

At that time in 2013.

The War On Fox Is Over - @theyoungturks - Air Date: 12-22-13 (Archive)

[00:00:54] **CENK UYGUR - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** A lot of you might know that Media Matters is a group that is making sure that the conservative media is kept in check. The basic thing that they've done for a long time, which I love, they just quote the conservative media, particularly Fox News. And that enrages Fox News. And it's, they're like, "How dare you quote us over and over again!"

Now, oftentimes Fox News will do the usual BS criticism of, oh, they took us out of context. And then Media Matters will post the whole segment up and say, here's the context. And it looked just as bad. And they're like, "Damn it! I told you to stop quoting us!"

Well, Fox News might have their way, because Media Matters believes that they've kicked Fox News's ass so much and so hard that the war is pretty much over. That's awesome.

Now, back in 2011, the founder of Media Matters, David Brock, had declared an all-out "War on Fox." And he had said:

[00:01:46] **DAVID BROCK, MEDIA MATTERS:** Our formula is this. We go out, we hit people in the mouth, number one.

[00:01:53] **CENK UYGUR - HOST, THE YOUNG TURKS:** Number one. And apparently they did. Now Media Matters Executive Vice President Angelo Carusone has come out and said, quote, "The war on Fox is over." And he continues by saying, "And it's not just that it's over, but it was very successful to a large extent. We won." Damn.

Now look, there are very good points to be made that that is exactly what happened. Number one, Glenn Beck was absolutely driven off of Fox News and, even Roger Ailes who runs Fox News said they needed a "course correction." Damn.

Now, one of the reasons Beck left is not because the guys running Fox News are not just as big a lunatics as Glenn Beck. It's because his advertisers were driven away, because he'd say terrible things like, "Oh, president Obama is racist against white people." And that actually was among the saner things he said. He said absolutely wrong and outrageous, but he kept going further and further out, making that comment look tame by comparison until all the advertisers said *No mas*. It turns out Media Matters is right. They were not quoted out of context. That was in context. And yes, they say terrible things on Fox News all the time. That's point number one.

Point number two.-- and by the way, Sean Hannity's not on at nine o'clock anymore, either, which is the second most important spot for Fox News. They brought in Megan Kelly for a softer touch. So, Fox News is not going as hard right-wing as they used to. I know it's, I mean, it's damning with faint praise, right?

Uh, but that was point number one, but more importantly, they said, "Look, when Media Matters got into the mix--" and very importantly, the guy who started all this actually was not with Media Matters, it was Robert Greenwald who did the documentary back in 2004, called *Outfoxed*.

When they both started on this trek, you have to remember because I was there at the time, I was in the media, I was doing a radio show. And when you told people, Fox News was conservative, they say, "Oh no." When you told me it was right, they said, "No, no, no, no, no, no. Look, they don't cover news in the

exact same way CNN does. But CNN is the liberals." And the actually people, I know it seems impossible to believe, but back then people would, with a straight face, say, "They're fair and balanced."

Now, eventually it became impossible to say that because of the overwhelming weight of the evidence. But somebody had to collect that evidence.

Now, when you go to Robert Greenwald and you asked him about this and he said, look, when we started the film, liberals and progressives and Democrats were saying, oh, Fox is not really so bad, because it's really just a couple of commentators. He says, so now we've come a long and positive way in terms of people realizing that they're a channel dedicated to one point of view.

And it's true. So not only do liberals and Democrats recognize it, but almost everybody in the country recognizes it. So that is in some sense, mission accomplished, and the war is over, at least in that aspect. But now you still got to keep an eye on them. They're still up to no good. And still trying to paint Jesus and Santa and the Easter bunny white. All the fun things that they do over at Fox News. But there's nothing wrong with a conservative channel, as long as everybody treats it as a conservative channel.

The only part of the mission that is not accomplished, they didn't talk about it here, but I still see it and I think it's still a very important part of what Fox News does, is they still drive the agenda on so many issues. Right? Now, again, back in the bad old days, before MSNBC had any progressive voices on and in the mid two thousands, when Fox News drove an agenda, MSNBC and CNN would flip over immediately and the whole country would be talking about whatever issue that Fox News had made up that day. And with a total right-wing framing.

Now there's a little bit more balanced, but still to this day, a lot of times Fox News will drive an issue and they will talk about something like Benghazi so long, that CNN will say, well, I guess that's real. Benghazi, goddammit! Oh yeah, a scandal.

Now later you find out that the IRS so-called scandal was actually done by a conservative and he targeted not just conservative groups, but also liberal groups. Then it was just a filing error. But did Fox News let it go? No. Now did the rest of the media come back and say, "Oh, we're so sorry for covering that made up scandal?" No, they never said that. Right?

So they're still important because the one group that is still motivated to pretend that Fox News is a real quote-unquote news organization is the rest of the news.

Why? Because in cable TV, about a third of the people once worked at Fox News. They're not going to say they worked at a propaganda outfit. A third of the people are looking forward to working at Fox News. So look at Howard Kurtz worked on CNN. Now he works at Fox News. Bill Hemmer used to work on CNN, now works on Fox News. You think that those guys are gonna say, "Oh, see Fox News is total crap?" No, they're looking forward to a payday from Fox News one day. They're not going to say that, it's not in their personal interest to say that. So they're the last vestige.

If you ask a service today, is Fox News conservative? They said, of course it is. Liberals, of course. Moderates, of course Fox News is conservative. The only people in the country that still deny it are the people that work in cable news.

And by the way, the other third, they have friends at Fox News and it's understandable. They don't want to say that their producer friend, their reporter friend, their editor friend, who's at Fox News is a sellout that works for a Republican propaganda machine. It's personal for them. So they have to retain that fiction at all costs.

Losing Relatives to Fox News - You're Wrong About - Air Date 12-7-20

[00:07:15] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** This is one of the statistics that I think is so important for understanding what's going on.

So famously the median age of Fox News viewers is 65.

[00:07:25] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** Ooh, I didn't know that. I love it how you're always like "notoriously." And then you quote a statistic and I'm like, oh, I've never heard about that or even wondered it. So great.

[00:07:35] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** I mean, this is often cited for sort of the corrosive effect that Fox News is having on older people, that it's like mostly older people watching Fox News.

Do you know the average age of MSNBC viewers?

[00:07:48] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** 64?

[00:07:49] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** 65. What's important to me about that equally old audience is that people who watch MSNBC are not fucking QAnon people. They're not anti-vaxxers. MSNBC does not radicalize old people the way that Fox News does. Like there is a difference in the kinds of things that they are willing to put on the air.

Like the difference is not between older people and younger people. The difference is between the conservative ecosystem and the liberal ecosystem.

[00:08:19] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** And also what conservative media wants to do to its consumers, which we talked about in our Nancy Grace episodes, and I think that's very relevant for Fox News. It's like hockey. You just want to keep the puck in motion. You want to keep the viewer in a perpetual state of fear and anxiety and like ready to shoot someone on their lawn-ness

[00:08:39] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** Yeah. This is also very well-established. I interviewed researchers who study this. There's a famous study that came out after the 2016 election about the conservative ecosystem versus the liberal ecosystem, because regardless of your political ideology, you're not just getting news from one source.

[00:08:54] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** I get my news from Seth Myers.

[00:08:56] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** But this is the thing, you probably read the New York Times, you probably see clips of CNN online at various times. You do watch Seth Meyers. there are various left wing sources that you're looking at of like different levels of credibility.

[00:09:06] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** Well, and then also there's just the ecosystem of what do your friends mention to you? If you're on social media, what do people put in your sight line and how much credibility do you give to it?

[00:09:17] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** So there's nothing special about basically the left wing information ecosystem and a right-wing information ecosystem. Like this is a totally normal part of the way that we get our information.

However, this study after the 2016 election looked at all of the links between them, like who is linking to who, who is sharing things from one website and

then they share things from another website. And they basically found that on the left, the most prominent sources of news are basically center-left: New York Times, and CNN are the most-shared websites among left-wing people. That is basically the poll around which everything else revolves. So there's fringe left-wing websites, but people aren't really looking at them and the New York Times is not linking to them. these are kind of separate ecosystems. If you watch CNN and you read the New York Times for days, you would not have any idea that the voting machines in Ohio didn't count the ballots or these various sort of left-wing fringe theories, you would never know about those.

So what they also find is that the poll around which right-wing media revolves is the far right. So these fringe conspiracy theories, there's a huge number of stories that begin on these super fringy, like some of them were on fucking RT.

Like fucking Wayfair.

Like fucking Wayfair. Exactly. They start on these super far-right websites with no standards whatsoever about vetting information or ensuring that things are true before they're printed. And then the rest of the right-wing ecosystem will then start linking to them. So Fox News, all of these other websites will be like "according to a report in Breitbart.com..."

So if you watch Fox News for an entire day, you will learn about how Kamala Harris is a socialist. She slept her way to the top.

[00:11:04] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** She sold her vagina somehow.

[00:11:06] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** Yes. You will hear about fucking Hunter Biden's laptop. They won't necessarily say that it's true, but they will have fringe people on and interview them credulously and just put these ideas into the bloodstream. Right?

I actually found a really interesting study. There was a meta analysis of 88 different studies across 44 years, and I forget how many countries, but many countries. And they basically found that conservatives are generally more subject to conspiracy theories.

First of all, because conservatives there's various personality traits that are associated with conservatives, one of which is appeal to authority. They're more likely to trust authority figures. They're more likely to be dogmatic. But also as they mentioned in this study, they're also interested in maintaining the status

quo, and the status quo includes keeping marginalized groups marginalized. So when you have a theory that depends on immigrants committing a bunch of crime, that's just more appealing to somebody who has a worldview that the current social order is the correct social order.

[00:12:04] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** I mean, it's interesting to me, first of all, that what we have happening in terms of the ways that Trump and his administration have plotted to leave the country naked during an epidemic, are technically conspiracy. This is a conspiracy, according to the law. But it's not conspiracy theory-type conspiracy because the damage that has taken place has come about mainly through indifference.

[00:12:28] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** Again, I don't want to smear individuals. I think whatever -- I read things in newspapers and I believe that they're true. Everybody does this.

[00:12:35] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** Yes, everyone believes false things in their life and everyone is taken in by something they want to believe.

[00:12:40] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** Well, we just believe things that we are told. And conservatives are told much more fucking garbage than liberals are.

You know, you look at public polling and more than half of Republicans believe the QAnon conspiracy is mostly or partly true. Three-quarters of Republicans think there's a deep state cabal which is sabotaging Donald Trump.

[00:13:03] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** what's the deep state, Mike?

[00:13:05] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT: I** mean, this is this idea that there's civil servants, within whatever, the CDC, that are deliberately keeping Donald Trump from implementing his agenda.

This is something that almost every autocrat around the world says is happening, and this is why he's not delivering on all of his promises that he made in his campaign. This is an extremely consistent finding in authoritarian regimes. That they get into office by promising I'll fix it all, kick out all the immigrants, whatever.

And then they don't do anything because they're lazy and incompetent and then they blame it on a big conspiracy.

[00:13:34] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** I mean, this is just like when your dad makes impossible promises about Christmas presents and then it turns out that the very thing he was going to get for you was literally impossible for him to get in a way that was someone else's fault.

[00:13:46] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT:** Yeah, exactly. There's also the example people always use of left-wing conspiracy theories is anti-vaxxers, right? Because we hear so much about progressive, random wine moms getting into this anti-vax stuff. Republicans are much more likely to believe in anti-vaxxer stuff than liberals are.

[00:14:04] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** My experience of the world confirms this.

[00:14:06] **MICHAEL HOBBS - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT: I** found a study that showed that 92% of Democrats would get their children vaccinated, and it's only 72% of Republicans. So even the left-wing conspiracy theories are more bought into by Republicans than Democrats. the one that I keep thinking about is that in 2013, a study came out that showed two-thirds of Republicans thought that Barack Obama was lying about his birthplace. In 2005, at the peak of Bush did 9/11 stuff, the highest that number ever got, it was 35% of Democrats believed that Bush had knowledge of the 9/11 attacks before they happened. So comparing left-wing conspiracy theories and right-wing conspiracy theories, sorry, they're just not equivalent.

I mean, I interviewed a guy whose parents live in Denver and they've been conservatives their whole life, even though they didn't really like Donald Trump, but they didn't end up voting for Donald Trump in 2016. But over the last four years, this has totally accelerated. And last time he was down there, he's chatting with his dad about voting something something, like there's some scandal down there with the secretary of state and voting rights. And he mentioned it to his dad and his dad was like, oh, you know, he's paid by Soros, right? And it's like, really? where do you even get this stuff?

[00:15:18] **SARAH MARSHALL - HOST, YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT :** Well, and it's also creating a scenario where George Soros has been the Napoleon of crime, which is a conspiracy theory. But most real conspiracy

theories elevate certain people to a degree of control that just doesn't really exist in the world.

Kevin Drum on how Fox 'News' broke America - The Bradcast - Air Date 9-17-21

[00:15:34] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** Now you land on this, and of course, I think you even mentioned this may be an unsatisfying answer, at least for many progressives and liberals who already blame Fox News for everything, but you actually are able to support that in your data.

[00:15:51] **KEVIN DRUM:** If you take a look at, first of all, of course, was taking a look at other things. I thought social media was going to be a bigger deal than it turned out to be when I started working on this. You take a look at the data, you need something, like you said, you need something to start around the year 2000, give or take. You need something that's continued Yeah I just kept going for the entire 20 years.

You need something that's grown over the last 20 years.

Fox News fits that.

Fox News started in 1996. For the first few years didn't have very much a reach. And then around 2000 started really signing up more and more cable systems, and the audience for Fox News started to grow and

it's grown steadily ever since then. And there is a lot of research, there's plenty of research now, showing that the mere presence of Fox News on a cable system

will

increase the vote for Republicans by upwards of 2% or 3%,

which is a huge amount

in a 50/50 country like this,

that's a

big change.

So it's clear that Fox News has an effect

on voting. Anybody who watches Fox News, you don't even need any research for this knows exactly how they do it, and that is not by being

the most right-wing

medium around,

there are others that are farther right-wing, but by focusing on fear.

Over and over, everything they do is designed to make people afraid, and that's why so many Republicans think that democracy is in danger, because Fox News tells them that

over and over again.

And they believe it.

And

think about it.

why wouldn't they believe it? I mean, to them Fox News is news. It's just like CNN or New York Times or anything else. As far as they're concerned, this news and

the

why would the news, why would a news broadcast lie to you?

So they believe it.

[00:17:35] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** Even though they believe that all the other news sources are lying to them, but that's really because Fox News is telling them that.

And by the way you mentioned they were around since '96, they didn't have a lot of coverage. Also,

initially, they weren't quite as insidiously and nefariously

this far as they certainly are now to the right

and unapologetically lying to their

to their audience.

But Kevin Drum, I mentioned

Rush Limbaugh up top, he was around for many years in the

in the 90s, before Fox,

who

in one sense

picked up the ball from Rush Limbaugh and

put his divisive, and usually false arguments and misinformation, on to television.

Why isn't Rush Limbaugh and the rise of right-wing talk radio, the real source of America's rage here as you see it

?

[00:18:21] **KEVIN DRUM:** I don't think there's any question that they set the stage. And certainly

they've made things worse.

The entire right-wing media community

is to blame for this.

But sure, Rush Limbaugh and then

Newt Gingrich, who's

my favorite punching bag

was,

absolutely

got this started.

The answer to this I think is there's a difference in two ways. One, television is television, radio is radio. Television is just far more powerful than radio.

The other thing is a little bit of subtle, but people don't always get this, which is,

Rush Limbaugh, even people who listened to him, I think to some extent, understand that

he's

there for entertainment, not for

God's own truth.

Even the people who like him

get that.

Whereas,

Fox News is nothing like that.

Fox News is news.

It looks

Just like CNN.

It's a bunch of folks in suits and ties

and just like anybody else.

[00:19:13] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** And you can't say when you say Fox News is news, because it is radio here, you can put air quotes around the word news. Cause it's actually not news, but it sure looks like news.

[00:19:23] **KEVIN DRUM:** And it's worse than that.

People like you and I, we know perfectly well, but difference between say,

the daytime Fox News, which

does have some news broadcast,

and the prime time,

Sean Hannity

and Laura Ingraham and those folks, Tucker [Carlson].

A lot of people, I think, don't get that.

What happens is

at seven o'clock, there's somebody there in a suit and tie doing something,

reading the news, and then at eight o'clock it's Tucker Carlson and he's there on a suit and tie reading the news. And I think a lot of people who watch Fox News don't actually get that there's a difference there, they think it's just the news.

And so all the prime time stuff,

a lot of people who apologize for Fox News

say that, "Yeah, okay."

The prime time stuff is bad, but hey, they also do stuff that's in daytime that's,

that's a real news."

As you said, yeah, the real news is less real news

than they'd like you to believe.

There's no question the primetime stuff is worse. And a lot of people, I think, just don't they just don't see that.

They just don't understand

the news ecosystem, if you will, and to them, it's just another guy in a suit.

[00:20:22] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** There was no question, and I have argued and I know you have

at your various

media outlets,

that Fox News is just brain poisoning this country. It has done so

slowly but surely over the past 20 years or so,

and that's radio by the way

and Rush Limbaugh. What I would argue there us that once Fox News came around,

it was one thing to hear Rush Limbaugh telling you something, but if you then came home and saw it on your television set and heard that same thing,

or heard something on Fox News that night, and then the next morning you'd get in your car, drive to work, and hear Rush Limbaugh echoing that same thing, now it's not just one source, it's an entire ecosystem

that

undergirds

all of these beliefs

and drives it into your brain as if it is reality, when it certainly is not.

Kevin,

last question here, I don't believe that your essay actually goes into details on this aspect, but maybe that'll be the next 6,000 word essay for

for mojo, but if Fox News is the problem, what is the solution, Kevin?

[00:21:28] **KEVIN DRUM:** That's a very good question.

The reason I think this is important is it's not that I don't think people should be worried about social media,

go ahead and fight social media,

I think you should, there's

a lot of bad stuff there, but

Fox News is by far the bigger problem. And I understand that for a lot of people this is a little boring, maybe.

We've been fighting Fox News for 20 years and we haven't come up with a solution. And I guess my message to people is look,

it doesn't matter

whether it's boring, whether it's tedious,

whether you like doing it, that's where the problem is, and that's what we have to keep fighting.

Now, how do we do it? Boy, that's a good question.

Advertising boycotts don't work really because Fox News doesn't really

rely

on advertising for

most of their income. You can't get them taken off cable systems,
the cable systems just won't do that.

One thing that I've suggested, and this is just
one thing to toss out is

I just don't think that the rest of us should treat anybody who works for Fox
News, I don't care from the janitor on up, as just another person. If you work for
Fox News, as far as I'm concerned, you should be persona non grata. And

you are, in my view, basically working for

a,

I almost hate to say this, but a more or less less traitorous organization,

because as far as I'm concerned, Rupert Murdoch and Fox News they're sole
Goal is to create chaos, and to make money from doing it.

You're watching Fox News. You just don't know it. - Vox - Air Date 5-24-19

[00:22:51] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** I'm done. I'm finally done
watching Fox News. It's rotting my brain, and only Boomers watch that crap
anyway. From now on, I'm watching real news. Stuff that actually matters. I'll
never have to worry about Fox News ever a--.

[00:23:07] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Two of the headlines on Fox News
tonight...

Has gotten a lot of attention, thanks to a Fox News...

Started on Fox News...

Yesterday on Fox News...

Last night on O'Reilly...

Last night on Hannity...

This morning, on Fox and Friends...

Fox was all over this story...

I wanna play this clip from Fox...

Clip from Fox...

Clip from Fox News earlier.

It makes my head explode when I see these clips from Fox News...

[00:23:26] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Oh, God! It's everywhere!
There's no escape!

[00:23:31] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Thank God for Fox News...

Thank God for Fox News...

And God for Fox!

You get the truth out!

Thank God for Fox News, or otherwise no one would be talking about these issues.

[00:23:40] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** In an ideal world, political journalism looks like this:

On either side, you've got the parties fighting for the attention of the press. And in the middle, you've got journalists sorting through what's important and what's just partisan bullshit.

This is called "Gatekeeping," and it's one of the most important things journalists do. Political operatives can spin whatever talking points they want, but ultimately it's the journalists who decide what's newsworthy enough to pay attention to.

But that is in an ideal world, and we don't live in an ideal world, we live in hell. And in hell, there's Fox News.

Fox exists in this weird in-between space, because it claims to be a news organization, but it's essentially a Republican front group. The network was founded by GOP political operative Roger Ailes. (Not sure why he's posting like Shirley Temple in this picture.

..)

[00:24:22] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Ailes spent his career advising Republican presidents like Reagan Bush senior and surprise surprise Nixon a memo from the Nixon library detailed Ailes's dream of launching a Republican news network a plan for putting the GOP on TV news which was described as a way to get around the prejudices of network news selectors Wow Nightmares really do come true Ailes eventually founded Fox news And with it he turned partisan hackery into an art form Obama salutes while holding coffee

[00:24:48] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Everyone's talking about the disrespectful way The president saluted a Marine yesterday

[00:24:52] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Clinton coughs during a campaign event

[00:24:54] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** We all have our coughing spells but it doesn't look good when you have all these conspiracy theories about her health Rashida Tlaib says a naughty word about Trump We're going to go in there and we're going to impeach the mother fucker Is this what the democratic party has become buckle up Party in 2019

[00:25:09] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Fox knows this fucking bullshit Doesn't actually matter but that's not the point The point is pretending that it matters So voters at home think it does too

[00:25:16] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** They're doing political communications they're finding a weak point and then they're hammering it very very relentlessly It's a network that was founded by political operatives it has a partisan operative mentality And it works

[00:25:28] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Now I know what you're thinking Oh my God who cares It's Fox None of us actually watch that crap

Except you do watch that crap Mary you just don't realize it Mary Because once Fox news goes all in on a story other networks pay attention

[00:25:41] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** Political journalists are very sensitive to complaints about liberal bias And so one thing they do is they overcompensate by paying a lot of attention to what's going on in conservative media What's in conservative media What are conservatives talking about Let's elevate this Let's take it seriously even if I don't personally agree with it

[00:26:00] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Take Bengazi for example You're still mad about this I'm still mad about this in 2012 Fox began peddling wild conspiracy theories about a terror attack in Benghazi

[00:26:10] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** explosive new details about a possible white house cover up on Benghazi Unanswered questions about Benghazi Questions still remain unanswered Some have suggested this is bigger than Watergate

[00:26:19] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Fox's goal was to smear the Obama administration Sure But it was also to get other news outlets To take that smear seriously

[00:26:26] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** You know at first blush I think most journalists would be inclined to mostly ignore that It wasn't nothing but it just wasn't like the biggest news story in the world but it's on Fox It's on Fox You hear about it more

[00:26:38] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Why is the media not dealing with a clear cover up here

[00:26:41] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** And you say to yourself okay I don't want to be biased I need to incorporate this into my news diet into my report

[00:26:47] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** and eventually Mary it worked.

[00:26:49] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Aren't there still legitimate questions to be answered on Bengazi?

Very serious unanswered questions...

Legitimate questions...

Too many questions!

It's not just for Fox News anymore. It's all of cable news!

[00:26:59] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** So, the result of that, is that there's incredible agenda setting power in am Talk radio Fox News They all go talk about something no matter how crazy or unimportant it is it gets on the news agenda and it gets covered by the mainstream

[00:27:13] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Thank God for Fox news for being tenacious enough to cause the mainstream media not to ignore this

[00:27:19] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** There's no equivalent to this on the left And that creates what Matt calls a hack gap because conservatives can manufacture their own outrage cycles Mainstream outlets pay a lot more attention to their bullshit which means even minor slipups by Democrats can become career defining scandals in March Democrat Ilhan Omar gave a speech about how Muslim organizations had to fight Islamophobia after 9/11

[00:27:42] **REPRESENTATIVE ILHAN OMAR:** they recognized that some people did something and that all of us were starting to lose access to our civil liberties

[00:27:50] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Pretty non-controversial right Wrong again Mary because in April Republican Dan Crenshaw accused Omar of trivializing 9/11 because she didn't say the word terrorist I guess I don't know Am I bleeding again And the next morning Fox news knew what it had to do

[00:28:05] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Really A few people did something You have to wonder if she's an American first downplaying One of the darkest days in our nation's history the democratic party has a problem Ilhan Omar is embroiled in another controversy today after making controversial comments do you feel she should apologize Do you think she should have rethought her words How do you think this controversy is playing out among Democrats The congresswoman needs to be careful about her own words too

[00:28:34] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** This is the kind of hacky nonsense that good gatekeeping is supposed to protect us from And it almost did Nobody even cared about Omar's speech for weeks after she gave it But once Fox made it a story it was over Look at how many mainstream news segments included clips from Fox

[00:28:51] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** How do you think this controversy is playing out among Democrats

[00:28:53] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** The hack gap is a nightmare in a normal year but it's especially bad During election season in 2016 a lot of journalists realized that the Clinton email server was not the national crisis Fox is making it out to be

[00:29:05] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Could this new development put her behind bars You've got destruction of evidence You've got obstruction of justice There's three specific laws that we've found There's at least seven that I've found Lock her up Yes lock her up Oh that pleases me

[00:29:18] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** But because Fox viewers became fixated on Hillary's emails the story became newsworthy

[00:29:33] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** I remember talking to somebody who was a high ranking official in a major newspaper And I was asking him why didn't you guys have so much emails coverage And he said I think that the emails stories spoke to some of the electorate's fundamental doubts about Hillary

[00:29:48] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** Benghazi her private email server It's all part of the same narrative and why many voters don't trust her

[00:29:53] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** Okay fair enough But like where did those doubts come from They came from Fox news They came from conservative talk radio

[00:29:59] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** the American public know they can't trust her...

We can't trust her.

..

We cant trust her!

[00:30:03] **MATTHEW YGLESIAS:** So you put this stuff out, then it becomes a true fact that many people are worried about this email server. But then that becomes a controversy that you have.

[00:30:11] **CARLOS MAZA - HOST, VOX:** Years later, when it turns out that the Trump White House is also using unsecured communication lines, it doesn't spark the same months-long crisis that Hillary's emails did, because there's no left wing propaganda machine baiting journalists into overreacting.

It's not that there's nothing to these stories; clinton's email server was a mistake; benghazi was a mess; Omar... could have said the word terrorists more, I guess? (Oh God, it's in my ear now). It's that they get blown way out of proportion by a propaganda machine that's trying to score political points, and by mainstream journalists who are too afraid of looking biased against conservatives to call bullshit.

And the weird genius of the "Hack gap is that if you're not watching Fox news you won't even notice it because it doesn't look like Fox and friends or Hannity It looks like serious journalists covering a serious controversy that they've decided is important but they aren't deciding they're reacting to a political operation that was created to get you to pay attention You can try to ignore Fox news all you want but as long as journalists are getting their story assignments from conservative media you can't escape it.

Conspiracy Network OAN 90% Funded by AT&T - The David Pakman Show - Air Date 10-7-21

[00:31:14] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** This is really a disgusting story, not only of media propaganda, but also in a sense of media consolidation. Reuters has done a very, very good special report about how the radical, outrageous right-wing media network OAN -- One America News, the people we would see in the press briefing room yelling questions from the back at Trump and even to Jen Psaki to some degree -- they are 90% funded by AT&T, the same AT&T who bought Warner Media, which owns CNN.

So this story is about a lot of different things. The report on Reuters is extensive and we're linking to it. Okay. We today for time purposes are going to look at sort of a summary from Mediaite of the Reuters investigation. Okay.

One America News, the self-styled news channel that pumps out pro-Trump propaganda, has received tens of millions of dollars in funding from AT&T, according to a stunning new report. Reuters unearthed how the far-right

channel, which distinguished itself in cable news by pedaling the most extreme 2020 election conspiracy theories, is being propped up by the world's largest communications company. Reuters review of court records shows the role AT&T played in creating and funding OAN, a network that continues to spread conspiracy theories about 2020 and COVID.

The role that AT&T played in the launch of OAN was revealed by the network's founder, Robert Herring, Sr., in a deposition obtained by Reuters. "OAN founder and chief executive Robert Herring, Sr. has testified that the inspiration to launch OAN in 2013, came from AT&T executives. They told us they wanted a conservative network. They only had one, which was Fox News, and they had seven others on the other left-wing side. When they said that I jumped to it and built one. Since then, AT&T has been a crucial source of funds flowing into OAN providing tens of millions in revenue, court records show. 90% of OAN's revenue came from a contract with AT&T owned TV platforms, including DirecTV. What makes this bizarre tale even thornier AT&T owns Warner Media, which is the parent company of CNN. CNN's parent company is funding OAN. And again, I encourage you to check out the entire Reuters report.

So there are, I mean, there are so many stories here, guys. First of all, Maybe antitrust laws are there for a reason. Maybe we should be having more than just a handful of internet service providers who were vertically integrated and also own the programming. Okay. That's that's number one. We have many of these laws on the books. There's been no appetite from Republicans or Democrats, really. In enforcing this stuff. You do hear sometimes from Democrats, we got to break up this, that the other thing we've heard it from Bernie, Elizabeth Warren, not nearly the topic that it should be. That's one story.

Second story: CNN has done a bunch of critiques of OAN. Okay. They've exposed OAN's lack of journalistic integrity, and they did it accurately. Does CNN know when they do that, that the parent company is the same; they're owned by Warner, which is owned by AT&T and AT&T is not owned, but is the main funder of OAN. It wasn't mentioned in the segments that were done on CNN; makes me wonder whether they even know it.

If... either way you would think it's something that should be disclosed. Now, full disclosure, it appears as though AT&T also owns this show. No, I'm kidding. That's not the type of disclosure I'm talking about. It appears as though AT&T is in the process of selling Warner Media. So at some point the CNN-OAN connection may no longer be true.

But this is another example also of how we have to remember: the primary bias of corporate media is money. MSNBC is corporate media, and editorially they lean left. Fox News is corporate media. Editorially, they don't just lean right, I mean, Fox is on the right something different than what MSNBC is on the left.

CNN has been anti-Trump I would say objectively so, because of the disasters Trump did during his presidency. But fundamentally CNN is a for-profit entity and that's the number one bias above all else. And, we have to remember that a lot of this stuff, the technology for delivering this stuff becomes invisible, and we just look at, oh, it's, you know, Rachel Maddow here, and then it's Hannity here. We've got to remember the technology has its own biases and structure that kind of overrides all of this other stuff. and AT&T we've got stuff that's considered more left than stuff that's considered -- basically we just want to be able to monetize all these different things. That's the bottom line. And, whether ultimately we will see any serious enforcement of antitrust, I don't know. But the problem is that even now that Republicans talk about anti-trust and breaking up companies, they're really just wanting to break up social media or control social media so that Twitter can't ban conservatives. It's completely cynical, their new-found desire to deal with antitrust. The laws have been on the books for decades, could have been enforced all along and they just don't want to do it.

How Fox News Made Every Moment of the Last 25 Years Worse - The New Abnormal - Air Date 10-8-21

[00:36:51] **MOLLY JONG-FAST - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** Thank you for joining us on the 25th anniversary of Fox News.

[00:36:56] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** Yeah, it's a big day for them. They're very proud of themselves. They're very excited. I mean, everything is worse because of it. It's a blanket statement that usually would be too broad of a comment, but it's true. Everything is worse because of it. And I don't think there's a moment right now that really reflects that or illustrates it better than how we're dealing with this pandemic. So they've made it worse and we are struggling to get out of this because of what Fox has done, which is refracted the absolute most absurd and destructive and deadly disinformation and misinformation from the right-wing feed response

[00:37:30] **MOLLY JONG-FAST - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** So, they did a bunch of clips to celebrate the impact they've had ruining our society.

I saw a clip today of the many ways in which they've been sewing discontent from the recount. It seems to me, if I were Fox News, I might just pretend.

[00:37:47] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** Yeah, I would pretend. I think for some reason it feels like more people now are way more tuned into how damaging Fox is than say 15 or even 20 years ago, but if we think back over time, Dr. Tiller, who was an abortion provider, was murdered because of Fox News. Bill O'Reilly went on a multi-year campaign against this guy, calling him Tiller, Tiller, the baby killer. That is a small example of the harms that they've created.

That was considered pretty standard programming back then. I mean, they would zero in on an individual and absolutely smear them to the point where they would end up either getting threats or getting physically injured. They did it so often that it became normal. When president Obama appointed a gay man to a mid-tier level position in the Department of Education, his name was Kevin Jennings and it was the first time, it was the highest official in the Department of Education that was gay at that time, it was one of the highest ranking LGBT officials, Fox News ran a multi-month campaign claiming that he was a member of NAMBLA, the National Man Boy Love Association. I mean, there's not a single moment, whether big or small, as big as the pandemic, as seemingly small as an appointment in the Department of Education where Fox is not gotten in there and made it worse, honestly.

[00:38:56] **MOLLY JONG-FAST - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** The irony I feel like is that a lot of these Fox hosts have ended up being either, in the case of Bill O'Reilly, having to pay out million dollar settlement. Ed Henry, it's a plethora of sexual harassers and criminals.

[00:39:12] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** Yeah. I mean, that starts right at the top, right from Roger Ailes and then importantly, a culture of consent, of tacit consent, by the Murdoch's. I mean, they enabled it. It's not like they have clean hands here. They make it very clear that Fox gets to operate contrary to all these other standards and norms and get away with it, and they knew what Murdoch was doing, I mean, what Roger Ailes was doing, but he was obviously profitable, he was supporting their political interests, and he had the talent. And that meant that they could, that they would support and enable it. And it's what we're seeing today with Tucker. I mean, a big reason why he gets to do what he does is because Lachlan Murdoch has given him that seal of approval.

[00:39:49] **JESSE CANNON - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** It seemed this week, it's always a race down the drain with them, but Tucker railing against vaccine mandates from employers when his own employer has it.

[00:39:58] **MOLLY JONG-FAST - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** And a 90% compliance.

[00:40:00] **JESSE CANNON - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** Yes. Bathroom Gate with Kyrsten Sinema, when they're one of their anchors, Jesse Waters, literally made his name by chasing people in the bathrooms and elevators for years on end.

[00:40:11] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** It's true. That's actually very true. That's a good point. They were always proud of those interviews. Right?

[00:40:16] **JESSE CANNON - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** Bill O'Reilly would come on, "Great work chasing Bill Moyer"s, at 80 year old man, into an elevator, Jesse. You're really doing God's work, buddy."

The other big news of the week though, is this testimony that Facebook is well aware that they are, in some estimations, making it so that the Republicans feel they have to radicalize for their base, and it seems that that has also been a reflection of Fox News. What have you guys been seeing there?

[00:40:43] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** In a lot of ways, one, the damage is already done, and the right work the refs so effectively at the platforms, and in particular Facebook, that what you basically had was a continuation of... let me just take a step back on this, because here's what I think is it's significant.

It's significant, obviously, in the moment, But when I look at it, I think about it a little different. We are living in the world that was built in, at least the information landscape, that really came to being in the mid to late 90s. So the ascent talk radio, they sort of established themselves, they transformed the information landscape, they transformed the way that other media did business, because they were responding to that, and they transformed our politics and our society. And that was mostly that way for the past few decades.

And what's happened is in 2015-2016, you started to see a real shift in the significance of, in particular Facebook, but some of the other platforms in changing it. And the moment we're in right now and have been, it's kind of like where we were in the mid to late 90s. whatever the new landscape is going to look like for the next few decades is being built right now.

To me, when I think about the significance of the Facebook stuff, you can draw a straight line from things that the right-wing media were pushing the platform, in particular Facebook, to do and complaining about to policy changes that they

put in place as early as 2017 to the harms that were talked about in the testimony this week.

So for instance, in 2017, when Glenn Beck and Tucker Carlson, I'm sorry, in 2016, when Glenn Beck and Tucker Carlson,, and Laura Ingraham complained to Facebook about the trending topics section being biased against conservatives, Mark Zuckerberg, overnight, contrary to their own internal data, changed the entire rules of the way the trending topics sections worked. And for the first time ever on the platform, disinformation, misinformation, fake news, and right-wing media actually started to get greater reach and engagement than a non-aligned or news sources.

[00:42:35] **MOLLY JONG-FAST - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** And what year was that?

[00:42:36] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** That was in 2016, May of 2016.

[00:42:39] **MOLLY JONG-FAST - HOST, THE NEW ABNORMAL:** Perfect. Yeah, right before a certain election

[00:42:42] **ANGELO CARUSONE:** A very significant moment. And you could draw, and you could go down the list, even in more recently with the explosion of QAnon, this was a by-product of right-wing complaints that held them from enforcing the rules. Decision-makers like Joel Kaplan, who was a former Republican operative, I guess, current, even at Facebook. And so to me, when I look at the testimony and just this week, big picture, it's that we're watching whatever world information landscape we're going to live in being built, and this was a really big part of it.

The same strategy it did in the 90s that work the refs, they were doing it to platforms. And then the harms that were talked about, you could actually go back and see the moments where the last vestiges of the right-wing media, as they're beginning their transformation, we're actually adapting and tipping the scales in their favor for what the new information landscape was going to look like.

What 25 Years Of Fox News Poison Has Done To America - All In - Air Date 10-8-21

[00:43:31] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** You've probably seen these viral videos have been going around, maybe not, but, there's been a lot of them,

of people losing their minds at school board meetings. You might have seen this particularly egregious video it's of a woman berating a mother because the mom's kid was wearing a mask

[00:43:48] **music:** Are you

[00:43:48] **ARCHIVE FOOTAGE:** going to be

[00:44:02] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** now this is to put it mildly incredibly anti-social behavior just wildly outside the parameters of everything anything you would want or expect in civil society you think to yourself well where would someone even get the idea to do something like that Well we have an answer

[00:44:19] **TUCKER CARLSON:** as for forcing children to wear masks outside That should be illegal Your response When you see children wearing masks as they play should be no different from your response To seeing someone beat a kid in Walmart call the police immediately contact child protective services Keep calling until someone arrives What you're looking at is abuse It's child abuse and you are morally obligated to attempt to prevent it There is

[00:44:43] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** a direct pipeline from what appears on Fox news to the absolute worst manifestations worst behavior worse elements of our politics and society input to output clear and strong connection Just take a step back and survey the wreckage of the current moment This unprecedented era in American politics The first president in the country's history without any meaningful political or military experience the first president impeached The first deadly insurrection which tried to interrupt the peaceful transfer of power and overthrew the duly elected government Since basically the cannons firing Fort Sumpter during the Civil War. We have experienced all of that. These genuinely novel, unprecedented, destructive events in just a few years. How did we get here? The answer is in large part Fox News. And so it is fitting that on the network's 25th anniversary, they're patting themselves on the back I made all the pomp and circumstance Donald Trump the monster they created both an avid Fox news viewer and the network's quintessential talking head the real life case study of what happens when you try to govern the country based on the network cynical and demagogic misinformation that he was who they chose to have on to complete the The logical conclusion of Fox's quarter century long project to rebuild United States in its image It was exactly the kind of sycophantic propaganda you would expect from Fox not even a pretense of asking Trump a tough question about say a new report that implicated him in an attempted coup instead we got the

same disgusting vile racist attacks on immigrants that have become Fox news his brand over the past two decades.

And it was almost fitting. Because Donald Trump, the politician and his racism and nativism, authoritarian aspirations, almost entirely a creation of Fox News and the political project that its founding CEO, Roger Ailes, first set out to make half a century ago when he pitched then president Richard Nixon on a news network that would beam pro-Republican coverage directly into Americans zones Every night Trump's presidency was the apotheosis of Ailes vision The country we now have which is being torn to shreds in the midst of a democratic crisis and a deadly once in a century pandemic which is so much deadlier than it needs to be in large part because of what Fox is putting out every night There is a body count there foxes corrosion of our discourse maybe reaching a crescendo now but there's a great piece in mother Jones that makes a compelling case The networks debut 25 years ago 1996 was the point that started to push this country on its current state Of heightened polarization and distrust of major institutions from the insane spectacle the Clinton impeachment and the late 1990s the 2000 presidential election between George W. Bush now gore which gore won the popular vote of its chaotic aftermath to the racist destructive culture war madness of the post nine 11 era and the lead-up to the Iraq war When the country ban then known as the Dixie chicks were essentially removed from polite society for daring to criticize then president George w And the House of Representatives cafeterias started serving "freedom fries" to protest Francis' opposition to the Iraq war And of course the war itself which was touted as a huge success on the network while its critics who were of course ultimately vindicated by history were lambasted for their lack of Patriot To the racialized backlash Barack Obama's presidency including birtherism the racist conspiracy theory that says Obama was not born in this country which was Donald Trump's first major foray into the political discourse And that's at the groundwork for the entire mega movement All this was fueled by Fox news and the perpetual conservative outrage machine And it's not just speculation There's been studies done of this There are studies that have determined that Fox news is a real motivating factor in American politics One study found that Fox has impact increased Republicans vote share in presidential elections by three to four points in a country as polarized as ours That is enough to be massively consequential I mean for reference Republicans have won the popular vote Exactly Once since the 1980s in 2004 Georgia you Bush did win an outright majority of voters But according to this study if it was not for the boost from Fox news that outcome would have been reversed And as much as voters Republican politicians basically live in fear of Fox the backlash it could inspire And his memoir for a Republican speaker of the house John Bayner writes about that destructive influence that it had on his party He recounts going to confront then chairman of the network Roger Ailes, about Fox's coverage. " I

once met him in New York during the Obama years to plead with him, to put a leash on some of the crazies he was putting on the air. It was making my job trying to accomplish anything conservative that much harder." Banner goes on to say that Ailes was not receptive to his request Ailes was a true believer through and through He was not just cynically manipulating right-wing outrage and conspiracy theories about Obama and the Clintons Roger Ailes believed at all to or at least he did by that And he weaponized an entire conservative media empire to broadcast that pathological paranoia. at least until he was forced out of the network he built when more than 20 women, including high profile Fox anchors, accused him of sexual harassment. He died shortly thereafter.

And so it is true that to a certain extent, Fox operates as a state run TV for elected Republicans Just listening to former Trump press secretary Stephanie Grisham described the relationship

[00:50:18] **BRIANNA KEILER:** What was the role of Fox news in the white house

[00:50:22] **STEPHANIE GRISHAM:** That's just where we went to get what we wanted out They you know by and large didn't get tough with us They just took what we were saying and disseminated it

[00:50:33] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** Elected Republicans obviously use Fox to disseminate pro party propagata But we also cannot ignore the reverse wag The dog reality where increasingly Republican politicians are themselves avid Fox viewers That's where they get their information They follow the networks lead Kevin drum highlights One example of Fox leading the party in that great mother Jones piece quote starting in March Fox mentioned critical race theory 1300 times in the space of just three months By the end of June 26 states had introduced legislation that restricted or banned teaching CRT and related topics All this of course brings us back to our present moment where every day as we continue to Chronicle on this show Fox news is pushing out a constant stream of public health misinformation that is getting people sick Getting them into the hospital getting them killed and prolonging this pandemic It's unconscionably dark It's the darkest most extreme logical conclusion you can imagine for where this entire enterprise would end up where you've got these phenomenally rich costed it Elite Fox hosts sitting in their little studios on no lights with hair and makeup and expensive clothes Working for a company that mandates either vaccines or daily testing regime precisely the policy they're railing against but they won't say that they won't say anything about their bosses because they're too cowardly Instead what they're doing is pushing poison into people's brains that gets them sick This is where both the

modern enterprise of Fox news and the conservative movement more broadly have ended up the most acute threat to American democracy We have seen in 150 So happy 25th anniversary guys. You did it.

Former Fox News Reporter Tells All - David Pakman Show - Air Date: 02-05-13 (Archive)

[00:52:19] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** From... from '96 to 2002, you were a Washington DC based correspondent for Fox News channel, and then you went on to MSNBC.

So, when you were at Fox News, how explicit is the right- wing talking point, point of view in terms of the direction that... that an... on air staff get?

[00:52:39] **DAVID SHUSTER:** Uh, Fox was a very different organization back then than it is now. When I joined Fox News, I had been a local reporter in Little rock arkansas; I had led my local station's coverage of the Whitewater investigation; I had really good contacts in Ken Starr's office.

And so, Fox News hired me to Washington to, essentially, keep track of Whitewater in case it went anywhere. And then when the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke, a lot of the prosecutors I'd covered in Arkansas, they were then working for Starr.

So I had great contacts in the Office of the Independent Counsel. And I never really had any issue with Fox, saying, "Do a story this way," or... or "Don't do it that way."

Uh, the biggest problem that I had was with some of the on-air talent, uh, some of the hosts who would take this, sort of, carefully crafted information about the Whitewater investigation or about the Monica Lewinsky scandal, and take it out of context, and use it for their own agenda. So that was a sort of a constant battle internally.

We would also get the memos from the head of the, sort of, editorial side of Fox News saying, "Here's the types of stories we're going to be following," but I didn't really sense that there was a, um, a heavy hand or a... an oppressive, sort of, right-wing hand on Fox News until, really, uh, starting with the Florida

recount in 2000. And then it became more obvious, and that's when I felt like, "Wow, maybe this isn't such a great place for me".

[00:53:49] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** Right. So, you were on the "You Decide 2000--" I don't know, if it's staff or... or whatever-- you were part of "You Decide 2000," and... and everything that took place around the 2000 election.

So at that point, as things were developing, with the Supreme Court, and with the recounts, and all of this stuff, was there any kind of concerted decision about what the point of view would be? Is it just kind of known what it would be?

[00:54:15] **DAVID SHUSTER:** Well, it became pretty obvious to me that-- I had covered the John McCain campaign, and it felt like there was a lot more, sort of, effort to try to get me to do negative stories about John McCain and the 2000 Republican primaries than to get the guy who was covering George W. Bush to do negative stories about him. So I felt like the network management, in a sense, was more, sort of, in the George W. Bush camp.

But then during the Florida recount, and I was down in Tallahassee for, uh, for four weeks, where it became so apparent to me, is that, uh, you recalled that on election night, when all the networks got it wrong, one of the talking points from the Republicans was that, "Well, if the networks had not called the State of Florida when they did, thousands of voters in the panhandle of Florida would not have been disenfranchised. And, now keep in mind, some of the polls closed in Florida, most of the state, at seven o'clock, and then in the panhandle, which is in the Central time zone, it actually closes at seven o'clock Central time, which is eight o'clock Eastern.

The networks called Florida for Gore, initially. And so the argument was, "Oh, my God! There were thousands of conservative Republicans in the panhandle of Florida that didn't vote, and if the networks had not called it early for Al Gore, then George W. Bush would have won the votes, period." That was a talking point on election night, and for several days afterwards.

So what Fox News did, is they sent one of my colleagues, a guy by the name of Brett Baier...

[00:55:26] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** right...

[00:55:27] **DAVID SHUSTER:** ... to the panhandle to find these "thousands of Republican voters who had heard that Al Gore won Florida, and were disenfranchised, and decided not to vote." And Bret couldn't find any of them, he and his crew, because they didn't exist! There were no people! If they were waiting in line at quarter-of, they voted anyway. Bret could not finding these people!

So he then comes to Tallahassee, and he tells me, you know, this talking point, this Republican talking point, is wrong. And I said, "Well, you're going to do the story, then, right? You're going to report that there's... there were none of these, you know, thousands of people that were disenfranchised; that, in fact, Al Gore... that the networks... that George W. Bush would not have won the overall vote, regardless of what the networks did?"

He said, "No, I'm not going to do that."

And I said, "Well, why not? I mean, our job is, you go and report, and... We've got people on the air right now, saying that George W. Bush would have won Florida, had it not been for the networks."

And he said, "No, I'm... I'm just not going to... I'm just not going to do the story. I'm not going to rock the boat."

And that's when I realized that, okay, Fox did have an agenda, to, sort of, let this talking point be out there, that George W. Bush would have won, had it not been for networks. And I felt, right then, Bret Baer is going to go very far in this news channel, because he's playing to management; he's not, necessarily, playing to journalism.

And that was, you know, that was a choice that he made. I was, um, I was disturbed by it, and felt like, "No, that's not the choice that I would have made." And when I was in Florida, I reported what I was finding. And that, is both sides were working like hell to try to win the recount; and there were shenanigans on both sides. It wasn't just Al Gore that was, you know, trying to... to rig certain things. It wasn't just George W. Bush. But the networks, starting in the Florida recount, had very much of an agenda to say Al Gore is trying to steal this thing.

[00:56:58] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** So, that's a pretty candid discussion to have with Bret Baier who now hosts the 6:00 PM news hour; I mean, he's one of the main Fox News guys at this point. And you were right in your prediction that he would go far, with that point of

view. And he basically just admitted, "You know, it's just... it's gonna... it's gonna stir things up if I report that. I'm just not going to talk about it at all."

Do you find that... there's kind of two sides, right? We saw the Bill Salmon memos, where they say, "This is how we're going to talk about health care." And that's, like, a very proactive way to push, basically, republican talking points. But you're talking about a different thing, which is, just, the exclusion of certain stories that might conflict with the party line.

So, so it's really, it's like a two-sided approach.

[00:57:37] **DAVID SHUSTER:** Absolutely. And the two sides-- and you've identified them perfectly-- the one side would be the "Host," who, you know, the people who host certain shows, who... they will express whatever opinion of Bill Salmon, or somebody from management sends in a memo, they will weave that into their comments or into their discussions;

and then the second side is, involves the people who consider themselves to be reporters. And that is, they will report on certain stories, and they will not touch other stories. And so, you know, folks like a Bret Baier, or other people who consider themselves journalists, they will do an admirable job with the stories that they are presented, or the stories they are asked to cover; but there's a whole range of stories that these reporters, even... they may say, "Hey, we should go cover this story over here", but Fox News management will say, "No, no, we're, we're not going to cover that story. We're not going to talk about that."

And sometimes the absence of covering stories, particularly ones that hit you in the face, that's where the bias can show up.

[00:58:28] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** So, let's talk a little bit about MSNBC. Because we get... being on the... on the progressive side of independent media myself, I hear two... two, kind of, opinions about MSNBC. One is, people who really like it, and they like Rachel Maddow, and, uh, and they like everything that's going on on the channel; and others who say, "You know, the Keith Olbermann thing is really, just, kind of, an example-- Keith Olbermann, uh, the controversy over his political donations, and eventually leaving the channel-- is really an example that MSNBC has chosen as a profit product to have editorially more progressive, uh, commentators, but really, that it's indistinguishable from Fox News, in the sense that, they both are just corporate media putting out the product they think will make them the most money.

Rachel Maddow has come back and said, "No, you know, these are both for-profit companies, but there's a huge difference between the, kind of, uh, decidedly right-wing talking points that pervade the supposed news coverage on Fox, and MSNBC having liberal opinion programming.

Having worked for both, what's your take? How do you compare them?

[00:59:30] **DAVID SHUSTER:** Well... well, that's a great question, and a great, uh, analysis. And that is, I would say a couple of things. Yes, there is a, um, there is a bias in both sides. And once upon a time, I would've said Fox News was far more conservative than MSNBC could ever be "liberal." However, I would say that has started to balance out a little bit more, that... that MSNBC's become much more, sort of, progressive, liberal, uh, than before, than certainly when I started there.

But, a couple of things. I would also argue, though, that the Rachel Maddows, the Keith Olbermanns, uh, Ed Schultz, uh, Chris Matthews; it's much more of a fact-based approach; and I think that's also been something that progressives will instinctively tell you; that progressives tell me, "Look, we don't want the thumb on the scale; we simply want a fact-based, a science-based discussion of these issues.

And that's where I think, you know, the MSNBC commentators do a better job than Fox. And that yes, you might think, "Well, Rachel Maddow has a point of view, or Lawrence O'Donnell, or Ed Schultz, but they tend to be... they tend to adhere to facts and basic science much more in a strict... strict sort of fashion than you get on the opposite side. Over at Fox News, and that's where I'd say the differences.

Now you could... and I think this is something that progressives will... will say, "Of course!" Progressives... I think most progressives would tell you, if you have a fact-based decision, progressives are going to win 70% of the time.

And I think that seems to be what I hear from some of my former colleagues at MSNBC. They just want to have an arduous... argue... a very arduous, um, on-point discussion that is fact based, and then they believe that their progressive points of view will win.

[01:01:01] **DAVID PAKMAN - HOST, THE DAVID PAKMAN SHOW:** Last thing we saw after the 2012 election results viewers tune out a lot from Fox News. The ratings have, while they're still very good in a kind of aggregate

sense in... in... in the key demographics in prime time, they've been lower than they were since before 9/11, in fact.

What do you think this is a response to? Is this just some fatigue after losing an election? Or could this be, kind of, the start of a longer term shift away from that type of programming?

[01:01:29] **DAVID SHUSTER:** I think it's part of a longer-term shift. I mean, the credibility gap at Fox News has been there for a long time. And I think it is finally catching up with them, that the drum beat of criticism, legitimate criticism, that they get from organizations who pay attention to facts, who say, "Okay, Fox News gets it wrong, or they got it wrong." Or Jon Stewart, for example, perhaps the most effective at that...

I mean, Fox News's credibility simply doesn't exist anymore. It is seen as a Republican house organ, as GOP propaganda. And even when Fox does a straight news story, it is now viewed through the prism of, "Well, this is..., this is being done to further a particular Republican agenda."

And I think Americans realized, even some moderates and conservatives, felt they got burned in the last election, by all the predictions on Fox News, about Mitt Romney, winning the election, and it's going to be a landslide, and all that, of course, turned out to be wrong.

And I think people are realizing, that, in this day and age, when you want to have accurate information around you, regardless of your preexisting political views, you want accurate information. And I think more and more Americans feel that what they're getting from Fox News simply is not accurate and can not be trusted.

The biggest difference between Trump and Nixon is Fox News - Impeachment, Explained - Air Date 11-8-19 (Archive)

[01:02:28] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, IMPEACHMENT, EXPLAINED:** One of the things that is tricky in this conversation, but I think is actually important, is distinguishing the idea from news reportage that happens in a very professional way, but happens to be done from a somewhat more conservative perspective, from conservative media entertainment. And oftentimes I will hear people make the argument that the mainstream media has some amount of

liberal bias, which I think is true actually, certainly on social issues. I think if you look in big city newsrooms and most of these newspapers or media organizations are in New York, or they're in LA or they're in DC, people are overwhelmingly pro-choice, they're pro-immigrant, they're not necessarily pro single-payer healthcare, but they're culturally liberal, but they do a pretty good job on the news. And that actually, as I see it, did not leave that much room for just conservative news, because people just weren't that underserved.

What it created a lot of room for was conservative media and somebody like Sean Hannity or Tucker Carlson, or some of these other players, Laura Ingraham, they're not trying to report the news in the same way, what they're trying to create is a conservative narrative and storyline. And what's striking about that is that the person who is the best customer is Donald Trump. That he is not just creating a state propaganda network, he is the person who believes in it and it shapes his actions. And that's a very different situation than just having a conservative news dimension to your media.

[01:03:55] **NICOLE HEMMER:** I think that's right, and I think that is a pretty important distinction. And I think that you're also right in zeroing in on the question of audience or appetite. Because if you are tuning into something because it's conservative, what you're looking for is most likely not just a set of reported facts about the world. If you're ideologically motivated to seek out that new source, you're probably looking for something that has a little bit more of an argument, that's a little bit more opinionated. And there have been efforts over the past 30 to 40 years to create conservative journalism, but it hasn't really had the same power as conservative opinion. That has really been the heart of conservative media over the past 40 years.

When it comes to Donald Trump, one of the most interesting things about his presidency is not that Fox News is operating as State television, but rather that whatever they put on air, Donald Trump tends to believe. And so that actually has real consequences and it actually has real consequences for something like the impeachment inquiry. It does seem, and it's hard to parse anyone's actual beliefs and their heart, but it does seem like Donald Trump genuinely believed that there was this Democratic conspiracy in 2016, that somehow involved Ukraine, and involved at the server, and involved all of these other moving pieces that he just needed to expose, and the moment that he exposed it, then everyone would be on his side.

And you can tell him that there was this belief by the actions of the administration, by people heading all over the world and this sort of Carmen San Diego let's go to Italy, let's go to Ukraine to find the server and to hunt

down this conspiracy. It was something that Donald Trump really believed. And this is the flip side of having a State media that tells you everything that you want to hear and will repeat any sort of conspiracy theory. If you believe those conspiracies, you get led down a rabbit hole pretty quickly, and I think that's part of what happened with Ukraine.

[01:06:01] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, IMPEACHMENT, EXPLAINED:** This to me is such an important point about this, because I think that the conventional wisdom about Fox News and Breitbart and the rest of this ecosystem is it is protecting Trump from impeachment, but as you say, the evidence is also that lured Trump down the path that led to this impeachment process. That a lot of these conspiracy theories, they originated with people like Peter Schweizer, who is an editor at large for Breitbart, John Solomon, who was a conservative columnist for The Hill. They were promoted in tons of different Fox News and Breitbart and related channels, and that Donald Trump bought it. the point of having Pravda is it's a place where the government can lie to the people. It is a very strange inversion of that relationship where the point of having these networks is it's a place where the president lies to himself

[01:06:52] **NICOLE HEMMER:** I think that's an excellent way of putting it. And I think that that is precisely the problem here, is that it is one thing to provide these messages, and I'm not saying even most viewers believe everything that Fox News says, but what Fox News does is it provides them a handy set of talking points, interpretations, that people can then use whether they're Republicans in Congress or whether they're ordinary voters to say, "okay, this is how we're going to explain why the president did this."

But because you have a president who is very television oriented, who is very prone to believe, in many ways, his own press, because he believes that it causes him to act in ways that actually dig the hole deeper for him and make it much more difficult to provide cover for him. And so it is this kind of strange feedback loop that's happening between Fox News and Donald Trump that is creating more and more problems for him.

Now, at the same time, it's providing him cover, it's providing Republicans with talking points that are helping to keep the Republican party behind Donald Trump and thus protecting him from impeachment, but it's definitely, I think, leading his presidency down a path that probably even the people at Fox News would not prefer to go.

[01:08:11] **EZRA KLEIN - HOST, IMPEACHMENT, EXPLAINED:** There's a dynamic that seems to me to be emerging that I want to trace, but it's,

I'm not even sure I can quite explain what I think it is here, so let me give it a try .Donald Trump as a figure, both in Republican and conservative politics, but also as a media figure, he is what we'd call differentiated in the market. He has always, from the moment he burst into politics, taken positions the other Republicans didn't want to take, said things to other Republicans who didn't want to say, and then created this dynamic where you were either with him or against him, and it forced these constant loyalty tests. Were you with the base that he represented, or were you not?

And as that has continued, and now moving into this impeachment story where what he did with Ukraine is so baldfaced, and so obvious, and so undeniable, what it seems to me to have done is created a situation where it sharpens the difference between conservative media and news. And you see this in some of the crack-up at Fox News. One of the arguments Fox News has always made about itself is that, "well, look, we might have these opinion journalists in primetime, in the evening and on Fox and Friends in the morning, but during the daytime, we do hard news. Look at Shep Smith." And it's not coincidental that it's during this period that Shep Smith began getting into fights with Tucker Carlson on air, across their different shows, and then ultimately left the network and was followed out by a certain number of the hardcore news people at Fox.

And so now we're in this position where Donald Trump and the way he's acted in what you need to contort yourself to say, and do, and ignore, and believe to defend it, it's not possible to straddle the worlds anymore. And so Fox News and the conservative media that is beyond Fox News, it's either being forced to detether even more from the reality of the situation or is choosing to detether even more, because that's a good market decision, but either way, the ability to split the difference becomes weaker and weaker. And it seems to me, that's gonna make this ecosystem even more detached and problematic.

[01:10:12] **NICOLE HEMMER:** One way I like to think about this is that the first three years of the Trump administration were a series of loyalty tests and impeachment is the final exam. This is the time when all of these loyalty tests actually matter, because it brings conservative media around him, it brings Republicans around him, and it makes sure that that bulwark of conservative institutions stays firm, even through these investigations in which reality and what you're hearing on Fox News and what you're hearing out of the White House are very, very different.

And what I mean by loyalty tests, you can actually see when it comes to Fox News. Fox News early on in the 2016 race was a little skeptical of Donald Trump, precisely because of those things that you're talking about. Fox News

sought self as a conservative network and Donald Trump was not a particularly conservative politician. And when Donald Trump calls out Fox News in their spring of 2016, it begins to lose viewers. Conservatives side with Donald Trump instead of siding with Fox News, and so actually what you see over the course of 2016 into 2017 after Trump wins the election is that Fox News begins to change itself in order to reflect this new kind of, not really conservative politics, but nationalists right-wing politics of Donald Trump.

And you see that in the change up in the evening lineup. They bring in Tucker Carlson, they bring in Laura Ingraham, these very nativist, nationalist, presenters in the opinion hour, and they push out people who are more news oriented or were more establishment Republican, "never Trumpers". And the recent fights between Shep Smith and Sean Hannity go directly to this. It was clear even before Shep Smith Left that he was low man on the totem pole when it came to the fight with Sean Hannity. He was the one who was told to stop fighting about it. and really Fox News has chosen to side with the Trump administration to reflect Donald Trump's politics.

And that's not just because of who Donald Trump is, that's because they get blow back from their base, their viewers, whenever they deviate from Donald Trump's message. So it's really difficult to make sense of Fox News' as choices if you just think about it in terms of Donald Trump. You have to think about it in terms of his relationship with the base as well.

(Members) Final comments on the multi-decade victim mentality of conservatives about the media

[01:12:41] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with the Young Turks, from back in 2013, discussing the end of the War on Fox News, as it was seen at the time that their bias had been fully exposed;

You're Wrong About compared to be conspiratorial thinking on the right and left;

The Broadcast spoke with Kevin Drum about Fox's strategy of stoking fear;

Vox explained how Fox hacked the rest of the media by hyping stories that would have otherwise been rightfully ignored;

The David Pakman Show discussed the recent revelation that One America News was primarily funded by AT&T;

The New Abnormal looked at how Fox makes everything worse, and then looked ahead to Facebook and the next 25 years of news consumption;

and All In with Chris Hayes gave an overarching historical analysis of the impact of Fox News.

That's what everyone heard; but members also heard bonus clips from the archives, including the David Pakman Show, from 2013, speaking with David Schuster, a former MSNBC and Fox News employee, about what it was like behind the scenes;

And again, with that clip, similar to the thoughts of Media Matters from the beginning of the show, to think that the bias of Fox being exposed would hurt them in the ratings over time, is, just, so quaint to think about now, and shows how ignorant we were to the desire for propaganda dressed up as news, or at least the willingness of people to trick themselves into thinking they're getting real news.

And the other bonus clip was from Impeachment Explained, from 2019, discussing the process of Fox News becoming "Trumpified."

To hear that, and all of our bonus content, delivered seamlessly into your podcast feed, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support, or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted, no questions asked.

And now I just have some final thoughts for you. It's so happens that a recent conversation we had on the bonus show just for members is completely relevant to this conversation. And I'm not just going to play a clip or anything. I'm going to read a little bit from an article we were discussing.

We were talking about this article, "How the Right Wing Convinces Itself that Liberals are Evil." And the premise is about this ongoing, multi-decade, anti liberal propaganda among conservatives, going back to at least McCarthy; and how that propaganda has been used to excuse terrible behavior on the right, because at least they can tell themselves, "Well, we're not as bad as the Left." And they go from McCarthy to Trump effectively, or even pre McCarthy.

And part of that article, they got talking about conservative media. And here's just a little bit of it. "Long before Fox News, conservatives began forming their own explicitly right wing media landscape. Supporters of Franklin D Roosevelt and the New Deal dominated the mainstream press, which meant that conservative dissidents needed a home. The conservative magazine *Human Events* was launched in 1944 as an alternative to what its co-founder Felix Morley believed was a stifling conformity in the American press.

"The same was true of the *American Mercury* in 1950, when under the ownership of William Bradford Huie, the formerly social democratic magazine moved to the right.

"Both Morley and Huie felt victimized by a liberal press establishment that stifled alternative voices. And, after all, liberals had the *New Republic*, and leftists *The Nation*, as journals of opinion.

"But their charge of mainstream bias was more complicated. One of the largest newspapers in the United States, the *Chicago Tribune*, owned by conservative businessman Robert McCormick, had militantly opposed the New Deal and American entry into World War Two. Fulton Lewis Jr, a Washington, DC based political journalist, who was by 1950, one of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy's his biggest supporters, had one of the most listened to radio programs in the country.

"And both Morley and Huie had had illustrious careers before launching their magazines. Morley won a Pulitzer Prize when he edited the Washington Post in the 1930s; Huie had a solid reputation as a freelance journalist. But they clung to the belief that dissenters from the liberal orthodoxy were being hounded out of the media."

And so, as I said, the premise of this article is that conservatives had... have had this, sort of, victim complex combined with, "You just won't believe how actually-evil liberals are" mindset for all of these decades. And that that has led to excusing dirty tricks and bad behavior of all sorts all throughout these years.

So, Fox News is... is bad-- I think we've established that in today's episode-- and the nature of television does make it more powerful than previous forms of conservative media. But the sentiment behind why they feel they need it, is not new. They have felt as though their voices have been suppressed since at least to the post-war era. And, I would imagine, you could go back even further than that.

So you can hear more... we go into lots and lots of detail in our bonus episode. It's a really good conversation, and obviously the conversation goes far beyond just the media comparisons. They, sort of, take it almost decade by decade to... to show that as the Left gets demonized, the right does and says terrible things, always justifying their actions with the "evilness of the Left."

So, with that, keep the comments coming in at 202 999 3991, or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening.

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And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member, or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support, or from right inside the Apple podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, like the one I just described, in which we talk about that article, and the multi-decade campaign to demonize liberals. In addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes.

For details on the show itself, including links to all of the sources and music used in this and every episode, all that information can always be found in the show notes on our website and likely right on the device you're using to listen.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.