

# Here Are Some Key Ways the Mainstream Media Distorts the Truth



The media's decidedly liberal consensus often puts media elites out of touch with mainstream conservative ideas. (Photo: iStock Photos)

"Our leading media" are characterized by "indefensibly corrupt manipulations of language repeated incessantly."

Patrick Lawrence in *The Nation*, Aug. 9, on the media's reporting of the alleged collusion between Donald Trump's campaign and Russia.

To understand America's crises today, one must first understand what has happened to two institutions: the university and the news media. They do not regard their mission as educating and informing but indoctrinating.

In this column, I will focus on the media. I will dissect one issue that I know extremely well: the national and local coverage of the invitation extended to me to guest conduct the Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. The concert took place last week.

I am well aware that this event is far less significant than many other issues. But

every aspect of the reporting of this issue applies to virtually every issue the media cover.

Therefore, understanding how The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and NPR covered my story leads to an almost perfect understanding of how the media cover every story where the left has a vested interest.

When it comes to straight news stories—say, an earthquake in Central America—the news media often do their job responsibly. But when a story has a left-wing interest, the media abandon straight news reporting and take on the role of advocates.

As I explained in detail in a previous column, the board of directors of the Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra and its conductor, Guido Lamell, invited me to guest conduct a Haydn symphony at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

I have conducted regional orchestras in Southern California over the last 20 years.

Sometime thereafter, four members of the orchestra published a letter asking their fellow musicians not to perform, claiming, “Dennis Prager is a right-wing radio host who promotes horribly bigoted positions.”

They were joined by former Santa Monica Mayor Kevin McKeown, who announced, “I personally will most certainly not be attending a concert featuring a bigoted hate-monger,” among others.

Then, The New York Times decided to write a piece on the controversy.

The first question is why? Why would the Times write about a controversy begun by a few members of a community orchestra in California?

I am quite certain that one reason was to protect the left. My original column on the issue, titled “Can a Conservative Conduct an Orchestra?“, went viral. And it made the left look bad.

Not only was the left trying to prevent conservatives from speaking; it was now trying to prevent a conservative from not speaking—from just making music.

Therefore, it was necessary to show that the left in Santa Monica had legitimate

reasons to try to prevent me from conducting. And the only way to do that was to reaffirm that I am a hater and a bigot.

The Times writer wasted no time in portraying me that way. He wrote, “a number of them are refusing to play the fund-raiser, saying that allowing the orchestra to be conducted by Mr. Prager, who has suggested that same-sex marriage would lead to polygamy and incest, among other contentious statements, would be tantamount to endorsing and normalizing bigotry.”

**Lesson No. 1: When the mainstream media write or say that a conservative “suggested” something that sounds outrageous, it usually means the conservative never actually said it.**

After all, why write “suggested” and not “said” or “wrote”? Be suspicious whenever anything attributed to a conservative has no quotation marks and no source.

Seven paragraphs later—long after having mischaracterized my words to prime the readers’ perception—the Times writer did quote me on the subject.

He said, “Mr. Prager suggested that if same-sex marriage were legalized, then ‘there is no plausible argument for denying polygamous relationships, or brothers and sisters, or parents and adult children, the right to marry.’”

Though no context was given, the words quoted are accurate and a source was given. It was a 2014 column I wrote about judges having hubris for overturning voters in state after state who voted to keep marriage defined as the union of a man and a woman.

I was responding to then-District Judge Vaughn Walker, who ruled that California’s Proposition 8, which amended the state’s constitution to define marriage as “the union of a man and woman,” was unconstitutional.

One of Walker’s arguments was that “Proposition 8 prevents California from fulfilling its constitutional obligation to provide marriages on an equal basis.”

I wrote in the column, “If American society has a ‘constitutional obligation to provide marriages on an equal basis,’ then there is no plausible argument for denying polygamous relationships, or brothers and sisters, or parents and adult children, the right to marry.”

Had The New York Times author been intellectually honest, he would have written the context and the entire quote.

Or, if he had wanted to merely paraphrase me, he could have written, “Prager suggested that if same-sex marriage were legalized, there were no arguments against legalizing polygamy and adult incest.”

But that would have sounded a lot less awful than saying I suggested same-sex marriage will lead to polygamy and incest.

So, for as long as human beings and the internet exist, people who wish to dismiss me or my views on same-sex marriage will quote The New York Times mischaracterization. Readers will not know that the quote about same-sex marriage and incest is not mine but that of a New York Times writer.

### **Lesson No. 2: When used by the mainstream media, the words “divisive” or “contentious” simply mean “leftists disagree with.”**

Both words were used in The New York Times piece. The writer wrote that my “political views are divisive” and that I’ve made “other contentious statements.”

But the only reason my views are “divisive” and “contentious” is The New York Times differs with them.

During the eight-year presidency of Barack Obama, did The New York Times once describe anything he did or said as “divisive” or “contentious” (including his pre-2012 opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage)?

### **Lesson No. 3: Contrary evidence is omitted.**

Despite all the Santa Monica musicians who supported my conducting; despite the musicians from other orchestras—including the Los Angeles Philharmonic—who asked to play when I conducted; and despite the orchestra’s conductor and board members who have followed my work for decades, not one quote in the entire article described me in a positive light.

Rather, the article is filled with quotes describing me in the worst possible way.

Two of the four musicians who wrote the original letter against me are quoted extensively (calling me “horribly bigoted” and saying I help “normalize bigotry”);

a gay member of the orchestra is quoted accusing me of writing “some pretty awful things about gay people, women, and minorities” (for the record, I have never written an awful word about gay people, women, or minorities); and the former mayor’s attack on me was quoted.

#### **Lesson No. 4: Subjects are covered in line with left-wing ideology.**

The subject of the article could have easily (and more truthfully) been covered in a positive way, as something unifying and uplifting.

“Despite coming from different political worlds, a leading conservative and a very liberal city unite to make music together”—why wasn’t this the angle of the story?

Similarly, instead of its headline, “Santa Monica Symphony Roiled by Conservative Guest Conductor,” the Times could have used a headline and reported the very opposite: “Santa Monica Symphony Stands by Conservative Guest Conductor.”

That also would have conveyed more truth than the actual headline. But the difference between “roiled by” and “stands by” is the difference between a left-wing agenda and truth.

And even with the headline as it appeared in the Times, shouldn’t the story have offered quotes from supportive musicians to balance the negativity? One was left wondering why the invitation to guest conduct was offered to such a person to begin with.

Now let’s go to the Los Angeles Times, which was as negative as The New York Times, though at least its two negative columns were opinion columns—unlike The New York Times, they were not news stories, strictly speaking.

On Aug. 8, Los Angeles Times columnist Michael Hiltzik, a Pulitzer Prize winner, wrote a column headlined “How right-winger Dennis Prager politicized his own symphony gig—and declared himself the victim.”

The mendacity of the title is quite something. Never in all the years I have conducted orchestras have I used the opportunity to say a political word. My sole purpose has been to conduct orchestras, raise funds for those community orchestras, and bring new people to classical music.

The only people to ever politicize my conducting appearances are a few left-wing musicians and politicians in Santa Monica.

Those people made my conducting a political issue. Yet Hiltzik writes that I am the one who did. "It's Prager himself who pumped up the political component of the controversy," he says.

This is a fine example of "the indefensibly corrupt manipulations of language repeated incessantly in our leading media."

It is also worth noting that every mainstream news source, like the Los Angeles Times, identified me as either "right-wing" or "conservative."

Commentators and talk show hosts on the left, however, are virtually never identified as "left-wing" or "liberal." This is because in the closed world of the left, the left is the norm and the right is the aberration.

Hiltzik also wrote that "many in the orchestra find Prager's views noxious." That was after writing, "So far, seven musicians have said they won't perform ... leaving 70 still on the roster."

Apparently, about one out of 10 is "many." (Hiltzik also didn't mention the equal number of musicians from other orchestras who asked to play when I conducted.)

Then there was the column by the Los Angeles Times classical music critic, Mark Swed.

He wrote: "Can a divisive public conservative amateur musician conduct an orchestra? That's asking for trouble."

Note again the word "divisive"—only conservatives divide because, again, in the mind of the left, left is normative. And in case you missed it the first time, Swed later wrote about my "militant polarizing of issues."

As a conservative, I am not only divisive. I am a militant polarizer.

Does Swed provide an example of my militant polarizing? Yes, just one: my "calling liberalism a cancer."

Like The New York Times article, Swed did not place the words he attributed to me in quotation marks, and for good reason.

I have never in my life written or said that “liberalism is a cancer.” What I did write recently is that “leftism is a terminal cancer in the American bloodstream.”

But I always distinguish between leftism and liberalism because the two have almost nothing in common. Leftism is as anti-liberal as it is anti-conservative. But Swed knows that writing “liberalism is a cancer” renders me far more extreme-sounding than writing “leftism is a cancer.”

However, what is most disturbing about Swed is not that he wrote a column against the Santa Monica Symphony inviting me to conduct. Hiltzik wrote a similar piece, after all.

But as irresponsible as Hiltzik’s piece was, Hiltzik is a political columnist. Swed is not. He is a classical music critic.

What he did was one of the reasons I wrote that leftism is a cancer in the American bloodstream: The left damages virtually everything it touches—the arts, education, religion, the economy, the news media, and the military, among other areas of life.

When I was a young man living in New York City, I read every column the legendary New York Times classical music critic Harold C. Schonberg wrote. I do not recall him ever writing a political column.

To this day, I have no idea whether Schonberg was a liberal, a leftist, a conservative, or a Buddhist. He knew his role was to write about music. Swed, a man of the left, does not.

Finally, we come to NPR. It published a piece on Aug. 13 titled “Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra Confronts Controversy Over Right-Wing Guest Conductor.”

Putting the title aside—again, it communicates a negative story when a positive take would have been just as valid—the piece was considerably more balanced than those of the Los Angeles Times or that of The New York Times.

But it had the usual media defect: It gave away its political bent. The second paragraph read:

*Dennis Prager’s day job, however, has members of the orchestra up in arms—and laying down their instruments. He is a conservative talk show host*

*who often targets multiculturalism, Muslims and LGBTQ people.*

The writer gave an example in each case.

For multiculturalism, she cited a column I wrote titled “1,400 Girls Raped by Multiculturalism.” In it I described the kidnapping and sexual enslavement of over 1,400 English girls by young Muslim men over the course of more than a decade—while the police and the media conspired never to divulge that the rapists were Muslim.

The reason, as British authorities later admitted, was their commitment to multiculturalism.

But for a writer at NPR—even one who did not go out of her way to portray me as a mean-spirited bigot, as The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times did—the mere fact that I wrote a column against multiculturalism explains why members of the orchestra were “up in arms.”

As for “targeting” Muslims, she cited my column titled “Yes, Muslims Should Be Asked to Condemn Islamic Terror.”

In NPR’s moral universe, asking Muslims to condemn Islamic terror is equivalent to “targeting” Muslims. When the left demands that our white president condemn white supremacist violence, is it targeting whites?

And the example she supplied for my “targeting” LGBTQ people is my 2014 critique of judges who, I argued, overreached their authority when they overturned popular votes to keep marriage defined as the union of a man and a woman.

The whole article was a critique of judges, not LGBTQ people. But on the left, merely disagreeing with judges about an LGBTQ issue is “targeting” LGBTQ people.

In summary, all mainstream media coverage of this one story was tainted, biased, often false, and predicated solely on left-wing presumptions.

Magnify what they did to me a thousandfold and you will begin to understand media behavior over the last two generations, and especially behavior today,



when hysteria and advocacy have completely replaced news reporting.

The media pay little or no price among those who still believe them.

But I will pay a price. The New York Times lied when it wrote that I “suggested that same-sex marriage would lead to polygamy and incest.” Yet that will be cited forever as if it were true.

It’s already begun. On the night of the concert, the Fox TV station in Los Angeles reported:

*A left-wing attempt to boycott a performance of the Santa Monica Symphony due to a guest appearance by conservative radio host Dennis Prager backfired on Wednesday night; the event was a sellout. ... Prager has made controversial comments in the past, saying that he believes gay marriage would lead to incest.*

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