

# From bias to disruption

When journalists, politicians, and activists profess independence yet challenge individuals with whom they disagree based on political viewpoint, that reveals bias. When, however, those partisans go beyond challenging views they dislike to calling into question the character, motivation, or legality of those with whom they disagree, they aim to disrupt lives and careers. In the days of Edward R. Murrow, professional journalists, politicians, and activists largely avoided stooping to the level of character assassination unless the facts were largely beyond dispute and the issues clearly affected the public welfare. Not so any more.

With the Michael Flynn and Monica Crowley debacles and with the incessant efforts to accuse the President of complicity with the Russians, we see journalists, politicians, and activists condemn their opponents without the benefit of facts, aiming to destroy their careers. That may help account for why journalists, politicians, and activists are among the least trusted and most disliked groups in the country. The liberal media condemns first and then scurries to find supporting facts; when support is not found, the facts are twisted to suggest negative inferences, and the false stories are published anew.

It used to be that professional journalists aspired to avoid opinionated discourse in favor of a careful recitation of the facts. Opinion was left to the editorial pages and opinion talk shows. It used to be that politicians refrained from attacking the character of their opponents, preferring instead to address the issues. It used to be that political activists endeavored to make clear their ideological positions and concerns and draw public attention to the plight of those victimized by forces beyond their control.

Now, however, many who call themselves journalists,

politicians, and activists share the unseemly goal of destroying the character of their opponents with little or no effort spent on explaining the difference in political opinion that are often their true motivation. In some instances that is because of a mindless opposition, prejudice, or anarchistic sentiment which runs strong in opposition quarters. In other instances, however, that is because casting aspersion on character is thought to leave a more indelible and disabling mark on a person than challenging their views.

So it is that a man of great integrity and intellectual prowess, Tenth Circuit Judge Neil Gorsuch, is now the subject of much brainstorming by Democrats and liberal activists intent on finding some way to impugn his character and integrity. Again the focus is not so much on the facts of his record but on how those facts may be twisted to suggest that he suffers from character flaws so profound as to warrant his disqualification. In the case of Judge Gorsuch, that effort is so shrill, so far-fetched, that it should be apparent to every reasonable person.

Although the politics of character assassination have old roots, the use of them to destroy reputation were honed by activists and politicians during the confirmation fights over the nomination of Judge Robert Bork and, later, Judge Clarence Thomas. Many charges were levied against those honorable men that grew from selectively culled facts and innuendo, innocuous in and of themselves, yet sewn together to suggest that the two were character deficient. Any who objectively followed the careers of those two men came to the conclusion that they were far from the evil people they were portrayed to be.

In the end the epidemic of disruptive journalism, politics, and activism, which aims to render people and government dysfunctional, to tear down character and institutions without any clear aim other than destruction, reflects most profoundly on those engaged in the tactics.

They should themselves be the subject of great scrutiny, called before the public to answer for their reliance on false information and their condemnation of others without the benefit of facts. Once these select journalists, politicians, and activists who disserve us all have been discovered for their false publications, the public should act to hold them accountable, no longer supporting, patronizing, or voting for them.

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