# 1NC

#### I negate Resolved: In a democracy, a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy.

#### The value is Justice, defined as giving each their due, because the only reason to value anything else is because humans value it, which concedes that humans are valuable and deserving.

#### My value criterion is an informed public – that is what a free press is

#### This comes as a prior question to anything – when we deliberate and create ethical solutions we need to be informed. In order to accomplish this we have to 1] make sure we avoid misinformation and 2] allow people who are silenced to speak

We’ll define objectivity as reporting both sides of an issue and being neutral

### Contention 1: False Balance

#### Objectivity leads to a false balance where unequally credible sides are propped up as having equally good points

Napoli 21 [Philip M. Napoli, educator at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University, 03-02-2021, “Back from the dead (again): The specter of the Fairness Doctrine and its lesson for social media regulation,” Wiley Online Library, https://sci-hub.se/https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/poi3.253]/Kankee

Fairness, balance, and false equivalency Finally, it essential to address the problematic broader principle that underlies any governmental or voluntary efforts to impose fairness or balance requirements on media gatekeepers. The biggest problem with the Fairness Doctrine is what it does to our conception of journalism and to the notion of how responsible gatekeeping works. Over the past few years, there has been a substantial amount of criticism heaped upon the news media for engaging in “false equivalence”—that is, giving equal attention to competing claims on different sides of the political spectrum, regardless of the objective validity of the competing claims (see, e.g., Spayd, 2016). This sort of uncritical, nonevaluative approach to journalism—and to gatekeeping more broadly—simply is not the right path to cultivating an informed citizenry in this environment of nearly unprecedented political polarization and disinformation. Institutionalizing such a model allows falsity to be legitimized by being presented alongside truth. It creates a system where demands of fairness and balance neuter journalists' and other gatekeepers' ability (and responsibility) to differentiate fact from fiction, truth from conspiracy theories and hoaxes. Consider, for instance, recent research focusing on the content curation practices of Google News (Kawakami et al., 2020). This study found that “Because there are fewer right‐ leaning publications than center or left‐leaning ones, to maintain this ‘fair’ balance, hyper‐ partisan far‐right news sources of low trust receive more visibility than some news sources that are more familiar to and trusted by the public” (Kawakami et al., 2020, p. 59). Such findings help to empirically demonstrate the dangers of the application of Fairness Doctrine‐ like principles in the governance of digital platforms, as such approaches typically lead to the disproportionate and unwarranted (from an informed citizenry standpoint) prominence of sources that are more likely to disseminate disinformation. This critical gatekeeping function is more valuable than ever in today's vast and complex information ecosystem, where distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate sources of news and information is more challenging for the end user than it has ever been; and where efforts by bad actors to manipulate social media platforms have become commonplace and increasingly sophisticated. The Trump White House's (2020) executive order contended that social media platforms should operate as “passive bulletin boards.” They have virtually never operated in this way; nor should they. Even those platforms that have marketed themselves as completely unfiltered forums for public discourse (e.g., Parler) operate under a number of explicit content curation and moderation guidelines, and, ironically, have been found to be engaging in editorial decision‐making geared toward filtering out particular political viewpoints (Lerman, 2020). Any efforts at content‐based regulation of social media platforms need to move beyond the notion of fairness—or, at the very least decouple the notion of fairness from the notion of balance. Fairness and balance are not the same thing. There is a degree of passivity, of a lack of judgment, in the notion of balance that is not present to the same degree in the notion of fairness. A news story can be fair without necessarily being balanced if, in the fair and objective judgment of the journalist, giving greater prominence to a discredited or extreme viewpoint would misinform the public. Similarly, if a digital platform is systematically and objectively applying criteria to individual posts or accounts that result in one political perspective's posts being taken down or fact‐checked more than another's, this can be seen as the platform behaving fairly. The unbalanced outcome is not a reflection of unfairness on the part of the platform. It is a reflection of the behavior of the speakers. Frustratingly, this is a position that the representatives of the various digital platforms have refrained from expressing in any of the many instances in which they have been called before Congress and grilled about their bias against conservative viewpoints. As one recent reconsideration of the Fairness Doctrine noted, contemporary concerns should focus on “greater accuracy and completeness, but… not… balance” (Vandenbergh, 2020, p. 815). As one of the growing number of critics of the notion of balance in journalism has noted, “Although appealing on the surface, balance can easily be manipulated to create a false sense of equivalency” (Vandenbergh, 2020, p. 815). Along these lines, some critics of the Fairness Doctrine noted that it led to an emphasis on the presentation of “extremes of controversy” (Bolton, 1987, pp. 818–819). Neither policy nor professional practice should, in the pursuit of “fairness” or “balance,” prioritize opposing viewpoints independently of any concerns about accuracy or truthfulness. Unfortunately, many of today's advocates for “fairness” in the content curation and moderation practices of social media platforms appear concerned first and foremost with the availability of extreme viewpoints independent of whether they have any grounding in verifiable fact. This strategic conflation of diversity and falsity needs to be resisted. Passivity does not equal fairness; and so in this regard, what Republican policymakers are calling for is a far cry from the principles of the Fairness Doctrine which specifically extended protections to “all responsible positions on matters of sufficient importance to be afforded radio time” and to “the various positions taken by the responsible groups” (Federal Communications Commission, 1949, pp. 1250–1251, emphasis added). The term responsible seems particularly relevant to the current environment, in light of contemporary challenges related to hate speech and disinformation. The Fairness Doctrine's approach to gatekeeping did not—at least in theory—involve broadcasters serving as passive conduits; and so any current efforts to impose more “fairness” upon social media platforms that are ultimately about converting these platforms to passive or uncritically balanced conduits misrepresent what fairness should mean in regulatory approaches to media gatekeeping, as well as in the voluntary gatekeeping practices of news organizations and digital platforms. CONCLUSION

#### False equivalence decreases overall science education – past empirics prove

Weatherall et al. 20 [James Owen Weatherall, Suppes Visiting Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University with a Ph.D. in Philosophy from UC Irvine and a Ph.D. in Mathematics and Physics from the Stevens Institute of Technology, Cailin O’Connor, Associate Professor in the Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science at UC Irvine, member of the Institute for Mathematical Behavioral Science at UC Irvine, and co-author of the book The Misinformation Age,” and Justin P. Bruner, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Economy and Moral Science at the University of Arizona, 2020, “How to Beat Science and Influence People: Policymakers and Propaganda in Epistemic Networks,” British Society for the Philosophy of Science, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1093/bjps/axy062]/Kankee

5 Journalists as Unwitting Propagandists In the two treatments we have discussed so far, the propagandist has adopted strategies intended to influence the policymakers’ beliefs. In both cases, we found that the propagandist can succeed, at least under some circumstances. The basic mechanism at work in both strategies is that the propagandist endeavours to bias the total body of evidence that the policymakers see. They do not do this through fraud, or even by sampling from a different distribution than the other scientists (as in Holman and Bruner [2015]). Instead, they do it by choosing results so that the total evidence available, even though it was all drawn from a fixed distribution, does not reflect the statistics of that distribution. What these results show is that in many cases, particularly when evidence is relatively difficult to get or equivocal, it is essential that policymakers (and the public) have access to a complete, unbiased sampling of studies. This suggests that curation, or even partial reporting, of evidence can lead to epistemically poor results. But propagandists are not the only agents who regularly curate scientific results. Non-malicious actors can also play this role. For instance, journalists often select scientific studies to feature in articles. Few journalists are experts in the relevant science, and in any case, the goal is rarely to give a uniform and even-handed characterization of all available evidence. To the contrary, journalistic practices often encourage, or even require, journalists to share either only the most striking, surprising, or novel studies; or else, when they choose to share a study on a controversial topic, to endeavour to be ‘fair’ by sharing research that supports both sides. Indeed, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had an official policy, from 1949 to 1987, that required broadcast news to present controversial topics of public interest in a ‘balanced’ manner. In practice, this meant giving roughly equal time to multiple perspectives. The policy was known as the ‘fairness doctrine’. Oreskes and Conway ([2010]) argue that this doctrine became a tool of the tobacco industry’s propagandists, who used it to insist that pro-industry science get publicized. To study the effects of the fairness doctrine, we consider the following modification of the models we have considered thus far.27 The network structures remain the same, but in place of the propagandist, we have a ‘journalist’, who like the propagandist can see all of the scientists’ results and can communicate with all of the policymakers. In this case, we suppose that the policymakers receive all of their information from the journalist, and consider different ways the journalist might share that data. Suppose, for instance, that the journalist—abiding by the fairness doctrine—shares two results from the network of scientists each round, one of which supports theory B, and one of which supports theory A. More precisely: we suppose that each round, the journalist chooses randomly among all of the results that support theory A and all that support theory B. In rounds where no results support one of the two theories, the journalist shares the result they shared the previous round (capturing the idea that sometimes journalists need to search past data to find something to adequately represent the ‘other side’), unless there has never been a result favouring a given theory, in which case the journalist shares only one result. What we find is that this addition artificially slows the policymakers’ acceptance of theory B. To show this, it is most informative to compare the policymakers’ beliefs under the action of this journalist (fair) with what one would find if (a) the journalist shared two randomly selected pieces of data each round (random) and (b) the journalist simply shared all available evidence each round (all). We find that (on average across runs) the fairness doctrine never improves the epistemic performance of the policymakers, and for many parameter values, policymakers receiving evidence from a journalist abiding by the fairness doctrine end up with beliefs substantially less accurate than under conditions (a) or (b). In all cases we consider, the policymakers’ beliefs still tend towards the truth (whenever the scientists’ beliefs do), but they do so much more slowly.28 In this sense, then, the ‘fair’ journalist mimics the propagandist under the conditions where they are losing the tug of war for policymakers’ beliefs, but nonetheless slow the policymakers’ progress. Figure 9 shows average policymaker beliefs when scientists reach consensus on the true belief for complete networks under different parameter values.29 Data points are for simulations where journalists share fair, random, or all data as described above. The trend line shows the average beliefs across parameters under each condition. As is evident, when journalists share all the data, policymaker beliefs are very accurate. With less data available—two random sets of data—their convergence to true beliefs is slowed. Under fair reporting, policymakers converge to true beliefs much more slowly, since they see a result that supports theory A every time they see a result supporting B. The strength of this effect is dependent on parameter values, but, as mentioned, fair reporting only worsens, and never improves, policymaker beliefs in comparison to reporting randomly or reporting all data. Journalists are not the only actors who perform data curation. University faculty, when teaching courses, may endeavour to give a panoptic and even-handed view of a field, but they will not be able to share all available relevant data with a class. Literature reviews and survey articles also curate data, commenting on its quality and selecting what seems most relevant or significant. The mechanisms by which researchers and university instructors select material to present are arguably motivated by epistemic considerations—they seek to give a compact overview that supports the views they believe are best supported, given the total evidence that they have seen—but it is hard to see how they can do this without using their own beliefs—which may be influenced by various factors—to guide the choices. And so, it is not clear that even this sort of curation is certain to accurately track the statistics of the total available evidence. In this way, even independent researchers, in their teaching and writing, can unwittingly act as propagandists. In addition, it has been widely observed that scientists regularly fail to publish negative or null results. This ‘file drawer’ effect biases the pool of evidence available to the entire community, and has already been shown to potentially have negative effects on scientific beliefs (Romero [2016]).30 6 Conclusion We have now considered two aspects of the tobacco strategy as described by Oreskes and Conway. We take the results we have presented to provide strong evidence that the tobacco strategy can work, in the sense that biasing the total evidence presented to a group of agents can lead those agents to converge to the incorrect belief. Of course, modelling alone cannot establish that this did happen in the case of tobacco industry propaganda efforts. But when you combine the modelling results we have presented with the careful historical analysis and arguments offered by Oreskes and Conway ([2010]), there are strong reasons to believe that the tobacco strategy was an important causal factor in the long delay between when a link between cigarettes and cancer was established by the medical research community, and large-scale changes in regulation and public attitudes. Moreover, we take it that if these strategies have succeed in the past, they are very likely to succeed now and in the future.31 What is perhaps most interesting about the results we have presented is not that they show what can work, but rather the insight they provide into how those strategies work. As we have emphasized above, in our discussion on unwitting propagandists, the basic mechanism at play in our models is that the propagandist biases the total evidence on which the policymakers update their beliefs. The fact that each result that is shared is, in some sense, ‘real’ ends up being irrelevant, because it is the statistical properties of the total available evidence that matter. For this reason, we see that producing results favourable to industry—say, through industry funding—is not necessary to manufacture favourable public beliefs, at least in cases where the evidence is probabilistic and spurious results are possible. On this point: one might have expected that actually producing biased science would have a stronger influence on public opinion than merely sharing others’ results. But when one compares the two treatments we consider above, there are strong senses in which the less invasive, more subtle strategy of selective sharing is more effective than biased production, all things considered, particularly when the scientific community is large and the problem at hand is difficult (or the power of generic experiments is low). The reason is that such a scientific community will produce, on its own, plenty of research that, taken without proper context, lends credence to falsehoods. Merely sharing this already-available evidence is cost-effective, and much less risky than producing one’s own research—which, after all, can cost a great deal to produce, fail to generate the desired results, and ultimately be disqualified or ignored because of the association with industry. From this point of view, producing industry science (or even outright fraud) is simply not worth it. In many cases, another more effective, less expensive, and more difficult to detect strategy is available. Indeed, if industrial interests do wish to spend their money on science, perhaps rather than producing their own results and publishing them selectively, they would do better to adopt a different strategy, which Holman and Bruner ([2017]) have called ‘industrial selection’. The idea behind industrial selection is that there are many experimental protocols, methodologies, and even research questions that scientists may adopt, often for their own reasons. Some protocols may tend to produce more industry-friendly results than others.32 Industrial selection involves identifying methods already present among the community of scientists that tend to favour one’s preferred outcome, and then funding scientists who already use those methods. This extra funding works to amplify these scientists’ results, by allowing them to publish more, perform higher powered studies, and train more students who will go on to produce consonant results. Indeed, there is a strong potential feedback effect between industrial selection and selective sharing: by increasing the number of ambient industry-favourable results in a scientific literature, and then further amplifying those results by sharing them selectively, propagandists can have an even stronger effect. It is worth emphasizing that industrial selection does not require some scientists to have adopted bad or unreliable research methods; it may also just be that they have focused on research topics that promote an industrial agenda. For instance, Oreskes and Conway ([2010], p. 17) describe how the Tobacco Industry Research Council supported the work of noted asbestos researcher Wilhelm C. Hueper of the National Cancer Institute. Hueper’s research was not methodologically flawed; to the contrary, it very convincingly established the (real) link between lung cancer and asbestos. But for the tobacco industry, it was valuable to have evidence that other environmental factors played a role in lung cancer, since that could be used to obfuscate the role their own product played. Taken together, then, selective sharing and industrial selection suggest those interested in dampening industry influence should turn their attention to the more subtle ways propagandists can come to bias epistemic communities. This will to a certain extent require philosophers of science to reorient their focus, as extant work tends to address explicit, direct ways industry can impact inquiry. It is natural to ask given the past success of the tobacco strategy and the results we have described, whether there are ways policymakers or members of the public can protect themselves against a propagandist using the methods described. Of course, one natural suggestion is to stop listening to propagandists. But this is difficult to do, in large part because propagandists pose as (or, in some cases, are) credentialed scientists.33 Another possibility, perhaps more realistic, is to gather evidence from as many scientists as possible: as we discuss above, policymakers connected to more scientists tend to do better, because the propagandist has to produce more evidence to effectively influence such policymakers’ beliefs.34 Connecting to many scientists may also allow policymakers to identify propagandists on statistical grounds: indeed, as Holman and Bruner ([2015]) point out, in some cases it may be possible to identify biased agents by comparing the statistics of their results with those of other agents in their network. Finally, and along similar lines, it might also be possible, at least in some circumstances, for policymakers to adjust their updating rule to accommodate the possibility that some of the evidence they receive is exaggerated, filtered, or otherwise intended to mislead.35 On the other hand, as O’Connor and Weatherall ([2018]) show, some apparently reasonable heuristics for updating belief in light of unreliable sources can lead to bad epistemic outcomes, including stable polarization. We think that it would be valuable, in future work, to study how these latter two reactions might be implemented, and how and when they would be effective. We will conclude by noting a few ways the incentive structure of science contributes to the success of the would-be propagandist, particularly when employing the selective sharing strategy. As we noted above, selective sharing is most effective when (i) the problem is difficult (in the sense that pB is close to 0.5); (ii) the number of data points per scientist per round is small; (iii) there are many scientists working on a given problem; and (iv) policymakers are connected to few scientists. This situation interacts with how scientists are rewarded for their work in complex, troubling ways.36 For instance, although there are some incentives for scientists to make their work accessible and to try to communicate it with the public and policymakers, it continues to be the case that academic scientists are evaluated on the basis of their research productivity—and there are sometimes reputational hazards associated with ‘popularizing’ too much. This sort of effect can limit the number of scientists to whom policymakers are connected. But a more troubling way that propaganda and incentives intersect concerns the role of low-powered studies. Scientists are strongly encouraged to publish research articles, and to do so often. Moreover, publishing positive results is strongly preferred to null results. Finally, scientists work with limited funds that they must use to meet many demands. All of these considerations lead to strong incentives to run studies with relatively low power (particularly, fewer data points) whenever possible (Smaldino and McElreath [2016]).37 Of course, most scientific fields recognize that, all else being equal, higher powered studies are more rigorous, more reliable, and make for all-around better science. But there is little incentive, and often few resources, for individual scientists to produce consistently high-quality studies. And as we have seen, low-powered studies are more likely to spuriously support erroneous conclusions. In cases where industry is not involved, this is not as worrying: spurious results can be detected via meta-analysis. But in the presence of a propagandist, they become a powerful tool in shaping public belief. Discussions of low-powered science often focus on their role in controversies about particular results, in the context of the so-called replication crisis in the behavioural sciences (and especially psychology) (Open Science Collaboration [2015]). And the regular publication and acceptance of ultimately incorrect results is certainly worrying. But the arguments and results we have given here suggest that even more is at stake: the same sorts of conditions that lead to a replication crisis also provide extra fodder for industrial propaganda. This makes reshaping scientists’ incentives to publish many, low-powered ‘least-publishable units’ crucial to foiling propagandists. For instance, scientists should be granted more credit for statistically stronger results—even in cases where they happen to be null. Scientists should not be judged on the number of publications they produce, but on the quality of the research in those articles, so that a single publication with a very high-powered study, even if it shows a null result, should be ‘worth’ more than many articles showing surprising and sexy results, but with low power. Similar reasoning suggests that given some fixed financial resources, funding bodies should allocate those resources to a few very high-powered studies, rather than splitting it up into many small grants with only enough funding to run lower-powered studies. Or a more democratic alternative might involve scientists who work together to generate and combine smaller studies before publishing, making it more difficult for the propagandist to break off individual, spurious results.

#### False balance decreases trust in media and causes misinformation

Benham 19 [Janelle Benham, Adjunct Professor at Abilene Christian University and former reporter with a master’s degree in journalism from Ball State University, 2019, “Best Practices for Journalistic Balance: Gatekeeping, Imbalance and the Fake News Era,” Journalism Practice, https://sci-hub.se/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17512786.2019.1658538]/Kankee

Zelizer (2004) said journalism prides itself on its respect for truth and facts. However, public opinion of U.S. news outlets has an increasingly different view on if journalism truly reflects a truthful picture. In a 2016 Pew Research Center survey, 74% of U.S. adults surveyed said they believe news media tend to favor one side when reporting on political or social media issues, with only 24% saying media deal fairly with both sides (Mitchell et al. 2016). In the same year, a Gallup Poll revealed that trust in U.S. news organizations sunk to an all-time low, with only 32% saying that had a great or fair amount of trust in the news media “to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly” (2016, 1). In their most recent joint poll, Gallup and the Knight Foundation (2018) found that only 44% of respondents could name a news organization which they believe reports the news objectively. For institutions tracking public perception of US journalists’ bias and fairness there has been a steady decline over the last four decades (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2004). In 1985 the Pew Research Center found 45% of those U.S. adults surveyed thought news organizations to be politically biased, by 2002, that number jumped to 59% (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2004). Considering Pew’s latest survey has nearly three-fourths of respondents doubting the fairness of reports, the trajectory of U.S. journalism in the truth perception spectrum is grim. While the numbers are starkest in the U.S. this issue is relevant globally as well. In a 2017 Pew Research Center survey 75% of those surveyed in 38 nations said media bias, specifically favoring one political party over others while reporting, is not permissible (Mitchell et al. 2018). Globally 52% think their news media are doing a good job at fairly reporting different positions on political issues (Mitchell et al. 2018). These numbers indicated the audience’s decreasing perception of journalistic fairness in relation to bias. However, the problem does not lie in just bias perception but in the balance conundrum itself, Kovach and Rosenstiel said that balance is inherently subjective: Balancing a story by being fair to both sides may not be fair to the truth if both sides do not, in fact, have equal weight. And in those many cases where there are more than two sides to a story, how does one determine which side to honor? Balance, if it amounts to false balance, becomes distortion. (2014, 63) As a part of that, there should be a greater examination into this journalistic concept of balance, how it can be more concretely defined, and how to obtain balance within storytelling while avoiding the pitfalls of imbalance. A qualitative examination into this concept of balance is essential to frame this issue within the communication research profession. In her study on the impact of the Internet on news organizations, Robinson offered this support for qualitative research, “In-depth interviews with news producers would offer a chance to explore the nature of the press as an institution in the latest emergentmedia environment”(2007, 308). A qualitative approach will be enlightening for this topic of study as it allows for open-format discovery and expands beyond the content analysis approach of past balance and objectivity studies (Lazarfield, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Schaefer and Fordan 2015). Stavitsky and Dvorkin explained the historic difficulties of quantitative measurement for the concept of balance in journalism particularly with relation to campaign or candidate reporting: Quantitative analysis of balance—sometimes referred to as ‘stop-watch studies’—may point to important discrepancies in coverage and signal a lack of fair treatment. However, stopwatch analysis alone does not address questions of whether coverage favored a particular candidate or, for that matter, a political party or interest group. (2008, 6) Hearns-Branaman also utilized a qualitative approach in part for his work on the philosophy of truth in journalism practice: Unlike many philosophical discussions around truth and journalism, I will also use the discourse of journalists interviewed by myself to inform the discussion. This is not to take their statements at face value nor to associate their talk with their ‘beliefs.’ It is simply talk, talk that, however, illustrates how they are situated in the field of journalism. (2016, 4–5)

#### Only advocacy can overcome misinformation – squo focus on objectivity fails to convince the public

Froomkin 20 [Dan Froomkin, adjunct professor at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies at the American University School of Communications and Washington bureau chief for The Intercept, 7-28-2020, "Are we witnessing the final collapse of "objective" political reporting? Let's hope so," Salon, https://www.salon.com/2020/08/03/are-we-witnessing-the-final-collapse-of-objective-political-reporting-lets-hope-so/]/Kankee

There are two main reasons why the leaders of America's elite newsrooms are so devoted to the journalistic practice commonly referred to as "objectivity," which precludes reporters from "taking sides" in their political coverage — even when one side is an obvious lie, or an affront to core journalistic values like pluralism and democracy. The official reason is that they sincerely believe that press neutrality leads to a more informed electorate. They argue that voters will trust their news sources more if those sources are "unbiased," and that accurate information is more likely to be accepted as the truth if readers come to their own conclusions rather than being told what to think. A news organization perceived as objective, they say, has an increased power to persuade. The unofficial reason, which New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen pithily calls "refuge seeking," is that the "objective" approach protects editors and reporters from criticism – specifically, from accusations of bias. It also allows them to feel superior to partisans and activists, because they remain "above the fray." OK, let's review. Our leading journalistic institutions engage in "objectivity" to achieve two major goals: An informed electorate Immunity from accusations of bias So, here's my question to New York Times executive editor Dean Baquet, Washington Post executive editor Marty Baron, Associated Press executive editor Sally Buzbee and the other proclaimed and self-proclaimed guardians of our biggest, finest news organizations: How's that working out for you? Not so great, huh? The obvious answer is that "objectivity" has failed miserably to achieve either goal — and is more likely having the opposite effect. Informed electorate? Some four out of 10 Americans currently believe all sorts of things that aren't remotely true, like that the Black Lives Matter protests have been mostly violent, or that voter fraud is a problem and that mail-in voting makes it worse, or — despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary — that Trump is doing a good job. Nearly three in 10 believe COVID-19 was made in a lab and that Bill Gates wants to use vaccination to implant trackable microchips in people. Immune from accusations of bias? Those misinformed voters believe these things because they heard them from Fox News or some other right-wing super-spreader of conspiracy theories, after having decided that the "mainstream press" is, as their president tells them, so biased that it has become "fake news" and the "enemy of the people." And before you simply blame social media and filter bubbles — which of course are factors here — ask yourself this: Could it be that the "objective" approach to covering major political issues is simply too anodyne to convince anyone who's on the fence? What if the mainstream, reality-based media armed its audience with facts as emphatically and effectively as Fox News arms its audience with misinformation? What if the New York Times aggressively advocated for the truth, rather than just putting it out there for the record? A large fraction of America has tuned out the elite media, treating it like so much white noise. What if the Washington Post more assertively said in its news stories: "Here's what we believe are the facts, and why"? What if they said: "Here's where we're coming from"? What if they said: "Here's our best explanation of why all this crazy stuff is happening and why you're so screwed"? And what if the mainstream media provided its audience with a true, overarching narrative in which to situate the day-to-day stories — true, evidence-based narratives as compelling as the false ones that Fox and OAN and others are selling — rather than throwing their hands up in the air and saying "you decide"? The only thing hard about this would be overcoming decades of self-censorship. Reality-based reporters know the truth: Economic stories exist within a narrative of grotesque inequality sustained by the people who benefit from it; the earth is in grave danger from climate change but fossil-fuel interests have blocked necessary action; law enforcement is only one of many institutions that devalue Black lives; and Donald Trump doesn't fix problems, he exploits them. People hunger for compelling, explanatory narratives — that's why they respond so strongly to people like George Conway and books like those by Mary Trump and Michael Wolff. My view is that journalism as it is currently practiced by our most elite organizations simply isn't persuasive. It frustrates the liars enough that they'll still try to delegitimize it — and succeed, in scary proportions. But printing the truth and the lies and letting the people decide just isn't working. You have to shout the truth from the rooftops, and fight the lies in the streets. And although Trump and Trumpism have brought these issues to a head, the failure of objectivity is not just a Trump-era phenomenon. Most notably, and fatally, the failure of the press to assertively call out the flaws in the case against Saddam Hussein — out of fear of appearing biased — arguably led to a devastating war. When a poll in late 2003 showed that a shocking 69 percent of Americans falsely believed that Hussein played a role in the 9/11 terror attacks, newsroom leaders across the country should have launched a major reassessment of their approach to fighting misinformation. Today, with Trump openly challenging the basic mechanics of democracy, the question is upon us: When it comes down to a choice between authoritarianism and democracy, will the elite media "take sides"? Or will they be afraid of appearing biased? The alternative: "moral clarity" In a seminal tweet early this summer, during the battle over a particularly abhorrent op-ed, journalist Wesley Lowery set down a marker: Some have depicted this view as radical, demanding some sort of uniform view on all issues. But what Lowery and others (including myself) are arguing for is not moral conformity, just clarity. Government "by the people" depends on voters being exposed to different points of view — but it also requires the media to fight misinformation. So that means journalists should strive to present a variety of political arguments to their audiences. But they need to be based in reality and presented honestly. Alternately, political arguments that gain currency but are made in bad faith — particularly those that are racist, or sexist, inhumane or anti-democratic — should be clearly identified as such. Moral clarity in news journalism isn't partisan or polemic. Journalists shouldn't pretend they know the answers. We should just stop pretending we don't know what the problems are. Heck, maybe "moral clarity" just means having an occasional open discussion in diverse newsrooms about how to do the work, rather than just doing it the way it's always been done. "What I argue for is a more deliberate process that acknowledges that there are morals and ethics at all," Lowery told newsletter journalist Luke O'Neil in early July. "All these folks get off on saying 'We don't make any decisions ever. This is what it's always been' as a way of shielding the fact that they are constantly making decisions, and those decisions are subject to their biases." Lowery noted: "I'll be honest, in my experience there is far less discussion than there should be. Everything operates on autopilot." Losing trust, not gaining it Objectivity is supposed to create a bond of trust between journalists and their audience. But I've often argued that an honest, transparent journalistic application of moral clarity would enhance trust a lot more than the transparently bogus application of strained euphemisms, flagrant false equivalence, amnesia and credulousness. As I wrote last month, editors like Baquet are pursuing a form of objectivity that encompasses a whole range of anachronistic attitudes and habits that actually reduce the accuracy and authenticity of news coverage, rather than enhance it — and the readers notice. Intelligent readers cringe when they read star New York Times reporter Peter Baker join the he's-changing-his-tone chorus by pronouncing that "denial no longer appears to be a viable strategy for Mr. Trump." (The Times itself published an unsigned and oddly short-lived item in its live news updates a few days later, headlined: "Trump Returns to Where He's Mostly Been on Coronavirus: Denying Reality". It started off: "Trump's supposed shift on the virus didn't last long.") Focusing on tactics rather than substance leads to horrors like this recent Washington Post article examining who will benefit politically from Republicans letting unemployment benefits run out for desperate Americans. It literally featured headers saying "Democrats say" and "Republicans say." The worst thing, however, is the hypocrisy. Reporters confidently describe Trump's thinking when they're making absurdly generous and incorrect assumptions — as when he recently restarted his daily briefings because he missed the TV ratings, which the Times somehow translated into "a tacit acknowledgment that the public health crisis he had hoped to put behind him was still ravaging much of the country." But they can't bring themselves to write that he's lying, or crazy, or stupid. Consider how the New York Times sometimes concludes that it's important not to tell people what they should think about a news story, but at other times concludes it is — and a key factor seems to be whether doing so will annoy the left. Don't want to take my word for it? In his interview on the Times's own Daily podcast in January, Baquet defended the paper's both-sides coverage of Trump by saying: "I think of the reader who just wants to pick up his paper in the morning and know what the hell happened. I'm beholden to that reader, and I feel obligated to tell that reader what happened." But defending an article about Bernie Sanders' entrance into the 2016 Democratic presidential primary, which framed Sanders as a long shot who at best might shift Hillary Clinton a bit to the left, Baquet said: "I think we got to tell the readers, in the moment, how should we think about this." He added: "I think the reader picks up The New York Times and says, Bernie Sanders, I've never heard of him. How should I think about him?" There's no consistency. "Objectivity" seems to be based on an oversensitivity to the imagined views of a mythical center-right white male who doesn't exist — and it pisses off readers who do. Taking the public's side Local journalism is dying, and to some extent I blame that on "objectivity," too. Here's the core argument I made in 2009, when I wrote that "'Playing it Safe' Is Killing the American Newspaper": But we're hiding much of our newsrooms' value behind a terribly anachronistic format: voiceless, incremental news stories that neither get much traffic nor make our sites compelling destinations. While the dispassionate, what-happened-yesterday, inverted-pyramid daily news story still has some marginal utility, it is mostly a throwback at this point — a relic of a daily product delivered on paper to a geographically limited community. (For instance, it's the daily delivery cycle of our print product that led us to focus on yesterday's news. And it's the focus on maximizing newspaper circulation that drove us to create the notion of "objectivity" — thereby removing opinion and voice from news stories — for fear of alienating any segment of potential subscribers.)… While we legitimately want to keep partisanship and polemics out of our news coverage, we need to stop banishing our humanity and the passions that made us become journalists in the first place. When we find a great story, why shouldn't we shout it from the rooftops? Maybe if local papers were pluckier and more assertive about advocating for the people in their communities, those people would be more willing to pay. If they want to take the public's side, local, regional and national newspapers should consider creating beats based not on how officialdom organizes itself, but on major areas where people are getting screwed. So maybe there should be a beat about struggles with poverty, and another on the effects of criminal justice. National news organizations are suddenly, finally, devoting resources to race issues. But what about creating beats for inequality, misogyny and official secrecy? There are signs of progress here and there. In regards to Trump's attempts to delegitimize the November election, the mainstream media has, effectively, taken sides (with some notable exceptions). Some news organizations are recognizing that taking sides is just fine sometimes. Here's the vice president of news at McClatchy: Am I hopeful that the industry can change? Not so much in the short run, no. That's because there's actually a third reason so many journalistic leaders cling to "objectivity": Abandoning it would require them to admit they were wrong — and that "liberals" like me were right. It would mean surrendering the moral high ground they treasure more than anything. That's why I don't expect much to change until there's a new generation of leadership in our newsrooms.

### Contention 2 – Journalistic Advocacy breeds social and political change.

#### The press can use a form of advocacy reporting called “movement journalism” to ensure authentic stories are being told in their entirety. Advocacy propels social justice to challenge systemic inequities

Nicole Froio 2021 [Nicole Froio is a writer and researcher currently based in York, United Kingdom. She is working on a PhD on masculinity, sexual violence, and the media. She writes about women's rights, Brazilian politics, books, and many other topics.) "How journalists are challenging ideas of objectivity while empowering their communities," Current, 5-20-2021, https://current.org/2021/05/how-journalists-are-challenging-ideas-of-objectivity-while-empowering-their-communities/] SM

DaLyah Jones didn’t think of herself as a movement journalist when she worked in public radio. But she had a feeling that her newsroom was failing to cover the communities that needed the most attention.

During her time at KUT in Austin, Texas, from 2016 to 2019, Jones said, she often pressed for more coverage of marginalized communities, including Black Austinites who were leaving the city’s historic side for rural and suburban areas. “I was covering everyday stuff, but I would try to push folks,” said Jones, who now works for the Texas Observer.

Yet she felt that her superiors didn’t share her priorities. Jones didn’t understand why she was running into resistance. That changed when she was introduced to a new concept — “movement journalism.”

Movement journalism aligns with goals of social change and liberation from oppression. Its proponents strive to work with underserved communities affected by injustice, particularly those of color.

Because it questions objectivity and other pillars of traditional reporting, movement journalism remains outside of the mainstream. But some journalists in public radio are finding that it can provide a valuable framework for deepening coverage of local issues. Meanwhile, Jones and others have chosen to leave public radio entirely to devote themselves to the principles of movement journalism.

During her time at KUT, Jones learned more about movement journalism when she got a Freedomways fellowship with Press On, a Southern media collective that aims to catalyze change and advance justice through the practice of movement journalism. The Freedomways program supports journalists and storytellers in the South.

Lewis Raven Wallace, co-founder and education program director of Press On, describes movement journalism as an alignment with community grassroots organizing and movements for social justice. For journalists, this means diversifying their sources and scope of reporting to encompass the realities of racial, classed and gendered oppression in society and making their journalism more collaborative and community-centered, rather than extractive.

Wallace said he believes that movement journalism holds promise for what public media could achieve through working with communities that have been left behind by corporate media. Harnessing this promise could be a valuable asset for journalists and communities alike.

“There’s been a lot of conflation with this idea that we are talking about advocacy journalism, or writing that always takes a stance. And I think that reporting always takes a stance,” he said. “Movement journalism is not so much taking a stance on a given issue — it’s about aligning with grassroots community organizing and movements for justice, trying to make things better, and recognizing that there are going to be debates within that. So it’s really about asking, how do we align ourselves and our ethical practices with communities and movements for justice?”

After receiving training in movement journalism, Jones tried to work on her investigative Freedomways project at KUT, focusing on wildfires in the rural community of Bastrop southeast of Austin. But she felt that the station wasn’t hospitable to her exploration of movement journalism.

This felt especially frustrating because of Jones’ background. “I’m a person who comes from a rural background, and I know and understand the importance of not having information, not being able to share it in a very succinct way, as well as what happens to a community when they don’t know much about their own community,” she said.

KUT was then grappling with internal dysfunction and a toxic newsroom culture that journalists of color pressed management to address. Jones said that she became burned out and disillusioned with public media.

Against the background of protests following the murder of George Floyd, Jones shared some of her experiences with racism at KUT in a Twitter thread. At the Texas Observer, she now runs a Google News–funded engagement initiative focused on communities of color across Texas, letting marginalized communities lead the way on what to report. While the Observer doesn’t explicitly endorse movement journalism, Jones said that she feels it’s more accepting of the practice.

The larger problem with public radio journalism, Jones said, is that reporters see themselves as “not a part of our communities.”

“I feel like we get this very hierarchical standpoint within journalism,” she said. “We think we are above the communities we report on and that’s what public radio is to me. … It’s very snobby. And if you don’t feel like the things you’re reporting on will affect you, then that’s coming from a place of privilege, for one. And also, you’re sadly mistaken.”

‘Neutrality is impossible for me’

The term “movement journalism” and the concept was formalized in a 2017 report by Project South, a Southern organization dedicated to cultivating strong social movements in the region. But Project South noted that a tradition of alternative media in the U.S. that seek to advance social movements goes back to at least 1827, when free African Americans in New York founded the newspaper Freedom’s Journal.

Movement journalism also has roots in Hispanic movements for emancipation (the first Hispanic-owned newspaper in the U.S., El Mensagero Luisianés, was established in 1909), Indigenous struggles (The Cherokee Phoenix, the first Indigenous newspaper, debuted a year after Freedom’s Journal) and labor movements in the 1820s (labor journalism gave a platform to unions and people fighting for better working conditions). The work of investigative journalist and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells also foreshadowed the development of movement journalism.

More recently, proponents of movement journalism have identified noncommercial radio as a potential seedbed for the practice. In its 2017 report, Project South pointed to low-power FM stations in the South as “a promising platform.” At the time, two Project South board members sat on the board of WRFG, a community radio station in Atlanta. The organization also had a relationship with WMXP, a low-power FM station in Greenville, N.C.

Since 2016, Project South has planned a news outlet for social justice coverage that would syndicate programs to community radio. It has yet to launch that platform, but as a first step, Project South has started working with more than 50 Black-owned noncommercial radio stations in the South. The Black Radio Project gives the stations technical assistance, informational spots and public service announcements, according to Angela Oliver, Project South’s communications coordinator. PSAs have covered topics such as COVID prevention, voting rights and the need for civic engagement beyond elections.

In addition, Project South is working on a database of experts to help producers in the network find diverse sources for stories. It is also organizing events to bring together DJs, artists and activists to strategize about movement building.

“The idea is to create a space for them to be able to strategize and help each other — how can radio help get the message out?” Oliver said. “How can activists provide content to the radio based on whatever work they’re doing at the time?”

While public media may offer a forum for movement journalism to grow, Wallace risked his job in the system to highlight the shortcomings of traditional newsgathering.

Shortly after President Trump’s inauguration, Wallace published a blog post titled “Objectivity is dead, and I’m okay with it.” In the post, Wallace reflected on his position as a white transgender journalist in public media — he was a reporter for Marketplace at the time — and pointed out journalistic objectivity’s failure to address the rise of “alternative facts.”

“Neutrality is impossible for me, and you should admit that it is for you, too,” Wallace wrote. “As a member of a marginalized community (I am transgender), I’ve never had the opportunity to pretend I can be ‘neutral.’ And right now, as norms of government shift toward a ‘post-fact’ framework, I’d argue that any journalist invested in factual reporting can no longer remain neutral.”

At the request of his Marketplace supervisors, who told him he had violated the show’s ethics code, Wallace took down the post. He was suspended for the rest of the week. On Friday of the same week, Wallace reconsidered his decision and told his bosses he would republish it.

“Part of what I wanted to highlight in that blog post was the kind of doublespeak around diversity that happens in public media, where there’s a lot of conversation about wanting more diversity or wanting to include people of color, wanting to include trans people, but a complete ban on advocating for yourself as a trans person or as a person or color,” Wallace said. “… I ended up going public with that story largely for the purpose of highlighting this contradiction.”

He learned the following Monday that he had been fired. Wallace publicly disclosed that he was dismissed for a blog post rejecting journalistic objectivity. He ultimately wrote a book on the myth of objectivity and co-founded Press On.

Public media journalists are in a unique position to do journalism differently from their corporate counterparts but refuse to for fear of seeming partisan, Wallace said.

“There is this idea that public media in particular serves the public and wants to represent a diverse public but refuses to stand up against racism and white supremacy because that might not be considered objective. And not only is that untenable, but it’s also not really in line with the original intent of public media,” he said. “The original intent was grounded in what you might now call a ‘media justice framework,’ of trying to counterbalance corporate monopoly in media and create platforms that would be able to represent folks who are underrepresented because of systemic exclusion.”

In his book The View From Somewhere: Undoing the Myth of Journalistic Objectivity, Wallace challenges traditional approaches to journalism that fail to recognize the context of oppression and racial hatred in the U.S. He argues that the conversation about objectivity cracks open uncomfortable truths about how journalists practice cultural dominance in newsrooms.

“You cannot have a successful career in public media as somebody who publicly takes a stance on racial hostility or publicly takes a stance on patriarchy or abuse, and that is obviously messed up at a moral level,” Wallace said. “But it also creates this just ridiculous conundrum for the efforts in public media to be more representative and to be more driven by the public.”

During the protests that followed the killing of George Floyd, some public media organizations made clear to their employees that they could take a stance on racial injustice on their social media accounts. That may indicate change in some newsrooms, but Wallace also advocates for challenging the very concept of objectivity in journalism.

“To me, the conversation about objectivity is just a wedge conversation that opens all these other issues that are really about cultural white supremacy, and cultural racism, and cultural dominance, and oppression in these spaces,” he said. “But we really can’t have an honest conversation about oppression if we are still attached to the myth that it’s possible to be neutral, so it comes out over and over, every single time.”