

Serpent in the Media Book

Collusion, How the Media Stole the 2012 Election. Bozell & Graham, 2013

Note: El Morya and Jesus Christ would like to teach upon this chapter.

EL MORYA: It is the “serpent in the media” that in the past we have taught on.

JESUS CHRIST: You must recognize that serpent and *slay* it.

EL MORYA: Or it will come and slay you as this chapter says it again and again.

JESUS CHRIST: You are the faithful ones, these are the serpents, not far from even Serpent in the Garden of Eden.

Skim the yellow highlighted words for now.

Also put in words that are bigotry that has been directed at you that you recognize the tentacles of the *media serpent*.

EL MORYA: We would not leave you comfortless, that you know how to slay this beast.



CHAPTER 1

From Hope to Hatchets

“He will have to kill Romney.”

It is a dirty trick for the national media to decide who’s playing dirty. Their support for liberal politicians verges on adoring. Conversely, because the media elite loathes most conservative politicians, almost anything goes in attacking them.

The first thing any conservative should tell his friends about the “news” business is this: reporters, editors, and anchormen are not those characters in your civics textbook, merely interested in telling you what happened in the world while you slept or while you were at work. They’re not objective, impartial observers of a political system holding all politicians accountable. They are participants in the process.

The news business in the Obama era has been virtually indistinguishable from the Obama commercials, the official White House videos, and the campaign social-media messages. When they were “reporting” on Obama, reporters weren’t offering a news story as

much as they were advancing a narrative. They are in the narrative business.

In fact, it could be argued that today's campaign ads are more vetted for accuracy—and in fact, more accurate—than news reports. The 2012 cycle was loaded up with “nonpartisan” fact-checkers with liberal-media backgrounds frisking the candidates and their messages for accuracy. They weren't probing their fellow journalists for lies and inaccuracies. There is often only one difference between a candidate's vicious negative ad and an “investigative” news report: the undeserved patina of media “objectivity” and respectability.

Obama's Republican challengers could be viciously and personally attacked, and the media wouldn't paint the attackers as vicious—especially when they were among the attackers. Team Obama always believed Mitt Romney would be their opponent. In August 2011, *Politico* reported a “prominent Democratic strategist aligned with the White House” speaking bluntly: “Unless things change and Obama can run on accomplishments, he will have to kill Romney.”¹

Imagine the explosion had the Romney camp declared the need to kill Obama. Despite these words appearing in a liberal publication, and despite the Romney camp denouncing the quote as “disgraceful,” the words “have to kill Romney” were completely ignored by the major media. They were ignored by the Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. This phrase wasn't quoted on ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR, PBS, or CNN. As usual, Fox News was the exception to the blackout. Oh wait, there was another. It was relayed once by *Last Word* host Lawrence O'Donnell on MSNBC. He enjoyed it as the “juiciest quote.”²

The anonymous source was probably not someone like Axelrod, who would never concede Obama had no accomplishments. But it did reflect Team Obama's attitude toward the Republicans. The GOP contenders could all prepare for an historic campaign—defined as

an historic level of mud-slinging, the tawdriest, flimsiest attacks of “investigative journalism,” and bottom-scraping negative ads.

The architects of Obama’s reelection campaign couldn’t boast about any reelection mandate. The public was unimpressed by Obama’s performance in his first term and reluctant to award him a second one. The Real Clear Politics average of the approval-rating polls in mid-September 2011 measured the president’s approval rating at 43 percent approval, and 51 percent disapproval.³ With these numbers, pundits could have measured his political coffin.

Instead, Axelrod would need to rely on a narrative that the Republicans were all too conservative to offer a serious challenge to Obama. He boasted afterward that he had told the president “the seeds of his re-election had been planted by that [2010] election. The Tea Party movement would need to be marginalized in order to drag all the GOP candidates down. He would need the national media to advance this narrative. In fact, the work was already under way.

Over the summer, the Tea Party wanted the Republicans to vote against increasing the debt limit, as a way to force the Democrats to limit spending. Opposition to Obama equaled hatred, even some form of jihad. *The New York Times* assembled an editorial-page tag team.

Columnist Thomas Friedman warned, “If sane Republicans do not stand up to this Hezbollah faction in their midst, the Tea Party will take the GOP on a suicide mission.” Friedman later claimed on NBC that “there’s a lot of Republicans who are starved for a candidate” who could debate Obama and attempt to be “as smart and mellifluous as the president.”⁴

Times business columnist Joe Nocera claimed the country “watched in horror as the Tea Party Republicans waged jihad on the American people.”⁵ But columnist Maureen Dowd stood out from

the crowd, sounding like she had swallowed a fistful of hallucinogenic drugs:

“Tea Party budget-slashers . . . were like cannibals, eating their own party and leaders alive. They were like vampires, draining the country’s reputation, credit rating and compassion. They were like zombies, relentlessly and mindlessly coming back again and again to assault their unnerved victims, [Speaker of the House John] Boehner and President Obama. They were like the metallic beasts in *Alien* flashing mouths of teeth inside other mouths of teeth, bursting out of Boehner’s stomach every time he came to a bouquet of microphones.”⁶

The New York Times even published a book review by an Ohio State professor that equated the Tea Party with the Ku Klux Klan. “Imagine a political movement created in a moment of terrible anxiety, its origins shrouded in a peculiar combination of manipulation and grass-roots mobilization, its ranks dominated by Christian conservatives and self-proclaimed patriots, its agenda driven by its members’ fervent embrace of nationalism, nativism and moral regeneration, with more than a whiff of racism wafting through it. No, not that movement.” Opposing Obama—even if you were Herman Cain—demonstrated “more than a whiff of racism.”

The candidates who jumped in didn’t impress Axelrod. So during the primary season, the media elite treated the emerging Republican challengers as a field of nightmares, a group of pretenders and has-beens who could not be seriously hoping to defeat Obama. Republican debate audiences were criticized as “bloodthirsty” and demonstrating “bloodlust.”⁷

There was no such thing as a loyal or honorable opposition. Instead, Obama critics were described as assassins. On MSNBC, Chris Matthews was asserting “the whole shebang, has been eliminate this guy’s presidency. It’s been personal, it’s been about him,

and it's about hatred. . . . 'We hate you, want to kill you—[dramatic pause] politically.'"⁸

Republicans on the Chopping Block

From the start of the Republican race in 2011, every candidate who took the lead in the pre-primary polling was subjected to a beating. Even Sarah Palin was slimed in case she decided to run. Outbursts of “investigative journalism” erupted repeatedly against the GOP front-runner of the moment. Republican presidential campaigns were damaged or demolished, one by one.

PALIN. Governor Sarah Palin never declared she was running for president, but she frightened reporters by going on campaign-style bus tours to keep alive the notion that she just might run and her name in the headlines. Journalists feared the voters in Flyover Country might find her more culturally resonant than the globe-trotting sophisticate with the funny name that they preferred. Bill Maher told Piers Morgan on CNN he wouldn't put it past the Republicans. “Somewhere along the line they got on a short bus to Crazy Town, and if someone gets the nomination of one of the two major parties, especially in a bad economy, with a black president, yes, she could become president.”⁹

Everyone was qualified to find Palin crazy—even Roseanne Barr. On CNN, she declared “[Palin is] a loon and I think she's kind of a traitor to this country. . . . Her followers are the dumbest people on Earth. . . . They can barely scare up a pulse. I'm serious.” MSNBC host Martin Bashir had his own adjectives: “Vacuous, crass, and according to almost every biographer, vindictive too.”

Author Joe McGinniss was roundly condemned by liberals as a

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smear artist in 1993 for his Ted Kennedy book *The Last Brother*. It was an unreliable, unsubstantiated attack piece, they felt. But when McGinniss wrote *The Last Rogue*, a book attacking Palin, this same maligned scribe was given the red-carpet treatment on *Dateline NBC*. It didn't matter that Palin wasn't running for president. Just the chance that this "mama grizzly" might run inspired NBC's venomous portrayal.

McGinniss called Palin "[a]n utter fraud. An absolute and utter fraud." Rather than challenge that statement, his NBC interviewer, Savannah Guthrie, helpfully added: "You called her a tenth-grade mean girl." McGinniss insisted "those are kind words compared to a lot of what you would hear in Wasilla . . . the people who know her best like her least."

NBC needed no names or documents to prove any smear that McGinniss allegedly was repeating. Guthrie continued: "He accuses the famed hockey mom of using her children as props and reports she was not much of a mother at all." She was "virtually nonexistent as a mother," insisted McGinniss. Guthrie also helpfully relayed the unproven charge that Todd and Sarah Palin were "fighting incessantly and threatening divorce."

The Palins also used cocaine, according to the NBC manure-spreaders. Guthrie touted: "Another bombshell, McGinniss writes that both Todd and Sarah have used cocaine in the past, a claim that has not been verified. How do you substantiate something like that?" A far better, and more important question: Why was this unsubstantiated garbage being repeated on NBC? Are all unverified rumors accepted—if they are salacious enough, and the subject is a conservative?

Guthrie also helped champion McGinniss's claim that Palin slept with a pro basketball star: "McGinniss also quotes friends who speak of a sexual encounter Palin had with basketball star Glen Rice in 1987, while she was a sports reporter for a local Anchorage station,

prior to her marriage.” Proof of Sarah Heath’s bed-hopping with basketball stars at twenty-three? Who needs proof?

Then Guthrie wrapped up: “McGinniss portrays Palin as ‘Hands Off’ when it came to governing Alaska, but a ruthless political opportunist who crushed her enemies and rarely lived up to the fiscal conservative image she championed.” McGinniss said, “At best, she’s a hypocrite. . . . At worst, she’s a vindictive hypocrite.”¹⁰

Ruthless opportunists . . . vindictive hypocrites who crush enemies—truer words were never spoken . . . if they were applied to the “news” manufacturers at NBC. Guthrie wasn’t punished for this exercise in character assassination. She was promoted to her dream job as the cohost of *Today*.

BACHMANN. On July 11, 2011, as Michele Bachmann’s popularity was growing (and about a month before she won the Iowa straw poll) ABC’s *World News* touted a hidden-camera investigation of the clinic of her therapist husband, Marcus Bachmann. It was a “pray away the gay” scandal, they said. “We begin tonight with an ABC News investigation,” oozed anchor Diane Sawyer. “Tea Party powerhouse Michele Bachmann has rocketed to the top of the Republican pack. Tonight, a closer look at the business she and her husband own back home in Minnesota. An outside group filmed undercover video inside the Bachmann’s Christian counseling center. Bachmann’s husband has said he does not try to turn gay people straight.”¹¹ (The horror!) ABC (and then CNN, and then NBC) claimed otherwise.

But the hidden cameras of this “ABC News investigation” weren’t sent in by ABC. They came from a radical homosexual lobby called “Truth Wins Out,” a funny name for a group that had lied and faked its way into the Bachmann clinic. No one saw the conflict, apparently.

Mocking Bachmann was easy, and was never seen as sexist. On *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno, MSNBC host Chris Matthews insisted, “I’ve always said she’s in a trance. I mean, she looks like she’s

been hypnotized.” Former *New York Times* executive editor Bill Keller couldn’t stand religious sentiments on the campaign trail. “Rick Perry, Michele Bachmann and Rick Santorum are all affiliated with fervid subsets of evangelical Christianity, which has raised concerns about their respect for the separation of church and state, not to mention the separation of fact and fiction.”

In August, *Newsweek* mocked Michele Bachmann on its cover, making her look pale and confused. Nutty. The headline said it all: “The Queen of Rage.” The cover story by reporter Lois Romano threw mud. “Bachmann has become the living embodiment of the Tea Party. She and her allies have been called a maniacal gang of knife-wielding ideologues. That’s hyperbole, of course. But the principled rigidity of her position has created some challenges for her campaign.”

“Obama and his allies are a maniacal gang of knife-wielding ideologues. That’s hyperbole, of course.” Do you think any editor would ever allow that to stand?

Here’s another typical, sneering sentence: “For now, Bachmann revels in the Iowa crowds, which don’t fuss about the missing fine print behind her ideas, the perceived contradictions among them, or their radicalism.”¹² *Newsweek* claims to loathe contradictions—as they write long, nasty editorials and then claim like complete hypocrites that they were publishing a “news” story.

The liberal website FunnyOrDie.com wrote alternative titles for the Bachmann cover picture, including “The Girl Next Door: Assuming You Live Next to an Insane Asylum” and “Zombies: Michele Bachmann Eats America’s Young.”¹³

PERRY. Governor Rick Perry looked like a strong contender when he entered the race in August, due to his booming success in the Texas economy and his ability to raise campaign cash. That’s when reporters decided to portray him as the worst kind of cowboy bumpkin. ABC

anchor Diane Sawyer called him the “human tornado,” as reporter Jake Tapper added, “Democrats say that until Perry came along, they never thought they’d meet a candidate who made the other Republican candidates look responsible.”¹⁴ CBS ran a wild-haired cartoon image of Perry running with an exploding gun as they explained he believed in “America’s right to bear arms—even in a speeding helicopter. Yes, he made it legal to hunt wild boar from the air. After all, he’s the kind of governor who would shoot a coyote while he’s out jogging.”¹⁵

CNN commentator Jack Cafferty saw his ascent as the End of Brains. “Since Michele Bachmann won the Iowa straw poll and Rick Perry entered the race, these two have been sucking up most of the media’s attention, mostly for saying stupid stuff. . . . That’s a sad commentary on the state of our politics, isn’t it? Here’s the question: When it comes to presidential politics, why does America seem to be allergic to brains?”

But his days as front-runner were numbered as the big “investigative bombshell” arrived on October 2, when *The Washington Post* killed trees to report in earthshaking depth how the Rick Perry family had leased a hunting property where in 1983 or 1984, the N-word was found painted on a rock, and never mind it was the Rick Perry family that covered it with white paint. Reporter Stephanie McCrummen could conjure up a virtual Klan hood on Perry’s head. “As recently as this summer, the slablike rock—lying flat, the name still faintly visible beneath a coat of white paint—remained by the gated entrance to the camp.”

Near the end, she underlined it again: “In the photos, it was to the left of the gate. It was laid down flat. The exposed face was brushed clean of dirt. White paint, dried drippings visible, covered a word across the surface. An N and two G’s were faintly visible.”¹⁶

Three thousand words they spent on this.

The *Post* was throwing the biggest rock they could at a

Republican—racism, as in casual acquiescence to the N-word—without telling the public who was behind the accusation. They quoted seven sources, but six of them remained anonymous. Were some Obama supporters or financial backers? Naturally, when some readers protested, *Washington Post* ombudsman Patrick Pexton declared, “If the seven sources the *Post* relied on for this article are truthful, then Perry is lying or is badly misinformed about when the rock was painted.”¹⁷ Pexton also insisted that the Perry camp’s failure to protest more fiercely made him look guilty. Damned if you do, damned if you don’t.

Would the *Post* use six anonymous sources to push a three-thousand-word story on the front page trashing Barack Obama for something some people said anonymously that he did or said in the 1980s? Radio host Hugh Hewitt put it best: “It is a drive-by slander.”¹⁸

Two days after the rock “scoop,” a *Post* front-page article by Amy Gardner found Perry’s record on race was “complicated” . . . by the facts. Perry “appointed the first African American to the state Supreme Court and later made him chief justice” and oh yes, “One chief of staff and two of his general counsels have been African American.” But “minority legislators” complained he used “racially tinged” tactics. Guess what was listed first? “Black lawmakers have been particularly troubled by Perry’s recent embrace of the Tea Party movement.”

CAIN. Herman Cain was exactly the kind of candidate liberals fear: a successful, dynamic black Republican with a solid record of business success. Liberal journalists couldn’t abide the idea that someone of his ilk could ever pretend to be president. *Washington Post* writer Tim Carman made him sound like a mobster: “One of his primary credentials for the job involves his nearly miraculous healing of the once-moribund Godfather’s Pizza, as if America were a midgrade Midwestern chain whose many problems could be solved with a few

deaths in the family (read: store closings) and a tough-talking thug in a pin-stripe suit and fedora.”¹⁹

When Cain ascended to the top of the Republican polls, it wasn't proof that the Tea Party conservatives were suddenly or temporarily not racists. It was time for another “investigative” takedown. On the night of Halloween, the liberal newspaper *Politico* first reported that when Cain headed the National Restaurant Association, it settled two sex harassment lawsuits. Citing unnamed sources, *Politico* reported two unnamed women had alleged Cain was guilty of “conversations allegedly filled with innuendo or personal questions of a sexually suggestive nature,” and also “descriptions of physical gestures that were not overtly sexual” but made women uncomfortable.²⁰

“Another high-tech lynching,” said Ann Coulter on Fox News.²¹

Even Stephen Engelberg, a former *New York Times* reporter at the investigative journalism shop ProPublica, found it underbaked. “If the facts as published were part of a memo to *Politico*'s editors they would amount to a first-rate tip on a story . . . in this case, it remains unclear whether this was merely a great tip or an actual bombshell.”²²

But the networks were thrilled. “This morning, bombshell blast,” announced ABC's George Stephanopoulos hours after the story broke, reporting a “bimbo eruption” of the kind he used to keep out of the news for a paycheck from the Clintons. NBC's Matt Lauer gloated that Cain was “finding out the hard way about the attention that goes along with being a front-runner.”²³

In the first week of the scandal, ABC, CBS, and NBC combined for eighty-four stories on Herman Cain's alleged impropriety with women—before the media would or could identify an accuser with a name and a face.²⁴ By contrast, eight days into Bill Clinton's sexual harassment scandals with publicly identified accusers Paula Jones and Kathleen Willey and adding even the rape allegation of Juanita Broaddrick, there were eight reports on the three named Clinton accusers combined.²⁵

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The network story count was almost 100 before a real name emerged, a television avalanche. The networks hurled 117 stories at Cain in the first ten days. Not only that, ABC's Brian Ross suggested Cain's backers were thugs, since one accuser "hired a security team to guard her home outside Washington." Ross added that the accusers might appear together "so they can all tell their stories of Herman Cain, with the sense of safety in numbers."²⁶

On November 28, Ginger White told WAGA, the Fox affiliate in Atlanta, that she had a thirteen-year adulterous affair with Cain. All three networks reported it almost simultaneously with the Atlanta story. This is not the way allegations against a Democrat are handled. Ginger White makes an adultery charge against Cain and she's on the *NBC Nightly News* within hours. But when Juanita Broaddrick in a 1999 *Dateline NBC* interview accused Bill Clinton of raping her, then-anchor Tom Brokaw never allowed one single second of her voice to break into his evening newscast.²⁷

If only Herman Cain were a Democrat. By the next morning, Cain was dismissed as a political corpse, or a ghost. On ABC, anchor Robin Roberts suggestively asked, "Do [White's] shocking revelations spell doom for his troubled campaign?" On CBS, political analyst John Dickerson proclaimed, "It's hard to see how he comes back from this. . . . At the worst, it's a death blow to the campaign." But NBC's Chuck Todd was the most colorful, citing movies: "Now we're in sort of *The Sixth Sense* mode. Everybody knows this candidacy is basically dead except the campaign."²⁸

One day later, Ginger White gave an interview to George Stephanopoulos, a man who would have shredded her reputation and kept her off television if she had claimed an affair with Clinton. The ABC host gloated over Cain's impending doom: "Will our interview spell the end of the one-time front-runner's presidential bid?"²⁹

Stephanopoulos was so brazen that he dismissed Cain on character grounds: "There are just too many questions about his honesty,

his judgment, his experience, his organization. Even if he stays in [the race], he's not going to be a factor."³⁰ This from the former official spokesman for Bill Clinton.

Collectively, the media sounded like Yul Brynner playing Pharaoh Ramses in *The Ten Commandments*, shouting, "So let it be written! So let it be done!" Cain soon withdrew.

GINGRICH. Many conservative voters loved the smarts of Newt Gingrich, and loved the way Newt fired away at liberal-media debate moderators—not to mention the idea of him aggressively debating Obama. But seemingly all liberal journalists still carried their 1990s loathing of Gingrich around. NBC anchor Brian Williams announced one night: "The Newt Gingrich that a lot of folks will remember from his speakership days back in the '90s was back on display making statements about controversial issues that left some of his critics slack-jawed."

Chris Matthews recklessly smeared Newt Gingrich, saying, "He looks like a car bomber. . . . He looks like he loves torturing."³¹ With a complete lack of awareness of his own incivility, Matthews accused Newt of polluting the civil discourse. "Ever since he appeared on the national scene, politics has been nastier, more feral, too often uglier."³²

Matthews also declared Gingrich was "a political killer, a gun for hire. . . . That's why they're offering up their partisan souls, why they're ready to bow down before this false god of hatred."

Reporters endlessly cited Gingrich's personal "baggage" in his personal life and public remarks as an impossible obstacle to overcome. Somehow the "baggage" gets lost when the media bellhops are writing about Democrats.

Then again came the Gingrich "investigative bombshell." On the January 19 *Nightline*, days before Gingrich won the South Carolina primary, ABC anchor Terry Moran oozed, "Tonight on *Nightline*,

breaking her silence. In an exclusive TV interview, one of presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich's ex-wives speaks out, questioning his moral fitness to be president." Not only was he cheating on her with the woman who would become his third wife, "he was asking for an open marriage."

Brian Ross eagerly prompted ex-wife Marianne Gingrich to tell all: "You know his secrets. You know his skeletons." He boasted to viewers that his scoop could be seen as a "January surprise" to whack Gingrich. Ross implied he shouldn't be considered a conservative, not with his background: "And now, as a candidate for president, Gingrich regularly expounds on family values and the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman."³³

What a difference four years makes, especially if the candidate belongs to the other party. At this point in the 2008 campaign, on January 4, Ross was disparaging character attacks on the Democratic contenders. "At grocery store checkout lines, there have been *National Enquirer* headlines, claiming a love child scandal involves Senator John Edwards or a member of his staff, forcing Edwards to issue a strong public denial." Edwards insisted on ABC: "The story's false. It's completely untrue and ridiculous."³⁴ Ross didn't investigate Edwards for "bombshells" and "skeletons." Ross provided him a national platform to profess his innocence to millions of viewers.

SANTORUM. In November, MSNBC host Rachel Maddow of 2011 laughed at the idea that anyone would ever vote for dark horse former senator Rick Santorum. "Nobody's going to vote for Rick Santorum, come on," Maddow declared, reminding her audience that thanks to far-left sex columnist Dan Savage, when you Google-searched for Santorum, you would find a vulgar definition for the fluid aftermath of anal sex.³⁵

MSNBC host Martin Bashir reached for historical smears. "In reviewing his book, *It Takes a Family*, one writer said, 'Mr. Santorum

has one of the finest minds of the 13th century.' But I'm not so sure. If you listen carefully to Rick Santorum, he sounds more like Stalin than Pope Innocent III."

Santorum reminded former top *New York Times* editor Bill Keller of a radical fundamentalist: "Remember earlier in the campaign when Newt Gingrich was worrying everyone about Sharia law: the Muslims were going to impose Sharia law in America? Sometimes Santorum sounds like he's creeping up on a Christian version of Sharia law."

On January 16, a few days before Santorum's victory in the Iowa caucuses was belatedly announced, the usual "investigative bombshell" landed. *Newsweek* (on its *Daily Beast* website) decided it was "news" to report on Mrs. Santorum's ancient dating history in a piece titled "Before Karen Met Rick." Yes, *before the couple ever met*. The author was Nancy Hass, who a few months before had written a valentine to radical feminist pioneer Gloria Steinem, announcing that Michele Bachmann and Sarah Palin "wouldn't be riling up the Tea Party faithful had Steinem not paved their way out of the kitchen."³⁶

Hass wrote that Karen Santorum, the "ultra-pro-life wife," had a dirty secret. "Her live-in partner through most of her 20s was Tom Allen, a Pittsburgh obstetrician and abortion provider 40 years older than she, who remains an outspoken crusader for reproductive rights and liberal ideals. Dr. Allen has known Mrs. Santorum, born Karen Garver, her entire life: he delivered her in 1960." The article featured a picture of young Garver posing with her much older boyfriend as he lounged in a hammock.³⁷

It is impossible to imagine a greater personal attack on an innocent wife, and a blameless candidate, than this. Even the networks were a little queasy over this twenty-four-year-old story about a candidate's spouse. CBS brought up the relationship in an interview with Mrs. Santorum in March, forcing her to admit, "I did go through a phase of life where I wasn't living the way I should have been." NBC

jumped right on it, though. On the January 21 *Today*, NBC's Michael Isikoff (a *Newsweek* alum) checked the box: "*Newsweek* reported that before she married Santorum, she had a six-year live-in relationship with a Pittsburgh abortion doctor forty years her senior."

In the same story, Isikoff also noted Gingrich's second wife going on ABC and making her "open marriage" allegation. He concluded with the odd suggestion that these personal attacks and ugliness weren't generated by the "objective" media: "All this, political analysts say, is unusual, even by the rough-and-tumble standards of Southern politics. . . . With polls pointing to a close result tonight in South Carolina, personal attacks show no signs of abating as the GOP race continues."³⁸

Can you imagine *Newsweek* plotting a hard-hitting investigation of who Michelle Obama dated before Barack? Or who Barack dated before Michelle? Did Mrs. Obama have sex with other men before Barack? Did she have affairs with married men? Those questions would be considered beyond the pale, a repugnant violation of privacy. But somehow, all those niceties did not apply to Mrs. Santorum before she even knew her husband.

At the end of 2004, *Newsweek* proclaimed the arrival of Senator-elect Barack Obama with Jonathan Alter's cover story titled "The Audacity of Hope." In the same issue, there was also a profile of Santorum by Howard Fineman. The contrast was stunning, even by *Newsweek's* obnoxious standards.³⁹

Obama was introduced to the country as the "incredibly pragmatic" soul of civility who is "uniquely qualified to nudge the country toward the color purple" (merging the red states and blue states). He was all about "embracing our hybrid origins and transcending our often narrow-minded past." But Santorum was consistently described with violent undertones. His career was a "bruising crusade" supported by anti-abortion "shock troops." He was a "cultural mili-

tant,” and a “heat-seeking missile” with a “combatively devout approach.”

The photos framing the stories told the tale all by themselves. Obama was shown on a Chicago rooftop with the caption “Sky-walker.” Santorum was shown in his office next to his picture of “Roman Catholic martyr Thomas More.” Captured on his office TV was a Fox News Channel graphic about schools excluding Christ from Christmas. The caption was “Bully Pulpit.” No coincidence.

In other pictures, Obama was seen interacting with staff, back-slapping with John Kerry, practicing a speech next to Michelle, and kissing his three-year-old daughter, Sasha (to a caption titled “Family Man”). In the only other picture accompanying his profile, Santorum was pictured in the darkened frame of his office door, with the caption underlining his admission that he smoked pot in the 1970s, but adding he is now “in the front ranks of the new faith-based GOP.” *Newsweek* had no room for Obama’s self-described pot-smoking and cocaine-snorting in their early valentine . . . and no room to acknowledge Santorum was a “family man” with six children.

While Mrs. Santorum was pounded for her ancient romances in 2012, *Newsweek* lauded Michelle Obama in 2004 as a Harvard-trained lawyer with an “innovative nonprofit that provides leadership development.” After two of Obama’s potential 2004 Senate rivals—Republican Jack Ryan and Democrat Blair Hull—were energetically removed from Obama’s path by the gumshoes at the *Chicago Tribune* suing for (and then spilling) their divorce records—Michelle was Obama’s character witness. “People always ask, ‘What’s he got in the closet?’ Well, we’ve been married 13 years, and I’d be shocked if there was some deep, dark secret.”

For starters, *Newsweek* could have found the nutty reverend that married them.

Alter even helpfully reported that Mrs. Obama “goes so far as to

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say” her husband wasn’t even a politician. He “is not a politician first and foremost. He’s a community activist exploring the viability of politics to make change.” Perhaps the most transparently phony thing any reporter could ever write about the news media’s “rising star” of liberalism was that he somehow wasn’t a politician—a Chicago pol, riding on a shiny rocket of media hype. But Republicans? “Politician” was about the nicest thing said about them.