

Shawna Henderson

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Grand Canyon University

ENG-365: Multi-Media Journalism in the Twenty-First Century

Professor Tara Cantore

August 22, 2021

### The News is Dying and it's Their Own Fault

Charles M. Blow shared recently in a NYT [opinion](#) piece that our democracy was at risk of dying. While that very well may be true his reasonings are not. He believes it's because of a weakened press (Blow). If our democracy is at risk, then the US media has no one to blame but themselves because they sold out many years ago. Somewhere along the line the news changed from being factual based to being big money. It turns out that our news media outlets are owned by 15 billionaires and 6 corporations (Hallman). If this doesn't alarm you then it should. What happens when most of your news sources are owned by the same people? Nothing good I can assure you.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s major networks were being acquired by entertainment conglomerates, which lead to the news divisions having to answer to shareholders and improve the bottom line. For the first time, there was an expectation that the news divisions had to make money, just like the entertainment divisions (How News Has Changed). To keep up with these expectations news outlets had to cut costs and eliminate the areas that were not turning a profit. In the 1990s and 2000s, Cable TV and the internet changed the way advertisers were targeting people by allowing them to spend less money on more specific audiences. The news became just

another commodity, and the truth began to erode. The introduction of 24-hour news programs put more pressure on journalists to get their stories out quickly. There was no longer time for them to do the proper research and to be fully prepared when presenting their stories.

The way news is shared has changed dramatically over the years, and the values of journalism have changed as well. News reporting historically was nonbiased. Journalists would share the news in a straightforward fashion and the audience would never suspect what the personal perspective of the journalist was. This is no longer the case. Due to the upsurge in competition, journalists are now jumping the gun to report on events and their stories are often slanted or filled with holes. Media outlets are known for their biases and which political party they support. Newspapers have seen a decline not only in their readership, but also in advertising dollars because it is simply easier to target audiences online. The news has become more sensationalized because advertisers are pushing for the entertainment value.

On May 25, 2020, people around the world witnessed a horrible attack. George Floyd died on the pavement under the knee of a police officer. Passersby began recording the incident and for over 9 minutes anyone who had access to a television, smart phones, or digital device was able to see for themselves the horror of it. Protests began the very next day in Minneapolis and quickly spread around the country. I am not here to debate the awfulness of what happened to George Floyd, my argument lies with the press. For roughly ten weeks in the Spring of 2020, our country was on lockdown due to the Coronavirus crisis. For ten weeks we sat at home and listened to news reports about how Covid-19 was spreading across the world. We were confused, scared, and unsure of how this was going to play out. It was a surreal time in all our lives. We were a united country for a moment in time and it felt good.

Then the devastating death of Floyd happened, and our country exploded into fire and rage. The protests went on for over a week and the press ate it up. They finally had something else to discuss besides Covid-19. It was all over broadcast news, the internet, and in the papers. There was no escaping it. What I personally found interesting during this time was that very few people seemed to be concerned about the virus. The virus that for 10 weeks SHUT DOWN THE WORLD. I believe the press is largely to blame for the rioting to have continued so long. Had the press not focused so much on the violence that was taking place night after night things might have calmed down sooner. I could not believe what was happening in front of my eyes and after a few nights of it we turned off the TV. We just couldn't take the insanity any longer. The press sensationalized these atrocities and gave the rioters a platform. All while thousands of people walked together unmasked and trashed businesses. The same people who a week before were arguing about the necessity of mask wearing and the importance of staying at home.

I believe the pandemic was turned into a political battle because of the press. Because of the way they spun the death of Floyd, and the BLM movement, and the issue of wearing or not wearing a mask. These issues should never have been politicized, but the news is not exciting unless we have a debate, unless there is an enemy. During our lockdown we were united and, in this battle together, and then our country was split in half and divided over a mask. All because drama sells and makes these entertainment conglomerates money and we are all just allowing it to happen.

If our democracy is at risk, it is due to the press cheapening themselves over the last fifty years and allowing those with power to dictate what is newsworthy and what is not. It is because the news outlets are pressured into caring about likes and followers instead of about sharing the truth. Journalists are supposed to be the safe guardians of free speech, but instead they are in the

back pocket of the wealthy, who are calling the shots, and shaping the narrative. If consumers want the press to change then we need to push back and demand that the news outlets no longer be owned by these conglomerates. They need to not be tethered to corporations that have political agendas. We owe this to ourselves and the future of our country before our democracy is snuffed out.

## Resources

Blow, Charles M. "As the Press Weakens, so Does Democracy." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 18 July 2021, [www.nytimes.com/2021/07/18/opinion/media-newspapers-democracy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/18/opinion/media-newspapers-democracy.html).

Hallman, Carly. "Who Owns Your News? The Top 100 Digital News Outlets and Their Ownership." *TitleMax*, 14 Apr. 2021, [www.titlemax.com/discovery-center/lifestyle/who-owns-your-news-the-top-100-digital-news-outlets-and-their-ownership/](http://www.titlemax.com/discovery-center/lifestyle/who-owns-your-news-the-top-100-digital-news-outlets-and-their-ownership/).

"How News Has Changed." *Macalester*, 10 Apr. 2017, [www.macalester.edu/news/2017/04/how-news-has-changed/](http://www.macalester.edu/news/2017/04/how-news-has-changed/).