

From Boardroom to Airwaves, NPR Has a Diversity Problem

Two recent FAIR studies highlighted the lack of diversity at **National Public Radio**—both in the boardrooms that have authority over its member stations and in the perspectives that are aired on its most prominent news shows.

Out of 259 board members at NPR's most popular member stations, a report by Aldo Guerrero (7/2/15) found, 194—or 75 percent—have corporate backgrounds.

Of the board members with corporate occupations, 66 are executives in the financial industry. Another 22 are corporate lawyers. Eleven other members appear to be board members by virtue of their family's corporate-derived wealth.

NPR president and CEO Jarl Mohn says he wants to stabilize NPR's financial status by asking “wealthy donors” for more money and doubling revenue from corporate underwriting (NPR, 10/17/14). What easier way to accomplish that than by having governing boards dominated by wealthy individuals from the corporate sector? Of course, the inevitable consequence of this is to put legal control of what is supposed to be *public* radio into the hands of a tiny, highly privileged fraction of the population.

Beyond lacking occupational diversity, NPR's governing boards also suffer from a lack of ethnic and gender diversity. One hundred eighty-six of the board members (72 percent) are non-Latino whites. Among members who are people of color, 31 are African-American (12 percent), 23 are Asian-American (9 percent), 12 are Latino (5 percent) and one person is of Middle Eastern descent. Male board members outnumber female members two-to-one, with 170 men constituting 66 percent of the boards, while 88 women were 34 percent. (Six members' ethnicities and one member's gender were unidentifiable.)

FAIR also took a look at NPR's national board of directors. While a majority of the 17-member board is made up of NPR station managers with backgrounds in public media, the other board members have strong ties to

these commentators (79 percent) were men; 13 of the commentators (92 percent) were non-Latino whites.

FAIR has studied NPR's commentators twice before, in conjunction with broader studies of NPR's sources in 1991 (*Extra!*, 4-5/93) and 2003 (*Extra!*, 5-6/04). In 2003, 24 percent of regular commentators were women and 20 percent were people of color. In 1991, 7 percent were women and 4 percent—as in 2015, a single individual—was a person of color.

Most commentary involved art and entertainment criticism. Political commentaries have almost been eliminated from NPR's news shows, replaced with weekly point/counterpoint segments featuring David Brooks and E.J. Dionne.

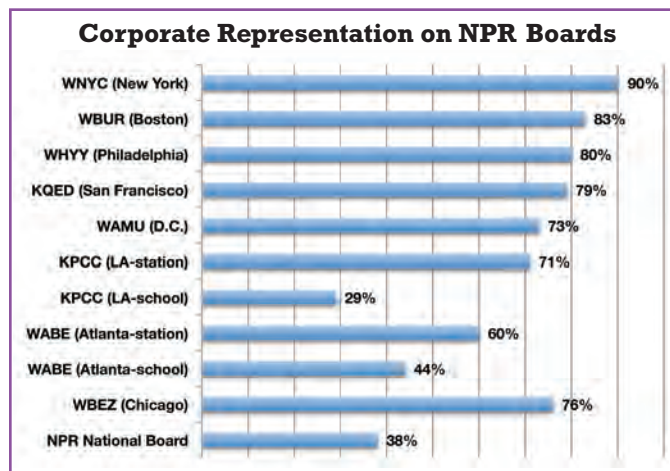
NPR ombud Elizabeth Jensen (NPR.org, 7/22/15) had an ambiva-

lent response to the report, saying, “I find the specific numbers in the study somewhat arbitrary.” But she did acknowledge that “having overwhelmingly white viewpoints does not reflect enough of the country.” ■

the corporate sector. This includes NPR CEO Jarl Mohn, who has held executive positions in commercial media (**E!**, **MTV** and **VH1**). And NPR Foundation chair Howard Wollner is a retired Starbucks senior vice president. All four of the so-called “public members” represent the corporate elite; three of them are financial industry executives.

Male NPR board members outnumber women 10 to 6 (63 percent male). Fifteen of the board members are white (94 percent, more ethnically homogeneous than any of the station boards studied), while only one—Caryn Mathes—is African-American.

Another FAIR study, by Michael Tkaczewski (7/15/15), found that NPR commentary segments on leading news shows are likewise dominated by white men. The study, looking at **Morning Edition**, **All Things Considered** and the **Weekend Edition** shows from January through May 2015, found 14 regular commentators—people whose perspectives were aired more than once—in a total of 111 segments. Eleven of



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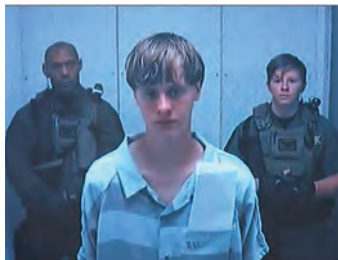
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A White Supremacist Killer Is Less a 'Terrorist' Than Persons Unknown

When two bombs went off at the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013, killing three and injuring hundreds, it was inevitably a huge story: A search of the Nexis news database for US newspapers on the next day turns up 2,593 stories mentioning the marathon, virtually all of them about the bombing. Of these, 887, or 34 percent, used some variant of the word "terrorism"—even though the bombers, let alone the bombers' motivations, would not be known until days later.

When nine people were killed at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on April 17, 2015, there were 367 stories in the next day's papers that mentioned "Charleston" and "church," according to Nexis—a big

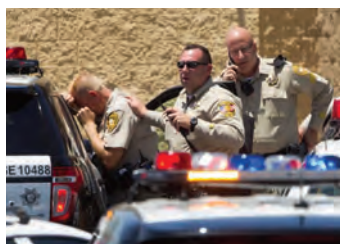


Dylann Roof appears in court: A *Washington Post* writer argues against calling him a "terrorist."

story, though not given the blockbuster treatment of the Boston Marathon bombing. Only 24 of these stories mentioned "terrorism"—just 7 percent, even though a suspect, Dylann Roof, was named on the first day, with evidence presented that he was motivated by a white supremacist ideology and a desire "to start a civil war" (Columbia, S.C. *State*, 6/18/15).

Non-Muslim Terrorists a Surprise—to Consumers of Corporate Media

Since the September 11 attacks, the *New York Times* (6/23/15) reported, "extremists have regularly executed smaller lethal assaults in the United States.... But the breakdown of extremist ideologies behind those attacks may come as a surprise." The "surprise" is that more people are



The *New York Times* depicts police at the scene of a terror incident at a Las Vegas Walmart—the kind of political violence the paper thinks will surprise its readers.

killed by "white supremacists, anti-government fanatics and other non-Muslim extremists than by radical Muslims": 48 vs. 26 since 9/11, according to a study by the New America Foundation.

The *Times* suggests that "such numbers are new to the public." But in a piece all about the "mismatch between public perceptions and actual cases," the entity most charged with making sure these match—the news media—doesn't get much scrutiny, except from "some Muslim advocates" who "complain" of media double standards.

There is research on this question; one study from University of Illinois communications professor Travis Dixon (Champaign/Urbana *News Gazette*, 6/23/15) found that while 6 percent of the FBI's domestic terrorism suspects between 2008 and 2012 were Muslim, 81 percent of those described on national TV news were. That goes a long way toward explaining why there might be readers for whom reports of non-Muslim terrorism "come as a surprise."

Reporting Fast Track's Victory From the Corporate Lobbyist Perspective

After the Congress granted President Barack Obama fast-track authority to negotiate trade agreements, *National Public Radio* aired one report (*Morning Edition*, 6/25/15) on the legislative action that paves the way for corporate-friendly international deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The report, by correspondent Yuki Noguchi, had three sources, each one a pro-fast track corporate lobbyist: the president of the Business Roundtable and the vice presi-

When Political Violence Comes From 'White People Like Ourselves'

Most Americans are white, and we see white people like ourselves. When I see Dylann Roof, I remember being a white male his age, barely out of my teenage years and experiencing weird anger in a difficult time.... We can identify much more easily with who he is.

—*Washington Post* political analyst Philip Bump ("Why We Shouldn't Call Dylann Roof a Terrorist," 6/19/15)

dents of the National Retail Federation and the National Association of Manufacturers.

The thousands of labor, environmental and other public interest groups that strenuously opposed giving Obama fast-track authority were relegated to a one-line summary from Noguchi: "Labor and environmental groups criticized the fast-track deal, calling it worse than the North American Free Trade Agreement passed two decades ago."

To which manufacturing lobbyist Linda Dempsey was allowed to retort: "The critics are just wrong."

Greece's Brutal Austerity Isn't Enough for *WaPo*

In the wake of a resounding anti-austerity vote in Greece, the *Washington Post*'s Griff Witte and Michael Birnbaum (7/6/15) reported that Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras would now be "seeking to persuade European partners that Greece can be trusted to trim its spending, and get fresh bailout funds in return." From 2010 to 2015, Greece has cut government spending from roughly 13 billion euros to 10 billion euros a year—cutting almost a quarter of its budget (and unsurprisingly driving the Greek economy into a depression, with unemployment stuck above 25 percent since the end of 2012). But this isn't enough, apparently, to convince the *Post* of Greece's willingness to "trim its spending" enough to merit a bailout.

Who Knew? George Will Believes in Recycling

Washington Post columnist George Will wrote a blistering attack on Chief Justice John Roberts' recent ruling reaffirming the Affordable Care Act. From the column as it appeared

in *Investor's Business Daily* (6/25/15):

Roberts cites a doctrine known as "*Chevron* deference."... As applied now by Roberts, *Chevron* deference obligates the court to ignore language that is not at all ambiguous but is inconvenient for the smooth operation of something Congress created.

Unfortunately for Will, Roberts actually rejected the *Chevron* doctrine. As the Supreme Court's summary of Roberts' ruling put it, "*Chevron* does not provide the appropriate framework here."



George Will's *Washington Post* column was accompanied by a photo that correctly identified Chief Justice John Roberts. It went downhill from there.

So Will's column underwent a slight rewrite by the time it appeared in its home base of the *Washington Post* (6/25/15); it now said that "Roberts invents a corollary to '*Chevron* deference,'" for instance. "As applied now by Roberts, *Chevron* deference obligates the court to ignore language...." morphed into "while purporting to not apply *Chevron*, Roberts expands it to empower all of the executive branch to ignore or rewrite congressional language."

Why throw out a perfectly good column just because its initial premise was completely backward? ■

‘Wolf’ Cry by FBI on 4th of July?

by Adam Johnson

On the Monday before the Independence Day weekend, several mainstream media outlets repeated the latest press release by the FBI that the country was under a new “heightened terror alert” from “ISIL-inspired attacks” “leading up to the July 4 weekend.”

Former CIA director (and consultant at DC PR firm Beacon Global Strategies) Michael Morell went on **CBS This Morning** (6/29/15) and scared the bejesus out of everyone by saying he “wouldn’t be surprised if we were sitting [in the studio] next week discussing an attack on the US.”

The ominous FBI (or Department of Homeland Security) “terror warning” has become such a staple of the ongoing, seemingly endless “war on terror,” we hardly even notice it any more. The specter of the impending “attack” is part of a broader white noise of fear that never went away after 9/11.

Indeed, the verbiage employed by the FBI in this latest warning—“we’re asking people to *remain vigilant*”—implies no actual change of the status quo, just an hysterical nudge to not let down our collective guard.

There was only one problem: These warnings had never actually come to fruition. Not rarely, or almost never, but never. No attacks, no arrests, no suspects at large.

A casual search revealed the FBI and DHS were a pitiful 0-for-40 warning of terror attacks. The actual terror attacks carried out on US soil—the Times Square bomber, “underwear bomber,” Boston bombing and Garland attacks—were accompanied by no such warnings. (Nor were the often deadlier terrorist attacks by right-wing white terrorists—but terrorism in this category is rarely if ever the subject of FBI warnings.)

Some skeptical journalists also noted the FBI’s habit of issuing pointless terror warnings, including **FireDogLake**’s Kevin Gosztoła (7/5/15), **The Intercept**’s Glenn Greenwald (7/6/15) and **The Guardian**’s Trevor Timm (7/6/15). There was a general

sense among many that the July 4 “warning” was just another empty terror warning meant to scare, provide CYA for the FBI and ultimately fizzle out like so many before.

And, in fact, the holiday weekend came and went, with the FBI “terror warning”



NBC News depicts the foiling of “ISIS-inspired July 4 attacks” with a photo of a New York City cop guarding Coney Island.

hyped by the media foreshadowing nothing more than two false alarms and a handful of canceled Fourth of July plans.

So it was curious, to say the least, when on July 9 the FBI asserted to **CNN**’s Jim Sciutto that “a number” of “ISIS-inspired” terror plots had been “thwarted” from “coast to coast” over the Fourth of July weekend:

US law enforcement efforts thwarted a number of terror threats in the last two weeks, including plots timed to the July 4 holiday weekend, US officials tell **CNN** on Thursday. The thwarted plots included targets “coast to coast.” In fitting with calls by ISIS to attack in any way possible, the attempted plots were unsophisticated, including guns, knives and other weapons.

The evidence for these plots? As usual, none was provided. Just the word of “US officials.” Or as Sciutto put it, “No further details were immediately available about how the plots were thwarted.”

About an hour later, **USA Today** and others would report FBI Director James Comey making similar claims:

FBI Director James Comey said Thursday that federal authorities disrupted an undisclosed number of plots timed to the July 4 holiday to “kill people in the United States.” The plots, Comey said, were linked to the Islamic State terror group.

More than 10 people have been arrested in the past four weeks on charges related to their association with ISIL. Some of those, Comey said, involved plots timed to July 4. Comey declined to elaborate on the nature of the plots or where they were targeted.

Notice the weasel phrasing the media uncritically allow Comey to engage in: “timed to the July 4 holiday”; “related to their association with ISIL.”

You get more of a sense of what actually was going on from Pete Williams’ **NBC News** report, if you read a little between the lines:

Comey added that those inspired by ISIS don’t make elaborate plans and often act on the spur of the moment.

“It’s actually hard to figure out when they’re trying to kill somebody,” Comey said. “And you cannot say, ‘Well, we’ve got to do it on the Fourth.’ Because you know you have people who are motivated to kill people, and they are unreliable in terms of when they’re going to act.”

So the arrests were of people without “elaborate plans” who are “unreliable in terms of when they’re going to act.” It’s not even clear *that* they were intending to act, since it’s “hard to figure out when they’re trying to kill somebody.” But not hard to get the media to report as fact that these planless, unreliably scheduled suspects who may or may not have been trying to kill anybody had “ISIS terrorist plots linked to the Fourth of July holiday.” ■

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Inspecting Media's Claim That Iran Should Trust Inspectors

by Jim Naureckas

When CBS's *Face the Nation*'s John Dickerson (7/19/15) interviewed Secretary of State John Kerry and Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz about the Iran deal, his second question—after “when [Americans] see Iranians dancing in the street with this deal, why shouldn't they be suspicious about it?”—was about the fact that it doesn't give the United States the ability to inspect any place in Iran with no notice. Dickerson cited the Israeli prime minister:

One of the real opponents of this deal, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said of the 24-day waiting period on inspections, he said, you wouldn't tell a drug dealer, give them 24-day notice. They would just flush the drugs down the toilet. Does he have a point?

Moniz made the obvious point that you can't actually flush a secret nuclear program “down the toilet”:

I don't think that's really an option here with nuclear materials.... We feel very confident in the capability of IAEA with environmental sampling to detect any nuclear activity very, very long after it has occurred.

But Dickerson persisted, turning to Kerry: “What happened, Mr. Secretary, with anytime, anywhere?” To which the secretary of State responded: “There's no such thing in arms control as anytime, anywhere. There isn't any nation in the world, none, that has an anytime, anywhere.”

But, persisted Dickerson, “Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser, said in April you will have anywhere, anytime, 24/7 access.”

That's not actually what Rhodes said; when asked about “anywhere, anytime” by CNN's Jake Tapper (4/6/15), he responded, “Well, Jake, first of all, under this deal, you will have anywhere, anytime 24/7 access as it relates to the nuclear facilities that Iran has.” In other words, anywhere that's a nuclear facility—not anywhere in the country that the US happens to be curious about.



Face the Nation's John Dickerson grilling cabinet members Ernest Moniz and John Kerry.

Kerry and Moniz said pretty much the same thing to Dickerson.

This obviously left Dickerson unsatisfied: “We will have to move on there,” he said, before going on to ask a question about why the deal wouldn't prevent the “terrorist nation” of Iran from having a conventional military.

Perhaps the discussion would have been more satisfying—if not for Dickerson, then for viewers—if someone had acknowledged the reality that it would be foolish for Iran to accept unlimited inspections at any location on its territory, because the United States has in the past used inspections as a cover for espionage that facilitated military attacks. As Jon Schwarz put it in a piece in *The Intercept* (7/15/15):

All countries have things they legitimately want to hide, such as conventional military secrets and the security procedures of their leaders.... During the 1990s the US demonstrated with Iraq that it would routinely abuse the weapons inspections process in order to uncover such legitimate secrets—and use them to target the Iraqi military and try to overthrow the Iraqi government.

These efforts are not exactly a secret to US corporate media; the *Washington Post* and *Boston Globe* jointly broke the news that the UN's UNSCOM inspection program in Iraq had been used for US military espionage on January 6, 1999 (written up by Seth Ackerman in *Extra!*, 3–4/99, 11–12/02). In the *Globe*'s words, UNSCOM concealed “an ambitious spying operation designed to

penetrate Iraq's intelligence apparatus and track the movement of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.”

The *Post* (1/17/99) later revealed that intelligence garnered through the UNSCOM spying was used to bomb military targets in Iraq, with military analyst William Arkin writing:

National security insiders, blessed with their unprecedented intelligence bonanza from UNSCOM, convinced themselves that bombing Saddam Hussein's internal apparatus would drive the Iraqi leader around the bend.

Rather than apologizing for this misuse of the inspections process, Washington insiders defended it. *USA Today* (3/3/99) reported:

Experts say it is naive to believe that the United States and other governments would not have used the opportunity presented by the UN commission to spy on a country that provoked the Persian Gulf War.

So it wasn't considered debatable at the time—though a few years later, when the US was gearing up for an invasion of Iraq, US media started treating it as an allegation made by Iraq rather than an actual operation that had been exposed by leading US papers (as Ackerman documented—*Extra!*, 11–12/02).

And now that the US is trying to get inspectors into another Mideast country, no one in a position to either ask or answer questions on elite news shows like *Face the Nation* even recalls the scandal—or, if they do, they're too polite to mention it. ■

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