

Michael Costello Media alters the news it reports

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

Journalism schools do not require their graduates to study physics. If they did, then journalists might have a greater appreciation for how they corrupt the events they cover. A fundamental law of physics maintains that one cannot observe an elementary particle's behavior without influencing and thereby altering that particle's behavior. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle has this theorem at its core.

If our ever-vigilant and unbiased news media were interested in simply reporting the course of events, they would endeavor to minimize the impact their presence causes. Instead, they actively try to direct the course of events. At the very least, the unrest in Ferguson, Mo., during the past few weeks were exacerbated by the presence of the news media. Of the 163 riot-related arrests in Ferguson, only seven listed their addresses in Ferguson. Some came from as far away as Oakland, Calif. As moths to a flame, there are troublemakers who cannot resist the lure of seeing themselves on television.

And this is OK with the news media. In 1979, shortly after the Iranian revolution, Islamic extremists overran the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took the staff hostage. This was followed by massive street demonstrations. Every night, the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news broadcasts would open with live video of the demonstrators chanting "Death to America."

This struck me as odd at the time. When I considered the time zones, it made even less sense. As it turned out, the networks were orchestrating the demonstrations, telling the demonstrators when to start their chants to synchronize with the start of the broadcasts. That was wasn't reporting news. That was fabricating news. It was no different from the time that NBC used remotely detonated pyrotechnics to "prove" that GMC pickups would explode in side-impact collisions.

There really is no excuse for the news media's behavior in this one. But, then, I've said that before. Two years ago, the news media promoted a false narrative in the Trayvon Martin killing. On that occasion they went so far as to doctor photos and video, and selectively edit transcripts and audio recordings. Before that, there was the Duke lacrosse team episode, in which the news media presented a stripper's tale of a sexual assault that never happened. They clung bitterly to that story even as an avalanche of hard evidence disproved it. And before that there was ... oh well, you get the picture. The news media are not simply insensitive to the effect that their presence has on the course of events. They actively push narratives that fit their agenda.

In this particular case, the news media presented "eye witness" accounts of doubtful credibility. The most notorious was that of Michael Brown's alleged partner in the strong-arm robbery that preceded the shooting. According to that version, Brown's arms were in the air in surrender when he was shot. As unlikely as that seems, it's an improvement over the version I heard on CNN, in which a "witness" claimed that the police stood over Brown's prone body and pumped bullets into his back.

This is all part of the left's instinct to "never let a crisis go to waste." Waiting for facts permits the emotions to cool.

There have also been reports that policeman Darren Wilson's eye socket was fractured by a blow delivered by Brown. True or not, this story is no less credible than the witness accounts that have gotten coverage.

Another thing that did not advance the narrative was the security camera video that appeared to show Brown attacking a store clerk just prior to the shooting. What did advance the narrative were the posed photos of a much younger Brown that showed a face of such innocence that nobody would believe it belonged to 6-foot, 4-inch, 290-pound man capable of threatening a police officer.

It's therefore appropriate that, according to Politico, Barack Obama has tapped race-baiting charlatan Al Sharpton as his unofficial representative in Ferguson. After all, the Reverend Al got his career started by promoting a false tale of sexual assault against Tawana Brawley. He had the media eating out of his hand on that one, too. It also makes perfect sense that Sharpton now works for NBC.

Update: A few weeks ago, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee cited an Environmental Protection Agency report that blamed dissolved carbon dioxide for oyster deaths in Puget Sound. The EPA is now arguing in court that it's untrue. <http://www.law360.com/articles/568751/epa-seeks-to-sink-green-group-s-ocean-acidification-suit>

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