



April 17, 2020

Dean Baquet, Executive Editor  
The New York Times  
620 8th Avenue  
New York, New York 10018

Dear Mr. Baquet:

Please indulge us in a brief thought experiment. Two men seeking high office are each newly accused of a decades-old incident of sexual assault. One of the accusations is unsubstantiated, while the other is supported at least by circumstantial evidence. The New York Times publishes one of the accusations the day it is made, but waits nearly three weeks to print the other. Can you guess which is which? Would it help to know that one of the men is a prominent conservative judge nominated to the Supreme Court, and the other is the presumptive Democrat nominee for President?

The conservative readership of the Times, not to mention many conservative former Times readers, will have no trouble solving this riddle. That's a problem. Not just for the New York Times, not just for the falsely accused, and not just for disbelieved and discounted accusers, but for America. It is a problem when our "newspaper of record," which should be a bastion of objectivity, instead lives down to the President's nickname for it: *failing*.

The Times is *failing* to question stories that make conservatives look bad, like Julie Swetnick's story—or was it really Michael Avenatti's story? When Swetnick claimed that Brett Kavanaugh was a gang rapist in high school, the Times considered the claim "fit to print" the same day. But the Times is also *failing* to take seriously stories that make liberals look bad, like Tara Reade's story about Joe Biden.

Tara Reade says that Joe Biden, who was then the powerful Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, sexually assaulted her in her workplace—the United States Senate—when she was his young staff assistant. Then, she says, Biden retaliated against her by forcing her to resign when she reported the attack.

There is no question that Reade and Biden were in the same place at the same time, which is more than could be said for the Swetnick story. Yet you thought the Times should do more than a “straightforward news story” about Reade’s allegation. Instead, you wanted to “help people figure out what to make of it,” and “help[] the reader understand.”

Don’t worry, we understand. We understand that when a woman accuses a powerful conservative man of sexual assault, it’s breaking news worth reporting even if “none of [the] claims [can] be independently corroborated.” We understand that when a woman accuses a powerful liberal man of sexual assault, it’s a “really sensitive story” and “the main obligation” is to get it “as close to right” as possible. We understand that when the context is a Supreme Court nomination by a Republican President, it’s “a live, ongoing story” and “the biggest political story in the country.” And we understand that when the context is the campaign of the presumptive Democrat nominee for President, *in an election year*, “it [isn’t] like we [are] in a heated race with the clock ticking” and taking some time and “having multiple conversations with” the accuser is important.

We also understand why conservatives have lost all confidence in the Times newsroom to maintain its independence from the Democrat Party. Do you? Do you understand what it does to the Times’s reputation when you treat similar stories differently? Or when you edit a news item at the behest of the Biden campaign, without so much as noting the edit, and try to pass it off as just a grammar fix? Or when you ask us to believe that, in your “news judgment,” “Kavanaugh was a running, hot story” — but a presidential campaign isn’t? Do you ask your reporters to accept this sort of obvious nonsense, or just your readers?

Ben Smith, to his credit, asked you if you were “reluctant to promote a story that would hurt Joe Biden and get Donald Trump re-elected.” And to your credit, you answered honestly: “I think once you start making those kinds of calculations, you are not a journalist anymore. You’re some sort of political actor.” At least we can agree with you about that.

Sincerely,

Mike Davis, Founder and President  
The Article III Project (A3P)

Eric Beach, Chairman  
Great Again PAC

Rachel Bovard, Senior Director of Policy  
Conservative Partnership Institute (CPI)

Terry Campo, Former General Counsel  
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