

When Bias Tells The Truth

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At AllSides, we rate media bias so we can curate news and opinion from different perspectives, helping people to find the truth and better understand each other across divides. We also teach people to understand and combat bias, so they can better navigate media and information.

5 [...]But is bias always wrong?

A media organization seeks to inform its audience; put another way, it takes in information from many sources and decides which information to present to its audience. Media that strives for objectivity will try to present an accurate, proportional view of the goings-on of the world.

10 Biased media, however, paints a caricature of the world that inflates some facts and minimizes others, often to suit a political narrative or to support a perspective or worldview. This may be driven by an ulterior “agenda” when governments or moneyed interests are involved, but media bias is often a natural, self-reinforcing process in which audiences seek to confirm their existing beliefs and outlets earn more money by catering to them.

15 Put another way, a fact can be presented in a biased manner and reinforce the audience’s bias without the fact itself being wrong or misleading.

The truth doesn’t regard partisan lines. Sometimes the facts will fit conveniently into the right’s narrative of the country, and sometimes they will fit into the left’s. That does not make the facts untrue. How the facts are used, however, is a matter of subjectivity and
20 opinion.

For example, maybe an outlet on the right will write a story that frames President Joe Biden’s immigration policy negatively by including context about how many people have illegally crossed the border and highlighting high-profile crimes committed by unauthorized immigrants. While the story may show a right-leaning bias because it gives a negative
25 perception of the left’s handling of the issue, the facts are not untrue, nor is it necessarily misleading to include such details. But it *is* misleading to highlight one-off instances of crime in order to imply that unauthorized immigrants are particularly dangerous people, if you also omit the fact that studies show unauthorized immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S.-born Americans. But even then, some would push back on that framing by
30 highlighting how coming to the U.S. illegally is *itself* a crime. [...]

Whether a story goes against your bias or supports it, you should always fact-check its contents. But just as biased stories may be untrue or omitting certain important context, biased stories can also be true, even when you disagree with the overarching position or narrative it seems to reinforce. [...]

> INDIVIDUALLY: **Read** the article and take notes about **the relationship between the truth and bias**. Are they **mutually exclusive**?

> IN PAIRS: **Correct** and **complete** each other's notes then **discuss**:

Is bias in the media harmful? Why (not)?