

# On the New York Times and the firing of Jayson Blair

14 May 2003

*Below we post a selection of letters on the New York Times and the firing of one its junior reporters, Jayson Blair.*

Your juxtaposing Jayson Blair and Judith Miller at the *NY Times*—in a thorough piece that for once was subtle in its understanding of the paper’s motives and modus operandi—was just right. This kid is not the first “pathological” journalist trying to see how much he can get away with—there have been so many like him in recent years they should come up with a name for the syndrome. Yet no one died as a result of Blair’s shenanigans.

Keep up the good work on Miller. I’m glad someone is making her accountable. The contradictions between the *Washington Post’s* account of that WMD unit’s activities and her reporting are alarming. She’s the one who needs to be ousted.

JS

13 May 2003

A very well-written article and take on the Jayson Blair fiasco. Even your average American can, maybe, understand what the *Times* is trying to do. There is no doubt in my mind that the *Times* is hanging this guy out to dry so that no one can link him with their paper’s uhmm umm cough integrity.

Remember when the American journalist died in Iraq of natural causes and then the US tank said, here, eat this, firing on the Al Jazeera TV station killing a cameraman? When the latter event happened there was lots of explaining to do, as there should be. When the heat was turned up on this story, out of the blue comes Jeff Greenfield of CNN with a commentary about the dangers for foreign journalists. He grouped together the killed Al Jazeera cameraman with the American reporter who died of natural causes. Somehow being shot and dying of natural causes is the same thing to this fool.

I would love to hear an honest opinion on why the major US media was so gung-ho for war.

Respectfully,

GY

13 May 2003

It seems to me that NYT was trying to send a message to all its reporters: This is what will happen to YOU if you deviate from our policies of reporting only positive information about Bush and the war.

DP

Tucson, Arizona

12 May 2003

Thank you so much for your insightful and unbiased article on the Jayson Blair incident. I think that you were right on target, and I even emailed your article to three ultra-conservative right-wing radio talk show hosts, in which I heard two of them discussing this incident today. As you mentioned in your article, two talk show hosts had already jumped on the bandwagon implying that this is what comes out of affirmative action. Oftentimes, I have to turn their programs off because one can only take the lunacy for so long. I’ve got to find a liberal radio talk show station, but this is Dallas, Texas, need I say more. As I shared with the above-mentioned talk show hosts, I believe that Mr. Blair probably stumbled onto something that was so big, his whole credibility had to be forever ruined, least he be believed. He was more than likely a “fall guy.” He was to be used as an example (in my opinion) of what can happen to one who might want to challenge the propaganda of the “powers that be.” I do not believe that we have the WHOLE story and I believe that this has been in the making for a long time. It definitely hints of racism to me. No white journalist that I can remember has been raked over the coals to this great of an extent. Yet as your article shows, far worse journalistic compromises have been made by the

*Times*. Unfortunately, your article won't appear where it's needed most, in major USA publications. Thank God for the Internet, it's the last place one can go for reporting that has not been hijacked by the American government. Great article!

LC

12 May 2003

This is to thank the both of you for your article of May 12, "Panic and hysteria reign at the *New York Times*," in the *World Socialist Web Site*.

EC

Memphis

13 May 2003

Interesting point about Judith Miller—I will never read HER the same way again. As for Tom Friedman, he once had some interesting insights but is now a pathetic waster of trees.

Still, do not lose sight of the fact that Blair was dishonest, and he should have known better. And he serves to strengthen the stereotype that affirmative action programs foster unqualified candidates.

BC

12 May 2003

Dear WSWS,

Your piece on Mr. Blair's transgressions is quite sensible. It is interesting that one of his major transgressions was plagiarism—that was what provoked his departure from the *Times*—which would seem to be a matter of property and not a matter of truth. Nonetheless, it is a fact that there is more outrage over this than the *Times*' ghastly behavior in the Stalin era, which is a matter of truth not property.

As a worker in scientific misconduct, these facts of differential outrage need to be explained because the naive approach would be to assume that truth issues trump property issues.

DL

12 May 2003

Thanks for your article on *NY Times* correspondent Jayson Blair. I had just read the article about his sacking on the *NY Times* online web site. After reading it I was confused. As you pointed out, why all this name calling and berating this poor individual who the majority of the readers are probably not thoroughly familiar with? A simple apology and announcement of his dismissal would have been appropriate. Especially since he really did not hurt anyone, considering the

lying propaganda that Judith Miller puts out.

The truth is Jayson Blair was just doing the kind of journalism that has become common at the *NY Times* and US media institutions in general. The only difference is he was not dispensing some nationalistic, warrioristic, jingoistic propaganda. Also, he wasn't dispensing lies fed to him by the government, like Judith Miller.

The *NY Times* has seized on poor Blair as a sacrificial lamb to die for all their sins. Was it Shakespeare who wrote, "Me think thou doth protest too much."

TR

12 May 2003

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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