

Citizen Media Monitoring Guide

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Introduction

“Whoever frames the debate and the terms of the debate is well on the way to winning the debate.”

What is “political correctness”?

How does political correctness produce media bias?

How has political correctness and media bias enabled the creeping advance of radical Islam in the West generally, and America specifically?

How can concerned citizens detect it?

What can concerned citizens do about it?

Why is this important?

These questions are the reason the American Congress for Truth “Citizen Media Monitoring Guide” was created.

Look again at the quote at the top. Islamists and their apologists and defenders want to frame the debate about “Islam” as a recurring problem with insidious intolerance and anti-Muslim bigotry. If they succeed, public critique and criticism of radical Islam will be virtually suppressed.

On the other hand, we must work to frame the debate for what it actually is – the 21st century challenge of a supremacist political ideology, draped in religion, that for fourteen centuries has sought, and frequently succeeded, in conquering, subjugating, and killing non-Muslims. If we succeed, public focus will be on the truth about radical Islam’s political ideology, which is a focus Islamists desperately want to prevent.

In other words, the struggle against radical Islam and all the various threats it poses, begins with a struggle over how it is defined. If most Americans end up subscribing to this statement:

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“Islam is a religion of peace that has been hijacked by a few extremists”

...rather than this one...

“While there are many peaceful Muslims, Islam, doctrinally and historically, is not a religion of peace”

...we as a nation will be hard-pressed to effectively combat and defeat the threat of radical Islam.

Europe and Great Britain have already demonstrated to a watching world how impotent a culture will be in combating the rising tide of radical Islam when the threat is defined as “Islam is a religion of peace that has been hijacked by a few extremists.”

America cannot afford to walk down this path.

This is why detecting and exposing politically correct media bias is an absolutely essential element in the overall effort to defeat the threat of radical Islam.

The stakes are very, very high.

The Ft. Hood Jihadist Attack: A Case Study of Political Correctness Run Amok

The horrific jihadist attack that occurred on November 5, 2009 at Ft. Hood provides a tragic, and wholly preventable, case study of the corrosive effects of political correctness, both prior to the attack and in the media reporting that followed. Thirteen people died and dozens of others were wounded in the worst terrorist attack on American soil since 9/11.

To underscore the power of political correctness, there are those in the media who, to this day, refuse to acknowledge that this was a jihadist attack or a terrorist attack.

The Aftermath

In the hours and days following the attack, news anchors, commentators, and journalists bent over backwards to avoid characterizing the attack as a jihadist attack or a terrorist attack. One study found that between November 5 and November 10, fully 85% of the reports produced by ABC, NBC and CBS News did not mention the words “terrorist” or “terrorism.”

Most “establishment media” news reports assiduously avoided terms like “Islam,” “Muslim,” or “jihadist.” Evan Thomas, Editor-at-Large of Newsweek, said he cringed when he heard the perpetrator was a Muslim, because “it will get the right wing going.” Thomas said Nidal Malik Hasan was probably a “nut case.” He was not alone.

This narrative, that Hasan must be deranged, or that he was emotionally unbalanced, or suffering from some form of post-traumatic stress disorder, or that he was a victim of anti-Muslim taunts, dominated the media for days. Whenever anyone suggested the possibility that jihad or radical Islam may have been the reason for the attack, or at least a partial explanation, the suggestion was generally dismissed or aggressively disputed.

Numerous media outlets trotted out spokespersons for organizations like CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America. While these “spokespersons” denounced the violent act (how could they not?), they were quick to assert that this could not have had anything to do with Islam.

We were warned by military leaders and political leaders, including President Obama, to avoid “rushing to judgment” -- even as one talking head after another “rushed to judgment” by assuring us that Hasan must have been emotionally unstable! This would

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have been comical had it not been so tragic. At times there seemed greater concern for the potential of “anti-Muslim backlash” than for the families of the victims, a concern that proved to be without merit as no anti-Muslim backlash occurred. (A similar concern was expressed after 9/11. It too proved to lack merit).

There was also great concern for Hasan as a “victim.” One article was titled “The lonely life of the alleged Fort Hood shooter.” There were endless stories about alleged mistreatment of him by other soldiers.

In other words, many in the media and government were looking for ANY possible explanation other than the obvious one staring them in the face – because the obvious explanation, that Hasan was a jihadist, didn’t fit their prejudices.

Yet in spite of this politically correct driven narrative, evidence that Nidal Hasan was in fact a jihadist began leaking out, bit by bit, piece by piece. In spite of the herculean attempts by many in the media – and in the government – to dismiss or downplay any role for jihad or radical Islam, the amount of evidence grew to a point that more and more Americans began asking why these “warning signs” were missed. Even “establishment” outlets like ABC News began asking the question, “Did political correctness lead people to overlook the warning signs about Hasan’s radicalism?”

Had there been only a handful of warning signs, the politically correct narrative would have survived unchallenged. But because there were so many warning signs, and such news cannot be completely “managed” or suppressed by a handful of media outlets, polls in the days following the attack revealed that an inquiring American public had begun to conclude that jihadism and radical Islam did in fact have a bearing on this attack.

The Run-Up

In the many months prior to Hasan’s terrorist attack at Ft. Hood, Hasan had provided numerous indications that he was an adherent to the ideology of jihad. These included everything from making presentations where he stated “infidels” should be killed, to incidents where he argued with his patients that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan weren’t justified, to email correspondence he had with a radical imam.

While it is not necessary to recount all of those actions here, any one or combination of them should have been more than sufficient to cause concern leading to appropriate action by his superiors and/or those in law enforcement.

Law enforcement dismissed the emails as non-threatening. Many fellow officers failed to report Hasan's behavior, with some admitting they didn't do so out of fear of being accused of discrimination against Muslims. Concerns that were expressed by Hasan's colleagues were ignored. The common thread throughout was a climate, a culture, of political correctness that influenced the behavior and choices of countless people to look the other way.

In a stunning illustration of how this culture of political correctness corrodes our vigilance, Hasan was included as a participant in a task force created by George Washington University's Homeland Security Policy Institute!

The task force was entitled "Thinking Anew – Security Priorities for the Next Generation." According to the report published by the Institute, "...the Task Force sought to further policy discussions of the top strategic priorities in the area of security in order to generate actionable recommendations, for the Administration taking office in January 2009..."

Apparently unbeknownst to GW's Homeland Security Policy Institute was the fact that one of their participants was a jihadist.

Defining “Political Correctness”

The term “political correctness” is often used, but rarely defined. The reason may be explained by the remark attributed to a former Supreme Court Justice who, when asked to define “obscenity”, replied that he didn’t have a good definition but he recognized it when he saw it.

In other words, it would appear that most of us recognize “political correctness” when we see it. In both the run-up to and in the aftermath of the Ft. Hood jihadist attack political correctness was so clearly on display that many in the media began aggressively asking if political correctness were to blame for all the warning signs that were missed. No one had to define it, as it was assumed that people knew what it was when it was discussed.

Having said that, having some defined parameters regarding what constitutes political correctness and the effects of political correctness is helpful.

- **The distortion of truth and/or reality due to naiveté or ignorance about both sides of an issue, coupled with a refusal to acknowledge there is another side of the issue.** There is often an attitude of “moral superiority” associated with this, where those who engage in this variation of political correctness assume that anyone who believes otherwise shouldn’t even be allowed to express such a position. This was frequently on display during the media coverage following the Ft. Hood terror attack.
- **The deliberate distortion of truth and/or reality to advance a particular political agenda.** This goes beyond what is called “political spin.” This is designed to produce a particular prevalence of opinion to achieve a desired political result. When spokespersons for American Islamist organizations asserted that the Ft. Hood attack could not possibly be connected to or justified by Islam, we witnessed a deliberate distortion of truth designed to shape public opinion.
- **The use of intimidation tactics to intimidate and/or silence those who will not “toe the line” regarding a particular point of view on an issue.** This is likely to emanate either from an extreme position of moral superiority or, conversely, a position based upon a fear that one’s position is largely indefensible and thus debate cannot be allowed or it will expose that weakness.

A consequence of this is the reluctance by people to identify or describe what they recognize as the true cause of a problem out of fear of being ostracized, intimidated, or in other ways pressured.

Numerous colleagues of Nidal Hasan acknowledged after the Ft. Hood terror attack that they had previously witnessed Hasan say and do things that aroused their concerns, but in many cases they admitted they did nothing out of fear that they would be accused of being “discriminatory” against Muslims. How many others, in law enforcement, intelligence, counterterrorism, and in military leadership, also chose not to act on what they learned due to similar concerns? We may never know for sure.

But it is impossible not to conclude that a “culture of political correctness,” actively fostered in academia, government, the media, and in the military and law enforcement, has created a climate of fear in this country that has not only compromised our safety and security, but compromised our cherished ideals of a free press and free speech.

It has also produced an unwillingness, and even an inability, to accurately define our enemy. This has left us highly vulnerable to the creeping advance of “cultural jihad” and the infiltration of government, media, academia, and the entertainment industry by committed Islamists whose ultimate objective is the downfall of our constitutional form of government and the imposition of Islamic shariah law.

In a [blog](#) written shortly after the Ft. Hood jihadist attack, President George Bush (the elder) was quoted as follows:

The notion of ***political correctness*** declares certain topics, certain expressions, even certain gestures, off-limits. What began as a crusade for civility has soured into a cause of conflict and even ***censorship***.

Well said.

How Political Correctness Produces Media Bias That Aids and Abets the Advance of Radical Islam

- **Omission.**

This is the most subtle, and difficult to detect and expose, expression of politically correct bias, because there are no news reports, articles or opinion pieces to analyze. Media outlets simply don't cover certain issues or stories or relegate them to obscure placement in their publications. In doing so, they keep much of the public unaware about the issues they choose not to cover. This media-imposed ignorance has multiple consequences, such as minimizing the importance of the issue that is ignored and thus tamping down citizen action.

The New York Times alludes to this practice with its slogan "All the news that's fit to print." In other words, what the *Times* is saying is, if we aren't covering it, it's not news.

- **Misleading or biased headlines.**

Most people scan newspapers and websites, honing in on things that catch their eye or appeal to matters that are of importance to them. The headline of a story sets the tone for the story, and it is not uncommon for the substance of a story to be at odds with its headline.

Because most people scan, the headline writer has a great deal of power over the information they process and the conclusions they draw. This is especially the case when people only read the headlines and not the stories.

Here are two fictitious examples of misleading or biased headlines:

- **"Thousands attend rally protesting administration decision regarding terrorism."**

The reader who actually reads the story learns that the number of people at the rally was estimated at 100,000. "Thousands" implies high single digits or low double-digits, at best. A more accurate headline would have read: "100,000 attend rally..." By saying "Thousands" the headline significantly understates the impact of the rally.

- **"Mideast peace process derailed by Israel."**

When you actually read the story you find that Hamas stated, unequivocally, that it would not now, nor ever, recognize Israel's right to exist. In response, Israel stated "there can be no meaningful negotiations

without such a recognition of Israel by Hamas,” and walked away from the negotiating table.

While the headline makes it sound as if Israel precipitated the collapse of the peace process, the reality is Hamas did. The headline should have read: “Mideast peace process derailed by Hamas.” Misleading readers to believe Israel was the cause is political correctness at work.

- **Editorializing masquerading as news reporting.**

The line between hard news reporting and editorializing, or the insertion of opinion, has become increasingly blurred over the past several years. Front page stories and television news reports that purport to be hard news reporting frequently have subtle, and not so subtle, opinions embedded within them.

A principal reason why is that it is common in college journalism schools for professors to be instilling in their students that their duty as a professional journalist includes “changing the world for the better” – in other words, to be activists who use their positions as a medium for activism. What used to be seen as a profession whose responsibility was to report the news is now widely regarded as a vehicle for change and its practitioners as change agents.

The result is more and more journalism dedicated to advancing a political or social cause or agenda – more often than not an agenda that blames America first, is pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel, and seeks to find “causes” for Islamic terrorism unrelated to the ideology of political Islam.

Here are two fictitious examples.

- **“Nidal Hasan, who was likely distraught due to his impending deployment to Afghanistan, has been identified as the shooter.”**

The key phrase here is “who was likely distraught...” Says who? Verified how? And even if he was, how does that have any factual bearing on what happened at Ft. Hood? This is clearly an opinion inserted by the writer of the story, an opinion masquerading as fact. An opinion designed to lead the reader to a conclusion desired by the author.

- **“The Attorney General’s decision to try Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in a civilian, criminal court, was applauded by most civil rights attorneys as a sound constitutional decision that rose above the fray of politics.”**

This statement has so much unverifiable opinion jammed into it that it’s hard to know where to start dissecting it. How does the writer know that “most” civil rights attorneys applaud this? Did he conduct a survey? Of course not, so that is his unsubstantiated opinion.

Who defines what a “civil rights attorney” is? Apparently, the author of the news story did. More unsubstantiated opinion.

And even if we had good answers to these questions, which we wouldn't, how would the “civil rights attorneys” know that political considerations didn't enter into the decision? How would they know what was in the mind of the Attorney General, or what calculations he was making? Even if the Attorney General had said “political considerations had no bearing on this decision,” accepting this without question is poor journalism and in itself reveals the insertion of opinion colored by bias.

- **Using loaded descriptors to evoke negative emotion and euphemisms to avoid evoking such emotion.**

In this form of media bias, the story describes those whom the author or publisher dislikes with emotionally-laden adjectives, while describing those whom the author or publisher likes with positive adjectives or euphemisms to downplay negative connotations.

For instance, many in the media bend over backwards to avoid using terms such as “Islamic terrorist,” “jihadist,” or even “terrorism” when describing an attack. Here are two fictitious examples.

- **“The crime scene was riddled with debris in the aftermath of the explosion detonated by a man of Asian descent, said to be angry about his treatment by immigration authorities.”**

A “man of Asian descent” is a common euphemism, especially in Great Britain, for Muslim immigrants. Did you catch the insertion of opinion by the author when he wrote “said to be angry”? By whom? The opinion has been clearly inserted to lead the reader to a particular conclusion.

Consider the inverse. How often does a media report state “said to be motivated by his commitment to jihad”? Rarely if ever. The rationale given is almost always one that would lead the reader away from concluding that jihad or militant Islam was a cause or even a factor in the incident.

- **“The rally, powered by an undercurrent of anti-immigrant resentment, included several notable anti-Islamic speakers.”**

Notice that the descriptor “anti” is used twice. “Anti” evokes a negative emotional reaction. For instance, “pro-populist” has a warmer appeal than “anti-government.”

Note also the insertion of a conclusion by the author based on his opinion: “powered by an undercurrent of anti-immigrant resentment.” How would a journalist quantify such an “undercurrent” in order to justify such a conclusion? People attend such events for a wide variety of reasons.

What’s more, to be opposed to illegal immigration does not necessarily mean one “resents” immigrants. The descriptor “resentment” is heavily loaded and evokes negative emotions in the reader.

Taking Constructive Action to Expose and Minimize The Influence of Political Correctness in the Media

- **Newspapers.**

Sadly, newspapers across the country have become notorious for their politically correct bias. One reason has been the demise of competition in the print media. Years ago, most major cities, and many mid-sized ones, had more than one newspaper. The competition helped keep the newspapers more “honest,” as readers had a choice of what to read.

With the advent of one-newspaper towns came increased politically correct bias. Editors had little to fear because they were the only game in town.

Then came the rise of talk radio and the internet.

Today, newspapers in many cities are struggling financially as readership and circulation numbers continue to drop. Consumers hungry for news are looking elsewhere. Even such “bastions” of the press, such as *The New York Times*, are in serious financial trouble.

That doesn’t mean we ignore newspaper bias. We fight back against it.

How? Here are some action items.

- **Good letters to the editor.**

The letters to the editor section of a newspaper is typically one of the most-read sections of the newspaper and is thus a great place to point out bias. This is an excellent way to respond to news stories, editorials, and letters to the editor submitted by other readers.

Writing a good letter to the editor intended to expose politically correct bias requires a working knowledge of the subject, the ability to analyze news stories and opinion pieces, and the ability to write a concise, well-reasoned letter.

One need not be a scholar, an expert, or an accomplished writer to submit a good letter to the editor.

Some sample letters, responding to the examples of bias provided previously in this Guide, are included in Appendix A.

- **Discussions with editors.**

It is entirely appropriate to ask for a meeting with the editor of a newspaper where politically correct bias is particularly frequent and egregious. Ideally, a small group of people, such as members of an ACT! for America chapter, would ask for and attend such a meeting. If you must go alone, bring a letter or petition signed by several people who agree with you.

Be prepared with examples of news stories taken from the newspaper and accompanying analyses pointing out the biased reporting. Be respectful and professional. Rely on facts instead of emotion.

Such a meeting might in fact persuade the editor to be more attentive to reader concerns about politically correct bias. Even if such an outcome does not occur, it is still worth the effort to try.

- **Meeting with prominent advertisers.**

Newspapers depend on advertising for a substantial portion of their total revenue. Meeting with key advertisers (usually small businesses) after meeting(s) with the newspaper's editor prove fruitless may provide an avenue to put pressure on the newspaper.

Ideally, you or someone you know will have a prior relationship with one or more of the advertisers you want to meet with. Even when that is not the case, it is still worthwhile to meet with one or more advertisers.

Go to the meeting with a few other like-minded people or take a letter or petition signed by several people who agree with you. Be prepared with examples of biased reporting, just as you would do when meeting with the newspaper's editor. Be respectful and professional. Rely on facts instead of emotion.

The first step is to get the advertiser to agree with your contention of biased reporting. If you can achieve that, then ask the advertiser to call the editor and express concerns about the reporting. If the advertiser is sufficiently concerned or even angry he/she may go so far as to tell the editor he will pull his advertising if some "adjustments" to editorial policy are not implemented.

This may well result in some begrudging "adjustments" by the editor. If not, follow up with the advertiser and ask him/her to pull its advertising and let the newspaper's sales department know why.

In the event the advertiser is not interested in acting on your request to speak to the editor, be prepared to let the advertiser know that you and others you know will look for another company with which to do business.

- Television and radio.

The same approach for dealing with newspaper bias applies to dealing with television and radio news bias, but instead of dealing with an “editor” you would deal with a “news director.”

Talk radio offers the opportunity to express opinions on the air. However, it’s important to express them in a way that will actually be persuasive. We’ve all heard the talk-show callers who do more harm than good to their “cause” by appearing uninformed or unable to effectively communicate their position.

Keep in mind that most talk shows thrive on controversy or, at the very least, stimulating discussion. Hosts are dependent on advertising and advertising dollars are driven by ratings. For this reason interesting, challenging, and stimulating callers are always welcomed on talk shows that utilize the listener call-in format.

- Internet sites.

Internet news and blog sites that are independent of print, television or radio outlets pose a different challenge, primarily because such sites are not locally based and driven by local news and local advertisers. For instance, unless you live near where the site is geographically based, it is impractical to try to meet with an editor.

However, many such sites offer ample viewer feedback. Take advantage of it. Post comments about biased news stories and politically correct-driven opinion pieces, and urge others you know to do the same.

Appendix A: Sample Letters to the Editor

- **Sample fictitious headline: “Thousands attend rally protesting administration decision regarding terrorism.”**

Letter to the editor response:

The story that appeared in [name of newspaper] on [date] was either the result of a politically correct decision designed to influence reader reaction or was a case of sloppy journalism. The story’s headline, which stated “thousands attend rally protesting administration decision regarding terrorism,” badly understated the number of people who attended.

Since “thousands” implies, at best, 10,000 people, and since estimates put the number of people attending at 100,000 or more, an accurate headline would have been “At least 100,000 people attend rally protesting administration decision...”

But such a headline would have communicated to your readers that there was a huge amount of opposition to the administration’s decision. What better way to steer reader opinion than misrepresent something as quantifiably measureable as the attendance?

Your readers deserve better.

- **Sample fictitious news report: “The Attorney General’s decision to try Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in a civilian, criminal court, was applauded by most civil rights attorneys as a sound constitutional decision that rose above the fray of politics.”**

Letter to the editor response:

Your article on the Attorney General’s decision to try Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in a civilian court [article title and date], was riddled with unsubstantiated opinion masquerading as hard news reporting.

For instance, the article stated that the decision was “applauded by most civil rights attorneys as a sound constitutional decision that rose above the fray of politics.”

Did the article's author do a poll of "civil rights attorneys" to arrive at his contention that "most" applauded the decision? If so, how did he know whom to poll – did he get a list of "civil rights attorneys"?

Even if he had done that, which we all know he didn't, how would the "civil rights attorneys" know that "politics" were not a motivation in the Attorney General's decision? Are they mind readers? No. Do they have access to the inner sanctums of this administration to know what was really behind this decision? Again, no.

Discerning readers want such politically-correct editorializing clearly defined as such and confined to the editorial and opinion pages of the newspaper. When you report the news, we ask that you report it, not slant it, and let us readers draw our own conclusions based on the facts presented.

- **Sample fictitious news report: "The rally, powered by an undercurrent of anti-immigrant resentment, included several notable anti-Islamic speakers."**

Letter to the editor response:

The [name of newspaper] article on [date] titled [title] was just one more example of the politically correct bias of this newspaper.

For instance, the article stated "the rally, powered by an undercurrent of anti-immigration resentment, included several notable anti-Islamic speakers." Wow. The author of the article must have remarkable powers of clairvoyance, because she was somehow able to deduce that "anti-immigration resentment" is what "powered," or motivated, the people who attended.

People attend rallies like this for lots of different reasons. It is likely there were people there who harbor resentment towards immigrants. It is equally likely that there were people there who are not resentful but simply want our laws enforced, or are afraid that terrorists are sneaking into our country through our porous southern border.

Unless the article's author was able to interview a majority of the attendees, it is simply not possible to state as fact that "anti-immigration resentment" is what was motivating most people. It is clear the author's intent was to portray the rally attendees in a negative light which comports with this newspaper's long record of politically correct reporting bias.

Appendix B: Nationwide Project to Coordinate Writers to Newspaper, News Magazine, Talk Radio and Cable TV Blogs

We are constructing a nationwide network of volunteer writers who will agree to monitor certain publications or broadcasts.

The purpose of the network is to help ensure that a greater number of media outlets are being responded to in an appropriate manner by assigning certain media to certain volunteer writers.

In this manner, we can minimize “over-coverage and under-coverage” of the various media markets through effectively spreading out our volunteers across the entire country.

We will establish an order of priority based on overall numbers of readers, viewers or listeners as well.

As a result of this project being successfully implemented, when a volunteer in Seattle, Washington realizes that her efforts to correct media bias are being matched with similar efforts all over the nation, she will be encouraged to keep up the good fight!

The writers will also be encouraged to correspond with each other to develop the best points to be making during the first few hours of emerging developments.

If you are interested in either helping respond or helping coordinate your region of the country, please send us an e-mail at:

member@americancongressfortruth.org

Be sure to put “**Nationwide Media Responders Project**” on your subject line. Thank you!