



STUDY GUIDE

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE LIE

KEY TERMS: informed journalist fact malfeasance
condemn scandal truth

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p>What is the media <i>supposed</i> to do, in terms of helping citizens discover truth?</p> <p>Who was President Trump referring to when he described certain groups as ‘fine people?’</p> <p>What is news reporting supposed to be about?</p>	<p>In what way did much of the mainstream media engage in journalistic malfeasance when covering what happened during and after the Charlottesville protests?</p> <p>What evidence demonstrates that President Trump did not refer to Neo-Nazis as ‘very fine people?’</p>

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- At the beginning of the video, Mr. Cortes contends that, “It’s our job, as informed citizens, to figure out the truth. And that’s where journalists and the media come in. They are supposed to help us ferret out fact from fiction. So, when they get a fact wrong, that’s bad. When they get a fact wrong, know it’s wrong and don’t correct it, that’s worse. That’s not getting a fact wrong. That’s a lie. And that’s journalistic malfeasance.” Do you agree with Mr. Cortes that it is our job to figure out what the truth is? Why or why not? In what ways, specifically, can the media help us separate fact from fiction? What do you think would motivate a journalist to engage in journalistic malfeasance- i.e. what does the journalist hope to gain from such vile malpractice?
- Later in the video, Mr. Cortes explains that, “...a group of white supremacists held a ‘white pride’ rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The ostensible reason was to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. An AntiFa group showed up to counter-protest. The mayor and the police were totally unprepared to deal with the violence that ensued. Tragically, a young woman, Heather Heyer, was run over and killed by a neo-Nazi.” Why do you think that so many different groups showed up to the statue removal? Explain. What factors do you think contribute towards some people becoming so hate-filled towards others that they would actually engage in violence against those others? Explain.
- Mr. Cortes goes on to remind us that, “...the media reported that President Trump described Neo-Nazis as ‘very fine people.’ Only he didn’t. In fact, he didn’t even hint at it. Just the opposite: he condemned the Neo-Nazis in no uncertain terms.” Why do you think that the media purposefully lied about what happened in this case? Why do you think that the media thinks that it can get away with such deception? Explain. Why do you think that the media doesn’t seem to suffer any negative consequences when ‘outed’ for purposefully deceiving the public? Explain.
- Later Mr. Cortes points out that, “The scandal of Charlottesville is not what President Trump said about neo-Nazis. It’s what the media said President Trump said about Neo-Nazis. It’s a scandal because news reporting is supposed to be about gathering facts, not promoting an agenda.” Why do you think that journalism has drastically changed so much to the point of placing a significantly higher value on promoting an agenda over relaying objective facts? Explain.
- At the end of the video, Mr. Cortes concludes that, “In Charlottesville they [the media] got it exactly backwards. We have been living with the consequences ever since. Plainly put: ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR, the New York Times, the Washington Post and the others spread a malicious lie that has poisoned our national dialogue. They should apologize to the American people for what they have done. Don’t hold your breath. Actually, I have a better idea. Let out a big sigh of relief. Because now you know the truth.” What do you think the ‘consequences’ are that Mr. Cortes refers to here? Do you think that the media who purposefully deceived the public about what happened in this case should apologize to their consumers? Do you think that the media even cares about their consumers? Why or why not? Why is it important to know the truth?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Joe Biden

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Joe Biden is running on the media’s Charlottesville lie about Trump,” then answer the questions that follow.

- How long has the media been spreading the lie about what President Trump said? What did the former vice president present as his primary motivation for running for president? How did much of the media present President Trump’s quote about ‘fine people on both sides?’ What did President Trump make clear several times during the press conference? Which groups did President Trump say ‘should be condemned totally?’
- Why do you think that Joe Biden has chosen to run his campaign on a proven lie? Do you think that it will work? Why or why not? Do you think that this circumstance proves Mr. Cortes’ point that politicians lie? Explain. In terms of people being able to discover truth and make sound judgments for themselves, what are the short and long-term ramifications of mainstream media outlets having such a strong and extreme bias in the way that it covers news? What are the consequences of mainstream media having any degree of political agenda? In what ways have reporting and editorializing been blended? Do you think that media should blend reporting and editorializing? Why or why not? If the media will not report objective truth anymore, how can citizens become properly informed? Explain.
- Do you think that people are wrong to expect the media to be objective and to not promote an agenda? Why or why not? Considering that so many media outlets (and now the frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nominee) have blatantly lied about what President Trump said, do you agree that the media engaging in journalistic malfeasance, not President Trump, is what is dividing the country and ‘poisoning our national dialogue’ about racism? Why or why not?



QUIZ

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE LIE

1. It's our job, as informed citizens, _____.
 - a. to only support informed politicians
 - b. to do the journalist's jobs for them
 - c. to always believe the media
 - d. to figure out the truth

2. What is journalistic malfeasance?
 - a. When a journalist gets a fact wrong, doesn't know it's wrong, and doesn't correct it.
 - b. When a journalist gets a fact wrong, knows it's wrong, and doesn't correct it.
 - c. When a journalist gets a fact wrong, knows it's wrong, and corrects it.
 - d. None of the above.

3. Regarding the Charlottesville incident, which group did President Trump *condemn* in no uncertain terms?
 - a. Protestors who wanted the Robert E. Lee statue removed
 - b. The police
 - c. Neo-Nazis
 - d. Protestors who wanted to *keep* the statue and restore the park's original name

4. President Trump's daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren are Jewish.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. News reporting is supposed to be about _____.
 - a. promoting an agenda
 - b. making large profits
 - c. gathering facts
 - d. All of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE LIE

1. It's our job, as informed citizens, _____.
 - a. to only support informed politicians
 - b. to do the journalist's jobs for them
 - c. to always believe the media
 - d. to figure out the truth

2. What is journalistic malfeasance?
 - a. When a journalist gets a fact wrong, doesn't know it's wrong, and doesn't correct it.
 - b. When a journalist gets a fact wrong, knows it's wrong, and doesn't correct it.
 - c. When a journalist gets a fact wrong, knows it's wrong, and corrects it.
 - d. None of the above.

3. Regarding the Charlottesville incident, which group did President Trump *condemn* in no uncertain terms?
 - a. Protestors who wanted the Robert E. Lee statue removed
 - b. The police
 - c. Neo-Nazis
 - d. Protestors who wanted to *keep* the statue and restore the park's original name

4. President Trump's daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren are Jewish.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. News reporting is supposed to be about _____.
 - a. promoting an agenda
 - b. making large profits
 - c. gathering facts
 - d. All of the above.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/joe-biden-is-running-on-the-medias-charlottesville-lie-about-trump>

Joe Biden is running on the media's Charlottesville lie about Trump

by Eddie Scarry

April 25, 2019 09:58 AM

If Joe Biden was going to pick anything in the world as his reason to run for the Democratic presidential nomination, you would think he'd get creative. But no, he chose a well-known lie the media have been spreading since 2017.

In his campaign launch video posted Thursday on YouTube, the former vice president said it was President Trump's comments on the Charlottesville, Va., protests that served as his personal bat signal.

"He said there were, quote, 'Some very fine people on both sides,'" said Biden. "Very fine people on both sides? With those words the president of the United States assigned a moral equivalence between those spreading hate and those with the courage to stand against it and in that moment I knew the threat to this nation was unlike any other I'd seen in my lifetime."

You can imagine Biden in 2017 sitting in his recliner with an O'Douls when it struck him that the country needed him. He would don his cape one more time.

His primary motivation to run for president was apparently not so much a belief he had the right ideas on healthcare or immigration or the judiciary, but a blatantly out-of-context quote from Trump that the media played out years ago.

After the violent clash in Charlottesville, where protests against the taking down of an historical statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee morphed into an alt-right rally, Trump held a press conference wherein he was repeatedly asked about the incident.

Out of more than 15 minutes of questions and answers, the press glommed onto the three seconds where Trump said "You also had people that were very fine people on both sides." It was made to look as though Trump had equated white supremacists who hijacked the event and liberals who were there to counterprotest.

This is precisely the opposite of what Trump said.

Trump made clear several times during the conference that he was referring specifically to those who had showed up to demonstrate against the statue's removal and that he otherwise condemned the white supremacists.

What Trump said, as transcribed by the Los Angeles Times:

"I've condemned neo-Nazis. I've condemned many different groups. But not all of [the people at the rally] were neo-Nazis, believe me. Not all of those people were white supremacists, by any stretch. Those people were also there because they wanted to protest the taking down of a statue, Robert E. Lee."

A reporter yelled out, "Both sides, sir?"

Referring to the so-called antifa, which was also present at the rally wearing masks, throwing paint, and spraying urine, Trump said, “Well, I do think there's blame — yes, I think there's blame on both sides.”

But Trump also said, “You have some very bad people in that group. But you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides.”

He again specified that he was not referring to white supremacists, saying, “You had people, and **I'm not talking about the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists, because they should be condemned totally.** But you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and white nationalists” [emphasis added].

Later, he said, “If you look, they were people protesting very quietly the taking down of the statue of Robert E. Lee. I'm sure in that group there were some bad ones.”

What inspired Biden to run is a tired, old media lie.