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Episode #105: Behind Raw Story's Progressive Mission

Mike Blilnder:

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Mike Blilnder:

Hi, I'm Mike Blilnder, Publisher of E&P. If you're enjoying E&P Reports, our weekly vodcast series, by all means, if you're on your favorite podcast platform, please follow us right now. If you're watching the video version, go to the bottom of the screen and click the subscribe button, smash the bell to the right. We'll make sure you get an update each and every time we upload a new episode of E&P Reports. Look up the word, Raw Story, on the internet you're going to see it's listed as an American progressive news website, an online tabloid founded in 2004 by John K. Byrne. But we wanted to dive deeper into what Raw Story is. What's their mission? And what are they doing when it comes to showing both sides of the political argument?

Mike Blilnder:

Let's explore Raw Story right now with Roxanne Cooper, their editor-in-chief, one of their top contributors, Jordan Green, and a Pulitzer Prize winning contributor, as well, David Cay Johnston. Let's talk Raw Story on this episode of E&P Reports.

Mike Blilnder:

I've got a great group here today, unbelievable group from an organization that gets a lot of play. We're talking about a group called, Raw Story. Let me go around the table here now, and first say, hello, of course, to my old friend, Roxanne Cooper. Roxanne you are the editor-in-chief of Raw Story, correct?

Roxanne Cooper:

I am.

Mike Blilnder:

You and I go way back, though, because you used to run AAM, the Association of Alternative News Weeklies.

Roxanne Cooper:

We do.

Mike Blilnder:

Boy, you are now running the show there. Also with us today, if I maybe so bold, as we go down bottom left of your screen, we've got Jordan Green, a staff report at Raw Story. And if the face right below me looks familiar to you, well, it should that's David Cay Johnston. Mr. Johnston, you are not the first Pulitzer Prize winner on this platform but, man, you are well-known and we're honored you carved out time for us today.

David Cay Johnston:

Well, thank you, and just David is fine.

Mike Blilnder:

Okay, David it is. Let's first start off with Roxanne. Roxanne, for those that do not know what Raw Story is, give me the elevator pitch. What do you guys do? What do you focus on? And what is Raw Story?

Roxanne Cooper:

Well, you've heard that story about the kid that started a blog in his dad's basement, and it turned into a big website.

Mike Blilnder:

Yes.

Roxanne Cooper:

The owner of Raw Story, John Bryne, is actually that guy. He literally started Raw Story in the basement of his dad's... His dad was a doctor, a country doctor, outside of Boston. And started Raw Story in the basement of his office. And then had some early... Raw Story had some early success in the investigative reporting world. I'll give you a couple of examples. Raw Story was the first website to report that our black sites in Europe, during the war on terror, were in Poland. And Raw Story also became very famous for outing several D.C. politicians. That is how people might remember Raw Story from 17, 18 years ago.

Mike Blilnder:

Yeah. But there's no question that if you investigate Raw Story and Google it, you lean to the left, but with a mission to do real news. I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but well-sourced journalism to counter what you might call, fake news.

Roxanne Cooper:

Right.

Mike Blilnder:

Can I put it that way?

Roxanne Cooper:

Sure. I mean, we're progressive, but we're not partisan. And very frequently, you will find stories on our website about hypocritical Democrats, for example.

Mike Blilnder:

God forbid there is one out there somewhere.

Roxanne Cooper:

There's a couple of them. The thing for us is we have to follow the truth. And while we are progressive, and we do have progressive values, we're going to call our hypocrisy wherever we see it.

Mike Blilnder:

Well, now Jordan, here. Jordan, I Google you, and you have broken a lot of stories recently. You are really on top... I don't even know if anyone had heard the term, Proud Boys, until Jordan really... I mean, you became a real student of that organization. Did you not, sir?

Jordan Green:

Well, I became a student of the far right and its many varied permutations going back to Donald Trump's election, and the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville. The Proud Boys is definitely one of... Part of that stream. But I've known many other reports have done stellar reporting about the Proud Boys. I'm definitely not the first. I can't take too much credit for that.

Mike Blilnder:

Yeah. But your investigation into these white supremacist groups have been picked up and retweeted, if I may use that term, and viral across the universe. David, I have to ask you a question. You aren't exactly hurting for work, sir. I mean, you're pretty busy. I understand you're traveling. You're speaking. You're writing. You've written for The Times. Your background is well-known. As a matter of fact, I'd like you to pick stocks for me, because, correct me if I'm wrong, you were one of the first to predict that Donald Trump actually had a chance to become president. Am I right, sir?

David Cay Johnston:

Yeah, absolutely. I dropped everything I was doing on June 16th, 2015, because I was certain that the politics reporters would completely screw up the coverage of Donald Trump and they did.

Mike Blilnder:

Yeah.

David Cay Johnston:

And I couldn't get anybody to listen to me, including my former editors at the New York Times, one of whom I told about Donald's long deep involvement with a major international drug trafficker, which only makes sense if Donald was involved with him in drug trafficking. The editor said to me, "Well, when was this?" And I said, "Basically, throughout the '80s." And he goes, "That's so long ago. No one cares." The following Sunday, the future front page story in the New York Times was, What Was Hillary Clinton Doing in the 1970s?

Mike Blilnder:

I remember watching Morning Joe back then, and Mike Barnicle betting that this man would never... He wouldn't even get the Republican nomination or I'll buy you a truck and be good. I mean, you must have been screaming at the TV. You're not getting it. This may work.

David Cay Johnston:

Well, and the reason we started a DCReport. We have a relationship with Raw Story. They publish a day ahead of us, which provides us with revenue to do the work we do. David Crook, my co-founder, was an editor at the LA Times, three little Thompson newspapers, where he grew their circulation by a third, when nobody was growing them. And then created the Wall Street Journal Sunday, which had a circulation of 11 or 12 million, and entirely his idea. As soon as Donald won the electoral college, David and I both agreed that the White House press corps would do a good job of covering the palace intrigues, but they were going to do a lousy job of what he was going to do to our government.

Mike Blilnder:

There you go.

David Cay Johnston:

And so, we started DCReport for that. There are many, many stories we've broken since we've put up our first piece a few days after Trump took office that the New York Times and the networks, and others have picked up on, very often, without crediting us. In fact, I got Donald Trump's 2005 tax return and the Times wrongly credited this to Rachel Maddow, and I complained. They said, "Well, nobody's heard of DCReport," and I said, "That has nothing to do with the rules at the Times. You have to credit us." And they finally came around and did so. But we, for a long time, tried to get people to understand who Donald Trump is, and why he's incredibly awful for the country. But we've also, as Roxanne mentioned, we write a lot about things Democrats do that don't make sense. I just had a piece about how the Biden Administration couldn't sell ice cream to children in July. You look at the human infrastructure bill. What do you hear on TV and the newspapers? \$3.5 trillion. I mean, what a huge number.

David Cay Johnston:

Well, it's over 10 years, and per American it's \$2.88 per American. And for 80% of Americans, you get a tax cut. And-

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David Cay Johnston:

Of Americans, you get a tax cut. And if you're in the rich group, that's going to pay for this, guess what? You're going to sell more goods and services and get even richer if it becomes law, but nobody reports it that way. Nobody does the basic math and the basic explanation of policy. We do that at these [crosstalk 00:10:19].

Mike Blilnder:

Again, even though you may have an opinion, correct me if I'm wrong Roxanne, you are the Editor in Chief of this. You do get content then here from David, but it's all sourced, right? That's not opinion. You are doing factual sourced news, correct?

Roxanne Cooper:

Right. And even if David was doing just opinion, I mean, everybody knows the best editorial pieces are reported, there's reporting in them. They don't give Pulitzer Prizes to columnists who don't do reporting. So even when David is doing an opinion piece for us, it does include reporting in it.

Mike Blilnder:

But here's my conundrum. David, you are doing a sourced article and you are correct. Okay, let's put it all on the table. It seems like the far right is manipulating the media perfectly. They throw these shiny toys that the reporters jump on, correct, go nuts with and then while the other hand's doing something else, right?

David Cay Johnston:

So Mike, the first thing is at DC Report, we never use unnamed sources. We never go to press conferences. We never work off press releases and we use links to verifiable information so people can crosscheck everything we have. We have run two corrections in almost five years.

Mike Blilnder:

Wow.

David Cay Johnston:

Both minor details. We referred to Almaty as the capital of Kazakhstan instead of the former capital.

Mike Blilnder:

There you go.

David Cay Johnston:

And the other error was on that level. The news media's fundamental problem here is that most journalists, even the very well paid big time journalists you see on television who work for the networks, simply quote what their sources tell them. They don't ever go to things like IRS data tables, Social Security Administration reports, Inspector General reports, the Federal Register, the Congressional Record. And so they're captive to what their sources are telling them.

David Cay Johnston:

I read stories every day in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, where I go, "Gee, this is a very readable story and that reporter doesn't know what they're writing about." They've put together a sensible narrative, but clearly they only know what their sources told them and they don't have a deeper understanding of what they're doing.

Mike Blilnder:

Yeah. But I remember way back in my youth, when I took over my first radio station, which actually had a news department. Back in the eighties, we actually did news in AM radio. Morning shows had five records. We had news, sports, traffic, all that kind of stuff. I went to an NAB and Fred Friendly was on the stage and he was doing an amazing thing about giving people the news they want or the news they need. Now who's right here, when the anchor on the echo chamber cable channels builds these millions and millions of audience with opinion. Is there room for us? When I say us, I mean, that's EMP's mission, news publishing, sourced, credible news. Is there room for that in our society, sir?

David Cay Johnston:

Well, there is, but you've hit upon a fundamental problem with people like Ben Bagdikian were warning us about 30, 40, 50 years ago. Lots of people want to only be reconfirmed in what they believe and now we have 500 channels, we literally have 500 channels. People can get into a silo left, right, only business, only sports, whatever it is, and never get pushed beyond that.

David Cay Johnston:

When Fred Friendly was running CBS news, there were three television networks and surprisingly to a lot of people when I tell them this, there were studies done that showed they didn't do the exact same news every night. They tended to pick the same big story every night, but not always. But you got people who felt a great responsibility to be thorough, well vetted, and I would argue, overly cautious in what they defined as news.

David Cay Johnston:

Today, there's clearly a lucrative market in just telling people what they want to hear, including lying to them constantly. The problem with that model is it's fragile, it's vulnerable. In the case of the biggest successes at that over at Fox, their audience is aging. It's more people my age than young people and advertisers are not interested in you and me, Mike, as you well know.

Mike Blilnder:

You're right.

David Cay Johnston:

They probably think Jordan is a little long in the tooth for advertising.

Mike Blilnder:

They want the 18 to 34 year old. No, if ands or buts, there's no question.

David Cay Johnston:

And one of the things that sustained this is the cable TV model where, of course, if nobody bought an ad on Fox or MSNBC or CNN, they would still collect millions of dollars a year from cable TV revenues. That whole cable economic model is-

Mike Blilnder:

Dying.

David Cay Johnston:

... absolutely dying.

Mike Blilnder:

Right, through streaming. So, Jordan, I know you're hanging there and I want to just ask you a question. You now are generating tons of content for Roxanne. You are out there generating story after story. We all know that we have a free press, that doesn't mean a free hand press. You're sourcing your news, but you are not an algorithm, Sir. You have a socioeconomic image in your brain from all of the stimuli

you've had over your years. How do you stay unbiased when you're writing? This is what I want to know, Jordan- do you,

Roxanne Cooper:

Is that a goal?

Mike Blilnder:

Is that a goal? Okay. Sorry. Is that not a goal, Roxanne?

Roxanne Cooper:

Sorry to cut in on you.

Jordan Green:

Yeah, please do.

Mike Blilnder:

You saved him. Go ahead.

Roxanne Cooper:

I think the journalism model that came after the advent of television, where people were objective ... I'm from the all weekly world so I have a different perspective on this than a lot of people in our business. But I mean, I don't think humans are objective and I think it's silly to pretend like they're objective. And so there's a difference between being critical and having your own world view and acknowledging it. You don't tell people you're fair and balanced when clearly you're not fair I balanced. We tell our readers, this is who we are, we're putting this out there and we're going to strive to tell you the truth anyway, but this is our world view. I think that's a more honest way to interact with your audience then pretending like you're totally objective, which I don't believe is possible.

Mike Blilnder:

But all journalism is biased, there's no question. You can go back ... go ahead, you were about to jump in, David.

David Cay Johnston:

[crosstalk 00:17:10] I would argue that it's not bias. There's one area of authority that reporters and editors have, and I'm talking about the news side, not the [crosstalk 00:17:19].

Mike Blilnder:

Okay, go ahead.

David Cay Johnston:

And that is, this is what we think it's important for you to know and so we have a two part mission. Pay zealous attention to detail, spelling people's oddly spelled names and getting budget numbers right and exact actions the police took in a case. And putting things, on the other end, in their proper place in the universe so we don't turn gnats into elephants and elephants into gnats. And having a perspective is of

course there. What is seen as news in New York by the New York Times or the New York Daily News or Spectrum One, is not what the perspective would be of someone who lives in Auberge or Shanghai or Singapore, because of the different societies that you're in. But that's not bias, that's your professional perspective. And you draw an audience or lose one based on your ability to, if it's news, reliably report it or as we've seen with this conflation where a lot of people think the nightly cable TV shows where I very often appear, used to be on all three, but Fox doesn't put me on anymore, those aren't news shows. Those are opinion and discussion shows.

Mike Blilnder:

But the average person, I hate to say it, sees that logo says, "This must be news."

David Cay Johnston:

Yes, no-

Mike Blilnder:

"Tucker Carlson's giving me news."

David Cay Johnston:

Right. We have done a terrible job, going back decades, in educating people and making them literate about the news. Interestingly, Finland, other European countries, Singapore, all teach young people, "Here's how to understand news." I have students, I'm not a lawyer, but I've taught law at Syracuse University College of Law now for about 14 years, and I have students who think Wikipedia is a news source. They have not been given any training in what's called media literacy.

Mike Blilnder:

Even though it's a necessary function in a true pluralistic democratic society, is having print information.

David Cay Johnston:

When you went to school, Mike, wherever it was, I'll bet you were in junior high school, you diagrammed sentences.

Mike Blilnder:

Of course.

David Cay Johnston:

And I'll bet in high school you were required-

Jordan Green:

Don't do that know.

David Cay Johnston:

Did you Jordan?

Jordan Green:

No. I said I confirming they don't teach that.

David Cay Johnston:

Okay. Well that's what I was going to get to next. And the three older ones of us, we all had to read novels in ...

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David Cay Johnston:

And the three older ones of us, we all had to read novels in high school. And if we were lucky, we got novels that were interesting and engaging. And if we were unlucky like me, we got Silas Marner, which is a horrible book.

Mike Blilnder:

Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage. I enjoyed it. Go ahead.

David Cay Johnston:

Today, many, many student and go to high school and they're never assigned to read a novel.

Mike Blilnder:

No.

David Cay Johnston:

They may get one chapter. They will have discussions. There are teachers who show movies. And I was shocked when I first learned this and then I found out in New York state, I live in Rochester, New York, that you can't fire a teacher for doing that, for not teaching the books, but showing a movie. Which doesn't help you with the purpose of having students read novels, which is to understand the other and to create in their own mind narratives and characters and see them in their own way. So while the rest of the world has been upping its education and its standards and its demands, we've been saving football.

Mike Blilnder:

Yeah. But let's ... all right, let's put our cards on the table. Assuming, and I know I'm going to get hate texts for this and be thrown out there and destroyed, assuming that the far right does lie, that they are giving mistruth ... Roxanne, you're going, "Duh." I mean, assuming that's the case, would that not fight that, if we were to start forcing that into our education system? They would rather have an uninformed public.

David Cay Johnston:

In fact, they already do that. I mean, there's a very good book called Lies My Teacher Told Me about all the falsehoods we teach in American history. I, in lectures to students for years, will ask them what was the civil war about? And students in America will say, "Well, the war of Northern aggression." But when you bring up slavery, many of them say "No, that wasn't really the issue." Read the secession declarations, Mississippi being the clearest. They all began in the very first sentence with, "We are seceding from the union to protect the most valuable of all assets, slaves." And that's exactly what it

was about, but we don't teach those things honestly. we don't teach lots of things honestly, in America. And that over time leads to the problems that news organization that report facts have.

David Cay Johnston:

And by the way, well, Fox in particular is well known for just making stuff up. And that's been well documented. There are places on the left that do the same thing. I get some left wing blogs or quote, unquote news sites that are deeply into conspiracy theories, that propound various items of nonsense, where they appear perhaps to link to some fact, but they go off in space. And there are plenty of right wing groups that do that. I subscribe to a huge array of things. So I get to ... But making a living by lying about stuff is working quite well. And that speaks very badly about the critical thinking skills of large numbers of Americans.

Mike Blilnder:

I am a huge believer that we all need daily of Aaron Sorkin. You might think I'm totally ...

David Cay Johnston:

No, I think-

Mike Blilnder:

I think he has an amazing way of showing both sides of an argument in an entertaining yet educational way. There was a show he came out with that I loved, that no one watched, it never found an audience, called Studio 60. I don't know if you ever heard of it?

David Cay Johnston:

Oh, yeah.

Mike Blilnder:

But there was a ... you had this left wing star, I mean, left wing producer, and then you had this right wing religious comedian. And she said to him these words, and I'm going to bounce this off for Roxanne first [inaudible 00:23:47], I know you're going to jump in, Dave. I don't understand the culture words. And he said, "Your side resents my side because my side ... you think my side thinks you're stupid and we resent your side because we think you're stupid." Okay. There it is. There it is in a nutshell, the condescend ... see, I wrote this editorial about, we got to stop Fox-itis as well as condescend-itis. If we keep putting down and acting like media elite, and that's a flyover state, I hope their cousins are all getting married down there, I'm just going to the other coast, how can we become a pluralistic society? Roxanne, do you consider the other side stupid?

Roxanne Cooper:

Well, I don't, know exactly what you mean by the other side.

Mike Blilnder:

There you go.

Roxanne Cooper:

Because you mentioned flyover states, and not to interject yet another news organization into this conversation, but something everybody should check out is this network of sites called States Newsroom.

Mike Blilnder:

Say that again? Safe Newsroom?

Roxanne Cooper:

States Newsroom.

Mike Blilnder:

S-T-A-

Roxanne Cooper:

They're all over red states and flyover states.

Mike Blilnder:

States Newsroom. Okay, go ahead,

Roxanne Cooper:

States Newsroom. And they're doing great work on a state by state basis. And it's just a really good network of sites. Anyway, I didn't want to get too far in the weeds on that, but I think there are smart people in Kansas, obviously. Our reporter Jordan Green here is from North Carolina. He lives in North Carolina. Much of his perspective is informed by growing up in North Carolina. And in fact, I should say this about Raw Story, most of our writers are not living in the beltway or in California. We're all over the place. We're a completely virtual company. And one of the reasons we've always seen that as a benefit is that what's important in the beltway is not important to the guy I have in Montana. Right. And the guy I have in Montana is bringing his perspective to our organization and to the news that's lacking everywhere. Or I always laugh because I'm from California. New York had an earthquake and I was like, it's a 3.2 earthquake. I stir my coffee with 3.2 earthquake. What's the big deal? But for days it was, "There's an earthquake!"

Mike Blilnder:

All right. Well, David hold on for a second because Jordan, you're going to have to shut up. You're taking over too much of this conversation right now. But I need you to tell me ... she just painted you with a brush. She said, "Okay. He's from the Carolinas, but he's got an open mind." You're from the triad, right? You're from ... there are more PhDs per square inch there than any other place in the world, correct? I mean-

Jordan Green:

Greensboro, North Carolina. No, I concur with what Roxanne said completely. She didn't ask me to move to Washington DC when she hired me in March. And I'm glad for that fact. I like to a perspective from outside of the beltway and outside of the major media centers. And I think you asked about bias and I think it's ... I agree with Roxanne that we should own up to our perspectives. I think it's a tricky mission to always try to discern the truth and to not get kind of captured by the different interests. Like I don't

like reporters becoming the reporter for the industry of government. Which I think is a hazard. Like when I was younger, I worked in construction and retail deliberately because I wanted to know what life was like for a lot of other people who were outside of the intelligentsia. So I'm sorry. I think I got off of ...

Mike Blinder:

No, no, you're doing great. All right, David, bring this home. You got the magic wand right now. Stop the pluralism. How are we going to do it? Is media the culprit? Is media simply playing along? Or is media have no impact? I mean, what's going on?

David Cay Johnston:

Well, I think what we're seeing is a divide not unlike we've seen with race and income in America. There is a segment of the population, 20% perhaps, who are very well informed. They understand how to separate wheat from chaff. They have a wide range of political views, but they're serious people in the sense that they want to understand how the world works. There's a equal or probably somewhat larger group, more like a third rather than a fifth of the population, who Chris Christie just went after in a speech he gave at the Reagan Library, who don't care about facts, only want to be told what they want to hear and openly buy into lies. And down that road, he argued is the death of the Republican party. And he traced it back to McCarthyism and the few people who stood up to McCarthy. And in between is this majority of the country that sort of pays attention to the news, often gets it from radio, not knowing that radio news often comes from the morning newspaper.

Mike Blinder:

Of course.

David Cay Johnston:

And is not particularly sophisticated about this. So having the cable news channels that are not subject to the fairness doctrine, getting rid of the fairness doctrine, having people who are not proficient at reading, only 48% of American adults are proficient readers, less than half. That should scream at us something about our society. All you have to do is go onto a site like NextDoor or the comment section at Raw Story sometimes, which is very lively, and you'll see people who don't know how to spell words and they don't seem to be troubled by it either.

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David Cay Johnston:

... see people who don't know how to spell words, and they don't seem to be troubled by it either, or how to construct a sentence. By the way, one of the things Raw Story does that I think is very impressive, if you want to keep track of outrageous Roxanne curates that absolutely fabulously. Here's the pastor who told his flock, "The COVID vaccine is the devil's work. Stay away from it." And then he dies and leaves a spouse and three kids. And here's the politician who just made this stuff up and got called out on it and actually do a very good job of finding that stuff and telling people about it. But fundamentally, I think our democracy is in very deep trouble. I've thought that for a long time. And I think a lot of the resentment and distrust of news grows out of 50 years of Washington, not paying attention to the vast majority of Americans. And here's a little fact, I keep citing at Raw Story often. In 2018, 90% of Americans made less money than in 1973.

Mike Blilnder:

Wow.

David Cay Johnston:

People in 1973,

Mike Blilnder:

It's the divide. We are not one society anymore. We're a divided society.

David Cay Johnston:

And the reasons for that, Mike, are very clear in the public record. I've been writing about this. When I first started writing about it in the New York Times, you got all these, "You're crazy," [inaudible 00:31:27], but we got rid of unions, starting with Reagan. Well, you can trace decline for the bottom 90% and decline of the [inaudible 00:31:37] unions, and they track perfectly. We changed other rules so that lots of people, they don't have pensions. We are continuing to live under a set of government rules basically adopted between 1890 and 1940.

Mike Blilnder:

That's true.

David Cay Johnston:

And we're not moving beyond them and saying, "We need to do new things in better ways." And we've sold the public, Milton Friedman and his crowd, sold the public on this idea that there is something called deregulation. There is no such thing. There's only new regulation. Everything is regulated. Baseball regulates how many stitches are on the ball.

Mike Blilnder:

Right.

David Cay Johnston:

Universities regulate dating. When I bring it up with my students, they look around quizzically like what? And eventually they come around and say, "Oh, sexual harassment." I said, "Yeah, dating. Bad dating leads to sexual... It is regulated by the university.

Mike Blilnder:

And there's my poll quote. But I want to... I mean, there is still going to be a faction that listened to what you just said, sir, and say, "You are an elitist. I have my right to be uneducated." Moreover, I want to blame it on that person because it's their my reason for not being where I want to be. And then here's the challenge. Then our leaders will fan those flames, right? I mean, "Okay, be angry," and, "It's their fault. It's their fault." Meanwhile, your income doesn't come up. Meanwhile, you lose your job, and no one's helping you along.

David Cay Johnston:

Let's focus on solving problems. I was on a right-wing radio show 15 years ago, and this guy comes on, and he says, "You're one of those elites." And I said, "Thank you." And he went, "What?" And I said, "That's a tremendous... Thank you. I mean, for a kid who had to go to work at 10 and had to work full-time at 13 and help support my parents since I was 13 and had a family. I got married at 17. I mean, for you to say I'm an elite. I mean, thank you. That's just terrific." And I said, "You don't have any idea what that word means, do you, sir?"

David Cay Johnston:

And unfortunately we have made being dumb an okay thing. And others have written about how you trace this to Sarah Palin, the selection of Sarah Palin by the McCain campaign, which was a huge mistake, they now realize in retrospect. But it's not okay to be dumb. It's not okay to be uneducated. And in a modern world, where the world is getting more and more complicated, where there's more and more change coming as we master both the physical universe and the constructed universe, it is crucial that we develop a society more like South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Finland, Germany, Norway, where you are well-educated, you have critical thinking skills. That's how we build a wealthy future that's broad-based.

Mike Blilnder:

Wow.

Jordan Green:

I do want to interject this. I have a friend who has a saying that Republicans... Well, Democrats all think that Republicans are all stupid, and Republicans think that all Democrats are evil. I think that divide does exist. I often think that we ridicule dumb things that Conservatives and Republicans do at our own peril, because it's a dismissiveness and underestimation that [crosstalk 00:35:04] come back to bite us. But then there is that difficult vaccine thing to grapple with, a whole population that thinks that Liberals and Democrats are evil. And that's hard to overcome.

Mike Blilnder:

Well to go back to an Aaron Sorkin quote from American President, this is an advanced society, and it's going to push back. You're supposed to be able to listen to someone scream at the top of their lungs something that you abhor and at least allow them to say it. And that is democracy.

David Cay Johnston:

And by the way, every journalist I have urged repeatedly to watch The Newsroom. I think it is a searing indictment of our business.

Mike Blilnder:

It's amazing. Yeah. And if he does such a nice job always showing both sides of the argument. He gives credence to both sides so well. That's why I think we all need a dose of that because there is two sides to an argument. That's democracy.

David Cay Johnston:

Or three or four or five.

Mike Blilnder:

Or three, four, or five. That is democracy. We just have to allow it to happen and cook. It's a half a loaf society, and that's tough. Well, anyway, I want to thank you all for your valuable time. Roxanne, more information on Raw Story. They go to rawstory.com? Is that correct, ma'am?

Roxanne Cooper:

Yes.

Mike Blilnder:

There you go. Rawstory.com. And Roxanne's contact information is there. Mr. David, sir, if they want to learn more about your initiative in DC, it's called what again?

David Cay Johnston:

Well, everything we publish is at Raw Story first.

Mike Blilnder:

Okay.

David Cay Johnston:

But dcreportsingular.org [crosstalk 00:36:38] is our own website. And we're non-profit. No ads. After we and Raw Story have published, we let other people republish us. And our about page will tell you about our philosophy of fact-based journalism, but not namby-pamby. "Well, they said this, and we said that." We believe in snark and point of view, but you got to factually make your case and be fair and rounded.

Mike Blilnder:

And Jordan, everyone wants to start googling your name, you've got a lot of stuff that you're churning out that's excellent. We really appreciate the great reporting you're doing. Guys, thank you. [crosstalk 00:37:13]. Stay healthy. Stay well. And keep working hard. Okay? We really appreciate you.

David Cay Johnston:

Take care.

Jordan Green:

Okay. Thank you.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [00:37:28]