

Media Matters for the Left

David Brock's mission to boost Hillary Clinton and smear non-leftist sources of news and commentary

By Matthew Vadum

Summary: *David Brock defected from conservatism and now runs a political empire, sliming those who threaten his pals like President Obama and Hillary Clinton. He first established, with help from George Soros, the nonprofit Media Matters for America, a fake watchdog on the press. Now he also enjoys doling out millions of dollars for political activism with his new super PAC, American Bridge 21st Century.*

Conservatism is a disease in need of eradication, according to Media Matters for America (MMfA), a decade-old pretended media watchdog that focuses on a unicorn known as “conservative misinformation.” Of course, those few conservatives who actually work in the liberal-dominated media are not infallible. A bona fide media watchdog that monitored the Right and kept reporters and pundits honest might contribute something of value to society, but that’s not what Media Matters is about.

MMfA’s primary mission at the moment is protecting Hillary Clinton, who is expected eventually to announce her 2016 presidential run. The electoral wipeout of Democrats coast-to-coast in the November congressional elections may free up MMfA’s resources to focus on getting Mrs. Clinton past the finish line. Clinton bragged in 2007 that she helped create what she called “a lot of the new progressive infrastructure,” including Media Matters. The group was founded



Media Matters for America, a character assassination factory, reflects the pathologies of its famously erratic CEO David Brock (above). Brock is said to be “viciously mean” and “abusive” to employees, which may explain why the group’s workers unionized. A gun control advocate, Brock hired a bodyguard who illegally carried firearms to protect him from imagined threats and “had more security than a Third World dictator.” His stunning hypocrisy notwithstanding, the Left -- and especially his ally Hillary Clinton -- still sees something in him.

in spring 2004, in time for the presidential election campaign. It was initially funded by \$2 million in contributions that radical philanthropist George Soros and former Clinton White House chief of staff John Podesta helped raise.

Media Matters CEO David Brock is a former Clinton antagonist who made peace with the

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Clintons years ago. “David is immensely valuable to Hillary,” an affluent Democrat with ties to Brock told a newspaper. “It’s like having your former prosecutor running around saying you were wrongfully prosecuted. He’s living proof the right wing is out to get Hillary. ... I don’t think anyone really trusts him. He’ll never get a job in the [Hillary Clinton] White House, but he’s useful” (*Newsday*, Sept. 6, 2006).

Brock even founded a group in late 2013 called Correct the Record to fend off pesky questions about Hillary Clinton’s behavior and record in political office (*Slate*, July 29,

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Address:
1513 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1480

Phone: (202) 483-6900
Long-Distance: (800) 459-3950

E-mail Address:
mvadum@capitalresearch.org

Web Site:
<http://www.capitalresearch.org>

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2014). Correct the Record complements the work of American Bridge 21st Century, a super PAC, that was also founded by Brock as part of his growing empire of activism and “dark money.”

Earlier this year Brock was elected chairman of the ethically shaky left-wing watchdog group CREW, which stands for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. But Media Matters is still the crown jewel in Brock’s constellation. Masquerading as an impartial media watchdog, it is actually a left-wing opposition research organization that aims to bully reporters into toeing the liberal line and to terrorize Fox News. Even the *New York Times* describes Media Matters as a “highly partisan research organization” (Nov. 1, 2008). Every working day the lavishly funded outfit churns out political propaganda calculated to pressure journalists into unquestioningly backing the Democratic Party line. It has absurdly characterized Chris Matthews and former *New York Times* editor Bill Keller as sellouts to the left-wing cause.

Media Matters’ mission is to stigmatize and marginalize conservative ideas in order to save Americans from themselves. It carries out this crusade via an aggressive outreach program. The group says it works “to notify activists, journalists, pundits and the general public about instances of misinformation,

providing them with the resources to rebut false claims and to take direct action against offending media institutions.”

The news content analysis of Media Matters is a complete sham. Such examinations of political news traditionally focus on detecting journalistic bias, but MMfA’s approach is to try to stamp out views with which its left-wing content analysts disagree. That isn’t hard to do if you can think creatively and tolerate mind-numbing hairsplitting. Media Matters will typically isolate a small facet of a media story that can be twisted in such a way that suggests that the reporter or commentator is a liar or hypocrite. That tidbit is then used to suggest that everything the original source says must be false and deserving of censure.

Come down on the wrong side of an issue and risk being labeled ignorant or evil by the smear website. Say that tax cuts lead to economic prosperity, and you’re attacked. Criticize illegal immigration, and you’re attacked. Say affirmative action is racist and discriminatory, and you’re attacked. Republican pollster Frank Luntz describes Media Matters as “one of the most destructive organizations associated with American politics today ... They are vicious. They only understand one thing: attack, attack, attack.”

David Folkenflik, media reporter for liberal National Public Radio, was similarly unimpressed by Media Matters. “They’re looking at every dangling participle, every dependent clause, every semicolon, every quotation to see if there’s some way it unfairly frames a cause, a party, a candidate that they may have some feelings for.” The group’s website, MediaMatters.org, relies heavily on personal attacks, rather than substantive or fact-based arguments. It settles scores.

It slavishly defends the corrupt Obama administration, parsing, rationalizing, hair-splitting, and sometimes lying outright to create the false impression that the Chicagoland gang running the White House are decent, honest, honorable people. It attacks conservatives constantly, questioning their motives, sanity, intelligence, and worth as human beings. Media Matters is a magnet attracting the most loathsome spin doctors of the Left, giving its alleged media bias analysts free rein to defame and intimidate their enemies. They are attack dogs, Obama zombies, and purveyors of malicious gossip.

For example, Media Matters takes credit for having CBS Radio fire Don Imus in 2007 and for Lou Dobbs’ departure from CNN in 2009. It also engineered a campaign against Glenn Beck when he had a Fox News show. Media Matters gave a \$200,000 grant to Citizen Engagement Laboratory in 2010, the parent group of Color of Change, a radical Afrocentrist group co-founded by Van Jones. The declared purpose of the grant was for a “campaign to expose Glenn Beck’s racist rhetoric in an effort to educate advertisers about the practices on his show.”

Media Matters has been very successful in putting its left-wing talking points in the hands of journalists. “We were pretty much writing their prime time,” a former MMfA staffer said of the cable channel MSNBC. “The entire progressive blogosphere picked up our stuff,” a Media Matters source said,

“from Daily Kos to Salon. Greg Sargent [of the *Washington Post*] will write anything you give him. He was the go-to guy to leak stuff.”

Uncooperative journalists felt heat from Media Matters supporters. “If you hit a reporter, say a beat reporter at a regional newspaper,” an MMfA source explained, “all of a sudden they’d get a thousand hostile

dishonest tactics used to foist the so-called Affordable Care Act on an unsuspecting public. Citizens’ stupidity allowed Democrats to get away with so much, Gruber bragged. “Lack of transparency is a huge advantage. And basically, you know, call it the stupidity of the American voter or whatever. But basically that was really, really critical to getting the thing to pass.”



Hillary Clinton boasts that she was instrumental in the creation of Media Matters.

emails. Sometimes they’d melt down. It had a real effect on reporters who weren’t used to that kind of scrutiny” (Daily Caller, Feb. 12, 2012).

Parse, Dissemble, Lie, Misdirect

Media Matters has been working overtime recently, putting out fires all across the fruited plain in an effort to shield President Obama from the consequences of his actions. Anything that could hurt Obama is deemed a phony scandal, a reckless accusation, or even a Republican lie.

For example, MIT professor Jonathan Gruber, touted as a key architect of Obamacare, was caught on video repeatedly insulting the American people while he explained the ugly,

Yet according to Media Matters, rampant dishonesty when creating legislation that seizes control of one-sixth of the U.S. economy isn’t a big deal. One headline on the MMfA website berated Fox News for paying any attention at all to the story, screaming “Fox Devoted 57 Segments To Manufactured ACA Scandal.” Another whined about “The Fraudulent Media Campaign To Scandalize Obamacare’s Passage.”

MMfA’s Zachary Pleat argued in a Nov. 13, 2014 post that everybody does it, so move along, nothing to see here. Instead, Pleat shoots the messenger, claiming:

“Fox News dishonestly claimed that MIT economist Jonathan Gruber’s comment that

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the Affordable Care Act (ACA) ‘was written in a tortured way’ to minimize criticism proves that the law was passed deceitfully. In fact, Congress routinely crafts bills to fit legislative rules and politically acceptable limits, and health care reform was transparently debated for years with input from Republicans.”

It’s what’s called a Big Lie. Republican lawmakers were shut out of the law-drafting process. Then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) infamously bragged about the lack of transparency at the time. “But we have to pass the bill so you can find out what is in it, away from the fog of the controversy,” she said.

Former IRS mandarin Lois Lerner, a fiercely partisan Democrat, orchestrated an unprecedented crackdown on Tea Party and conservative groups and then attempted to scapegoat those nonprofits, blaming them for the harsh treatment they received at her instigation. President Obama claimed that there was not even “a smidgen of corruption” in the IRS affair, but anyone with eyes can see how the Obama administration has been stonewalling and intimidating witnesses who know the ugly truth about these banana republic-style tax abuses. And potentially damning government emails providing evidence of the abuses have disappeared from IRS servers. Nobody in the government knows where they are, or so officials claimed at press time.

That’s just another phony scandal, according to Media Matters. In a June 18, 2014 post MMfA writer Thomas Bishop opined:

“Fox News personalities baselessly accused the Obama administration of engaging in a cover-up following reports that the IRS lost emails connected to the alleged targeting of organizations seeking tax-exempt status, ignoring the fact that government agencies regularly lose emails due to antiquated computer systems and policies.”



Media Matters “senior fellow” Eric Boehlert

It is certainly true that the federal government has obsolete computer equipment and loses track of many emails, but the IRS admitted in court last month that it hasn’t even tried to find the emails in question (CNSNews.com, Nov. 6, 2014).

Benghazi too is a fake scandal, a conspiracy theory hatched in the fevered minds of jingoistic Americans, according to Media Matters. The Obama administration’s refusal to launch a rescue mission on Sept. 11, 2012, mere weeks from a hotly contested presidential election, is also a non-issue, according to Media Matters.

Recall that during the 2012 campaign the president had claimed al-Qaeda was decimated and on the verge of annihilation. When it turned out the terrorist organization was doing just fine, he decided to scapegoat a YouTube video instead of admitting that al-Qaeda was roaring back, stronger than ever, in recent years. His secretary of state at the time, of course, was Hillary Clinton, who aspires to be the 45th president of the United States.

For two weeks after the terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya the Obama administration said over and over again that the incident was inspired by a low-quality anti-Islam video on YouTube. The American resident who made the video that virtually no one

watched was jailed on the thinnest of legal pretexts after Mrs. Clinton vowed to grieving relatives of the four dead men that the administration would catch the video maker she claimed had caused the attacks. White House advisor Susan Rice went on TV to back up the administration’s lie that the assault was related to the video. Eventually the administration acknowledged that the battle was a terrorist attack.

Sharyl Attkisson of CBS News has been a thorn in the side of the Obama administration on Benghazi and a host of other scandals. She believes the administration hacked into her computer, much as it monitored the emails and phone calls of Fox News reporters, and she eventually left CBS News, where her boss was David Rhodes, brother of Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, who was intimately involved in the Benghazi scandal.

Media Matters would have us believe Attkisson is a loon, an incompetent reporter, and a drama queen with disdain for the facts. MMfA analysts Ellie Sandmeyer and Sophia Tesfaye wrote on April 22, 2014:

“Former CBS reporter Sharyl Attkisson has stepped up her campaign to paint herself as a victim of media bias by floating half-baked conspiracy theories about the research that exposed factual issues with her work. These

newest allegations are as unsubstantiated as the shoddy reporting that has previously tarnished her—and CBS’—record as a reliable source.”

This is nonsense on stilts. The Emmy Award-winning Attkisson is one of the few mainstream media reporters who has taken any interest at all in investigating the activities of the Obama administration. Media Matters “clearly targeted me at some point,” she said. “They used to work with me on stories and tried to help me produce my stories, and I was certainly friendly with them as anybody—good information can come from any source. But when I persisted with Fast and Furious and some of the green energy stories I was doing, I clearly at some point became a target. ... I don’t know if someone paid them to do it or if they took it on their own” (*Politico*, April 21, 2014).

Media Matters is tight with its allies in the Obama administration. The Daily Caller published emails Sept. 18, 2012 showing that MMfA has worked closely with Justice Department officials to impact media coverage of the Obama administration. And government emails that Judicial Watch obtained through the Freedom of Information Act back up Attkisson’s allegation that the administration targeted her.

One email sent Oct. 4, 2011 by Tracy Schmalzer, then-spokeswoman for the Justice Department, complained to the White House that Attkisson, who was covering the Fast and Furious gun-running scandal at the time, was “out of control.” Schmalzer, emailing White House Deputy Press Secretary Eric Schultz, wrote that she intended to contact Attkisson’s editor and CBS anchor Bob Schieffer about Attkisson’s reporting.

Schultz was delighted. “Good. Her piece was really bad for the AG,” a reference to Attorney General Eric Holder (Townhall.com, Nov. 21, 2014).

Media Matters ineptly tried to spin the damning email exchange. In a post dated Nov. 21, 2014, MMfA writer Timothy Johnson wrote an attack post headlined “Conservative Media’s Latest Sharyl Attkisson ‘Bombshell’ Is A Dud.” Yet the entry by Johnson, whose online bio states he “previously spent time at the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence Legal Action Project and the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence,” doesn’t deny that the Justice Department coordinated with the White House. Nor does it deny that the Justice Department put heat on Attkisson by contacting CBS News.

Johnson dismisses the administration’s attempt to strong-arm CBS as unimportant. “That the Obama administration would complain about Attkisson’s reporting is unremarkable -- the central contention of the article they were complaining about was in fact inaccurate, as later confirmed by a 2012 independent investigation into Operation Fast and Furious.” Attkisson stands by the article and has pointed out that it won an Emmy award and an Edward R. Murrow award for investigative reporting. In this context, Johnson’s post seems pointless. Perhaps Media Matters simply wanted to have the last word.

It needs to be noted that Attkisson is no conservative shill. When she has gone after Republicans, she has earned praise from the Left. For example, MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow praised Attkisson in a broadcast about an interview she conducted with then-Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.). The interview was about questionable accounting at his charitable organization and the pharmaceutical industry’s influence over the charity.

“No influence, you say? This is your cue, Sharyl Attkisson of CBS—go! Go! Go! Go!” Maddow cheered in a Nov. 12, 2009 broadcast. On the same day left-wing website Talking Points Memo was similarly enthusiastic about Attkisson’s digging into

Buyer’s affairs, giving her credit for asking “some tough questions.”

This raises the obvious question: Why is this disreputable 501(c)(3) nonprofit still tax-exempt? And why has Media Matters, unlike conservative and Tea Party groups, been mysteriously immune from IRS audits? C. Boyden Gray, White House counsel to President George H.W. Bush, has complained to the IRS about MMfA, which he accurately describes as a “Democratic training camp.” Giving Media Matters tax-exempt status affords it an advantage not enjoyed by its victim, Fox News. That tax-exemption in effect legitimizes MMfA “by having the government affirm that the organization’s operations are truly ‘charitable’ and therefore consistent with the nation’s public policies,” according to Gray.

Tax-exempt status comes with a set of conditions. “Tax benefits to charitable organizations are three-fold: exemption from federal

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income tax, tax-deductible contributions and tax-exempt bonds,” says Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa). Such groups pay no federal income tax because it is presumed that what they do benefits the public. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit is not allowed to “attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities” or “participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates.”

Will the incoming GOP-dominated 114th Congress examine MMfA’s seemingly dubious claim to tax-exempt status? Nobody knows yet.

Finances

Media Matters has had little trouble raising money because the scales are tipped in favor of the Left. Left-wing nonprofits, many of which rely on radical billionaires for funding, vastly outspend conservative groups, which tend to rely more on grassroots donations. Leftist organizations operate with almost complete impunity nowadays, unimpeded as they strive to influence American politics and fundamentally transform our Republic.

Conservative groups have been swimming against the tide for decades, but the Obama era has made things far worse. The activist Right is severely outgunned by the activist Left, as David Horowitz and Jacob Laksin exhaustively documented in their 2012 book, *The New Leviathan: How the Left-Wing Money Machine Shapes American Politics and Threatens America’s Future*.

This vast network of left-wing funders and activist groups dwarfs anything the activist Right has to offer. It is “self-sufficient and self-perpetuating... an aristocracy of wealth whose dimensions exceed any previous accumulations of financial power, whose influence already represents a massive disenfranchisement of the American people and whose agendas pose a disturbing prospect for the American future,” according to the authors.



Texas political gadfly Kinky Friedman (left) shakes hands with former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D-Texas) in an undated photograph.

Unlike organizations on the right, left-wing activist groups can count on a seemingly endless supply of cash from radical, deep-pocketed philanthropists such as anti-American hedge fund manager George Soros, predatory lender Herb Sandler, Taco Bell heir Robert McKay Jr., Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes, singer Barbra Streisand, and Teresa Heinz Kerry, wife of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

As the book observes, the collective assets of liberal-progressive grant-making foundations are in fact 10 times the size of the assets of conservative foundations.

Many of MMfA’s largest institutional donors are charitable foundations connected to members of the ultra-secretive Democracy Alliance. The shadowy club for radical millionaires and billionaires who want to turn America into Greece was founded soon after John Kerry’s defeat in the 2004 presidential election. At closed-door meetings twice a

year the Alliance recommends worthy left-wing causes and encourages its well-heeled members to fund them in an effort to build left-wing political infrastructure. (For more on the Democracy Alliance, see *Foundation Watch*, October 2014.)

With much fanfare in 2010, George Soros, a leading figure in the creation of the Alliance, gave \$1 million to MMfA, apparently out of his personal funds. Fashion magnate Susie Tompkins Buell, a Democracy Alliance member, sits on MMfA’s board of directors, according to the group’s 2012 tax filing. Strangely, philanthropy databases do not show donations from her foundation to Media Matters.

Below is a list of some of the most generous institutional donors to MMfA. An asterisk (*) marks where the foundation is connected to a member or former member of the Democracy Alliance:

Foundation to Promote Open Society (\$1,275,000 since 2010; ***George Soros**, founder); **Tides Foundation** (\$3,603,362 since 2003; ***Drummond Pike**, founder; **Joanie Bronfman**, director); **Stephen M. Silberstein Foundation** (\$2,625,000 since 2003; ***Stephen M. Silberstein**, founder); **Ford Foundation** (\$2,311,466 since 2010); **Bohemian Foundation** (\$1,925,000 since 2005; ***Patricia Stryker**, president); **Dyson Foundation** (\$1,700,000 since 2005; ***Robert R. Dyson**, president); **Gill Foundation** (\$1,610,000 since 2006; ***Tim Gill** is founder); **Leland Fikes Foundation Inc.** (\$1,030,000 since 2007); **Bauman Family Foundation** (\$950,000 since 2005; ***Patricia Bauman**, president; **Anne Bartley**, director); **Silicon Valley Community Foundation** (\$931,000 since 2008); **New York Community Trust** (\$902,000 since 2006); **Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation** (\$799,934 since 2012); **Glaser Progress Foundation** (\$600,912 since 2005; ***Rob Glaser**, founder); **Schumann Center for Media and Democracy Inc.** (\$600,000 since 2005); **Carsey Family Foundation** (\$550,000 since 2007; ***Marcia L. Carsey**, president); **Baytree Fund** (\$455,000 since 2005; ***Judith Avery**, president); **Joyce Foundation** (\$400,000 since 2010); **Pritzker Family Foundation** (\$400,000 since 2007); **Lotus Foundation** (\$370,000 since 2005; ***Rachel Pritzker**, president); **Lewis B. & Dorothy Cullman Foundation Inc.** (\$300,000 since 2006; ***Lewis B. Cullman**, founder); **Sandler Foundation** (\$300,000 since 2008; ***Herb** and the late **Marion Sandler**, co-founders); **McKay Foundation** (\$285,000 since 2005; ***Robert McKay Jr.**, executive director); **Wallace Global Fund II** (\$275,000 since 2009); **Edlis-Neeson Foundation** (\$250,000 since 2009; ***Stefan Edlis**, founder); **Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund** (\$242,500 since 2008); **H. Van Ameringen Foundation** (\$235,000 since 2006; ***Henry P. Van Ameringen**, trustee); **PBL Fund** (\$200,000 since 2008; *late **Peter B. Lewis**, founder); **Rockefeller Brothers Fund Inc.** (\$200,000 since 2011; ***Anne Bartley**, trustee); **Dwoskin Fam-**

ily Foundation (\$150,000 since 2006, ***Albert J. Dwoskin**, president); **Sagner Family Foundation** (\$120,000 since 2004; ***Deborah Sagner**, president); **Lear Family Foundation** (\$55,000 since 2005; ***Norman Lear**, founder); **Barbara Lee Family Foundation Inc.** (\$55,000 since 2005; ***Barbara F. Lee**, a philanthropist in Cambridge, Mass., is founder); **Carnegie Corp. of New York** (\$50,000 since 2008); and **Bernard & Irene Schwartz Foundation Inc.** (\$35,000 since 2007; ***Bernard L. Schwartz**, director).



Media lapdog: *Washington Post* blogger Greg Sargent “will write anything you give him,” a Media Matters source said.

Thanks to these generous donors, David Brock is able to reward himself handsomely for captaining the helm of Media Matters, which appears to have a staff of around 100 people. As chairman of the MMfA board, Brock receives a salary of \$273,954 for a workweek of just 22.5 hours, according to the group’s tax filing (IRS Form 990) for the year ending Dec. 31, 2012. In that year the group had a budget of \$10.4 million. MMfA also disclosed a \$400,000 grant it made in 2012 to American Independent News Network for a “joint media project,” the details of which were not provided.

Former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D-Texas) was listed as the group’s treasurer. Bell is a former journalist who represented the 25th congressional district in the Lone Star State from 2003 to 2005. He is also, according to his website, a trial lawyer specializing in truck accidents.

“It’s important that you contact an 18 wheeler lawyer so that you can pursue damages from the driver, trucking company, or any other

responsible party,” the website states. Bell was also an early leader in the lawfare campaign against then-House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas). In a 187-page ethics complaint, Bell said, “It’s my opinion Mr. DeLay is the most corrupt politician in America today” (CNN.com, June 15, 2004). A decade after his political career was ruined by Bell’s attacks, DeLay was entirely exonerated by the Texas courts.

The Weird World of David Brock
It is impossible to examine the foibles and dysfunction of Media Matters for America without examining the vast eccentricities

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of its troubled founder. David Brock is demonstrably paranoid. This is no mere figure of speech. He has suffered at least one full-blown mental breakdown. In summer 2001 he “was committed to the psychiatric ward of Sibley Hospital in Northwest Washington,” according to an exclusive Drudge Report story.

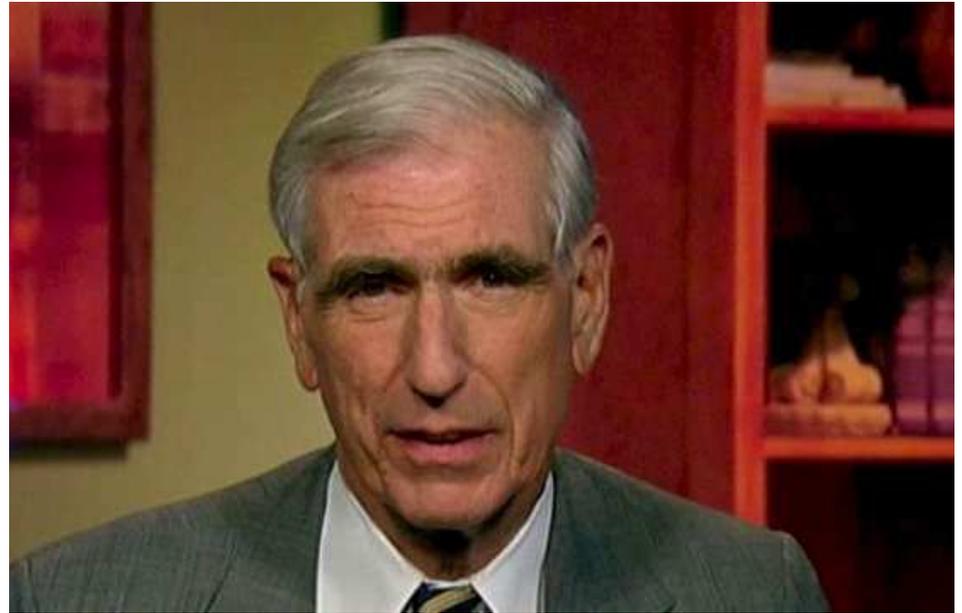
“The breakdown came just months before Brock finalized production of his bestselling book *BLINDED BY THE RIGHT*—a book that has been widely challenged on points of accuracy! ‘He had delusions, he thought people were trying to kill him,’ reveals a source who befriended Brock last July at the hospital. Brock told fellow patients that he did not feel safe—even inside of the hospital’s secure medical setting! ‘He spent time in the ‘The Quiet Room,’ there was just a mattress on the floor, and he had some books. He was so tired and stressed’” (Drudge Report, May 21, 2002).

Reached by telephone at the time, Brock did not deny the hospitalization. He told the Drudge Report, “I am not going to comment on private medical matters.” By 2010 Brock had become increasingly concerned “that he was being targeted by right-wing assassins” (Daily Caller, Jan. 27, 2013). That Brock believed anyone was trying to dispatch him is testament both to his paranoia and inflated sense of self-importance.

In an episode that was strange even by David Brock standards, Media Matters became involved in illegal gun-running. Brock hired an illegally armed bodyguard to provide personal security. A one-time aide named Haydn Price-Morris, who worked for MMfA from early 2009 through late 2010, carried a concealed Glock handgun when accompanying Brock to events in the nation’s capital, which until recently had arguably the strictest gun control laws in America. The aide had no concealed-carry permit for his gun in the District of Columbia. Such a thing didn’t exist at the time—a permitting system is only

now being developed in response to a series of court rulings forcing the District to abide by the Second Amendment.

In addition, multiple firearms were purchased to protect Brock, with his blessing, and apparently with MMfA’s money—despite the group’s strident advocacy for gun control that reached a fever pitch following the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook



Media Matters critic Boyden Gray

Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., the Daily Caller discovered. The Glock handgun was purchased with cash in Maryland, an act that would reduce the likelihood the transaction would show up in the group’s accounting records. Price-Morris also obtained a shotgun for his security work.

“Price-Morris was regularly armed when accompanying Brock on trips around the country, according to a source, and his firearm possession in Washington, D.C. constituted multiple felonies,” the Daily Caller reported. “On at least one occasion, Brock—accompanied by his armed aide—visited California to attend a ‘Democracy Alliance’ summit of major Democratic donors and lawmakers.”

Brock “had more security than a Third World dictator,” one Media Matters employee said,

adding that Brock’s bodyguards rarely left him alone. “What movement leader has a detail?” a source said (Daily Caller, Feb. 12, 2012).

Brock was reportedly “terrified” that his gun improprieties would become publicly known. “George Soros and a lot of groups connected to gun control are funding this group, and they wouldn’t be too happy that

an employee of Media Matters was carrying a gun, especially when it was illegal in D.C.,” one source said. The Joyce Foundation, a Chicago-based charity whose board of directors included Barack Obama from 1994 to 2002, gave MMfA \$400,000 in 2010 for “a gun and public safety issue initiative.”

Price-Morris returned the weapons to Media Matters through a third party, according to the Daily Caller.

Brock and Mental Illness

Even in the modern era mental illness is widely misunderstood and stigmatized. Just because someone has occasional bouts with, for example, disorders related to anxiety, mood, eating, or obsessive-compulsive behaviors, doesn’t mean the individual can’t function in society.

Abraham Lincoln suffered from depression so severe that he sometimes engaged in thoughts of suicide. Mood disorders have plagued actress Patty Duke, playwrights Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill, and others in the artistic community. But people with mental illnesses have pressed on and succeeded, often brilliantly.

Given David Brock's abundant psychiatric challenges, one might expect Media Matters to deal with mental health issues with a degree of compassion. Wrong. The group has been known to hound its targets and label them as mentally ill in an effort to ridicule and discredit them.

On the Media Matters website, MMfA senior fellow Eric Boehlert mocked talk show host Glenn Beck, who has struggled with alcoholism and other destructive behavior, as "the guy who was too crazy for Fox News" (Jan. 24, 2014). Simon Maloy, who has since moved on to Salon, a website with even less integrity than Media Matters, called radio talker Michael Savage "Crazy, stupid, crazily stupid." Maloy referred to Savage's mind as "the house of shattered mirrors that is Michael Savage's psyche" (Dec. 2, 2010).

While attacking some persons for allegedly suffering from one kind of mental problem, Media Matters has hypocritically howled with indignation when the intellectually handicapped have been attacked—but only when they are attacked by the wrong people. MMfA takes exception to the use of the now-politically incorrect adjective "retard" when it is used by individuals the group despises.

MMfA's Hannah Groch-Begley sanctimoniously denounced author Ann Coulter for using the word "retard," which "is widely considered a slur and disability advocates argue it is hate speech," Groch-Begley wrote. Coulter defended her non-clinical use of the term, which she has applied to President Obama and MSNBC's Chris



Media Matters benefactor George Soros

Matthews. "Where do you think the words idiot, imbecile, cretin, moron, come from?" Coulter said. "These were all technical terms at one time. Retard has been used colloquially to just mean 'loser' for 30 years" (Oct. 25, 2012).

But President Obama is exempt from this standard. When Obama mocked the developmentally handicapped on "The Tonight Show," by quipping that his average score of 129 during bowling at the White House "was like the Special Olympics or something," Media Matters gave him a pass. The strongest criticism Boehlert could muster was to say that the Special Olympics comment was merely "ill-advised" (March 31, 2009).

The Origins of Brock's Anti-Conservative Animus

When David Brock worked for the *American Spectator* magazine, he used to be a hero to the Right for taking on President Bill Clinton. Throughout the 1990s he relentlessly attacked the Man from Hope, digging up mountains of muck on the im-

peached president. But then something changed. As he conducted research for what was supposed to be a hit piece on Hillary Clinton, he decided he liked the style and corrupt politics of the Clintons. In the mendacious Clintons, Brock had found kindred spirits. His book, *The Seduction of Hillary Rodham*, disappointed readers hoping for a stinging exposé and also marked a turning point in Brock's disordered thinking.

After the book was published Brock wrote a series of apologies, begging the forgiveness of the Clintons and of Anita Hill, the lying law professor who told a story of sexual harassment in an almost-successful attempt to derail the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Brock distanced himself from his acclaimed exposé, *The Real Anita Hill*, and his other works and set about ingratiating himself with the Democratic Party establishment. Brock and the Clintons kissed and made up, and Brock recanted his sensational Arkansas "Troopergate" stories.

Organization Trends

In his autobiographical book, *Blinded by the Right*, Brock tried to spin his apparent mental breakdown as a sincere change of heart. After reading the apostasy memoir the late leftist intellectual Christopher Hitchens skewered its author. Brock “is incapable of recognizing the truth, let alone of telling it.” He described the book as “flimsy and self-worshipping,” “an exercise in self-love, disguised as an exercise in self-abnegation,” and as “dismally written, pick-nose, spiteful and furtive” (*Nation*, May 27, 2002).

In the book Brock reveals himself to be a deeply narcissistic formerly conservative journalist who renounced his beliefs in the 1990s because of imagined conservative intolerance of his homosexuality and because the pay and social scene were better on the Left. Hitchens mocked Brock’s melodramatic tale of sexual preference-based persecution as a work of fiction.

“On page 121 Brock makes the demented assertion that the GOP had ‘virtually launched an antigay pogrom,’ before sobbing, ‘there was far less ideological affinity between the GOP and me than when I had first come to Washington. The party had left me and many other libertarian-leaning conservatives back in Houston.’”

“The defamation game,” Hitchens concluded, “is still all that this creep knows.”

Media Matters is now Brock’s personal defamation factory. It is the Thought Police.

Brock lays out his justification for taking on America’s conservatives in his book, *The Republican Noise Machine: Right-Wing Media and How It Corrupts Democracy*. In the 2004 book the admitted serial liar labels the “verbal brownshirts” of the Right a threat to the Republic. This brutal propaganda machine will carry on “until its capacities to spread filth are somehow eradicated.”

In other words, Brock’s progressive totalitarianism holds that conservative thinking is not only wrong but antisocial. Media Matters, which aspires to correct “conservative misinformation,” actually aspires to extinguish conservative thought altogether. The pretended media watchdog is not concerned with factual accuracy but with conservative ideas themselves. Such ideas are, after all, “filth,” according to Brock.

Those who question the Left are blacklisted as contemptible bigots. Conservative, libertarian, anti-tax, pro-life, pro-family, and immigration reduction activists are all seen as legitimate targets for demonization. They must be marginalized and delegitimized.

The War on Fox News

MMfA claims to combat “conservative misinformation” but concentrates its fire on Fox News Channel because it dares to air political viewpoints that sometimes overlap with the views of Republicans. The ultimate purpose of Media Matters is to silence opposition to the Left.

Brock, who described himself as a “hit man” when he was a conservative, declared in 2011 that MMfA’s mission was to wage “war on Fox [News]” as well as “to disrupt [News Corp. CEO Rupert Murdoch’s] commercial interests” and to turn regulators against his media outlets.

“The strategy that we had had toward Fox was basically a strategy of containment,” said Brock, who referred to Fox as the “nerve center” of the conservative movement. Brock thought that challenging the factual claims made on the cable TV channel would help to keep conservative ideas out of the media ecosystem (*Politico*, March 26, 2011).

Taking a page from Machiavelli, Media Matters went after top Fox News executives and

midlevel employees. As *Politico* reported at the time:

“It has hired an activist who has led a successful campaign to press advertisers to avoid Glenn Beck’s show. The group is assembling a legal team to help people who have clashed with Fox to file lawsuits for defamation, invasion of privacy or other causes. And it has hired two experienced reporters, Joe Strupp and Alexander Zaitchik, to dig into Fox’s operation to help assemble a book on the network, due out in 2012 from Vintage/Anchor.”

It also planned to harass shareholders of Fox parent News Corp. and was considering opening a branch of Media Matters in London, England, to hurl slime against Murdoch’s company over there. Media Matters got its comeuppance in a sense the same year when the late night Fox News show “Red Eye” biting attacked the group in a mock interview with a man portraying a Media Matters analyst.

“It’s horrible. All we do is sit and watch Fox News and make up stuff about Fox News. It is the saddest place I have ever seen in my life. I think about it, and I want to throw up,” the make-believe MMfA employee said. “I get to work and I take off my clothes, and they strap me into a chair in front of a TV with [Fox News Channel] on. They keep my eyelids propped open like in *Clockwork Orange*, and I sit and type all day.”

“If there was no [Glenn] Beck, George Soros would come down and demand we make it up,” the character said. “I would watch the ‘Flintstones’ and transcribe Fred Flintstone’s words and attribute them to Beck. It was the only way to get Soros to stop hitting me.”

Brock, of course, is nothing if not delusional, and a year ago Media Matters claimed “victory” in its war against all things Fox.

“In the coming years, Fox will no longer be the center of Media Matters’ universe,” Me-

Media Matters executive vice president Angelo Carusone declared. That's because MMfA believed it has succeeded in discrediting the network's wish to be regarded as "fair and balanced."

"The war on Fox is over," Carusone said. "And it's not just that it's over, but it was very successful. To a large extent, we won."

Commentator John Nolte ridiculed Media Matters at the time, comparing it to "a frustrated child who flips over a board game and screams, 'I win!'" Even though Fox News "regularly pulls in more viewers than both of its left-wing counterparts (CNN and MSNBC) combined, and recent polls show that Fox is trusted more than almost every other news source, Media Matters would like its donors to know it has won."

"Fox News isn't just dominant; its competition is in deep, deep water and either drowning or barely treading water," Nolte wrote. "If that's a victory for Media Matters, I'd love to know what defeat looks like" (Breitbart News, Dec. 13, 2013).

MMfA's War on its Own Workers

Nobody would accuse David Brock of being a nice guy. "Viciously mean" is a phrase used by someone who watched Brock interact with Media Matters employees. "He spent a lot of time ripping up researchers. It was abusive. I never understood why more people didn't quit." One employee remembered Brock saying he would like to dismiss a research employee for being physically repugnant. "David definitely does not like ugly people" (Daily Caller, Feb. 12, 2012).

Similarly, elitist left-wingers like Brock talk a good shtick when it comes to labor unions, but when unions arrive on their doorstep, they change their tune. When MMfA employees decided to pursue union certification, Brock fought it, just as the now-defunct Association

of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) fought unionization efforts in its own house (Daily Caller, April 29, 2014).

Media Matters employees were outraged that their employer was opposed to their forming a union. The organizing committee posted a statement on the website of Service Employees International Union Local 500 that criticized the nonprofit for "the unexpected and unexplained path our leadership has taken in response to our efforts to unionize," adding that "the actions of Media Matters executives have placed employees in the impossible position of continuing to produce content espousing pro-labor values for an employer who is challenging our right to unionize." According to the post:

"Media Matters employees often write in defense of organized labor, and our work has demonstrated the virtues of organizing through card-check and the perils of being forced through a protracted NLRB election process. It is fitting, then, that we've chosen to unionize and attempt to lead our own lives by the principles we regularly advocate for in our work."

This past summer MMfA staff voted to form a union. Perhaps seeing the writing on the wall, management was conciliatory. "We have always respected the rights of Media Matters employees to organize and collectively bargain," said MMfA president Bradley Beychok. "We look forward to the next steps in this process and thank our staff and allies in the progressive community for their support." (Huffington Post, July 1, 2014).

Spreading Influence

Distributing media criticism, harassing enemies, and browbeating conservatives is just part of the Media Matters repertoire. MMfA began a weekly strategy conference

call with the Obama White House, joined by the left-wing Center for American Progress, whose founder, John Podesta, is now a senior White House advisor. Media Matters sends a representative every Tuesday night to the left-wing Common Purpose Project meeting at the Capitol Hilton, just a few blocks from the White House (Daily Caller, Feb. 12, 2012).

Media Matters conducts boot camps for budding progressive influencers. Its Progressive Talent Initiative (PTI) founded in 2009 has trained pundits who have appeared at least 800 times on TV and radio. "Media Matters uses that metric to pitch donors for more contributions, but its leadership believes that the surge of camera-ready liberals has recaptured lost ground in the media wars against conservatives," according to the *Washington Post*.

Participants learn that reporters are "conflict-seeking showmen easily disarmed by the use of their first names or compliments on the cleverness of their questions." They also become "adept in the craft of the pivot and setting up far-left straw men to make their own left-leaning positions seem more moderate." The importance of storytelling is emphasized. As instructors explained, "A good story is a Trojan horse" to "deploy your ideas," and once the horse is inside the walls, "gut everyone" (*Washington Post*, March 22, 2011).

Sticking the knife in and twisting it is David Brock's specialty, after all.

Matthew Vadum is a senior editor at Capital Research Center. His book, Subversion Inc.: How Obama's ACORN Red Shirts are Still Terrorizing and Ripping Off American Taxpayers, was published in 2011.

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Briefly Noted

National Action Network founder **Al Sharpton** played a significant role in President **Obama**'s selection of federal prosecutor **Loretta Lynch** to replace **Eric Holder** as U.S. attorney general, according to various news reports. Lynch, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, was first appointed by President **Obama** in 2010. She shares a lot of Sharpton's radical left-wing views such as the belief that voter ID laws are racist. Lynch also belonged to the **Harvard Black Law Students Association** in the 1980s when she was a student. That radical group brought representatives from the **Palestine Liberation Organization** (PLO) to speak on campus, GotNews.com reports. BLSA leader **Mohammed Kenyatta** called for the "liberation of Palestine" and expressed support for the PLO.

Voting by illegal aliens and other non-citizens is so prevalent throughout the nation that it gave us Obamacare, according to a study by two **Old Dominion University** political science professors. The new report by **Jesse Richman** and **David Earnest** "examines participation rates by non-citizens using a nationally representative sample that includes non-citizen immigrants," a first in voting studies, they claim. "Non-citizen votes," which are almost always illegal, "likely gave Senate Democrats the pivotal 60th vote needed to overcome filibusters in order to pass health care reform and other Obama administration priorities in the 111th Congress," the authors write. North of 14 percent of non-citizens in both the 2008 and 2010 samples reported being registered to vote. "Our best guess, based upon extrapolations from the portion of the sample with a verified vote, is that 6.4 percent of non-citizens voted in 2008 and 2.2 percent of non-citizens voted in 2010," they wrote. And yet left-wing groups such as **Demos**, **Brennan Center for Justice**, **Center for American Progress**, and **Advancement Project** claim voter fraud is a myth.

The old Missouri chapter of now-defunct **ACORN** (**Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now**) is playing at least a supporting role in the violent unrest and crime wave that has plagued Ferguson and St. Louis, Mo., since the Aug. 9 police shooting of **Michael Brown**. **Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment** (MORE), a 501(c)(4) nonprofit, is the rebranded Missouri branch of ACORN, the left-wing activist network that filed for bankruptcy in 2010. MORE has been active in the protests and in efforts to free jailed demonstrators so they can continue vandalizing businesses, intimidating perceived adversaries, setting fires, throwing projectiles and urine at cops, and engaging in the Left's usual modes of so-called non-violent protest. President Obama used to work for ACORN, and he represented it in court as a lawyer.

The government of the **United Arab Emirates** has designated the **Council on American-Islamic Relations** (CAIR) a terrorist organization. Although CAIR claims to be "a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding" whose mission "is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding," the U.S. government named CAIR an unindicted co-conspirator in the **Holy Land Foundation** case. That foundation was found guilty of aiding **Hamas** terrorists. Former federal prosecutor **Andrew McCarthy** calls CAIR a "**Muslim Brotherhood** bullhorn created to cheerlead for sharia, for Hamas, and for sundry other jihadists—all under the guise of 'civil rights.'" Amazingly, the Obama administration refuses to designate CAIR a terrorist organization. CAIR was profiled in *Organization Trends*, August 2005.

Terrorist **Rasmea Odeh**, associate director of the Chicago-based **Arab American Action Network** (AAAN), was convicted last month by a Detroit jury of immigration fraud. Prosecutors accused Odeh of killing two Israelis in the Sixties and then lying about it in U.S. immigration papers. Odeh previously received a sentence of life imprisonment from Israel but was released after 10 years as part of a prisoner swap. AAAN receives funding from the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, **Tides Foundation**, and **Woods Fund of Chicago**.