

CORPORATE
CON JOB
HOW MAINSTREAM MEDIA AIDS THE OLIGARCHY

By Jordan Chariton

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Jordan is a peer hero of mine and one of the most fearless, persistent journalists in America right now. When he goes after an issue of injustice in America, he won't let go until the full story is told. His work on Standing Rock & Flint has been some of the most essential breakthrough journalism of the past few years.

Shaun King, Senior Justice Writer for NY Daily News, Commentator The Young Turks

There is no other journalist I trust more to take on the media and political establishment than Jordan Chariton. His groundbreaking coverage from the front lines of Standing Rock captivated millions and forced other media outlets, as well as the world, to pay attention. While covering stories the corporate media would never touch, Chariton infuses a strong dose of unabashed progressive activism into his approach to journalism that provides people with a front row seat to the pain and suffering of the most oppressed citizens of our country. He offers his audience a chance to become invested in the stories and empowers them to play their own part in the political revolution.

Armand Aviram, Media Producer for Senator Bernie Sanders

Dedication

This book is for my parents, Larry and Laurie, who've always stepped in
as my compass when I got lost in the woods.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank George Verongos for a stellar job of editing my drivel, aka writing, and dealing with my 100 questions a day on no sleep; Ann Szalkowski for enthusiastically offering cutting-edge and progressive public relations to someone very bad at promoting himself; Walker Bragman, a terrific, up-and-coming journalist and cartoonist who made a bad-ass cartoon of me whipping corporate media to serve as my book cover; and to the countless colleagues, friends, and supporters who've offered me words of praise and personal anecdotes for the book. Most of all, I'd like to thank all the viewers and supporters for supporting me in my pursuit of sharing my story.

Chapter Two

Why the Corporate-Media-WELFARE-Complex Delivered President Trump

It was frighteningly frigid outside the Burlington, Vermont theatre as hundreds waited, but inside, it felt like an otherworldly tundra.

Chills rapidly crept through my body: “Drag em out! Get em out!” a voice screamed from the crowd as security pulled two young adults out of the theatre.

“I want to see your papers!” another voice belted while the young man and woman—presumably immigrants—were escorted out.

And on stage, a reality-TV-star-turned-presidential-candidate was ginning it all on from the stage, screaming: “Get em out of here!” to be met with adoring chants of: “Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump!”

“We’ll get more and more angry as we go along, is that okay?” Trump told the audience, who I’d been shocked to find out was self-selected by the Trump campaign, who stopped people at the door to ask if they were Trump supporters—turning away people who said no or expressed they were there to find out more.

“And by the end, I’ll say ‘get them the hell out of here’ and then, by the way, at that time the security will be so tough and so nasty, and you know what’s gonna happen when that happens? You’re not gonna have anymore problems...pretty soon, they’re gonna get so nasty that we’re not gonna

have more protesting.”

Donald Trump ended his riff with this doozie: “Don’t give him his coat, don’t give him his coat, keep his coat, confiscate his coat; you know, it’s about 10 degrees below zero outside.”

The harassment and xenophobia wasn’t only aimed at minorities. Since Trump tacitly instructed his supporters to serve as side security, his fanatics motioned to security and pointed out a young woman who they claimed was protesting.

“I didn’t do anything, I didn’t do anything,” the young woman screamed to my right with tears visibly dripping down her cheek.

Yup—they were even pointing to the wrong people and kicking them out.

Sitting in the press section, three rows in the back of the theatre, I sat stunned watching what was playing out in front of my eyes. But my esteemed colleagues from CNN, MSNBC, ABC News and the rest sat like robots—as if there wasn’t a quasi-fascist horror show swirling around us.

Not one to sit idly in the face of cruelty, I sprung out of my seat and bolted down the aisle with a camera in hand to try and get a closer shot of protesters getting manhandled by security and heckled by the hyena pack of Trump supporters, as they were escorted out.

Then, a bulldog-like blonde woman sprinted toward me: “Get back in your seat NOW!”

This was the first encounter I’d have with the militant, Trumpian press

enforcer, who'd go out of her way to be unpleasant and intimidating to reporters, throughout the campaign, in order to keep the truly horrifying images and sounds happening around Trump from getting out to the public in full.

She was used to easily-malleable corporate reporters who wouldn't dare ruffle feathers with top campaign aides—if they did, *gasp!* they might lose access to the Donald himself. Good thing Eric and I couldn't give two shits about access to a fascist oompa loompa.

While she forced me back to the press section, Eric was also getting the Trump treatment. Another aide spotted him trying to get too close to damning visuals—so she stuck a campaign aide on him for the remainder of Trump's speech, shadowing everything he did to the point of reprimanding him when he'd move his camera shot off of Trump speaking to the toxic crowd.

As all of this was going on, I felt something nauseating gnawing at me: as a journalist, I'd always tried to separate my personal emotions from my coverage of terrible events. But, as a person who grew up going to Hebrew school twice a week, and with a father who's so Jewish he might as well be the Prime Minister of Israel, the racism, xenophobia, and hatred being displayed—led by one of the leading Republican candidates—was truly worrisome to me.

My concern wasn't specifically about Trump himself: I'd met and witnessed dime-a-dozen bigots throughout my life and journalism

career. It was the hatred for the “other” and total adoration Trump supporters had for him that was beyond worrisome and dumbfounding to me. How in the world can people be this ignorant, but maybe even more importantly, misguided?

I mean, if there was no corporate control of the media and journalists were free to simply inform the masses on the pure facts and truth, a 7th-grade middle-schooler could educate viewers on the real forces behind Trump supporters’ economic and security concerns.

It wasn’t Mexicans, or Muslims, or minorities that kept their wages frozen or falling for the last 20 years. It wasn’t folks wearing turbans or speaking Spanish that were making it impossible for a parent to send their kids to college—or get quality healthcare for them. It wasn’t Mexicans, or Muslims, that launched us into endless war with Iraq and Afghanistan, or controlled the U.S. border. It was the United States government—along with its accomplices in corporate America.

Like Donald J. Trump.

But, rally after rally, I’d see awful scenes like this play out, with Trump supporters chanting awful things at minorities or protesters while the Donald stood on stage smirking, tacitly approving and deploying bigotry.

Bigger than that, he was over-the-moon happy with himself: he was pulling off the biggest political Corporate Con Job in history.

Trump was a plutocratic real-estate tycoon born on third base who had

never struggled to eat, or pay bills, or care for his children. He was a man whose main financial accomplishment of the 21st century was starring in a fake reality-show called “The Apprentice.” Yet, he was convincing millions of angry Americans that he was the populist white-man-of-the-people they’d been waiting for. And the corporate media was the biggest booster of his con job.

Instead of calling Trump what he is—a racist, lying, fraud—and reporting the facts around the actual drivers of economic disparity and inequality, “journalists” peppered their airwaves, newspapers, and websites with Trump.

Every tweet was breaking news. Empty podiums sat on screen over anchors’ voices (as I mentioned in Chapter 1, rather than Bernie Sanders talking in real-time to tens of thousands of people). Every fact-free, xenophobic rant Trump would utter would be morphed into a segment, where “pundits,” “Trump supporters,” and “Hillary supporters” would duke it out over the issue—as if the claims Trump was making deserved to be treated as real issues, rather than the land-of-make-believe theatre it actually was.

I wondered how this could be. In the past, the corporate media wouldn’t give much, if any, airtime or print space to bigots. MSNBC got rid of Pat Buchanan years ago; Don Imus had been fired for his disgraceful, “nappy-headed hoes” comment. And aside from Fox News, most “respectable” outlets had little tolerance for on-air racism, xenophobia, or misogyny.

Why were the rules and ethics tossed out the window for this fucking buffoon stoking violence and hate?

The answer would become more and more clear as the campaign went on: to the corporate stooges on camera, and in print, it was more palatable to prop up Trump; lob softball interview after softball interview his way; allow him to call in to shows in his underwear from atop his ivory Trump Tower; and to succumb to the “must cover” notion due to his big crowds (hmm, but why not the same for Bernie?) than to report the cold-hard-corporate truth. The truth that it was their parent companies, and the oligarchs connected to them, that were the actual forces that had been stomping on Trump supporters, and America, for decades.

And the issues Bernie Sanders was championing at mega rallies throughout the country were those corporate media didn't want to touch with a 10-foot pole. If they did, their parent companies'—and the corporations and government entities they do business with—grave train would be exposed.

But for me to help you understand the rise of Trump—and how it really had nothing to do with him—I first must explain how our corporate media is, in fact, the biggest Corporate Con Job in existence.

Take General Electric, who used to own NBC News; CBS, which owns CBS News; and Time Warner, which owns CNN. The trio, along with 12 other Fortune 500 companies, paid nearly no federal income taxes in 2014 on \$23 billion in profits, according to a [study by Citizens for Tax Justice](#).

Not only did the media conglomerates not pay any taxes—they actually got a REBATE! CBS, which earned \$1.8 billion in profits in 2014, received a federal income tax rebate of \$235 million; Time Warner, which earned \$4.3 billion in profits in 2014, received a rebate of \$26 million. And General Electric paid the most that year—a laughable 0.9 percent.

Broadening it out to 2010-2014, the same three companies paid little to no taxes: Time Warner paid a 14.7 percent rate; CBS a 5 percent rate; and General Electric, who made \$33 billion in profits, paid NOTHING, receiving a rebate of \$1.4 billion while paying an effective rate of negative 11.1 percent.

Corporate WELFARE like this has been the bedrock of American “democracy” for decades now. Together, conservatives like Ronald Reagan, along with neoliberals like Bill Clinton—who, as my colleague Jimmy Dore correctly says, was able to pass right-wing shit that Republicans could only *dream of* passing—funneled in dirty dollars from corporate conglomerates. While they did this, they were simultaneously working to crush unions; allowing banks and corporations to write multinational trade “deals” that sent millions of workers’ jobs offshore; deregulating the financial—and media—industries so that banks and financial institutions could legally rob the people that elected them, and launching a war on “terror” that had an odd resemblance to a war for oil.

While this was going on, media outlets owned by corporate cowards, brought on political cowards like Paul Ryan, his Republican colleagues,

and many corporate “Democrats” to demonize the *victims* of the Corporate Con Job as the “takers”—without challenging them. They allowed anchors, guests, and columnist to pretend the biggest drivers of America’s financial ills were entitlement programs, rather than the actual drivers—unpaid for wars, tax cuts, and corporate welfare.

These corporate media outlets essentially squashed talk of demonizing the financial industry—even after it took the global economy down like the Titanic nine years earlier. “There’s a new normal,” I’d hear both Republican and Democratic politicians assert on cable news, urging Americans to adjust their economic expectations in this new, globalized world order.

All of this came to mind while I was interviewing an unemployed man on food stamps at the Democratic primary debate I covered in South Carolina between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton.

“I’ve got the money to pay my bills at the moment because I’ve got some savings, but without the food stamps, I’d be broke very, very soon,” [Dave Crossley, who was donning a bad-ass pair of green, mega sunglasses, told me.](#)

When I asked him what his response is to politicians like Paul Ryan attacking people like him as the takers, he hesitated: “I’m trying to think of something appropriate I could say.” I told him to say whatever he wanted: “I’d say go fuck yourself,” he responded.

And there’s plenty of fuck yous to go around. It was Ronald Reagan who

began the corporate media welfare industrial complex. The Gipper appointed Marc Fowler as FCC chair, and as FAIR [points out](#), Fowler didn't exactly have a lot of interest in media regulation. He called the television "just another appliance—it's a toaster with pictures" (Washington Post, 2/6/83). More comments steered toward total deregulation: "We've got to look beyond the conventional wisdom that we must somehow regulate this box."

Fowler started loosening regulations on television and broadcast networks, which set in motion General Electric, who was a huge military contractor and nuclear power producer, taking over NBC, while at the same time, Westinghouse, the electric giant and huge nuclear power, owned CBS. That's right—two nuclear power corporations owned two of the three biggest networks.

"Your career wouldn't flourish upward in TV news if you were saying 'hey, we gotta figure out where we're going to store all this lethal waste,'" Jeff Cohen, Founder of FAIR, told me. "It really became dangerous when the ownership got bigger and bigger and bigger and that wave of conglomeration started with Reagan and continues today."

But, if Reagan built the stage for the Corporate Con Job, President Bill Clinton lit the lights.

It was Clinton who signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which gave a giant, wet blowjob to corporate America by allowing it to swallow what was supposed to be our public information mediums, turning them

into a consolidated monopoly of stenographers telling you—and not telling you—the news in a way that wouldn't lay a glove on the powerful and corrupt. Bubba called it “truly revolutionary legislation” that “really embodies what we ought to be about as a country.”

Nauseatingly enough, former Rep. John Dingell (D-Michigan) went biblical, thanking God for the law that would “make this country the best served, the best educated and the most successful country ... in all areas of communications.” As you can tell by millions of Donald Trump, Fox News, MSNBC, CNN, and NY Times viewers and readers—God let us down. [As Truthout.com noted](#), media scholar Robert McChesney said it was “widely considered to be one of the three or four most important federal laws of this generation.”

“It was completely bipartisan, it was done behind closed doors, the lobbyists for these big companies basically wrote the law,” Cohen told me, noting that the public had zero input as corporate conglomerates funneled cash to Democratic and Republican campaign committees, the DNC and RNC, President Clinton and Speaker Gingrich—as the bill was being weighed.

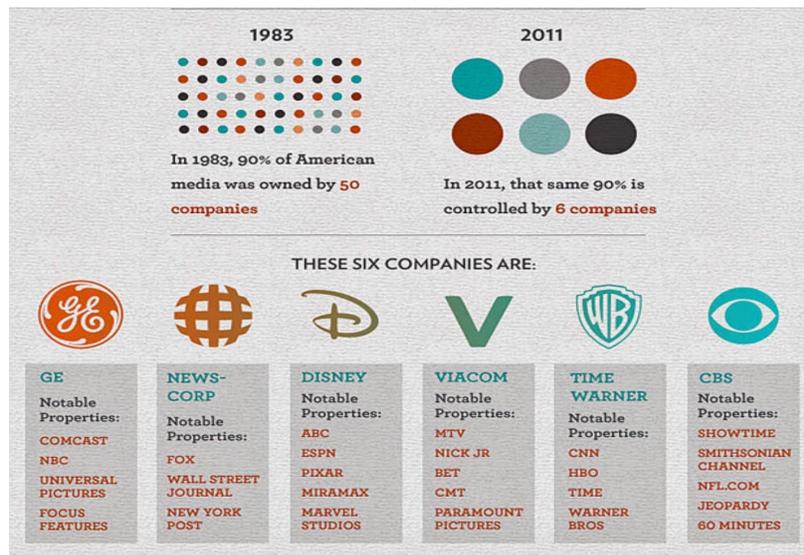
While this was going on, there was very little coverage in the mainstream media. “By 1995, when this was just a bill and not an act yet, and consumer groups were trying to stop it and publicize it, there had already been so much conglomeration that there was almost no debate,” recounted Cohen. So much so, that when the Consumer Federation of America tried

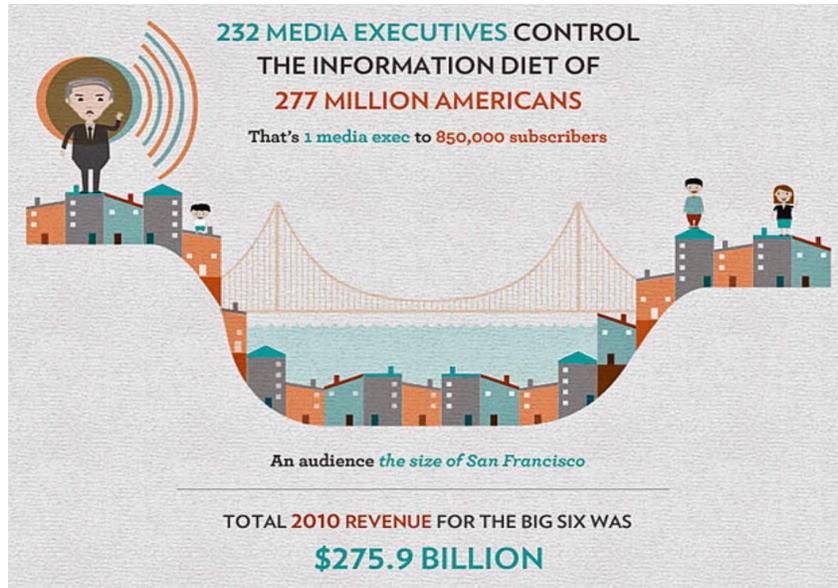
to place an ad on CNN opposing the bill, CNN said no.

“Here’s CNN, that takes money to run almost anything, would not take money for criticism of the telecom bill.” Cohen continued, “The shenanigans that have been pulled on television and broadcasting is directly related on the splurge and huge concentration that followed the Clinton and Gingrich bill.”

As the first change in telecom laws in 60 years, Bubba opened the floodgates by loosening regulations that previously prevented giant corporations from buying up thousands of smaller media entities, essentially eliminating quantity of microphones in favor of a shrinking pool with a few behemoths swimming in it.

As Business Insider pointed out, [nearly 90 percent of the media industry is controlled by six companies.](#)





Sounds familiar to this other number—[90 percent of the income being owned by the top 1 percent](#), doesn't it?

This 2012 chart, which would look different today after GE sold its 49 percent stake in NBCUniversal to Comcast in 2013, tells the business side of the equation, but it doesn't illustrate the dire effects of this type of corporate coup of our media.

And these six multi-billion dollar corporate conglomerates aren't exactly sitting idly by—enjoying the opportunity to educate the American people. Collectively, they spend millions yearly to get favorable legislation, aka corporate welfare, through lobbying efforts and donations to candidates and parties.

According to OpenSecrets.org: “Since the 1990 election

cycle, donations from individuals and political action committees associated with the industry have tilted 60 percent in Democrats' favor. Democrats have held the edge during the past four election cycles. Total contributions from the industry since the 1990 election cycle have amounted to more than \$33.1 million, including almost \$2.3 million during the 2014 cycle.”

And, make no mistake, these media miscreants aren't lobbying or donating for single payer, free public college, or enhanced democratization of the media. They are pushing for tax breaks, further deregulation, and subsidies—the tasty trio of toxic social Darwinism that has made the rich much richer and the middle class poorer for 40 years.

More from [OpenSecrets](#): “From 2002-2008, the industry increased its spending on lobbying efforts every year. The streak snapped when the Great Recession set in and most clients cut back on their DC efforts, and then reversed again in 2013. In 2014, cable and satellite providers spent nearly \$8.1 on lobbying. The top spenders on lobbying activities that year were 21st Century Fox at over \$5.8 million, Rural Media Group at \$550,000 and TV One LLC at \$350,000.”

Does anyone think that the owners of Time Warner, or Disney, or News Corporation, or Comcast give a flying fuck about the single mother I interviewed in a trailer park in [Elkhart, Indiana](#) who was choosing between paying for medicine for her children and groceries? Or the staggering levels of poverty on the [Standing Rock Sioux reservation](#)

before a toxic crude oil pipeline was dumped on its sacred land to contaminate its drinking water? Or the [Portland houseless community](#) I reported from, that was bare-naked empty during the day because the tenants were out working.

Sure, maybe they give money to charity and toss out nice platitudes from time to time about giving back. But, in practice, these corporate conglomerates—that, make no mistake, control what their anchors, columnists, reporters, and executives—do and do not report, have an army of lobbyists behind them twisting their employees’—the politicians—arms in order to shit on the very viewers consuming their news.

“When General Electric owns a channel, you knew what issues were off limits,” Cohen remembers. He would know: he worked at MSNBC on Phil Donahue’s program before he and his colleagues were fired when the show was cancelled—for being too anti-Iraq war. “It’s no accident we all got terminated right before the invasion of Iraq because we were too questioning,” he said. “If those are your bosses, you can yell about Russia, Russia, Russia or Trump, Trump, Trump, but what you can’t do if your boss is Comcast, or General Electric, or Verizon; you learn at the national television level that there are certain issues, that, if you care about your career, you avoid. Some of us at the Donahue show—we didn’t care about our career; we didn’t plan on a TV career, we were journalists. We fought management and they got rid of us. But, if you’re a careerist, you learn very subtly when huge conglomerates—these are some of the most political corporations in the country today that own the media—these

companies have massive lobbying operations; you have these huge conglomerates with huge lobbying operations that also own TV networks. That's not what you had in the 50s, 60s, and 70s."

Does this sound like what the founding fathers had in mind for a free press?

Most importantly, all of this allows BLATANT CONFLICTS of interest stemming from media figures swimming in the same pool as the powerful people they are supposed to be holding accountable. Just look at the 2016 campaign. You had a VP of Comcast, which owns NBC News and MSNBC, David Cohen, [hosting two separate fundraisers for Hillary Clinton](#). You had CNN, owned-by the 10th largest donor to Hillary Clinton in her career—[Time Warner](#)—never disclosing that fact in any of its coverage.

Founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, who [owns the Washington Post](#), and who reportedly is a libertarian who donated \$100,000 in 2010 [to stop a progressive income tax on the wealthy in Washington State](#), had generously donated to the Clinton Foundation, and voila! Amazon received a \$16.5 million contract from the Clinton-run State Department in 2012 to distribute Kindle readers for U.S. education centers across the globe.

No wonder The Washington Post had the stamina to write [16 negative stories about Bernie Sanders in one day!](#)

These are just some of the examples—not including individual anchors,

columnists, and reporters' blatant conflicts of interest, which I'll report more on in Chapter 3, of media ownership lying in comfy, silk pajamas in a big, cushy bed with politicians, where they've been having a nice, intimate cuddle at the expense of the working Joe for decades.

Which brings us to the Trump-reality-TV-election. In my first few months at The Young Turks, I was predominately back and forth between covering Trump and Bernie rallies. Obviously, the dynamics, crowds, and DNA of both movements couldn't have been more different. But, if I'm being honest, I had a very important business and career decision to make between the two.

You see, 99 percent of the rest of the media—corporate and independent—were covering Trump till they were blue in the face (and then some more). My basic DNA, as a journalist and person, is to be different—to offer something unique and valuable that no one else is.

Make no mistake: I found the words coming out of Trump's bloated mouth to be disgusting. I found the policies he was proposing to be reprehensible. I also warned my audience that the more progressive ones he was claiming—like being anti-NAFTA, TPP, and war—were fraudulent. But, I felt the real story wasn't about Donald Trump and his awfulness; a fact that is true but was being covered by every other outlet ad nauseam. The real story was how bad the conditions were for the majority of the country that *allowed someone like Trump to rise in the first place*.

That view led me to decide to cover the corruption within the Democratic Party—led by Bill and Hillary Clinton over the last 30 years—who, along with extremist Republicans, created staggering levels of income inequality, poverty, hunger, crime, and worse. All things the corporate media they deregulated doesn't cover because it goes directly against their own interests.

Believe me: if I had covered Trump endlessly like everyone else, it would actually have been better for me in the short term.

From January 2016, when I started full-time with TYT, to November, TYT Politics—the YouTube channel I took over—grew from a little over 2,000 subscribers to 140,000. It was the fastest channel growth the company had ever experienced—including the original TYT channel. And if I chose to cover Trump obsessively, rather than Bernie and average people's stories, that growth would have most likely been double, as every search engine optimization source in America had Trump near the top.

Right, or wrong, to me, the audience deserves content that is not just a visceral, groupthink, or reactionary response to news of the day. The audience deserves more than obsessively reporting and analyzing a moron's tweets. The audience deserves more than a lowest-common-denominator approach that presents the news as if Trump was some great, unprecedented threat to our Democracy—when the nuanced truth is that our Democracy was hijacked decades ago for the reasons I've outlined earlier in this book.

If I truly believed Trump was a fascist dictator that would lead to the murder of millions of Americans, I would've, of course, temporarily put aside my focus on injustice and corruption to try to stop him.

But, in my gut, I didn't believe that. Covering between 40-50 Trump rallies and events, I viewed Trump as a mere performance artist. He was neither a Democrat nor Republican—his ego is too big to truly subscribe to either. No, Trump was someone who correctly spotted the turn of the political tide dating back to 2011, when he began bloviating out toxic conspiracy theories about the first African American president.

Deciding not to fall into the groupthink Trump tsunami was not easy. While out covering real people's stories, Flint, East Chicago, and Democratic Party corruption, I was routinely under attack on social media from Democrats, Hillary supporters, and Never Trump-ers who lifted me to the status of helping to elect Trump. Several times, random people got my number and called me screaming—with one threatening to meet me on the road and “put a dent in me like Trump will America.” Even a close friend of mine from childhood would complain to me about how much coverage I was doing on Hillary Clinton and non-Trump related news. When I'd push back that I was the most aggressive reporter in the field challenging the stupidity and hate Trump supporters were spewing, it often fell on deaf ears.

I'd be dishonest to say these factors didn't occasionally make me doubt whether I was doing the right thing. I mean, if everyone and their mother

was covering this guy as the “iceberg, right ahead,” was I helping to sink the Titanic? My internal compass was challenged more when Trump would drop his latest bomb, like saying women should be punished for having an abortion, or McCain wasn’t a war hero, or stoking up his supporters to potentially assassinate Hillary Clinton, or proposing a temporary Muslim ban, or suggesting a Mexican judge couldn’t be impartial in his case.

Not jumping in and joining the media chorus reflexively covering these things wasn’t an easy choice—I, of course, didn’t want to be on the wrong side of history. But, the more I thought about it, the more I stuck with my gut. After all, the majority of people criticizing me for not obsessing over Trump were themselves victims of the Corporate Con Job, leaving them ignorant to the real drivers of economic and social disparity—which came long before Trump. No, if I was going to cover the campaign, I was going to show my audience what was *really* going on in the country and leave the Trump echo chamber to the hacks covering him 24/7 while ignoring everything else.

To Trump’s credit, he saw that people were starting to wake up to the 30-year Corporate Con Job perpetrated by the unholy cabal he was part of: the banks, lobbyists, corporations, the media, and their employees—politicians. Whether it was the Tea Party on the extremely deranged side or Occupy Wall Street, who in my view, was on the right side, Trump saw that the canvas was wide open for a faux-progressive-populist-meets-Tea-Party-loon candidate to hijack the corporate establishment and rile up the

masses.

The masses I interviewed on the ground in nearly 30 states and cities during the campaign were hurting financially because of radical conservatism and NEOLIBERALISM spawned from the 1980s through 2016. Out of hurt, comes hopelessness, anger, and desperation. And when you have all three for long enough, people can talk themselves into making radically poor choices—and into following radically dangerous individuals.

This was, in large part, how Trump happened—but it wasn't the entire picture.

Having previously worked in cable news, I knew the medium was pretty much starting to bleed out. When CNN has the youngest average audience at 58 (no offense to viewers that age—love you!), you know it's not a sustainable model. After all, the advertisers the industry is built heavily on are desperate for younger viewers, or in the cable news biz, what they call the 25-54 demo.

But young people stopped watching cable news ages ago, both by choice and because of alternatives like The Young Turks. As I told the viewers repetitiously on the campaign trail, young people—and older progressives—can sniff out bullshit a mile away: the thousands of people I've met and interviewed know outlets like CNN and the New York Times are pushing more of a narrative and profit-motivated news agenda rather than reporting on the news, corruption, dangers, injustice and crises their

generation's future depends on. This one stat says it all: before 2016, the combined coverage of the catastrophic and CURRENT dangers of climate change barely got any coverage on TV news outlets. I would know: as a producer at both Fox News and MSNBC, I constantly pushed these stories to be met with "that won't rate," or, ironically, "it's not what's hot right now."

Umm—the planet is literally burning, so yes, that's what was hot right now!

But, if you were frustrated with the lack of coverage before the campaign, you might be as apoplectic as I about the drop in climate coverage during.

From Media Matters—not exactly my favorite source—but [I'll credit them here](#):

"In 2016, evening newscasts and Sunday shows on ABC, CBS, and NBC, as well as Fox Broadcast Co.'s Fox News Sunday, collectively decreased their total coverage of climate change by 66 percent compared to 2015, even though there were a host of important climate-related stories, including the announcement of 2015 as the hottest year on record, the signing of the Paris climate agreement, and numerous climate-related extreme weather events. There were also two presidential candidates to cover, and they held diametrically opposed positions on the Clean Power Plan, the Paris climate agreement, and even on whether climate change is a real, human-caused phenomenon. Apart from PBS, the networks also failed to devote significant coverage to climate-related policies, but they

still found the time to uncritically air climate denial—the majority of which came from now-President Donald Trump and his team.”

So, planet burning, whole villages being submerged under water, [Miami and New Orleans predicted to be under water as soon as the next century](#): but Trump’s tweets!

Beyond climate change in 2016, corporate media abdicated its responsibility to keep covering the poisoning of American citizens by their government in Flint, Michigan—in which corruption played a key role. It also ignored the brutalization of people exercising their first amendment rights in Standing Rock—and barely investigated the fact that Trump was INVESTED in the pipeline. Corporate media also ignored poor African Americans and Latinos being lead-poisoned in East Chicago, Indiana; in this case, the man who was running for Vice President on the Republican side never once came down to visit minority, lead-poisoned citizens as Governor. He also denied the area a disaster declaration, which would have delivered desperately needed relief funds (the new Governor reversed this).

But Pence did act *immediately* [when Greentown, Indiana—a 96 percent white town—had a lead issue](#). Within two months, it was fixed. Pence also found time to leave the campaign trail for a photo op visiting a white town stricken by a tornado.

From Flint to Standing Rock to East Chicago: crickets across the corporate media—especially cable news.

It wasn't just young people who could smell the blistering bullshit of cable news and corporate media: I was grateful to meet thousands of older Americans on the campaign trail that were equally astute and angered by the complete corporatization of the media, which morphed outlets that previously informed the public into mass infotainment platforms.

Whether it was at Standing Rock or Flint or at nearly 100 campaign rallies, I had dozens of older Americans come up to me thanking me for being one of the few journalists covering real issues. Personally, I loved *anyone* coming up to me expressing his or her enjoyment for my work, but hearing it from people my parents' age meant a great deal to me since they know what the news business was like before the corporate conglomerates took over.

Their support meant I was really on to something.

A quote from an older Bernie supporter to me outside the March 2016 Democratic primary debate in Miami said it best: "The best liar wins—millions are spent to award the biggest liar," he told me. And sadly, it was the corporate media who was elevating the biggest liar of all—in order to survive as an industry themselves.

Executives at cable news networks as well as the New York Times, Washington Post, and the rest of the usual corporate clowns knew all the aforementioned facts: young people were flocking away from traditional media, instead choosing independent media and new media models like TYT, Democracy Now, Secular Talk, Jimmy Dore, Lee Camp, VICE,

Mic, ATTN, and elsewhere. They were also less reliant on television news, now able to consume news on their phones, Twitter, Facebook, and beyond.

And on the digital side of things—where I’ve written for Mediaite, TVNewser, Salon, TheWrap, The Hill, and others—outlets succumbed to the page view model, translated for the non-industry person: let’s write as sensational and clickbait-y of a headline as humanly possible about substance-less nonsense and hope it goes viral, or even better, gets picked up by the God awful Drudge Report, which equals a shit ton of traffic.

I know, because every digital outlet I’ve ever written for operated under this model: out with the old, bootstraps investigative reporting, in with the cheap, brainless infotainment.

One of the more nauseating, hard-to-keep-a-straight-face-with interviews I did with a Trump supporter comes to mind when thinking about this race to the bottom strategy. With a steady stream of rain falling outside a Trump rally near Cincinnati, Ohio, one of his supporters explained to me the allure of the Donald.

“I think Trump, he’s honest,” [Ralph Lee told me](#). “We don’t need no Barack in office anymore, because he’s a liar, he can’t be direct, Hillary Clinton is a criminal, Bernie Sanders is a socialist, he will believe in taking away all our freedoms, he’ll control the way we eat, the way we sleep, the way we live.” When I asked him how Bernie was going to control all of that, he answered simply: “He’ll find a way” before going on

to give me a “correct history” lesson on Hitler being a socialist. I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. “He was a fascist—very different,” I interjected, but Mr. Lee was sticking to his story. “It is, runs in the same category but it’s different.”

ON NO PLANET IS FASCISM AND SOCIALISM AT ALL SIMILAR, yet a living, breathing, Trump supporter—who was a nice enough guy by the way—was standing in front of me, steadfast in this nonsense. When the interview was over, I asked him where he got his news from. “I really like that Breitbart dude and Fox News.”

Ahhh, the moronic melody I’d just experienced now made sense (even though that Breitbart dude has been dead for a few years). I wish this gentleman was a one-off fluke, but I met people like this at Trump rallies across the country. And the common denominator was where they got their news (and in Chapter 3, you’ll see it wasn’t just Trump supporters).

So, if cable news, traditional newspapers, and the majority of digital sites were all hemorrhaging younger viewers, an easy, sugar-high source of ratings, readers, and clicks would be welcome. Enter a walking clown juggling mangled balls of facts in his quest for the Republican nomination: Donald Trump.

You see, all of these outlets—who had long ago abdicated the responsibility of informing the public, or, dare I say, advocating for average people—had a clear choice right in front of them: offer minuscule coverage to Trump, an unserious entertainer also known for pushing

birtherism, conspiracy theories, racism, and vulture capitalism OR go all in on the spectacle, offering him breathless coverage and hemming and hawing at everything he did. The former would've seen media outlets showing integrity and deference to news consumers and the truth; the latter, showing a craven desperation and opportunism to provide profits to their parent companies.

So, of course, profits came before people.

MSNBC's "Morning Joe," who, now that we have President Trump, has suddenly morphed into a big bowl of righteous indignation, slamming Trump's lies on a daily basis, led the cowardly class of enablers who elevated the dangerous doofus. The dynamic duo of Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski did it all for the Donald. [First they whispered sweet nothings to Donald](#)—of course, they were on a first name basis with a man they'd been brushing shoulders with at cocktail parties for years—during commercial breaks at a "town hall" they did with him. In the same conversation, in response to Trump saying "nothing too hard" in regards to the questions they'd ask and "just make us all look good," Scarborough responded: "Exactly." In the same commercial break, in which the duo was caught on hot mic, you could also hear Mika responding "OK" to her producer speaking in her ear, who was apparently directing her not to ask tough questions.

But the dynamic duo didn't stop there. For the entire campaign, they acted like a pair of schoolchildren with a crush, giggling with the Donald as he

called into their show several times a week, offering him kid-glove questions and often blatantly ignoring some of the most vile things Trump would say the night before at his Klan-like rallies I was out covering.

“Donald, you got a ton of face time, it was you everywhere,” [Mika gleefully told Trump](#), waving her hands when mentioning that it “was you everywhere.” Scarborough interjected: “This is the second debate, Donald, that it was all about you; the Fox debate, now the CNN debate, all the questions, the split screens, yet, you thought you were treated fairly last night.” Well, I’m sure the Donald thought he was treated fairly on your show, while both of you gave him TV fellatio!

Fast forward to six months after the election of President Trump, Mika had a moral moment, condemning the rest of the media for not taking on Trump enough.

“We need to stop celebrating ourselves and just do our job. This isn’t like some sort of game show; reporters do a good job because that’s what reporters do. I mention the pathetic grab for ratings in terms of networks having Kellyanne Conway on the show, a repeated liar, so consistently that she lies that it’s almost like watching a car wreck on the highway, you just can’t take your eyes off her; it’s a gross, tabloid TV management ploy for ratings, and that’s not our responsibility.”

Hmm...a gross, tabloid TV management ploy for ratings. Like, say, what you and your fiancé (Joe and her are literally engaged!) did for a year-and-a-half, helping to normalize a racist, dog-whistling danger to the

Republic?

Notice, Morning Joe didn't ask Trump, after a CNN debate, to defend his controversial policies of temporarily banning Muslims or deporting millions of Mexicans. They didn't ask him to defend his Reagan/Bush tax cuts for the rich ON STEROIDS. They didn't ask him to explain how he, a completely out-of-touch plutocrat who has screwed workers and vendors for decades, can credibly claim to be the savior of the forgotten middle class.

Instead, they fluffed his pillow and asked him if he thought the moderators were fair to him. No wonder the majority of the country is uninformed or misinformed. But make no mistake about it—Morning Joe didn't play this game of spin the bottle with Trump out of simple idiocy. They knew EXACTLY what they were doing.

According to a February 2016 Daily Beast story, [Morning Joe set the bar for, dare I say, becoming a Trump tabloid.](#)

“According to data from the media monitoring service TVEyes, the MSNBC program has mentioned Trump's name more frequently than any other cable show since his June 2015 announcement of candidacy—2,414 times compared to 2,181 on New Day and 1,472 on Fox & Friends; this, despite the fact that MSNBC programs as a whole have mentioned the thatch-roofed billionaire less frequently (9,749 times) than Fox News (10,446) and CNN (16,308).” Did this obsession with Trump have something to do with the show's ratings doubling because of, gee gosh

jolly Jim, their obsession with Trump!

According to [TVNewser](#), and industry blog I used to write for, Morning Joe, tattooing itself with Trump, helped them reach record heights. “Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski had a particularly strong year as Morning Joe delivered MSNBC’s biggest total viewer audience in the time period ever, and beat CNN’s New Day in both total viewers and the key A25-54 category.” No wonder they tossed away journalistic integrity and facts for, as Mika Brzezinski hypocritically and fraudulently railed about, a “tabloid TV management ploy for ratings.”

“They put him in office, these things can not be disputed,” Cohen stated, pointing out that there was no way a Republican could defeat Trump during the nomination period. “I had people coming over from Europe and they said, ‘this isn’t a democracy. How can you have a democracy when one candidate is getting more coverage than all of the others combined?’” Cohen recounted.

But Morning Joe weren’t the only “journalists” tossing integrity and the people out the window. Stalwarts like Jake Tapper—who I showed acted strangely with yours truly in Chapter 1—also let his audience and the country down with one of the most shameful interviews I’ve ever seen from a journalist.

Before I lace into Tapper, I should qualify that of all the non-journalists at CNN who simply serve as stenographers for the powerful, I happen to like him the best. In some instances, he’s delivered tough questioning to

Trump and others. I also respect his advocacy for and coverage of U.S. veterans' issues—after all, our men and women who serve and die have been major victims of the Corporate Con Job that features media outlets whipping their pom-poms around as presidents send us into fake wars.

So this is why I was stunned watching Tapper [interview](#) Trump at the end of February 2016—right before Super Tuesday states voted and there was still a chance the bloated-brained reality star wouldn't win the GOP nomination. During their conversation, Tapper asked Trump whether he would disavow white supremacists like David Duke who were supporting his candidacy.

Trump played dumb: “Just so you understand, I don't know anything about David Duke, OK? I don't know anything about what you're even talking about with white supremacy or white supremacists. So, I don't know.”

OK, so Tapper had the leading candidate for the Republican nomination clearly lying—or worse, being a complete moron—about not knowing the Grand Wizard of the KKK on his show. In a society, and credible journalistic enterprise, the only option would be to not give a bona fide, disgraceful dog-whistler like Trump any more airtime, right?

“But I guess the question from the Anti-Defamation League is, even if you don't know about their endorsement, there are these groups and individuals endorsing you,” Tapper followed up. “Would you just say unequivocally you condemn them and you don't want their support?”

Trump doubled down: “Well, I have to look at the group. I mean, I don’t know what group you’re talking about.”

Right there, a real journalist would have said to hell with the corporate conglomerate and my network president Jeff Zucker forcing me to cover this dangerous buffoon 24/7—I’m ending the interview. But, Tapper chose to keep going, offering feeble push back: “OK. I mean, I’m just talking about David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan here, but...”

TAPPER TRANSLATED: “I mean, excuse me your highness Trump, I can’t strongly call you out as the incorrigible fraud that you are because I’d then lose access to you, thus angering my corporate overlords. But, can you just denounce the KKK so we can keep up this charade that I’m a journalist holding the powerful accountable? I’d REALLY appreciate it!”

When Trump said one last time that he didn’t know anything about David Duke, Tapper said, “alright” and then moved on to a question about what Trump is looking for in a potential running mate. Tapper provided Trump an additional one minute and 26 seconds of airtime after his disgraceful Duke dodge.

Do you know how many people there are struggling to support their families, or put a roof over their heads, or experiencing domestic abuse, or being poisoned by their government, or being represented by a corrupt congressman, or experiencing police brutality, or experiencing harassment at work, that would die for 30 seconds of airtime on CNN, much less a minute and 26 seconds?

But instead of providing real people dealing with real challenges a platform, Tapper and CNN gave Donald Trump a never-ending microphone for a year-and-a-half, or what Susan Sarandon expertly told me on that Iowa balcony a month before Tapper's interview with Trump—normalized racism.

Besides the spineless nature of Tapper's "grilling" of Trump, it was also lazy. If he or his army of producers had done a miniscule amount of research, they would've found out that, shocker! Trump indeed knew who Duke was.

In 2000, Trump ruled out running on the Reform Party ticket, citing Duke as one of the reasons. "The Reform Party now includes a Klansman, Mr. Duke, a neo-Nazi, Mr. Buchanan, and a communist, Ms. Fulani," he said in his [statement](#). "This is not company I wish to keep."

Oy vey.

Even more troubling than Tapper's moral cowardice, his corporate media colleagues celebrated him after this, acting like he had performed a tough inquisition of Trump, rather than allowing a bigot national airtime to be a bigot, and moving onto a new question after he wouldn't denounce bigotry. By Tapper, and his network, providing Trump endless airtime to espouse racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, and fact-free statements, they were rubber-stamping his views and platforms as part of the mainstream, worthy of consideration from voters.

And we all know how it ended.

“The one guy that symbolizes Trump, to me, is Jeff Zucker,” Cohen told me about the president of CNN, who when he was president of NBCUniversal, gave Trump his TV start with “The Apprentice.”

“No one did more to promote him than Jeff Zucker when he was the head of NBC Entertainment; The Apprentice is key to Trump being the president,” Cohen explained, noting that Zucker eventually went to CNN, instructing his producers to cover Trump endlessly.

Zucker’s CNN, along with MSNBC, Fox News, the New York Times, ABC, CBS, NBC, and all the rest ended up giving Trump [\\$2 billion worth of free media](#): meaning, media coverage his campaign didn’t have to pay for in the form of advertisements and other expenditures.

Frankly, that number, reported in March, 2016, is most likely lower than the real number, which, factoring in the remaining seven months of the campaign, comes out closer to \$5 billion, [according to](#) media analytics firm Media Quant.

“Imagine if Trump only got 45 minutes [on the evening news], instead of his 80, and Bernie got something like 30 minutes, instead of 20 seconds, the whole of American politics could be different,” Cohen suggested. “CNN, MSNBC, and the broadcast networks—whenever Trump burped, it was news, when he was getting out of a limousine or approaching a mic, it was breaking news; it was breaking news when he did anything.”

The truth is, the corporate media’s completely breathless, shameful, and substance-less coverage of Trump wasn’t only about profits in the short-

term. It was about keeping their grip on power in the long term.

To any objective, rational observer of the 2016 campaign, the real story wasn't Donald Trump. It was Bernie Sanders and the complete rejection of the neoliberal order that had wrapped a noose around the American people for the last 30 years. But corporate media completely ignored that—the truth was, they'd been ignoring that rejection for the eight years prior.

When Occupy Wall Street, the Fight For 15, and Single Payer movements started gathering steam under President Obama—and to a much lesser extent, the Tea Party movement—corporate media had a choice to make. Do we cover, and go in depth, on progressive—and faux populist movements (the Tea Party movement was actually not grassroots at all—the Koch Brothers funded it)—whose proposals and DNA go directly against the establishment, and our corporate parents, or do we distract the masses?

Alas, the distractions came. The same media outlets stunned on election night that a man like Donald Trump could rise to win the presidency showed everyone of his circus animal press conferences and interviews questioning the birthplace of President Obama.

In the beginning of 2011, Trump started the dog whistle campaign, asking the ladies of “The View”—“Why doesn't he show his birth certificate? There's something on that birth certificate he doesn't like.”

But NBC's “Today Show,” which is part of the network in which Trump hosted “The Apprentice,” had him on two weeks later. ABC News, CNN,

and many other outlets interviewed him or spoke to him. In April 2011, all the networks aired Trump's absurd press conference in front of his jetliner in New Hampshire—where he congratulated himself.

“Today, I'm very proud of myself because I've accomplished something that nobody else has been able to accomplish,” Trump said about Obama releasing his birth certificate. “He should have done it a long time ago, he should have done it a long time ago, why he didn't do it when the Clintons ask for it, why he didn't do it when everybody else was asking for it, I don't know.”

The fact that no sensible or sane person was actually asking for Obama's birth certificate aside (and my issues with Obama, which I'll discuss later in the book), no sensible, sane, or ethical person would have pushed Trump's bullshit spectacle. But corporate media not only showed it—they elevated it, interviewing him and then doing follow-up roundtable segments where pundits would bloviate about whether the birtherism Trump was spewing posed a political problem for Obama ahead of the 2012 election.

Again, borrowing from Sarandon: they normalized racism. And why did they do it? It's about the money, Lebowski!

Fast-forward five years later; my feet lie frozen under me after two hours of interviewing Trump supporters who were wrapped around a long line on a frigid 10-degree New Hampshire night. It was a week before the New Hampshire primary, and they were waiting to be let into his rally.

Weaving in and out of line, I spoke with them, trying to gauge how many of his supporters were full-blown birthers.

I came across an older couple on line and asked the wife whether she agreed with Trump that President Obama wasn't born in America.

"Yes, I do" [she said](#). "I think he was born out of this country." From over my shoulder, I heard, "That's a crock of shit."

"He ain't no damn American citizen, Obama," a woman wearing a black hat said to me. "This is all friggin politics games," she continued.

I followed up by asking her if she thought the former president had somehow duped America. She was ready with a sea of stupid: "He even admitted that he's all for Muslims and ISIS, so hello, wake up!" I consider myself fairly WOKE, so I asked her when Obama admitted he's an ISIS fighter. "When he went over to India, he went over and was practicing Muslim and read the Quran—it was right on YouTube." She continued her wondrous word-vomit, introducing Obama as the leader of the New World Order: "No he's the puppet to this whole new world order; ISIS is just part of the game plan, we're all screwed."

I challenged her one more time, asking her if she is suggesting Obama is actually working for ISIS rather than us. "Well yea, he's more sympathetic to them and the Muslims than he is to the blacks, because he's not really black."

Have a brain aneurism yet? I still do.

But this woman wasn't an anomaly: from New Hampshire down to South Carolina, I was meeting Trump supporters who were completely clueless or bigoted. A week before the SC primary, I was standing at the Capitol interviewing an African American Bernie supporter when I saw a man waving a confederate flag walk by me. As I finished the interview, Eric told me, "I think there's some type of confederates for Trump rally going on over there."

The river of racism and old-school hate I experienced [interviewing confederates for Trump](#)—in addition to a toothless hillbilly telling me the elites are trying to ethnically cleanse white people—could make up its own chapter. In it, I'd have to include the female Trump supporter who told me [Jesus wants Trump](#); a different supporter [telling me](#) he'd vote for Trump even if he sexually assaulted a woman; another saying she doesn't mind him up at 3 am thinking about sex tapes because, [at least he's up thinking](#); a Trump supporter getting so frustrated at my questions, that he resorted to calling me [boring, annoying, and "short"](#); and a Trump supporter [defending him against government bullying](#) (and this is just a short list of the batshit crazy).

But, as I was out meeting these Americans inhabiting Planet Donald, and seeing an unprecedented level of hate, cluelessness, and naivety, the corporate media wasn't out doing the same. Instead, they were airing his rallies in full and doing post-game panels as if it was a sporting event. They would salivate at every tweet; often setting their daily news agenda on something stupid the real estate magnate would tweet during breakfast.

As if it was a sporting event played on a loop, the same bullshit was playing over and over on TV, in print, and online. Meanwhile, millions of people across the country were gathering to fight back against the oligarchy, which the corporate media represented. I'd bounce back and forth between Bernie and Trump events and speak with frustrated Bernie supporters. And why wouldn't they be? The corporate media was literally putting on a reality-TV circus show while ignoring the bigger, more organic movement that cut across age and race.

“What they're doing right now is robbing us of everything that we have and what we've worked hard for,” a Bernie supporter [told me](#) in Colorado ahead of the state's caucus. “And that's not what America is about and it should be about helping the people—the bottom-line is people.”

When I mentioned Trump to her and her friends, their faces turned pale: they were simply sick of hearing about him while Bernie's movement had a CIA-level cover up keeping it down. For me, the cold, hard reality of the corporate media preferring a quasi-fascist who would spark America's regression back toward a 1950s social dynamic over a progressive socialist who would hike their taxes came when they, collectively, moved on to the next Trump-induced chaos after he'd claimed he'd seen thousands of Muslims cheering from a New Jersey rooftop as the planes went through the Twin Towers on 9/11.

Networks and newspapers assaulted him for days, and then—moved on. Can you imagine if Bernie Sanders would have alleged something so

twisted, facetious, and immoral? Chris Matthews would be calling for Sanders to immediately drop out of the race and CNN would start chattering as to whether Sanders should be uninvited to the next presidential debate.

But, you see, it was never about Bernie as a person. Or Trump for that matter. Instead, it was about corporate media companies and the army of anchors, reporters, and columnists keeping their fancy cars, and houses in the Hamptons, and luxurious vacations, and entitlement of living the *good life*. They clung onto their status and wealth for dear life because they believed in neoliberalism; they believed that the conditions in the country just weren't all that bad. And why wouldn't they? They hadn't been out covering the war on the poor, or the disappearing middle class, or the gang wars born from poverty. Because they simply didn't care and were trained not to care. Which is why you rarely saw any in-depth coverage of the struggling rust belt region that eventually won Trump the White House.

If they showed you the whole story, they'd have to also show you who was responsible. And anything that put their corporate parent companies' gravy train in jeopardy—like a Democratic socialist and a movement of millions behind them screaming, “Enough is Enough!”—would not be broadcasted. I guess it's true—the revolution will not be televised.

To be clear, not all Trump supporters were racist. A few weeks before the election, Eric and I were at a blisteringly hot arena in Pennsylvania, which apparently didn't believe in air conditioning. Trump was three hours late

due to weather issues, but the masses stayed, waiting for him. After speaking with a moron who told me watching “a lot of Fox News” gave him the medical expertise to [diagnose Hillary Clinton with dementia](#), I spoke with a more reasonable factory worker. He described the layoffs that had been taking place where he worked, tearing up at the thought of him being next. There was the Latina studying to be a nurse [I’d met in Florida](#), who genuinely felt Trump was the answer to her communities’ economic woes. In Ohio, there was the small business owner who [told me](#) Trump’s tax cuts would spark economic growth.

There were indeed reasonable Trump supporters I met across the country—many whom didn’t want to go on camera—who had similar concerns to Bernie Sanders voters. They shared a common sense of struggle, a common sense of disgust at the status quo politicians who had rigged the economic game for decades. That’s why, in the end, the legacy of the rise of Trump has little to do with Donald Trump. He’s just a glorified grifter, making up the show as he goes. The real lesson is that our country is run by corporate suits masquerading as journalists, who will stop at nothing to preserve the status quo and their own wealth. Their echo chamber of sameness and substance-less drivel is built to reinforce the notion they falsely tell themselves on a daily basis.

“We are the ones holding the powerful accountable,” I’ve heard over and over from all the corporate stooges, who repeatedly say this in order to justify what they’re really doing.

I'm not going to lie to you: I do occasionally get frustrated when, in response to President Trump doing something heinous—now happening on a daily basis—I'm met with a torpedo of tweets blaming me for his victory. In my gut, I know it's not true and I don't regret the choice I made to not offer Trump endless coverage.

The bastions of our corporate media knew better than to offer Trump a mega microphone. And despite his faux populism, the corporate media saw the writing on the wall. Trump's tax plan for the rich gave it away—he was the status quo posing as a human wrecking ball. And the decision to shield the powerful, and elevate the corrupt and moronic, had been sealed two decades earlier, when Bill Clinton made his deal with the corporate devils, signing media and banking deregulation, and thus shitting all over Americans' information and economic life preservers.

And as I'll report in Chapter 3, right next to him was Hillary Clinton, already angling for her turn sitting in the throne.