

It's *NOT* The News

*...Talking Islam at
the Capitol of Texas...*

Part 2: The Media



by Kat Rowoldt

Two years ago I reported the impact on me after having been in the press pit at the Capitol for the first time. My shock and horror at actually watching the media craft the news they would be doling out to their audiences astounded me. It had nothing to do with the meat of what was happening before them in deciding who would be Speaker of the House, but instead it was trying to capture a tasty sound bite to tickle the ears.

Now the ear-ticklers have taken it to a new level. I would call it a feeding frenzy, trying to suck blood out of a moment for the sharks to devour. It's an ugly sight.

Let me set the stage: It's Thursday morning at the Texas Capitol. Representative Kyle Biedermann (R-District 73) is hosting a forum on Homeland Security. Five speakers have flown in, and one Skyped in, to share their experiences and firsthand knowledge about radical Islamic terrorism. As the meeting begins, only a handful of press are in the room, each politely picking their spot and marking their territory, setting up their shot.

The mainstream media is an interesting breed to watch. There are the three-legged-tripod group, the roamers, the floor-crawlers, the ones with lenses that are as large as the cameras on tripods, the courteous ones who duck under your shot, the arrogant ones who don't care if they block your shot or crowd your space, and those who professionally blend in and do not distract from the event they are covering. Some are shooting video, some still shots, and others are scribbling notes on pads.

Watching them do their thing, you have to ask if they even begin to understand the depth of importance the meeting has and what it all really means. Not one of them seems focused on the topic. They are just doing their jobs. Like someone who knows their craft, like cutting down or sawing off branches of a tree, yet with no comprehension of the significance of which way a tree falls, or

even which end of the branch to be sitting on when cutting it off. Is ignorance truly bliss?

As the meeting progressed, more and more people packed into the room, including media. Well into the meeting, the back wall became a collection of Muslims and their imams. Later, we learned CAIR had held an impromptu press meeting to pull some of the reporters off the forum Biedermann was hosting. Now they had moved from that gathering and joined us. We were maxed out in the room.

I learned the Washington Post and New York Times had flown in reporters to cover the forum when I visited with Representative Biedermann the day before. I had also been told the Capitol was not going to video or live-stream the forum. I offered to video it for Biedermann, since I planned to do that anyway. I have provided his office with the footage of his two-hour event for his records.

During the presentation that morning, only the representatives seated at the dais could ask any questions of the speakers. When the meeting concluded, and before I could even get my rolling case freed from its space and my camera moved out, a feeding frenzy erupted immediately in front of the dais.

I had no desire to join in the mania. I chatted with a few acquaintances and slowly made my way across the room to a side door which led to a private room. I had been given permission to do a few interviews there.

I set my things up and peeked back out into the main room. Yikes! The frenzy was in full force. Mayor of Irving, Beth Van Duyne made her way over to do the interview. We did a quick shoot, as she had a lunch engagement awaiting. I stepped back into the main room and the craziness was still happening, but Representative Biedermann and guest speaker Nonie Darwish were finally escaping the media madness.

The press push at the dais appeared to have been led by a few Muslim women who were going after Biedermann and Darwish. Somewhere in all the mix, former Representative Molly White (R-District 55) lost her cool by a question one of the media had asked, and she popped off at him.

The media loved the footage that created. That split-second sound bite became the lead story in several news reports; it had nothing to do with the forum at all. The other media got great shots of the press-pounding, but nothing of the information presented by the speakers.

The last huddle of insanity came when the same Muslim women challenged Representative Bill Zedler (R-District 96) in another area of the room. Two gentlemen went to Representative Zedler's aid, both highly versed in the

Qur'an, the Hadith (the sayings of Mohammad), and Islamic law. One of the two men had the "Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law" in his hand. These men were non-Muslim. One of the Muslim women called her imam into the dialogue. I so wish I had captured the moment with my camera. It was a textbook example of how they respond to questions and what they come back with to change the conversation.

When the imam was asked about a certain passage of their scripture, the woman who was leading the challenge answered for the imam and said she was sure he would prefer to have it in Arabic, which is their standard response. "Reliance of the Traveller" is published bi-lingual, both Arabic and English side-by-side. When that didn't work, and the question was asked again, the woman began trying to shame the man who asked the question about the scripture he quoted. She began saying he was being challenging and rude. He was not.

She then asked Representative Zedler, and the man asking the question, to come to their mosque/school and have an open debate on their turf. They welcomed the invitation.

Standing back and observing what was transpiring, there is no question the chaos after the event was rehearsed and well-planned in advance. I have no doubt this orchestrated pounding has been used multiple times before, perfecting their control of the media, the message, and the mania: The purpose of the event was lost in the chaos. The priceless firsthand knowledge the six experts gave to our legislators was buried beneath the controlled diversion CAIR successfully created.

Women's rights, Texans' rights, terrorist organizations openly operating in our country, and other critical points were swept underfoot and trampled on, in order to portray Representative Biedermann as an Islamophobe, the event as anti-Muslim, and former Representative Molly White as hot-tempered.

On the contrary, Biedermann worked to bring highly qualified experts to the Capitol to inform our legislators from their unique fields of expertise about areas of concern in regards to border security and safety for Texans. It was an attempt to define the difference in Islamic ideology between their tenets of faith and where the radical extremists cross over the line that endangers others.

In defense of former Representative Molly White, I think we all get tired of hearing the media's baiting, loaded questions, even disrespectful questions, in their interviews. She did what a lot of us would like to do at times. Sad thing, the media doesn't even realize how crude, rude, and disrespectful they have become. They have been taught to throw the blood bait into the shark tank to get a story that will tickle the ears. Remember, if it bleeds, it leads.

As I have often said, it truly saddens my heart to realize we, Texans, Americans, all just hard-working folks, are being fed this type of news/propaganda; we use this untrue data to create our opinions and influence the way we vote. Media manipulation! Strategist-orchestrated! Crafted outcomes! Sad!

One comment. I think the core of what helped drive the media to the point where it is today, is today's technology. There is such a rush to be the first to break a story—Get it out now! Show it raw!—we have lost the ability to put things into their proper context, which breeds distortion. In some cases, we need to slow down and package our stories with verified content in place, and with dots connected. Cancel the talking heads and ear-ticklers; let's return to good old-fashioned disciplined truth.

I have been shocked over the last few months at the requests that came in from all over the world to use sound bites out of my interviews or other footage. One of the first I received was from the AP, immediately after General Michael T. Flynn was asked to be an official part of President Trump's advisory board. They wanted to pull a snippet out of a piece to put in a story they were crafting about General Flynn.

When I figured out what they were going to do, I denied them permission. Two days later, I was watching "Fox & Friends" and there was my footage playing on their program. After a split-second of "Wow, that's cool," I realized someone had stolen my footage.

RightWingNews.com had lifted my footage, blocked out my CRN ID and set theirs in the upper right corner of the screen and then sold it to Fox. That's the lovely media sources we have been relying on for our information. What they wanted was the sound bite in which General Flynn says Islam is not a religion but a political ideology.

I sent General Flynn a quick email telling him I had denied the AP access, but it had been stolen anyway and ended up on Fox. Within minutes he kindly emailed me back and said not to worry. He still stands by his statement and always will. He thanked me for letting him know what was happening and to resend him the full footage of the video they were lifting it from. I did.

We truly need a new news source that can deliver truthfully what is happening around the state, the nation, and the globe directly to the people. We are very close to launching Encounter Truth. Get ready! Yes, that was a plug for what we are about to bring to you. What I originally envisioned as of interest to just Texas has already gone global and we haven't even had our kick off. I think you will be very excited about this, even with its humble beginnings. Please keep it, my team, and me in your prayers. Thank you.

Part 3 will give you an insight on what Texas Muslim Day at the Capitol was like. There's more to come. . . .

Until next time

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