



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 19, 2019

NYT Signals Change in Trump Editorial Narrative From Collusion to Racism

Following backlash by high-profile Democrats over a *New York Times* story that headlined President Trump's call for national unity against racism in the wake of the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, the *Times'* executive editor convened a meeting of newsroom staff to address concerns that the "independent" news source was becoming too soft in its coverage of the president and needed to intensify its portrayal of Trump as a racist.



The [August 5 Times story](#), originally headlined "Trump Urges Unity Vs. Racism," reported in the first paragraph that President Trump had "denounced white supremacy in the wake of twin mass shootings over the weekend, and citing the threat of 'racist hate,' he summoned the nation to address what he called a link between the recent carnage and violent video games, mental illness and internet bigotry."

The article went on to complain that Trump had "stopped well short of endorsing the kind of broad gun control measures that activists, Democrats and some Republicans have sought for years, such as tougher background checks for gun buyers and the banning of some weapons and accessories such as high-capacity magazines."

However, after some Democrat personalities loudly complained over the headline's implication that Trump may be less than a virulent racist, the *Times* quickly changed the headline to read "Assailing Hate But Not Guns," and later to "Trump Condemns White Supremacy but Stops Short of Major Gun Controls" — neither of which could stem leftist outrage.

Among the Democrat notables sounding off over the headline were failing presidential candidates Beto O'Rourke, who assailed the headline as "unbelievable," and Cory Booker, who admonished the paper that "lives literally depend on you doing better, NYT. Please do."

Similarly, New York Democrat Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez insisted that the headline amounted to a "reminder of how white supremacy is aided by — and often relies upon — the cowardice of mainstream institutions."

And New York Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted: "Hey, nytimes, what happened to 'The Truth Is Worth It?' Not the truth. Not worth it."



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In the wake of the backlash, the *Times*' executive editor, Dean Baquet, summoned journalists and other newsroom staff for a convocation to address the impression that the newspaper's coverage of Trump was losing its edge in holding "the administration to account."

In the hour and fifteen minute meeting, Baquet observed to his staff that the paper's coverage of the president was transitioning "from being a story about whether the Trump campaign had colluded with Russia and obstruction of justice to being a more head-on story about the president's character."

Baquet admitted that the *Times*' editorial powers had "built our newsroom to cover one story" — which ultimately turned out to be based on contrived and phony evidence — "and we did it truly well." However, with Robert Mueller's admission that there had been no collusion and no obstruction for which the president could be indicted, "we have to regroup, and shift resources and emphasis to take on a different story."

Baquet noted that when "Bob Mueller walked off that witness stand, two things happened. Our readers who want Donald Trump to go away suddenly thought, 'Holy s***, Bob Mueller is not going to do it.'" The second thing that happened was that "the story changed," said Baquet, with a resulting change in the theme of the *Times*' ongoing Trump narrative to racism.

Addressing the paper's "vision for coverage for the next two years," Baquet reflected: "How do we cover a guy who makes these kinds of [allegedly racist] remarks? How do we cover the world's reaction to him?... How do we cover America, that's become so divided by Donald Trump? How do we grapple with all the stuff you all are talking about? How do we write about race in a thoughtful way, something we haven't done in a large way in a long time? That, to me, is the vision for coverage."

In covering the insider *Times* meeting, CNN expressed frustration that, regardless of a lack of clear evidence, the *Times* has not joined it and other major media organs in aggressively labeling President Trump a racist.

"Unlike some other major newsrooms," reported CNN impatiently, "more than two years into Trump's presidency, the *Times* has not plainly labeled Trump's series of racist actions and statements as such. Instead, Baquet has opted to explain what Trump has said, allowing readers to decide for themselves whether they consider his comments racist."

One *Times* staffer unintentionally revealed his superior, elitist mentality with regard to at least some of the *Times* readership, arguing that such traditional journalism might be "well intentioned," but it is ultimately ineffective at leading *Times* readers to the desired conclusion that Trump is a racist.

"It puts a burden on readers and especially those who are maybe less savvy," the unidentified *Times* staffer told CNN. "And when the stakes are so high and so many people feel personally threatened and there's real danger in the air, the show don't tell approach feels inadequate."

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