

Whose news is it — and who decides what we see?

written by Lallan Schoenstein
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Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez read Granma together, underscoring a shared commitment to media that serves the people, not the oligarchs.

Fidel Castro was one of the great communicators. He focused on the problems of raising the cultural level so that people could gain control of their own destiny.

Castro warned that the great media corporations of the imperialist countries functioned as the heavy artillery of the ideological war — instruments that spread confusion, fear, and demoralization, and that worked to disarm the people politically. He stressed that mass media was the main ideological weapon used by oligarchies to shape consciousness and defend their power.

“When they emerged, the mass media seized minds and ruled them not merely on the basis of lies, but on conditioned reflexes. A lie is not the same as a conditioned reflex. A lie affects knowledge; a conditioned reflex affects the capacity to think. ...They don’t teach the masses how to read or write, they spend billions on advertising every year to pull the wool over the eyes of a huge majority of humanity.” ([“Fidel Talks About Freedom of the Press,”](#) 2008)

Fidel Castro said, “Illiterate and semi-literate people cannot do it, and for hundreds of years, while colonialism reigned and the capitalist system was developing since the invention of the printing press, four-fifths of the population could neither read nor write, and there was no free and public education system.

“Today, through huge investments alone one can have centers which broadcast the news throughout the planet and only those who direct them decide what is broadcast and how it is broadcast, what is printed and how it is printed. The efforts made by the Pentagon to monopolize information and the Internet networks are obvious.” ([“Once Again, the Rotten OAS,”](#) 2009)

Trump attacks on the media

Trump is fond of blasting the media with a rant about “Totally fake news.” It is clear that he is not talking about the paucity of real news. No, it is understood that he is whining about the appeasement of his bloated ego.

Trump has threatened to sue the British government-affiliated BBC for between \$1 billion and \$5 billion, claiming that a news clip of Trump’s speech before the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol was unfairly edited. The controversy led to the resignations of the BBC’s Director-General Tim Davie and Head of News Deborah Turness.

Neither Davie nor Turness is known for left-wing bias. Turness even promoted Nigel Farage, the racist, anti-immigrant leader of Reform U.K. Nonetheless, an ultra-right member of the BBC Board, Robbie Gibb, wrote in an August 2020 Daily Telegraph opinion piece: “The BBC has been culturally captured by the woke-dominated group, think of some of its own staff.”

“There is a default left-leaning attitude from a metropolitan workforce mostly drawn from a similar social and economic background.”

The media oligarchs

Within the United States, the high-tech media establishment, with its powerful media control, backs Trump’s rule. For the most part, they support his aggressive grasp of the U.S. governing state, which parallels their rapidly expanding media presence.

Elon Musk, the richest man on Earth, now owns X, formerly known as Twitter. He bought it for \$44 billion in 2022, giving him control of a platform that had previously served as a broad public source for news stories. Musk promised to unleash its “extraordinary potential.”

Larry Ellison, the second-richest man, has a son, David, whose company, Skydance

Media, merged with Paramount Global in July, making David Ellison CEO of the new Paramount Skydance, which owns CBS. The Ellisons have also made bids to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery, which owns CNN.

In July, Paramount paid \$16 million to settle Trump's lawsuit against CBS over a "60 Minutes" interview with Kamala Harris. Two weeks later, on July 17, CBS announced it would cancel *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert, with the show ending in May 2026. In August, Brendan Carr, the Trump-appointed chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), approved film studio Skydance's \$8 billion merger with Paramount on the condition that CBS provide "unbiased coverage" and eliminate what he called "discriminatory" programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In early October, CBS named the anti-"woke" blogger Bari Weiss editor-in-chief of CBS News. Weiss's only experience in broadcasting was running a right-wing, pro-Zionist newsletter called *The Free Press*. It was subsequently leaked that CBS News suppressed Trump's boast that the network "paid me a lotta money" in a "60 Minutes" interview.

Ellison is a big Trump donor. In fact, he was one of those on a phone call to plot how Trump's 2020 election defeat could be overturned. In June, Ellison and Oracle were co-sponsors of Trump's military parade in Washington.

Mark Zuckerberg is the third-richest man in the world, with an estimated net worth of \$251 billion according to *Forbes*. He owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Zuckerberg changed Facebook's name to Meta to reflect his ambition to dominate the "metaverse," which he says is "the next frontier."

The fourth-richest man, Jeff Bezos, owns *The Washington Post* and Amazon MGM Studios. The Washington Post Editorial Board recently published a piece applauding the Pentagon's push for a new generation of small nuclear reactors — specifically

the Army's Janus Program and Project Pele. This caused controversy because X-energy, a key contender for these military contracts, is now financially linked to Amazon: In October 2024, Amazon announced it was anchoring a \$500 million investment in X-energy. Amazon Web Services is partnering with X-energy to deploy small modular reactors (SMRs) to power its data centers, particularly in Washington state and Virginia.

Another multi-billionaire media oligarch, Rupert Murdoch, owns Fox News, The Wall Street Journal, and the New York Post, as well as the book publisher HarperCollins. He and his son own hundreds of local, national, and international publishing outlets around the world, including in Britain (The Sun and The Times), Australia (The Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun, and The Australian), and the television network Sky News Australia — giving them major political influence in Britain, the United States and Australia.

In 2017, Murdoch sold the bulk of his family's 21st Century Fox entertainment businesses to Disney for \$66 billion, but kept the newspapers and the right-wing U.S. cable channel Fox News. "Are we retreating? Absolutely not," he said during an investor call on the day the deal was announced. "We are pivoting at a pivotal moment."

The growing menace of misinformation

Fidel Castro spoke about the toxic menace of the capitalist dominance of culture. The support of the media oligarchs for the Trump regime is an ominous sign of the crisis of their decaying class.

At the same time, their attempts to control the consciousness of the masses through the media are becoming less successful. Opposition to the ICE attacks on immigrants and protests against the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza are signs of resistance.

Now is the time to build resistance, to reach out and strengthen communications through our unions and communities — to confidently raise our voices, saying we can build a better world.

Fidel Castro's centenary will be celebrated on August 13, 2026, marking what would have been his 100th birthday. A comprehensive program of commemorative activities, titled "100 Years with Fidel" (#100AñosConFidel), has been launched by Cuba and solidarity organizations worldwide, extending through November 2026.

