



Fox News Treachery: Profiteering by Perniciously Pushing Polarizing Propaganda

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Fox News Exposed

Fox "News" has had a more negative, divisive, far reaching, harmfully impactful, antagonizing and dangerous impact on the USA than almost any other pernicious influence. For the good of the country, the Federal Communications Commission should revoke Fox Corp's broadcast licenses for all political reporting on account of its betrayal of the public interest by intentionally lying to people.

"The people running the country's most popular news network knew Mr. Trump's claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election were false but broadcast them anyway in a reckless pursuit of ratings and profit." This is the central allegation of Dominion's \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit. And remarks made by Rupert Murdoch add to the damning evidence that Dominion has accumulated as it tries to prove its case.

The lies Fox pushed about the election "did not simply harm Dominion. They harmed democracy. They harmed the idea of creditable elections." The many Fox falsehoods, told repetitiously, helped provoke the fervor that led to the deadly and injurious mob assault against Congress on January 6, 2021.

Fox demonstrates an abysmal lack of integrity in its drive to profit and wield power by telling their viewers only what they want to hear. In so acting, and pushing damaging lies, it displays an excess of maniacal greed. Fox is dangerously irresponsible because its programming divides people and tears our society apart.

Dominion's lawyers have written, "The truth matters", and added, "Lies have consequences."

Since the pro-Trump mob stormed the Capitol on January 6, "threats of political violence and actual attacks have been a steady reality of American life, affecting school board officials, election workers, flight attendants, librarians and even members of Congress, often with few headlines and reaction from politicians."

There have been an increasing number of instances of violence in recent years, and "scholars who study political violence point to a common thread: the heightened use of bellicose, dehumanizing and apocalyptic language, particularly by prominent figures in right-wing politics and media."

Fox News hosts made numerous unfounded accusations about voter fraud and "technical glitches" in Dominion Voting Systems voting machines, repeatedly airing false, far-fetched and exaggerated allegations about Dominion and its purported role in a plot to steal votes from Trump.

Dominion is suing Fox Corporation for defamation and harms, as a result of those and many other "big lie" bogus assertions. The suit cites some incredibly preposterous on-air claims like saying that Dominion was a front for the communist government in Venezuela trying to interfere in our elections.

"Dominion's complaint is replete with example after example of false statements, many of them made after the facts were widely known."

If Fox loses the case, it will be "a huge financial and reputational blow to Fox, by far the most powerful conservative media company in the country."

Do not doubt the truth: Enabling sympathy with Trump's claims is all but treasonous to our democracy, and to democratic fairness and the integrity of voting and elections. It is also subversive of domestic tranquility and the

really important quality of social cohesion, which is being shredded and trashed asunder by polarization -- like that caused by falsehoods pushed by Fox and further hard-right networks.

Fox deserves the criticism it receives and the damage to its reputation, whether or not it loses the lawsuit. For it has used the politics of resentment, and exploited aggrieved people who regard themselves as victims, to tear the country apart -- for the disreputable sole purposes of making bigger profits and being able to exert more unaccountable power and influence.

Fox News Proven to Lie Unrepentantly to Its Viewers

Robert Reich observes, "If you wonder how right-wing leaders can still be supported and even beloved by millions of Americans and the vast majority of conservatives, I'll tell you one key reason. It is because of the lies spewed every day by the likes of Fox News, Sinclair, Breitbart, and far-right hate-mongers on social media. This is the single biggest threat to American democracy."

"Backed by billionaires like Rupert Murdoch and Elon Musk, these far-right news outlets and social media companies have created a disinformation bubble -- and one with massive reach -- in which global warming is a hoax, COVID-19 vaccines aren't safe, and the 2020 election was stolen."

The treacherous collaboration of conservative politicians and Fox "News" has created serious threats to our democracy. Fox has acted for years as a propaganda arm of the Republican Party. It has pushed right-wing spin to support Trump and other Republican politicians, and repeatedly broadcast false claims that Trump was cheated of victory in the 2020 election. At the same time, off the air the network's stars, producers and executives expressed contempt for those same lies and conspiracy theories, calling them things like "ludicrous", "mind-blowingly nuts", "totally off the rails" and "completely bs". One legal expert characterizes the messages as "incredibly damning."

"The texts aren't merely embarrassing -- they provide chilling evidence that Fox hosts lie on the air, seek retribution for basic journalistic fact-checking, and provide a national platform to conspiracy theorists they know are not credible."

On Nov. 5, 2020, just two days after the election, Bret Baier, the network's chief political anchor texted a friend: "There is NO evidence of fraud. None." And the network's top primetime broadcast hosts -- Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity and Laura Ingraham -- "texted contemptuously of the claims in group chats, but also denounced colleagues who pointed that out publicly or on television," wrote David Folkenflik in *Off the air, Fox News stars blasted the election fraud claims they peddled*.

"Ingraham called Trump campaign attorney Sidney Powell 'a bit nuts.' Carlson, who famously demanded evidence from Powell on the air, privately used a vulgar epithet for women to describe her. A top network programming executive wrote privately that he did not believe the shows of Carlson, Hannity and Jeanine Pirro were credible sources of news."

"Even so, top executives strategized about how to make it up to their viewers -- among Trump's strongest supporters -- after Fox News' election-night team (in November 2020) correctly called the pivotal state of Arizona for Democratic nominee Joe Biden before other networks."

"The audience started to erode severely that fall, starting on Election Night itself. Fox executives and stars equally obsessed over the threat posed by the smaller right-wing network Newsmax. Hannity texted Carlson and Ingraham that Fox's Arizona call 'destroyed a brand that took 25 years to build and the damage is incalculable.' Carlson shot back that it was 'vandalism.' Others hosts, including Dana Perino, were equally shocked."

Bill Sammon, the Fox network's Washington managing editor on Dec. 2, 2020, one month after the election, wrote, "A sense of desperation pervades the private notes from Fox's top stars, reflecting an obsession with collapsing ratings. It's remarkable how weak ratings make ... good journalists do bad things." Like harming America.

"Network executives above him stewed over the hit to Fox News' brand among its viewers. Yet there was little apparent concern, other than some inquiries from Fox Corp founder Rupert Murdoch, over the journalistic values of fairness and accuracy." The Murdochs are a menace in harming America. Nemesis, the Greek goddess who

regarded arrogance as intolerable, personifies retribution for the sin of hubris. And she's becoming aggravated.

"Fox News host Neil Cavuto was attacked by colleagues for pulling his show away from a presentation by then White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany in which she made unfounded claims of fraud once more. (McEnany is now a host on Fox News.)"

"Those revelations and far more surfaced in legal filings made public late Thursday afternoon (Feb. 16, 2023) as part of Dominion Voting System's blockbuster \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit against Fox and its parent company. Dominion sued after Fox hosts and guests repeatedly claimed, without evidence, that the company had switched Trump votes to Biden."

The revelations presented in Dominion's nearly 200-page brief shows that "there were no illusions that there was heft to the allegations of election fraud even among those Fox figures who gave the most intense embrace to Trump allies peddling those lies. Instead, Dominion's attorneys paint a portrait of inner turmoil, anger and angst at the news network."

The claims vilifying Dominion were aired over and over again on Fox News despite the fact that Dominion sent thousands of communications dissecting and disproving the false claims. Dominion even took to the opinion pages of Fox News' corporate cousin, the *Wall Street Journal*, to refute the allegations. (Both Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal* are part of the Murdoch family's conservative media empire.) Dominion says it sent more than 3,600 communications to Fox staffers taking issue with the false claims of election fraud.

"Under the high legal bar of actual malice, defined in a 1964 U.S. Supreme Court decision involving *The New York Times*, Dominion has to show Fox acted either with knowledge that what it was broadcasting to the public was false, or that it acted with reckless disregard of the truth."

"Here," Dominion's legal team wrote in its filings, "every person acted with actual malice." It offered many examples where key Fox figures knew what the network was putting on the air was false.

"In answering questions from Dominion's attorneys under oath, former Fox Business host Lou Dobbs said he had never 'seen any verifiable, tangible support' that Dominion was owned by a second voting-tech company Smartmatic. Yet that claim was repeatedly said on air by Fox hosts and guests. Dobbs also said he was aware of no evidence that Dominion rigged the election, according to Dominion's legal filings."

"On the air, Dobbs was among the most muscular proponents of Trump's baseless claims of election fraud. He was forced out of Fox the day after Smartmatic filed its own \$2.7 billion defamation case against the network."

"On Jan. 5, 2021, the day before Congress was to ceremonially affirm Biden's win, and an angry pro-Trump mob sacked the U.S. Capitol to prevent it, Rupert Murdoch forwarded a suggestion to Fox News CEO Scott. He recommended that the Fox prime time stars -- Carlson, Hannity and Ingraham -- acknowledge Trump's loss. 'Would go a long way to stop the Trump myth that the election was stolen,' he wrote. They did not do so. 'We need to be careful about using the shows and pissing off the viewers,' Scott said to a colleague."

In a recent article in *The Atlantic* by journalist Adam Serwer, a staff writer for *The Atlantic*, Serwer explained *Why Fox Lied to Its Viewers*. "The network's hosts and leaders knew that Trump had lost the election, but feared the consequences of telling their audience the truth."

"Fox News lies to its viewers," he wrote. "Its most prominent personalities, among the most influential in the industry, tell their viewers things they know not to be true. This is not accusation, allegation, or supposition. Today, we know it to be fact."

"Early in the Trump era, news organizations were torn over whether to refer to Donald Trump's false statements as lies, because it is difficult to know an individual's state of mind, to know what they know. In the throes of insecurity, ideological conviction, or carelessness, people can make statements that are false without malicious intent. The argument over what a person knows to be true or false can take on a metaphysical aspect."

"Sometimes, though, you have proof that someone knew one thing and said another. With Fox News, examples of the network's commitment to knowingly misleading its viewers abound. There was the irresponsible hyping of anti-

vaccine propaganda even as it imposed a vaccine mandate on its employees. There were the text messages from Fox hosts released by the January 6 committee showing that they saw Trump as responsible for inspiring the mob that sacked the Capitol, even as they defended him on air and downplayed the significance of the event."

In this propaganda feedback loop between Republicans and Fox News, Fox is fearful of its own viewers, and makes an ethics-deficient bargain with the devil by pushing falsehoods on the air.

Tucker Carlson even suggested that a Fox journalist who fact checked false allegations against Dominican voting machines should be fired for not lying to Fox viewers -- like he and Sean Hannity and Laura Ingraham were doing.

Moral Turpitude and Fox Lawyers

Fox got more bad news when former Fox News producer Abby Grossberg recently sued Fox, according to NBC News, "alleging she was coerced into giving misleading testimony about the network's coverage of supposed election fraud." For the network's lawyers to have coerced Abby Grossberg into giving misleading testimony in the Dominion case is a damning claim, for Grossberg had worked to help produce the shows for Fox "News" hosts Maria Bartiromo and Tucker Carlson, and had been fired by Fox after she filed her complaints.

Grossberg said she didn't trust the producers at Fox that she worked with because they were "activists, not journalists, and impose their political agendas on the programming." She added in an amended complaint that the lawyers wanted her to downplay the importance of ratings in decision-making at Fox and that she felt "pressured to respond with a generic 'I do not recall' whenever she had the opportunity, even if she, in fact, did have a recollection, albeit perhaps not a perfect one." And she also claims Fox discriminated against her on the basis of her gender, and that the network is home to rampant misogyny.

Grossberg's attorneys add that the Fox lawyers "intentionally coerced and intimidated Ms. Grossberg into providing testimony that placed her reputation in a false light" and "did so intentionally to deflect blame and liability in the Dominion/Fox Lawsuit away from Fox News and male on-air hosts and executives."

No one is above the law in our nation of laws and Constitution, and corporate entities egregiously deceiving the public should not be above the law either, especially when they so consequentially abuse the power of their moneyed influence at the colossal cost of severely undermining "domestic tranquility" and peaceable coexistence and the general welfare and national security. Corporations cannot be exempted from conforming to the law and the moral good in such serious ways.

The behavior of Fox News reveals that it is engaged not only in instances of unethical profiteering and legal malfeasance, but also of apparent seditious conspiracy to undermine our democracy and weaken our constitutional republic. Fox appears to be damnably guilty of betraying the public trust by more-or-less violating every one of the Preamble purposes for which the Constitution was ordained and established. These aspects of Fox's business make their activities unacceptable.

Assessing the Chances that Fox Will Be Found Guilty

The text and email messages revealed so far in Dominion's lawsuit "could amount to powerful body of evidence against Fox, according to First Amendment experts, because they meet a critical and difficult-to-meet standard in such cases." That standard is the "actual malice standard", which makes it hard to win defamation lawsuits "because of the difficulty in demonstrating a reporter or publisher's state of mind before publication. It places the burden on the plaintiff to prove that the reporter was not simply just wrong, but knew it and proceeded regardless."

Nonetheless, says RonNell Andersen Jones, a University of Utah professor who specializes in media law, "You just don't often get smoking-gun evidence of a news organization saying internally, 'We know this is patently false, but let's forge ahead with it.'" And they did.

The Supreme Court ruling that has guided libel and defamation claims for nearly 60 years was decided in the *New York Times v. Sullivan* case in 1964. It ruled that a plaintiff (like Dominion) must show that a defendant (like Fox) published false statements with "actual malice" -- meaning that it was done "with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not."

Based on the messages revealed, "I think that Dominion both will and should prevail," said Laurence Tribe, a former Harvard law professor. "If anything, the landmark this case is likely to establish will help show that *New York Times v. Sullivan*" is not an impossible legal hurdle to clear, as some critics have claimed.

"While it's true that the Supreme Court [in *Sullivan*] has set a high bar for plaintiffs, a high bar doesn't mean no bar," said Sonja R. West, a First Amendment scholar at the University of Georgia law school. "What we're seeing in this case looks an awful lot like the exception that proves the rule. The First Amendment often protects speakers who make innocent or even negligent mistakes, but this does not mean they can knowingly tell lies that damage the reputation of others."

"Fox's attempt to defend itself with *Sullivan* notably clashes with efforts by some prominent conservatives to undo the ruling. Trump has said numerous times it should be easier for people to claim libel against the news media. Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has backed state legislation to do just that. Supreme Court justices Clarence Thomas and Neil M. Gorsuch have also suggested the *Sullivan* standard should be revisited." This is wrong.

Fox will probably have to face a jury in a trial that has jury selection scheduled for April 13, 2023. "That could prove perilous," said a knowledgeable observer. "In my experience, juries have no sympathy for media companies that knowingly cause harm to others."

"Last year a jury in Connecticut in October ordered Alex Jones to pay \$965 million to the families of children killed in the Sandy Hook massacre, whom he had repeatedly lied about on his shows."

The great comedian Jon Stewart recently told University of Utah law professor Ronnell Andersen Jones, "As a cultural pathogen, Fox News is far more powerful, far more devious, far more pernicious and has created far more damage than Alex Jones ever will. And at least Alex Jones gives you supplements to help offset the damage," Stewart jokingly added, referencing Jones' penchant for hawking dietary aides.

"Alex Jones is a wolf in wolf's clothing," Jon Stewart said during a lengthy discussion about defamation law and the falsehoods knowingly peddled by personalities on Fox. "Fox News is the opposite," he wittily added.

MAGA Republican Conspiratorial Complicity

Malice seems to have become an epidemic in politics. A main reason for this is due to the fact that those who get money and gain unmerited power happen to derive big personal benefits from strategies that divide people.

Just days after the jarring Breaking News about Fox "News" hosts being revealed to have lied to their viewers about the 2020 election being stolen from Trump, Kevin McCarthy gave Tucker Carlson thousands of hours of video from the January 6 attack against the Capitol to use as he sees fit. This scheming collaboration between Republican leaders and deceitful Fox propagandists is morally wrong.

Historian Heather Cox Richardson noted that Mike Allen of *Axios* reported this news, saying that House speaker Kevin McCarthy has given Tucker Carlson -- who again "figured prominently in the election fraud lies -- exclusive access to 41,000 hours of footage from the U.S. Capitol of the January 6, 2021, attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. According to Allen, Carlson's producers have already begun going through it to see what they can use on his show."

See what this action really is -- a top Republican leader is openly conspiring with the tainted media collaborators of the Big Lie about election fraud by giving government videos to Fox so that it can twist the truth about the January 6 insurrection to try to agitate its viewers into even worse anger and hostility and public disunity.

We have a critical need to reform the political structures that disproportionately empower the extremes in American life, and yet the new MAGA House Majority is seeking revenge against members of the January 6th Committee, starting with Rep. Adam Schiff, and they are threatening to vindictively impeach President Biden and Attorney General Merrick Garland without good grounds.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis may be even more dangerous than McCarthy and the buffoonish Trump, since he stokes political extremism that is increasingly afflicting the ethics-deficient and unprincipled Republican Party. He is another overly ambitious divide-to-conquer demagogue who is maniacally preoccupied with getting power and

money for himself by fawningly pandering to Big Money financiers who act as facilitators for the rich and "Masters of the Universe" leaders in our capitalist corporatocracy.

Fox should fire Tucker Carlson for the harm he has done to the network and America with his pandering lies and distortions of the truth and his rabble-rousing. This harm may bankrupt the network if it loses the huge lawsuits against it by Dominion and Smartmatic, another technology company that Fox is accused of defamation against while it attempted to rile up the MAGA masses and improve the company's ratings and greedily hold up its stock price by engaging in treachery.

Tucker Carlson is also a major "mouthpiece for white supremacy." He uses his position on Fox News to spread white nationalist beliefs to the general public. He has also expressed sexist views. Recordings of Tucker Carlson from the days of his "shock jock radio show *Bubba the Love Sponge*" (which originally aired from 2006 to 2011) cover a wide range of topics, including a clip from 2007 in which he compares women to dogs, adding: "They're extremely primitive, they're basic, they're not that hard to understand. And one of the things they hate more than anything is weakness in a man." What twisted BS!

The dire consequences of consequentially lying to people was exposed as dangerous in a crookedly parallel development on another front, when the one-year anniversary was marked of Vladimir Putin's terroristic war crimes against humanity in his brutal aggression against Ukraine and its people. Putin's military's is ruthlessly bombing civilians and water and power infrastructure, and schools, churches, hospitals and residences. These acts are beyond evil, and his consequential lies about the war are making Russia into a rogue pariah nation.

Faux News Threatens Democracy

Fox News is faux news: dishonest, deceitful, manipulative, engaging, entertaining, agitating and emotion hijacking. It is designed to engage and addict viewers, and thereby profit by divisively polarizing people over immigration and politics and hot button social issues.

The principal purposes and guiding principles for the creation of the U.S. Constitution are set forth in its great Preamble. So it is an outrage against propriety that Fox News, to maximize its profits, has repeatedly promoted devious, disingenuous and divisive false narratives about Trump and the 2020 election, and about threats posed by immigrants. In so acting, and by their efforts to exploit hot button social issues, it is hijacking people's emotions and undermining unity and making injustices worse and sacrificing the general welfare and threatening both national security and the blessings of liberty for the American people and our Posterity. The bottom line effect is to torpedo domestic tranquility and shatter social cohesion and sabotage peaceable coexistence. This is wrong.

Consider the remarkable Ukrainian patriot Volodymyr Zelensky. In the past year, he laudably "has risen to global renown, fashioning himself as the brash conscience of Western democracies, as he pushes for more weapons to bolster Ukrainian forces," wrote Paul Sonne and David Stern in the Daily 202. "With the savvy of a professional entertainer, he has delivered hundreds of speeches presenting the war as a Manichaeian struggle between democracy and autocracy, freedom and tyranny, fairness and injustice -- and most recently, at last week's Munich Security Conference, David and Goliath. In a distracted Western world, he has kept the Ukrainian cause alive." We Americans, too, must be strong supporters of democracy and fairness to be patriotic.

MSNBC's Joe Scarborough ripped Republican politicians that he called "buffoons" because they delivered a propaganda victory to Russia when they attacked President Joe Biden on Feb. 21, 2023, after Biden made a secret visit to Ukraine. The president visited Kyiv in a show of support for Ukraine in Russia's war against it. Yet GOP lawmakers Marjorie Taylor Greene, Matt Gaetz, Andy Biggs and others issued sharp criticism of Biden and U.S. military assistance for the conflict. This is why the "Morning Joe" host said their comments echoed Kremlin propaganda.

"As we talk about this, it is so clear that this is a battle between a western democracy and Russian and Chinese autocracy," Scarborough said. "While you have the majority of Republicans in the Senate supporting the president and western democracy, you had some buffoons yesterday on Capitol Hill say some absolutely remarkable things that I have no doubt [Russian state media program Russia Today] will be playing for the next few weeks."

Joe Scarborough added. "They hate the American president so much that they're willing to provide aid and

comfort to the Russian cause. It really -- you know, one of Kevin McCarthy's closest associates talked about a civil war, talked about secession. Others openly, openly just contemptuous of Ukraine and the efforts there. They were saying, 'doesn't matter to us.' A guy who wants to be president of the United States actually going on television yesterday saying Russia doesn't pose any threat to its neighbors."

The Rich, Elitism and "Conservatives"

Tom Nichols, a staff writer at *The Atlantic*, wrote in *THE REAL ELITISTS ARE AT FOX NEWS*, that Republicans and their media enablers despise ordinary Americans.

Ironically, right-wing political and media figures regularly level the accusation of "elitism" at other Americans. Tom Nichols observes, "The recent revelations from Dominion Voting Systems' defamation lawsuit against Fox News and the Fox Corporation over claims of election fraud 'are reminders that the most cynical elites in America are the Republicans and their media valets.'"

"Elected Republicans and their courtiers in the right-wing-media ecosystem deploy the word *elite* as an accusation, a calumny, almost a crime. To be one of the elite is to be a snooty, educated city dweller, a highbrow pretend-patriot who looks down upon the Real Americans who hunt and fish and drive pickup trucks to church. (It does not mean "rich people"; Donald Trump has gleefully referred to himself and his supporters as the "super-elite.") The elites also support the production of "fake news" by liars who intend to hoodwink ordinary people into doing the bidding of wealthy globalists. They buy books and listen to National Public Radio and they probably read things like *The Atlantic*."

"This shtick has been a remarkable success. Republicans have used it to convince millions of working people that super-educated gasbags such as Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, and Ron DeSantis are just ordinary folks who care deeply about kitchen-table issues that matter to their family and a secure future for their children, such as Hunter Biden's sex life and whether public schools are letting kids pee in litter boxes."

"In the entertainment hothouse, Fox News is the most prominent offender. The Fox all-star lineup, especially in prime time with Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity, and Laura Ingraham, is a parade of millionaires who work for Rupert Murdoch, one of the richest and most powerful men in this corner of the Milky Way galaxy. Every day they warn their viewers that democracy is in peril because of people who majored in gender studies. All of this nuttury is delivered with a straight face -- or in Carlson's case, the weird mien of a dog watching a magic trick."

"It's one thing, however, to suspect that Fox personalities see their viewers as mere rubes who must be riled up in the name of corporate profit. It's another entirely to have it all documented in black and white. Dominion might not win its lawsuit against Fox, but for the rest of America, the process has produced something more." Damning revelations! Check out the article!

MSNBC Opinion Columnist Matt Gertz writes in *FOX LIES: DEMOCRACY DIES* that "newly revealed Tucker Carlson text messages insult his fans — and disgrace Fox News."

"A brief filed by election technology company Dominion Voting Systems as part of its \$1.6 billion defamation suit against Fox News ... provides the clearest picture ever of the right-wing network's operations — and the portrait that emerges is not flattering."

"Wielding internal emails and text messages obtained through discovery, as well as numerous depositions with Fox's on-air talent and brass, Dominions lawyers reveal that the network was feeding viewers information about fraud in the 2020 election that its executives, hosts and producers knew to be false. Out of fear that Fox News's audience was leaving for its competitors, the brief alleges, the network chose to buttress President Donald Trump's lie that the election had been stolen from him, helping to set the stage for the Jan. 6 insurrection."

"Perhaps the brief's most revealing piece of evidence comes in a text message between prime-time hosts Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham. In the Nov. 18, 2020, conversation, the Fox stars shared their contempt for Trump's conspiracy-minded lawyers, Sidney Powell and Rudy Giuliani. Carlson told Ingraham that he personally found their lies 'unbelievably offensive,' but added: 'Our viewers are good people and they believe it.'"

"When I tell people that I've spent 15 years studying Fox News and the right-wing outlets in its orbit, the question

I get most frequently is, 'Do they really believe what they are saying?' In other words, are Fox's biggest stars actually bigoted conspiracy theorists, or are they playing a role for the cameras that fulfills their viewers' expectations? My typical answer is that it is impossible to say for sure and that different hosts may fall more into one category than the other, but that ultimately what matters is what they say, not what they truly think."

"But Carlson's text message is the key to understanding Fox News' programming. It establishes definitively that at least in some cases, Fox hosts are knowingly deceiving their viewers because they think that is what the viewers want."

This is now crystal clear: they promote misinformation and falsehoods for ratings and to prop up Fox's stock price -- in other words for money and greed and power.

"Other panicked messages in the brief include executives chastising 'news side' staff for not 'respecting our audience' by debunking false election fraud claims and instructing them not to 'smirk at our viewers' in that way because they might switch to a Trumpier alternative. Meanwhile, the prime-time hosts — led by Sean Hannity — discussed trying to get a colleague fired for fact-checking a false Trump tweet about Dominion changing the vote totals. As Carlson put it, such content was 'measurably hurting the company.'"

"Together, these messages reveal a network operating by a simple mantra: The audience giveth and the audience taketh; blessed be the audience. Carlson's messages show that he thought Powell's claims about election fraud were 'absurd' and 'insane.' But while he noted on-air that Powell had not produced evidence for her most explosive claims about Dominion's role in stealing the 2020 election, as Dominion's brief points out, 'he did *not* say what he believed privately — that she was 'lying.' That might offend viewers who believed what she was telling them, and so it went unsaid."

"Fox News' role, according to its own talent, is thus not to challenge or inform its audience, but rather to confirm what its right-wing viewers already believe. In short, Fox is a propaganda outlet, not a news outlet."

"In this case, Fox's viewers 'are good people' and they believe the 2020 election was stolen, so Fox confirms that belief. ... Just hours after the brief's release, Carlson was still insinuating that the election was fraudulent, telling his viewers: "There are so many unanswered questions, some of them lingering. How, for example, did Biden get 15 million more votes than his former boss Obama? Was the 2020 election a miracle? Honestly we don't know and don't expect an answer tonight."

"The network's handling of numerous other stories reflects the same logic: Fox hosts at the least give succor to right-wing conspiracy theories, at most adopt them in full -- but rarely if ever disrespect the audience by debunking them."

"Fox's viewers are good people and they believe that Bill Gates has placed microchips in the COVID-19 vaccine, and Fox's stars are there to tell them they are right to think the vaccines are dangerous and unnecessary. Fox's viewers are good people and they believe that Paul Pelosi was assaulted by his gay lover, and Fox's stars are there to tell them they are right to question the official story. Fox's viewers are good people and they believe that Trump is about to smash a global cabal of Democrats and celebrities that is sexually abusing children, and Fox's stars are there to tell them that there's nothing wrong with being a QAnon adherent, whatever that is."

"For years, Fox Corp. chairman Rupert Murdoch and his son and would-be heir, Lachlan, have steadfastly supported Fox's right-wing talent and handsomely profited from their dives into the fever swamps. Indeed, the brief reveals that the elder Murdoch was fully aware that the claims of a rigged election his network was airing were 'crazy stuff' -- and that document was filed before his own deposition in the case."

"But with its 2020 election fraud lies, Fox News may have finally gone too far. It is very difficult to win a defamation case against a media outlet in this country -- rightfully so given the importance of the First Amendment. But Dominion's lawsuit makes a strong case based on internal documents that it says show 'literally dozens of people with editorial responsibility -- from the top of the organization to the producers of specific shows to the hosts themselves -- acted with actual malice' -- the legal standard required in defamation cases. And earlier in the week, a court ruled against Fox News' bid to quash a separate \$2.7 billion lawsuit filed by the election technology company Smartmatic, which the network similarly maligned.

Matt Gertz concluded, "Fox News may finally be on the verge of facing real consequences for lying to its viewers. That day of reckoning can't come soon enough."

Dastardly Rudy Giuliani

Fox "News" is actually unfair and imbalanced, in stark contrast to its deceitful claims for many years to be Fair and Balanced. The network pushes nefarious misinformation, and has been involved in a toxic feedback loop with right-wing politicians and Trump supporters to create and satisfy demand for deceitful spin about immigrants, and "wokism", as well as about the 2020 presidential election, in which it agitated its viewers by promoting lies pushed by the likes of Rudi Giuliani and Sydney Powell.

Watch the documentary *When Truth Isn't Truth: The Rudy Giuliani Story* to better understand the naked opportunism that has caused the famed mob prosecutor and New York crime fighter to be transformed into a lie-spewing Trump defender. The film premiered recently on MSNBC, and is streaming on Peacock.

Trump saw Giuliani as "a kindred soul" in his ambition, demagoguery, white supremacy, and crass opportunism -- and his willingness to violate ethics, norms and laws. Giuliani brazenly helped Trump in his devious and dastardly exploits. In a February 21, 2023 news movie *The GOP's problem of denying election results they don't like is only getting worse*, Rachel Maddow looked at examples of Republicans doubling down on rejecting election results and stoking Big Lie conspiracy theories despite clear evidence that suggest Americans are not buying it, including in many of the 2022 midterm election results.

MSNBC Opinion Columnist Ken Frydman has written about Rudy Giuliani in *Rudy Giuliani helped make my career. Now I'm trying to help end his*: "Perhaps he was always like this — and I just missed the early warning signs."

Ken Frydman reflects: "The man I worked for is not the man who now lies for Trump," I wrote. I wanted to favorably introduce readers to the 'old Rudy.' But I also hoped to snap him out of Donald Trump's spell. That has turned out to be an impossible task."

"Ever the contrarian, Rudy Giuliani dismissed my column and the 'liberal' newspaper it appeared in. He was busy trying to dig up dirt on Hunter Biden, anyway. But Ukrainian sidekicks Igor Fruman and Lev Parnas were arrested Oct. 9 (2021) — the day after my Times op-ed ran."

"I met Rudy Giuliani in February 1992, when I was hired as press secretary on his rerun mayoral campaign against Democrat David Dinkins, the city's first Black mayor. Giuliani had lost to Dinkins by 2 percentage points in 1989; he defeated Dinkins by 2 points in 1993, a four-point swing."

David Dinkins, incidentally, was an admirable New York Mayor who cared about people and made politics about community and accountability rather than tribal warfare.

"Back then, Rudy at least seemed like a regular guy from Brooklyn. Suits off the rack and sensible dress shoes. A quick study, a policy wonk, a terrific litigator. He smoked cigars but didn't drink, at least not on the campaign trail. And he listened to me and others, because he wanted to win."

"Rudy's first term was arguably the most successful in the city's history. His tough-on-crime policing strategies and tactics reduced murders in New York City from 2,245 in 1990 to under 800 in 1997, the end of his first term. And murders fell even further in 2001, Rudy's last year as mayor. Indeed, the murder rate has continued to fall in the 20-plus years since: The city's low-water murder mark was 292 in 2017; city officials said 488 murders were recorded citywide in 2022."

"So how to square the mayor I worked for with the Donald Trump toady? Maybe longtime Rudy haters are right: Perhaps he was always like this, and I missed the early warning signs."

"Imagine young Rudy Giuliani. He was the only child of a doting mother and a mobbed-up father, studious and serious and at the top of his class. Catholic school gave him the moral high ground and a willful sense of self-certitude. He considered becoming a priest until his budding interest in the opposite sex emerged." (By comparison, Trump was reportedly a lazy student who was shipped off by his affluent parents to the New York Military Academy.)

"But Rudy did change, at least outwardly. The 9/11 hero became an anti-democratic collaborator. No longer the darling of the New York tabloids, he was the butt of late-night jokes. He remains in legal jeopardy and could even be barred from practicing law in multiple states."

"Returning to my original question: How did this happen? Only Rudy knows for sure. Nothing he says or does makes sense anymore, whether it was his bizarre news conference outside Four Seasons Total Landscaping, sticking a hand down his pants in *Borat*, shaving in an airport restaurant, or appearing oblivious to some sort of dark dye running down his cheeks."

"I've tried and failed to reason with Giuliani publicly. I have appealed to his 'former self' and his future legacy. At one time, I hoped Giuliani would come to his senses and abandon Trump. Instead, he dug in deeper, becoming the face of Trump's election fraud charade."

"And then, on Jan. 6, 2021, Rudy metaphorically lit a match to the Constitution and personally exhorted the insurrectionists to 'have trial by combat' before they stormed the Capitol to 'stop the steal.'"

"That's why I keep speaking out -- I feel almost duty-bound to use my platform to keep exposing Rudy's lies, writing columns, doing interviews and consulting on documentaries about him."

"My mother asked me in late 2019 why I 'keep kicking Rudy while he's down.' After all, she noted, 'he helped make your career.'"

"Because," I responded, "he keeps getting back up." Ken Frydman concludes, "I'm still waiting for him to throw in the towel." Our legal system seems to take forever to hold people accountable for misdeeds. Will Rudy Giuliani finally go down for his lies in Georgia in trying to overturn the 2020 election, and other consequential wrongs?

Another Divide-to-Conquer Rogue

Marjorie Taylor Greene is another pusher of division and conspiracies and main proponent of political extremism. On Presidents' Day 2023, she tweeted: "We need a national divorce. We need to separate by red states and blue states and shrink the federal government. Everyone I talk to says this. From the sick and disgusting woke culture issues shoved down our throats to the Democrat's traitorous America Last policies, we are done."

That call for secession "wasn't a gaffe. She doubled down on it repeatedly." Note that the Civil War reinforced the understanding that secession can be calamitous, and is unconstitutional, unpatriotic and un-American.

The congresswoman is in effect calling for a new War Between the States, and is sadly too influential within the GOP -- "and too representative of its views -- for her calls for secession to be dismissed," writes Peter Wehner. "It was only a matter of time before Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene -- a peddler of far-right conspiracy theories, a speaker at white-nationalist rallies, a supporter of political violence, and an all-around unhinged individual -- would renew her call for secession."

"The temptation of many people, eager to move past America's political freak show, will be to ignore her comments and dismiss her as an outcast, a fringe figure, deranged but isolated. The less said about her, the better. But that's unwise," observed Peter Wehner.

Wehner pointed out that "Greene is not alone in her views. She is giving voice to a widespread and growing sentiment in the Republican Party. Among Republicans in the South, for example, support for secession was 66 percent in June 2021, according to a Bright Line Watch/YouGov poll. (The poll found support for secession growing among every partisan group in the months following the January 6 riot at the Capitol.)"

"Greene is not just a member of Congress, not just a member of its Committee on Homeland Security; she has become a confidante of Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy. He has 'forged an ironclad bond' with Greene, according to the *New York Times*. She has 'taken on an outside role as a policy adviser to Mr. McCarthy.' He has in turn lavished praise on her."

"If you're going to be in a fight, you want Marjorie in your foxhole," McCarthy told the *Times*. "When she picks a fight, she's going to fight until the fight's over. She reminds me of my friends from high school, that we're going to stick together all the way through." Wehner adds that McCarthy will "even stick together with those arguing

for secession, apparently."

Historian Heather Cox Richardson wrote perceptively on Feb. 20, 2023 that when Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene called for a national divorce, she "explicitly called for dividing the nation." Heather told her readers, "For once I will spare you my usual lecture on how elite southern enslavers in the 1850s made this same argument because they resented the majority rule that threatened their ability to impose their will on their Black neighbors."

"I will note, though, that former representative Liz Cheney (R-WY) helpfully reviewed 'some of the governing principles of America' for Greene, tweeting: 'Our country is governed by the Constitution. You swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Secession is unconstitutional. No member of Congress should advocate secession, Marjorie.'"

MTG is an epitome of malignant Trumpian ugliness in American politics. She shows that Bertrand Russell was right when he said that "The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent are full of doubt," and she also shows us that when representatives of the people are cocky absolutists in their politics and their religion, the world suffers serious harms. The program 60 Minutes should not have given her high visibility.

"What Greene had to say next is of more interest in this moment. The Munich Security Conference, the world's largest gathering for international security discussions, has just reported that the Russian war on Ukraine is a war of authoritarianism on a rules-based international order. At that conference, Vice President Kamala Harris said the U.S. had determined that Russia has committed crimes against humanity and noted that the bipartisan U.S. delegation to the conference was the largest we have ever sent. The U.S. president has just entered a war zone to declare U.S. support for democracy and is now in Poland, where he will speak with the leaders of the nine countries that make up NATO's eastern flank and will deliver a speech that Blinken has described as 'very significant.'"

"In contrast, Greene echoed authoritarian leaders Viktor Orbán of Hungary and Putin himself when she called for splitting the nation over 'the sick and disgusting woke culture issues shoved down our throats' and 'the Democrat's [sic] traitorous America Last policies.' Authoritarian leaders insist that the equality that underpins liberal democracy threatens traditional society because it means that LGBTQ people, women, and minorities should have the same rights as white men. Greene appears to be taking the same position."

Peter Wehner again referred to calls for secession when he observed: "Last summer, thousands of Texas Republicans approved a platform that called on the state legislature to authorize a referendum on secession from the United States. And shortly after Donald Trump lost the 2020 election, Rush Limbaugh, one of the most dominant figures on the American right, said, 'I actually think that we're trending toward secession. I see more and more people asking, What in the world do we have in common with the people who live in, say, New York?'"

"Limbaugh, who died in early 2021, added that 'a lot of bloggers have written extensively about how distant ... and how much more separated our culture is becoming politically, and that it can't go on this way. There cannot be a peaceful coexistence of two completely different theories of life, theories of government, theories of how we manage our affairs. We can't be in this dire a conflict without something giving somewhere along the way.' (Limbaugh said of secession, 'I myself haven't made up my mind.')

"The Republican Party, forged a century and a half ago in the fight against secession, now finds the move worth contemplating."

"Civil War-like secession isn't going to happen in the United States, at least not anytime soon. But all of the emotions that are attached to a *desire* for secession -- seething resentment, existential fear, an unforgiving spirit, contempt and hatred for those who disagree with you -- are stoked by the kind of rhetoric employed by Greene and those who see the world as she does. Such language will further destroy America's political culture and could easily lead to extensive political violence."

"But by and large, if Republicans call Greene out, they will offer only gentle rebukes. Mostly, they'll want to ignore her comments, change the topic, and try to redirect attention to Democrats. During the past half a dozen years, Republicans have perfected whataboutism."

"What the rest of us learned during the Trump era is that a party led by craven men and women -- some of them

cynical, others true believers, almost all afraid to speak out -- will end up normalizing the transgressive, unethical, and moronic." Moderation, not extremism, is required.

"Trump did horrifying things at the end of his presidency, including attempting a coup and inciting a violent mob to attack the Capitol. The majority of Republicans tolerated what he did, to a degree that simply wouldn't have happened at the beginning of his presidency. It took time for the corruption to fully take hold, for the party -- lawmakers and the right-wing media complex -- to fall completely into line. But fall in line they did. Trump may be losing his grip on the Republican Party, and that is a good thing, but his nihilistic imprint remains all over it."

"MAGA Republicans like Marjorie Taylor Greene have added calls for secession to their corrosive lies about the 2020 presidential election. More incendiary and treacherous claims will follow. Greene and McCarthy -- one crazed, the other cowardly -- embody a large swath of the modern-day GOP. Any party that makes room for secessionists and secessionists is sick and dangerous."

Heather Cox Richardson also recently wrote, "Meanwhile, Fox News Channel personalities, including Tucker Carlson, are trying to spin Biden's visit to Ukraine as proof that he doesn't care about the train derailment in Ohio. Scholar of disinformation behavior Caroline Orr Bueno noted: 'There's a narrative being planted here; watch how support for Ukraine is framed as incompatible with US national interests.' She notes that a similar narrative in Canada argues that support for Ukraine hurts Canadian veterans." These are subversive ploys!

The Dysfunctionality, Harms and Injustices Associated with Gerrymandering

We should understand clearly the great value of consequential ethics in providing healthy perspective to issues, helping us make eminently reasonable evaluations of proposed reforms and solutions to problems that confront us.

Gerrymandering plays a highly negative role in our political system because a main consequence of gerrymandering is to create safe seats for politicians who are on extreme fringes rather than being centrists. This hinders collaboration, cooperation and fair-spirited compromise in serving constituents. Seen in this light, gerrymandering is contrary to good governance and finding positive solutions to big problems, and antagonistic to efforts to enact needed win-win common good reforms. Gerrymandering polarizes the populace and helps drive wedges between people, shredding social cohesion and entrenching disunity, and even stoking potential political violence.

Attention-seeking political opportunists like the trolling provocateur and politically incendiary agitator Marjorie Taylor Greene, and the aggressive gun enthusiast Lauren Boebert, are empowered in their extremist political base by being elected in contorted gerrymandered districts. As a result, there are harmful impacts and more obstacles that prevent good public service. It is highly antithetical to good governance to have such coldly calculating politicians seek more attention, power and personal political benefits by cynically trying to "own the libs", destroy political opponents and severely twist the truth.

Other Seditious Conspiracies

House Republicans are focusing their work now that they have narrow control of the House of Representatives on cutting popular social benefits, launching investigations into President Biden, and playing hostage games with the debt ceiling.

The Congressional Budget Office revealed in mid February that the U.S. is on track to add nearly \$19 trillion to its national debt over the next 10 years. This is \$3 trillion more than previously forecast, and is due to higher interest costs on the ballooning debt and escalating costs of the military and Social Security and Medicare. Federal interest costs will total more than \$10 trillion over the next decade. This is an extraordinarily high cost for our failing to reign in regressive tax cuts and deficit spending year after year after year.

One of the most high profile Republicans pushing federal spending cuts is Florida Sen. Rick Scott, who led the party's Senate campaign committee during the 2022 midterm elections. Scott put out a platform that called for "sunsetting" all federal legislation after five years. That would mean Congress would be required to renew massive programs -- like Social Security and Medicare -- and their funding levels twice per decade.

With our politics so intensely divided these days, sunseting all federal legislation would result in the elimination of many many programs, and this would come at a frighteningly terrible cost to most Americans.

"The Republican Study Committee, an influential House group that drafts GOP policy proposals, put forward a 2023 budget that called for raising the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67. The group also suggests cutting the benefits for the spouses and children of future retirees and disabled workers, and increasing the Social Security retirement age to 69 for younger workers, then linking the retirement age to increases in life expectancy. In other words, as Americans live longer, they'd also have to work longer before they could receive full Social Security benefits."

We should heed the warnings demonstrated in France, where sustained widespread protests are taking place because President Emmanuel Macron has increased the retirement age -- from 62 to 64.

Some top Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, have disavowed cuts to Social Security and Medicare. But hard-liners in the House have suggested linking cuts to those programs to attempts to raise the debt ceiling, or the amount of money the federal government is allowed to borrow.

Those lawmakers say they are concerned about national debt and want to slash spending on social benefits in exchange for raising the borrowing cap. But with House Republicans using the issue as leverage to extract concessions on spending cuts from the White House, they are threatening a first-of-its-kind government default, which would likely destabilize global markets and push the country into a deep recession -- and maybe also have the same dire impact on world economies.

Think about John Steinbeck words, penned in an extraordinary passage in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*: "Some time ago a Congress of honest men refused an appropriation of several hundreds of millions of dollars to feed our people. They said, and meant it, that the economic structure of the country would collapse under the pressure of such expenditure. And now the same men, just as honestly, are devoting many billions of dollars to the manufacture, transportation, and detonation of explosives to protect the people they would not feed."

In those words, Steinbeck was referring to the Second World War that was then going on, nine months before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor -- a war "which no one wants to fight, in which no one can see a gain: a zombie war of sleep-walkers which nevertheless goes on out of all control of intelligence." Steinbeck and his close friend, 'Doc' Ed Ricketts wrote these words while embarked on a famous marine biology expedition to the Sea of Cortez in March 1940, on a 77-foot-long chartered fishing vessel named the *Western Flyer*. (Ah, to have been a fly on the wall!)

Breaking News

Heather Cox Richardson wrote on Feb. 20, 2023: "We awoke this morning to news that President Joe Biden was in Kyiv, Ukraine, where he pledged 'our unwavering and unflagging commitment to Ukraine's democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.' Air raid sirens blared as Biden and Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky walked through the streets during the U.S. president's five-hour stay."

"As National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters, Biden's visit was the first time a U.S. president has visited 'the capital of a country at war where the United States military does not control the critical infrastructure' ... in other words, an active war zone. Biden traveled in a special mission plane from Germany to Poland, then took a train from Poland to Kyiv. To make sure there would be no attacks, the U.S. notified the Russians that Biden would be in Kyiv, but a Russian MiG 30 flew from Belarus during Biden's visit, triggering air raid sirens."

Nine years ago, "Four months of protests against the corrupt puppet leader of Ukraine culminated in a violent crackdown on February 20, 2014 in which more than 100 people were killed. This led to revolutionary discord and the necessity for the corrupt Russia-installed puppet leader of Ukraine to flee to Russia." (Republican operative Paul Manafort -- later Trump's campaign manager -- had helped get the guy installed as Ukraine's leader.)

"According to Sullivan, Biden felt it was important to visit Kyiv at the anniversary of the 2022 Russian invasion. The image of Biden and Zelensky standing together sent a message to Russian president Vladimir Putin, as David Rothkopf put it in the *Daily Beast*: "I am here in Kyiv and you are not. You not only did not take Kyiv in days as some predicted, but your attack was rebuffed. Your army suffered a humiliating defeat from which it has not recovered."

"Just under a year ago, the global equation looked very different. On February 4, 2022, Chinese president Xi Jinping hosted Russian president Vladimir Putin on the opening day of the Winter Olympics. The two men pledged to work together in a partnership with "no limits" in a transparent attempt to counter U.S. global leadership and assert a new international order based on their own authoritarian systems."

"At the time, Russia was massing troops on its border with Ukraine but fervently denied it was planning to invade. On February 24, 2022, Russian tanks rolled across the border and Russian planes covered them in the air. Biden remembered that Zelensky called him and said he could hear the explosions as they spoke. 'I'll never forget that,' Biden said. "The world was about to change.' When Biden asked what he could do to help, Zelensky said: 'Gather the leaders of the world. Ask them to support Ukraine.'"

"And over 50 nations stepped up to make sure the rules-based international order in place since World War II, which prevents one country from attacking another, held. Those backing Ukraine against Russian aggression have squeezed Russia with economic sanctions and supported Ukraine with military and humanitarian aid. As Biden said today, standing next to Zelensky: 'Kyiv stands and Ukraine stands. Democracy stands. The Americans stand with you, and the world stands with you.'"

"Biden pledged another \$460 million in aid to Ukraine, emphasizing that U.S. support for the country is bipartisan." ... "Biden mourned the cost Ukraine has had to bear, but championed its successes. 'Russia's aim was to wipe Ukraine off the map,' Biden said, but 'Putin's war of conquest is failing. Russia's military has lost half its territory it once occupied. Young, talented Russians are fleeing by the tens of thousands, not wanting to come back to Russia. Not ... just fleeing from the military, fleeing from Russia itself, because they see no future in their country. Russia's economy is now a backwater, isolated and struggling.'"

"Putin thought Ukraine was weak and the West was divided," Biden said. He remembered telling Zelensky that Putin was "counting on us not sticking together. He was counting on the inability to keep NATO united. He was counting on us not to be able to bring in others on the side of Ukraine." While Biden didn't say it, Putin had reason to think those things: the four years of the Trump administration had seen the U.S. offending allies and threatening to pull out of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that stands against Russian aggression.

"He thought he could outlast us," Biden said. "I don't think he's thinking that right now.... [H]e's just been plain wrong. Plain wrong." A year later, Biden said, "We stand here together."

"You and all Ukrainians ... remind the world every single day what the meaning of the word 'courage' is -- from all sectors of your economy, all walks of life. It's astounding. Astounding."

"You remind us that freedom is priceless; it's worth fighting for -- for as long as it takes. And that's how long we're going to be with you, Mr. President: for as long as it takes."

Zelensky answered, "We'll do it."

"The world could stand behind Ukraine as it has because Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have held a coalition together and presented a united front with Zelensky and allies and partners in defense of democracy."

Truth and freedom and democracy are better than lies and authoritarian dictates and skullduggery. Let's support leaders who honestly represent these values, and depose those who do not.

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
April 7, 2023