

important story of price control, and also, later on, of peacetime incomes policy.) The planners, he demonstrates, knew their business. It was no process of supply and demand that brought 50,000 aircraft a year into production, but the fast and incisive calculations of Simon Kuznets and Robert Nathan and their ability to find resources by, for instance, extending work hours, adding shifts and limiting overtime pay. Bernstein writes: "Born of an intellectual legacy tied to the investigations of scholars predisposed to privilege individualism and democratic ideals ... neoclassical economics was required in the historical accident of a command economy."

Twenty years on, Kennedy and Johnson's economists took a no less serious view of their duty. The Council of Economic Advisers of those years worked with the President closely and intervened with authority on his behalf both within government and with the private sector. Full employment without inflation was achieved and maintained. In the words of Senator William Proxmire, Kennedy's CEA chief Walter Heller and his colleagues "ha[d] almost singlehandedly made the profession both respectable and useful in the eyes of government." And then, as though these achievements had not occurred, the profession suffered a nervous breakdown. It was part of the larger crisis of American liberalism faced with Vietnam and the twin challenges of radical and reactionary protest. The New Economists might maintain that the fault was Lyndon Johnson's, for failing to raise taxes to pay for the war (a position this reviewer has never found entirely satisfactory). But however the merits of that may be, their position with the profession and the public crumbled, first because of inflation, and then with the return of classical doctrines, which airbrushed the government from American economic history more completely than the Soviets erased Trotsky.

"Feel-good economics" took over. As Bernstein relates, in 1997 Greg Mankiw of Harvard received \$1.25 million for a textbook in which the name of John Maynard Keynes "barely appeared once." Under President Clinton, Alan Greenspan took control of policy, while members of the CEA dis-

appeared from view. Privatization and deregulation advanced on all fronts, abetted by cheerleading economists who in earlier times would have been in powerful dissent. Instead of public servants, the pros became consultants and expert witnesses, for hire like lawyers. Ultimately, their credibility was lost, while talented academics retreated into opaque formalism without practical content. Bernstein concludes: "At century's end, the discipline ... was confronted with a remarkable paradox. On the one side, the very prestige and influence of economics as a social science had been built upon statist agendas. Yet on the other, the contemporary profession had turned inward, spurning the fiscal activism and frank political engagement of its forebears, preferring a more withdrawn posture that ostensibly depoliticized its work while at the same time it made more and more practitioners mere shills for particular corporate elites eager to seize upon public assets now increasingly 'privatized.'"

And so we end where we started. Of the American Economic Association meetings in 1915, the President of the New York Federal Reserve Bank (no less) wrote that the participants were a "rather impractical lot. Here is a world crisis, the greatest in a half a thousand years, or more," and economists did not even deign to discuss it." No present day observer would be surprised.

JAMES K. GALBRAITH's latest book is *Inequality and Industrial Change: A Global View*, co-edited with Maureen Berner.

Yellow Journalism

By Seth Mnookin

MORE THAN SIX YEARS AGO, IN the fall of 1995, Ruth Shalit wrote a 13,000-word piece for *The New Republic* entitled "Race in the Newsroom—*The Washington Post* in Black and White." The piece, written before the feisty scribe was drummed out of *TNR* for a laundry list of jour-

nalistic sins, set out to document "the growing backlash against affirmative action at the *Post* itself?"

Shalit was tackling one of the thorniest topics in newsrooms in America. Her piece came on the heels of two incendiary memoirs written by black reporters who had left the *Post* (Nathan McCall's *Makes Me Wanna Holler* and Jill Nelson's *Volunteer Slavery*). Both writers said the paper was a predominantly white enclave into which token blacks were hired but never fully accepted. On the other side of this poisonous divide were the midlevel white journo who were convinced that they would be succeeding faster were it not for the forced diversity represented by the Nathan McCalls of the world. (McCall made an easy target: He had a serious criminal record as part of his vita, having spent three years in a Virginia prison, and admitted in his book to participating in numerous gang rapes of black girls.)

Shalit got an impressive number of things wrong. (Look up *Post* editor Len Downie's barnburner

riposte for the whole list.) But she did get the forest right, even if she was hard-pressed to accurately identify all of its trees. A half-decade ago, the burgeoning economic boom was just reaching the country's ink-stained wretches, and most working journalists still remembered the lean years of the early and mid-1990s, when staff-writer jobs were few and far between. Efforts to diversify the country's newsrooms were often forced and clumsy, and many people, black and white, had legitimate gripes. There was a growing backlash against affirmative action, and it wasn't limited to the *Post*'s newsroom.

It was during this time that William McGowan, a former *Washington Monthly* editor and current Manhattan Institute fellow, signed on with Simon & Schuster's Free Press to write a book critiquing how a poorly conceived and executed push to diversify newsgathering organizations was robbing American journalism of its objectivity. McGowan aimed to take Shalit's critique one step further, examining not



COLORING THE NEWS:
How Crusading For Diversity Has
Corrupted American Journalism
by William McGowan
Encounter Books, \$25.95

only how diversification was roiling newsrooms but how it was hurting the product of journalism as well.

It took six years for McGowan's polemic, *Coloring The News*, to get published, and by the time it came out, it was no longer a Free Press book. The feisty West Coast house Encounter Books had picked it up. Not surprisingly, a pungent hint of scandal surrounds this move. In late 2001, Encounter's publicist sent out an e-mail claiming that McGowan's work had been suppressed by the liberal media cabal running the country's newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses: "Originally, Simon & Schuster's Free Press had signed on to publish this book, but decided against it in fear of publishing such a controversial issue."

It sounds like a great hook: Manhattan Institute fellow has his work squelched by the very liberal theocracy he's critiquing. Unfortunately this claim, like too many of the criticisms in McGowan's outdated tome, has only the flimsiest connections to reality. McGowan did indeed sign a contract with the Free Press in 1995. By the time he got around to handing in his manuscript four years later, the editor, editor-in-chief, and publisher of the Simon & Schuster imprint had all moved on.

Still, despite Encounter's claims, McGowan acknowledges that the Free Press was willing to publish his book; it was the author who balked. "It was clear their editorial vision had changed," he told me. "If they had taken the book, they wouldn't have supported it the way I wanted them to." ("The suggestion that the book was cancelled for fear of controversy is a complete fabrication," says Mitch Horowitz, the editor who signed up McGowan. "In terms of controversy this book was a walk in the park.")

And so we are introduced to *Coloring the News*. As with Shalit's 1995 article, which McGowan cites approvingly several times, McGowan's book demonstrates an impressive ability to misinterpret and misreport facts. But McGowan, who seems to have begun this project with an ideological axe to grind, fails to even map the forest correctly. *Coloring the News* is filled with canards and an unsophisticated tendency to see conspiracies behind every door even as it fails to recognize the

tremendous change that has occurred in American newsrooms over the past six years.

Affirmative action in the newsroom, like any other affirmative action debate, became less pressing as the economy got better and there were more jobs to be had. And the country's news directors, editors, and publishers have become more nuanced in their efforts to broaden the makeup of their operations. That may be one reason McGowan seems to have done little research since the mid-'90s, when he initially signed on to write his book. For example, he harps on some old and much-ridiculed quotes from top *New York Times* people, including then-executive editor Max Frankel's "own little quota plan." But that was 10 years and two top editors ago. Today, the *Times* has a black managing editor for the first time in its history, an appointment that caused no outcry from partisans on either side of this diminishing debate.

(A humorous example of how out-of-date this book is: Anna Quindlen is the most frequently cited *New York Times* columnist, and she hasn't worked for the paper since 1994.)

More disturbing, the examples McGowan does dust off to show double standards and reverse racism in the newsroom, such as the *Boston Globe's* Patricia Smith-Mike Barnacle debacle, often are missing so much information as to change their meanings. Elsewhere, McGowan's analyses are so misleading one has to wonder if the deception is purposeful. Take McGowan's treatment of the December 1995 killings at Freddy's Fashion Mart in Harlem, where a black man named Roland Smith set the Jewish-owned store on fire and then shot seven people to death.

The New York Times, claims McGowan, referred to Smith in laudatory terms. "The *Times* depicted Smith as a man of 'principle,' explaining that he lived 'an ardent credo' of black 'self-sufficiency' and 'resistance,' and that his actions inside Freddy's were not criminal per se, but a strange act of suicide in protest against the 'institutional force' of white racism," McGowan writes.

The article in question actually refers to Smith as mentally deranged. Furthermore, the piece never claims that the massacre wasn't criminal;

instead, it simply quoted a former friend of the killer's to show how far gone he was: "It was an act of insanity for all of us looking in on it ... But I'm 98 percent sure he didn't view it as an act of criminality, but as a strange act of suicide against an institutional force." The same day that story ran, the *Times* printed an op-ed column (by a black writer, no less) that read, "Roland Smith was driven by a sick hatred of whites and Jews and by the criminally irresponsible anti-white and anti-Semitic ravings of protesters who had been picketing Freddy's."

Even as McGowan spends thousands of words picking on the *Times* tendentious coverage of racial issues, he devotes exactly one sentence to last year's Pulitzer Prize-winning project, "How Race is Lived in America." He calls the 15-week series an "exception" which "managed to catch many of the subtleties and the sense of historical progress often lacking in most of the paper's daily coverage."

While McGowan will no doubt refer to negative reviews of his work as further proof that the entrenched media elite don't want to hear his views, the shame of *Coloring the News* is that the issues McGowan tries to raise—whether unofficial quotas for newsroom hiring results in a decrease of quality and objectivity; whether racial issues are treated with less skepticism than they should be—do need to be addressed. But as McGowan claims in his book, no serious, thoughtful analysis of these issues has been done, and that includes this work.

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Trial by Jury Consultant

By Dorothy Samuels

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS following his 1991 acquittal of charges that he raped a woman at the Kennedy family's Palm Beach estate one moonlit night over the previous Easter Weekend, William Kennedy Smith thanked his mother, his family, his defense lawyer, Roy Black, and members of the jury. In a true sign of the