
TOPIC: Tucker Carlson

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Tucker Carlson's attempt to smear the New Yorker

BY ALEX PAREENE

**WAR ROOM**

Hilarious news out of **Keith Kelly's media column in the New York Post yesterday**: Jonathan Strong, investigative journalist for Tucker Carlson's Daily Caller, spent weeks "investigating" the claim that the New Yorker's Jane Mayer plagiarized her recent story on the Koch brothers, funders of much of the conservative-libertarian movement that has been amassing power in Washington for decades. But the plagiarism story fell apart upon

closer examination, and they will not be running it. (Except that, of course, the story of the story they're not running ended up in Rupert Murdoch's New York Post.)

Someone -- I won't speculate as to who, though Kelly surely knows -- handed Strong a story: Mayer plagiarized blogger Lee Fang for her Koch piece! Except Fang himself said: "Jane Mayer properly credited me in her story. She clearly did a ton of her own research. I have nothing but admiration for her integrity as a journalist." But there was more! A 2002 Mayer piece on the SEC had stolen from a 2000 BusinessWeek story! Except the author of *that* piece said, "I remember reading her story at the time, and I think she did a good job."

In other words, the plagiarism charges were so unfounded as to be laughable. And the Caller did not run the story. Which is actually hard to believe, because the Caller will run *anything*. (Crazy homophobic rantings from an old bigot recently fired from his part-time job for sexual harassment? **Sure!**)

The evidence not quite supporting an explosive claim has not stopped Carlson from running a story before. Strong's JournoList stories required **misleading headlines and unsupported claims** to be remotely interesting, so the Caller ran them with misleading headlines and unsupported claims. A scoop about **some sort of pay-for-blogging ring** last August sounded juicy in the first paragraph, but soon revealed itself as thin (some blogs were charging above-market rates for ads, some bloggers are also campaign consultants) and poorly sourced ("one Republican campaign operative" and a blogger, both unnamed).

I'm especially surprised that the Caller didn't run with this because as of Monday, Tucker sounded pretty gung-ho about it. "It's a bigger story than that. From what I know at this point, it's an extensive piece," he told Kelly

He dropped it the next day. Maybe he actually read it.

Jane Mayer, of course, has been a prominent journalist since the 1980s. She's authored or co-authored

three major books and won various prestigious awards and generally earned the respect of everyone who still reads magazines and books. I point out the accolades not because they "prove" that she's a great journalist -- her often amazing work speaks for itself -- but because few plagiarists get away with it for that long, especially when they're so prominent and widely read. (Plus, there are those legendary New Yorker fact-checkers.) Instead of devoting a week to the "investigation," it probably could've been cleared up in an afternoon -- unless there was some sort of political motivation behind the investigation, of course. In that case, the charges suddenly seem much more serious. It's to (Cato Institute senior fellow) Tucker's credit that he dropped this when it didn't pan out, but would he have dropped it if the Post's media reporter hadn't apparently learned who fed it to the Caller to begin with?

The funniest thing is that Kelly did more work vetting this story than Strong's actual editor did. Tucker told Kelly, "I have no clue where we got it. I never ask the reporters where they get stuff, only whether it's true. In this case, we didn't have enough." Yes, the boss at the Daily Caller never asks his reporters where their stories come from. Which explains a lot, actually. **As Tom Scocca said:** "That's like an engineer saying it's the construction crew's job to do the math."

Is someone specifically targeting Mayer for a coordinated smear campaign? Probably. **According to Hamilton Nolan**, some people are saying a private investigator has been hired to dig up dirt on Mayer. (It's funny that she's getting more blowback for writing about a couple of thin-skinned billionaires than she got after exposing some of the CIA's darkest secrets, but the incredible sensitivity of our ruling elite has become depressingly apparent over the last two years.) But with the right wing's silliest news outlets on the case (the depressing Washington Examiner tried to find something scandalous about her, too) Mayer probably doesn't need to worry too much about her reputation.

FRIDAY, DEC 3, 2010 17:30 ET

The Daily Caller (sorta) defends crazy old bigot's "don't ask, don't tell" column

BY ALEX PAREENE



WAR ROOM



iStockphoto/Salon

Remember **last week's "This Week in Crazy" winner**, Joe Rehyansky? He's the old kook who said in Tucker Carlson's Daily Caller that gay men shouldn't be allowed to serve in the armed forces because they all have AIDS and they will look at Joe Rehyansky in the shower, which scares him.

Rehyansky also said he was fine with lesbians serving, because they're less diseased than the gay men and he wants to give "straight male GIs a fair shot at converting lesbians and bringing them into the mainstream."

That line, about converting lesbians, was removed from the column by Daily Caller editors **after people began talking about how awful it was**.

Today, **Daily Caller editor Peter Tucci defends Rehyansky** from those awful liberal bloggers and their horrible liberal readers. They are disrespecting a veteran! A bigoted, crazy old veteran!