

Sun Journal

Fact checking the Republican National Convention

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Hillary Rodham Clinton was often attacked, sometimes unfairly or out of context, on the second night of the republican National Convention. Here's a roundup of some of the most noteworthy claims that were made.

"You viciously attacked the character of the women who were abused at the hands of your husband."

This line echoes an attack already used by Donald Trump - that Clinton is an "unbelievably nasty, mean enabler" of her husband's affairs. "She would go after these women and destroy their lives."

Carl Bernstein's 2008 book "A Woman in Charge" reveals that Hillary Clinton was involved in a pre-1992 effort to obtain signed statements from women denying they had affairs with Clinton, including Gennifer Flowers, who said she had had a 12-year affair with the then governor of Arkansas. "There can be no question that Hillary was Bill's fiercest defender in preventing his other women from causing trouble," Bernstein wrote.

But evidence is lacking that Clinton attacked the character of women who were "abused" by Clinton.

A central element of this claim is an interview with Hillary Clinton on The Today Show on Jan. 27, 1998, a week after the president was accused of having an affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. That accusation emerged during discovery for a sexual harassment lawsuit by Paula Jones, a former Arkansas state employee who alleged that in 1991 Clinton, while governor, propositioned her and exposed himself.

"I mean, look at the very people who are involved in this, they have popped up in other settings," Clinton told Matt Lauer. "This is the great story here, for anybody willing to find it and write about it and explain it, is this vast right-wing conspiracy that has been conspiring against my husband since the day he announced for president."

This is a famous statement by Hillary Clinton, which came after she referenced what she believed were false attacks by Republican foes: "Having seen so many of these accusations come

and go, having seen people profit, you know, like Jerry Falwell, with videos, accusing my husband of committing murder, of drug running, seeing some of the things that are written and said about him, my attitude is, you know, we've been there before, we have seen this before, and I am just going to wait patiently until the truth comes out."

This interview, by many accounts, was certainly pivotal to saving Bill Clinton's presidency, as his wife forcefully backed him. But while Clinton's foes describe this as a political attack on Lewinsky and Jones, by Hillary Clinton's account at the time her husband had not yet admitted the Lewinsky affair to her. That did not happen until Aug. 15, 1998, according to her memoir:

"He told me for the first time that the situation was much more serious than he had previously acknowledged. He now realized he would have to testify that there had been an inappropriate intimacy. . . . I could hardly breathe. Gulping for air, I started crying and yelling at him. . . . I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Up until now I only thought that he'd been foolish for paying attention to the young woman and was convinced that he was being railroaded. I couldn't believe he would do anything to endanger our marriage and our family. I was dumbfounded, heartbroken and outraged that I'd believed him at all."

Moreover, at the time of the interview, Lewinsky also denied there had been a relationship. Her lawyer had submitted an affidavit on Jan. 12 from her saying she "never had a sexual relationship with the president." Lewinsky did not begin to testify before the independent prosecutor about the full extent of the relationship until July 27, six months after the Today Show interview. Lewinsky testified for 15 days, after which the president finally confessed to his wife.

When Clinton ran for the Senate, she was asked during a debate whether she misled Americans during the Lauer interview two years earlier. "Obviously I didn't mislead anyone," Clinton replied. "I didn't know the truth. And there's a great deal of pain associated with that and my husband has certainly acknowledged that and made it clear that he did mislead the country as well as his family."

Some might argue that because Lewinsky had relations when Bill Clinton was in a position of executive authority, he engaged in sexual harassment. Certainly an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission claim could have been filed, though Lewinsky did not do so.

Bill Clinton in 1998 settled the Paula Jones suit for \$850,000, with no apology or admission of guilt. There is no indication he ever admitted to his wife that Jones's allegations were true. The case had been dismissed by a federal judge, who ruled that even if Jones's allegations were true, such "boorish and offensive" behavior would not be severe enough to constitute sexual harassment under the law. That ruling was under appeal when the case was settled.

"She even lied about sniper fire. Why even she lied about why her parents named her Hillary."

Hillary Clinton's false claim of landing under sniper fire in Bosnia is one of the all-time great fact checks. But some viewers of the RNC may have been confused about McConnell's charge that Clinton lied about her name.

But this is indeed the case. Snopes looked deeply into this issue in 2003 and concluded that Clinton had told a fishy tale to curry favor with the people of Nepal during a visit there in 1995 as first lady. After meeting Sir Edmund Hillary, who first conquered Mount Everest, Clinton claimed that her mother had read about the famous climber and knew his name had two L's. "So when I was born, she called me Hillary and she always told me, 'It's because of Sir Edmund Hillary,'" Hillary Clinton said.

But there were problems with this story. Edmund Hillary, with with Tenzing Norgay, reached the summit in 1953-six years after Clinton was born. The mountain climber was not necessarily obscure in the year Clinton was born, but Snopes could find no evidence that he was mentioned in midwestern newspapers prior to 1953. Moreover, this appeared to have been the one and only time that Clinton had ever made reference to this story-and she never repeated it in her 2003 memoir. (However, Bill Clinton mentioned it in his memoir.)

In 2006, as Clinton was preparing to run for president, a spokeswoman conceded that Clinton was not named for the climber. "It was a sweet family story her mother shared to inspire greatness in her daughter, to great results I might add," said Jennifer Hanley, a spokeswoman for the campaign.

Snopes did not buy this revisionist spin. As they put it:

"We still find this explanation extremely unlikely. In order to accept it, one has to believe that only after Hillary Clinton was nearly 60 years old, and only after she had been pilloried in the press for more than ten years for claiming she had been named after someone who was virtually unknown in the U.S. at the time of her birth, and only after her husband had presented the fictitious story as true in his own autobiography, did Dorothy Rodham finally confess that the 'sweet family story' she once told her daughter wasn't the truth."

"As a senator you [Hillary Clinton] paid women less than the men in your office." --Sharon Day, Republican National Committee co-chair "Incidentally, ladies, both in then-Senator Clinton's office and the Clinton Foundation, men have been paid better than women." - Kimberlin Brown, former actress and small business owner

Were women paid less than men in the Clinton Senate office and at the Clinton Foundation? The data are mixed.

The Washington Free Beacon reported in February 2015 that Clinton paid women 72 cents per dollar compared to men. The outlet analyzed Senate expenditure reports from 2002 to 2008 and

found that the median annual salary for a female employee in Clinton's office was \$15,708.38 less than the median salary for male employees.

In response to the Free Beacon report, the Clinton campaign provided an internal analysis. Our friends at FactCheck.org took an extensive look into the internal data from 2002 to 2008, and found that the median salary for men and women were the same. And the Clintons staff had hired roughly twice as many women as men.

The difference between the two data sets was the number of hours worked by the employees. The data analyzed by the Free Beacon did not include people who did not work an entire fiscal year. The data from the Clinton staff included full-time workers who may not have worked the entire year or took leaves of absence, FactCheck.org found.

As for the Clinton Foundation, PolitiFact analyzed publicly available data when Donald Trump made a similar claim. The information apparently came from the Clinton Foundation's tax documents, which include annual compensation for about a dozen highest-paid officials. PolitiFact analyzed the documents, and found that one calculation showed female top officials earning, on average, 70 cents per every dollar earned on average by a top male official.

By another measure of compensation reported in the tax documents -- total compensation including benefits -- women earned 67 cents for every dollar earned by a man, PolitiFact found. Median pay for women still came out to 76 cents on the dollar compared to men. But this does not give us a full picture of Clinton Foundation employees' salaries.

"As head of a Foundation you [Hillary Clinton] accepted tens of millions of dollars from foreign countries who enslave women and treat them as second-class citizens."

Sharon Day's attack on the Clinton Foundation donations is one of Donald Trump's favorite lines criticizing Clinton's ties to the Clinton Foundation while she was secretary of state.

The Clinton Foundation has accepted millions from countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, despite their poor human rights record. The Washington Post has covered foreign donations to the Clinton Foundation in detail, and found that foreign sources made up a third of those who gave the foundation more than \$1 million over time.

The Post's Rosalind S. Helderman and Tom Hamburger reported:

Foreign governments had been major donors to the foundation before President Obama nominated Clinton to become secretary of state in 2009. When the foundation released a list of its donors for the first time in 2008, as a result of the agreement with the Obama administration, it disclosed, for instance, that Saudi Arabia had given between \$10 million and \$25 million.

In some cases, the foundation said, governments that continued to donate while Clinton was at the State Department did so at lower levels than before her appointment. [...]

Qatar, for instance, spent more than \$5.3 million on registered lobbyists while Clinton was secretary of state, according to the Sunlight Foundation. The country's lobbyists were reported monitoring anti-terrorism activities and efforts to combat violence in Sudan's Darfur region. Qatar has also come under criticism from some U.S. allies in the region that have accused it of supporting Hamas and other militant groups. Qatar has denied the allegations.

The foundation said the donations went to fund the organization's philanthropic work around the world.

"In Nigeria, Hillary Clinton amazingly fought for two years to keep an al-Qaida affiliate off the terrorist watch list. What happened because of this reckless action by the candidate who is the self proclaimed champion of women around the world? These terrorists abducted hundreds of innocent young girls two years ago. These schoolgirls are still missing today. What was the solution from the Obama/Clinton team? A hashtag campaign! Hillary Clinton, as an apologist for an Al-Qaida affiliate in Nigeria resulting in the capture of innocent young women guilty or not guilty?"

Christie grossly simplifies a complex debate at the State Department-which actually did not involve Clinton personally.

In 2014, we closely examined this issue, concluding that claims that "Clinton" was responsible for the decision betrays a misunderstanding of how the State Department works. Yes, Hillary Clinton was secretary of state in 2012. Designations of foreign terrorist groups are ultimately issued by the secretary of state. But the decision on how to handle the group was resolved before it ever reached her level, according to officials familiar with the deliberations.

State Department officials in 2012 vigorously debated how to treat Boko Haram, with the Bureau of Counterterrorism, headed then by Assistant Secretary Daniel Benjamin, leaning toward designation, and the Africa bureau, headed then by Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson, urging caution. One big issue was that Nigeria was a government close to the United States - and Nigeria was adamantly opposed to the designation, arguing it risked entrenching Boko Haram. Nigerian officials also argued that an FTO designation - which halts any flow of funds to the entity or people associated with it - would make it difficult for humanitarian aid to continue in the region where Boko Haram operated.

There was another, complicating issue: U.S. officials believed the Nigerian army had engaged in brutal human rights abuses in its efforts to fight Boko Haram. So a compromise was reached internally: The administration would name three leaders of Boko Haram as specially designated global terrorists while holding out the possibility of a broader designation of the entire group as a means of improving the behavior of Nigerian forces battling Boko Haram.

In any case, in 2013, the State Department did formally designate Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization. Officials later conceded that in retrospect they could have moved a bit

faster, but there is no evidence Clinton played a role or "fought" to keep Boko Haram off the list. The internal debate did not rise to her level; it was handed by the Deputy Secretary of State.

There is no evidence that a terrorist designation any sooner would have prevented the kidnapping of the girls. As for the hashtag campaign, that came after Clinton had left the State Department.

"Right now the burden of government regulations in this country amounts to roughly \$15,000 a household."

- Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-West Virginia)

We've looked at this number before and it's pretty bogus.

The figure comes from an annual report, Ten Thousand Commandments, put out by the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a free-market group founded in 1984 to combat what it considered excessive government regulation. The \$15,000 is derived from an estimate that regulations cost at least \$1.8 trillion a year. (This number is calculated in a CEI working paper titled "The Tip of the Costberg.") Then \$1.8 trillion is simply divided by the number of American households. Presto, each household "pays" \$14,974 annually in a hidden regulatory tax.

Those aren't our quotation marks around "pays." That's exactly how it appears in the report. The word "spent" also appears in quotation marks when the report tries to argue that "more is 'spent' on embedded regulation than on health care, food, transportation, entertainment, apparel and services, and savings. Embedded regulatory costs can be said to absorb up to 29 percent of the typical household's expenditure budget."

The report admits this number is "not scientific," but says "the comparison is a useful back-of-the-envelope way of reflecting on the magnitude of regulatory costs."

But there is one huge element missing-the benefit side of the analysis. The report concedes that the \$1.8 trillion figure purposely does not subtract any potential benefits from regulations. But that's unbalanced. Every regulations has costs-but also benefits. (For instance, seat belts are a regulation, but they also result in fewer deaths, which is presumably a benefit.)

The \$15,000 figure has serious methodological problems - even the report admits it is "not scientific" and "back of the envelope" - and it is especially misleading when the benefit side of the equation is ignored. Yet here it turns up in a major convention speech.

"In the last four years, we passed the largest state tax cut in Indiana history, and now are home to the largest school voucher program in the United States of America. Unemployment in Indiana was over eight percent when I became governor, and it's below five percent today. Hoosier businesses, large and small, we've created more than 150,000 net new jobs. "

- Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, Republican vice presidential nominee speaking to the American Conservative Union

Since becoming Indiana's governor in January 2013, Pence has established a record of cutting taxes. He was one of four governors who received an A from the Cato Institute, a Libertarian think tank, which releases a governors score sheet based on their tax and spending record.

Pence has been a "champion tax cutter, and he has held the line on spending," according to the score card. Pence signed a tax cut package into law in 2013, cut individual income taxes, corporate taxes and property taxes, and repealed the state's inheritance tax.

Indiana's individual income tax rate was already the second-lowest in the nation, according to the Urban Institute's Tax Policy Center. Pence pushed to exempt business-to-business sales from tax, but the state legislature was concerned about revenues and passed a more modest version.

Indiana's unemployment rate has, indeed, dropped from 8.4 percent in January 2013, when he took office. And the state's unemployment rate was 5 percent as of May 2016. But this change is actually on par with the national unemployment average, which was 8 percent in January 2013 and 4.7 percent as of May 2016. Indiana has, indeed, added just under 150,000 new jobs since 2013.

But we have repeatedly warned our readers to be skeptical when a state executive highlights employment trends during his or her tenure. There's a lot happening within a state's economy that affects state employment trends, which are not necessarily tied to the policy decisions of the governor.

"Here in our bicentennial year in my state, we have more Hoosiers going to work than ever before in the 200-year history of the state of Indiana."

- Indiana Gov. Mike Pence

"More Hoosiers are working now than in any time in our 200-year history."

- Lieutenant Gov. Eric Holcomb

This is clearly a favorite talking point of Indiana's top executives, but let's add some context.

There were about 3 million jobs in Indiana in May 2016, the largest number of people working in the state in at least the past three decades. But Indiana's population has grown during that time as well. Our friends at PolitiFact rated this claim Half True. As a percent of the state's population, the percentage of Hoosiers going to work were higher in 2000 than in 2016, PolitiFact found.

"There's a political tint to this whole issue. The Clinton camp was the first to get it out there."

- Paul Manafort, at a news conference

"This is, once again, an example of when a woman threatens Hillary Clinton, how she seeks out to demean her and take her down. It's not going to work."

- Manafort, interview on CNN

Trump's campaign manager tried to pin the blame on the Clinton campaign for the flap over allegations of plagiarism in Melania Trump's prime-time address Monday night at the Republican National Convention. But no evidence has emerged that is the case; indeed, Manafort has offered no evidence.

Instead, the striking similarities between sections of Trump's speech and Michelle Obama's 2008 address to the Democratic convention appear to have been first noticed by a Twitter user named Jarrett Hill, who describes himself as a journalist and an interior designer.

At 10:30 p.m., Hill tweeted: OMG. Melania. That was literally a whole line from Michelle Obama 2012.

Then, at 10:40 p.m., he went further: Melania must've liked Michelle Obama's 2008 Convention speech, since she plagiarized it.

At 12:17 a.m., he suddenly realized he had struck a nerve: Um. This is becoming a thing.

His findings spread so quickly over the Internet and on television that he even mused that it might help him find a job:

We have reached out to Hill to find out what made him make the connection between the two speeches. But in an interview with The New York Times, he provided this account:

Mr. Hill, a television journalist who was recently laid off, said in an interview that one of Ms. Trump's lines - the words "strength of your dreams" - caught his attention as he was watching on his computer from a Starbucks in Los Angeles, juggling Facebook chats and browsing Twitter.

"It kind of made me pause for a minute," Mr. Hill said. "I remembered that line from Michelle Obama's speech."

Mr. Hill, 31, found the clip of Mrs. Obama's speech online and noticed that parts of the two speeches sounded the same. He then realized that a larger portion appeared to have been borrowed as he continued to examine both.

"I thought, 'That's legit plagiarism,' " said Mr. Hill, who described himself as a supporter of President Obama. " 'Someone took this piece and plugged in their own information.' "

There appear to be no ties between Hill and the Clinton campaign. Heavy.com, in a post on Hill, described him as a critic of Donald Trump. His LinkedIn Page says he is the host of a weekly podcast show and a contributor blogger to The Huffington Post.

For the record, the Clinton campaign denied any involvement.

"After obtaining a degree in design and architecture at University in Slovenia, Melania was jetting between photo shoots in Paris and Milan, finally settling in New York in 1996."

- Bio of Melania Trump on the RNC program

Melania Trump's speaker bio claimed she obtained a degree at university in Slovenia, something that she also claims on her bio on her website. But that's false, according to journalists who have looked into the matter. In reality, she dropped out of school after the first year, and switched to a full-time modeling career.

Trump's biographers Bojan Pozar and Igor Omerza have called her out on the claim in "Melania Trump: The Inside Story, From a Slovenian Communist Village to the White House," which the New Yorker described as the most thorough biographical account of her life. In the book, the authors detail then-Melanija Knavs's brief time at the University of Ljubljana, a local university in Slovenia.

In her freshman year, the 19-year-old Melanija Knavs attended lectures on the following subjects: elements of architecture, fine arts, fundamentals of technical mechanics, architectural construction, descriptive geometry, mathematics, and an ideological (read "communist") elective credit called "General Partisan Resistance and Social Self-protection." Melanija would have made it to her sophomore year, even having failed 2 exams, but she was supposed to have gotten and held a 1-month internship and kept a journal about it.

Knavs dropped out of college and later married the man who is now the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. Once Melania Trump told American media that she had obtained a degree, Slovenian journalists started digging into it.

Things got complicated when some Slovenian journalists found and wrote that Melania Knavs was lying to the American media about her education. Since her thesis couldn't be found in the university system or the country's national register of publications, journalists started asking for direct and official answers from the heads of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana as to whether Melanija Knavs had graduated or not.

In a lengthy GQ profile, Julia Ioffe interviewed former friends who had attended University of Ljubljana at the time.

Melania decamped to Milan after her first year of college, effectively dropping out. Her connections to home grew faint. Sedej saw her for the occasional coffee on the rare occasions

she visited Ljubljana, but has lost track of her since. She and her classmates wrote to Melania about their 20th high school reunion a few years ago. They e-mailed Melania's representatives, they wrote to her on Facebook. There was no response. "She cut the line behind her," says the friend from Ljubljana. "She started to live another life, and all this is behind her."

Ioffe reported Tuesday for Politico that Melania Trump's college boyfriend, high school best friend and the University of Ljubljana confirmed that Trump dropped out of college before obtaining a degree. As the biographers did, Ioffe also found that there was no thesis by Melania Knavs "anywhere in the registry, though all Slovenes who graduate write a thesis, and all of these theses are catalogued."