

May 17, 2015

Kevin Williamson writes on the particular failings of Stephanopoulos.

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*... Stephanopoulos has offered a half-hearted apology: "I should have gone the extra mile to avoid even the appearance of a conflict." But "extra mile" assumes a previous mile, and he did not really hike an inch to disclose this conflict — not an "appearance of a conflict," but an actual conflict. The Clintons' relationship with the eponymous nonprofit organization is a legitimate public issue, and Stephanopoulos has significant relationships with both family and foundation.*

*It is impossible to see how Stephanopoulos could do his job with any integrity in an environment in which the Clintons and their foundation will be central to the political news for the foreseeable future. Certainly not after concealing his relationship with the foundation. ABC News owes it to itself to live up to at least the standards of a small-town weekly newspaper. It owes them a lot more than that, in fact, but it cannot deliver the goods with Stephanopoulos at the desk.*

Jonathan Tobin has more thoughts on the Stephanie flap.

*... Author Schweizer is understandably upset that Stephanopoulos questioned him closely about his own possible bias in writing a muckraking book about the Clinton. Schweizer has a history as a writer connected to conservative causes and served briefly as a speechwriter to George W. Bush. That's fair game. But how is it that the ABC host thought that was worthy of exposure but believed his own hefty contributions to the Clinton's foundation was neither relevant nor of interest to viewers watching him try to shoot down the allegations about the Clintons?*

*The answer is that like the Clintons themselves, some of those around them seem to have the sense of entitlement and belief that the normal rules of political conduct or journalism ethics don't apply to them.*

*To be fair, unlike most of those who gave far more than he did, Stephanopoulos cannot be accused of hoping to trade the donation for favors. He may well have given the money in order to support efforts to combat AIDS and deforestation as he said in the apology he issued today. Nevertheless, a savvier journalist than the ABC host might have noted the fact that the Clinton foundation actually spends only a fraction of the money given to it on actual charitable work (only ten percent) and contributions given to other more ethical and less political organizations would have done a lot more for those causes.*

*The revelation makes everything Stephanopoulos has said on the air trying to pooh-pooh the Clinton Cash scandal seem self-interested or biased but in the great scheme of things, it can't*

*be said that those comments did much to alter the trajectory of the story or harm the future of the republic.*

*But it does remind us of the intolerable coziness of so many media elites with the people they cover. ...*

And liberals at the Daily Beast like Lloyd Grove are not pleased with the weak apology.

*... In a non-apology apology that is unlikely to appease the referees of press ethics, let alone his Republican detractors—and may just baffle morning television viewers who haven't paid attention to the blossoming scandal within the media-political complex—the former top aide to Bill and Hillary Clinton put the very best face possible on his lapse in judgment in not disclosing \$75,000 in donations to the Clinton Foundation when he conducted a contentious April 26 interview with foundation critic Peter Schweizer on *This Week With George Stephanopoulos*, ABC News's Sunday show.*

*Although Stephanopoulos's case is very different from—and nowhere near as serious as—the embellishments of suspended NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams, his explanation of his mistake on Friday morning was much in the same vein as Williams's claim last February that he made up a story about a helicopter ride in Iraq simply in an innocent, good-hearted attempt to honor America's fighting men and women.*

*Williams wrapped himself in the flag; Stephanopoulos cloaked himself in charity. ...*

More from the left, this time Jack Shafer from Politico. Pay attention to the pretention that a Politico reporter "broke" the story. We'll have more on that later as a WaPo blogger calls ABC News on the shaft they gave to a Free Beacon reporter. *Former Clintonland insider George Stephanopoulos, who has excelled at both politics and journalism, appears to have failed both professions with a single transgression.*

*As my POLITICO colleague Dylan Byers reported today, ABC News' "This Week" and "Good Morning America" host Stephanopoulos has donated a total of \$75,000 to the Clinton Foundation, something he had not previously disclosed to viewers or his employers. In a statement to Byers, Stephanopoulos apologized for not disclosing the gifts. ABC News called the oversight an "honest mistake," a sentiment Stephanopoulos amplified in an afternoon interview with Byers.*

*"We stand behind him," the network also offered, which is corporate-speak for we will bind George in barbed wire and dump him into a surging storm sewer and drive off into the night the minute he becomes an intolerable distraction.*

*The donation corrodes much of the journalistic credibility Stephanopoulos has labored so carefully to build since joining ABC News as a correspondent and analyst in December 1996. ...*

**Victor Davis Hanson** calls out Stephanie's "staggering hypocrisy."

*The problem with George Stephanopoulos's Clinton-gate mess is that his own words prove him to be both a bully and a hypocrite, as well as abjectly unethical.*

*Set aside the fact that — if not outed — he would likely never have informed his viewership about his contributions to the Clinton Foundation (and presumably would have continued to grill authors like Peter Schweizer for attacking the pay-for-play Clinton culture). Set aside the fact that, in Clinton Foundation tax-reporting fashion, he “forgot” a \$25,000 donation when he initially and erroneously stated that he had contributed \$50,000 rather than the actual \$75,000. And that he confused the news source that originally discovered his gifts. What we are left with is George Stephanopoulos indicting George Stephanopoulos. ...*

*... And when it is reported that Columbia University Journalism School professor Richard Wald intones of the scandal that, “It’s a mistake, and it’s a dumb one, but it’s not a criminal offense; other people have done other dumb things,” one doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Wald once worked as “ethics czar” for Stephanopoulos’s own ABC network and, in good Clintonian fashion, is invoking for him the now familiar Bill/Hillary defense of “at least it can’t be proven a crime in a court of law” and “everyone does it.”*

Now we get to the story about how ABC News treated a Free Beacon reporter in shabby fashion. And it is a Washington Post blogger who tells ABC he's not gonna rest until they answer some questions. The post is by **Eric Wemple**.

*Every journalist lives in fear of a certain scenario: You have a news story, quite possibly an exclusive, on a significant public figure. You Google the keywords and a jumble of old links pops up; no one has written it! So you take your revelations to the public figure’s PR rep and ask whether your reporting is true and real. In making that inquiry, you relinquish a bit of control over your investigation; now someone outside of your news organization — a PR official — knows what you have. You have no choice but trust that the official doesn’t play any games with a prospective scoop.*

*Games may have been played yesterday in connection with the week’s resounding media story. On Thursday morning, Politico media reporter Dylan Byers broke the story of George Stephanopoulos’s big-money donations to the Clinton Foundation (at first they were reported as \$50,000 but grew to \$75,000 by day’s end). The headline of Byers’s story: “George Stephanopoulos discloses \$75,000 contribution to Clinton Foundation.” ...*

*... Continetti is the editor-in-chief of the [Washington Free Beacon](#), a conservative website that launched in February 2012. Stiles is the digital managing editor for the Washington Free Beacon. The Stephanopoulos story surfaced on Wednesday just before 3:30 p.m., when Stiles found his name on the Clinton Foundation’s donor lists. He e-mailed Continetti, who told him to move on the story and also directed a researcher to check whether Stephanopoulos had seeded any of his on-air work with disclosures about the donations.*

*The research turned up no evidence of Stephanopoulos having told viewers of his largesse to the Clinton Foundation, clinching the need for a story. “I think you have to write this one straight,” Continetti wrote to Stiles, who sometimes takes [attitudinal approaches](#) to the news. The editor-in-chief also cited the need for a comment from Stephanopoulos’s office. “I knew immediately that this was a news story,” says Continetti.*

*Despite Stiles' best efforts, ABC News didn't cough up a response on the spot. Heather Riley, a spokeswoman for ABC News, e-mailed Stiles just after 9 p.m., promising him "something." "What time are you posting? Want to make sure I get it to you in time," she wrote.*

*Hear this, knee-jerk detractors of modern web journalism: Absent a comment from ABC News, Continetti & Co. decided to let the matter sit overnight. They just waited. ...*

*... The Washington Free Beacon's industrious use of Twitter ensured recognition of its pioneering efforts on the Stephanopoulos story. Major news outlets, in their writeups of the story, credited the site for its inquiry into the donations. That dynamic undercut whatever result the network sought in releasing its statements to Politico first.*

*Silence is unacceptable here. ABC News has to do one of two things: Either apologize to the Washington Free Beacon for whatever precisely it did or explain how its actions meet the commonly acknowledged standards of the industry. Today Stephanopoulos issued his second apology for his evasions in the Clinton Foundation case, so that story may ebb in the coming weeks. Yet the Erik Wemple Blog is committed to keeping this unfinished business about the Washington Free Beacon in play until the network resolves it.*

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## National Review

### The ABCs of Journalism Ethics

by Kevin D. Williamson

What to think about George Stephanopoulos?

Some years ago, I worked with a young man who would later become momentarily infamous, during the season of Stephen Glass and Jayson Blair, when he was found to have fabricated aspects of stories for a very high-profile national news outlet. I found all those episodes maddening: As a writer for small community newspapers, I was used to being blown off by sources, accustomed to politicians and other worthies refusing to return my calls. But if you're a writer for the *Washington Post* or *The New Yorker*, people pick up the phone when you ring.

There's no excuse for the small fry, and there's really, really no excuse for bigfoot reporters from the majors.

Call me a snob, but I have always been mystified when fabrications show up in the pages of prestigious publications such as the *New York Times* or *The New Republic*. I recently taught a seminar at Hillsdale, partly on the subject of *Rolling Stone's* shameful, fictitious account of a brutal gang rape at the University of Virginia, a crime that did not in reality happen. How does this sort of thing make it into print, not in some backwater weekly but in a magazine with real editorial resources? We all make errors, and sometimes we make embarrassing errors, and the potential for making embarrassing errors increases the higher up the journalistic food chain one goes, simply because nobody is paying much attention to youngsters writing business features for the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*. *Rolling Stone's* Sabrina Rubin Erdely got badly snookered by a source. That happens. I once got badly snookered by a source and published a caustic editorial criticizing the University of Texas for doing something that it hadn't actually done. That was when I was in college, and that is, to some extent, what college newspapers are for.

You'd expect that standards would become more stringent as one ascends the ladder of prestige, but in that regard journalism is no different from the general run of business, in which as often as not standards of professional conduct decline as the stakes grow larger.

When I was editing a small newspaper in the Philadelphia suburbs, one of my reporters asked for a meeting with me, which was in itself unusual — my standing policy for reporters was that after hiring them I did not care if I ever saw them again, so long as their stories showed up on time. I'd assumed we were going to do the usual thing where he asked for a raise and I told him no, but he sheepishly explained that he needed to modify his beat because he was beginning to develop a personal relationship with one of the people he covered. His reasoning was sound: Whether it worked out or went nowhere, he could not claim to be disinterested.

What would have happened if he hadn't told me? I'd have fired him. And if I hadn't, somebody would have fired me. And I would have deserved it.

Conflicts of interest are common in small-town journalism. I employed a columnist who was a Democratic activist and public-relations consultant, who sometimes needed to be reminded that she wasn't allowed to write articles about her clients. Police reporters are infamous for getting themselves captured, socially or romantically, by their beats — one of the telltale signs being when they start writing the way cops talk, e.g. "officers responded to the scene," a phrase that is true only when police exclaim: "Holy cow! Look at that scene!" The sort of people who like to write opinion columns are also the sort of people who feel called to activism and campaign work, and smaller publications rely on them because they're cheap — generally free; "free" being every newspaper publisher's favorite word — and because they often are in fact the best people for the job.

But ABC News isn't the *Muleshoe Journal*; ABC News can hire whomever it wants. But Washington, too, is a small town, with a substantial overlap between journalism and politics. And hiring George Stephanopoulos wasn't a terrible idea: He's smart, he's articulate, he knows everybody. He was a Clinton functionary with deep ties and longstanding loyalty to all things Clinton. Is that a problem? Sure, of course, but it's a problem that can be addressed in no small part with simple disclosure.

Which is to say, the one thing that ABC News and Stephanopoulos needed to do is the one thing that they failed to do.

That \$50,000 donation that has since grown to \$75,000 may be chump change for Stephanopoulos — it certainly is for the Clintons — but if it were 20 bucks, you'd still want to disclose it if you were, to consider a random, implausible, and crazy hypothetical, overseeing highly critical coverage of a book alleging wrongdoing by the Clintons through the instrument of their family foundation.

Stephanopoulos has offered a half-hearted apology: "I should have gone the extra mile to avoid even the appearance of a conflict." But "extra mile" assumes a previous mile, and he did not really hike an inch to disclose this conflict — not an "appearance of a conflict," but an actual conflict. The Clintons' relationship with the eponymous nonprofit organization is a legitimate public issue, and Stephanopoulos has significant relationships with both family and foundation.

It is impossible to see how Stephanopoulos could do his job with any integrity in an environment in which the Clintons and their foundation will be central to the political news for the foreseeable future. Certainly not after concealing his relationship with the foundation. ABC News owes it to

itself to live up to at least the standards of a small-town weekly newspaper. It owes them a lot more than that, in fact, but it cannot deliver the goods with Stephanopoulos at the desk.

## Contentions

### Liberal Media's Stephanopoulos Problem

by Jonathan Tobin

Compared to the conflicts of interest that came up as a result of the foreign donations to the Clinton Foundation while one of its principles was serving as secretary of state, this doesn't amount to much. The news that [ABC News' George Stephanopoulos donated \\$75,000](#) to the Clintons personal "charity" isn't even particularly shocking. Especially when you remember that before he crossed over to supposedly objective journalism, Stephanopoulos was a top operative in Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign and then served as communications director of his White House. But considering that the current host of ABC's "This Week" Sunday show grilled *Clinton Cash* author Peter Schweizer on the air without disclosing to the audience his personal involvement in his former bosses' affairs, a mere ex post facto apology with no disciplinary action seems a weak response to this embarrassment. But while Stephanopoulos getting off without even a slap on the wrist isn't surprising, the incident does raise serious questions about media bias and the cozy relationship some leading liberal mainstream media figures have with the once and would-be future First Family.

Author Schweizer [is understandably upset](#) that Stephanopoulos questioned him closely about his own possible bias in writing a muckraking book about the Clinton. Schweizer has a history as a writer connected to conservative causes and served briefly as a speechwriter to George W. Bush. That's fair game. But how is it that the ABC host thought that was worthy of exposure but believed his own hefty contributions to the Clinton's foundation was neither relevant nor of interest to viewers watching him try to shoot down the allegations about the Clintons?

The answer is that like the Clintons themselves, some of those around them seem to have the sense of entitlement and belief that the normal rules of political conduct or journalism ethics don't apply to them.

To be fair, unlike most of those who gave far more than he did, Stephanopoulos cannot be accused of hoping to trade the donation for favors. He may well have given the money in order to support efforts to combat AIDS and deforestation as he said in the apology he issued today. Nevertheless, a savvier journalist than the ABC host might have noted the fact that the Clinton foundation actually spends only a fraction of the money given to it on actual charitable work (only ten percent) and contributions given to other more ethical and less political organizations would have done a lot more for those causes.

The revelation makes everything Stephanopoulos has said on the air trying to pooh-pooh the Clinton Cash scandal seem self-interested or biased but in the great scheme of things, it can't be said that those comments did much to alter the trajectory of the story or harm the future of the republic.

But it does remind us of the intolerable coziness of so many media elites with the people they cover. We had hoped that the era of leading journalists acting as informal advisors or shells for politicians they liked was over. Surely we will never again see a repeat of the kind of behavior that led legendary Washington newsman Ben Bradlee to do that for his pal Jack Kennedy, not to

mention the rest of the DC press corps that knew of JFK's affairs but kept quiet about them. But Stephanopoulos' involvement with the Clintons makes one wonder how anyone will be able to watch "This Week's" coverage of the 2016 election without remember that a charter member of the Clinton machine with ongoing connections to them runs the show. [Stephanopoulos has already recused himself from moderating any of next year's presidential debates](#) but not even that gesture can silence the questions he has raised.

Of course, we knew that before we learned about Stephanopoulos's donations. But up until now he has been treated as a straight newsman under the informal rule that allows political operatives one free career change. We all seem to think there's nothing much wrong with a politician or political aide crossing over into journalism so long as they keep away from partisan hackery and don't actively work to advance the causes of their former associates or bosses. But by giving so much to what is, in effect, a non-profit political slush fund for Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton, Stephanopoulos has violated that rule.

He ought to recuse himself from any further reporting or comment about the Clinton Cash issue or Hillary but we know that won't happen. Like the Clintons, Stephanopoulos will simply move on and act as if nothing has happened that should cause us to view him differently.

But while what happens to him isn't all that important, it still must be pointed out that if a journalist were exposed as giving money to the Koch Brothers charities and then reported on them, there would be howls for his scalp throughout the media. The rules are different for liberals. Analysts who wonder about the shrinking audience for such shows and networks whose political coverage is drenched in the tired rhetoric of liberalism need wonder no more. Stephanopoulos's lack of transparency in this story is just one more piece of evidence indicting mainstream outlets for outrageous and blatant liberal bias.

## Daily Beast

### [George Stephanopoulos Makes a Passive-Aggressive Non-Apology for Clinton Donation](#)

by Lloyd Grove

George Stephanopoulos cloaked his undisclosed Clinton Foundation donations in charity. That half-hearted apology isn't going to suffice if he wants to keep his anchor chair.

You see, *Good Morning America* host George Stephanopoulos was just too darned generous to poor kids and AIDS victims.

In a [non-apology apology](#) that is unlikely to appease the referees of press ethics, let alone his Republican detractors—and may just baffle morning television viewers who haven't paid attention to the blossoming scandal within the media-political complex—the former top aide to Bill and Hillary Clinton put the very best face possible on his lapse in judgment in [not disclosing \\$75,000 in donations to the Clinton Foundation](#) when he conducted a contentious April 26 interview with foundation critic Peter Schweizer on *This Week With George Stephanopoulos*, ABC News's Sunday show.

Although Stephanopoulos's case is very different from—and nowhere near as serious as—the embellishments of suspended *NBC Nightly News* anchor [Brian Williams](#), his explanation of his mistake on Friday morning was much in the same vein as Williams's claim last February that he

made up a story about a helicopter ride in Iraq simply in an innocent, good-hearted attempt to honor America's fighting men and women.

Willams wrapped himself in the flag; Stephanopoulos cloaked himself in charity.

His 48-second statement, which he read near the end of *GMA*'s first block, went as follows: "Now I want to address an issue you may have seen about me. Over the last several years, I've made substantial donations to dozens of charities, including the Clinton Global Foundation. Those donations were a matter of public record, but I should have made additional disclosures on air when I covered the foundation, and I now believe that directing personal donations to that foundation was a mistake. Even though I made them strictly to support work done to stop the spread of AIDS, help children, and protect the environment in poor countries, I should have gone the extra mile to avoid even the appearance of a conflict. I apologize to all of you for failing to do that."

It is hard to argue that asking tough questions of a charity's critic on the air—as Stephanopoulos did last month with Schweizer, whose much-publicized book *Clinton Cash* has been the target of war room-level pushback from Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign—without bothering to mention that you've donated to that charity, is anything other than a serious breach of accepted journalistic standards. Or that letting viewers know about such a potential conflict of interest is "going the extra mile."

Apparently Stephanopoulos still fails to grasp that there is nothing "extra" about what should have been a common-sense disclosure. What's more, on *GMA* Friday morning, he didn't see fit to mention the sheer size of his donations; no doubt many of his viewers would consider \$75,000 real money, even for a television personality reportedly making double-digit millions.

Even Stephanopoulos unwittingly acknowledged the bad appearance of things during an April 28 appearance on [The Daily Show](#), two days after his Schweizer confrontation. He told Comedy Central's Jon Stewart: "I read the book that this is based on, *Clinton Cash*, and I actually interviewed the author on Sunday. This is a tough one, because when you actually look, look closely at it, he even says there is no evidence of any direct action taken on behalf of the donors. But everybody also knows when those donors give that money—and President Clinton or someone, they get a picture with him—there's a hope that it's going to lead to something. And that's what you have to be careful of."

When Stewart pointed out that "the entire system appears to be shrouded in that type of quid pro quo, or the appearance of it," Stephanopoulos agreed, saying: "Even if you don't get an action, what you get is access and you get the influence that comes with access and that's gotta shape the thinking of politicians. That's what's so pernicious about it."

Could Stephanopoulos, who is also ABC News's chief anchor and political correspondent, be hoping for access to and exclusives from Bill and Hillary, giving him a competitive edge during the 2016 presidential campaign?

It's a fair question. Even if Stephanopoulos never discussed his contributions to their foundation with the Clintons, as appears to be the case, the Clintons are undoubtedly aware of them. Like all successful politicians, they have a keen eye for, and a long memory of, people who give and don't give them money.

So if Stephanopoulos really wants to put this issue to rest—and I think he can—he's going to have to do better than the once-over-lightly treatment he accorded it Friday morning. A

“modified limited hangout”—to use Nixon aide John Ehrlichman’s phrase during the Watergate adventure—just won’t do in this case.

## Politico

### [The Great Stephanopoulos Mess](#)

*ABC anchor proves to be his own worst enemy.*

by Jack Shafer

Former Clintonland insider George Stephanopoulos, who has excelled at both politics and journalism, appears to have failed both professions with a single transgression.

As my POLITICO colleague Dylan Byers reported today, ABC News’ “This Week” and “Good Morning America” host Stephanopoulos has donated a total of \$75,000 to the Clinton Foundation, something he had not previously disclosed to viewers or his employers. In a statement to Byers, Stephanopoulos apologized for not disclosing the gifts. ABC News called the oversight an “honest mistake,” a sentiment Stephanopoulos amplified in an afternoon interview with Byers.

“We stand behind him,” the network also offered, which is corporate-speak for we will bind George in barbed wire and dump him into a surging storm sewer and drive off into the night the minute he becomes an intolerable distraction.

The donation corrodes much of the journalistic credibility Stephanopoulos has labored so carefully to build since joining ABC News as a correspondent and analyst in December 1996. Stephanopoulos critics were many at the time of his appointment, predicting his crack-up even before he completed his first assignment. The Los Angeles Times’ Howard Rosenberg spoke for many when he prophesied that Stephanopoulos would not be able to “shed his intense loyalty for Clinton in his new role.” Stephanopoulos worked hard to do just that through his 1999 memoir about his time as an adviser to President Bill Clinton, “All Too Human: A Political Education.” In the book, he distanced himself from the president, much to the disparagement of Clinton loyalists like Mandy Grunwald and to the disappointment of Clinton himself.

In transmogrifying from politician to journalist, Stephanopoulos defied the pundits’ predictions, drawing only the occasional charge that he was in the bag for the Clintons, as Byron York writes today in the Washington Examiner.

One reason Stephanopoulos made such a graceful switch from pol to pressie is because there isn’t much to making the switch. As long as you can do the work, the journalism profession doesn’t care if your last port of call was a federal penitentiary. Other politicians who have successfully crossed over to the TV news racket include Mike Huckabee, Joe Scarborough, Tim Russert, John Kasich, Jerry Springer, Susan Molinari, Diane Sawyer, Mary Matalin, Chris Matthews, Bill Moyers, Bay Buchanan, Al Sharpton, Bill Bradley, Dee Dee Myers, Dana Perino, Lawrence O’Donnell, Nicolle Wallace, Karl Rove and others.

Most politicians cross over to media with the understanding that they will continue their partisan ways. But others, such as Stephanopoulos, Sawyer and Russert agree implicitly and explicitly to leave that baggage behind. In shelling out \$75,000 to the politically identified Clinton Foundation, Stephanopoulos has betrayed that compact, torched the journalism-cred he has

acquired in the past two decades, and obviously forgotten the lessons in political savvy he learned as a member of Bill Clinton's inner circle. He knew going into ABC News that his reporting and his personal actions would be extra scrutinized for bias. I find it implausible that he did not understand in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (the years he gave the Clinton Foundation cash), that his contributions would be an issue with his employers and his viewers once discovered—even if they were just sitting there buried on a website for anyone to stumble upon.

As we conduct the dumb, dumber and dumbest inventory of Stephanopoulos' humiliation, we must ask why it was necessary for him to give anything to the Clinton Foundation? In his first statement to Byers, he said he gave to the foundation because he believes so deeply in the AIDS and deforestation programs administered by the Clintons. Surely, a politically neutered foundation that does equal or superior works in those areas would accept his philanthropy. Surely, when Stephanopoulos cross-examined Peter Schweizer, the author of the Clinton Foundation exposé "Clinton Cash," on the April 26 edition of ABC's "This Week," the meta aspect of the segment must have occurred to him! But, no! Stephanopoulos bowls right through the interview without any acknowledgment of his cash endorsement of the Clinton Foundation!

Wounded by the revelation of his donation, will Stephanopoulos survive in his role as ABC News chief anchor and chief political correspondent? Already he has agreed to forfeit his role as moderator of the GOP primary debate in February, but the demands for additional concessions are a certainty. Both parties love to run against the press, but the Republicans take special glee in it. By donating so handsomely to the Clinton Foundation, Stephanopoulos has handed the Republicans a cudgel that they won't stop using against him and ABC News until he exits the arena. You can't be your network's chief anchor and a late night punchline at the same time. Just ask Dan Rather.

A worthy side note to the Stephanopoulos exposé is contained in its genesis. The story appears to have originated at the Washington Free Beacon, which asked ABC News for comment about the Stephanopoulos contributions last night. The next thing the Free Beacon knew, POLITICO had broken the story this morning. Free Beacon writer Andrew Stiles and site editor Matthew Continetti accused Stephanopoulos' office and ABC of shipping the scoop to POLITICO. I sent email to ABC News seeking clarification on this point and did not hear back. I also asked Byers about the origin of his scoop to which he responded, "I'm not going to be able to talk about matters related to sourcing."

If ABC News shopped the scoop, as the Beaconites claim, it wouldn't be the first time that a news organization has been so preempted. Government and business play this retaliatory game all the time when journalists surprise them with a request for comment. What's unbecoming is that a news organization might engage in this practice.

Come to think of it, that's precisely the type of thing you could imagine the Stephanopoulos-era Clinton administration doing without compunction.

## **National Review**

### **[George Stephanopoulos's Clinton Foundation Hypocrisy Is Staggering](#)**

by Victor Davis Hanson

The problem with George Stephanopoulos's Clinton-gate mess is that his own words prove him to be both a bully and a hypocrite, as well as abjectly unethical.

Set aside the fact that — if not outed — he would likely never have informed his viewership about his contributions to the Clinton Foundation (and presumably would have continued to grill authors like Peter Schweizer for attacking the pay-for-play Clinton culture). Set aside the fact that, in Clinton Foundation tax-reporting fashion, he “forgot” a \$25,000 donation when he initially and erroneously stated that he had contributed \$50,000 rather than the actual \$75,000. And that he confused the news source that originally discovered his gifts. What we are left with is George Stephanopoulos indicting George Stephanopoulos.

When he attacked Schweizer for a supposed conflict of interest in having been a Bush speechwriter for four months, he assumed that his own much longer tenure as a war-room political flak for Bill Clinton could never impinge on his own objectivity — much less provide the context for his recent donations to the Clinton family foundation.

After all, there are plenty of other charities concerned with AIDS and deforestation to help out. (At least Stephanopoulos did not suggest that he was interested in Haitian relief or Kazakhstani internal development.) And the vast majority of charities surely do not skim 90 percent off the top for travel and overhead expenses, as the Foundation does according to news reports. Routing \$75,000 to these worthy causes via the Clintons might have meant that the charities ended up with ten cents on the dollar, or about \$7,500 of Stephanopoulos’s money to divide up among them. Had he consulted various adjudicators of charity performance, he could have easily learned that giving to something run by Bill, Hillary, and Chelsea Clinton was not a very efficient way of saving trees and helping those infected with HIV.

So when Stephanopoulos confessed to Jon Stewart in late April that donors who know the Clinton Foundation modus operandi give generously to ensure that, “There’s a hope that that’s going to lead to something,” he was again referencing himself, although not overtly to Stewart. Remember, Stephanopoulos stated that he did not donate to deforestation and global AIDS efforts via the Clintons until 2012, 2013, and 2014. In other words, if Stephanopoulos were to grill Stephanopoulos, he would surely ask why the donations started then and why they went to the Clintons, given that the dates roughly coincide to when Hillary was transitioning out of the State Department and readying her run for the presidency. The obvious inference is that it would be wise for marquee television-roundtable hosts to plan ahead and to line up interviews for the upcoming campaign. Was Stephanopoulos, then, in donating at that time and to that recipient, thinking such an action would “lead to something” such as possible exclusives and better news access to the Clinton campaign?

And when it is reported that Columbia University Journalism School professor Richard Wald intones of the scandal that, “It’s a mistake, and it’s a dumb one, but it’s not a criminal offense; other people have done other dumb things,” one doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Wald once worked as “ethics czar” for Stephanopoulos’s own ABC network and, in good Clintonian fashion, is invoking for him the now familiar Bill/Hillary defense of “at least it can’t be proven a crime in a court of law” and “everyone does it.”

## **Washington Post - Blogs**

### **[Dear ABC News PR: Tell us you didn’t shaft the Washington Free Beacon](#)**

by Eric Wemple

Every journalist lives in fear of a certain scenario: You have a news story, quite possibly an exclusive, on a significant public figure. You Google the keywords and a jumble of old links pops

up; no one has written it! So you take your revelations to the public figure's PR rep and ask whether your reporting is true and real. In making that inquiry, you relinquish a bit of control over your investigation; now someone outside of your news organization — a PR official — knows what you have. You have no choice but trust that the official doesn't play any games with a prospective scoop.

Games may have been played yesterday in connection with the week's resounding media story. On Thursday morning, Politico media reporter Dylan Byers broke the story of George Stephanopoulos's big-money donations to the Clinton Foundation (at first they were reported as \$50,000 but grew to \$75,000 by day's end). The headline of Byers's story: "[George Stephanopoulos discloses \\$75,000 contribution to Clinton Foundation.](#)"

Big deal. The Internet exploded with commentary, criticisms of Stephanopoulos, liberal-media slams and claims that the PR department of ABC News had done something untoward in handling the story.

**Thanks [@ABC](#) for leaking statement to [@DylanByers](#) after [@AndrewStilesUSA](#) and [@FreeBeacon](#) asked you about Stephanopoulos donation to Clintons**

— Matthew Continetti (@continetti) [May 14, 2015](#)

**.[@AndrewStilesUSA](#) spotted the donation yesterday. I told him to ask [@ABC](#) for comment. They said they'd give a statement—to [@DylanByers](#)!**

— Matthew Continetti (@continetti) [May 14, 2015](#)

**Here is the story that would have broken the George Stephanopolous donation if [@ABC](#) had any sense of decency: <http://t.co/S8zDBhfVXL>**

— Matthew Continetti (@continetti) [May 14, 2015](#)

**I contacted ABC News last night for statement on Stephanopoulos donation to Clinton Foundation. [pic.twitter.com/J5WWwKZc0w](http://pic.twitter.com/J5WWwKZc0w)**

— Andrew Stiles (@AndrewStilesUSA) [May 14, 2015](#)

Continetti is the editor-in-chief of the [Washington Free Beacon](#), a conservative website that launched in February 2012. Stiles is the digital managing editor for the Washington Free Beacon. The Stephanopoulos story surfaced on Wednesday just before 3:30 p.m., when Stiles found his name on the Clinton Foundation's donor lists. He e-mailed Continetti, who told him to move on the story and also directed a researcher to check whether Stephanopoulos had seeded any of his on-air work with disclosures about the donations.

The research turned up no evidence of Stephanopoulos having told viewers of his largesse to the Clinton Foundation, clinching the need for a story. "I think you have to write this one straight," Continetti wrote to Stiles, who sometimes takes [attitudinal approaches](#) to the news. The editor-in-chief also cited the need for a comment from Stephanopoulos's office. "I knew immediately that this was a news story," says Continetti.

Despite Stiles' best efforts, ABC News didn't cough up a response on the spot. Heather Riley, a spokeswoman for ABC News, e-mailed Stiles just after 9 p.m., promising him "something." "What time are you posting? Want to make sure I get it to you in time," she wrote.

Hear this, knee-jerk detractors of modern web journalism: Absent a comment from ABC News, Continetti & Co. decided to let the matter sit overnight. They just waited.

When the Washington Free Beaconers put their heads together Thursday morning, there was still no comment from ABC News. "I say, 'Let's begin to move this story,'" recalls Continetti. The piece wasn't complicated: A network news anchor had contributed to a charity run by the first family of the Democratic party and hadn't told viewers when that charity emerged in news coverage. What was complicated was its landing. "Literally as we were about to hit 'post,' we are alerted to the Dylan Byers piece that just went up," says Continetti, who moved to publish their piece without the ABC News statements. Those arrived later.

Unleash the tweetstorm from the Washington Free Beacon:

**Yes they said they'd send a statement in by the morning. Sent 10 minutes after Byers published. BecketAdams [@jdpeterson](#) [@FBillMcMorris](#)**

— Andrew Stiles (@AndrewStilesUSA) [May 15, 2015](#)

**How many other media figures have donated to Clinton Foundation without disclosure? One thing I know: I won't be asking them for comment!**

— Matthew Continetti (@continetti) [May 14, 2015](#)

Could Byers have simply converged on the same story at the same time as the Washington Free Beacon? Sure, but he's not saying anything. "I can't discuss sourcing," he responds to the Erik Wemple Blog via e-mail.

Nor has ABC News responded to inquiries from the Erik Wemple Blog. Nor did ABC News respond to [Politico media commentator Jack Shafer](#), who asked about the matter. Nor did ABC News respond to inquiries from the Washington Free Beacon:

**Addendum: [@ABC](#) did not respond to a request for comment on whether they received a separate, simultaneous inquiry from [@politico](#).**

— Andrew Stiles (@AndrewStilesUSA) [May 14, 2015](#)

So that makes three separate sets of questions to ABC News PR that ABC News PR has failed to answer. Answering questions is the job of ABC News PR.

What could possibly account for the network's slow-walking approach to the Washington Free Beacon? Absent a response from ABC News, the Erik Wemple Blog would be forced to speculate about how the network perhaps wanted to retain greater control over the story; or speculate about how ABC News has an allergy to working with a conservative news site; or speculate about any number of other things. And we don't speculate.

In any case, it's impossible to determine precisely what happened here, though the allegation is right there on the record:

**Media bias? No. After what [@ABC](#) did, media corruption.**

— Matthew Continetti (@continetti) [May 14, 2015](#)

**It's really considerate of [@ABC](#) to answer [@FreeBeacon](#) queries by running to [@DylanByers](#)!**

— Matthew Continetti (@continetti) [May 14, 2015](#)

Nothing about this contretemps slights the work of Byers. Quite the contrary — he wrote a factual breaking news story, however it germinated.

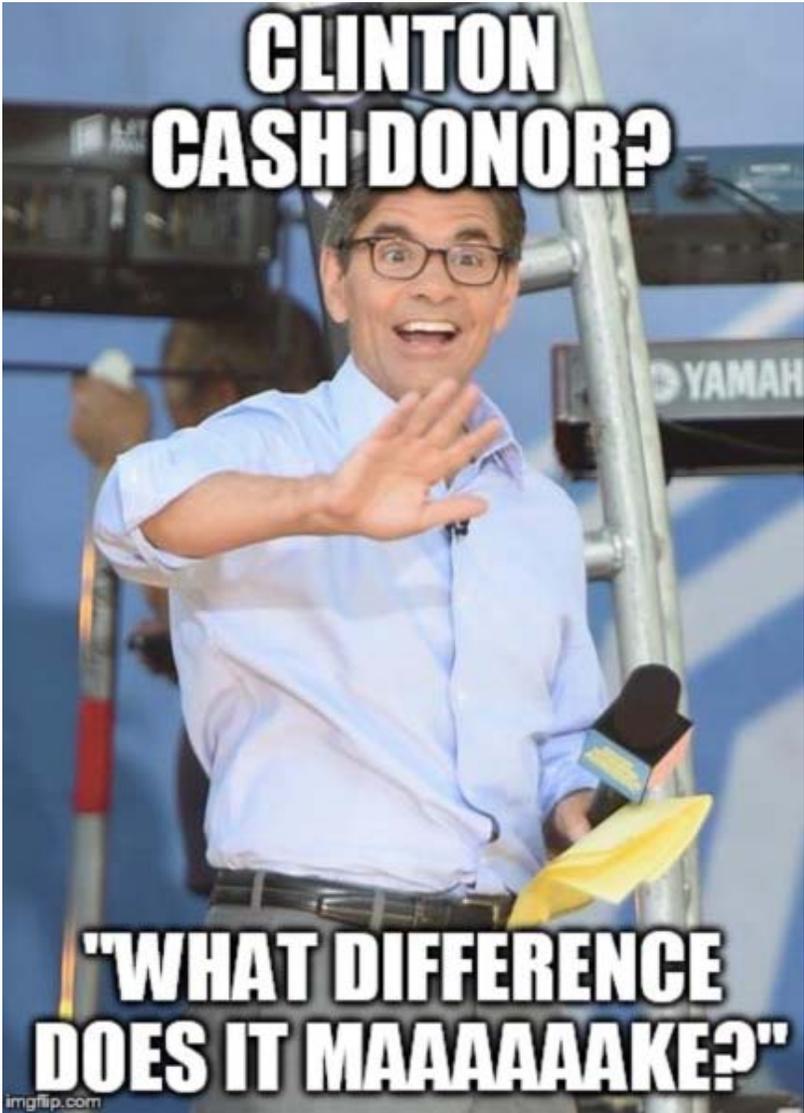
If indeed ABC News “ran” to Byers after getting an inquiry from the Washington Free Beacon, shame on them. PR shops, after all, exist to handle just the scenario that the Washington Free Beacon presented. It’s a very linear transaction: Reporter asks, PR responds. Should it turn out that ABC News betrayed this very simplicity, the network will have forfeited its expectation that journalists check with them before publishing their goods on ABC News. “I’m trying to instill the value of reporting to a new generation of conservative reporters,” says Continetti. “What lesson do they draw when they do their due diligence and some hack PR agent goes to another outlet in order to control the story?”

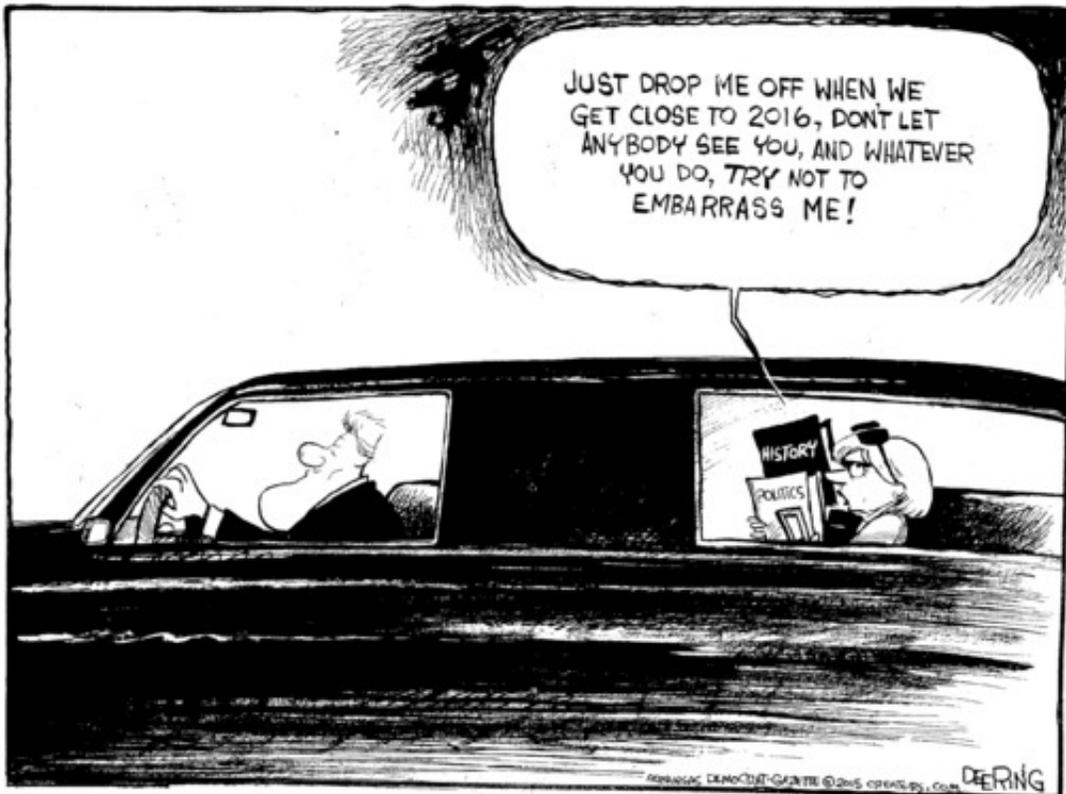
That’s such a good question that the Erik Wemple Blog just dropped it into an e-mail and passed it along to ABC News along with the other questions that they won’t answer.

Short-sighted would be a compliment for this media strategy. The nub of the Stephanopoulos news was that a top media figure had left a green paper trail of support for the Clinton family’s grand designs. Could he possibly, then, treat Republicans and conservatives with fairness? At the very time that this chatter started circulating, the network’s PR operation was shafting a conservative news outlet by slow-e-mailing its response. Symmetry.

The Washington Free Beacon’s industrious use of Twitter ensured recognition of its pioneering efforts on the Stephanopoulos story. Major news outlets, in their writeups of the story, credited the site for its inquiry into the donations. That dynamic undercut whatever result the network sought in releasing its statements to Politico first.

Silence is unacceptable here. ABC News has to do one of two things: Either apologize to the Washington Free Beacon for whatever precisely it did or explain how its actions meet the commonly acknowledged standards of the industry. Today Stephanopoulos issued his second apology for his evasions in the Clinton Foundation case, so that story may ebb in the coming weeks. Yet the Erik Wemple Blog is committed to keeping this unfinished business about the Washington Free Beacon in play until the network resolves it.





THIS ISN'T A DIPLOMA  
IT'S A CERTIFICATE THAT HE'S  
PAID OFF HIS STUDENT LOAN!

# CLASS OF

