

## Episode 118: "Just the Facts" with Jim Agresti

Speaker 1 ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers, fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people. Interesting things.

Bill Walton ([00:25](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton show. I'm Bill Walton. I don't know what happened on January 6th and I don't know what really happened with the vote in Georgia. And I don't know how lethal COVID-19 really is, but I do know that there's a concerted effort to prevent us from learning the truth, the facts about these things. Our freedom of inquiry is being shut down by both the mainstream and social media. Increasingly, I think this show is simply about pursuing the truth and defending our freedoms to do so. Case in point is a recent story in the New York Times fact-checking the January 6th Trump speech, Antifa's involvement in the Capitol Hill riot, and the Georgia vote. The New York Times story is riddled with flagrant falsehoods and distortions. With me today to talk about the Times story is my frequent guest and truth-teller Extraordinaire, Jim Agresti, founder of Just Facts.

Jim Agresti ([01:32](#)):

Bill, thank you for having me on.

Bill Walton ([01:33](#)):

Jim, it's great as always. Just to be clear, we talked about this before. This episode is about language and speech and media distortion, not about what really happened. We don't know what really happened and that's the problem. So Jim, let's start in. Where are we with this Times story? What was it last week that this came out?

Jim Agresti ([01:57](#)):

Yes. So the Times fact checked President Trump's attorneys during the, or should I say former President Trump's attorneys during the impeachment trial. And they claimed that a number of the statements made by the attorneys were false or misleading or lacked context. And in reality, what is false is, in most cases, is the fact check. These were not Trump's typical off the cuff exaggerated statements. These were very measured statements by the attorneys that are provably demonstrably, true. Yet the New York Times said they're false and then proceeded to prove that by uttering a ton of falsehoods in support of their fact-check.

Bill Walton ([02:47](#)):

Well, by proving, you mean making certain declarations about things that, as you look into it, just weren't true?

Jim Agresti ([02:56](#)):

Abjectly, demonstrably, categorically false.

Bill Walton ([03:01](#)):

So what about the inciting violence piece of this? I mean, there was talks about the use of the word fight and how that meant people were supposed to take their AR-15s and go to the Capitol even though there were no AR-15s there.

Jim Agresti ([03:17](#)):

So Trump's attorney, like many other people, pointed to Trump's speech on the day of the Capitol Hill riot and said, Hey, he said, in this speech let's peacefully and patriotically go down to the Capitol and make our voices heard. This is clearly not an incitement to riot. In fact, it's an incitement not to riot. It's saying, let's be peaceful about this. Let's be patriotic about it. So the New York Times says, well, this is misleading because Trump used the word fight 20 times in the same speech. However, that rebuttal is dependent upon the assumption that Trump meant the word fight in a physical sense, but the context of what he said clearly shows he was talking about it in a legal and verbal sense. And you can see that from every time he uses the word fight. In particular, he was talking about the media and he said, listen, we don't believe the corrupt fake news media anymore.

Jim Agresti ([04:18](#)):

They ruined their reputation, but it used to be, they'd argue with me and I'd fight. So they'd fight and I'd fight. And they'd fight. That's like five uses of the word fight right there. And he was just saying, Hey, we had an argument about this. And now he's saying, what they do is they go silent. It's called suppression. And that's exactly what we're dealing here with the New York Times. What they're doing is prejudicing the juror. They are basically trying to tell people, you can't trust those top Trump attorneys because they're lying. When in fact the people who are misleading here are the New York Times.

Bill Walton ([04:51](#)):

Well, didn't the Trump defense attorneys show endless minutes, hours of Democrats using exactly the same language?

Jim Agresti ([05:00](#)):

Yes, they showed video footage of them using the word fight more than 200 times. Many times, the tone in their voice was very combative. And more than a dozen times, they use the exact phrase that the Democrats included in Trump's impeachment resolution, fight like hell.

Bill Walton ([05:21](#)):

Well, it's interesting because I've been to Washington, DC area and I'm surrounded by people who did not vote for Donald Trump. And they get all their information from the New York Times and the Washington Post. And if that's all you're reading, I mean, I'm forced to read it because I'm interested in what's really going on, but they don't read anything else. So you're saying if they read this story and that's it, they'd say flat out Trump was lying. He was urging people to go to the Capitol and go inside and do what they did.

Jim Agresti ([05:56](#)):

I've found in this day and age that you can almost take nobody's word for anything. And that includes myself, not that I have a bad record. It's that I always encourage people to check what I'm saying. One of the unique things Just Facts does is we link right to the primary source. Oftentimes we quote it directly

so that people can go and verify what we say. So I just recommend, if it's something important, do the digging for yourself and dig back to that primary source, read the full transcript, watch the full video, because the media consistently, they're infamous for taking people out of context. And the New York Times, we have a recent piece about this is, does this as a regular course of habit.

Bill Walton ([06:48](#)):

We've got a whole list of things I think we might want to get into in just a bit. If you did all this digging about what Trump's intentions really were, did you find anything that suggested that that was his motive?

Jim Agresti ([07:01](#)):

No, just the opposite. He has been clear throughout his time in the office, and even before that, we should respect law enforcement, respect our laws. He kept using the phrase law and order. It's very, very clear what he was talking about and to surmise otherwise, or lead people to believe otherwise is grossly, grossly misleading.

Bill Walton ([07:27](#)):

Well, we're also being told by the Times, this was all about white supremacists and the left wasn't remotely involved in anything having to do with what happened at the Capitol yet there's I think we've got somebody from Antifa who was involved, at least according to your research. What was that about?

Jim Agresti ([07:47](#)):

The New York Times is denying this, and this is part of my article. But there's no question that a leader of Antifa was present at the riot, that he broke a window, that he incited people, sometimes yelling through a megaphone to storm and burn the Capitol, that he celebrated inside the Capitol as this was going on with an accomplice saying we did it, we did it. And this is not something my research shows, this is something that the FBI listed in the arrest affidavit calling for the arrest of this individual who was arrested. Its own videos show this, there's no question these things happened. And the New York Times is saying, well, he just says he was there to film the event. Since when does the denial of an accused person carry more weight and evidence for a fact-check than actual video of the event?

Bill Walton ([08:54](#)):

How did they cover the fact check? One of the things I think they said was they mis-characterized, somebody who said he was the leader of Antifa. And I think what the lawyers have said was that he was a leader or a member or something like that. Big difference.

Jim Agresti ([09:11](#)):

They took the lawyer's words, which are again, available on video and said, he called him the leader of Antifa. But what that person actually said is a leader of Antifa. And then the New York Times, Linda Q is the author of this fact check said, Antifa doesn't have a leader so therefore he must be wrong about this. But the fact is, this guy was the leader of a group called Insurgence USA, his name was John Sullivan. He had a website where he sold Black Bloc tactical gear, which is often used by Antifa the black clothing, the black face mask, the black umbrella and rubber pigs that Antifa will carry to mock police officers that squeak.

Bill Walton ([10:00](#)):

Wait, wait, wait. This guy is in the business of selling rubber pigs?

Jim Agresti ([10:05](#)):

Yes. But no, he's not Antifa according to the New York Times. And you know what the New York Times says is the reason for this? he says, he's not.

Bill Walton ([10:18](#)):

Well, that's a great defense. I want to get him as my criminal defense lawyer, I suppose, if that stands up. So is there any evidence that anybody, I mean, we said, this is not about what really happened, we don't know. But what other distortions surrounding the left's involvement in this might the Times have engaged in?

Jim Agresti ([10:39](#)):

In so far as the Capitol Hill riot, that's about as deep as my research goes. I looked into this one particular person because PolitiFact did a fact check that was very much like the New York Times' fact check. Abject nonsense, completely at odds with the facts. And by the way, you're talking about freedom of speech here. So somebody had posted this evidence to Facebook and based on this PolitiFact fact-check, Facebook censored the post, put a big warning up, reduced its thing said, this is not true or this lacks context or it's misleading. So what Facebook has going on here, they said, well we have independent fact-checkers that vet this for us. And then they don't hold them to any kind of standards, so which means basically this whole independent thing is a farce. Facebook has cherry-picked certain organizations to be the arbiters of truth on their website. And then they call them independent?

Jim Agresti ([11:43](#)):

No, they're your agents and you will not hold them to account. And you are cutting off the speech of other people based on abject falsehoods from these people. And I have aligned to Facebook because we used to do a good amount of advertising with them, so we were a good customer. So I had people there and I pose these questions like, well, what kind of standards that you hold these people to? What happens if they do something false and I can not get a straight answer from them. I just get the form email. These are independent fact checkers. It's just abject circular mindset.

Bill Walton ([12:21](#)):

How do you communicate with Facebook? I mean, I've gotten into things with Facebook and YouTube and all you get is a form email that you're talking to, what's the computer, Hal from Space Odyssey. No, there's no problem here. But you know, Facebook's got that advisory board they put together saying, well, we're going to have an independent advisory board to give us their thoughts on policies. And if you know, Brent Bozell at the Media Research Center analyzed who was on it. And every single member with maybe one exception out of 40 people was a member of the progressive left. And there is no bias, but we're just not seeing the world quite the way they do. So what about the Georgia absentee ballots? How did Times spin that?

Jim Agresti ([13:13](#)):

So here we get into this thing of taking people out of context. As has been widely reported in the media, Trump told the governor of Georgia to find the ballots to change the ultimate result in Georgia. The only thing you'll typically see in a media account is the word find in quotes. As if we trust them, given their track record, to make sure they're using that in context and what his attorney pointed out is they're not

using it in context. He was talking about the problems, the well-known problems in Georgia, and he said that, Hey, in 2016, the absentee ballot rejection rate in Georgia was about 6.42%. And this time out, it's only 0.4%, despite a massive increase in the number of absentee ballots, which you would think would lead to an even higher rejection rate. Instead, you have this much lower rejection rate.

Jim Agresti ([14:15](#)):

So here are the New York Times fact checkers step in and say, no, no, no he's comparing apples and oranges. And without getting too deep into the weeds, the fact that the matter is that 0.4% rate is a hundred percent correct. In fact, I shouldn't say that, we shoved the numbers, went through all the Georgia secretary of state's data, which is a massive dataset. And we came out with 0.35%, so if you round it at 0.4%. that number's entirely accurate. And Q just dismisses that says, well, I don't know the source of that number and just gone, not, let's do some digging and the number is available on other websites.

Bill Walton ([14:56](#)):

So what's that mean in terms of votes?

Jim Agresti ([14:59](#)):

So let me put it to you this way. There's some question about the absentee ballot rejection rate in 2016. Georgia has two different figures or has two different data sets. But even if you go with the lower one, which is a 2.9% rejection rate, if that were the rejection rate in 2020, about 34,000 fewer absentee ballots would have been cast in Georgia. In comparison, Joe Biden's margin of victory in the state was under 12,000 votes. So it's certainly possibly in the range that could overturn the results of the election. And that's the point the attorney was bringing out and he did it very accurately, but the New York Times just dismisses it. Again, this is a fact check from the so-called paper of record, and it's just blatantly misleading people.

Bill Walton ([15:52](#)):

So what about the signature audit?

Jim Agresti ([15:55](#)):

So the one of the attorneys, Trump's attorneys, also brought out the fact that, Hey, President Trump wanted the signature verification to be done in public. He's not asking for a riot. He's asking for transparency in this election. And the Times and Q say, well, you know what, a signature audit was done and it disproves what President Trump says. And this is what's so grossly misleading about this. I know I keep using that word. I don't want to overuse the word grossly, but it really-

Bill Walton ([16:27](#)):

We're using the word grossly misleading in the context of the New York Times. That's only because you don't read the Washington Post, which is worse. Maybe you do, I don't know.

Jim Agresti ([16:39](#)):

I do. I read them both every day.

Bill Walton ([16:43](#)):

God help us.

Jim Agresti ([16:43](#)):

I can't think of another word to really emphasize how blatantly dishonest and/or incompetent these fact-checks are.

Bill Walton ([16:52](#)):

Well, how do you know what you know? I mean, one of the things I like talking with you is you've done a lot of deep digging into this. And I think we've talked about it before, but I think it'd be worth reminding me and everyone else about what kind of work you do to dig into what's real and what isn't real.

Jim Agresti ([17:09](#)):

Sure. So we have instituted standards of credibility, which you can check out on the about us page of justfacts.com and what it is, is a series of principles that we use to check facts. And there's seven of them. One of the most important ones that I applied here is going to the primary source. You know, when you're a child, you played that game, telephone. Somebody started out with a phrase, a statement, and then it got passed around the room. And by the time it arrived back at you, it was always greatly distorted. And this is what happens when we rely on secondary sources. I don't care who they are. You have to dig back to that primary source of data to see what is going on. And that's what we do as a course of habit. It takes a lot of time, but it pays dividends because now we're getting this straight raw data, as opposed to somebody's interpretation of it or misinterpretation of it.

Bill Walton ([18:10](#)):

Who else out there is doing what you're doing?

Jim Agresti ([18:15](#)):

I don't know of anyone, quite frankly.

Bill Walton ([18:18](#)):

Yeah. That's the reason you're my go-to guy on this because most people are in secondary sources or hearsay or people believe what they feel, not necessarily what's true. Now you wrote a piece and I haven't had a chance to dig into it in the last day or two. We've got a whole litany of things that the Times has been distorting what's happening. Do you want to tick down that was just briefly so I can get more depressed about finding out-

Jim Agresti ([18:50](#)):

Just a little context here, because this is unbelievable. So the Times published an essay by a technology columnist by the name of Kevin Roose. I believe that's how you pronounce his name. And he frets., And I think rightly that the US is suffering from a reality crisis. And this is his solution, he wants President Biden to set up a truth commission, tell me how Orwellian that sounds, to combat the scorch of hoaxes, lies, and collective delusions that lead to violent unrest and civic dysfunction. Yet the Times idea of truth, and oftentimes Biden's idea of truth, and the left's idea of truth often consists of falsehoods that cause those very social ills.

Jim Agresti ([19:36](#)):

And just to rattle off a few of them, they have published hoaxes, lies, and delusions that spur violence against police that have actually resulted in their killings. They incite class warfare, they put out falsehoods about the economy that stagnate it. They slammed the United States as a nation and its people. They sow racial animosity, they empower criminals by disarming their victims. They cover up corruption in graft and fraud. They demonize elected officials. This example of Trump is a prime example. They distort science. I mean, the list goes on and on. I didn't count them all. I'm guessing 50 plus examples of how the New York Times has done that, again, with abjectly [inaudible 00:20:23].

Bill Walton ([20:23](#)):

Yeah. And just to put a finer point on it, they say things like the job market is not working to distribute wealth, which is not true. Our tax code isn't progressive. Well, it's the most progressive in the western world. There's little, and this is my favorite because I've been in business for 40 years and I can tell you all about regulations, so they say there's little historical evidence that tying regulation levels to economic growth. And, Oh, this is a good one. As a result of Obamacare, wages will go up, not down. I mean, it boggles, yet, I tell you if we go over to my club and the whole lot of people in my club that voted for Joe Biden, they'll tell you this stuff is absolutely true. No doubt about it. And how do they know that, because they read it in the New York Times.

Bill Walton ([21:22](#)):

So who's behind the New York Times. Didn't they get bailed out by some, I mean, one of the other themes I'm getting into is there seems to be a common cause being made by the tech oligarchs and the woke progressive left. And I don't want to get into the other, the Chinese Communist Party is actually ... I'll stay away from that one for this one, but you've got all these billionaires now that seem to control the media outlets. And we've got Bezos with the Washington Post. And who's the billionaire behind, that bailed the New York Times out?

Jim Agresti ([21:57](#)):

So that is Carlos Slim. In 2015, he became the largest single shareholder of the New York Times. He is also a Mexican citizen, not an American citizen. He loaned them a quarter of a billion dollars in the midst of the great recession because credit was really tight. And in the Times' own words, they were in peril. He also, at that time, was the second richest person in the world, \$72 billion net worth. So we have a foreigner pumping in money into a US news outlet. You cannot do that with a US election as we well know, but yet the law allows it to happen with US news outlets.

Bill Walton ([22:43](#)):

Have you done any work to find out what his views are? I mean, he doesn't seem to be like a George Soros who's credibly ideological and driven to bring about stuff. Was this just a vanity investment for Slim or something else?

Jim Agresti ([23:01](#)):

I don't think anybody gets into a stock for vanity, for the most part. I don't know his views, but I have to imagine he did not want to see this paper fail, either because it was serving his business interests was serving his personal views, but people don't put that kind of money into something just for the fun of it.

Bill Walton ([23:23](#)):

Well, I think his motive, I don't know, this is again, speculation. His motive seems to me to be more buying good opinion and favorable coverage, because if there's anybody who could be a target of the progressive left, it's a Mexican billionaire with \$72 billion in control of all of these entities, which a hostile reporter could hurt. But nevertheless, it's not like the Times is being rewarded by the marketplace. Does the Times make money?

Jim Agresti ([23:58](#)):

Do they make money? Oh yeah.

Bill Walton ([23:59](#)):

Okay.

Jim Agresti ([24:01](#)):

Just to give you an idea, the Times frets about big voices and special interest groups in politics and how the voice of the wealthy drown out the common people. This is almost direct words from one of their op-eds. For more than a century, one extended family has owned a controlling share of the Times, the Ochs Sulzberger family and the revenues from the Times are approximately 20% greater than the total donations of all US citizens and corporations to federal Republican campaigns and causes. I'm talking about presidential candidates, congressional candidates, and even special interest groups, the so-called dark money. So you have one family with a greater voice and more power to speak as measured by money than basically half of the United States population.

Bill Walton ([24:56](#)):

So I don't think they read their own masthead then, did they, but that's not unusual. We need to get a truth commission after them to find out why they're not disclosing all this. And I'm sure they'll fact check this and we'll find out that the things you said are true. They'll tell us, they'll somehow spin it. Well, Jim, I want to bring this one to a close, because we're going to have a lot more to talk about another topics in the future. Turns out you are absolutely right about the, changing subjects here, about the number of deaths caused by the lockdowns of COVID-19 and the pandemic versus the number of people that died. People are talking about a big number, 500,000, which is a tragically large number. I still don't think anybody's really dug in to how much of that is, I don't think anybody's dug into that number. That's a different question. But you were right about the damage that the lockdowns would do to a society, in particular kids.

Jim Agresti ([26:01](#)):

Yeah. So multiple peer review journals have come out with studies and the results accord with ours, which I believe we did in April or May, months ahead of the curve that my coauthor and I, Dr. Andrew Glenn, and they're basically finding the same things that when you have people saying, well, we have to save lives, you have to measure the harm that your cure does. And if you say, well, we're going to lock down children and we're going to destroy jobs and destroy the economy and people are going to be so terrified because we're terrifying them to make sure they don't get away from the lockdown and not honor it. They don't get medical care and all these things are coming to coming, chickens are coming home to roost.

Bill Walton ([26:48](#)):

And all that work's on your website?

Jim Agresti ([26:52](#)):

Yes, it is.

Bill Walton ([26:53](#)):

Anyway, Jim Agresti, founder of Just Facts, thanks again for coming on. We'll have you back for our next installment. I'm sure, not in the near future and for everybody watching this, listening to this, I hope you'll go to the justfacts.com website. There's a whole treasure trove of what's really happening in the world, and I think it's worth the time spent with it. So, Jim, thank you. We'll be talking again soon. And thank you for watching and listening. And we'll be back with hopefully equal interesting episode in the next few days. Thanks.

Jim Agresti ([27:31](#)):

Thank you, Bill.

Bill Walton ([27:31](#)):

I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the subscribe button or head over to the BillWaltonshow.com to choose from over a hundred episodes. You can also learn more about our guests on our Interesting People page. And send us your comments, we read every one and your thoughts help us guide the show. If it's easier for you to listen, check out our podcast page and subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right, and what's next. Thanks for joining.