

# [***A dangerous undercurrent is pulling Americans toward the political extreme. The media is turning a blind eye to it***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B48-14N1-DY7V-G019-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

New York (CNN) &#8212; There is a dangerous undercurrent dragging Americans who wade into the political waters out toward the extreme. But much of the national press, basking ashore on the sun-soaked beach, refuses to acknowledge it in a serious manner.

Instead, many journalists have grown comfortable glossing over the treacherous rip tide lurking beneath the surface of the water before their very eyes. They report that scores of swimmers have been dragged into the menacing waters of the deep sea, but never do they acknowledge the conditions that led them there.

It's as if identifying the cause of the calamity is too much to ask. It is, apparently, a bridge too far. The invisible, yet threatening, forces must remain invisible.

That's how reading and watching much of the coverage of the Iowa caucuses came across. Yes, the national political press pointed to an alarming entrance poll showing that an overwhelming majority - 66% - of GOP caucusgoers do not accept Joe Biden legitimately won the 2020 election. And yes, the news media accurately noted that Donald Trump maintains a firm grip over the Republican Party, despite inciting an insurrection and being ensnared in a messy web of legal battles, among other things.

But crucial coverage of the grave undercurrent in GOP ***politics*** that propelled the caucusgoers far outside the Overton window - believing that the duly elected president is not actually the duly-elected president, despite countless fact-checks and court rulings - received little-to-no attention. While one might expect the poll to set off alarm bells and deep soul-searching about the fate of the nation's democracy, the press failed to interrogate the issue in a real way.

Embarrassingly, Ron DeSantis has done more in recent days than most in the press to call attention to the matter. The Florida governor accurately noted last week that Republican voters operate in a dishonest information environment in which Trump receives little criticism but plenty of praise.

Of course, the observation from DeSantis, himself a culture warrior who has refrained from assailing Trump in a meaningful way while contributing generously to public distrust of the press, is rich. But that doesn't mean it isn't right on the mark.

On a daily basis, cable channels such as Fox News, a stable of national and local talk-radio hosts, an assortment of online influencers, and a network of online outlets such as Breitbart dump reams of toxic waste into the national discourse. That is not without consequence.

The propaganda machine supporting Trump has deceived the GOP, twisting the party into believing outright lies that have been publicly rebuked by the former president's one-time confidantes. But, instead of identifying the crux of the matter and vigorously calling it out, most major newsrooms demur when presented with repeated evidence of its corrosive and widespread effects.

It goes without saying that there are many reasons for this reality. For one, it is still perhaps uncomfortable to acknowledge the depths of dishonesty in which much of right-wing media now operates. More importantly, however, most news organizations are terrified of being perceived as biased - and delivering such a fact set to viewers could contribute to distrust among Republicans (though it's likely they already do distrust the press).

Whatever the reason, it should not translate into coverage of paramount importance failing to be transmitted to audiences. The news media's duty is to deliver the plain facts, regardless of fear or favor or anything else standing in its way. Choosing to back down and ignore the hazardous conditions offshore amounts to a dereliction of duty.

Unfortunately, that is precisely what so much of the press continues to do. The country is at risk of drowning - and the press watches from the shore, unwilling to sound the alarm about the insidious forces plunging Americans into the stormy seas.

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