Expert on Journalism Ethics Discusses Repercussions of the CBS News Scandal

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Description

Bob Steele, an expert on journalism ethics at the Poynter Institute, discusses the scandal at CBS News surrounding its flawed report on President George W. Bush and how it affects the news media as a whole.

Keywords

CBS News, Scandal, Bob Steele, Poynter Institute, Ethics, Media, Investigation, Dan Rather, Network News, 60 Minutes II, President, George W. Bush, National Guard, Military Service, Reporting Errors, Journalism, Journalist, CBS, Liberal Bias, Independent Investigation, Report, Sources, Fact Checking, Integrity, Reporting, Executives, George H.W. Bush

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Transcript
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BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Bob Steele is an expert on journalism and journalistic ethics at the respected Poynter Institute. He weighed in for us on the CBS situation. Today's review and how the case affects the news media as a whole. Here he is tonight in his own words.

Professor BOB STEELE: CBS News failed significantly when it came to the original stories. They failed in terms of their system, they failed in terms of their operations, and in many cases, they reacted poorly and slowly to the criticism that came at them.

Mr. DAN RATHER: (From CBS News) We can no longer vouch for their authenticity.

Prof. STEELE: It was wise to do an independent review of what took place, and the review is extensive and substantive, and it gives CBS plenty to chew on and to act upon in terms of how to right the ship. It's essential that they go back to what is at the heart of CBS News, and that's a matter of integrity. Many accuse CBS News of bias, of ideological bias and political bias. The situation is probably unique to some degree because of the case history. There has been tension between Dan Rather and the Bush family.

Former President George H.W. BUSH: (From file footage) How would you like it if I judged your career by those seven minutes when you walked off the set in New York?

Prof. STEELE: I don't think bias was a factor in what went wrong. I think it was a failure of skill, a failure of standards and a failure of journalistic oversight. The playing field is changing. There's no doubt about that. In fact, it's already changed, when you add into the mix the Internet bloggers. The journalists of CBS News, from those who are reporting from around the world to those covering the White House, have to figure out ways to keep moving ahead professionally. I don't believe our attempt should be to change the public and convince them that we're good and credible. I think we should prove it by the work that we provide and by the way in which we honor the highest of standards.