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ABC, CBS, CNN, FNC, NBC Morning Interviews With Gonzales All Skip "March Massacre" of 1993

## Mass Amnesia Over Mass Clinton Firings

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales appeared on five broadcast and cable network TV morning shows to comment on the sudden media-manufactured "crisis" that the Justice Department fired eight U.S. Attorneys, political appointees of the President. None of the Gonzales interviewers – at ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and FNC – ever mentioned that the Clinton administration fired all 93 U.S. Attorneys in 1993. How can firing eight be a "crisis" and firing 93 be not worth a solitary mention?

The TV journalists asked Gonzales 42 questions this morning, and not one touched on the previous administration. Every network asked Gonzales whether he would resign – 10 times in total. (ABC asked three, CNN asked four, the others just once.) Here's the network breakdown.

**ABC.** *Good Morning America* wins a prize for the most visibly shameless Clinton spin against Team Bush, alternating between Hillary Clinton and George Stephanopoulos. Reporter Jake Tapper touted an exclusive interview with Mrs. Clinton and never challenged her on air with a whisper of her husband's actions. Then came Stephanopoulos -- who was White House spokesman defending the Clintons when they canned all 93 attorneys. He pressed Gonzales like a prosecutor, asking "if it turns out that evidence of political interference does come up in these e-mails and other communications, will you resign?"

**CBS.** On *The Early Show*, anchor Harry Smith fueled the notion of a political purge, telling Gonzales about how "the perception" is that the U.S. Attorneys were fired for not "carrying out the White House's agenda." He also asked: "What's more important, the rule of law or the appetite for change at the White House?"

**CNN.** *American Morning* anchor Miles O'Brien constantly interrupted Gonzales, badgering him to answer whether he would resign four times. O'Brien was most outrageous in using the term "mass firing" and then

asserting it was unprecedented: "This is an important personnel matter – unprecedented levels of firings of U.S. Attorneys. It's a big deal, isn't it?" Gonzales started to say it's "not unusual" for a "new president" to change the guard, but O'Brien interrupted: "Yeah, but we're talking mid-term...the beginning of the second go-round."

**FNC.** On *Fox & Friends*, anchor Gretchen Carlson sounded like the other networks, asking if Gonzales would resign and echoing Democrats: "Chuck Schumer, senator from New York, says the buck stops with Attorney General Gonzales." She did note that U.S. Attorneys can be fired for any reason, and asked Gonzales if he was saying they should have been told why they were fired.

**NBC.** On *Today*, anchor Matt Lauer tossed the typical blocks of accusatory liberal text at Gonzales.

One was from liberal *Washington Post* columnist Ruth Marcus accusing him of being "an absentee landlord, chronically clueless." The other was Sen. Charles Schumer comparing the Gonzales chief of staff that resigned, Kyle Sampson, to former Cheney chief of staff Scooter Libby, saying Sampson's resignation only "raises the temperature" of the scandal.

Back in 1993, the media had a different sense of "crisis." Clinton fired 93 U.S. Attorneys, and ABC and CBS never mentioned it. CNN and NBC mentioned it in passing. (FNC didn't exist yet.) The media do not merely arrive at the scene of a "crisis." They are the manufacturers of "crisis." If they decide a political action is not a "crisis," then it is not – even when the facts of yesteryear are much more dramatic than the facts right now. — *Tim Graham*

**CNN's Miles O'Brien even suggested to Gonzales that he'd presided over "unprecedented levels of firings of U.S. Attorneys. It's a big deal, isn't it?" It's not "unprecedented." Bill Clinton fired 93 U.S. Attorneys back in 1993.**

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