



Campaign 2004

# Media Reality ✓ Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ✪ Thursday, April 8, 2004

Press Contact:  
Katie Wright  
(703) 683-5004  
Vol. 8, No. 10  
www.mrc.org

NBC and MSNBC Allowed No Pro-Bush Mourners to Express Their Feelings About Condi Testimony

## NBC Trumps Rice With Anti-Bush Widows

Who are the most important judges of the investigation of what went wrong before September 11? The media elite have provided one consistent answer on who is in the political driver's seat: the relatives of the victims. But not all of them.

In recent weeks, the networks have interviewed a selected set of 9-11 widows and other relatives, and most have focused the lion's share of their outrage at the Bush administration. Viewers at home might assume that a poll of 9-11 families would find they almost uniformly blame Bush more than the terrorists and want him to lose in November.

Minutes after National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice finished testifying, Tim Russert told Tom Brokaw live on NBC: "But the real issue will be, how did the families of the victims of 9-11 respond to this testimony? They have been the driving force for the commission, for information from the White House, for Dr. Rice to testify under oath."

On this morning's *Today* and for multiple segments in a 90-minute post-Condi *Hardball* special on MSNBC, only four widows were singled out as judges of Rice's testimony. The four were celebrated in the April 1 *New York Times* as "nonpolitical." NBC has emphasized Kristen Breitweiser, who has appeared in four *Today* interviews in four weeks.

Mrs. Breitweiser insists that she voted for Bush in 2000, but has wildly declared that "Three thousand people were murdered on Bush's watch." *Times* arts editor Frank Rich also noted how she tartly complained that a Showtime 9-11 docudrama failed to display President Bush reading to school children "while people like my husband were burning alive inside the World Trade Center towers"

because it would have been contrary to "Karl Rove's art direction and grand vision." She's hardly "nonpolitical."

In fact, these widows are liberal lobbyists against the Bush team, even as they claim to speak for all 9-11 victim families. Even Tim Russert linked the widows and John Kerry as two forces who will now press the White House for a complete declassification of the much-discussed August 6 presidential daily briefing. (One weblog even urges Breitweiser should be picked as Kerry's veep.)

### Who Didn't Get on TV Today?

"Would you, Lori, like to hear an apology from Dr. Rice? I know many families were quite moved when Richard Clarke apologized and said, 'we have failed you.' **Now other families were not happy with Richard Clarke's testimony and, and basically wrote a letter indicating that. It was signed by, I believe, 41 families.** Having said that, would you like an apology today?" — NBC's Katie Couric to widow Lori Van Auken on Thursday's *Today*.

In their front-page widow story, the *New York Times* noted that liberal Senators Ted Kennedy and Charles Schumer were advising the widows to demand Bush and Cheney also answer commissioner questions (and speeches) on live TV. Print accounts have also noted these widows tried to get the 9-11 commission's director, Philip Zelikow, fired for being too close to Condi Rice.

(NBC wasn't all alone today in the anti-Bush widow department. On ABC's *Good Morning America*, widow Beverly Eckert was charging "Everybody's basically been covering up, I think, for the administration, this whole Washington scene.")

In March, 9-11 relative Ernest Strada sounded a different note, telling Chris Matthews on MSNBC's *Hardball* that "anybody can be a Monday morning quarterback." Strada says he told Bush at a memorial event: "Mr. President, you are on the right side of the issues. We're with you 100 percent. Forget what the media says, the country believes in you." Is it any wonder he didn't get to debate the Kristen Breitweiser crew on this important occasion?

— Tim Graham

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Katie Wright at (703) 683-5004