



Media Reality Check

A Twice-Daily Analysis of Network Convention Coverage Thur. Afternoon, August 17, 2000

Good Afternoon!

Welcome to the Media Research Center's continuing examination of Democratic convention coverage delivered by fax, e-mail and posted on our Website. This edition concentrates on this morning's TV coverage.

Tomorrow, a final edition will present a complete report on tonight's prime time coverage.

For the complete collection of these issues, including those published during the Republican convention, please go to <http://www.mrc.org> and click on "Campaign 2000." You'll be able to access issues as regular HTML files or view them as Adobe Acrobat PDF files.

Don't miss the video clips posted each day to illustrate the documented bias: Check the MRC home page and the "Campaign 2000" page for the latest.

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Matt Lauer: Gore Was "Very Successful" as Vice President

Russert Impressed By Senator "Regular Joe"

Vice Presidential nominee Joe Lieberman's speech to the Democratic convention got a mere 48 seconds on CBS's *The Early Show*, which spent nearly 19 minutes recapping last night's episode of *Survivor*. But ABC and NBC loved Lieberman; *Today*'s Tim Russert said, "He came across as a regular Joe, had a conversation with the American people. His low-key style, I think, is a winning one and one that people respond to."

On *Good Morning America*, host Charles Gibson allowed while "the Senator did take a swipe or two at Republicans...for the most part, he talked of the American Dream, for he has lived it." On FNC last night, political analyst Michael Barone counted "30 lines of negative attack on the Republicans."

"I think he did a great job," ABC's George Stephanopoulos beamed. "Listen, maybe I'm a sucker because I'm a first-generation immigrant for all the 'only in America' stuff, but it was quite moving to the people in the hall."

"Lieberman's [speech was] more spontaneous, more humorous," NBC's Russert asserted, while "Cheney's [was] more workmanlike, and I think Cheney's had a little bit more of an edge to it – but that's pretty much who Dick Cheney is."

Impressed as he was with Lieberman, Matt Lauer was concerned about Gore. "If Joe Lieberman did a good job last night," he asked Russert, "is the downside to that that Al Gore has a difficult act to follow?" Russert gravely responded that, "the bar couldn't be higher."

Lauer also asserted that Gore "has been very successful, some would say the most successful number two in the history of vice presidents," but he worried, "Can he step forward?"

"Delegates...say his campaign speeches in '92 and '96 were good and solid performances," Russert reassured him, "his debates with Dan Quayle, Jack Kemp, Ross Perot, he stepped up. Don't be surprised tonight, they say, if he hits a home run." □

Quote of the Morning

"What about this turn toward what's called family values? The right turn doesn't seem to concern you?"

— CBS's Bryant Gumbel, interviewing Whoopi Goldberg, *Early Show*, August 17. When she asked what's wrong with family values, he said, "It's generally been a code word for less inclusion."

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Stuck on Celebrities

When CBS's *Early Show* wasn't focused on *Survivor*, it covered the convention — with a collection of celebrities. First, **Bryant Gumbel** asked actress **Whoopi Goldberg** if she was disturbed by the Democrats "trying to strike a moral tone" about entertainment. Gumbel also inquired, "What about this turn towards what's called family values? The right turn doesn't seem to concern you?" She asked Gumbel, "What's wrong with family values?" and he replied, "It's generally been a code word for less inclusion."

Gumbel also asked what Goldberg thought of the GOP convention, and she said Bush "didn't do anything for me." He put the same question to comedian **Chris Rock**: "Diversity was the watchword. Inclusion.... Did you buy it?" Rock laughed, "No." Rock also said he couldn't make fun of **Joe Lieberman's** Jewishness on his HBO show: "The people that write my check are that sensitive."

All three networks featured actor **Tommy Lee Jones**, Al Gore's college roommate at Harvard. He told ABC he remembered Al as "a guy sitting in a dorm in a pair of bib coveralls with a yellow ball cap on that says Golden Acres Seeds." NBC's **David Bloom** stated, "You described him as 'honest, smart, funny, and one of the coolest people in America.' That description might surprise people who don't know him as well as you." □

Laura Bush Was Quizzed About Husband's Wild Side

Today Shows Off Tipper's Photo Album

Shortly after 7:00 this morning, NBC's Tim Russert reported that Gore's advisors "want him to be seen as a loving, caring man of faith, [a] man of character, and not a robot." An hour later, *Today* aired an interview with Tipper Gore about photos she will display at the convention tonight. The interview was pre-taped, which allowed editors to insert numerous still photos of Al Gore taken by his wife.

"I wanted [voters] to know that he's got a sense of humor, that he clowns around at home, that he's a prankster. **I wanted them to know that he's thoughtful, that he's loving. I want them to know that family and faith really are at the center of his life,**" Mrs. Gore told NBC's Jamie Gangel, hitting most of the points that Russert said Gore's advisors thought were important.

In contrast, *Today* interviewed Laura Bush live, precluding the heavy use of sympathetic images of her husband. "**How did you tame the wild animal in George W. Bush?**" asked Katie Couric on July 31. "**What was your secret?**" □

"Made By a Professional Movie Director, But They Seem Candid" ABC's Gibson Plays Gore's "Home Movies"

In 1996, ABC's Ted Koppel left the GOP convention in San Diego, huffing that it was "more of an infomercial than a news event." This morning, ABC's Charles Gibson presented an Al Gore infomercial as if it was a news event. On four separate occasions, with an air time of two minutes and 19 seconds, Gibson aired "home movies" of the Gores made by movie director Spike Jonze.

Gibson began, "**There's one seemingly frivolous but very important piece of film that was played at the convention last night,** and it sort of caught us by surprise...obviously they want this movie to counteract the image of Al Gore as being too stiff, or too formal. We're going to show you a big chunk of this, and then we'll talk to George about it. Take a look." He showed a 57-second clip (labeled "Home Video" in the corner of the screen), and then George Stephanopoulos predicted, "**I bet you're going to see an awful lot of this film over the next three months.**" Gibson replied: "**Well, you're going to see an awful lot of it in our next half hour as well.**"

In the next half hour, Gibson introduced "a fascinating film...you get a sense that it's home movies of the Gores....This film to humanize Al Gore and change his image a bit." ABC ran a 43-second clip, this time labeled "DNC Video" in the corner. Then, a few minutes later, Gibson told ABC's political panel: "These quote, home movies. **They were made by a professional movie director, but they seem candid. And it's obvious as we looked at this as it was played for the convention in non-prime time, sort of slipped it in, but it has gotten a lot of attention,** and as George said, we are going to see a lot of it replayed, I think." He showed another 25-second clip of Gore joking that he can't be stiff with Tipper walking around barefoot. "That's my job," Tipper joked. Gibson replied, "It seems too pat, but it's good." □