



Campaign 2008

# Media Reality ✓ Check

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Even Before Her Obama Book, PBS Anchor Demonstrated Liberal Tilt at 2004 Vice-Presidential Debate

## Gwen Ifill Is Pro-Obama and Anti-Palin

Friday's *Washington Post* carried an ad from PBS touting their two TV debate moderators: "Objective. Impartial. Independent. The *NewsHour's* Jim Lehrer and *Washington Week's* Gwen Ifill bring PBS's tradition of integrity to the most important conversations in America – so you can make up your own mind."

Sadly, that ad is not accurate. Even before addressing whether "independence" is demonstrated by Ifill writing a new book celebrating Barack Obama's bold "Breakthrough," Ifill's questions in the vice presidential debate in 2004 displayed an undeniable bias against Vice President Cheney.

For example, she pressed Cheney to attack Democratic nominee John Edwards personally: "President Bush has derided John Kerry for putting a trial lawyer on the ticket. You yourself have said that lawsuits are partly to blame for higher medical costs. Are you willing to say that John Edwards, sitting here, has been part of the problem?"

Ifill then turned around and asked the Democrat if he was feeling pained at the attack she had just requested: "Senator Edwards, new question to you, same topic. Do you feel personally attacked when Vice President Cheney talks about liability reform and tort reform and the president talks about having a trial lawyer on the ticket?"

The PBS host also pressed Cheney with a Tim Russert-style question on Iran: "Mr. Vice President, in June of 2000 when you were still CEO of Halliburton, you said that U.S. businesses should be allowed to do business with Iran because, quote, 'Unilateral sanctions almost never work.' After four years as Vice President now, and with Iran having been declared by your administration as part of the 'Axis of Evil,' do you still believe that we should lift sanctions on Iran?" Cheney said no, and that in 2000, he was talking about unilateral sanctions, not universal sanctions. Some viewers were put off after the Edwards counterattack, when

Cheney said "I can respond, Gwen, but it's going to take more than 30 seconds," and she said "Well, that's all you've got." She said Democrats loved it ("they thought I was being snippy"), but she said that wasn't her intent.

When Ifill turned to Edwards for a question on Israel policy, there wasn't an equally tough question for him. She said the U.S. seemed sadly "absent" under Bush: "Today, a senior member of Islamic Jihad was killed in Gaza. There have been suicide bombings, targeted assassinations, mortar attacks, all of this continuing at a time when the United States seems absent in the peace-making process. What would your administration do?"

Ifill's toughest question to Edwards underlined that he had the least governmental experience of any vice-presidential nominee since 1976. She also pressed Edwards from the left on Kerry's promise not to raise taxes and their opposition to gay marriage. But her last question seemed designed to aid Kerry: "Senator Kerry changed his mind about whether to vote to authorize the President to go to war. President Bush changed his mind about whether a Homeland Security department was a good idea or a 9/11 Commission was a good idea. What's wrong with a little flip-flop every now and then?"

When Palin was picked, Ifill announced on the August 29 *Washington Week* that the idea of Palin attracting Hillary Clinton voters was strange: "I want to question that whole theory, why Hillary Clinton voters would actually vote for someone who is so famously anti-abortion, for instance and other issues." [See box.]

There's seemingly no end in sight for biased PBS moderators, since Republican debate negotiators keep accepting them, allowing PBS to suggest that decision endorses the false notion of their objectivity and impartiality. -- *Tim Graham*

### Palin Helps With 'Evangelical Far Right'

"I also was struck this week and last week that both parties – and maybe this is what happens after a party convention – but they both came away having played to and sealed down their base. Barack Obama had to take care of his Clinton problem. And John McCain had to take care of his evangelical, far right problem." – Ifill hosting *Washington Week*, September 5.

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Colleen O'Boyle at (703) 683-5004