



Media Reality ✓ Check

# QUICK TAKE

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## **ABC'S ROBERTS, JAN 21: "I DO NOT WANT HIS VOICE SILENCED"** **NETWORKS SPIKE LATEST TWIST IN** **JESSE JACKSON PAY-OFF SCANDAL**

*The Washington Post* reported this morning that "a woman with whom Jesse L. Jackson fathered a child during an extramarital affair had **approval to use funds from one of Jackson's tax-exempt charitable organizations to buy a house in Los Angeles**, according to correspondence confirmed by a Jackson aide today." The story, by *Post* staff writer William Claiborne, appeared on page A3 of this morning's edition, and was therefore available to all of the broadcast networks as they planned their morning news programs.

But not a single network morning show offered viewers even a hint of this new twist in the scandal plaguing the liberal activist/Baptist preacher/CNN personality. It's not that the networks are too sophisticated for tabloid news — ABC's *Good Morning America* and NBC's *Today* both dug into the latest developments in the 25-year-old Moxley murder case in Connecticut.

For its part, CBS's *The Early Show* shamelessly promoted tonight's episode of *Survivor*, explaining how a spin of a wheel will determine whether contestants will eat a bug, cow brains, or another gross item — but said nothing about the Jackson scandal.

All along, the broadcast networks have made it clear that they don't want to risk Jackson's career as an activist by trumpeting the unfolding scandal. When news that he'd fathered an illegitimate daughter first broke on January 18, ABC's Diane Sawyer insisted on a sympathetic spin: "**This is, of course, a political story, but also a family story, and everybody has to be very concerned for the Jackson family.**" Three days later on *This Week*, ABC's Cokie Roberts fretted that Jackson's liberal clout would be diminished: "**Obviously this is something he is feeling shame about and should, but I do not want to have his voice silenced in public debate. I think he's an important voice in public debate and I think that having it now lose some authority is too bad.**"

Now that new information on the use of tax-exempt funds to help Jackson's mistress has come to light, the networks are showing that they don't think hypocrisy is newsworthy if the alleged hypocrite is a liberal.