

Journalist Cites Bogus Climate Stat in Speech on 'Fake News'

At a recent awards ceremony, CNN's Christiane Amanpour denounced what she described as a "tsunami of fake news, aka lies" that occurred during the 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle.

Amanpour, a British-Iranian journalist and former host of ABC's This Week, made the remarks during a speech she gave after receiving the Burton Benjamin Memorial Award by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Here is an excerpt (4:30 mark):

"It appeared much of the media got itself into knots trying to differentiate between balance, objectivity, neutrality, and crucially, truth. We cannot continue the old paradigm—let's say like over global warming, where 99.9 percent of the empirical scientific evidence is given equal play with the tiny minority of deniers.

I learned a long, long time ago, covering the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia, never to equate victim with aggressor, never to create a false moral or factual equivalence, because then if you do, particularly in situations like that, you are party and an accomplice to the most unspeakable crimes and consequences.

So I believe in being truthful, not neutral. And I believe you must stop banalizing the truth. We have to be able to fight especially hard right now for the truth....

The winning candidate did a very savvy end-run around us, and used it to go straight to the people. Combined with the most

incredible development ever, which is a tsunami of fake news, aka lies.”

A couple of things here to consider.

First, it appears that Amanpour actually compares climate skepticism to genocide and ethnic cleansing. This hardly seems like a fair comparison, unless, I suppose, one accepts the theory of apocalyptic global warming, which rests on the idea that the planet is not just warming, but that the warming is primarily human-driven and a grave threat to humankind.

Second, in a lecture on truth, Amanpour cites a discredited statistic, and she even manages to cite the bogus statistic incorrectly.

The statistic Amanpour presumably was referring to is based [on the research of John Cook](#), an Australian and Climate Communications Fellow for the Global Change Institute at the University of Queensland. [The report](#), published in May 2013, says nothing about the dangers of climate change. It does claim that 97 percent—not 99.9 percent, as Amanpour states —of scientists agree that global warming is real and man-made.

That 97 percent figure, however, has been thoroughly debunked. Richard Tol, a professor of economics who has been involved in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since 1994, said the claim is a figure [“essentially pulled from thin air.”](#) [He later detailed](#) the flaws in Cook’s methodology:

Cook and Co. analysed somewhere between 11,944 and 12,876 papers – they can’t get their story straight on the sample size – but only 64 of these explicitly state that humans are the primary cause of recent global warming. A reexamination of their data brought that number down to 41.

Additionally, Princeton physicist Freeman Dyson says the

dangers of CO2 emissions are vastly overstated. Dyson, who studied climate systems for more than a quarter-century, recently wrote the foreword to [a report](#) written by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change co-founder Indur Goklany on CO2. Dyson writes:

[The] climatic effects observed in the real world are much less damaging than the effects predicted by the climate models, and have also been frequently beneficial. I am hoping that the scientists and politicians who have been blindly demonizing carbon dioxide for 37 years will one day open their eyes and look at the evidence.

Dyson, [a self-described Democrat and Obama supporter](#), attributes misconceptions of climate change to “tribal” thinking among “politicians and scientists about controversial issues.” You could probably add media to that list.

Perhaps Amanpour is right that there is “a tsunami of fake news” out there that obscures truth. If she believes this is a threat, she just might consider looking in the mirror first.

A bigger question: Are reporters and pundits really the best people to shield us from “fake news”?

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