

Book Review

*Blinded by the Right*

David Brock

2002, Three Rivers Press, 366 pages

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Fans of Air America's Al Franken Show are familiar with David Brock, director of Media Matters, watchdog of the news and information industry. His Air America theme song: "We Will Brock You" hinted at his background and later redemption:

"He took money from Scaife.

Big mistake.

Now he's back on the side of the human race."

For the full story, read *Blinded by the Right*, David Brock's own autobiography. He appears to hold nothing back in this self-excoriation for his own complicity in the right wing attacks on Democratic politicians and unaffiliated innocents.

Mr. Brock begins by reviewing his youthful political interests and journey, from admirer of Bobby Kennedy, to admirer of William Buckley, and ultimately to employee of the right wing *Washington Times*. His self-examination is an informative analysis of the thought processes that led him and many others to question Democratic policies in the 1970's and 1980's. His curious mind and his youthful naiveté, however, led him, like an American Pinocchio, to be duped by malicious pros who exploited his sincerity and writing talent.

Mr. Brock takes us on a tour of the worst of the Republican journalistic dungeons where the truth was tortured beyond all recognition. He explains how his head

was turned by the money and heady company of Republican movers and shakers, such as John Podhoretz, Grover Norquist, and P. J. O'Rourke. He exhibits the personalities behind the names like Ann Coulter, Matt Drudge, and Bill Kristol. He dissects the motivations of the publishers of the *Washington Times*, the *Insight*, and the *Public Interest*. He exposes the hypocrisy of the homosexual-bashing religious right wingers by day who frequented gay bars by night. And he demonstrates, with painful clarity, the journalistic sloppiness, dishonesty, and treachery in which he was instructed.

Gradually, Mr. Brock's better nature conquered his own vanity. He describes his deep and sickening shame when confronted with the journalistic errors he committed under the tutelage of those uninterested in responsible journalism and focused instead on persecution. He describes his attacks of conscience as he recognized the damaging consequences of his irresponsible writing. And he describes the gradual realization that he could no longer share an agenda with people intent on persecuting homosexuals, such as himself.

Mr. Brock left the right wing publishing houses and circles to pursue a different kind of career altogether. He realized he was in an excellent position to expose the character of the right wingers, their motives, tools, and agenda. In an attempt to do penance for his sins, Mr. Brock set out on an ambitious agenda of his own and has accomplished much. Ultimately he would write *The Republican Noise Machine*, found the watchdog organization, "Media Matters," and become a regular visitor on Air America. You can visit the website of Media Matters at: <http://mediamatters.org/index> where subscriptions are available for daily and weekly alerts about bias, misrepresentations, and outright lies by right wing Republican publications and broadcasts. The value of his work in these areas, however, is best understood and appreciated when one fully understands the keenly honed sensibilities he acquired through his trial by fire.

As the power of Mr. Brock's former employers and right wing writers and publishers to dupe the best educated citizenry in history subsides, we are well advised to study the dungeons from whence they came, lest, in our lifetimes, we allow history to repeat itself. (Remember, Bill Kristol is now a regular columnist for the *New York Times*.)