

Look Who Didn't Show Up at the NGA Conference

To Our Readers:

Responsible journalism means looking back, taking stock and fessing up, particularly during a presidential election when so much is at stake. So, on behalf of us and the rest of the lamestreamers, a mea culpa buffet:

[We were wrong](#) to suggest that Donald Trump's presidential campaign would be grandiose, absurd and brief. It's clear now that it [won't be brief](#).

[We were wrong](#) about Ben Carson being smarter than you. Since then we've had a chance to review your impressive CV. Meantime, Carson has [talked a lot](#).

[We were wrong](#) to say that Hillary Clinton probably sent a few e-mails she shouldn't have and was going to be in trouble with voters. The real number so far is [999 e-mails](#), and Democratic voters [don't seem to care](#).

[We were wrong](#) in repeating speculation that Jeb Bush is the best politician in his family. It's really his second cousin, Jed.

[We were wrong](#) to report that Bernie Sanders had [taken off the gloves](#). It now appears he took off one glove, scratched his head, then put the glove back on.

[We were wrong](#) that Chris Christie's best shot was to run in 2012. We meant 2032. We were also wrong that voters would punish him for [Bridgegate](#). We didn't realize that, in New Hampshire, "traffic jam" connotes a momentary delay caused by an itinerant cow.

[We were wrong](#) that Carly Fiorina was surging in the polls. It was actually a fly that landed on our browser screen.

[We were wrong](#) that super-PACs are taking over the political process. Scott Walker [told us that](#) and we believed him.

[We were wrong](#) that George W. Bush would be judged harshly by history. We [meant Woodrow Wilson](#).

[We were wrong](#) to suggest that Rick Perry 2.0 would be a significant upgrade over the original. He was actually [Windows Vista](#).

[We were wrong](#) that only a scandal could derail the Rand Paul campaign, because that assumed there [would actually be](#) a Rand Paul campaign.

We're so embarrassed about this litany of journalistic missteps that we're looking for a new line of work. Anybody have an opening for a political consultant?

One "featured blog post" promoted on the Huffington Post's [politics page](#) this morning has Donald Trump in its headline ("GOP Beginning to Face Stark Reality That Trump Might Become Their Nominee"), as does one "suggested for you" news item ("Ted Cruz Works His Way Through Iowa, Picking Up Trump Supporters.")

On the entertainment page, the Trump count is three blog posts, one [news article](#) ("Yes, This Is a Photo of Donald Trump Signing a Woman's Chest") and one "suggested for you" ("Dana Milbank: Trump a Bigot and Racist.")

That split decision makes it hard to tell if Arianna Huffington's gift to journalism is still trying not to take Trump seriously.

On July 17, the website [announced](#) a new and unorthodox editorial policy:

"After watching and listening to Donald Trump since he announced his candidacy for president, we have decided we won't report on Trump's campaign as part of The Huffington Post's political coverage. Instead, we will cover his campaign as part of our Entertainment section. Our reason is simple: Trump's campaign is a sideshow." (Trump, not surprisingly, didn't take this lying down, [dismissing](#) HuffPo as "a glorified blog.")

At the time, a Fox News poll showed Trump leading the Republican field nationally, with 18 percent of the vote, followed by Scott Walker with 15 percent and Jeb Bush with 14 percent. The [latest Fox News poll](#) had Trump at 28 percent, followed by Ben Carson at 18 percent.

If Trump was a sideshow, in other words, he's now at the very least under the big top.

So has the Huffington Post loosened its policy? We reached out to the website and its editors yesterday and got no reply.

TO: HRC

FROM: John Anzalone, David Binder

cc: John Podesta, Robby Mook, Joel Benenson, Jim Margolis, Mandy Grunwald

SUBJECT: The R-word

Madam Secretary, the numbers are in and we can confidently say we see no downside to [dropping the "Rodham" name](#), except in [Scranton](#), and even there we're only talking about one or two points. Jim and Mandy focus-grouped it in a handful of primary states and got the same result. Do you want to proceed?

John and David

TO: John Anzalone, David Binder

FROM: HRC

cc: John Podesta, Robby Mook, Joel Benenson, Jim Margolis, Mandy Grunwald

SUBJECT: Re: The R-word

Thanks guys. But just so you know, two points in Pennsylvania's seventh-largest city (in between [Upper Darby](#) and Bethlehem) isn't nothing. Can we special-purpose some printing to keep "Rodham" in play there? You know, just to cover every base?

TO: HRC

FROM: John Anzalone, David Binder

cc: John Podesta, Robby Mook, Joel Benenson, Jim Margolis, Mandy Grunwald

SUBJECT: Re: Re: The R-Word

Yes, but it's more money.

TO: John Anzalone, David Binder

FROM: HRC

cc: John Podesta, Robby Mook, Joel Benenson, Jim Margolis, Mandy Grunwald

SUBJECT: Re: Re: Re: The R-word

Since when do I care about money? I [spent \\$29 million](#) in Iowa in 2008 for 70,000 votes. You said you focus-grouped this, is that right? How, and where?

TO: HRC

FROM: John Anzalone, David Binder

cc: John Podesta, Robby Mook, Joel Benenson, Jim Margolis, Mandy Grunwald

SUBJECT: Re: Re: Re: The R-Word

Madam Secretary, we tried out a handful of test slogans and other promotional phrases both with and without "Rodham" in PA, OH, IA, NH, NY, FL and CA.

"Hillary Clinton's long history with [issues related to trust](#) and integrity are not a factor in this campaign" tested much better than the same sentence with "Rodham" included in PA, OH, NH, NY and CA. It did worse in IA and FL. But that's four against two, so we called that a win.

In the same five positive states -- PA, OH, NH, NY and CA -- "Hillary Clinton is unlikely to choke the nomination in 2016 like she did in 2008 because the competition is [so much weaker](#)" scored really well. It was less of a win in Iowa and Florida, but still scored better than it did with "Rodham" included.

"There's less likelihood that [Wall Street's ownership of Hillary Clinton](#) will become an issue in her administration as long as the economy doesn't crater" was another line we tested, and it was pretty much a push compared with the "Rodham" version. But that's not a negative, so we'll take it.

We can give you the rest of the script if you want, but trust your team. We got this.

TO: John Anzalone, David Binder

FROM: HC

cc: John Podesta, Robby Mook, Joel Benenson, Jim Margolis, Mandy Grunwald

SUBJECT: Re: Re: Re: Re: The R-word

No, that's OK. I've seen enough. Besides, people [just call me Hillary Clinton](#) anyway. So, how much did all this cost me?

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal.