



August 25, 2010

Mr. David Westin
President
ABC NEWS
47 West 66th St.
New York, NY 10023

Dear Mr. Westin:

I am alarmed by an experience I had with employees of ABC News during a demonstration against the proposed Ground Zero Mosque in New York on Sunday, August 22, 2010.

As the rally concluded, thousands of the participants marched the one block from the rally site to the actual site of Ground Zero.

It was there that I noticed a man in a black shirt with a phone camera, aggressively questioning a gentleman with a sign which read "No Sharia Here." This man was haranguing the gentleman with the sign. A reasonable person would have recognized it as provocation, which exceeded the bounds of any legitimate interview technique.

His line of questioning was very aggressive, disrespectful and condescending. He did not like the gentlemen's answers and pushed the point: Why do you feel threatened? What are you afraid of? Why can't you answer my questions?---type of thing.

I took the attached photos after witnessing this inappropriate and excessive behavior. I originally thought the man in black was a supporter of the mosque or some kind of fringe activist. At that point, I did not know his true identity.

A cameraman was standing nearby watching. I asked him who he worked for--he said ABC News. I then asked if the man in the black shirt was with him. The ABC cameraman said yes.

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Later, I observed the man in the black shirt getting into the ABC News truck and putting on the sound equipment.

At that point, it became clear the man in the black shirt was also an employee of ABC News. The ABC cameraman also witnessed his colleague's aggressive behavior –and did nothing to stop him.

Clearly, this ABC News employee was attempting to provoke a confrontation with participants, so ABC News cameras could record it and then use the footage. He was, quite literally, attempting to stage and “make” news.

By anyone's standards, this exceeds the role of a journalist who is supposed to seek facts, truth, etc., in explaining the disagreement over the mosque.

Clearly, this man has a point-of-view, and he attempted to use the cover of ABC News to advance his personal views. Who else knew about this attempt to “make news” or encouraged such behavior? Was his superior/producer involved? What is the policy of ABC News concerning such behavior? If events are too slow or uninteresting, do ABC News personnel have a responsibility to spice them up by provoking the participants?

I am deeply offended that representatives of ABC News attempt to stage manage and color such serious public policy debates, treating it like Saturday morning wrestling, and then present it as factual reporting each night in American living rooms.

I strongly recommend that both these ABC News employees be fired. There should be no place in journalism for people who behave this way and use their positions as journalists as cover for advancing their personal agenda or the agenda of their bosses.

Thank you,



Andrea Lafferty
Executive Director
Traditional Values Coalition

Attachment: photos









