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**From:** Morning Media  
**Sent:** Thur 9/14/2017 9:38:55 AM  
**Subject:** Morning Media: The White House vs. ESPN's Jemele Hill -- Bill O'Reilly's back -- Following up on fake news

By Alex Weprin | 09/14/2017 05:37 AM EDT

**W.H. PRESS SECRETARY: JEMELE HILL COMMENTS A 'FIREABLE OFFENSE':**

"I'm not sure if he's aware, but I think that's one of the more outrageous comments that anyone could make, and certainly something that I think is a fireable offense by ESPN." So said White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, at the [White House press briefing](#) on Wednesday afternoon. Her comments came after ESPN "SportsCenter" anchor Jemele Hill called President Trump "a white supremacist who has largely surrounded himself w/ other white supremacists."

**-Hill released a [new statement](#)** on Twitter late last night addressing the controversy: "My comments on Twitter expressed my personal beliefs. My regret is that my comments and the public way I made them painted ESPN in an unfair light. My respect for the company and my colleagues remains unconditional."

**-ESPN, meanwhile, released a statement of its own:** "Jemele has a right to her personal opinions, but not to publicly share them on a platform that implies that she was in any way speaking on behalf of ESPN. She has acknowledged that her tweets crossed that line and has apologized for doing so. We accept her apology."

**-Hill received plenty of support** after her comments took hold in the conservative media. The National Association of Black Journalists said it "supports Hill's First Amendment rights on all matters of discussion, within and outside the world of sports, as they do not impinge on her duties as a host and commentator." Meanwhile, outlets like Deadspin [weighed in](#) with more colorful support.

**-She has never shied away from politics**, as this excellent and [timely story in The Ringer](#) shows, but it has never defined who she was as a sports broadcaster. In recent months, ESPN has found itself a target from conservatives, claiming that a "liberal bias" is causing viewers to flee, with much of the blame heaped on outspoken staffers such as Hill.

**-So what happens next?** The statements from Hill and ESPN seem to be part of an effort to put the controversy to rest. ESPN's public editor Jim Brady [says](#) he plans to address the matter.

**Good morning and welcome to Morning Media.** I always want to improve Morning Media and make it more useful to you, so please send me tips, ideas and feedback! I'm on Twitter [@alexweprin](#) and on email at [alexweprin@gmail.com](mailto:alexweprin@gmail.com). Morning Media is produced with help from **Cristiano Lima** ([clima@politico.com](mailto:clima@politico.com) / [@ludacristiano](#)). [Archives](#). [Subscribe](#).

**FOLLOWING UP ON FAKE NEWS:** Two important stories about fake news and easterun european propaganda worth reading. First, The New York Times' Jim Rutenberg travels to

Moscow to talk to Vladimir Putin's press secretary, Dmitri Peskov. The whole piece is worth reading, but this paragraph stuck out to me:

**"By way of example, he pointed to 'this girl, from show business, Kim Kardashian.'**

Kardashian is among the most popular people in all of social media, with 55 million Twitter followers, nearly 18 million more than President Trump. 'Let's imagine that one day she says, 'My supporters - do this,' ' Peskov said. 'This will be a signal that will be accepted by millions and millions of people. And she's got no intelligence, no interior ministry, no defense ministry, no K.G.B.' This, he said, was the new reality: the global proliferation of the kinds of reach and influence that were once reserved for the great powers and, more recently, great media conglomerates. Even Peskov sounded slightly amazed considering the possibilities. 'The new reality creates a perfect opportunity for mass disturbances,' he said, 'or for initiating mass support or mass disapproval.'"

**-Then there is this excellent CNN investigation**, which sees a correspondent travel to a Macedonian town where the big business is making fake news in the U.S. and elsewhere. One operator is already gearing up for the 2020 presidential election.

**MUST WATCH:** Sean Spicer, in his first TV interview since leaving the White House, on ABC's Jimmy Kimmel Live." Spicer talks his infamous inauguration crowd briefing, his relationship to the press, and how President Trump would give feedback after briefings. Among other things, Spicer says a free press is "paramount to democracy." More from Cristiano, here.

**BILL O'REILLY'S BACK:** As part of a book tour for the latest book in his "Killing" series, former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly spoke to The Hollywood Reporter's Marisa Guthrie. The most newsy bits:

**-He will decide next month where he goes from here career-wise:** "I'm waiting to see very specific details of the projects that people have pitched to us. And there have been many. I think by early October, we should have a pretty good vision of what we're going to do."

**-His Billoreilly.com paid subscription service** has "hundreds of thousands" of subscribers.

**-He was happy when President Trump came to his defense**, even as he faced sexual harassment allegations that led to his departure from Fox. "He's very loyal to his friends. I think he understands that no one was mistreated on my watch, because that's the truth. He knows the politics of it because he has been in the same circumstance - accused - and the press will take any allegation and make it a conviction."

**-He was not happy with how he was let go:** "They made a decision. It was purely a business decision. But the way it was done, I'm over in Rome [on vacation]. My [legal] team was caught by surprise because we had an amazing amount of exculpatory stuff that we had presented. And it just - it was sad. That's the word, sad."

**STORMY WEATHER WITH SINCLAIR-TRIBUNE TIE-UP?** An advocacy group is using the recent hurricanes to fight the proposed Sinclair-Tribune merger, suggesting that Sinclair's

history of cutting local weather reporting reporting puts local communities at risk. The group, Save Local Media, plans to launch its new campaign today. It will highlight how Sinclair let go of veteran weather reporters, or downsized weather teams, after acquiring new stations. "Too often we think in abstract or ideological terms about these huge media mergers," said former FCC Commissioner and Common Cause Special Adviser Michael Copps in a statement. "Harvey and Irma bring it into real-life terms- people's' safety and people's' lives. Let's hope the FCC can think about in in these terms, too." Save Local Media is made up of organizations like the American Cable Association, Dish, Common Cause and Public Knowledge, and it opposes Sinclair's proposed takeover of Tribune, which would make the company the largest owner of local broadcast stations in the U.S.

**UNIVISION TO DEFEND 'DREAMER' STAFF:** Univision's chief legal and corporate affairs officer Jonathan Schwartz sent a memo to staff at the company Wednesday, explaining what the company was doing to support DACA and defend DREAMers that work for the company. The memo outlines the public-facing actions the company is taking, including PSAs and letters to congress, and what the company will do for its own employees affected. "We stand by the DREAMers across the nation and we will continue to take extensive steps to respond to the Administration's proposed action given the enormous negative impact on the communities we serve," Schwartz wrote. "We also are very mindful that our own DREAMer employees face the prospect of both losing their work authorization and their protection from the risk of deportation."

**-To that end, the company is planning to reimburse employees** that are part covered by DACA for the biannual fee, and it will "provide individual legal support, at the Company's expense, for any of our DREAMer employees with respect to DACA matters, including if they are subjected to deportation proceedings."

**SPOTTED:** At the Magic Hour rooftop lounge at the Moxy Hotel in New York, for the premiere party for "Page Six TV." New York Post publisher Jesse Angelo, Fox News co-president and Fox TV stations chief Jack Abernethy, NBC "Today" host Hoda Kotb, "Page Six TV" hosts John Fugelsang, Elizabeth Wagneister, Bevy Smith and Carlos Greer. "When Rupert Murdoch had the idea for Page Six forty years ago, it was about what are the secrets that CEOs and their mistresses have, what really is happening behind the velvet rope at amazing nightclubs like this, what are people listening to in the halls of power, and of course what are the big stories," Angelo told the crowd. "When we went about creating this show we knew when we had to make the same thing."

#### **MUST READS:**

-This [Esquire piece](#) on London Evening Standard editor George Osborne, who was sacked as chancellor of the exchequer by Prime Minister Theresa May following Brexit. And this [Newsweek piece](#) on Hans A. von Spakovsky, the newest member of President Trump's election integrity commission.

#### **REVOLVING DOOR:**

-Tom LoBianco is rejoining the AP's D.C. bureau, after a stint at CNN.

-The New York Times has named Jia Lynn Yang deputy national editor. She joins from The Washington Post, where she was deputy national security editor. Also joining the Times from WaPo: Thomas Gibbons-Neff.

**EXTRAS:**

-For the first time in six years, MTV's ratings are on the rebound, according to Reuters.

-The FCC has been inundated with complaints about CNN, despite the fact that the regulatory agency does not weigh in on cable content.

-The New York Times is folding its product suggestion site The Sweethome into sister site The Wirecutter, and rebranding both as "Wirecutter."

-Anthony Scaramucci will serve as guest co-host of TMZ's syndicated TV show on Monday, and will also appear on a webcast hosted by Harvey Levin.

-Vice is casting for a D.C.-based political reality show, according to THR's Jeremy Barr.

-21st Century Fox executive chairman Lachlan Murdoch said that his company's core brands were FX, Fox News, Fox Sports, Nat Geo and India's Star TV. Notably missing from that group, the Fox broadcast network, which started the whole company.

-WFAN morning show host Craig Carton has resigned, after he was indicted on fraud charges.

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/09/14/the-white-house-vs-espns-jemele-hill-bill-oreillys-back-following-up-on-fake-news-001348>

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