

# Let's Use the World Series as a Step Toward Understanding the Difference between Facts, Bias and Fake News

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I made sure to pick up a copy of *The Washington Post* before my early flight home from D.C. the morning after the Washington Nationals won the World Series.

I had no intention of opening it, having already read the online edition. The paper is going into a box for safe keeping, with hopes that my children will someday remove it and read the story about a ball club essentially written off in June, only to claw back to win the whole thing in late October, on the road.

Though I'm not sure what they'll do, perhaps years from now, I'm certain that many people right now won't touch *The Post*, having been conditioned to believe its content is "fake news." The whole publication. Every word.

But the Oct. 31, 2019, front page story sure isn't fake. I saw Howie Kendrick clang the go-ahead homer off the right-field pole. I read the main bar story. I heard the horns and cheers outside of my window well past midnight, as many others likely did across the nation's capital.

So maybe we could all at least try to make this moment in history into an opportunity to collectively retrain our brains to see beyond generalizations like "fake news" and find a way to rebuild our trust in journalism.

Yes, the media must do its part (and it has a lot of work to

do). But as engaged readers and viewers, we too must bear some of the burden – to understand that reporters, like all of us, carry inherent biases. But that doesn't make all of their stories factually incorrect, or "fake."

OK, "At last, Nats are champs," is a little breathless, but Washington – and its baseball beat reporters – have waited 96 years for a pennant.

On the other side, the *Houston Chronicle's* coverage. "Not To Be" reads the headline in massive all-caps, just below the masthead. "Astros undone as Nationals clinch their first championship with 4th road win."

The coverage offers two perspectives on the same truth. Of course, it's biased. But bias is entirely different than one side claiming victory when it wasn't theirs. Or claiming salaciousness, conspiracy, or omission in coverage and amplifying it into the ether.

If you cheered for the Nationals, "at last." If you cheered for the Astros, "not to be." Truth, facts, and perspective, all in one.

Is it possible to start with just two stories covering a single event, and use it to gain a foothold on the difference between facts, bias, and fake news? Can the World Series, for a moment, unify us under the umbrella of America's Pastime, and shift us, ever so slightly, to make the effort to understand someone else's perspective? To be able to detect the difference between perspective and diametric opposition?

I think it can. It starts with an Astros fan reading coverage in the *Post*, and a Nats fan reading coverage in the *Chron*. We'll never know where it will lead unless we give it a try.

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