

# DETROIT FREE PRESS IS AN ABSOLUTE DISGRACE

Let's say you are a reporter who detests the Catholic Church (there are more than a few out there), and would like to do an article that reflects badly on it. You come across a story that may qualify, but it is rather routine: it is about high school boys acting inappropriately.

Not satisfied, you decide to enhance the piece by trotting out a story about a noted Catholic public figure (Brett Kavanaugh) who was accused of acting offensively when he was in high school. It happened decades ago in some other part of the country, and the charges were never corroborated by anyone, but that doesn't matter. It can be made to fit.

Still not satisfied this will embarrass the Church, you add a story about a Catholic priest who, while having nothing to do with the original story, is serving time for what he did in the 1990s.

The story then ropes back to high school boys today in two Detroit Catholic schools who did something really newsworthy: they got into a brawl following a hockey game.

This 2679-word cut-and-paste "news story" appeared in the January 2nd edition of the *Detroit Free Press*.

To say this story was disjointed would be an understatement: forcing unconnected stories—stuffing them together without any segue—is what we would expect from a high school student hoping to finally make the honor roll. If a reporter did a story on African American high school students who acted inappropriately, and added to it a story on O.J.—jamming in a story about Bill Cosby—and ended with a note about brawling black high school athletes, it wouldn't pass the smell test. The odor of bigotry would be in the air.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education found that between 2013 and 2016, Detroit Public Schools listed 45 criminal cases of sexual misconduct, and 233 incidents of sexual harassment involving students.

Worse, the district had no Title IX investigation procedure. Moreover, just a few years ago, *USA Today* did a major study of sexual misconduct in the public schools in every state, rating them on several measures. Michigan received an overall score of "F."

Those who work at the *Detroit Free Press* have no interest in sticking it to the public schools, which is why they would never do to them what this article did to the Catholic Church. They are a disgrace to the profession of journalism.

We urged those who get our emails to contact *Detroit Free Press* editor Peter Bhatia.

Here is what he wrote in reply:

Thanks for your e-mail. However, the allegations made by Dr. Donohue are completely without merit. The story was responsible, deeply reported and factual, reporting on a difficult situation that has arisen over time in Catholic boys' schools here. Take the time to read the story and I think you will see it is fair. To borrow a phrase from Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Dr. Donohue is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.

Here is Bill Donohue's reply:

Mr. Bhatia's reply is flatulent. He says the story's facts are accurate. That was not my point, and he knows it. My point was that this was a contrived non-story with disjointed accounts spliced together to put a bad face on the Catholic Church. I even gave as an analogue how this might play out if the target were African Americans. His dodge is further proof of the dishonesty and juvenile journalism of the *Detroit Free Press*.