

Fiji and Media Distortion

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The media distortion behind Fiji's George Speight & Navin Naidu, Esq.

Mahendra Chaudhury, an ethnic Indo-Fijian, won the Fijian popular vote in the year 2000, becoming Prime Minister, and helming a Parliament comprising a large number of ethnic Indian legislators. He soon set about amending the Native Title Act which would have given Indo-Fijians - descendants of indentured plantation workers hired from India to work for the burgeoning sugar-cane industry- clear title to customary native lands. This was the spark that ignited a series of events that, till today, has spawned political and economic unease in the idyllic Fiji Islands.

The thought that Fijian Natives would be dispossessed of their lands - like the Native Americans by the euro-settlers - infuriated the indigenous Fijians. George Speight, a Fijian Native, was assigned the task of neutralizing the Chaudhury government by hidden hands. Speight seized Parliament together with all the legislators and their aides who were in attendance, and held them hostage for 56 days or so, according to media reports.

Speight was unceremoniously arrested for treason with the death penalty staring him in the face as a result of a curious turn of events, a series of volte-face incidents involving the top brass of the military and the Council of Chiefs, a good measure of legerdemain, spiked with confusion, and laced with a complex web of complicated deals that went sour, allegedly, with some special interest groups who were bent on getting the coup underway in the beginning.

Speight hired Navin Naidu because of the latter's expertise in customary native title issues as he was assisting Native Americans understand the doctrine of *usucapion* – a Latin term defining the right of ownership by lengthened possession, and that they had a genuine claim for their lands under treaty terms. Naidu was selected to defend Speight because the former is himself an ethnic Indian, whose presence in Fiji would somehow placate the Indo-Fijian supporters of ex-Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhury.

Naidu arrived in Fiji early June 2001 when Speight was still incarcerated. The English common law practiced in Fiji stipulated that treason was punishable by

death. Naidu proved to the court that under the Fijian Constitution a Fijian indigenous person can only be tried under tribal (tikina) law, and thus, cannot be tried under English common law rules. Speight is an indigenous person, and therefore, came under tribal jurisdiction. Besides, treason was alien to tribal law. Treachery was not.

This was a lasting sign of reprieve for Speight, who is still alive and well at the present time in 2009. In the meantime, during the course of the trial in Fiji, Naidu understood much later, Fijian Freemasons, who had a score to settle with Speight, contacted the University of London, a Fabian establishment known for its hidden agendas (see Jim Marrs' *Rule By Secrecy*, page 99-100), to disavow Naidu's law degree. The university did so via a facsimile communication. No flesh and bone representative from the university was present in court to confront and accuse Naidu. The university is also the Vatican of the Freemasons. In essence, the Plan was to prove that Naidu never had a law degree, and that he did not have a license to practice law, and therefore to discredit him wholesale. But the Office of Fiji's Director of Public Prosecutions acknowledged that Naidu was licensed to practice in Fijian courts!! See the [newspaper article](#) in this site. (11"x17" PDF file 293k)

Fortunately for Naidu, the conspirators were not checking, rechecking, and crosschecking their facts.

Naidu proved his credentials in the Fijian courts, and was asked to leave the country shortly thereafter. He gladly did. His only "crime" – getting involved in Fijian politics. (See Item No. 7 in the "[Bail Conditions](#)" Order of the Suva Magistrate Court in this site).

The media has been terribly unfair and unjust to Naidu. The media has had egg on its face too. Justice William O. Douglas was once observed that, "*the press is often the handmaiden of special interest groups.*" The pimp and his call girl will always be in our midst muddying the waters.

Hunter S Thompson wrote, "*Absolute truth is a very rare and dangerous commodity in the context of professional journalism.*" Naidu's effort in Fiji to secure Speight's release was never reported with accuracy, fairness, truth, or decency. He was tried by the merciless media owned by Indo-Fijians, who hated his guts as a fellow ethnic Indian for helping an indigenous Fijian "terrorist" – George Speight. Their diatribes against Naidu were incessant in the Fijian media between June and July of 2001.

The media can be vicious when it is out to “get someone” because that happens to be the best story to be concocted at that time. But often, it backfires, viciously. We all know about *The New Republic’s* star young writer Stephen Glass and the fabrications and tall tales he cast as the truth with credibility and accuracy to boot. It finally blew up in his face when his outrageous fabrications were uncovered in May 1998. The magazine’s editors and owners finally determined that 27 of the 41 stories written by Glass contained fabricated material! A movie titled “*Shattered Glass*” epitomized the whole sorry story. Mind you, *The New Republic* was a favorite read in Air Force One!

Seattle Times associate editor, Stephen H. Dunphy, reportedly resigned after acknowledging that he has plagiarized the work of other journalists, according to a news item on August 22, 2004. More horror stories about the fourth estate’s credibility.

In an influential book early in the 20th century, Walter Lippmann observed that the press is “like a beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision.” Naidu was burnt by the fiery beams of the media’s searchlight, which were not trained on him to search out the truth but to crucify him with falsehood, lies and fabrications. After all, lies have speed but truth has endurance.

We also know about an inaccurate attack on the Vietnam service of John Kerry, Democrat presidential candidate in 2004; and a forged document charging President Bush (43) with disobeying an order for an Air National Guard physical. The professional practices and code of responsibility in journalism suffered a body blow when the editors of *The New York Times* and *USA Today* were forced to resign for allowing these spurious articles to appear in their newspapers. Anything to get a story going.

Then there was James Forlong, a British television journalist, found dead sometime in October 2003, following a forced resignation from Sky News channel for faking a report during the Iraq war.

Walter Duranty, who reported from the Soviet Union for the *New York Times* between 1922 and 1941, is probably the most tainted scribe in that newspaper’s long history. Duranty covered up Stalin’s deliberate killing by starvation of as many as seven million Ukrainians in 1932-33. In 2003, the 70th anniversary of that infamous crime, Ukrainian groups worldwide lobbied to have Duranty’s 1932

Pulitzer Prize posthumously stripped from him. They failed. Special interest groups prevailed.

Duranty is best remembered for having coined the expression, "*you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs.*"

In April 2007, Washington Governor Gregoire signed a 'reporter shield law' that absolutely protects reporters in Washington state from the threat of jail for refusing to identify confidential sources. It also provides clearer safeguards from legal actions seeking the news media's notes and unpublished work products. If only Stephen Glass lived in Washington state!

With the passage of such a 'reporter shield law', it is easy to understand how the public can be misguided and misled by the misuse of truth with all the trappings of ugly distortions. Mark Trahan of the *Seattle-Post Intelligencer* posed a philosophical question sometime in November 2005: *Which is a higher journalism value - fairness or truth?*"

Naidu has moved on, and gained accolades and recognition as Chief Judge for several Native American judiciaries in the United States. He is also active in aboriginal causes in Malaysia and other Asian countries.
