

New York Times Shareholder Meeting Question
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I'm Justin Danhof of the National Center for Public Policy Research. The motto of one of your primary competitors, the Jeff Bezos-owned *Washington Post*, is "democracy dies in darkness."¹ When it comes to this company's bestseller list, it's truth and process that are dying in the darkness. The company refuses to explain its policies for selecting bestsellers. Then, when it is repeatedly called out for bias against conservative authors, it issues blanket denials. Without transparency, those denials are meaningless.

In early February, for example, the *Times* refused to list Jordan Peterson's *12 Rules for Life* on its bestseller list despite a *Toronto Star* report at the time noting, "[i]t's the No. 4 best-selling book in the U.S. overall, according to *Publishers Weekly*. It's No. 1 on Amazon. It's No. 2 on the *Washington Post*'s non-fiction list. It's No. 4 on *USA Today*'s overall list."² When a *Star* reporter attempted to get an answer for the omission, numerous folks from the *Times* responded with answers that were immediately debunked.

Peterson's work is clearly popular. Even a recent *Times* opinion piece noted some academics think Peterson is the "most influential public intellectual in the Western world right now."³ So what's the real reason for the omission? Here are some other troubling examples from 2017 alone:

- The *Times* was accused of refusing to list a true crime story about the horrors of the abortion practices of convicted criminal Kermit Gosnell – despite the book being #3 on Amazon – because it didn't fit the *Times*' pro-abortion position.⁴
- Major conservative publishing house Regnery severed ties with the *Times*' bestseller list because of persistent anti-conservative bias.⁵
- Conservative radio icon Mark Levin accused the *Times* of lying about his book sales in order to drop it down the bestseller list.⁶

I could list many more examples, but we would be here all day. Your continued refusal to be straight regarding your bestseller list policies only increases mistrust in the company and gives credence to the claims of an anti-conservative bias.

Last week, the world watched as Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was questioned on Capitol Hill about data privacy and other matters. He faced specific questions about Facebook's efforts to diminish conservative speech and opinion. The *Times* doesn't even try to obfuscate with talk of complex algorithms like Facebook does. You simply hide behind a secretive process and stable of liberal staffers.

Without revealing anything proprietary, will you commit to an independent audit of your policies for selecting bestsellers to evaluate whether the political biases of the selectors have influenced the process? And will you make those findings public?

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¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/the-washington-posts-new-slogan-turns-out-to-be-an-old-saying/2017/02/23/cb199cda-fa02-11e6-be05-1a3817ac21a5_story.html?utm_term=.f73d99e0f9b4

² <https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2018/02/09/jordan-petersons-book-is-a-bestseller-except-where-it-matters-most.html>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/25/opinion/jordan-peterson-moment.html>

⁴ <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/02/07/did-new-york-times-ignore-top-selling-book-that-damns-abortionist-as-serial-killer.html>

⁵ <http://thehill.com/homenews/media/349151-top-conservative-publisher-cuts-ties-with-nyts-best-sellers-list>

⁶ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/mark-levins-top-selling-book-diss-moted-by-new-york-times>