

Biased Media Coverage of US Election Campaign: As Sanders Surges, Cable News Runs Prison Reality Show, Jesus Documentary

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As Sanders Surges, Cable News Runs Prison Reality Show, Jesus Documentary

Over the past week, Bernie Sanders racked up six wins out of seven primary contests, winning [92 delegates more](#) than his rival Hillary Clinton to chip into her pledged delegate lead. While not an existential shift in the race, the momentum has changed in Sanders' favor, especially since he won the last three primaries—Hawaii, Washington state and Alaska—with between [70](#) and [82 percent](#) of the vote.

You, however, would hardly have noticed had you been watching cable news the night of the Saturday primaries. Both MSNBC and CNN forwent live election coverage on arguably Sanders' biggest night of the year, instead deciding to air a normally scheduled prison reality show and a "documentary" on Jesus. As The Nation's Katrina vanden Heuvel noted Saturday night:

Sanders wins big tonight, on calendar organized by DNC (natch, a weekend) & CNN has Jesus doc & MSNBC doing Lockdown/Up? Take back airwaves!

— Katrina vandenHeuvel (@KatrinaNation) [27 March 2016](#)

The networks cared so little for Saturday's primary results that the Hawaii results, which in fairness came in around 2:30 am, were totaled by online volunteers and revealed to the public [using a Google Doc](#).

The race is far from over, yet most of the major cable networks have all but moved on. Clinton's lead, while considerable, is far from insurmountable. Indeed, the netting of 66 delegates Saturday night pulls Sanders to within [268 pledged delegates](#) of the former secretary of State—with 2,073 delegates yet to be awarded.

The Republican primary race, which Trump has led with little or no suspense, has received A-list treatment throughout the race, despite having far less drama than the Clinton/Sanders battle. This is consistent with a New York Times [study](#) that showed the Republicans receiving three times as much coverage as the Democratic primary—most of which was handed, entirely for free, to the showy frontrunner, Donald Trump.

The Democratic party has 57 primary contests, 22 of which haven't chimed in this election. There is no law of reporting that gives more weight to ones that come early, other than the

horserace drama networks seek. If cable networks are going to follow the early contests like Woodstock, they could at least give some token coverage to Sanders' recent string of victories.

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