

Scientific American Endorses Biden and Risks Losing Whatever Readership It Has Left



By Alex Berezow, PhD — September 17, 2020

Scientific American, a once preeminent magazine that thoughtful and curious people read (or at least respected), has become an outlet for pseudoscience and politics. What a shame.



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One of the biggest mistakes that scientists have made in recent years is to become overtly political. *Scientific American* has taken it a step further and endorsed Joe Biden for President.

In its [editorial](#) [2], SciAm admits that it has never endorsed a presidential candidate in its 175-year history. There's a good reason for that. Science is not a partisan endeavor. But in recent years, it has increasingly become one, with scientists (and especially science writers) openly rooting for one side of the political spectrum.

For instance, a group called [314 Action](#) [3] has the mission of electing scientists into public office -- provided that they are Democrats. The March for Science, which began in 2017, was and continues to be a rudderless cabal of scientists and scientist wannabes united by meaningless progressive platitudes. Academia as a whole has become increasingly lopsided in terms of political diversity, and [some even celebrate this fact](#) [4].

At least the SciAm editorial is thoughtful and substantive. It rightly criticizes President Trump for exercising poor and inconsistent leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. But it should have stopped there. By endorsing Joe Biden, SciAm is further politicizing the scientific community, and

in the process, the once preeminent magazine risks losing whatever readership it has left.

The Many Misdeeds of Scientific American

And that's assuming SciAm still has readers. We have written previously of the many misdeeds of *Scientific American*. In December 2019, I wrote:

SciAm published an article that made one outrageous claim after another. For instance, the authors wrote that climate change was turning vegetables into sugary snacks; GMOs and glyphosate are responsible for a multitude of chronic diseases, from diabetes to autism; and the true pathway to health is to tinker around with our gut microbiome. As I [wrote](#) [5] at the time, "I've never before seen an article that so egregiously twisted and misrepresented a whole host of sciences -- from nutrition and agriculture to biotechnology and microbiology."

How something that egregious could make it through their editorial process is befuddling. That it happened over and over again is a scientific abomination. SciAm later published a conspiratorial anti-5G article and another one ranting against modern medical science.

Visiting the SciAm website is sort of like a box of chocolates or playing Russian roulette; you never really know what you're going to get. Right now, one of the top stories is about how a molecule called phosphine suggests that there might be life on Venus, despite the fact that anyone with a basic grasp of astronomy knows that Venus is a completely inhospitable hellhole. There's nothing there.

Yet, instead of debunking the story, [SciAm promoted it](#) [6]. Their subheadline read: "The unexpected atmospheric detection of phosphine, a smelly gas made by microbes on Earth, could spark a revolution in astrobiology." No, not exactly. Because SciAm is no longer in the business of practicing science journalism, that job fell (as it often does) to the excellent astrophysicist and writer Dr. Ethan Siegel, who [wrote](#) [7], "[B]etting that [alien life] is the answer is like buying a single lottery ticket and expecting to hit the jackpot."

There was a time when we would have expected much more of SciAm. But that time is long gone. Now, we get pseudoscience and politics. What a shame.

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_American#/media/File:SciAmer.gif

[2] <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientific-american-endorses-joe-biden/>

[3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/02/22/314-action-wants-elect-scientists-only-if-theyre-democrats-12612>

[4] <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/09/colleges-dont-need-more-republican-professors-ideological->

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[5] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/08/20/scientific-american-says-vegetables-are-toxic-sugary-snacks-14234>

[6] <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/venus-might-host-life-new-discovery-suggests/>

[7] <https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2020/09/15/dont-bet-on-aliens-phosphine-is-amazing-but-doesnt-mean-life-on-venus/#410fba0f4fbc>