

# Don't like a columnist's opinion? Los Angeles Times offers an AI-generated opposing viewpoint



By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

In a colorful commentary for the Los Angeles Times, Matt K. Lewis argued that callousness is a central feature of the second Trump administration, particularly its policies of deportation and bureaucratic cutbacks. “Once you normalize cruelty,” Lewis concluded in the piece, “the hammer eventually swings for everyone. Even the ones who thought they were swinging it.”

Lewis' word wasn't the last, however. As they have with opinion pieces the past several weeks, Times online readers had the option to click on a button labeled “Insights,” which judged the column politically as “center-left.” Then it offers an AI-generated synopsis — a CliffsNotes version of the column — and a similarly-produced opposing viewpoint.

One dissenting argument reads: “Restricting birthright citizenship and refugee admissions is framed as correcting alleged exploitation of immigration loopholes, with proponents arguing these steps protect American workers and resources.”

The feature symbolizes changes to opinion coverage ordered over the past six months by Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong, who's said he wants the famously liberal opinion pages to reflect different points of view. Critics accuse him of trying to curry favor with President Donald Trump.

## **Publisher says he doesn't want an “echo chamber”**

Soon-Shiong, a medical innovator who bought the Times in 2018, blocked his newspaper from endorsing Democrat Kamala Harris for president last fall and said he wanted to overhaul its editorial board, which is responsible for researching and writing Times editorials.

“If you just have the one side, it's just going to be an echo chamber,” Soon-Shiong told Fox News last fall. He said broadening the outlook is “going to be risky and it's going to be difficult. I'm going to take a lot of heat, which I already am, but I come from the position that it's really important that all voices be heard.”

Three of the six people who researched and wrote Times editorials, including editorials editor Mariel Garza, resigned in protest after the Harris non-endorsement. The other three have since left with the

last holdout, Carla Hall, exiting after writing a last column that ran March 30 about homeless people she met while covering the issue. Soon-Shiong's decision caused a similar unrest with subscribers as happened when Washington Post owner Jeff Bezos decided the newspaper would not back a presidential candidate.

The Times used to run unsigned editorials — reflecting a newspaper's institutional opinion — six days a week. The paper lists only two editorial board members, Soon-Shiong and executive editor Terry Tang. They're usually too busy to write editorials. Soon-Shiong has said he will appoint new board members, but it's unclear when.

He also said he was seeking more conservative or moderate columnists to appear in the paper. Lewis, a self-described Reagan Republican who just began as a columnist, believes he's part of that effort. Soon-Shiong has also brought up CNN commentator Scott Jennings, a Republican consultant who has already contributed columns for a few years.

Los Angeles Times spokeswoman Hillary Manning was asked recently about editorial policy, but reportedly lost her job in a round of layoffs before she could answer. There has been no reply to other attempts at seeking comment from Times management, including how readers are responding to “Insights.”

There were some initial questions about whether a “bias meter” as described by Soon-Shiong would apply to news articles as well as opinion pieces. But the publisher told Times reporter James Rainey in December it would only be included on commentary, as it has remained since “Insights” was introduced to readers on March 3.

### **A gimmick that insults the intelligence of readers?**

In practice, the idea feels like a gimmick, Garza, the former editorials editor, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

“I think it could be offensive both to readers ... and the writers themselves who object to being categorized in simple and not necessarily helpful terms,” she said. “The idea of having a bias meter just in and of itself is kind of an insult to intelligence and I've always thought that the readers of the opinion page were really smart.”

The online feature created problems instantly when it was applied to columnist Gustavo Arellano's piece about the little-noticed 100th anniversary of a Ku Klux Klan rally that drew more than 20,000 people to a park in Anaheim, California.

One of the AI-generated “Insights” said that “local historical accounts occasionally frame the 1920s Klan as a product of 'white Protestant culture' responding to societal changes rather than an explicitly hate-driven movement.” Another said that “critics argue that focusing on past Klan influence distracts from Anaheim's identity as a diverse city.”

Some at the Times believe an ensuing backlash — Times defends Klan! — was inaccurate and overblown. Still, the perspectives were removed.

Often, “Insights” have the flat, bloodless tone of early AI. After contributor David Helvarg's column about potential cuts to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the opposing viewpoint noted that Trump supporters “say it aligns with broader efforts to shrink government and eliminate programs deemed nonessential.”

A better way to improve opinion offerings is to hire more journalists and put them to work, said Paul Thornton, former letters editor for the Times' opinion section.

Media columnist Margaret Sullivan argued in The Guardian that Soon-Shiong talks about promoting viewpoint diversity but really wants to push the newspaper toward Trump. "His bias meter should — quickly — go the way of hot type, the manual typewriter and the dodo," Sullivan wrote.

Soon-Shiong, in his interview with Rainey, dismissed claims that he was scared of Trump or trying to appease him. People need to respect different opinions, he said. "It's really important for us (to) heal the nation," he said. "We've got to stop being so polarized."

### **A writer amused by the label attached to him**

One writer who doesn't mind "Insights" is Lewis — with one caveat.

"I like it," he said. "I didn't know what to expect but I was pretty pleasantly surprised. It does provide additional context for the reader. It provides counterpoints, but I think they're very fair counterpoints."

Lewis, who once worked for Tucker Carlson's "Daily Caller," was amused to see "Insights" judge his most recent column as "center-left." He figured it was because he was critical of Trump. Instead, Lewis said it points to the relative meaninglessness of such labels.

"I guess I'm a center-left columnist," he said. "At least for a week."

David Bauder writes about the intersection of media and entertainment for the AP. Follow him at <http://x.com/dbauder> and <https://bsky.app/profile/dbauder.bsky.social>

From:  
<https://tools.e-exercices.com/> - Ressources pour les apprenants

Permanent link:  
[https://tools.e-exercices.com/doku.php?id=en:ecrit:articles-en:article\\_archive:don\\_t\\_like\\_a\\_columnist\\_s\\_opinion](https://tools.e-exercices.com/doku.php?id=en:ecrit:articles-en:article_archive:don_t_like_a_columnist_s_opinion)

Last update: 2025/04/28 10:43

