

'Alternative Facts'

More desperation from the Trump administration

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OPINION COMMENTARY

We're barely over a week into Donald Trump's presidency, and he continues to demonstrate behavior that can truly be described as "Orwellian," if not just completely egomaniacal.

More so than his increasing number of executive orders that prevent travelers and refugees from seven different Muslim countries (although the ones he has significant business ties with are excluded curiously enough), advancing the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines, the former of which he also has significant business ties with, or his order for the EPA and Department of Agriculture to not be able to share public information, is his staff's insistence on peddling the term "alternative facts."

Originating in a "Meet the Press" interview with NBC's Chuck Todd, Senior Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway, when pressured by Todd to address the fact that White House press secretary Sean Spicer deliberately lied about Trump's inauguration attendance, stating that "This was the largest audience to witness an inauguration, period." Conway later added, "You're saying it's a falsehood. And they're giving—Sean Spicer, our press secretary—gave alternative facts," as reported by CNN's Eric Bradner.

Now even if we ignore the fact that Trump's team is deliberately doubling down on an easily verifiable falsehood, the fact that they have now invented a term for their pathological lying is even more disturbing. Brevard College's own Ralph Hamlett, professor of Political Communications, agreed, saying that "My gut level reaction is that it's a euphemism for 'believe my lie.'" That sort of reaction is not unfounded, for indeed what other sort of reaction would one expect when members of Trump's team, in particular Sean Spicer, say that "Sometimes we can disagree with the facts," according to The Guardian.

Disagree with facts all you like, it doesn't change whether or not they are actually true. One can disagree with the fact that gravity

exists for instance, but if you try to jump off a building, it isn't going to consider your opinion and stop you from plummeting to the ground. This is starting to become a disturbing pattern of the Trump administration, where verifiable reporting by the press and even the scientific community can simply be hand-tossed aside by spouting that they have "alternative facts" that just happen to coincide with their interests.

Trump said the day after his inauguration that he was in a "war" with "dishonest" media, but they report his lies, including one small example where Trump said, "Here in Philadelphia murder has been steady—I mean—just terribly increasing," PolitiFact reported this as being false, as in actual fact, they were the third-lowest last year since 1990. On Thursday, Jan. 26, Ralph Hamlett stated unequivocally that "Either he's stupid, or a liar—both are troubling." Troubling is an understatement as there has arguably been no other president in recent memory that has so brazenly attempted to deflect the press's effort to combat his rhetoric.

Now of course if any reporter or news outlet fails to do its job, i.e. vetting sources, fact checking their reporting, staying objective and non-partisan when reporting facts, they absolutely should be called out. However, Trump's administration isn't targeting specific cases of mishandled reporting; they are covering the entire world of journalism under a blanket of supposed dishonesty.

As reported by Feliks Garcia of Independent, Donald Trump warned that journalists will have a "big price" to pay by reporters who allegedly lied about the size of the crowd at his inauguration, on top of him saying that reporters are among "the most dishonest human beings on Earth."

John Padgett, English professor here at Brevard College, said that Trump's rhetoric has "really disturbing parallels" between Adolf Hitler and Mao Zedong. It's always been a cliché and

over exaggeration to compare anyone to such brutal tyrants in world history, understandably so. But Trump is doing himself no favors with his recent and quite frankly ridiculous string of executive orders, something of which he slammed Obama for, saying in a 2012 Tweet "Why is @BarackObama constantly issuing executive orders that are major power grabs of authority?"

There has been no word by GOP Congress members on these orders, but they were more than eager to jump on the bandwagon of Obama being authoritarian, despite the fact that, according to Policy Mic, The Pew Research Center reported that he had issued fewer executive orders than any president in the last 120 years.

Going back to this article's original point, this "alternative facts" nonsense is just one tiny shred of evidence that there will indeed be a "running war" with the media, as Trump puts it, but through no one's fault but his own. The very nature of a reporter's job description is to report on what is happening and what the impacts will be. It is this administration that is the instigator of this so-called war.

Between the president's constant labeling of the media as dishonest, to his chief strategist Steve Bannon's call for the media to "keep its mouth shut and just listen for a while," it has done nothing but paint them as a group of people who are so utterly terrified of their actual actions and intentions getting out to the American people.

On a personal note, let me just say this to you Mr. President and to you Mr. Bannon, we will never keep our mouth shut, we will never acquiesce to your constant attempts to discredit our profession, and more than anything else, we will never stop doing what we are doing. All your administration is doing is stoking the fire to your own political demise. We all have a stake in our Republic, and we will fight tooth and nail to make sure its integrity stands tall.