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# OPINION

## Alt-Right, Alt-Facts and Alternative Reality

Lies can have monstrous, mortal costs

BY TOM LAURENT

President Trump has ushered in a new reality for America. His campaign showed us this reality is based on fake facts, untruths and his constant demeaning any person or group who challenges him. Truth for him is based on whatever he says it is at that moment. During his three debates with Hillary Clinton, about 60 percent of his facts were false as analyzed by factcheck.org compared to 28 percent for Clinton.

Trump is an ego-maniac—he has a narcissistic personality, in-

tensely focused on himself as the apex—everyone worth anything follows him with utter loyalty or they are thrown under the bus. Trump's ego demands that he appear better than everyone else in everything he does.

His Electoral College win couldn't be average. It had to be great, thus his fake landslide win. Trump got 56.9 percent of the Electoral College votes. This is not a landslide. This ranks him 46th out of 58 campaign winners dating back to George Washington (factcheck.org). Trump claims he won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally without showing any supporting evidence.

His inauguration even becomes a competition with past presidents.

Coming in second in anything he does is unacceptable to him, so he forces reality into his imagined box and demands that we all see the world through his lying eyes rather than our own. Does he believe his own lies? Perhaps, which if true, makes him insane. If not, it means he is deceitful. What a choice.

Trump's narcissistic personality means that anyone questioning his statements and use of fake facts are threats to his power and dominance. He has to protect his self-image that will probably be "I am the greatest president ever." His speeches, his tweets, and, by extension, his press secretary and other Trump spokespeople, are so blotted with these erroneous claims that it's overwhelming.

The press and other media are the only ones he cannot control and who have the power to deflate his image. His media strategy is similar to Putin's, which is to make them irrelevant. He is trying to convince his supporters that you cannot trust the press and other media because they are biased against him. This is why he has been attacking the media calling them "dishonest" and even calling fact checkers "dishonest scum" (factcheck.org). He believes the media cannot accept his presidency and their goal is to delegitimize his presidency just as Trump tried to delegitimize Obama's presidency by his birther scam.

Once Trump minimizes the influence the media has, he then controls the truth. This is where alternative

facts play their role for Trump. This is what dictators do—lie, bully, name-call, and badger. We are going to experience a Trump-style dictatorship where his alternative facts are truth and real truths are lies for the next four years.

Why should we be concerned about this? Our invasion of Iraq in 2003 and subsequent deaths (4,497) and injuries (32,021) to American soldiers and 100,000 to 600,000 Iraqis and costing \$2 trillion was the result of alternative facts. Lies can have monstrous, mortal costs. Can we face him down and limit the potential damages? It is up to all of us.

*Tom Laurent offers this commentary via PeaceVoice. He is a retired soil scientist of 33 years with the U.S. Forest Service.*

## New Justice Must Bring Independence to the Court

A check on executive and legislative power

BY MARC H. MORIAL

*"Looming over this moment is the fact that the current Supreme Court vacancy is the result of more than 300 days of tremendous political obstruction that has undermined the integrity of the Court as an institution. Thus, any new Justice must be someone who will restore the standing of the Court, while bringing true independence to the role."* — **Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.**

The United States Supreme Court has played an important role in the progress of the Civil Rights Movement. The executive and legislative branches of government have, at times, had to be prodded toward active reform of racial justice. It is the most vulnerable in our society who have the most to gain or lose by any change in the direction of the Supreme Court. That's why when the new President recently announced his nomination of Neil Gorsuch to the court, I vowed that the National Urban League would conduct a thorough review of Gorsuch's judicial record and public statements to determine whether he is fit to serve on the nation's highest court.

How might he be expected to decide in a case of such monu-

mental significance as Brown or Loving? At first glance, I have concerns about Gorsuch's apparent judicial extremism and his criticism of those who have sought advancement of individual rights through the courts.

Gorsuch has consistently ruled against the rights of workers and consumers who were harmed by employers and corporations, and against disabled students pursuing their right to a meaningful education.

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I was especially alarmed by Gorsuch's ruling in an excessive force claim in which a police used a stun gun to kill a young man

suspected of growing marijuana. Gorsuch said the use of force was justified even though "the crime of which he was suspected was not itself a violent one, he was likely

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to be apprehended eventually and he hadn't harmed anyone yet."

The Supreme Court's function is to serve as a check on the power of Congress and the President. With

the current President's proclivity for authoritarianism, this responsibility is graver than at any time in modern history. Does Gorsuch have the integrity to stand up to the man who

our Founding Fathers, said "There is as yet no liberty if the power of judging be not separated from legislative power and the executive power." To ensure liberty, we

must determine whether Gorsuch can be independent.

*Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.*



MARC H. MORIAL

KRISTEN CLARKE

MARC H. MORIAL

Providing Insurance and Financial Services  
Home Office, Bloomington, Illinois 61710

**Ernest J. Hill, Jr.** Agent

4946 N. Vancouver Avenue,  
Portland, OR 97217  
503 286 1103 Fax 503 286 1146  
[ernie.hill.h5mb@statefarm.com](mailto:ernie.hill.h5mb@statefarm.com)  
24 Hour Good Neighbor Service®



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The Law Offices of  
Patrick John Sweeney, P.C.

Patrick John Sweeney

Attorney at Law

1549 SE Ladd, Portland, Oregon

Portland: (503) 244-2080  
Hillsboro: (503) 244-2081  
Facsimile: (503) 244-2084  
Email: [Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com](mailto:Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com)