



TRUMP AND THE MEDIA

By Chris Anderson

The Trump administration is uniquely unorthodox in a number of ways, one of which being how Trump handles his relationship with the media. Since first announcing his candidacy in 2015, Trump has transformed our idea of what we can expect from presidential politics.

“He always needs to be the biggest thing in news,” said Anna Oasheim, senior in elementary education.

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Kelly Winfrey, professor at the Greenlee School of Journalism at

Iowa State, sheds some light on the real conflict between Donald Trump and the media.

“Such a hostile relationship with the media from a president has never happened before,” Winfrey said.

Winfrey refers to journalism and the media as the “fourth branch” of government. Although not an official branch, many feel news media serves as a check and balance on elected officials.

Although Winfrey acknowledges it is not uncommon for a President to have issues with the media, Trump’s relationship with the “fourth branch” of government is uniquely hostile.

As an expert in the field, she feels journalists must hold governments accountable for their actions. It is reasoning like this that leads to experts like Winfrey being shocked when

Trump calls the media an “enemy of the people”.

“To say that the media is doing harm to democracy, I think, is far more detrimental to the country than journalists being hard on a president,” Winfrey said.

The harm that this conflict between Trump and the media creates is deemed “problematic” by Winfrey. She feels that this is leading to a distrust of media as Americans are finding themselves having to choose between trusting the president or trusting the media.

According to Winfrey, it is not uncommon for a president to put their own spin on whatever story is surrounding them; press secretaries exist for this very reason. However, the tactics used by the White House traditionally include choices in language, or choosing to omit certain facts.

“The Trump administration has blatantly lied about things, and that sort of alternative narrative that is based in fiction is certainly unprecedented,” Winfrey said.

The phrase “alternative facts,” in fact, comes from a press conference held by Donald Trump at the beginning of his term.

Sean Spicer, Trump’s press secretary, made the claim that President Trump’s inauguration was the most viewed inauguration in history, which was heavily disputed by journalists.

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the President, later appeared on NBC’s meet the press claiming the Trump administration was not saying “falsehoods” but “alternative facts”, which was later ridiculed online.

Winfrey, however, does see a silver lining to this conflict.

“I think this is an opportunity for journalists to do good journalism,” Winfrey said.

The type of journalism Winfrey believes in is clear facts, backed up with evidence, presented in an unbiased way. The purpose of this type of journalism in her view is to equip Americans to make their own decisions.

“If that’s done consistently, then I think we can overcome the negativity Trump and his



administration have put out towards media,” Winfrey said.

This is not a short-term solution, and minds will not change overnight. Winfrey feels this needs to be a consistent ideal that becomes more expected of journalism, regardless of party.

There are a number of issues in how the media sometimes conducts itself. Winfrey feels specifically on cable news there

is an emphasis on drama which turns many off.

Drama is ultimately created to sensationalize the story, and generate views. This sensationalism is exactly what turns off Isaiah Baker, co-director of ISU Legislative Ambassadors and junior in political science, from cable news.

“It’s not news it’s sensation,” Baker said.



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Co-director of ISU Legislative Ambassadors and junior in political science

Baker is somebody that tries to stay well informed with current news stories and has a specific set of sources he gets his news from. Among those sources he deems reliable are the New York Times, The Washington Post, and NPR.

Why he feels these sources are more reliable than television news giants like CNN or FOX, is the objectivity of the reporting he sees.

“You can get really good liberal and conservative opinions, and that’s just in their opinion pages. When it comes to actual news, it’s obviously objective,” Baker said.

Baker feels the way a news organization presents itself says a lot about its integrity. He says he prefers the smaller less sensational headlines of The New York Times to bold sensational headlines on CNN that attract clicks and attention.

“I shouldn’t want to click on something because of the way it is arranged visually,” Baker said.

Baker feels the reason the Trump Administration has such an awkward relationship with the media is reflective of an awkwardness he sees in Trump in a political role.

“If you report on Trump’s ability to do politics objectively, it’s

going to make him look bad,” Baker said.

It’s for this reason Baker believes Trump doesn’t want objective news being reported, which is why Trump has been known to call out organizations like The New York Times. Baker believes Trump feels much more comfortable with a narrative he can control, not one news media controls.

“They’re [the Trump Administration] trying really hard to push a narrative that relies on things that aren’t totally true,” Baker said.

Much like experts, like Winfrey, who hope journalism keeps government accountable, Baker believes objectivity is the saving grace that will eventually resolve this conflict.

“The more objective we can make our media the better we can make our politics,” Baker said.

