**Reporting on fascism**

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It is not appropriate for news organizations to tell people who they should vote for. But it is appropriate for them to actively strive to correct misinformation, clear up public misunderstandings of key issues in public policy, and advocate for democracy.

That a delusional, dissembling, and despotic Donald Trump remains in serious contention for the presidency in 2024 is a profound indictment of the journalism profession. It indicates that a torrent of misinformation is flowing unimpeded, that there are grave misunderstandings about the state of the country, and that the threat he poses to our democracy has not been made sufficiently clear.

The heads of our major newsrooms should be responding to Trump’s continued march toward the presidency with alarm — not just because of the threat a second Trump administration poses to a free press, but because it means that they are failing at their jobs.

Trump has made it clear that he would rule as a dictator. His plans include destroying government as we know it, while acting on his desires without guardrails or accountability. He has vowed to use the power of the state to punish political opponents. In short, another Trump presidency would end American democracy as we know it.

Most assuredly, some voters know exactly what Trump represents and are fine with that. They are the “deplorables” that Hillary Clinton spoke of so many years ago: “racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic.” Some large number are white Christian nationalists and correctly see Trump as an ally.

But I do not believe that such people approach 50 percent of the voting public.

Some of those who currently express support for Trump are, in fact, victims of a con. They believe Trump’s lies about how he will fight for them. They believe his lies that the country is being overrun by immigrants or that the economy is in shambles thanks to President Biden. Some are supporting him reflexively, because being on the Red Team is part of their identity, and they simply can’t imagine voting Blue.

Those people need an intervention. And it’s our obligation as political journalists to intervene: To expose Trump’s con job, refute his lies, and make it clear that what he is advocating is not conservative but is, in fact, extremely radical.

We need to flood the zone with truth.

Instead of intervening, however, most political journalists are still basically covering 2024 like a normal election, indulging in massive amount of horse-race journalism and treating both sides as equally plausible choices.

They are effectively contributing to the misinformation from Trump and his right-wing noise machine by not fighting it harder.

And they are effectively encouraging people to vote for Trump by not calling him out as an explicit danger to democracy – as a fascist.

As historian Rick Perlstein wrote recently about the New York Times, “By not naming it ‘fascism,’ when others responsibly name it that, the Times is, effectively, naming it ‘not fascism.’”

Political journalism needs to smash false narratives rather than indulging them.

It needs to fight as enthusiastically against misinformation as Fox and its ilk spread it. It needs to call Trumpism what it is: Fascism. It needs to stop letting Trump supporters disguise their true motivations behind empty words.

Excerpted: ‘Some Rules for Journalists Reporting on Fascism and Fascists in 2024’. Courtesy: Commondreams.org