

**Alternative
Facts**

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**Your on the
Street Reporter**



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Facts and Alternative Facts

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Consulting an online dictionary:

- **Fact:** a thing that is indisputably the case.

Another take on this word:

- **Alternative fact:** a contradiction to the definition of a fact and a re-entrant into America's political arena.

Facts are facts. Otherwise, they would not be called facts. They would be called fabrications or falsehoods.

Yet that is what we have been witnessing these last few weeks from our nation's Capital and political leaders. Cascades of falsehoods have been cast as alternative facts.

I am not admonishing the left or the right. I fault both parties. Both sides have used ridiculous terms to obfuscate what are plain and simple truths, but the White House has cornered the market on using the term, *alternative fact*.

A recent example of this practice are comments made by the White House about the candidate for the Supreme Court, judge Neil M. Gorsuch. Mr. Gorsuch was asked about President Trump's denigration of judges who ruled against Trump's immigration ban.

Mr. Gorsuch responded that Mr. Trump's statements were, "demoralizing" and "disheartening." The judge made a direct response to a direct question.

Mr. Gorsuch was referring to Trump's claiming the judges' decisions about his immigration order as Trump put it, were "disgraceful" and "so political."

The judge responded directly to a question and he answered it in turn. A simple question evoked a simple (and factual) answer.

Soon thereafter, the White House offered "[the judge was] referring to any such attacks on the judiciary."¹ Not so. The judge was addressing the president's specific attacks on American's judicial system.

Another example is a statement from Trump's advisor, Kellyanne Conway. After the presidential press secretary (Sean Spicer) misled the press about how many people attended the inauguration, Ms. Conway informed a *Meet the Press* audience that Spicer's comments represented "alternative facts."²

This woman can use this term and remain as an advisor to our President? If nothing else, the utterance reflects a mentality that purposely deceives others; in this case, the American citizen. It borders on being laughable and pathetic. It is pathetic, but it is not laughable.

Are these kinds of misrepresentations of the facts something new? No, during America's history, such distortions have been carried out with regularity.

However, discounting the scurrilous press of the 1700s and early 1800s, this is a different kind of attack. Trump went at the issues themselves, as he is certainly entitled to do. But he also

¹ Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "White House: Judge Didn't Chide Trump," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2017, A1 and A15.

² *The Week*, February 3, 2017, 6.

went after the judges involved. He made it personal, which is at variance with the practice of our modern presidents. This aspect of his behavior is disturbing, but he seems bent on going for the throat, when he should be going for the cerebral part of his adversary.

On the other hand, it was reassuring to read about the conversations the various judges had about Mr. Trump's immigration ban. It was reflective, intellectual, and without rancor. They never made any personal attack on Donald. They addressed the legal issues only.

Don't attack the person, Mr. President. Don't attack the person in the office. Attack the officialdom of the office and the laws to which it attaches itself. Attack the ideas of the person but not the person himself. And again, try to disassemble the office of the presidency from your own ego.

Granted, it would require a shift in your approach to achieving the results you want. But give it a go. Even greater egos have survived and flourished in the Oval Office. And instruct your staff to take a shot at distinguishing facts from alternative facts.

Otherwise, you have been given a mandate. Carry out your mandate, but try to do it with a modicum of respect for the office you hold. We will decide in four years how you have handled your mandate and how you have handled the facts.