

BACK TO REALITY

As we prepare to remove Trump from the White House, and resign from our collective position as his captive audience, *it is time to bring the 4-year era of Truth-Optional to an end*. The suspension of reality can last only a limited time, no matter how many Trump fans desperately and frantically try to block its return.

For the majority of Americans, reality never disappeared, but we were constantly bombarded with "alternate facts" and watched in astonishment as some 40+% of our citizens swore they believed the Trumpian absurdities.

That in itself seemed unreal, though, as if we were watching a dystopian movie, yet we were IN the movie we were watching. *Presidents, political parties, and their voters don't behave like that in real life, do they?* Yes, it seems that sometimes they do.

For thousands of years humans have been telling one another stories that aren't true, often to actually deceive, but also to entertain. Stories were told or sung orally, later written, performed on stage, and made into cinemas. Most of the time their consumers knew they were fiction and enjoyed them for that. Fiction can be used to present ideas, philosophies, opinions, or humor.

Some fictional stories have been turned into religions, which insist that whole populations suspend disbelief for a lifetime, the purpose being to alter or control the behavior of the believers. The fact that this can be done might be considered a warning that fiction can be used effectively in politics, too.

That has happened many times in the past. Wars and genocides have often been started by lies. The powers of monarchs, emperors, and dictators are facilitated by lies. In the past, the people had less access to the truth than we do now, but even then they had to be convinced to want to believe the lies.

Now, despite our systems of communication enabling us to find truth instantly at our fingertips, politically motivated fiction still works on willing believers. This time, the process turned into a war on truth itself. It began not to matter how quickly a proclamation could be determined to be a lie. The believers kept believing, or at least acted as though they did.

So, we have a democratic republic inhabited by people who differ not just in opinion or preferred ideology, but by existing in different realities, one real, the other not. That is a problem that won't be instantly corrected on January 20.

At least, without a Liar in Chief in the White House, the volume and impact of falsehoods will wane. Perhaps, like a flood after a storm, the lies will soak into the ground and run off into streams, rivers, and oceans, leaving us to repair our foundations and scrub the silt from our streets. How long will that take? We'd better get started.

--cosmicrat December 1, 2020