

A new term has now entered our lexicon: "gaslighting." In a 1940 movie called "Gaslight," an evil husband and his housemaid/mistress attempt to drive the wife mad by making her think that lies were true. They played tricks on her, hid things that she knew she had not lost, and finally almost convinced her that she no longer could tell truth from deception. Gaslighting now means that people can no longer tell truth from even an obvious lie. Gaslighting also requires people to aid in the deception.

I watched the Congressional Judiciary Committee meeting to decide the wording of the Impeachment document, a very serious duty of the Congress to check a President who has abused his office to benefit himself. Our Founding Fathers provided such checks and balances to protect our republic from tyranny. We had rebelled against a king when we created our country and wanted no more kings in our future.

The Democratic members of the committee, one by one, stated what I knew to be facts: that President Trump has more than once both permitted and solicited foreign powers to corrupt our election process. We heard him ask Russia, in public, for help in hacking his political opponent's e-mails.

We saw the transcript of his phone call to the desperate new President of Ukraine, whose country was fighting for its life against Russian aggression. Congress had authorized funds to the Ukraine to help them survive. President Trump held up the money, telling the Ukrainian president that he wanted a favor: finding "dirt" on Trump's potential rival in the upcoming election. Even Trump's summary of this phone call says plainly that he wanted the Ukrainians to "investigate" the Bidens and find evidence that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 election. Both of these issues have been found untrue by our own intelligence agencies. Putin planted both lies.

Where the Gaslighting comes in is this transcript. I have read it; it was posted by countless newspapers and television news programs. Yet Trump declares: "Read the Transcript!" He denies what we see with our own eyes. His adoring followers wear t-shirts with "Read the Transcript" printed on them. When asked by a reporter if the wearers had themselves read the transcripts, not one of them had. They just "trust their president."

Every week in our local newspaper, there is a column provided by the AP news service, called "Fact Checking." It posts each week's pronouncements by President Trump that are either lies, exaggerations, or partial lies, clearly identifying sources for the correct information. As of a week ago, President Trump was approaching 5,000 lies just since his inauguration day, which began with an obvious lie: that his inauguration had the biggest crowd attendance of any president.

Despite aerial photos showing the crowds at the first Obama inauguration and Trump's much smaller, and despite rain showers denied by Trump (he said the sun came out for him), he not only continued to lie about the numbers, but compelled his Press Secretary to lie also.

If this had just been a one-time issue, we could have all laughed it off with the hope that Trump was new at his job and that he would improve, as other presidents always did.

Alas, this was not to be. But it is one thing to know that you have a president who cannot resist lies, but when his entire political party, the Republicans, get pulled into this practice, the country is in trouble. We have become a nation divided by facts and "alternate facts" (lies). A representative democracy depends on the public and their elected officials sharing the same facts. There can be differences on what those facts mean, but not on the facts themselves.

People not schooled in critical thinking (the uneducated) can be conned into believing conspiracy theories. For the ignorant, victimhood has always fed on the notion that the powers-that-be are out to get them. Leaders throughout history have spread conspiracy theories to distract their angry masses. Our Republican senators are doing so also, spouting Putin's deceptions and gaslighting us. Shame on them.

687 words

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