

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

COVERING POLITICS IN A "POST-TRUTH" AMERICA
THE LATEST BROOKINGS ESSAY BY SUSAN GLASSER

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

PARTICIPANTS:

Welcome:

STROBE TALBOTT
President
The Brookings Institution

Featured Speaker:

SUSAN GLASSER
Editor
POLITICO

Discussants:

JAMES K. GLASSMAN
Former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy,
U.S. State Department
Former Editor, Roll Call

SHANI HILTON
Head of U.S. News
BuzzFeed News

GLENN THRUSH
Chief Political Correspondent
POLITICO

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: Good afternoon everybody, I'm Strobe Talbott.

Welcome to The Brookings Institution for today's afternoon event, which is a panel of four distinguished journalists who are going to be talking about a very, very topical subject, right up there. But first I'd like to give you just a little bit of background on how this particular event came about.

About three years ago, my colleagues here at Brookings and I felt that, like a lot of revolutions, the digital revolution -- exciting as it is and in some ways may be very positive that it is -- has also produced some victims and one of those victims is long-form journalism. So, to try to keep that genre alive, we've launched a periodical series of what we call Brookings Essays. They're web-based, they take a lot of advantage of new technology, but we keep a premium on high-quality, in-depth writing relevant to the big issues of public policy.

And an example is the disruption of the Fourth Estate, in particular the rise and the spread of fake news. So that led to us asking Susan Glasser if she would be good enough to write a Brookings Essay that tackles that challenge in the context of the 2016 campaign and its outcome.

It's harder to imagine a better author for this venture. She has extraordinary insight, experience, and, I might add, a heroic ability to meet deadlines. And that, of course, is because she's very often on the other side of deadlines. As I think you all know, she has made POLITICO a supreme platform for reportage and commentary. Earlier this year, she and her husband -- Peter Baker of *The New York Times* -- moved to Jerusalem. Yesterday, they announced that they are going to be returning to Washington to cover the U.S.'s role in the world and in a very interesting era that we are now entering.

So welcome back to D.C., Susan, and welcome back to The Brookings Institution, where you have been a real good friend to a lot of us around here, both

institutionally and also personally. She's now going to offer some opening remarks and then she will moderate a discussion and will introduce Jim and Shani and Glenn. And the podium is now yours.

MS. GLASSER: Well, thank you, Strobe, in particular, and thank you to all of you for sharing some of your time this afternoon with me, with Brookings, and with my colleagues in a few moments.

I want to say, first of all, that writing an essay about 2016 and Donald Trump and the media, and putting it out there in the context of our post-truth world is kind of like inviting the trolls to a dinner party. And so if we can discuss a little bit what the reaction has been to the piece, but, first of all, I really do want to thank Strobe because not only has he had the vision to really embrace long-form and put the commitment of Brookings behind this very provocative and powerful series of essay.

I've had the privilege both of writing one now and also of editing and partnering with Brookings on versions of these pieces that have had life in many different mediums as a result. And I think it's a very valuable contribution and if this is finally my moment as a journalist, where I'm not entirely sure that the glass of transformation is half full. Certainly, we are here today as a result of one of the positive aspects of the media transformation and the digital revolution, which is that everybody can potentially be a publisher, and Brookings has the same tools that we have at POLITICO or at *The New York Times* or at BuzzFeed. And so we're all grateful to Brookings for putting some of its muscle into thinking about how to publish big, thought-provoking ideas in a new world and on a new set of platforms.

That being said, this is my moment when I finally, after 25 years, as a congenital digital transformation optimist, have sat back down at the table, looked at the glass, and wondered if I've been misreading it a little bit. And I appreciate Strobe doing the hard work of explaining why the entire conclusion of my essay, which is "I'm going to leave Trump's Washington and move to the Middle East," is now not entirely operative.

So, yes, I am retracting the conclusion of my essay.

You know, I like to say that after three weeks in the Middle East we've got it all cracked. I fixed it all and we're returning here to Washington where the politics is really dysfunctional. Jerusalem, a very sane place in comparison these days.

No, but in all seriousness, it is dizzying and extraordinary what the response both has been to trying to come to terms of the role of the media in the 2016 campaign. And even in the short, not even two weeks since this essay was published by Brookings, let's stop for a second and think about the incredible series of news cycles, over and over again, that we've been living in. And again, this is just in the last 10 days since we published this piece.

We've been living in the great fake news panic of 2016 and here, as Washingtonians, we're particularly aware of its iteration in coming to our favorite neighborhood pizza place. And the moment when fake news became real threats is something that we're going to be thinking about a long time after 2016. We've been living in the CIA versus the FBI versus Trump great news cycle, over the question of Russia and it's intervention in the United States election and to what extent is that real news or is it fake news.

And then, I think the thing that I've noticed, which is really striking and won't be a surprise to anyone who's read this piece or thought much about the media, who now is claiming fake news around every corner and under every bed? Well, Donald Trump himself, right? So you have this incredible circle collapsing upon itself, or whatever metaphor you want to have, but the person who's now complaining about fake news is the guy who the journalists are busy trying to figure out how to cover and stop from purveying fake news. So we are living in the fully realized hall of mirrors that results from some of these long-term trends I wrote about.

What has the reaction to the essay been? Well, I think that metaphor of inviting trolls to the dinner party is not entirely unwarranted. No one here will be

surprised to know that either this was a wildly pro-Hillary essay, in which we were basically making apologies for the Democratic nominee, and none of it was her fault and none of it was the journalists' fault, or, conversely, there was a lot of people who felt that I absolutely completely failed to account for the fact that it really was the media's fault that Hillary Clinton lost because we over-covered her at the expense of not covering Donald Trump sufficiently.

Then, of course, there is the part that believes that it was not only a cover-up of Donald Trump's true evil, but a cover-up of Hillary Clinton's true evil, and that it was written with that in mind. Another strand of criticism, if you will, which I've encountered -- perhaps not surprisingly -- is that we wrote too many hard-hitting stories about Trump and, also, that we were covering up Russia's intervention in the election by spending our time writing the hard-hitting stories about Trump or spending our time writing the hard-hitting stories about Clinton. And also, of course, I think one of the takeaways -- and this one, I think, might be fair, a little bit -- was that I wrote this somehow as a way of making journalists feel better about the fact that nobody cares about what they do anymore.

I'm not entirely sure about that line of attack, but it recurred enough in some of the online commentary that I thought I would throw that out there for you. Now, of course, there was many people, I would say, who also objected to the notion that I wrote the sentence about the media being "smug, insular, and out of touch" in the past tense. And many readers of this essay would like you to know that they believe that the media is in the current, present tense "smug, insular, and out of touch." So I think that's a fair critique, and my point was slightly a different one, but fair enough.

And, of course, then there's just a lot of people who no matter what you say about election 2016 -- given how raw feelings are -- they really want you to know that we don't understand just how angry white America is and how much we don't get it. So, that's probably an inevitable table stakes.

What can we talk about going forward? We're not going to be re-litigating campaign 2016, except in learned discussions and academic papers, for the next few decades. We have to figure out a way forward both as a country and as a profession of journalism. That's where it's been most surprising and most interesting. So many people have come forward with very concrete ideas in a way that I'm not familiar with. Most of you have a sense of journalists and you know us well enough to know that we are the type who like to sit around and criticize, much more than we like to build things, much more than we like to solve problems, much more than we like to take action. We like to criticize those who take action rather than do so ourselves.

So I've been actually quite surprised at the number of people who have come forward to me, including one of our panelists today, with very specific concrete ideas. "We've got to do something about it" has been a refrain that I haven't heard very much up until now in my career in journalism. But I really have been surprised and struck by the extent to which some people say, well, we should really fight back with lawsuits.

Other people say, well, we should create a new website and we should police fake news out there. We should find a way of vetting either news organizations that we believe are trusted providers or we should vet individual stories or, in my view, one of the most promising ideas is to get out there and find a way for journalists to affirmatively make the case for reporting, for independent journalism, for facts and why they matter. We've taken it for granted. In fact, it's been a part of our social contract that we thought was so much a bedrock assumption that we haven't needed to do anything about it.

Well, it strikes me that perhaps this is a moment -- kind of like democracy itself, where we have to change the way we think of it. It's not a spectator sport anymore. If these are things that we value, how do we go out there and bring a new generation of people? How do we bridge this incredible divide in the United States between those who accept and are a part of the consensus that exists here in Washington, here in blue

America? How do we broaden the circle of people who understand why, in fact, that old adage still rings true, which is, you can have your opinion, but you can't have your own set of facts? You're not entitled to your own set of facts.

I feel like that consensus has frayed. And I've never seen that in 25 years in Washington and, I think, I'm excited about the prospect of taking concrete steps that address, really, the crisis of legitimacy of American journalism in a way that we haven't seen before. And so, when we get to the questions, I hope you all will step up not only with questions, but also with ideas for all of this.

I want to invite the panel to the stage right now and just say, very quickly, this is a conversation about Washington journalism, about political journalism, about how we got here, and where we're going forward. And we could have a version of this talk in Silicon Valley, but I'm just delighted because these are people who I've learned a ton from and who I think help explain why we're not just talking about generic digital journalism. We're talking about the role that reporting plays in our democracy and politics.

And so, Jim Glassman is our first panelist. Jim was really a person who taught me most of what I know about journalism, all the good parts. He's not responsible for the bad parts, but he was the editor and publisher of *Roll Call* newspaper, which was my first job out of college, and I wrote a bit about that in this essay. And I think he's a real visionary when it comes to Washington reporting, so I'm delighted that he could join us today.

Shani Hilton, from BuzzFeed News, is teaching all of us, I think, about what the possibilities that we haven't thought through for new platforms and new ideas when it comes to taking real old-fashioned ideas about reporting and why it matters, and journalism, and showing how we can do it both in new formats and in new mediums and in news organizations that didn't exist 30 years ago. So I'm delighted that she could be here.

And then the other panelist is my friend and colleague, Glenn Thrush, with whom I worked very closely over the last few years in launching POLITICO magazine. And he's been our chief political correspondent at POLITICO this year throughout the crazy 2016 campaign and comes from the world of New York tabloids, and has taught me a lot about reporting and thinking about politics in this crazy moment we live in.

So, without further ado, come on up and we'll "yack." (Applause)

(Panelists come to the stage.)

MS. GLASSER: Well, thank you everybody. I thought we would just really jump right in and the first question I wanted to ask everybody is one that I've obviously spent a lot of time thinking about since this crazy election, and I'm sure you have, too, which is: What could we have done differently? And what do you think about what it's going to take for us to cover a President of the United States who doesn't share many of the consensus views about the role of independent reporting that most of the people in this room, and certainly on this stage, do? What do you think?

MR. GLASSMAN: Let Glenn start.

MS. GLASSER: All right, Glenn, what did we screw up?

MR. THRUSH: What didn't we screw up? Well, first of all, I want to generally question what one of my sources, a guy named David Plouffe, says about Democratic politicians: The bedwetting that reporters tend to do in the wake of these elections were just very reflective to the point of the extreme of being so reflective as being narcissistic.

I think to some extent we are spending way too much time scouring our own mistakes and trying to figure out what we did wrong. I think anyone who read the aggregate of coverage of this campaign got more than enough information about both candidates to make an informed decision. Let's just put that on the table.

There were ignominious moments in this campaign, giving Donald Trump

30 minutes of unmediated empty airtime of his podium. I recently did a piece about the 10 turning points of the campaign. When you make a decision saying that an empty podium that Donald Trump will eventually occupy is more important than a full podium with someone speaking, you are saying something qualitatively and elevating him to a level that one shouldn't elevate him to.

But in general, I think we are in an environment where we have people who are attacking the press systematically, who are essentially attacking the legitimacy of all institutions broadly, in order to make a profit or make a political profit. And I think we need to understand that we are in -- I wouldn't say it's a war, though there is an organization called InfoWars, but I think we need to be somewhat less reflective and somewhat more deflective.

MS. GLASSER: So we didn't screw up anything?

MR. THRUSH: No, we screwed up a lot. But what I'm saying is that in the aggregate I think we informed. I think voters had more than enough information to make a decision.

MS. GLASSER: Well, listen, I'm glad you made that point because I should say, I came out and said that right at the beginning of this essay and probably that was the thing that pissed off more people than anything else about the essay, with the idea that, well, isn't it nice that you're absolving yourselves of all blame? But I still think it's true and I think it's pretty clear cut.

Just for the record, journalism by and about Washington, about government, about this campaign is better than it ever has been before. And Jim and I will talk a little bit about when I first started out here in the late 1980s. You know, the truth was, we were not nearly as good reporters as they are now. No way. And we didn't know most of the things that people know now in real time. What we expect of our reporters and of our journalists is much more now than it ever has been in the past. And that, to me, actually is the really scary part, but I'm glad you brought that up.

But, Shani, we did screw up, right?

MS. HILTON: No.

MS. GLASSER: No?

MS. HILTON: You know, I largely agree with Glenn. By the end of the campaign there was a lot of information, true information, out there about both candidates. And I think Donald Trump was actually fairly easy to cover in that digging into his past, into his background, the type of businessman he is. He's been a public figure for so long, he's been a celebrity figure for so long that finding true information about him and publishing it wasn't that difficult a thing to do. And the same for Hillary Clinton.

MS. GLASSER: So why did nobody care?

MS. HILTON: That's actually the bigger question, which is what you have up there, post-truth, post-fact. For a lot of people, it's very clear that they've given up on their trust institutions and if there's anywhere that we screwed up, it's how do you bring that back?

MR. GLASSMAN: Well, so I don't disagree with anything anybody has said so far, but I really do think the problem is people not believing or not really caring about facts. And that's a subject that I think a lot of people have tackled and I've certainly spent a lot of time on it, ever since I was at the State Department -- which is now eight years ago -- where I was confronted with a lot of conspiracy theories. And the questions were, why do people believe these things? What can you do about them? And the answer is in things like Mike Lewis' new book about Kahneman and Tversky, or Jonathan Haidt at NYU.

It's something we all understand, I think, which is that our intuition and our emotions are much stronger than a reason. And that presents tremendous problems for an institution that's founded on reason. And the fact is, as Haidt says, we're on teams and what we constantly look for is good news about our team and bad news about the

other team. And I think this election provided opportunities, thanks to the revolution that the Internet caused, for us to find -- whichever team that we're on -- "whatever truth," in quotation marks, we decide that we want to discover. And I think that's really what happened.

I'll just give one little example. The Trump team has been saying that Donald Trump has won a landslide victory. And I'll bet if you did a survey of his supporters, they would say he sure did. The fact that he got fewer electoral votes as a winner than two-thirds of the recent presidential winners -- at least since 1900, including both terms of Barack Obama, both terms of Bill Clinton, and so forth -- doesn't really matter because it is his emotional connection that counts.

So I think the real issue for us is how do we counter that? Because things are slipping away, I think, very quickly.

MR. THRUSH: I was on an NPR show, The Diane Rehm Show, a couple weeks ago and we had a Trump surrogate from Nashville, Tennessee, on the line and we were talking at that point about Donald Trump's Tweet about the 3 million illegal votes, which is a castle made of crap, right, that assertion.

MS. GLASSER: I hate it when you're pulling your punches.

MR. THRUSH: Sorry. Well, we were pressing this person on this and she actually said -- this is what she said, she said, unfortunately, there's no such thing as facts anymore. And the explanation of that argument was, well, you believe that there wasn't 3 million illegal votes, but so many of Mr. Trump's supporters out in the country really do believe that there were 3 million votes. And she really -- I don't believe in that moment she really understood the fundamental difference between those two things. That, to me, has been the mind-bending aspect of this campaign, not that Donald Trump won.

I think Donald Trump winning was always a possibility in our minds, but I think the notion that so many people were not imbibing fact in the way that we thought.

The process of assimilation of fact and decision-making was much different than what I think we assumed or what I've assumed in a two-decade career.

MS. GLASSER: So, I want to hone in on that with everybody because conspiracy theories have been around forever. Partisan media has been around forever. A divided country has been around forever. We fought a civil war here. You can go right back to Alexander Hamilton to see the evidence of media that spread untrue stories and that people believe different things. So, what is it that's different about now or that we feel to be different about now? Or is it just that we feel it to be different and it's not different, but we're exposed to it?

I think it's really important to hone in on that because that's where we start to look at it and understand, are we facing a more existential threat either to our democracy or to our independent journalism than conspiracy theories, lies, and falsehoods of the past? So that's one bucket of questions for everybody.

And then I want to come back, also, to Jim's point, which I think is very important, looking at almost the social science rationale behind this. You could reframe that, right, as narrative versus fact, right? And that one of the things about Donald Trump as a politician, I think -- his particular skill and genius, right -- is understanding narrative and definitely not understanding fact, right? He's pretty divorced from the world of facts and he's pretty genius at the narrative.

And he understood, I think, in ways that we had a hard time grappling with that creating or reinforcing a narrative around Hillary Clinton -- whether it was email or "corrupt Hillary" or "lying Hillary" -- was going to be a very successful way for him to use facts that were relevant and discard facts that were inconvenient. And I do think, as a journalist, we all know the power of narrative and how hard it can be to disrupt narratives, even those that are fundamentally untrue or misrepresentative. And to me that's what a lot of the election was about.

You know, facts no longer had the power to disrupt narrative or, perhaps,

the one part of the media that disseminated narrative was stronger than that. But let's go back to this question of, is there any truth anymore and is this something really different? What do you think?

MS. HILTON: I do think that a chunk of the media really wrapped the concept of the fact check around themselves like a blanket. You know, this is how we're going to penetrate the narrative.

MS. GLASSER: Yeah.

MS. HILTON: But we've long known, like you said, people really resist facts that challenge what they truly believe. And unlike journalists who, generally speaking, when you give them a fact they take that information and they incorporate it into the future of how they tell their story, the average person doesn't do that. And so, thinking about that clinging to fact check, I think that was a mistake.

MR. GLASSMAN: You know, fact checks -- one of the things that I did discover when I was at the State Department is that when you try to refute a lie, it only emphasizes the lie in the first place. So I'm not a big fact check fan. I mean, I think that people should correct mistakes, but don't expect that to actually have much of an effect.

But I want to go back to your very first question of the two-part question, Susan. So I think what's happened is, people are wired to respond to narrative, to respond to what -- if I say, "Once upon a time," you'll all pay a lot of attention. Whereas if I say, "This is 50 percent greater than that," you probably won't. So we're all wired to want to listen to narratives and we are very intuitive. But the big change really has been technological. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

So when I was in college, I wanted to start my own newspaper and I got out and I did that. And let me tell you, it was really hard because the three biggest expenses that I had were paper, ink, and distribution. And now it's not so hard. I mean, everybody is a publisher, as you said up there. Brookings is a publisher. Actually, Brookings was a publisher before the Internet, but.

So we're all publishers and, to quote Susan Glasser, "This is going to be a golden age for anyone who cares about journalism and access to new ideas and information." This is something she wrote before the election started, and it's true. It is a golden age. But it's a paradox because at the same time it's a golden age, everybody has his or her voice, those voices are not necessarily factual.

I've got to say now -- I'm going to sound like an old fuddy-duddy -- but I was trained to respect facts. I knew what the rules were and when I was in college, and we went to the same place, if you were a competitor for a place on *The Harvard Crimson* and you made one mistake, you were out. One factual error, that was it. It was very, very serious. Now, everybody is a journalist and nobody is really a trained journalist and so I think that a lot of those problems occur. But it's really the collision of these two things, the technology and the way that we're wired.

And, by the way, I also want to say that one of the good things about the Internet is that it does correct things and there are a million voices out there. So I don't want to repeal it, I think it's great, but it does cause problems. It does cause serious problems when people believe things that aren't true.

MR. THRUSH: Well, I think we're not in a golden age, we're kind of in a gold lame age, right? (Laughter)

I think what Shani said is absolutely right and it's absolutely devastatingly disconcerting, right? The fact that you can't rationalize your way around it, but I have an alternative theory. I think we have to wrap fact around a brick and throw it through people's windows. I think we've got to weaponize fact in a way that people like Donald Trump during the campaign -- and this is not a bias of mine, this has been demonstrated by fact checkers -- has weaponized falsehood or weaponized distortion effect, right?

We have to be as forceful in terms of pushing this stuff as he is. He is a product of a tabloid environment and I think people in D.C. may not really understand that. Everything that Trump does is configured to appear on Page Six of *The New York*

Post. His entire public meme is based on that priority. And I think the way that you go after somebody like that -- in terms of "go after," I mean correcting the record and holding him accountable -- is by using the tabloid tools.

One thing I would disagree with, I don't think we're in an age of fact versus narrative. I think we're in an age of fact versus branding. Narrative presupposes an attention span and it also presupposes a consistency in terms of storyline. What this guy does is branding. Look at what Susan was saying about fake news as a brand or as a hashtag? Three weeks ago it was weapon of the left.

MS. GLASSER: Yeah.

MR. THRUSH: Now, if you look at my trolls -- and please don't -- everything I will Tweet that they don't agree with is now --

MS. GLASSER: Fake news.

MR. THRUSH: -- is now hashtagged "fake news." So these are folks -- and it's not consigned to any one particular political movement, though it does seem to be more on the right, right now. People really understand branding in an intuitive way. And Trump is teaching his people branding, so this thing is really snowballing. We're going to have to figure out a way to not stop the snowball, but to make our own.

MS. GLASSER: Okay, I think your point is well taken, but I would argue that branding is a subset of narrative. We do know how to watch soap operas. Donald Trump is a soap opera. Donald Trump is a running show in which we're all now the extras. And I think that what you're calling branding is -- we followed his ups and downs, it's not that he's a dramatic flash in the pan type character, and then goes away, which would suggest the absence of narrative. In fact, what he's genius at is -- he almost needs to be thrown in a corner in order to fight his way back out. And that, to me, is much more of a soap opera type of character.

But I want to come back to a couple quick points and bring you into this because I think the structural shift in the media is what Jim was talking about. You know,

when you were in college -- they were a little less strict, I think, by the time I was there.

MR. GLASSMAN: It was a different era.

MS. GLASSER: I'm sure that there were more than one mistake required. And I should say, as a boss, you know, he did not fire people who made mistakes in their reporting. Thank goodness, otherwise I would have been fired in my first week as a reporter out of college.

But there is a structural shift, right, in media. So we're talking about what you guys see as consumers of journalism. There's a structural shift, and I've long thought, again, that that was a positive. We've gone from basically a scarcity economy -- when you graduated from college and started a newspaper, you had to pay to buy the ink; you had to pay for the printing press; paper was expensive, you couldn't print a lot of pages -- that dictated the content even of the journalism that people saw.

My dad -- who's here today, which is great -- always said to me, never get into an argument with somebody who buys ink by the barrel, right? It was a scarcity economy and those who could afford to own a platform, to own a newspaper or magazine, had an outsized impact on our public discourse and on what facts were allowed in a democracy. The gatekeepers are gone, the media has fragmented. We all know the consequences of it, but I think what we're really dealing with now is the fact that even though we knew this, this is not the first election cycle in 2016 in which a plethora of information and news, undifferentiated, has been thrown at us. That's been true at least for, arguably, the last decade, but we're still grappling, it seems to me, with the consequences of that on our political process. We are actually overwhelmed now by information.

The relative costs in economic terms of reporting, journalism, communicating your facts and your ideas, have now dwindled to zero or to less than zero. In the BuzzFeed world, right, the costs remain the human costs of putting reporters onto a story. But I think that's an interesting question, how do you as an editor of not only

a new media organization, but one that has unleashed a flood, a torrent, of content on us -- I hate that word, "content" -- but how do you think about what matters among that? Are you publishing too much stuff? Do you ever wish -- do you ever wake up and think, wow, I wish we did less but more impactful or better?

MS. HILTON: Every once a while -- let me tell you a story, "Once upon a time" (Laughter) -- two years ago we may remember that there was a flood of content on Facebook that was up-worthy click-bait, that kind of like and you'll never believe what happened next. Right? That stuff has largely gone away because Facebook made it go away.

That, in turn, became a bonanza for a lot of publishers like BuzzFeed, like *The Washington Post*, like other mainstream media publications, but it also seems to have become a bonanza for fake news sites who figured out how to game the system and come up with headlines that did not flag or trigger that "and you'll never believe what happened next" algorithm. But, actually, your Macedonian teen's getting their fake stories out to your grandmother in Ohio, or whoever.

And so part of it -- I don't think we can have this conversation without talking about Facebook and I think they're going through a reckoning right now internally and trying to figure out -- you know, Sheryl Sandberg said the other day that she doesn't believe that fake news on Facebook had anything to do with the election outcome. We recently did an analysis, "The Top 10 Most Shared Stories Both Fake and Real," and the fake stories were shared much more widely than the real stories. And that's happening in other countries. It's happening in Brazil right now with their presidential scandal where the biggest stories that are being shared are also fake.

MS. GLASSER: Well, you know, we cited that and we had a graphic off that in the essay for those of you haven't seen it. This reminds me of what happened, actually, with the techno optimists when it came to international politics just a few years ago. We're now kind of having our domestic American version of that, which is that -- I

POST-TRUTH-2016/12/13

was the editor of *Foreign Policy Magazine* a number of years ago, right around the period of the Arab Spring. And up until that moment we felt like, wow, Facebook and Google and Twitter, these are these great empowerment tools and there are flash mobs of democracy activists gathering and “death to tyrants,” and this is incredible and the world is going to see a whole new flourishing of freedom.

You know, today, on the day of the death of Aleppo -- which is not something that we talk about here in Washington; we should be talking about it -- today, on the day of the death of Aleppo, remember where we started in Syria, which was with young people coming out to make a peaceful, middle-class revolution in one of the Middle East’s worst tyrannies. And instead what happened is that we found out that the bad guys have Facebook, too. The bad guys have Twitter, too. And in places like Iran, by the way, they banned it for the regular people and kept it for themselves. And I feel like, in some ways, this conversation that we’re having about American domestic politics is very reminiscent of the disillusion that the techno optimists faced when it became clear that the Arab Spring revolutions were going to lead to dashed hopes.

But, Glenn, I know you wanted to jump in.

MR. THRUSH: I just think, we’re talking about mediated content here, we’re talking about curated content, I think the age of -- and BuzzFeed, I think, gets a bad rap on that. That story you guys did on the fake news stuff really changed the game. It changed people’s perceptions of the campaign and you are a very carefully mediated and curated and managed website.

I think the thing that Facebook and Twitter and Reddit have to face up to is the fact that they have got to start curating content. You cannot have this kind -- using a private platform. Now the Internet, the web itself, is a much larger question here and I believe it should be an unmediated platform, but these are privately owned platforms.

I view it like people want to move sewage, but they don’t have the right to have the pipe. And I think Facebook -- and Facebook recently instituted what? Was is

POST-TRUTH-2016/12/13

seven new measures and they're all seem woefully inadequate. I think it's going to cost them a lot of money to get in there and mediate. They can't just do stuff with algorithms, they have to -- didn't they, if I'm not mistaken, dismiss some of their editorial staff?

MS. HILTON: Yeah, they got rid of the people, the humans.

MR. THRUSH: I think that is over. The notion that Zuckerberg can think that he's not running a newspaper, when -- what was the other study, that 2 out of 10 people got their information from newspapers, from print sites, and 7 to 8 out of 10 got it from Facebook. So I think that age is over. I think these guys really need to take responsibility.

MS. GLASSER: Just to be clear, in the definitive survey that Pew Research Center does about how Americans get news about the campaigns, I cited this in the essay, more Americans in 2016 got their information about the campaign from late night comedy shows than from journalism, you know? So there we are.

But I want to go back, though, to what -- none of us know about algorithms, none of us on this stage are engineers or write computer code. Let's talk a little bit about journalism here in Washington and in national news, and what we're responsible for and what we're not responsible for?

Remember, people called Ronald Reagan "the Teflon President." Jim, is Donald Trump suddenly more Teflon or more armored with a new kind of Teflon that the technologists have given him? Or is it something really different in American politics?

MR. GLASSMAN: Well, I think it's different in the sense that he understands media and he has been able to tell his stories the way he wants to in an unmediated media way. So I think that's important and I think that's the result -- there wasn't any Twitter. I guess you could keep having press conferences every night, but you really would have a hard time getting your story out in any other way.

I do want to just comment about something that you said earlier. I'm a techno optimist myself and I think one of the things about technology that's sort of a

cliché is that in the short-term it tends to disappoint and in the long-term it tends to be more rewarding than everybody ever believed.

And I think we can see that now, finally, with television, which has gotten really good, the content part of television. And I think --

MS. GLASSER: Parts of it.

MR. GLASSMAN: Parts of it. Parts of it is terrible. In fact, the news part is terrible. You talked about Aleppo. This morning I watched the cable networks in vain to hear anything about Aleppo. Unbelievable. I mean, this is a really seminal event in world history and nothing.

But I think what will eventually solve or help solve the problem is people finding ways using technology itself. And I think the basic issue is the one that Shani and Glenn brought up, which is curation, which is what we used to call editing. And maybe we'll get to my idea at some point, but I think there are lots of ideas floating around about how to do that. But I do think it will happen. I think, right now, if we look back on this we'll say, wow, this is kind of a period of tremendous chaos.

People will believe conspiracy theories, they will believe lies, forever. There's no doubt about that, but the facilitation, I think, is going to become more difficult in the future.

MS. GLASSER: All right, Glenn, you have to cover the Trump White House. This is not a mere hypothetical. This is in actual real life. (Laughter) A put your fireman's suit on scenario and you have to slide down the pole and cover the Trump White House now. You talked about weaponizing facts and reporting, but in a practical sense, what does that mean? Politicians have always lied. What is it that you're going to do differently?

MR. THRUSH: Oh, wow, man. You're going to put me on the spot on that? (Laughter) It beats the hell out of me.

I think you have to write stories -- I'll give you an example. I think *The*

POST-TRUTH-2016/12/13

New York Times, and this is something that needs to be used judiciously, when Donald Trump came out and said he no longer believes that President Obama wasn't born in the United States, *The New York Times* put the word "lie" above the fold, on A1. I think that was an important moment for them to be able to identify really specifically that this guy -- to define what a lie is. And with Trump, what's the cliché about Eskimos, that they have 100 different ways to identify snow, I think with Trump there are hundreds of different ways to identify the various ways that he plays with the truth, right? And I think "lie" is at the extreme end of it.

So I think you've got to, when it's appropriate, to call that stuff out. I also think you can't allow -- I hate this term "normalization," but you can't allow these guys to dictate the terms of the debate based on misinformation. So if they are going to essentially create a playing field in which you are being forced to accept their terms based on false premises.

And then the last thing is -- and I think it might be the most important thing -- we've got to not dive for every shiny penny. Donald Trump has the capacity at 6:00 a.m. every morning to change the subject. And I'm not calling anyone out on this, but there was the day, the morning, he put out some Tweet on something -- the *Saturday Night Live* Tweet -- and there were a whole spate of stories that had come out that weekend about his business attachments and how he was going to potentially need to divest, and Donald Trump changed the narrative on one of our internal story budgets. Like, okay, guys, five reporters need to be deployed to deal with this Donald Trump Tweet on *Saturday Night Live*.

No, it may not have been -- it was the Boeing Tweet, so it was more substantive than the *Saturday Night Live* Tweet. The guy is using this platform to set the agenda and I think it's super important for us to say, no, we're not going to play along with this. And I think as print folks we need to pressure and shame basic cable. If they're going to play along with this guy and give him a platform, we have got to be more

adversarial. That is a tension -- I covered the White House for three years, that has always been a tension in the briefing room. And we don't even know if we're going to have a briefing room, by the way.

It's between the print folks, who would prefer things not to be on-camera as much, and the people in the front row who are wonderful and brilliant journalists, but they need the visual and they need the conflict. I think we as print folks need to be a little bit tougher on our cable brethren if they're going to continue to give this guy an unmediated platform.

MS. GLASSER: You know, I can challenge you a little bit on this question of whether the President, using his bully pulpit -- whether the bully pulpit is an old-fashioned bully pulpit or a press conference or Twitter -- it's probably, in my view, unreasonable to expect that a certain large percentage of the media isn't going to, in effect, amplify that speech. That's the power, in part, of the office.

But I want to get to this question of whether you think there are concrete things that you plan to do differently or that you think could be done differently in covering a Trump presidency than we covered a Trump campaign.

MS. HILTON: That's a really hard question. I think we come out of -- we don't buy paper or ink, but we do come out of a newspaper tradition, which is you cover things as they happen, you dig into the past, you dig into the businesses, you do some investigations when it's warranted. It's hard to imagine -- we have no interest in becoming an advocacy organization. And so to that end, a lot of what we're going to do is we're going to continue doing the same thing that we have been doing.

I think one area where we could improve is understanding the people who are on Facebook, and who are sharing fake news, and understanding the kind of conversations that they're having. I think that's something that a lot of publishers have done, investing in Facebook as a tool, as a fire hose for traffic, because it's made news so viral without understanding the people who are actually looking at that traffic or those

stories.

MS. GLASSER: So this gets into the question of solutions and are there any? And what is people's response? And as I said, I have sensed a tremendous desire on the part of the journalists that I know to find a way to take some more concrete action. Jim sent me his idea for sort of a *Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval, if you will, for news. What did you have in mind with that?

MR. GLASSMAN: Well, it sort of pains me to think that it has come to this because I think journalists have always resisted any kind of accreditation, and certainly it shouldn't be a state accreditation. But I think the idea of having some sort of optional accreditation agency, a nonprofit, a *Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval, a bug that is the result of some kind of an audit, I think it's a really good idea, you know? Sites, individuals, blogs don't have to subscribe to it, but if they did they would get some kind of an assurance for their readers that these folks follow certain standards. And I think you can -- when I was head of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and I'm sure they still do it, we used to do annual audits of all of our many 60 language services and they were quite effective.

So you could have -- one part could be just standards, people have to be trained in certain things. Another part could be an audit and another part could be some sort of response to criticism. And it could be funded by the sites, the purveyors, let's call them, themselves. And that could also be part of whatever Facebook and Google and everyone's kind of mysterious algorithms are. And I think it's a market-based, not a government kind of solution. And it's not really a solution, but it gets people thinking in the right way.

You know, we were talking about fact checking, I don't think fact checking is the answer. You're constantly running to catch up and, also, it emphasizes the lies, so that doesn't really help. But to say, yeah, these people are serious, you can take what they say as being the truth, or they've shown in the past that they have been

truthful, I think that would work.

MS. GLASSER: There's one large platform that does not have a fake news problem and that's Apple News, which is on the left of Home for anybody who has an iPhone and they're updated on ILS. And that's because Apple News uses human beings, like Glenn said, who vet every single partner that comes into the platform.

MR. THRUSH: I think the solution is local news. I think it is no accident, no coincidence that all of this is taking place at a time when we have seen the extermination of viable local news outlets. That's the way you get to know reporters. People trust fact when they can verify it themselves on the ground. When you see the photographer walking up your block, taking a picture of the neighbor's dog -- we are a dehumanized industry.

And you talked about what ticks you off, what ticks me off, and I have nothing against the Newseum, but I would like to see a percentage of the money that goes in the building of these beautiful edifices to go into maybe investing in local news coverage so that people can have more of a tactile experience with news gathering because I think that's the way people are going to really understand what the truth is, when they're able to really relate it directly to their lives.

And that's the other problem in our society in general, becoming more fragmented and disconnected. We thought that a lot of these institutions were going to be community building, but, in fact, a lot of these institutions are isolating.

MS. GLASSER: We're too busy staring at our phones in order to interact with anybody.

MR. GLASSMAN: Can I just add one thing?

MS. GLASSER: Yeah.

MR. GLASSMAN: I also think there's a national security issue here and we've already seen it in the last election.

MS. HILTON: Yes.

MR. GLASSMAN: This is going to get worse and worse and internationally, I think the Russians are terrific at this. There's no doubt about it, but as in so many other things, they will be the model; or the Chinese will be the model, the Chinese will follow the Russians. I'm not blaming anything on the Chinese because they're not anywhere near as extensive as the Russians.

But we're going to see this more and more and I do think that maybe some kind of accreditation or something might help with that.

MS. GLASSER: All right, I want to invite all of you to join in with questions and also ideas. But do try to keep it short and in a question form and ID yourself if you could? We have some microphones around the room. So, there in the back maybe?

MR. BALFOUR: Tony Balfour, former editor of the Oxford University newspaper and a popular journalist in London before spending 25 years here. The thing that really strikes me about the U.S. is the lack of direct questioning by politicians. The President does not hold press conferences, he doesn't have to reply on the prime news every night. In the U.K., if some story happens overnight, the BBC radio van will be outside the Minister's house at 7:00 in the morning, questioning him directly.

You also have television programs, *Question Time*, where you have people from different parties cross-questioning each other. I just don't see that in the U.S. Politicians stand at a podium, like Trump did for weeks on end, and it's simply reported uncritically.

MR. GLASSMAN: I can completely agree. I'm just so sick of what goes on, especially on cable news where, first of all, you have these surrogates who know what the talking points are for the day and one surrogate says this and the other says -- but I completely agree with you. I don't understand why a reporter can tolerate somebody just mouthing the latest talking points. You know, just go in for the kill.

I appeared, by the way, on *Hard Talk*, which is the BBC's premier

POST-TRUTH-2016/12/13

program like this. I would love to see a *Hard Talk* in the United States, but you don't even really need a separate show. You just need to actually ask tough questions. And I don't know the answer.

MS. GLASSER: Well, I think it's a fair point that if we were voting in this room, we would all probably vote for that. We had a question in the back, with the red?

MS. FERRIS: My name is Claudia Ferris. I'm an independent researcher and writer. I want to hear from the panelists what they think about the suggestion that Donald Trump was playing to an audience that did not care what the facts were, that responded only to the narrative, especially as it is underscored by the race issue.

I think that had a big impact on the gathering of his audience. And if that is the case, aren't you continually vulnerable to penetration by someone who is astute at picking up those kinds of divides in the culture?

MS. GLASSER: Any takers on that?

MR. GLASSMAN: Oh, I just want to say that I don't disagree with anything that you said, but I think -- as I was saying before -- I think we're all wired this way, whatever side we're on. So I think that people on the left are also more willing and eager to hear things that may not be true or that are slightly shaded than people on the right. I'm not sure there's that much of a difference. I think the difference in this election was you had someone who was very adept at exploiting that fact, and also adept at using the tools of dissemination to get his ideas across.

MS. GLASSER: Do you get a difference response, Glenn, from different parties?

MR. THRUSH: Yeah.

MS. GLASSER: I mean, do you feel like this is a bipartisan problem, even if it's been more pronounced in the form of Donald Trump?

MR. THRUSH: Well, I think there have been studies that show that

something like -- and I might be getting these numbers wrong, so I'll get fact-checked -- between 70 and 80 percent of Democrats trust the mainstream media somewhat and that number is in the 20s for Republicans. And I think a lot of that has to do with the Fox News phenomenon; this is something Obama has spoken about.

But the one thing I would guard against here are over-reading the results. I know it's been an incredibly dramatic thing that has taken place, but there are a lot of factors. Let us not forget that, I forgot the number of counties, but in a lot of these swing states the four blue wall states, ha, ha, ha, that turned out not to be such a blue wall. A lot of counties that were previously Obama counties in two elections flipped for Trump, so he was expressing something. And I think there's no question if you look at the alt-right phenomenon that there is a racial component to some of his support, but I think it is a misread to say that that's the only reason.

There were people who really wanted change and there are people who really didn't like Hillary Clinton who aren't racists or sexists. So I think we've got to understand that Trump's appeal, if you look at the numbers, if you look at his disapproval at the time of his election, it was 57 percent. So there were a large number of people who went into the voting booth disapproving of Donald Trump. And a higher number who rated him as having low character, by the way, who were cool with that.

So the notion that every person who flicked the switch for Donald Trump bought the whole package, I think, is a misnomer. And I think that's where it's going to get interesting.

MS. GLASSER: Does that make it more reassuring or less reassuring?

MR. THRUSH: I am not reassured by anything.

MS. GLASSER: It does suggest the job description of President that many voters have in mind is not perhaps the same job description of President that we here on the panel or in this room might have in mind.

All right, let's bring some more folks into the conversation. Right here in

the front?

SPEAKER: Yes, I wonder if there's somewhat of a smugness within the Washington press, looking for validation. And what makes me ask that is the series of *Washington Post* articles by Mr. Frankenfurter or whatever.

MR. GLASSMAN: David Fahrenthold. (Laughter)

SPEAKER: Fahrenthold, about --

MR. GLASSMAN: He does go by Frankenfurter, though.

SPEAKER: No, no, I'm sorry. I didn't know from the reading of the name --

MR. GLASSMAN: I don't want to be smug.

SPEAKER: -- but the point is, what he did, it was like a bulldog looking for a bone, and he clearly didn't expect to be writing big stories when he first started looking at the charitable contributions. And it became harder and harder for him to track it down, and then an editor who let him do more tracking down to find out that there was no there, as it were.

But *The Post* wasn't going to be rewarded for that story. The people who like Trump were going to ignore it and the people who didn't like Trump were just going to like him less. So my point is, maybe you shouldn't be looking for validation when, in fact, you're doing the work.

MR. THRUSH: Well, you know --

SPEAKER: I've struck a chord.

MS. GLASSER: It's always dangerous when Glenn has a chord struck.

MR. THRUSH: Sorry. No, I don't think we're looking for validation. And I think like there was a swing component of the electorate, who were educated whites, that moved -- there really was -- you know, it's funny we were talking about the post swing, post battleground, a lot of Democrats had a flawed theory of the case. But the truth of the matter was there was a volatile part of the electorate and that part of the

electorate are white educated voters. Okay? And there's some evidence that the Comey letter pushed them in that direction.

But, you know, what we're talking about is Fahrenthold's great series -- and a lot of people think he might win a Pulitzer; I believe he should -- documenting Donald Trump's history of his charity being distinctly uncharitable. So when you say he was finding nothing, he was literally finding nothing because there were no contributions. Right? So why shouldn't he have done that? I mean, that is precisely the kind of work a reporter does.

And the other thing about Fahrenthold that we were talking about weaponizing fact, Fahrenthold did this very clever thing where he had a yellow legal pad and he would write the names on the yellow legal pad. If you think David Fahrenthold and *The Washington Post* didn't have that on an Excel spreadsheet, you're crazy. They had a yellow legal pad. They used it as a way to sort of demonstrate for people and people would check in on it and he would do the thing. It's a perfect example of how to do this. I thought the whole thing was brilliant and laudatory.

It's not going to sway the election. The one thing that really moved the numbers with Donald Trump was the *Access Hollywood* tape. So, you know, the problem is you had trench warfare, World War I, with this very volatile, fairly small group of people moving back and forth. It's just the nature of our --

MS. GLASSER: Well, again, to me that's the point. I'm glad you raised this issue of maybe not the smugness part, because I'm not sure this is the best demonstration or not, but it really gets back to this basic question of do we impact or not? And this is where, you know, some Glenn's suggestions around we need to weaponize fact or reporting, I feel that it's not that we've not done that. There are great examples, whether it's that *Washington Post* series or actually *The New York Times* has very aggressive reporting on the taxes and many other issues, that succeeded, it succeeded with the part of America that already wasn't going to vote for Donald Trump.

You know what? If you took a survey, a scientific, rigorous survey, of *New York Times* readers or even those who were exposed to *New York Times* coverage, guess what. Probably it was a pretty unprecedented turnout against Donald Trump if you correlated the votes and readership of those stories. We're living in a country in which people are suffused in a cloud of not only like-minded spin on their Facebook feeds, but also with media brands that support the version of truth that they support. It's a cultural choice now that is reflected in our politics, and that's what scares me. That's why I'm so scared.

MR. THRUSH: But the one addendum that I would add to that is most people knew that Donald Trump had screwed around with that stuff. So people knew that and accepted that that was a bad thing about Donald Trump. They still voted for him anyway. So it's not necessarily an issue of it not penetrating. People understood that that meant that he was an uncharitable guy. They just didn't care enough to vote against him.

MS. GLASSER: All right, all the way in the back, sir, standing up.

MR. CUMMINGS: Hi, John Cummings. Question on not so much looking at the past, but looking at the present. The biggest thing on the horizon is the voting by the electoral college. Why isn't this plastered, you know, studied inside and out? What did the Founding Fathers intend? What are the responsibilities of it? Would Trump characterize as an unfit president? I mean, why isn't this dominating the front page of every one of your things and looked at in every possible angle?

MS. GLASSER: Good question. You know, on the one hand, I would say the electoral college is getting more attention this year than it's gotten since 2000 in some ways. On the other hand, you know, you're right, that is basically perceived as a sort of antiquated 18th century -- it's a vestigial organ. It's an appendix, it's a bellybutton on our democracy, you know. Nobody's really sure what function it plays and so, therefore, we have not imbued it with function, you could argue.

But the bottom line is the numbers are the numbers here. And I don't think there's anybody who thinks that anything -- any outcome is going to change. It's a nice thing to sort of talk about it in parlor rooms. I believe Jim has been in favor of abolishing the electoral college, haven't you?

MR. GLASSMAN: No, no.

MS. GLASSER: When we were at *Roll Call*, he was a great writer of editorials about eliminating the structural flaws in our democracy.

MR. GLASSMAN: Right. No, I'm actually for something that's even less popular, which is adding to the number of members of Congress after every Census, which was used to do and then we stopped doing it in the '20s. And as a result, the average member of Congress, of course, represents, you know, two or three times as many people as he or she used to. I think that would be good.

I am in favor of some structural changes as far as the election is concerned, such as changing the rules that the Commission on Presidential Debates has, which basically exclude anyone but a Democrat and a Republican. You know, I think that there's a great middle in this country that is not represented by the two parties. And I think that this election showed because of the candidates that each of the two parties put up the bankruptcy of the party system. But that's for another Brookings discussion. (Laughter) Thanks for letting me get that in, anyway.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Look at this, now everybody wants to jump in. Ma'am? This lady here.

MS. ORCHOWSKI: Thank you. I'm Peggy Orchowski. I'm the congressional correspondent for the *Hispanic Outlook* magazine and I write a lot about immigration and, of course, about Latinos. And I know lots and lots of people who voted for Trump and none of them are angry white men. None of them. Most of them are highly educated, international, many speak many languages, women. And so what? And I just think this conversation, too, is just missing it.

It's issues. There's certain issues that really turned them on. It didn't matter what his predications were for women. It didn't matter that he's unintellectual. He was saying things about issues that they needed and wanted and hadn't heard from the Democrats. And, of course, one of them was immigration, immigration in terms of law and order, not being anti-immigrants, xenophobic, racist, neo Nazis, you know. They want law and order and you never hear Democrats talk about enforcing immigration law. If anything, deportation's become like a crime against humanity, you know.

But the big issue was the Supreme Court. I think of all my friends who had a number of issues, the Supreme Court was the thing. They didn't care what he (inaudible) as long as he's going to change -- get a Scalia-type guy. And I think the Democrats missed that, but I think the press missed it, too.

MS. GLASSER: Thanks for your comment. Glenn, you covered President Obama on this question of immigration and deportation. I mean, Obama was very aggressively deporting immigrants early in his term.

MR. THRUSH: Why do you keep giving me the tough ones? (Laughter) Yeah, in fact, there was a huge issue, particularly with his -- and both Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton came out against it, the deportation of the Central American minors. And by "minors" I mean young people, not miners. And, you know, when you sort of crunch the numbers in a certain way, in 2012 and 2013 he had more deportations than any President in history. So I think, again, there are sort of differing facts there, so that's on that stuff.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I think we probably only have time for one or two more questions. Sir?

MR. BROWN: Stuart Brown with Warren Capital. I'm wondering if this is a discussion that's only taking place on the left. When I talked to my clients or friends that are on the right, they simply don't believe there was any false news out there. They don't think there was any fake news.

When I report that there's a 4.6 percent unemployment, they go are you nuts? There are 100 million unemployed Americans right now. Where do you get your information from? If it comes from *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*, they go, oh, well, there you go. If the number came from the Department of Labor, they go, yeah, see what I mean?

MS. GLASSER: Well, thank you, I think that's it. It's an important comment. I think we journalists worry every day that we're talking to ourselves, this question of insularity.

But, Jim, you know, you've had --

MR. GLASSMAN: You turn to because I'm the right-winger. So I served in a Republican administration. I've voted for a Republican for President in every year since 1980, except for this time. I'm deeply concerned about what's going on. I don't necessarily -- I do not think that Donald Trump won this election because of fake news. There's no doubt about that. And I think if Donald Trump didn't even exist, this would be a big -- this is still a gigantic problem that needs addressing.

MS. GLASSER: Lots of hands still up. Sir? Oh, no, farther back. Sorry.

MR. PEACE: Thank you. Leon Peace, The Peace Group. My question is what plans would the media have with respect to handling what I call misstatement or mishandling of the facts? And specifically, with respect to Mr. Trump, his tax issue.

The claim was that he -- the statement was that he did not pay his taxes, which implies that he did not pay the proper amount of tax due. If as reported he took a new operating loss, which allows you to carry it back a certain number of years and carry it over, he did pay the proper amount of tax due. If that amount was zero, fine.

But the allegation was that -- and the statements were made, therefore he didn't contribute to the well-being of the country, et cetera, et cetera. But I thought the media had an obligation to point out that's like asking the average payer to forego their standard deduction just to kick a few bucks extra into the pot.

But that was something that became a central issue, one of the central issues. And so I think the media has some obligation to treat him fairly.

MS. GLASSER: You want to take that one on?

MS. HILTON: I mean, I would just say that I think the reason that became a central issue is because people wanted to see his tax returns and had not. And I think that that is where that came from.

MS. GLASSER: Well, that's the bottom line is that every single President and presidential nominee going back really, you know, to the last several decades, has released their tax returns as a part of the campaign. Donald Trump, this is not the only norm of presidential politics he defied, but it's a very significant one. And, in fact, now we're going to face a very interesting question because presidents also have historically, every year, as a matter of course, released their tax returns every spring. Is Donald Trump going to find a way to blow that norm up, too?

MR. GLASSMAN: Yes.

MR. THRUSH: Yes.

MS. GLASSER: If we took a vote, we know what the answer is on that. I'm afraid we're just about out of time here. I want to thank everybody. I think it's a great conversation when you're leaving so many questions on the table. I hope we'll continue the conversation. Thank you. (Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2020