

March 8, 2017 – IRREPLACABLE

Whatever you may think of President Trump, it is an unalloyed pleasure to have someone in the Oval Office who does not hide his thoughts. We can hope his tweets never get staff sanitized. Think back to his passive aggressive predecessor who tried to disguise his animus towards Israel until the very end of his term. And likewise his dislike of Great Britain, which while never spoken, was obvious if you were willing to look beyond the smiling face. The latter displayed his faculty lounge ignorance of the historic contributions of the British anti-slavery movement led by William Wilberforce at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. For thousands of years of human history slavery was ubiquitous worldwide. And yet in 40 years, history's proverbial blink of an eye, it was halted in the large part of the world touched by British power.

Today's post examines the unprecedented attacks on the country's president; including calls for his assassination. Donald Trump looks like he has the courage and cojones to withstand this withering fire from the Left. Since *Pickings* trashed Trump early on in the campaign it is startling to realize he has become the irreplaceable president because no other politician in recent memory could withstand this unrestrained, and at times, unhinged aggression. [Victor Davis Hanson](#) provides an overview of the assault on Trump.

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Trump-Removal Chic

The elite efforts to emasculate the president have sometimes taken on an eerie turn. The publisher-editor of the German weekly magazine Zeit raised the topic on German television of killing Trump to end the "Trump catastrophe." So did British Sunday Times columnist India Knight, who tweeted, "The assassination is taking such a long time." A former Obama Pentagon official, Rosa Brooks, recently mused about theoretical ways to remove Trump, including a military coup, should other avenues such as impeachment or medically forced removal fail: "The fourth possibility is one that until recently I would have said was unthinkable in the United States of America: a military coup, or at least a refusal by military leaders to obey certain orders." ...

... Nor is the Trump family immune from constant attack. Daughter Ivanka Trump was recently cornered on an airline flight, while traveling with her three young children three days before Christmas, and bullied by a screaming activist passenger. Her private fashion business is the target of a national progressive-orchestrated boycott. Celebrities and writers have attacked Trump's eleven-year-old son Barron as a sociopath-to-be or as a boy trapped in an autistic

bubble. First Lady Melania Trump sued the Daily Mail after it trafficked in reports that she had once been a paid escort — a lie that was recently recirculated by a New York Times reporter.

Trump advisers Steve Bannon and Sebastian Gorka are routinely smeared as anti-Semites and fascists. One Trump critic berated Gorka as a Nazi sympathizer for wearing a commemorative medal once awarded his father for his role in the resistance to the Communist takeover of Hungary. ...

... Compared with Obama in 2009, at the same point in his young administration, Trump has issued about the same number of executive orders. For all his war on the press, Trump has so far not ordered wiretaps on any reporter on the grounds that he is a “criminal co-conspirator,” nor has he gone after the phone records of the Associated Press — Barack Obama’s Justice Department did both, to little notice in the media.

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For a good example of media bias, [Matthew Continetti](#) writes on the coverage of the opposition to Betsy DeVos. The fact that politicians against DeVos were bought and paid for by teacher's unions is barely mentioned.

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Even I, your humble Mediocracy columnist, am occasionally surprised at the one-sidedness of media coverage. On the day DeVos was confirmed, I clicked on a story in the Washington Post with the headline, “The DeVos vote is a bad case study for the power of campaign contributions.” The headline struck me as completely backward—if anything, the vote is a classic case study of the power of campaign contributions, since all of the senators opposing DeVos, including the two Republicans, are on the take from the unions. But, incredibly, Philip

Bump's article did not contain a single mention of the word "union," and instead focused solely on DeVos's contributions to Republican senators. I thought the omission absurd, an example of horrible journalism, and said so on Twitter.

"Dude," replied a colleague. "It's the Post."

Washington Examiner with another example of fake news.
Reporters have done it again.

The latest media misfire on the Trump administration involves Ibtihaj Muhammad, a New Jersey native who made headlines last year when she became the first female Muslim-American to win an Olympic medal for the United States.

Muhammad, a lifelong American citizen, claimed in an interview last week that she was detained "just a few weeks ago" by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents. She said she was held for two hours without explanation.

Her remarks on Feb. 7 earned her an entire news cycle, as several journalists ran with reports suggesting, and alleging outright, that the American Olympian had been ensnared in the president's executive order temporarily barring immigration from seven Middle Eastern countries.

But Muhammad has since clarified crucial parts of her story, including the date on which she was detained. A Customs official with direct knowledge of the incident has also disputed much of how she characterized what happened. ...

... The problem with this particular news cycle is that Muhammad was detained in 2016, weeks before Trump had even been sworn in as America's 45th president. ...

... Before we go, a few points bear further discussion, and none of them reflect well on Muhammad or the press.

First, it's mind-boggling that no one in that room on Feb. 7 thought to ask her for the exact date on which she was detained. It's a basic duty of journalism to get the who, what, where, when, why and how to every story. That Muhammad's interviewers didn't think to pursue the "when" is astounding.

Secondly, Muhammad isn't blameless in all of this. A less-than-charitable person would suspect her of being intentionally vague and imprecise. She was asked a simple "yes or no" question about the president's immigration order. Instead of giving a simple answer, she provided an anecdote involving the very misleading use of "just a few weeks ago." ...

WSJ OpEd says Eric Hoffer saw Trump coming almost 50 years ago.

"Scratch an intellectual, and you find a would-be aristocrat who loathes the sight, the sound and the smell of common folk." Those words might have been written last year, as an explanation for Donald Trump's rise or a rejoinder to Hillary Clinton's denunciation of "deplorables."

In fact they were published in November 1970 and written by Eric Hoffer, the "longshoreman philosopher," who was best known for his slender 1951 classic, "The True Believer: Thoughts on the nature of Mass Movements." The 1970 essay, under the headline "Whose Country Is America?," eerily anticipated not only the political events of 2016 but the tone and language of last year's campaign and the anti-Trump hysteria since Election Day.

Hoffer started his analysis with "the conspicuousness of the young"—that is, the baby boomers. "They have become more flamboyant, more demanding, more violent, more knowledgeable and more experienced," he wrote. "The general impression is that nowadays the young act like the spoiled children of the rich."

He attributed those developments to the "ordeal of affluence," which threatened social stability. Wealth without work "creates a climate of disintegrating values with its fallout of anarchy." Among the poor this takes the form of street crime; among the affluent, of "insolence on the campus"—both "sick forms of adolescent self-assertion." ...

We opened today with Victor Davis Hanson and he will be the close as he writes on the laws of unintended consequences.

The classical idea of a divine Nemesis ("reckoning" or "downfall") that brings unforeseen retribution for hubris (insolence and arrogance) was a recognition that there are certain laws of the universe that operated independently of human concerns.

Call Nemesis a goddess. But it was also simply an empirical observation about collective and predictable human behavior: Excess invites unexpected correction.

Something like hubris incurring Nemesis is now following the frenzied progressive effort to nullify the Trump presidency.

Fake News

"Fake news" was a term the Left invented to describe the ancient practice of propaganda (updated in the Internet age to drive Web traffic). They applied it to the supposed Russian habit of planting international news stories to affect Western elections, and in particular Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency and his tendencies to exaggerate and massage the truth.

But once the term caught on in our faddish age, who were the more appropriate media fakers? Fake news now serves as a sort of linguistic canary to remind the public that it is customarily saturated with a lethal gas of media disinformation.

Thus "fake news" seemed a proper if belated summation and clarification of years of liberal bias in the media that were supposed to be our custodian of the truth.

Were NBC anchor Brian Williams's fantasies fake news? Were Dan Rather's "fake but accurate" Rathergate memos? How about the party line circulated in JournoList or the Washington and New York reporters who colluded to massage the news to favor the Clinton campaign, as revealed in the Podesta WikiLeaks trove? Was jailing a video maker part of an Obama-

administration fake-news attempt to blame Benghazi deaths on a spontaneous riot? Was the Iran Deal's "echo chamber," about which Ben Rhodes later bragged, the epitome of fake news?

Thank the Left, because suddenly the term "fake news" is becoming a common description of the media's effort to suggest that Trump once went to Moscow to frolic with prostitutes, that his lawyer met Russians in Prague, that he removed Martin Luther King's bust from the Oval Office, that he was going to employ "100,000" guardsmen to enforce immigration law, or that he wished to invade Mexico.

The once liberal invention of the term "fake news" now mostly refers to media efforts by leftists to warp the Trump presidency; to progressive media celebrities who have been caught lying, colluding, or plagiarizing; and to the cohort of unapologetically left-wing journalists who, in the words of Obama White House operative Ben Rhodes, "know nothing" and thus are easily manipulated by their progressive political puppeteers. ...

National Review

Seven Days in February

Trumps' critics, left and right, aim to bring about the cataclysm they predicted.

by Victor Davis Hanson

A 1964 political melodrama, *Seven Days in May*, envisioned a futuristic (1970s) failed military cabal that sought to sideline the president of the United States over his proposed nuclear-disarmament treaty with the Soviets.

Something far less dramatic but perhaps as disturbing as Hollywood fiction played out this February.

The Teeth-Gnashing of Deep Government

Currently, the political and media opponents of Donald Trump are seeking to subvert his presidency in a manner unprecedented in the recent history of American politics. The so-called resistance among EPA federal employees is trying to disrupt Trump administration reform; immigration activists promise to flood the judiciary to render executive orders inoperative.

Intelligence agencies had earlier leaked fake news briefings about the purported escapades of President-elect Trump in Moscow — stories that were quickly exposed as politically driven concoctions. Nearly one-third of House Democrats boycotted the Inauguration. Celebrities such as Ashley Judd and Madonna shouted obscenities to crowds of protesters; Madonna voiced her dreams of Trump's death by saying she'd been thinking a lot about blowing up the White House.

But all that pushback was merely the clownish preliminary to the full-fledged assault in mid February.

Career intelligence officers leaked their own transcripts of a phone call that National Security Advisor–designate Michael Flynn had made to a Russian official.

The media charge against Flynn was that he had nefariously talked to higher-ups in Russia before he took office. Obama-administration officials did much the same, before Inauguration Day 2009, and spoke with Syrian, Iranian, and Russian counterparts. But they faced no interference from the outgoing Bush administration.

No doubt the designated security officials of most incoming administrations do not wait until being sworn in to sound out foreign officials. Most plan to reset the policies of their predecessors. The question, then, arises: Why were former Obama-administration appointees or careerist officials tapping the phone calls of an incoming Trump designate (and Trump himself?) and then leaking the tapes to their pets in the press? For what purpose?

Indeed, Trump's own proposed outreach to Russia so far is not quite of the magnitude of Obama's in 2009, when the State Department staged the red-reset-button event to appease Putin; at the time, Russia was getting set to swallow the Crimea and all but absorb Eastern Ukraine. Trump certainly did not approve the sale of some 20 percent of North American uranium holdings to Russian interests, in the quid pro quo fashion that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did, apparently in concert with Bill Clinton and the Clinton Foundation — and to general indifference of both the press and the intelligence community.

In addition, the *Wall Street Journal* reported last week that career intelligence officers have decided to withhold information from the president, on the apparent premise that he is unfit, in their view, to receive it. If true, that disclosure would mean that elements of the federal government are now actively opposing the duly elected president of the United States. That chilling assessment gains credence from the likelihood that the president's private calls to Mexican and Australian heads of state were likewise recorded, and selected segments were leaked to suggest that Trump was either trigger-happy or a buffoon.

Oddly, in early January, Senator Charles Schumer had essentially warned Trump that he would pay for his criticism of career intelligence officials. In an astounding shot across his bow, which was followed up by an onslaught in February, Schumer said: "Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you. . . . So even for a practical, supposedly hard-nosed businessman, he's being really dumb to do this."

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The elite efforts to emasculate the president have sometimes taken on an eerie turn. The publisher-editor of the German weekly magazine *Zeit* raised the topic on German television of killing Trump to end the "Trump catastrophe." So did British *Sunday Times* columnist India Knight, who tweeted, "The assassination is taking such a long time." A former Obama Pentagon official, Rosa Brooks, recently mused about theoretical ways to remove Trump, including a military coup, should other avenues such as impeachment or medically forced removal fail: "The fourth possibility is one that until recently I would have said was unthinkable in the United States of America: a military coup, or at least a refusal by military leaders to obey certain orders."

The Atlantic now darkly warns that Trump is trying to create an autocracy. Former *Weekly Standard* editor in chief Bill Kristol suggested in a tweet that if he faced a choice (and under what surreal circumstances would that happen?) between the constitutionally, democratically elected president and career government officials' efforts to thwart or remove him, he would come down on the side of the revolutionary, anti-democratic "deep state": "Obviously strongly prefer normal democratic and constitutional politics. But *if it comes to it* [emphasis added], prefer the deep state to the Trump state." No doubt some readers interpreted that as a call to side with anti-constitutional forces against an elected U.S. president.

Hollywood stars such as Meryl Streep equate the president with brownshirts and assorted fascists. A CNN reporter announced that Trump was Hitlerian; another mused about his plane's crashing. Prominent conservative legal scholar Richard Epstein recently called for Trump to resign after less than a month in office, largely on grounds that Trump's rhetoric is unbridled and indiscreet — although Epstein cited no indictable or impeachable offenses that would justify the dispatch of a constitutionally elected president. Earlier, Republican columnists David Frum and Jennifer Rubin had theorized that the 25th Amendment might provide a way to remove Trump from office as unfit to serve. *The New Republic* published an unfounded theory, based on no empirical evidence, alleging that Trump suffers from neurosyphilis and thus is mentally not up to his office.

Former president Barack Obama — quite unlike prior presidents Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush, who all refrained from attacking their successors — is now reportedly ready to join the efforts of a well-funded political action committee to undermine the Trump presidency.

The Police Need Policing

Fake news proliferates. House minority leader Nancy Pelosi and Representative Elijah Cummings recently attacked departing national-security advisor Michael Flynn by reading a supposed Flynn tweet that was a pure invention. Nor did Trump, as reported, have a serious plan to mobilize "100,000" National Guard troops to enforce deportations.

Other false stories claimed that Trump had pondered invading Mexico, that his lawyer had gone to Prague to meet with the Russians, and that he had removed from the Oval Office a bust of Martin Luther King Jr. — sure proof of Trump's racism. Journalists — including even "fact-checker" Glenn Kessler of the *Washington Post* — reposted fake news reports that Trump's father had run a campaign for the New York mayorship during which he'd aired racist TV ads.

Nor is the Trump family immune from constant attack. Daughter Ivanka Trump was recently cornered on an airline flight, while traveling with her three young children three days before Christmas, and bullied by a screaming activist passenger. Her private fashion business is the target of a national progressive-orchestrated boycott. Celebrities and writers have attacked Trump's eleven-year-old son Barron as a sociopath-to-be or as a boy trapped in an autistic bubble. First Lady Melania Trump sued the *Daily Mail* after it trafficked in reports that she had once been a paid escort — a lie that was recently recirculated by a *New York Times* reporter.

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What has the often boisterous Trump done in his first month to earn calls for his death, forced removal, or resignation?

Dangerous Style or Substance?

The stock market is reaching all-time highs. Polls show business optimism rising. The Rasmussen poll puts Trump's approval rating at 55 percent.

Compared with Obama in 2009, at the same point in his young administration, Trump has issued about the same number of executive orders. For all his war on the press, Trump has so far not ordered wiretaps on any reporter on the grounds that he is a "criminal co-conspirator," nor has he gone after the phone records of the Associated Press — Barack Obama's Justice Department did both, to little notice in the media.

Trump's edicts are mostly common-sense and non-controversial: green-lighting the Keystone and Dakota pipelines, freezing federal hiring, resuming work on a previously approved wall along the Mexican border, prohibiting retiring federal officials from lobbying activity for five years, and pruning away regulations.

His promises to deport illegal aliens with past records of criminal activity or gang affiliation have, by design, sidestepped so-called dreamers and the illegal aliens who are currently working, without criminal backgrounds, and with some record of lengthy residence.

In his executive order to temporarily suspend immigration from seven war-torn Middle East states, Trump channeled Barack Obama's prior targeting of immigration trouble spots. At first, Trump's order was poorly worded and clumsily ushered in; then it was reformulated. It is supported by the public but nonetheless earned a hysterical response from federal judges who seemed to invent new jurisprudence stating that foreign nationals abroad enjoy U.S. constitutional protections.

On more substantive reforms, such as repealing Obamacare, reforming the tax code, and rebuilding infrastructure, Trump awaits proposed legislation from the Republican congressional majority. By all accounts, Trump's initial meetings or phone calls with British, Israeli, Japanese, and Russian heads of states have gone well.

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Clearly in empirical terms, nothing that Trump in his first month in office has done seems to have justified calls for violence against his person or his removal from office. What then accounts for the unprecedented venom?

1) As we saw from his recent free-wheeling press conference, Trump's loud, take-no-prisoners style is certainly anti-Washington, anti-media, anti-elite, and anti-liberal. He often unsettles reporters with bombast and invective, when most are accustomed to dealing with career politicians or fellow liberal officeholders who share their same beliefs. As part of Trump's art-of-the-deal tactics, he often blusters, rails, and asks for three times what he might eventually settle for, on the expectation that critics of his style will be soon silenced by the undeniable upside of his eventual achievements. This is a long-term strategy that in the short term allows journalists

to fault the present means rather than the future ends. Trump's unconventional bluster, not his record so far, fuels the animosity of elites who seek to delegitimize him and fear that their reputations and careers can be rendered irrelevant by his roughshod populism. He also has reminded the country that some of the mainstream media and Washington–New York elite are often mediocre and boring.

2) The Democratic party has been absorbed by its left wing and is beginning to resemble the impotent British Labour party. Certainly it no longer is a national party. Mostly it's a local and municipal coastal force, galvanized to promote a race and gender agenda and opposed to conservatism yet without a pragmatic alternative vision. Its dilemma is largely due to the personal success but presidential failure of Barack Obama, who moved the party leftward and yet bequeathed an electoral matrix that will deprive future national candidates of swing-state constituencies without compensating for that downside with massive minority turnouts, which were unique to Obama's candidacy. The Democratic party bites its tail in endless paroxysms of electoral frustration — given that the medicine of broadening support to win back the white poor and working classes is deemed worse than the disease of losing the state governorships and legislatures, the Congress, the presidency, and the Supreme Court.

3) Usually conservative pundits and journalists would push back against this extraordinary effort to delegitimize a Republican president. But due to a year of Never Trump politicking and opposition, and Trump's own in-your-face, unorthodox style and grating temperament, hundreds of Republican intellectuals and journalists, former officeholders and current politicians — who shared a common belief that Trump had no chance of winning and thus could be safely written off — find themselves without influence in either the White House or indeed in their own party, over 90 percent of which voted for Trump. In other words, the Right ruling class is still in a civil war of sorts.

For some, the best pathway to redemption is apparently to criticize Trump to such an extent that their prior prophecies of his preordained failure in the election will be partially redeemed by an imploding presidency. It is no accident that many of those calling for his resignation or removal are frustrated that, for the first time in a generation, they will have no influence in a Republican administration or indeed among most Republicans. Yet, in private, they accept that Trump's actual appointments, executive orders, and announced policies are mostly orthodox conservative — a fact that was supposed to have been impossible.

4) Since 2000, what might have been seen as irrational and abnormal has become institutionalized and commonplace: record U.S. debt approaching \$20 trillion, chronic trade deficits, an often destructive globalization, Hoover-era anemic economic growth, polarizing racial identity politics, open borders, steady growth in the size of government, sanctuary cities, unmet NATO obligations abroad, crumbling faith that the European Union is sustainable and democratic, and a gradual symbiosis between the two parties, both of which ignored the working classes as either demographically doomed or as a spent force of deplorables and irredeemables (or both).

Trump's efforts to return politics to the center — enforce existing laws, complete previously approved projects, rein in government regulations and growth, recalibrate U.S. alliances to reflect current realities, unapologetically side with friends and punish enemies — were viewed as revolutionary rather than as a return to conventionality, in part because they threatened status quo careers and commerce. Trumpism is more or less akin to the Gingrich-Clinton compromises of the early 1990s or to what Reagan often *did* rather than what he sometimes said. But what was then bipartisan and centrist today appears revolutionary and nihilistic.

For now, chic Trump hatred and sick talks of coups — or worse — hinge on economic growth. If Trump's agenda hits 3 percent GDP growth or above by 2018, then his critics — progressive shock troops, Democratic grandees, mainstream media, Never Trump Republicans — will either shift strategies or face prolonged irrelevance.

But for now, ending Trump one way or another is apparently the tortured pathway his critics are taking to exit their self-created labyrinth of irrelevance.

NRO contributor Victor Davis Hanson is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the author, most recently, of [The Savior Generals](#).

Commentary

[The Media Wouldn't Look for the Union Label](#)

by Matthew Continetti

On February 7, for the first time in U.S. history, a vice president cast the tie-breaking vote to approve a Cabinet nominee. All 48 Democrats opposed the nomination, as did two Republicans. The defection of another Republican would have scuttled the appointment altogether. Surely, you say, such a polarized outcome must have been related to a Cabinet agency of the highest importance—Treasury, for example, or State, or Justice, or Defense. And surely the nominee's performance before the Senate must have been excruciatingly bad; worse even than the disastrous 2013 hearing of former secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who was nevertheless confirmed by a vote of 58 to 41.

Sorry to disappoint. The agency in question was the Department of Education, which Republicans have sought to abolish since it was founded in 1979. And the nominee was Betsy DeVos, the Michigan billionaire, philanthropist, and advocate of school choice. DeVos might not have had the strongest confirmation hearing, but it was by no means Chernobyl. There's got to be another explanation for the ferocious and unhinged opposition to her. "You'd expect everybody would be focused on the proposed budget director who wants to cut Social Security and failed to pay taxes on his babysitter's salary," wrote *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins, in one of her rare moments of semi-lucidity.

Well, you would expect that, Gail. But then you'd remember that the two largest teachers unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), spent about \$32 million in the last election, practically all of it in donations to Democratic candidates and liberal outside groups. The object of this spending is not a mystery: to maintain the union stranglehold over the public-school system, to resist accountability and changes to teacher tenure, to boost federal spending on education, and to prevent taxpayer dollars that otherwise would benefit unions from going to voucher programs or charter schools. DeVos is opposed to this agenda, and the president who nominated her wants to spend \$20 billion to expand school choice in all 50 states. So the stakes are obvious. For most of us, the DeVos nomination was an opportunity to debate education policy. For the teachers unions, it was an existential crisis.

Yet unions played but a minuscule part in the coverage of DeVos. They were mentioned, of course; it would be hard to ignore them completely. Overall, though, the press was far more interested in DeVos herself than in the forces opposing her. She became the latest in a long line

of conservative women to be caricatured as an unqualified, Bible-thumping ditz. Her perfectly mainstream, even conventional views on education were portrayed as fringe. She was among the Cabinet picks that "portend a shift far to right," according to a *New York Times* headline writer, which must have been news to Democrat Eva Moskowitz, founder of Success Academy charter schools and a DeVos supporter.

Through no fault of her own DeVos became the emblem of a Nietzschean, out-of-control donor class that reshapes public policy with little democratic accountability. "How Trump's Education Nominee Bent Detroit to Her Will on Charter Schools," read another *Times* headline. Still another read: "Betsy DeVos, Trump's Education Pick, Plays Hardball With Her Wealth." Unlike those nice teachers unions and their billions of dollars in mandatory dues. They play softball.

Reading the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, I came across nary a mention of why the unions might be opposing DeVos, what they stood to lose if she ran the department over which they have long exercised control. The *Post* did have one piece—"Teachers unions mount campaign against Betsy DeVos, Trump's education pick"—that went into some detail, but only some. While reporter Emma Brown noted that the unions face "a prospective education secretary with whom they could not have less in common," she more or less took dictation from National Education Association President Randi Weingarten and quoted liberally from the text of a speech Weingarten delivered opposing DeVos. By contrast, the piece had no fresh comment from DeVos, her team, or from school-choice and charter supporters. So even when the *Post* delved into the unions, it was for purposes of propaganda.

The degree to which journalists relied on the unions for material was illustrated by the oft-repeated claim that Detroit's charter schools perform no better than its public ones. *New York Times* education correspondent Kate Zernike, known for her hostile coverage of the Tea Party, made the assertion frequently. But it was false; Zernike had made the mistake of comparing median numbers with average numbers. "Essentially," wrote Max Eden of the Manhattan Institute in one of the best sentences I read this month, "Zernike took a basket of apples, pulled out the rotten ones, kept the genetically modified ones, made statistically weighted applesauce, and plopped that applesauce in the middle of a row of organic oranges. Then she drew a false conclusion that's become central to the case against Betsy DeVos's nomination for secretary of education." But look, who's counting? It's Betsy DeVos we're talking about—she thinks rural schools might need guns to protect against *grizzly bears*. The rube.

The atrocious coverage of DeVos troubled education blogger Alexander Russo, who wrote an item for the *Phi Delta Kappan* lamenting the fact that established publications "have cherry-picked storylines that put DeVos in a negative light and written about DeVos's ideas and efforts using fraught, charged language." This development surprised Russo, because "right after the presidential election, mainstream journalism went through an intense period of self-reflection and decided—among many things—that reporters and editors should try to check their liberal biases at the door and do a better job of covering people who weren't like them." Clearly Russo was hallucinating when he wrote those words, because the only period of intense self-reflection journalists went through after the election is when they decided to be even more antagonistic and hysterical in their treatment of Donald Trump.

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Washington Examiner

[More mainstream media mess-ups: The Muslim Olympian 'detained because of President Trump's travel ban' was detained under Obama](#)

by T. Becket Adams

Reporters have done it again.

The latest media misfire on the Trump administration involves Ibtihaj Muhammad, a New Jersey native who made headlines last year when she became the first female Muslim-American to win an Olympic medal for the United States.

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But Muhammad has since clarified crucial parts of her story, including the date on which she was detained. A Customs official with direct knowledge of the incident has also disputed much of how she characterized what happened.

"She comes and goes many times. She travels quite extensively. She has never been stopped before," the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Monday in an interview with the *Washington Examiner*, confirming that she was indeed detained. "She wasn't targeted. The checks are totally random; random checks that we all might be subject to."

Muhammad was also not held for two hours, he said, adding that the entire ordeal wrapped up in under an hour.

It's important to recognize from the get-go that in her Feb. 7 interview, Muhammad didn't put a hard date on when she was detained by Customs. It's also probably worth noting that she is an outspoken Trump critic, and that she is extremely displeased with his immigration order.

Here's a transcript of what the Olympian told [Popsugar's Lindsay Miller](#) about being detained by Customs [emphasis added]:

Popsugar: Do you know anyone who was directly impacted by Trump's travel ban? □ □

Ibtihaj Muhammad: Well, I personally was held at Customs for two hours just a few weeks ago. I don't know why. I can't tell you why it happened to me, but I know that I'm Muslim. I have an Arabic name. And even though I represent Team USA and I have that Olympic hardware, it doesn't change how you look and how people perceive you. □□ Unfortunately, I know that people talk about this having a lot to do with these seven countries in particular, but I think the net is cast a little bit wider than we know. And I'm included in that as a Muslim woman who wears a hijab.

Many journalists skipped over the "when" of Muhammad's story, and rushed to publish reports tying her story to the president's immigration order.

"Olympic athlete Ibtihaj Muhammad was detained because of President Trump's travel ban," read a headline published by Time magazine's Motto.

The U.K.'s Independent went with a story titled, "US Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad says she was detained by Customs after Donald Trump's 'Muslim ban.'

The Daily Mail said of the incident that it, "comes after Donald Trump signed an executive order – currently suspended – banning travel from seven largely Muslim countries causing chaos in US airports."

"U.S. Olympian Ibtihaj Muhammad being detained illustrates why Trump's Muslim ban is not who we are as Americans," read the headline to an article published by the New York Daily News.

The Hill published an article whose opening paragraph read, "A Muslim-American Olympic medalist says she was detained by Customs for nearly two hours without explanation after President Trump's travel ban was instituted a few weeks ago."

Sports Illustrated and ESPN published stories whose entire purpose was to tie Muhammad's Customs tale to Trump's immigration order, though the reports don't come right out and say it.

Journalists reacted to the story on social media with the usual mixture of despair and outrage.

The problem with this particular news cycle is that Muhammad was detained in 2016, weeks before Trump had even been sworn in as America's 45th president.

"This all happened in December, which was well before any executive order," the Customs official told the *Examiner*, "which is a totally separate incident."

Muhammad herself noted several days after her Feb. 7 interview that she meant last December 2016 when she said "just a few weeks ago."

"Thanks to all who reached out regarding the December incident at customs. I will continue be a voice for all impacted by profiling & bigotry," she said in a tweet on Feb. 11.

Let's pause now to review some quick facts:

- Barack Obama was still president in December 2016, meaning Muhammad was detained under America's 44th commander in chief. □□- Trump was sworn into office on Jan. 20. □□- The executive order on immigration was signed into law on Jan. 27.

To put it plainly, reports suggesting, and alleging, that the executive order had ensnared an American champion are totally false.

Before we go, a few points bear further discussion, and none of them reflect well on Muhammad or the press.

First, it's mind-boggling that no one in that room on Feb. 7 thought to ask her for the exact date on which she was detained. It's a basic duty of journalism to get the who, what, where, when, why and how to every story. That Muhammad's interviewers didn't think to pursue the "when" is astounding.

Secondly, Muhammad isn't blameless in all of this. A less-than-charitable person would suspect her of being intentionally vague and imprecise. She was asked a simple "yes or no" question about the president's immigration order. Instead of giving a simple answer, she provided an anecdote involving the very misleading use of "just a few weeks ago."

Her follow up remarks in that interview are also suggestive. Here's the next part of the transcript:

PS: That must have been a scary moment for you. □□IM: It's really hard. My human response is to cry because I was so sad and upset and disheartened — and just disappointed. At the same time, I'm one of those people who feels like I have to be strong for those people who may not be able to find that strength. □□I feel like I have to speak up for those people whose voices go unheard. It was a really hard two hours, but at the same time, I made it home. I try to remember to be positive and to try to leave all these situations, even if they may be very difficult, with love. I think that we will come out on top as women, as people of color, as Muslims, as transgender people, as people who are part of the disabled community — I think that we'll come out on top.

Muhammad, who did not respond to the *Examiner's* request for comment, did no one any favors with her language. Her remarks seemed to suggest her detainment had something to do with the president's executive order. Based on the press' coverage of her comments, many reporters clearly took that to be her meaning.

Lastly, the biggest problem with this particular news cycle is that so many reporters took Muhammad at her word. Few attempted to corroborate her story with Customs. That much is evident from the fact that several journalists thought the incident occurred post-Jan. 27.

In short, this entire news cycle is the result of reporters rushing to fill in the blanks in vague remarks made by a Muslim woman who, they thought, had been affected by the president's immigration executive order. They thought wrong.

"We were surprised and disturbed when we saw the story," the Customs official said. "We didn't mistreat her. We're very proud of what she has done."

Wall Street Journal

The 'Longshoreman Philosopher' Saw Trump Coming in 1970

Eric Hoffer anticipated the tone and language of last year's campaign and the postelection hysteria.

by Reuven Brenner

"Scratch an intellectual, and you find a would-be aristocrat who loathes the sight, the sound and the smell of common folk." Those words might have been written last year, as an explanation for Donald Trump's rise or a rejoinder to Hillary Clinton's denunciation of "deplorables."

In fact they were published in November 1970 and written by Eric Hoffer, the "longshoreman philosopher," who was best known for his slender 1951 classic, "The True Believer: Thoughts on the nature of Mass Movements." The 1970 essay, under the headline "Whose Country Is America?," eerily anticipated not only the political events of 2016 but the tone and language of last year's campaign and the anti-Trump hysteria since Election Day.

Hoffer started his analysis with "the conspicuousness of the young"—that is, the baby boomers. "They have become more flamboyant, more demanding, more violent, more knowledgeable and more experienced," he wrote. "The general impression is that nowadays the young act like the spoiled children of the rich."

He attributed those developments to the "ordeal of affluence," which threatened social stability. Wealth without work "creates a climate of disintegrating values with its fallout of anarchy." Among the poor this takes the form of street crime; among the affluent, of "insolence on the campus"—both "sick forms of adolescent self-assertion." As a result, "'men of words' and charismatic leaders—people who deal with magic—come into their own," while "the middle class, lacking magic, is bungling the job" of maintaining social order.

The "phenomenal increase of the student population"—enrollment in colleges and universities would more than triple between 1958 and 1978—created a critical mass: "For the first time in America, there is a chance that alienated intellectuals, who see our way of life as an instrument of debasement and dehumanization, might shape a new generation in their own image."

The problem for society is "that the alienated intellectual does not want to be left alone," Hoffer wrote. "He wants to influence affairs, have a hand in making history, and feel important." The country continued to be plagued by problems "like race relations, violence, drugs." Common people, however, "know that at present money cannot cure crime, poverty, etc., whereas the social doctors go on prescribing an injection of so many billions for every social ailment."

No historian, political scientist or journalist of the past 60 years has predicted the current moment with such accuracy. Others should have. Behind Hoffer's analysis is a view of history that dates to ancient Greece, especially to the historian Polybius. It's a warning that affluence condemns younger generations to political decline unless institutional checks and balances, combined with education for civic responsibility, are rigorously preserved.

The Founding Fathers were mindful of that danger. The checks and balances they devised were designed to avert long-term decline, not merely short-term abuses of power. John Adams devoted a chapter in "A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America" to Polybius' discussion of the theme. During the Constitutional Convention, Alexander Hamilton drew on this view too. At one point Benjamin Franklin expressed frustration that the convention had diverted too much into debates about Greek classics.

What finally upset the delicate balance that the Founders had set? Polybius left a place in world affairs to Tyche, the goddess of chance. Not for the first time in history, demographic change played that role. Whether the shock of the Trump election will yield a rebalancing or a further unsettling, time will tell.

In the less stratified America of 1970, the combination of Hoffer's erudition and his aversion to elitism was not as unusual as it seems today. Even John F. Kennedy had been skeptical of intellectuals. Arthur Schlesinger noted that JFK had "considerable respect for the experience of businessmen," which "gave them clues to the operations of the American economy which his intellectuals, for all their facile theories, did not possess."

Hoffer concluded: "We must deflate the pretensions of self-appointed elites. These elites will hate us no matter what we do, and it is legitimate for us to help dump them into the dustbin of history." Most surprising today may be where this sentiment appeared—in the pages of the New York Times.

Mr. Brenner is a professor at McGill University and author of "History: The Human Gamble" (1983) and "The Force of Finance: Triumph of the Capital Markets" (2002).

National Review

The Ancient Laws of Unintended Consequences

Eight years of a fawning press have made the Left reckless.

by Victor Davis Hanson

The classical idea of a divine Nemesis ("reckoning" or "downfall") that brings unforeseen retribution for hubris (insolence and arrogance) was a recognition that there are certain laws of the universe that operated independently of human concerns.

Call Nemesis a goddess. But it was also simply an empirical observation about collective and predictable human behavior: Excess invites unexpected correction.

Something like hubris incurring Nemesis is now following the frenzied progressive effort to nullify the Trump presidency.

Fake News

“Fake news” was a term the Left invented to describe the ancient practice of propaganda (updated in the Internet age to drive Web traffic). They applied it to the supposed Russian habit of planting international news stories to affect Western elections, and in particular Donald Trump’s campaign for the presidency and his tendencies to exaggerate and massage the truth.

But once the term caught on in our faddish age, who were the more appropriate media fakers? Fake news now serves as a sort of linguistic canary to remind the public that it is customarily saturated with a lethal gas of media disinformation.

Thus “fake news” seemed a proper if belated summation and clarification of years of liberal bias in the media that were supposed to be our custodian of the truth.

Were NBC anchor Brian Williams’s fantasies fake news? Were Dan Rather’s “fake but accurate” Rathergate memos? How about the party line circulated in JournoList or the Washington and New York reporters who colluded to massage the news to favor the Clinton campaign, as revealed in the Podesta WikiLeaks trove? Was jailing a video maker part of an Obama-administration fake-news attempt to blame Benghazi deaths on a spontaneous riot? Was the Iran Deal’s “echo chamber,” about which Ben Rhodes later bragged, the epitome of fake news?

Thank the Left, because suddenly the term “fake news” is becoming a common description of the media’s effort to suggest that Trump once went to Moscow to frolic with prostitutes, that his lawyer met Russians in Prague, that he removed Martin Luther King’s bust from the Oval Office, that he was going to employ “100,000” guardsmen to enforce immigration law, or that he wished to invade Mexico.

The once liberal invention of the term “fake news” now mostly refers to media efforts by leftists to warp the Trump presidency; to progressive media celebrities who have been caught lying, colluding, or plagiarizing; and to the cohort of unapologetically left-wing journalists who, in the words of Obama White House operative Ben Rhodes, “know nothing” and thus are easily manipulated by their progressive political puppeteers.

Fake Crimes?

Is “fake news” also the proper description for nonfactual accounts of “hate crimes,” an increasingly percentage of which prove to be pure inventions (at the University of Louisiana, in North Carolina, in Santa Monica, etc.) fabricated to accord the “victim” media attention, compensation, or sympathy?

Or does “fake news” define the supposed epidemic of campus sexual assault, which in all too many cases involves the university’s suspension of due process and constitutional guarantees for the male accused — who is sometimes accused because he engaged in consensual sexual relations with a female student and then socially rejected her, or because he failed to stay

monogamous? In other words, “sexual assault” is now redefined down to the crime of unenjoyable sexual congress, or of males proving post facto to be insincere lotharios or unreceptive cads.

Illegal Immigration Really Is Illegality

Illegal immigration offers another Nemesis moment. Media outrage now surrounds almost every effort by ICE authorities to detain an illegal alien on deportation lists compiled during the Obama administration. Activists, Democratic politicians, and Mexico itself allege that the Trump administration is hounding the blameless, as if there were neither immigration law nor a concept of deportation for violations of it.

But usually in every media report of a victimized illegal alien, one also finds buried incidental information showing that the detainee had previously been convicted for such crimes as drunk driving, or had engaged in voting fraud, or had committed identity theft or falsified a government document, or had failed to show up for a prior deportation hearing.

All that the progressive frenzy over deportation seems to be doing is drawing attention to the quite surprising number of foreign guests who continue to live here illegally even though they have prior criminal convictions. How odd that the public is now learning that the Left apparently sees identity theft as a minor matter for illegal aliens, though a serious one for citizens. And how strange to witness entitled guests showing outrage at the possibility that they might not be allowed to enter and reside in the U.S. illegally and then commit crimes without having to worry about endangering their already illegal-resident status.

The Russian Can of Worms

In the latter months of the 2016 campaign, the Clinton team floated the narrative that Trump was colluding with Russian president Vladimir Putin, who in turn was engineering leaks to increase Trump’s unlikely chance of becoming president.

At first, alleging Russian collusion with Trump was a strange strategy, given that Hillary Clinton herself, as the primary agent for the Obama-administration outreach to Putin, had pushed the red Russian reset button in Geneva. And it was quite an outreach: the shelving of long-established plans to build missile-defense shields in Eastern Europe, the open-mic promise by Obama to be more flexible with Putin after Obama’s reelection, the anemic response to the de facto annexation of the Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the constant trashing of the Bush administration as too harsh on Russia, and the ridicule showered on Mitt Romney for his supposed naïveté in naming Russia as America’s “Number One geopolitical foe.” In addition, the Trump plans of encouraging domestic oil production, updating strategic weapons, and beefing up the defense budget were not agendas conducive to Russian interests. Their Obama antitheses were.

In addition, while the media and progressives were floating the Trump-Russian connection, it was also clear that there were all sorts of shady elements to the story that would not appear favorable to either Clinton or Obama — from the Uranium One mess, which saw concessions given by Hillary Clinton’s State Department to Russian companies buying North American uranium, to Clinton operative John Podesta’s own investments in Russian oil concerns.

Worse, the subject of election-time courting of Russia suddenly reopened the question of past Democratic electioneering gymnastics with foreign powers, such as Ted Kennedy’s efforts in

1984 to have the Russians' help in undermining Ronald Reagan's reelection chances, or Bill Clinton's 1996 campaign-finance connections with China, or the Obama-designated officials' contact, before they assumed office in 2009, with their foreign counterparts.

But Nemesis was not done. It is now reported that the Obama administration during the campaign went to a FISA court to tap the communications of Trump-campaign officials and unofficial supporters. FISA applications are almost never rejected (and never leaked), but the court rebuffed this one in June 2016, ostensibly for insufficient cause. Ostensibly it is also unprecedented for a sitting president's administration to order surveillance of campaign personnel of an opposite party before an upcoming election — a fact suggesting that Obama-administration officials may have assumed that a grateful shoo-in successor Clinton Justice Department would not worry greatly about such interference.

News reports further suggested that a frustrated Obama administration *may* have tried again as the campaign heated up in October 2016, *may* have found a more sympathetic judge, and *may* on the second try have begun widely tapping Trump-campaign officials.

In addition, the Obama administration after eight years in power suddenly and deliberately expanded the number of people granted access to such surveillance, apparently in the hope (which soon proved correct) that greater dissemination would increase the likelihood of illegal leaks that in turn would embarrass Trump.

Perhaps from such intelligence leaks, the media reported that Jeff Sessions, Trump's attorney general, had met in his office with the Russian ambassador, a supposed contradiction of his Senate testimony.

But then Nemesis again appeared. It turned out that almost everyone in Washington — especially Sessions's Democratic accusers — had met with the Russians (most commonly Democratic senators and representatives in the spirit of the Obama-reset age).

Indeed, Sergey Kislyak was on every Democratic powerbroker's A list and traveled throughout the United States to meetings and conferences — as part of accustomed outreach. Journalists had apparently forgotten that Russian officials were frequent guests at the Obama White House, a logical consequence of the then-current media narrative that cowboy George Bush had provoked Putin's Russia, which in turn required a sober and judicious Barack Obama to calm down the class cut-up Putin and educate the macho former KGB officer about why American and Russia were in fact friends rather than enemies.

Finally, after Democrats, Obama officials, and the media massaged the leaks from surveillance of Team Trump, in Samson-like fashion, Trump pulled down the temple on everyone — by tweeting groundbreaking but unsupported accusations that a sitting president of the United States and his team were the catalysts for such unlawful tapping. Apparently, he reckoned that the liberal conversation would therefore turn defensive rather than accusatory. If the progressive media and intelligence agencies were hand-in-glove leaking damaging rumors about Trump, and if none were yet substantiated, then the issue reversed and turned instead on a new question: How were they trafficking in confidential intelligence information if not from skullduggery of some sort? *No wonder that some smarter observers backtracked from the Russian-Trump collusion charges of the past six months, given that the leaks were less likely to be credible than they were criminal.* The accusers have become the accused. And who would police the police?

The media and the anti-Trump Republicans decried Trump's reckless and juvenile antics as unbecoming a president. Perhaps, but they may have forgotten Trump's animal cunning and instincts: Each time Trump impulsively raises controversial issues in sloppy fashion — some illegal aliens harm American citizens as they enjoy sanctuary-city status, NATO European partners wince on their promised defense contributions, Sweden is a powder-keg of unvetted and unassimilated immigrants from the war-torn Middle East — the news cycle follows and confirms the essence of Trump's otherwise rash warnings. We are learning that Trump is inexact and clumsy but often prescient; his opponents, usually deliberate and precise but disingenuous.

FISA-gate

Where are we now?

Obama officials have written contorted denials that by their very Byzantine wording suggest there is some truth to the thrust of Trump's accusations. (Jon Favreau, a former speechwriter for Obama, tweeted a warning: "I'd be careful about reporting that Obama said there was no wiretapping. Statement just said that neither he nor the WH ordered it.") At best, the public is learning that intelligence agencies and the Obama Justice Department deliberately monitored Trump's campaign effort (and leaked its findings), acts that fit a larger pattern of seeking to oppose his 2016 campaign.

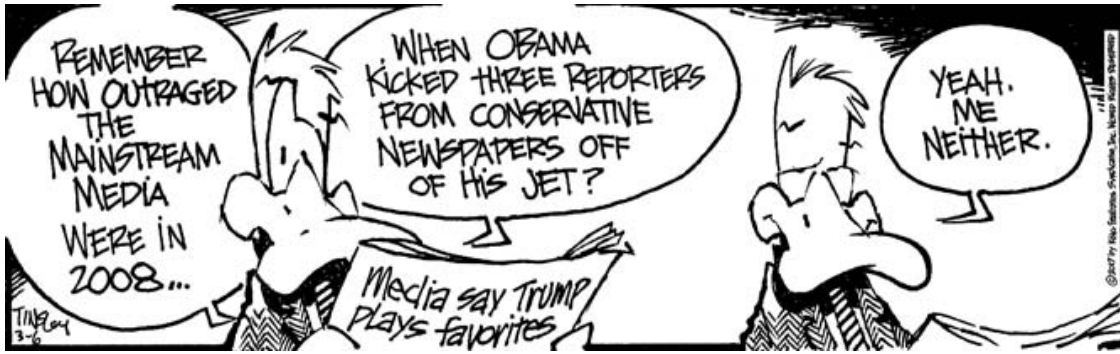
Maybe there is a divine goddess Nemesis, or maybe humans inevitably become arrogant when not checked, as a reflection of their primeval genetic code.

Or just maybe over the last eight years, the Obama administration so relied on media collusion (and Hillary Clinton's all but sure progressive continuum) that it felt it could do things politically and culturally — monitoring reporters' communications, politicizing the IRS, using the Justice Department to redistribute banking fines to left-wing activist groups — that otherwise no sane administration would even dare.



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Democrats in Congress

