

## Donald Trump just said something truly terrifying

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CNN, July 25, 2018

At a [speech in Kansas City to the VFW annual convention on Tuesday](#), President Donald Trump -- amid one of his trademark anti-media rants -- said this (emphasis mine):

*"Stick with us. Don't believe the crap you see from these people, the fake news. ... **What you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening.**"*

I know I keep saying this, BUT: That is an absolutely remarkable thing for any elected leader to say -- especially when that leader is the most powerful person in the country. And I know I keep saying this too, BUT: That the President not only thinks like that but feels emboldened enough to utter it to a crowd of people -- with cameras broadcasting it around the country -- is downright scary.

Go back and read that full quote above. What Trump is saying is this: I (and those who support me) are the only ones telling you the truth. Anything you hear from anyone who is not me is not to be believed.

Holy moly.

### Like what you're reading?

This feels to me like a step beyond Trump's long-established willingness to exaggerate and sometimes outright lie in pursuit of his own agenda. Since he became a candidate three years ago, Trump has exhibited a casual relationship with the truth. It's become clear over that time that he is telling himself the story of his own life; whether that version comports with established facts has never been of major concern for the President.

It's a mentality that produces concepts like "alternative facts" -- a belief that truth is itself a fungible concept.

But what Trump did in his VFW speech goes beyond simply saying lots of things that aren't true. (To be clear: He did that too!) He told the audience not to believe anything they see or read. That all media is fake. That everything that doesn't originate with Trump himself should be ignored.

As The New York Times' [Katie Rogers](#) and [Maggie Haberman](#) put it in a [piece](#) on Wednesday:

*"Mr. Trump, at a pivotal moment in his presidency, is increasingly living in a world of selected information and bending the truth to his own narrative. As his aides work to keep him insulated from the outside world, Mr. Trump is doubling down in his efforts to tell supporters to trust him over the words of critics and news reports."*

Defenders of Trump will undoubtedly be buoyed by his latest attack. *The media is hopelessly biased against Trump so why shouldn't he tell people to ignore anything the media says -- and so on.*

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There are a few ways to answer that question.

**First, the idea that the media is to blame for Trump's current morass over Russia is farcical.** The media didn't decide that Trump should sit down with Putin one-on-one for more than two hours in Helsinki. The media didn't dictate that Trump was unwilling to blame Russia for their election meddling in 2016. The media didn't botch Trump's repeated attempts to clarify whether or not he believes Russia sought to interfere in the last presidential election or whether they had plans to meddle in future elections. Donald Trump did all of those things. He literally said them on camera. All the media did was broadcast it; no analysis necessary.

**Second, for those who cheer Trump's call to ignore anything except what he says, ask yourself how that story ends.** We know that one of the hallmarks of authoritarian governments is an attempt to discredit the independent media and then seize control of the press so that only approved messages are aired or written. No matter how much you hate CNN -- or me! -- you can't believe that a government-controlled media is a better alternative,

What's even more terrifying about all of this is that Trump's message of un-reality is picked up and amplified by the primetime lineup at Fox News Channel. And Fox is, of course, the way that many conservatives in the country get their news. Fox is, of course, riding high in the ratings thanks to their willingness to parrot Trump's message to an audience waiting eagerly to hear it.

But, again, follow that path to its logical conclusion: At some point not even Fox would be good enough for Trump. The likes of Chris Wallace and Bret Baier, Fox anchors still committed to asking hard questions of the administration, would be deemed unacceptable. Any criticism -- or even analysis -- of an idea or statement from Trump would be seen as a betrayal. Fox wouldn't be Trumpy enough for Trump.

That's where the sort of rhetoric Trump is using ends -- in the obliteration of even the approximation of a free and independent media. So if you cheer when Trump tells you to ignore what your own eyes and ears are telling you, think about what you are applauding. My guess is it's not the kind of society you would want to live in -- or want to leave for your children.

