

## Melania shows she's a Trump through and through

By Kate Andersen Brower

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(CNN) — In a rare interview Wednesday night Melania Trump proved that she doesn't understand what it means to be first lady.

[She told](#) Fox News's Sean Hannity that "opportunists who are using my name" are the hardest part of being first lady, [again making the job about herself](#) and her family instead of taking the opportunity to talk about the challenges she sees other people facing.

She reserved her harshest words for the media, her husband's favorite punching bag. The biggest challenge she faces as first lady, she said, is from "comedians to journalists to performers, book writers."

Really? Is her family's legacy the thing that worries her most? After all the pain she has witnessed as first lady, from [meeting with a survivor](#) of the Parkland, Florida, high school shooting to [visiting with children separated](#) from their parents at the border, has the media really been the most difficult part of her job?

If so, that is a big problem.

When Hannity asked if the criticism "hurt" her, [she said](#), "It doesn't hurt. The problem is they're writing history and it's not correct."

The entire moment was a lost opportunity to put attention on the families of struggling Americans she's met in her role as first lady, especially since she spent time the very next day [reading to children](#) at Children's National Hospital, some sitting in wheelchairs with IVs attached. And the Hannity interview took place on USS George H.W. Bush, a trip the first lady made to support members of the military and their families.

Wouldn't it have been heartening to hear her use that moment during the interview to talk about the women and babies she's met struggling with opioid addiction, or the children who she has met as part of her "Be Best" campaign who have been bullied at school, or the people whose homes were destroyed in the California fires?

Unfortunately, there are no shortages of tragedies and shortcomings to cite. Anything but another pity party would have been nice -- and could have been expected from any other first lady in recent memory, all of whom, regardless of party, understood the incredible opportunities that accompany the sometimes-frustrating position.

CNN poll: Melania's favorability plummets 01:26

We are getting to know Melania Trump more and more the longer her husband is in office, and it seems that many people are not liking what they see. According to a [CNN poll out Thursday](#), Melania's favorable rating has fallen off a cliff. She now stands at 43% favorability, down 11 points from 54% in CNN's last polling just two months ago. Her unfavorable rating is also up six points to 36%.

The last time her public favorability rating was this low was in January 2017, before her husband's inauguration and before we knew her at all. The illusion that she was in some way a mollifying voice in this White House has been largely dispelled.

In the past couple of months, with the ABC interview in which she asserted that she is "the most bullied person" in the world and during her October trip to Egypt when she spoke about the #MeToo movement and said that although she stands with women, they [need to present](#) "really hard evidence," there is less and less separation between the first lady and the president (and that is what's causing her polling numbers to drop precipitously).

Recall that Melania said her decision to wear that now-infamous jacket while visiting migrant children at the Texas-Mexico border with the message "I really don't care. Do u?" was actually a [message to the press](#), whom she detests. It was small, it was petty and it was not worthy of a first lady of the United States.

Being first lady is no easy task, admittedly. No modern first lady would deny the challenges and isolation that accompany the undefined role: There is no pay, no mention of it in the Constitution and endless scrutiny. At a 2013 summit in Africa Laura Bush and [Michelle Obama talked about](#) those challenges. "There are prisonlike elements, but it's a really nice prison," Obama said of the White House. "You can't complain."

Melania: Sometimes you need to fight back01:06

All modern first ladies can relate to being frustrated with the press over their preoccupation with superficial things, including the way they cut their hair or what they choose to wear, but Melania has clouded the profound responsibility and honor of the position with her own personal resentment.

"People are sorting through our shoes and our hair ... whether we cut it or not," [Michelle Obama said](#) at the 2013 summit. "We take our bangs [she had just had bangs cut] and we stand in front of important things the world needs to see. And eventually, people stop looking at the bangs, and start looking at the things we're standing in front of. That's the power of our role."

That power is real and should be recognized and used to help those less fortunate, as has been done by [previous first ladies](#).

Decades earlier, when a residence staffer's child was born with a disability, Mamie Eisenhower asked the mother and child to move into the White House. In a June 18, 1990, letter from first lady Barbara Bush to former first lady Betty Ford, Bush alludes to the two of them working together to help a young girl be reunited with her family.

When Lady Bird Johnson found out that a butler's wife was battling cancer, she called two of the top oncologists in New York and that same day they landed at Washington's National Airport to examine her. Before a trip to Korea, Nancy Reagan was told about two Korean children who badly needed heart surgery. Reagan started working the phones, and by the time the Reagans were flying back home on Air Force One, they had asked some staff to fly commercial so that the children could fly back with them and have surgery in the US. [The son of one White House butler said it best](#): "The first lady can pick up the telephone and change your life."

I hope Melania realizes soon that her own personal challenges are nothing compared to the incredible opportunity she has to make a difference and "be best."