

The Trump Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy

Edited by Robert E. Gutsche, Jr.

First published 2018

ISBN 13:978-1-138-30738-4 (hbk)

ISBN 13:978-1-315-14232-6 (ebk)

Chapter 7

The Hell that Black People Live

Trump's Reports to Journalists on Urban Conditions

Carolyn Guniss

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

7 The Hell that Black People Live

Trump's Reports to Journalists on Urban Conditions

Carolyn Guniss

It's February 16, 2017.

Donald J. Trump has been in the White House as Commander-in-Chief for just about a month.

Trump holds a press conference to announce that he had nominated Alexander Acosta, a Hispanic man, as the U.S. Secretary of Labor. He uses the moment to update Americans about the “mess at home and abroad” that he inherited. He also took questions from journalists at his first press conference as president.

Trump takes a question from April Ryan, a veteran White House correspondent for American Urban Radio Networks. She has been in that role since 1997, is in the process of covering her fourth U.S. president, and serves as the radio network's Washington, D.C. bureau chief.

Standing about midpoint, to the left of the room for the viewers, she signals to Trump that she wants to ask a question.

Trump does what he does best when dealing with people of color: He finds a way to offend Ryan.

“Yes, oh, this is going to be a bad question, but that's OK,” he said.

It is unclear what Trump meant by the statement, but whatever he meant, it wasn't positive. Is it that he expected a badly phrased question, or that she was going to ask a question that was going to make him uncomfortable? The reporters who had asked questions before Ryan asked about his ties to the Russian controversy and Michael Flynn, Trump's fired national security adviser. Those were “bad questions” for Trump.

Ryan pivots to the question that the 41 million or so Black people in America wanted to know the answer to: When was Trump going to implement his plan for the nation's “inner cities” – Trump's code word for Black neighborhoods, but by no means an accurate description.

To contextualize Ryan's question, we must enumerate Trump's colossally flawed agenda for Black Americans – if one can use such a positive word as “agenda” to describe Trump's antagonistic, ignorant attitude toward this group.

Even the way Trump treated the seasoned White House correspondent – who no doubt had spent more time in the White House than Trump had at

that point – was demeaning. Trump didn't even let Ryan finish her question before he started to answer it.

He first says that her question was good and professional. Everyone should have known from that moment the exchange was going to deteriorate. He basically told Ryan with that statement, "I didn't expect very much from you."

Hard to know if it was her gender that made Trump feel she would be less than professional or if it was a combination of being Black *and a woman* that gave Trump a reason to have low expectations.

Ryan follows up with a question as to whether the president planned to meet with the "CBC." Trump, the political neophyte, doesn't know the popular acronym, so Ryan is accommodating and rephrases her question, replacing "CBC" with "Congressional Black Caucus."

Trump again acts less than appropriate. He asks Ryan to set up the meeting between himself and the Black Caucus.

Ryan respectfully declines to set up Trump's meeting.

Ryan raised the question because the Caucus had written to Trump, as well as had used Trump's preferred way of communicating – Twitter – to request a meeting. The Caucus had pointed out on social media that Trump had not responded to its letter.

Trump goes on to ask Ryan if she knew any of the Caucus members and if they were her friends. Here again, Trump is being disrespectful and condescending. He is also intimating that neither he nor his staff would know anyone in the Caucus, but since Ryan is a Black person, certainly she should.

The Ryan volley with Trump underscores the way Trump thinks of and refers to Black people. When he speaks of them it is as if they are foreigners, aliens. He refers to the entire Black population as "they," "them," and "those."

The exchange overshadowed the press conference as most media outlets latched onto the story.

It would only be about six weeks later when then-Press Secretary Sean Spicer had a testy exchange with Ryan during a press conference.

On March 28, 2017, Ryan asks Spicer how the White House was going to fix its image since in less than three months it had managed to draw so many negative stories.

By now, the Trump administration was facing an investigation into its ties to Russia and had alleged that the Obama administration had wiretapped Trump Tower, which turned out to be false. Spicer, during the very combative interview, twice tells Ryan to stop shaking her head, which she is doing in response to his empty answers (Henderson, 2017).

Another round of headlines and broadcasts ensued. For Ryan, Trump's and Spicer's gaffs raised her profile and seemingly created opportunity, both for media outlets and for Ryan. CNN announced on April 3, 2017,

that Ryan was hired as a political contributor and that; the National Association of Black Journalists had named her Journalist of the Year.

Let's take a look at some interactions that Trump has had with African Americans, especially in context of the "hell" in which they live, an observation Trump himself made. This essay will explore not only the results of the negative influence Trump's dealing with Black people produces, it will also explore his and his family's documented history of racism and questionable behavior.

Quietly, in tandem with Trump's ascent, violence against African Americans across the nation had ticked up. Reported in isolation to each location, the story about the salacious trend and its impact was flying under the radar. But the national disruption became evident when violent clashes started appearing on college campuses.

In June 2017, *The New York Times* reported that there were 900 incidents of hate within 10 days after the 2016 presidential election, as collected by the Southern Poverty Law Center. By March, the center had enumerated more than 1,800 (North, 2017).

"White supremacist charged with terrorism over murder of black man," is the headline on a March 28, 2017, article by NPR about the added charge of terrorism to a White supremacist who had traveled from Baltimore to New York to kill a Black man, which he did on March 22, 2017 (Domonoske, 2017).

A *Slate* article on June 1, 2017, "What we have unleashed," held the premise that the spate of hate crimes happening in 2017 were connected to Trump's ideologies and popularity. The article pieces together killing after killing of people of color across the nation – all in the name of race – and during the ascension of Trump (Bouie, 2017).

"Hate crimes up in California, fueled by hate-filled trump era," is the headline of a July 15, 2017, article in *The Los Angeles Blade*. *The Blade's* piece cited statistics from the California Department of Justice's annual report released July 3, 2017, showing hate crimes were up 10 percent against Muslims and Latinos, the groups Trump berated the most (Ocamb, 2017).

Welcome to the era of Trump.

Trump, Self-Proclaimed Answer for Black America

In courting the African American vote, which Trump seemingly grudgingly did, he addressed them directly, ironically however, before a crowd of mostly White people at an August 19, 2016, rally in Michigan.

There, Trump said Black people were living in "hell" and that he had a plan to change all that.

"What the hell do you have to lose?" Trump asked. "No group in America has been more harmed by Hillary Clinton's policies than African Americans – no group."

He continued:

The inner cities of our country have been run by the Democratic Party for more than 50 years. ... it is time to hold them accountable for what they have done to these communities. Look how much African American communities have suffered under Democratic control. To those I say the following: ‘What the hell do you have to lose by trying something different, like Trump?’

Trump was making the appeal just about three months before the 2016 presidential election. By then, Trump was already damaged goods to many African Americans, mostly because how he tortured President Barack Obama with his made-up lies about where Obama was born. The media dubbed it the Obama birther issue.

So, it seemed hypocritical if not downright foolhardy for Trump to believe *all* of the people would soon forget and throw him their support.

A subtle pattern had emerged during Trump’s campaign: He planned to dismantle everything that he could that Barack Obama had put into place while he was president.

Underlying that argument is that Trump was going to be a better president than the Black president.

Trump would spend the first few months of his presidency rolling back Obama’s policies, including those done by executive orders. Then there would be the failed attempts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare.

To better understand Trump’s contempt for Black citizens, and the outgoing president in particular, however, we must flashback to Obama’s first term in office.

Trump, and people who think like him, were very angry that a Black man was leading America. He and others were also concerned that Obama was not acting forceful enough toward radical Islam.

So, it wasn’t a surprise that a prominent white person would attack President Obama. It was probably more surprising that it was Donald Trump, the somewhat eccentric real estate mogul who had made several attempts before at the Oval Office, starting in 1987 (*TV Guide*, 2015).

Still, Trump’s try again made sense.

Trump was now an international household name. He had created the wildly popular *The Apprentice* reality show, which ended weekly with Trump or his children saying the catch phrase, “You’re fired.” The public had met him over the years, mostly through the Trump brand and his frequent and well-publicized bankruptcies.

In the 2000 presidential primaries, for example, Trump received 15,000 votes as a Reform Party candidate in the party’s California primary (*TV Guide*, 2015).

But Trump had seared himself into the consciousness of Black Americans, especially New Yorkers, in the Central Park Jogger case – 20 years prior.

In 1989, police arrested four Black and one Latino boys and charged them with raping a white woman in Central Park, a case that positioned Trump as an advocate for racist and harsh law and order policies (Ross, 2016).

The next month, in May 1989, Trump took out full-page ads that cost \$85,000 in four New York dailies, condemning the act, calling for a return of the death penalty, and even suggesting civil liberties end when safety is at stake (Sorkin, 2014).

Known as the Central Park Five, the boys, who ranged in ages 14 to 16, were given sentences ranging from 5 to 15 years, but they were all released in 2002 after DNA exonerated them and another man confessed to the crime (Weiser, 2014). The boys had served between 6 and 13 years for a crime that they had not committed but to which they made coerced confessions.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump still maintained that the Central Park Five were guilty (Burns, 2016). The nation would soon come to find out that Trump's racist stereotyping was a part of a pattern established by his father and inherited by the son.

Consider the following, for instance. Between 1969 and 1982, the U.S. Justice Department and other individuals sued Trump or his family, mostly concerning housing discrimination (Corn, 2016; NPR, 2016).

Though never convicted or forced to pay a fine, the frequent challenges do seem to speak to a culture in which the Trump business did not try to implement best practices and industry standards to avoid actions that conflicted with federal housing laws.

And while Trump didn't pay a housing fine – for those claims, anyway – The Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino was once forced to pay \$200,000 to the Casino Control Commission, a fine for race discrimination in the workplace (UPI, 1992). It was alleged that Blacks and female dealers had to be moved to other tables to accommodate a favored racehorse broker.

Anger toward Trump within Black communities only increased as he took on the country's first Black president – Barack Obama.

Where Were You Born?: Trump on (His) Birther Issue

Birther (informal) – A person who doubts the legitimacy of Barack Obama's presidency because of a conspiracy theory that Obama is not a natural-born US citizen.

Google Dictionary, 2017

Despite all the racial baggage and gauche statements, Trump would save his most provocative, deceptive, and divisive statements for his most-recent forage his into politics.

If we, and I mean those of us in the media, were paying attention, we would have noticed that in March 2011, Trump made a soft launch of his 2016 presidential campaign. He did so picking the biggest dog in the pen with whom to pick a fight: Barack Obama.

Trump understood that if he even sneezed within distance of Obama, he would be guaranteed a headline or a sound bite.

Trump had a foe, and that foe was the leader of the free world at the time, Obama.

Trump couldn't have chosen a better protagonist for what would become a carefully (or not) orchestrated campaign issue. By floating the birther issue, consider the elements that could be investigated, if even briefly, at least according to Trump and his supporters:

- Did Americans elect a non-America to lead the nation?
- Did that create a Constitutional problem?
- How did Obama make it this far, if he wasn't a citizen?
- Did Obama have people perpetuate a fraud?
- If Obama's father is African, that mean's his father is from another country, and doesn't that strengthen concerns about Obama's own nationality?

Yes, the birther lie had enough known dimensions that surely the story would last way into the campaign.

Trump was right – the birther lie was a lie that could not be buried.

In 2016, *The New York Times* chronicled how Trump started the incredulous lie (Parker & Eder, 2016). According to the *Times*:

In the birther movement, Mr. Trump recognized an opportunity to connect with the electorate over an issue many considered taboo: the discomfort, in some quarters of American society, with the election of the nation's first Black president. He harnessed it for political gain, beginning his connection with the largely white Republican base that, in his 2016 campaign, helped clinch his party's nomination.

"The appeal of the birther issue was, 'I'm going to take this guy on, and I'm going to beat him,'" said Sam Nunberg, who was one of Mr. Trump's advisers during that period but was fired from his current campaign. "It was a great niche and wedge issue."

The *Times* said Trump taunted the president for six weeks straight and abruptly stopped, but it wasn't before he publicly asked Obama to show his birth certificate, raised doubt Obama's American citizenship, and caused uneasiness for the nation's first Black president.

Trump's rant lived on, too.

On August 6, 2012, Trump wrote on Twitter: “An ‘extremely credible source’ has called my office and told me that @BarackObama’s birth certificate is a fraud.”

The note was retweeted 23,773, and as late as August 2017, the birther story was still getting headlines, the latest being about how the Republican Party should have stopped Trump from advancing the birther lie.

Sounds like a veiled apology to me, and now that the Republicans are deep in buyers’ remorse of their support and election of the Tweeter-in-Chief, they are claiming *mea culpa*.

The birther lie should have died a quick death. It should have been fact-checked and laid to rest.

But the media was complicit because Trump generated sound bites, hits, and headlines.

In a time that traditional media were under extreme pressure from bloggers, vloggers, and podcasters, Trump was a saving grace.

Not much has changed.

Starting a Race War

During his campaign, Trump seemed to be baiting a race war, though his moves were either lost on society or not taken seriously by Americans and their media.

Trump tested the idea that Americans live in a post-racial utopia and would beat back the hateful diatribe he spewed. But within months of even discussing his run for president, he proved that a post-racial America was a farce, a figment of hopeful imaginations.

Trump opened his campaign June 16, 2015, with the infamous inflammatory speech about Mexican immigrants:

When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

(*Washington Post*, 2015)

Trump would continue to dig a hole of disdain and display his lack of intelligence about African Americans, Latinos, Jewish Americans, Chinese Americans, and well, pretty much everyone.

At the first presidential debate on September 26, 2016, at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, baseless Trumpism was once again uttered about Blacks.

When NBC broadcast journalist Lester Holt asked the candidates what it was that they planned to do to fix race relations in the United

States following widening fissures amplified by shootings of African-Americans by police, Trump delivered this response:

We have a situation where we have our inner cities, African-Americans, Hispanics are living in hell because it's so dangerous. You walk down the street, you get shot. In Chicago, they've had thousands of shootings, thousands, since January 1st. Thousands of shootings. And I say, where is this? Is this a war-torn country? What are we doing? And we have to stop the violence, we have to bring back law and order, in a place like Chicago, where thousands of people have been killed. Thousands, over the last number of years.

(Blake, 2016)

That night may have been the beginning of journalists and journalism organizations like PolitiFact fact-checking Trump, almost in real time, and articles appeared about the rising African American middle class and the declining crime rates in key Black communities.

An NBC News analysis of Trump's speech called Trump's answer about Black communities antiquated. In his September 28, 2016, article "In 2016 Debate, Donald Trump Spoke of a Black America That No Longer Exists," author Perry Bacon Jr. pointed out that Trump seemed "like a man who had stopped reading the news about Black Americans in 1987" (Bacon, 2016).

Former President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Cornell Brooks was quoted in *The Los Angeles Times* article "Trump says African Americans are living in hell (Kaleem & Simmons, 2016). That depends on what you mean by hell" said Trump's statement was too board and was without context.

"To say African Americans are living in hell, that has the descriptive specificity of a bumper sticker," Brooks said. "There are communities where there are hellish conditions, but there are also communities where you find people who are gainfully employed, who attend houses of faith. There are vibrant cultural and artistic communities."

An op-ed in *The New York Times* stated that data from whitepapers and government agencies shows that, despite Trump's claims of massive, Black economic decline, "the black upper middle class is ascending the economic ladder at a faster rate than its white counterpart" (Edsall, 2017).

But Trump was not wrong about his assessment of Chicago, specifically, PolitiFact found (Valverde, 2016). PolitiFact rated the comment that Trump made about the thousands of shootings in Chicago as being true.

Still, Trump's stumbling in the dark continued, and he rolled out his urban renewal plan for rebuilding America's inner cities.

Trump dubbed it a New Deal for Black America, which included “safe communities, great education, and high-paying jobs” (Funk & Morrill, 2016).

Originally released to MediaTakeOut.com, Trump’s transition team in November 2016 released a 10-point plan for Black America. Trump said his administration would provide:

- Great Education Through School Choice
- Safe Communities
- Equal Justice Under the Law
- Tax Reforms to Create Jobs and Lift up People and Communities
- Financial Reforms to Expand Credit to Support New Job Creation
- Trade That Works for American Workers
- Protection from Illegal Immigration
- New Infrastructure Investment
- Protect the African-American Church
- America First Foreign Policy

The lack of attention given to this list will be discussed later, but it needed to be mentioned here because it underscores why April Ryan was asking Trump about his plans for the inner city in the first place.

The 10-point plan wasn’t the only reason why Ryan had good reason to question Trump that day.

Since his official swearing in, Trump had stumbled over his own feet when it came to his interaction with African Americans.

He countered all of his arguments of uniting the country and being the best president for Black people through his cabinet appointments.

The nation watched in horror as Trump picked known racists such as far-right nationalist and *Breitbart* News editor Steve Bannon as his chief strategist and Jeff Sessions, a known anti-Civil Rights lawyer, as the nation’s attorney general.

The inner sanctum of Trump included Press Secretary Sean Spicer and Reince Priebus, the former a previous chair of the Republican National Committee turned Trump’s chief of staff. Priebus, as chairman, had pushed fellow Republicans to fall in behind the controversial and extremely damaged presidential candidate.

Even after a series of indefensible discoveries about Trump’s character, including that he groped women, Priebus stood behind Trump when a 2005 tape surfaced of Trump saying near an open microphone while speaking with *Access Hollywood* host Billy Bush on a tour bus that he “can’t help myself” when he grabs women by the pussy (his words) (Fahrenheit, 2016).

Trump’s appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education set off a firestorm of complaints so much so that it took Vice President Mike Pence’s vote to push through her confirmation.

The whole nation scratched its collective head when Trump selected a renown Black brain surgeon to be, not the Surgeon General, but the head of the federal housing department better known as HUD.

The appointment of Ben Carson to lead HUD smacked of some stereotyping – give the Black man the department that oversees public housing and the nation’s low-income housing efforts, since the perception is that mostly poor, Black people live in government-subsidized housing.

But maybe Trump picked Carson because when Carson was a presidential candidate, he said publicly that he didn’t believe government assistance is a fix for those in need.

When Trump was done with his first cabinet, a March 10, 2017, *New York Times* article dubbed it the Whitest, most-male cabinet in more than half a century (Lee, 2017). “Donald Trump is rolling back the clock on diversity in the cabinet,” professor Paul Light of New York University’s Wagner Graduate School of Public Service told the *Times*.

Declaring war, as Trump did, on racial inclusiveness, would lead to questions of his legitimacy to serve in the Oval Office.

Questioning Trump, Hoping for Solutions

Shortly before Trump was inaugurated, U.S. Rep. John Lewis questioned the president-elect’s legitimacy to hold the office on national television. Lewis told “Meet the Press” moderator Chuck Todd that he believed there was a conspiracy with Russia to help Trump win the election and, conversely, to position Hillary Clinton to lose (NBC News, 2017).

Questions of Trump’s legitimacy centered mostly on reports from at least four U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia interfered with the election – through connections to Trump. Lewis also said he would not attend Trump’s inauguration ceremony Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters and others would join the chorus.

But let the hypocrites line up. Lewis only did to Trump what Trump did to Obama with the birther issue: He questioned the legitimacy of the Trump’s right to be the president.

And while Trump had no evidence that Obama’s birth certificate was fake, he floated the outright lie for several years without any consequences. So why not question Trump?

If anyone has the right to question any president’s legitimacy, it’s Lewis.

Besides serving his Congressional district in Georgia for more than 30 years, he is a living symbol of those who fought with blood and sweat for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and other equalities for African Americans. Lewis is a Freedom Rider, a group of activists who pushed for the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), which banned segregation on buses and facilities under their jurisdiction.

The Riders were met with violence, though they gain national attention and caused change.

Lewis is a former chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, founded by four Black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, who wanted to eat at a Woolworth lunch counter – and did.

Indeed, some would liken the modern-day Black Lives Matter movement to SNCC.

On “Bloody Sunday,” Lewis was beaten as he and others tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge to Selma, Alabama to register to vote.

But Trump, probably not even knowing Lewis’ history, felt the need to lash out at Lewis, questioning *his* leadership. And, so, Trump did – on Twitter:

Congressman John Lewis should spend more time on fixing and helping his district, which is in horrible shape and falling apart not to mention crime infested rather than falsely complaining about the election results. All talk, talk, talk – no action or results. Sad!

Trump again made a sweeping inference that Lewis’ district is made up of Black, poor criminals and, in turn, drew bipartisan backlash on Twitter and from more than 67 Democrats who decided to sit out the inauguration on January 20, 2017.

The Twitter responses included:

- From NAACP President Cornell Brooks, “By disrespecting @rep-johnlewis, @realDonaldTrump dishonored Lewis’ sacrifice & demeaned the Americans & rights, he nearly died 4. Apologize.”
- From U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, “Let us remember that many have tried to silence @repjohnlewis over the years. All have failed.”
- From Representative David Cicilline, directed at Trump, “John Lewis is an American hero. You’re a fake billionaire who won’t release his taxes. Put down Twitter and get serious about governing.”

Despite the attention, mainstream media did not handle Lewis’ statement very well.

While it was important to highlight the accomplishments of Lewis, which are unimpeachable, the press should have more vigorously tested whether his statement that the president was not legitimate had merit.

The press at the time ignored other areas needing further attention, as well, such as allegations that Russia interfered in the U.S. presidential election. Such allegations should have sparked more outrage than it had among the press, if media serve its watchdog function effectively.

In fact, if U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan said Trump is an “illegitimate president” it would be treated differently than if someone (read, Black) like Lewis did. For the press, the claims related to Trump’s legitimacy and involvement in foreign manipulation of domestic affairs, may have been the case of good message, but not the right messenger.

Diving into Trump’s 10-point plan and how policy decisions he had made by August 2017 impact lifting Black people out of the hell in which they have been trapped, or so says Trump, reveals another layer to how Trump views Black America.

Trump would address his plans for “the inner city” during the question-and-answer segment of an August 15, 2017, speech at Trump Tower in New York City when he announced an executive order to shore up the American infrastructure and promised permitting reform for urban areas.

Apart from the fact that he was using an executive order to tell several federal agencies to slacken their rules, Trump made the announcement in the days after an incendiary and deadly racial incident in Charlottesville, Virginia. Related to that case, Trump was under fire for not condemning the violence by Ku Klux Klan and Nazi sympathizers.

The debate about officials in Charlottesville removing a Confederate general’s statue from a public park started almost two years before Trump’s talk.

But since Trump didn’t condemn former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard David Duke’s support during his campaign (Jackson, 2016), White supremacists have become more vocal, and web sites and news organizations have given them platforms for their ideals.

It is that emboldened behavior of hate groups that would erupt into chaos and death in Charlottesville, and would place Trump at the very center of American racial hate speech.

Demonstrations about the removal of the statue and the renaming of the park to something other than related to the Civil War (and Southern remembrance of it) had started in August 2017 when white nationalists took their protest onto the University of Virginia campus.

On the second day, the Unite the Right protest appeared in city streets where police tried to keep White supremacists away from the multicultural counter-protestors.

But the protest turned deadly.

James Alex Fields Jr., a 20-year-old White man, drove his car into a crowd at the intersection of Forth and Water Streets, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring about 20 people (Rankin, 2017).

And while Trump wanted to change the narrative with the press, since he had been accused of first not condemning the White nationalists then condemning them but later changing his statement to say both sides were to blame for the violence and death, reporters only focused on the weekend’s altercation alone. And rightly so. The nation was hurting.

Older Americans watched as familiar images of the Civil Rights movement played out on their modern TV sets – this time in full color and high definition.

Younger Americans and immigrants were getting a glimpse of bits and pieces of history they had gathered over the years from Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebrations or when an icon of the Civil Rights movement gave a speech or died.

Trump, once again, displayed a lack of empathy and understanding of race relations in this country. So, as reporters tried to steer the questions to Charlottesville and Trump's position on racial hatred, Trump demanded questions focus on his other announcements.

Yet, when an unnamed reporter asked Trump about his thoughts on race relations, he had to take on the question:

REPORTER: How concerned are you about race relations in America and do you think things have gotten worse or better since you took office?

TRUMP: I think they have gotten better – or the same. They've been frayed for a long time, and you can ask President Obama about that because he'd make speeches about it. But, I believe that the fact that I brought in, it will be soon, millions of jobs – you see where companies are moving back into our country – I think that's going to have a tremendous positive impact on race relations ... You know why? It's jobs. What people want now, they want jobs. They want great jobs with good pay and, when they have that, you watch how race relations will be. I'll tell you, we're spending a lot of money on the inner cities. We're fixing the inner cities. We're doing far more than anybody's done with respect to the inner cities. It's a priority for me. And it's very important.

One has to wonder whether fixing poorer, urban neighborhoods is a priority for the Trump administration. Not according to budget priorities. PolitiFact found that \$225 million could fund a backlog of fixes and investments needed for the nation's public housing and related education and job training programs. Yet Trump's proposed budget for 2018 kills the Community Development Block Grants program, which is funded through HUD and granted to communities for economic development.

How ironic that Trump pledged to lift Black people out of the “hell” they lived in but he himself was proposing budget cuts to programs that encourage prosperity.

To be sure, though, Trump has a supporter of a leaner HUD budget in Carson who has launched a “listening tour” to find out more about America's affordable housing. Rather than telling him about their

housing needs, people have had to listen to Carson tell them about his love of public-private partnerships, because government alone cannot solve the housing crisis.

During a listening tour stop in Miami in April 2017, for example, Carson visited the southeastern U.S.'s oldest housing project, Liberty Square.

The run-down housing project is undergoing demolition only to be rebuilt as a mixed-income community of public housing, market-rate rentals and units for homeownership, commercial spaces, and a grocery store. Miami-Dade County and the developer, the Related Group, partnered to tackle the \$300 million project, and Carson praised the effort.

"Liberty City's new construction is a holistic approach to housing that we at HUD believe is essential for creating strong communities that allow residents to succeed," Carson told *The Miami Times* (Guniss, 2017). "As I have been on my listening tour, I have seen firsthand the benefits that come from developments that foster community like this one."

But what if more developers do not want to go into the public housing business?

For those who do, it is not clear how and who will control the pricing of the units once built, and we can already see in new developments that current residents will not be able to afford to live in the new units.

So much for Trump doing more for Black people than any other president, and so much for the media in calling him out on his lies.

If anything, Trump has created a new "hell" for people of color in America, and the press has continued to ignore it.

As a result, our Commander-in-Chief has rolled back the progress Americans made in learning to live with each other.

Enter, Trump, the Destroyer-in-Chief.

References

- Bacon, P. (2016, September 28). Analysis: In 2016 debate, Donald Trump spoke of a black America that no longer exists. *NBC News*. Retrieved at www.nbcnews.com/storyline/2016-presidential-debates/analysis-debate-donald-trump-spoke-black-america-no-longer-exists-n655581.
- Blake, A. (2016, September 26). The first Trump-Clinton presidential debate transcript, annotated. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved at www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/09/26/the-first-trump-clinton-presidential-debate-transcript-annotated/?utm_term=.cd3f829b8419.
- Bouie, J. (2017, June 1). What we have unleashed. *Slate*. Retrieved at www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2017/06/this_year_s_string_of_brutal_hate_crimes_is_intrinsically_connected_to_the.html.
- Burns, S. (2016, October 17). Why Trump doubled down on the Central Park Five. *The New York Times*. Retrieved at www.nytimes.com/2016/10/18/opinion/why-trump-doubled-down-on-the-central-park-five.html?mcubz=1.
- Corn, D. (2016, October 25). Here's another time a Trump company was sued for discriminating against black people. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved at

- www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/10/another-housing-discrimination-lawsuit-donald-trump.
- Domonoske, C. (2017, March 28). White supremacist charged with terrorism over murder of black man. *NPR*. Retrieved at www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/28/521805165/white-supremacist-charged-with-terrorism-over-murder-of-black-man.
- Edsall, T. B. (2017, April 27). Black people are not all “living in hell.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved at www.nytimes.com/2017/04/27/opinion/black-people-are-not-all-living-in-hell.html?mcubz=1.
- Fahrenheit, D. A. (2016, October 8). Trump recorded having extremely lewd conversation about women in 2005. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eed4_story.html?utm_term=.0c4f71a71e59.
- Funk, T. & Morrill, J. (2016, October 26). Donald Trump promises “a new deal for black America” at Spirit Square. *Charlotte Observer*. Retrieved at www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/election/article110546817.html.
- Guniss, C. (2017, April 11). HUD Secretary will stop at the public housing project as part of his national listening tour. *The Miami Times*. Retrieved at www.miami-timesonline.com/news/ben-carson-to-visit-liberty-square-wednesday/article_93935524-1ee4-11e7-82eb-ebc348430837.html.
- Henderson, M. (2017, March 30). April Ryan asked the most important question of the Trump presidency. *CNN*. Retrieved at www.cnn.com/2017/03/29/politics/april-ryan-sean-spicer-trump-presidency/index.html.
- Jackson, D. M. (2016, February 28). Trump blames faulty earpiece for KKK comments. *USA Today*. Retrieved at www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2016/02/28/donald-trump-david-duke-ku-klux-klan-cnn-state-of-the-union/81073572.
- Kaleem, J. & Simmons, A. M. (2016, November 5). Trump says African Americans are living in hell. That depends on what you mean by hell. *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved at www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-global-black-america-snap-20161103-story.html.
- Lee, J. C. (2017, March 10). Trump’s cabinet so far is more white and male than any first cabinet since Reagan’s. *The New York Times*. Retrieved at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/13/us/politics/trump-cabinet-women-minorities.html?mcubz=1&mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=BA48BBC30F6928F71A4E274896682D08&gwt=pay.
- NBC News. (2017, January 13). John Lewis: “I don’t see Trump as a legitimate president.” *NBC News*. Retrieved at www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/rep-john-lewis-trump-won-t-be-legitimate-854384195610.
- North, A. (2017, June 1). The scope of hate in 2017. *The New York Times*. Retrieved at www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/opinion/hate-crime-lebron-james-college-park-murder.html?mcubz=1&_r=0.
- NPR. (2016, September 29). Decades-old housing discrimination case plagues Donald Trump. *NPR*. Retrieved at www.npr.org/2016/09/29/495955920/donald-trump-plagued-by-decades-old-housing-discrimination-case.
- Ocamb, K. (2017, July 5). Hate crimes up in California, fueled by hate-filled Trump era. *Los Angeles Blade*. Retrieved at www.losangelesblade.com/2017/07/05/hate-crimes-california-fueled-hate-filled-trump-era.

- Parker, A. & Eder, S. (2016, July 2). Inside the six weeks Donald Trump was a nonstop “birther.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved at www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/us/politics/donald-trump-birther-obama.html?mcubz=1.
- Rankin, S. (2017, August 16). Inside a day of violence, terror in Charlottesville. *US News & World Report*. Retrieved at www.usnews.com/news/best-states/virginia/articles/2017-08-15/inside-a-day-of-violence-terror-in-charlottesville.
- Ross, J. (2016, October 8). Donald Trump’s doubling down on the Central Park Five reflects a bigger problem. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved at www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/10/08/donald-trumps-doubling-down-on-the-central-park-five-reflects-a-bigger-problem/?utm_term=.368e6cc2f1c0.
- Sorkin, A. D. (2014, June 23). Donald Trump and the Central Park Five. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved at www.newyorker.com/news/amy-davidson/donald-trump-and-the-central-park-five.
- TV Guide. (2015, July 28). Here’s a timeline of every time Donald Trump ran for president. *TV Guide*. Retrieved at www.tvguide.com/news/donald-trump-presidential-campaign-timeline.
- UPI. (1992, October 19). Trump Plaza loses appeal of discrimination penalty. *UPI*. Retrieved at www.upi.com/Archives/1992/10/19/Trump-Plaza-loses-appeal-of-discrimination-penalty/1911719467200.
- Valverde, M. (2016, September 27). Donald Trump says Chicago has experienced thousands of shootings this year. *PolitiFact*. Retrieved at www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/sep/27/donald-trump/donald-trump-says-chicago-has-experienced-thousand.
- Washington Post*. (2015, June 16). Full text: Donald Trump announces a presidential bid. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved at www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/?utm_term=.79b80db20a79.
- Weiser, B. (2014, June 19). 5 exonerated in Central Park jogger case agree to settle suit for \$40 million. *The New York Times*. Retrieved at www.nytimes.com/2014/06/20/nyregion/5-exonerated-in-central-park-jogger-case-are-to-settle-suit-for-40-million.html?mcubz=1.