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Daily OPINION

PATRICK'S POLITICS: TRUMP TV AND PROPAGANDA PROGRAMMING



FILE LOGO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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Have you ever wanted to live in a country with state-run media? No? Well, now you can with Trump TV!

That's what I imagine the tagline for Trump's newest venture to be, anyway. The real tagline isn't much better: "Watch the Trump administration's biggest moments all in one place." If watching Trump speak all day is your cup of tea, I won't stop you. The vanity and absurdity of Trump TV, though, masks its anti-democratic purpose. It is a continuation of Trump's war against the press, and it marks a significant foray into making the media landscape his.

On Sept. 18, Trump suddenly announced that reporters from CNN, Politico and MS NOW would be banned from entering the White House and participating in briefings. He claimed that those outlets had been putting out "fake news" and therefore were "treasonous." These three major news outlets sued almost immediately and the fallout from Trump's decision soon exploded.

All the networks in Trump's TV pool — CNN, NBC, ABC, CBS and Fox — announced that they would not be covering the president until the outlets were reinstated. Do you know how badly a Republican president has to mess up to make Fox News mad? It's roughly akin to parting the Red Sea.

I joke, but the situation is far more serious than many people realize. This incident may seem like just one of Trump's many battles with the media that he's called "fake news" for years. Now, however, he has taken the extraordinary step of banning publications from doing their job. This is not entirely a new phenomenon; Trump banned the Associated Press from the press pool last year, but the totality of this new restriction is striking.

The job of these banned outlets is to be the free press. Just how "free" the press is has been a topic of contention since America was founded and no government has a perfect relationship with the media which covers it, but on this point the Constitution is very clear. The First Amendment states that the freedoms of speech and of the press shall not be "abridged." This provision especially applies to cases where the government disagrees with a publication's content. If Trump wants to complain about supposedly "fake news," that is undoubtedly his right, but the Constitution explicitly prohibits the government from discriminating against viewpoints it doesn't like.

Why am I mentioning the Constitution, you might ask, if Trump clearly doesn't care? If you subscribe to Trump's worldview, the rules have been thrown out, and silly little documents like the law of the land don't matter anymore. Since the media is against Trump, they say, why can't Trump be against the media?

I bring up our founding document because the right of the free press is woven into our how democracy works. Since the beginning, it has at least been our ideal that Americans can receive coverage of the government without having to worry about censorship. This is a crucial factor that has helped us stay free as a country; if the press is restricted from doing their job, the government becomes the only information source, and the regime can then push whatever narrative it wants. Authoritarian regimes around the world have followed this playbook—kick out the free press and replace it with state-approved drivel that ensures public opinion is pacified.

Trump has, in effect, decided that the media cannot be allowed to oppose his worldview; that view is, of course, that he is the best and anyone saying otherwise is telling a lie. At the same time, he has clearly recognized that some form of media is needed to broadcast his messages. After the press pool that provides TV coverage of the president boycotted, he was left with literally no microphone during a speech about opening a new White House helipad.

Enter Trump TV from stage right. At the moment, Trump TV appears to be a glorified streaming channel; there's no news anchors, just a running feed of Trump content, and not many people are watching it. Yet Trump TV is deeply unsettling, and not just because you can listen to Trump drone on and on for 24 hours a day (I tuned in for five minutes to see how it worked and immediately felt as if my brain cells were jumping ship). Trump TV is media broadcast by the state, a bloviating mouthpiece for government propaganda. We have yet to see whether the Trump administration is committed to continuing the channel, but its very creation is significant. It is an affront to the idea of a free press and the American people's right to independent content.

The joint decision by Politico, CNN and MS NOW to sue the administration is a good one, and the ban will likely be overturned. We should not have to rely on the justice system, however, as a last resort. In a society that truly valued the free press, with a government that believed in a democracy of information, Trump's ban would not happen. Instead, Trump's attacks on the press have metastasized. The media will have to push harder than ever to maintain its freedom, and the American people will have to remain vigilant of Trump's dangerous state-run propaganda program.

If you find yourself tuning into Trump TV, do so at your own risk — and freedom's.

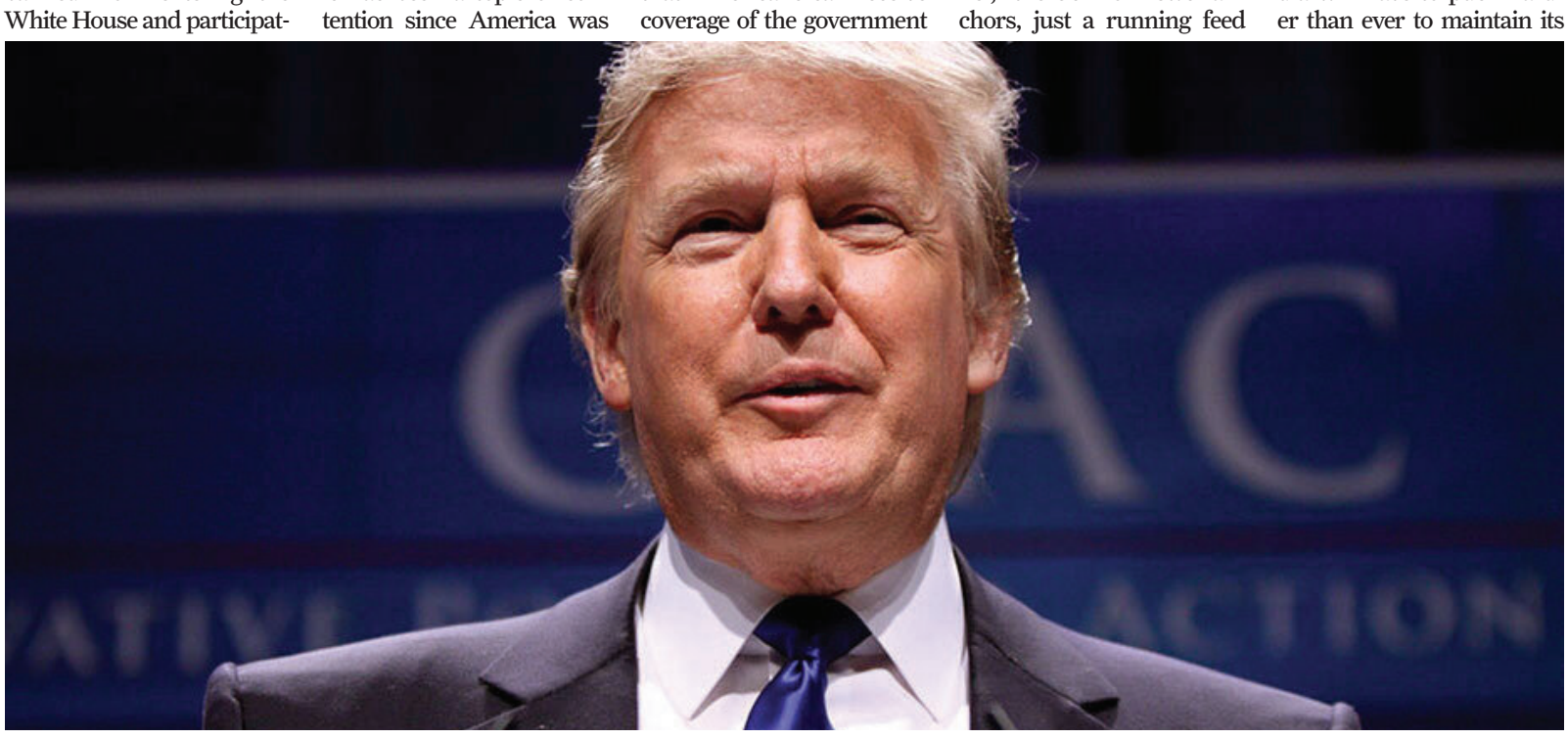

resident Donald Trump speaks to an audience. His decision to ban reporters from certain news outlets has caused all networks to pull out of the TV pool coverage.

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Huskytalk | Who Would You Like to Ride a Tandem Bike With?


"I'm gonna go Sarah Strong"

Alexa Beams
Nursing Major
5th Semester


"I gotta go Braylon Mullins, why not?"

Daniel Cirella
Natural Resources Major
5th Semester


"I would like to share a tandem bike ride with the one-and-only Derek Johnson"

Caeleigh Salmon
Finance Major
7th Semester


"I would love to share a tandem bike ride with my classmate Spencer; I work on assignments with him he's a great guy."

Sam Corey
Actuarial Science Major
5th Semester