

Why Is the Media So Obsessed With President Trump?

Allow me to state the obvious: there is a palpable mania surrounding our 45th president.

In fact, a report from Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy analyzed news coverage of President Trump's first 100 days in office. The study concludes that 41 percent of all news coverage was related to President Trump—three times the amount of attention given to past presidents—and a whopping 80 percent has been negative. For CNN and NBC, that number was above 90 percent

Think about that for a moment. This president dominates the news unlike any before him and it's almost all negative. It's a media obsession like we've never seen before.

How on earth did we get here?

After all, it's not all so clear cut. A recent survey conducted by the Harvard Institute of Politics found that most millennials agree with a majority of President Trump's policies when no mention of his name is given. When you conduct the same poll and add the name Trump, 41 percent of the respondents gave him a letter grade of F. This poll clearly reveals a kind of bias, but what exactly is fueling it?

Ironically, in that same survey, Millennials agreed with President Trump regarding the media. Only 10 percent give the news media an A regarding its coverage of the president—26 percent give them an F.

It's no secret that the news media leans left. They tell us they do. Consider the fact that 96 percent of political donations made by members of the media went to Clinton in the

last election. And while news coverage of past Republican Presidents Reagan, H.W. Bush and W. Bush similarly received more negative coverage compared to their Democratic counterparts Clinton and Obama—what we’re witnessing now is astonishing.

Is it simply a matter of reporters, commentators and anchors naturally revealing their political bias? Perhaps that’s a factor. Is it that President Trump has declared war on the media? Certainly that accounts for some of the media’s fixation. Do some in the media simply detest the president? I think it’s safe to say the answer is yes.

But could it also be that the corporations that own these outlets have simply hit “pay dirt?”

Remember that news, like any other business, is required to turn a profit, and the numbers are in—President Trump is good for ratings. Most major news outlets have enjoyed skyrocketing numbers in the first part of 2017. For example, CNN had its best Q1 since 2003, and MSNBC enjoyed a 51 percent spike in total audience.

Trump’s election might have even saved the *Late Show* with Stephen Colbert when the host took a hardline stance against the president. Similarly, President Trump has turned shows like John Oliver’s *Last Week Tonight*—known for its politically charged zingers and one-liners at the president’s expense—into must watch TV for large swaths of the electorate.

Then there’s the near automatic hyperventilation by some of those once considered calm and measured in their approach—often set in motion by the now infamous “unnamed sources.” It all feels more like playground gossip and tabloid fodder than straight news.

So, place yourself in the president’s shoes for a moment. What if your boss decided to let you go because an “unnamed source” at your office said you were colluding with the competition?

You would be livid, and rightly so and likely demand that the source be named.

In a nation where we are “innocent until proven guilty,” it’s clear that certain journalists do not extend the same courtesy they would desire themselves, to our political leaders. What happened to wanting the best for our country and our leaders regardless of their party affiliation?

I have honest disagreements with President Trump, but I’ve also met the man on multiple occasions, and the caricature portrayed by his political opponents is unfair. In person, he’s sympathetic, funny and gracious. He’s a good listener, and when he has a difference of opinion, he lets you know in a respectful way, and he’s generally interested in why you disagree. Sure he’s plainspoken, but he’s not unkind. In short, President Trump is likable, and he’s smart too.

The media is expressly protected in our Constitution because we depend on their virtue and independence to keep the public informed. We the viewer, reader and listener must demand more from them. We desperately need more from them. We do not need to be entertained or prodded on. We need the media to be the adults in the conversation, careful sifting through the noise, in search of not simply the truth, but civil discourse.

I don’t write this as a Democrat or a Republican, but as an American who believes we as a nation are called to more than this.

Whether you like him or not, President Trump deserves an honest and unbiased account—and so do the American people.

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez *is president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.*