

The Bourgeois Marxist in the Era of Surreality Politics

Melissa Tandiwe Myambo

Welcome to the era of Surreality Politics!

As the 20th-century drew to a close, reality TV became popular even though it soon became clear that it was actually contrived and just dressed up as real, like a little girl wearing stilettos pretending to be a grown-up. In the 21st-century, fake news is all the rage. It concocts outrageous cocktails of conspiracy theories, stranger-than-truth fiction and slanderous assertions into short, snappy “articles” pretending to be real. These are aimed at niche markets whose media consumers gobble up the “information” that confirms their already-established point of view. Social media has also splintered the notion of the public square and now we can each live in our own silo/echo chamber/virtual cultural time zone in which all “facts” confirm our vision of the world.

This is an essay about numbers and language and actual facts and the Media Infotainment Complex that spawned the terror that is Donald Trump. It is an eyewitness account of various anti-Trump protests that have been inadequately covered in some instances by the mainstream media and which took place in New York and in Washington, D.C., where I took the photo above. It is an appeal to any right-thinking conservative to stand up for reason, rationality, enduring values and simple truth. It is a desperate attempt to dispel various delusions because they are extraordinarily dangerous and in turn lead to the Trump administration’s deceptive, Orwellian doublespeak...

Donald Trump, the Tangerine Bully-in-Chief, is waging a ferocious campaign against reality, fact, logic, and simple truth which is further calling into question whether he is [morally qualified](#) to hold the highest office in the land.

“This was the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe,” Sean Spicer, White House Press Secretary, 21 January, 2017.

Factually incorrect. An “alternative fact” = Specious use of language to misrepresent the truth of the situation.

“This is not a Muslim ban,” Donald Trump, 29 January, 2017.

Factually incorrect. An “alternative fact” = Specious use of language to misrepresent the truth of the situation.
(Trump's executive order temporarily prohibiting entry into the United States for migrants from seven Muslim-majority countries including a permanent ban on Syrian refugees is a Muslim ban targeting less powerful Muslim nations like Yemen

to satisfy Islamophobes but does not apply to more powerful countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan. It makes the US [less safe](#), not more, and is [shameful](#) and revolting.)

Trump is unerringly obsessed with size – currently, with the size of the crowds at his inauguration on Friday 20 January, 2017, and secondly, with the size of his defeat at the hands of Hillary Clinton on 8 November, 2016. Yes, as of now, Trump won the electoral college and is hence the president of the United States. But he lost the popular vote by almost three million votes. Such a large discrepancy between the electoral college victor and the popular vote winner is unprecedented in US history. 46% of US voters voted for Trump but 54% of the American electorate supported a different candidate. These are facts that would sober and caution a wiser man.

Trump is no such man. Instead of recognizing this reality, he rejects these unflattering truths that become part of a series of refusals to recognize facts such as the size of his inauguration crowds which were much smaller than those of Obama's historic inauguration as the first African American president in 2009. He refuses to accept that he lost the popular vote, insisting with nary a shred of evidence that three to five million "illegal" immigrants somehow flouted the law and voted for his eternal nemesis, Clinton. If it were not for these "illegal" votes, of course, he insists - believe me! - he would have won the popular vote.

FACT: Trump lost the popular vote – [big league!](#)

Why can he not accept these truths?

He is a small man. He is physically large but his small hands, his small mind, his tiny intellect, his scant understanding of geopolitics and sparse knowledge of world history combined with his ego, that ego more fragile than a moth wing, have led him to this dangerous delusion.

What are the consequences of Trump's denial of [reality](#)?

The consequences are that if you add up his history as a reality TV star and his penchant for consuming the highly partisan Fox News and more egregious fake news, he manages to live in his own Kingdom of Surreality. He is now attempting to drag the rest of us down with him into his subterranean palace of Surreality where his need for infinite adulation has led him to believe that he is King and that all the people want him as their King.

This in turn leads to surreal instances, like when he claims that the size of the crowd at his inauguration was larger than that of Obama's 2009 inauguration.

That is not true. In other words, it is a lie. But Kellyanne Conway, recently named White House counselor, and fast on her way to becoming the most reviled woman in

America, has chosen to call these lies, “alternative facts.”

Alternative facts are also lies. Conway is so unpopular because we know that she knows that she has sold her soul. Before she worked for the Trump campaign, she worked against it in her capacity as a super PAC professional backing Trump’s former opponent Ted Cruz. She is [on camera](#) marshaling several facts that depict Trump as unethical and unpresidential.

But just as her new boss denies saying things that he is on camera saying, urging us to question the veracity before our own eyes and ears, so does the rest of his staff. Facts are therefore the ground on which all ensuing battles will be fought.

The fiction of his own popularity that he feeds himself determines what policy positions he decides to push through. Instead of governing in a centrist, rational fashion, recognizing that he lost the popular vote by almost three million votes, admitting that the majority of Americans voted against him, Trump is implementing an extremely, right-wing agenda tailor-made for a small fraction of the people who voted for him – his rabid base. Let us be factual, not all the people who voted for Trump constitute his base just as not all Trump voters are white supremacists and bigots. Yet, Trump insists on catering to the smaller, extreme segment, [narrowcasting](#) instead of broadcasting.

Reality TV shows are made for niche audiences. Trump’s presidency in the first weeks is geared towards a small segment of the US population. He is in action and gesture the minority president elected by a minority of the population. But because he lives in the Kingdom of Surreality, he cannot recognize that fact and thus will not “pivot” towards more centrist, mainstream policies that might be more palatable to a broader swath of a deeply polarized country.

But if Trump truly is a madman, we all have to take the blame for it.

Trump built his political career on the dubious foundations of “birtherism,” the conspiracy theory of “alternative” facts that claimed President Obama was not American-born and thus not the legitimate president. The Republican Party did not sufficiently distance themselves from this fiction because it appealed to some members of their base. When he launched his presidential campaign on 16 June, 2015, Trump’s political career took flight on the wings of the racist assertion that Mexican migrants entering the US “illegally” were “rapists” and “criminals.” If at that point, the Republican Party had shown an ounce of integrity and denounced him on the grounds that bigotry was not part of their party platform, we would be in a different place today. He would have been forced to run as an independent and would likely have floundered without institutional backing.

But the Republican Party has no integrity. They allowed this candidate to rise and thrive, not in spite of his surreal and outlandish statements but because of them. Surreality politics has served Trump well just as hyperbolic bragging served

him as a businessman. Unlike ordinary crazy people though, he has a whole host of enablers surrounding him who echo back his falsities.

But there are also other culprits to blame for Trump's ascension. The Media Infotainment Complex – not the extreme right, fringe-y Breitbarts and Infowars etc. but the mainstream news outlets of cable channels and the most well-read US newspapers – provided wall-to-wall coverage of Trump's every utterance, tweet and false claim during his campaign. When, in the first week of Trump's fractious presidency, Trump aide, Steve Bannon, calls the elite media "the opposition party," he is employing the type of doublespeak typical of the Trump campaign and presidency. The media propelled Trump's rise and now is bolstering his power by aptly playing the role of convenient scapegoat. They are his friend and his foe, his sidekick and his foil.

Now, as Trump, the minority president, begins his niche governing, implementing radical right-wing, extreme policies that ultimately will have long-term negative consequences, as he apparently attempts to start a (trade)war with Mexico and instigate hostile relations with China and several Muslim Nations (but not Russia), orders the building of a controversial wall and the even more shunned Dakota access pipeline and begins to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, and reconfigures the National Security Council and calls the National Park Services to demand they produce photos of the inauguration that make the crowds look bigger and insists that he wants to waste US taxpayer dollars in an investigation of the three to five million mythical votes cast by chimerical "illegals," the Media Infotainment Complex is outraged at his blatant lies...

But it is too little and way, way too late, and they are constantly outflanked by the administration's doublespeak, saying one thing although it means another, taking two, three or four contradictory position on any given issue (there is also a good measure of incompetence to blame for this as most of Trump's White House has no experience in government).

But even more saddening is how Trump's surreality politics is enabled by the Republican Party. Where is Paul Ryan, Mitch McConnell, John McCain or Jason Chaffetz? Cannot a single one of them stand up to Trump and tell him, STOP the madness!

No, they will not dismantle Trump's Kingdom of Surreality, dangerous as it is, because they are power-hungry. They hope to push their own somewhat more moderate agendas through with a Republican in the White House, even though many of his core positions do not correlate with the Republican Party's former platform (protectionism instead of free trade, big government spending sprees instead of fiscal prudence etc.).

Observers keep observing that the Democrats' electoral losses in 2016 mean that the party is in a crisis. But no more so than the massive identity crisis of the

Republican Party whose ideological hypocrisy will be remembered as a very dark chapter in US history.

And now, the whole globe faces a massive threat from this delusional man that American people have installed as their leader because they have been so cavalier with their democracy. There were ample warning signs. He campaigned like a Third World, Banana Republic [dictator](#) and thus far, he is governing like one. Many countries suffer under authoritarian leaders of questionable mental stability. But those countries do not so dominate the world stage and hence the negative consequences of their delusions and despotic tendencies do not effect the whole entire world.

What is a bourgeois Marxist to do in such troubling times?



Well, first of all, she has to postpone her pedicure, put on her big-girl panties and find the nearest protest. I had to return to the US earlier than expected so took in three protests in three days. This is what I saw, what the mainstream media aka the Media Infotainment Complex did not (thoroughly) report and what Trump's campaign of disinformation is aimed at deleting from the history books.

Thursday 19 January, 2017, cold, chilly, muddy in Central Park as we try and inch closer to the stage all the way down by Columbus Circle and Trump International Tower. The road is jam-packed with protesters but we're too far up Central Park West to actually hear what Michael Moore is [saying](#). Placards and excerpts of conversations steeped in outrage and emotion. A woman swinging her umbrella: "Drain the swamp? I've never seen such a swampy cabinet! Could any of these people be more unqualified or unethical?" A man dressed in military fatigues grumbles, "Goldman Sachs! Trump accused Hillary of being in bed with Wall Street. Now look how many Goldman Sachs jerks are in his administration."

We can see the huge screen above the dais through the leafless tree branches but we slip and slide through the park to get close enough to hear and now Al Sharpton's voice drills through the heavy, wet air. "Trump wants to turn back the clock, but he can't turn back time." Applause, cheers. But I wonder if it's true.

Friday 20 January, 2017: Almost missed the bus from Union Square, scrambled in at the last possible moment, sleepy, jet-lagged, stressed about whether my bag is small enough to be allowed through the secret service checkpoint. But how to go all the way from New York to D.C. sans any stuff? The bus travels through the night, heading southwards on smooth highways, not a single pothole.

Americans have no idea how good they have it, how much wealthier and functional their country is than so many others. If they had some point of comparison, would they have voted for a man who poses an existential threat to those core American values of egalitarianism and freedom that often persuade the world to forgive this country for its imperialist exploits, illegal occupations of other people's lands, general plunder and immoral war-mongering? Donald Trump has already set about destroying the principles that America might have one day lived up to in full but whose mere existence has always served as an aspiration and an inspiring ideal...

Busses are not allowed into the nation's capital today so around five in the morning, we draw into a parking lot somewhere in Virginia. The sun has not risen yet and despite how the soon-to-be-inaugurated president will recount this day going forward, it is a drizzly, dismal day in which it rains all day on and off including as he is giving his inaugural address at around noon.

Now pay attention. After Trump comes out with the hot lie that his inauguration was attended by huge crowds, many news outlets cited DC metro ridership for that

day to bolster their point that hundreds of thousands more people rode the metro on Obama's inauguration day. 570,557 riders used the Metro system on Trump's inauguration day compared to 1.1 million trips for President Obama's 2009 inauguration and 782,000 trips for his second inauguration in 2013. The media then goes on to equate the number of metro riders with the number of supporters attending Trump's inauguration.

WHY? Why do they assume that all the people on the metro were there to celebrate Trump's inauguration? I took the metro that day, along with thousands of other protesters who had come from near and far to raise our voices in dissent. We came to "inaugurate the resistance" as one bright yellow sign read, to lift placards with thought-provoking sentiments, "We need a mirror not a wall," to shout and chant, "Hey hey, ho ho, Donald Trump has go to go!", "Say it loud, say it clear: Immigrants are welcome here!", "NO Trump, NO KKK, NO fascist USA!"

Thousands of people taking the metro that morning were protesters. We arrived from far and wide, making our way through D.C.'s alphabetized, numerical, still dark streets. Vendors, most of them black and Latino, were setting up at various street corners preparing to sell T-shirts emblazoned with Trump's jowly scowl and red Make America Great Again baseball caps.

"Hey girl, you come to protest?" one vendor asked me as we consulted the directions to our protest site somewhere near Seventh and D streets. Yes, I nodded, I have. He laughed, "I'm gonna protest too. Soon as I finish selling all my stock. I mean, a man's gotta make a living and Trump's gotta be good for something!"

I would find out first-hand later on that day that Washington, D.C.'s working-class population is decidedly anti-Trump. He only won 4% of the vote in his new home and only 10% in his long-time hometown, Manhattan.

We eventually found the secret service-manned checkpoint where we had to queue for more than an hour in order to access the Navy Memorial where protesters would gather to chant slogans as the inaugural parade came by several hours later. Seventh street was full of protesters, snapping photos, uploading them to Twitter and Instagram, live streaming the action except there wasn't much going on. Everyone there seemed to be a protester and we were all just waiting to get through secret service. It would be a couple hours before I even saw a single Trump supporter. The most exciting event was when a group of people lifted a sign broken up into squares (as one could only bring fairly small placards onto the parade route). When they put it together, it read FASCIST. Then they turned it around and it said FAKE 45* (*illegitimate).

The morning was long and wet and I was freezing to death. Finally, I had to remind myself that I am a bourgeois Marxist and hence needed to take a break from protesting in the cold drizzle. Plus there was too much speechifying and not enough pumping music in between speakers. So I left my fellow protesters behind to fight

the good fight, exited the secure area and went in search of the warmest nearby restaurant. Once identified, I almost ran in the door, so excited was I by the prospect of heat. But as I entered, there was a flurry of activity as the staff surrounded me. They anxiously asked me to remove my signs – Congress, Listen Up! – and the bright yellow sign hung around my neck.

That was the first time that day I saw more than three Trump supporters together. There was a group of about twenty out-of-towners who were applauding and cheering as he gave his inaugural address. The servers seated me in a different part of the restaurant and of course they were all brown and black people and they came and shook my hand and said, thank you for protesting, because they couldn't and they took my dying cell phone to charge it for me and they told me they had to serve the supporters but this was a sad day for them, so different from the optimism of 2009 and they felt they couldn't express their own opinions as they had to do their jobs so they gave me hot tea on the house and offered to pack me some snacks to get through the rest of the day because Trump wouldn't be passing in front of our protest site on the parade route for some hours to come.

When Trump staffers go to DC restaurants, how many waiters are spitting in their drinks, the only way they can express their disgust and their resistance?

Outside the restaurant, protesters are lining up all the way down the street now. But unlike the early morning when we had first queued to go through the secret service security checkpoint when there were really only protesters in this area, now, Trump supporters are streaming by, coming from the inauguration. Most are silent as they read our signs and hear our chants. Some look disappointed and complain that we're raining on Trump's parade. An adherent to fact points out that rain is raining on Trump's parade. But logic and fact and reason are not the strong suit of many of those who choose to engage with the protesters, shouting out insults like, "Why don't you go get a job?" or "Go back to where you came from!" or simply, "You lost! Get over it!"

There is a white man standing behind me holding two placards: Hell Fucking NO! and Not my president, a common sentiment, except he had crossed out the my and wrote anyone's. Many Trump supporters send their children to come and scold him for using the "F-word." One blonde little boy of about ten years old says aggressively, sarcastically, "Nice use of expletives, Sir." Adults grumble the same thing. The man points out in factually accurate terms that they had voted a man into office who had broken every convention of basic decency and admitted in his own words to sexually molesting women. Yet, a common curse word offended their delicate ears? They were unable to coherently respond to this assertion.

The wait to get through security was even longer and more arduous but at least the rain had gone for a coffee break. There is a 19-year-old university student, a man who has just turned 90 waiting to get through to the protest. Next to them is a woman in her 70s who is here to support Trump. She asks me if I heard his

“uplifting” and “unifying” inaugural address in which he claims that he will be the president of all Americans. She is an elderly lady so I must be polite to her but inside I am reciting a lot of expletives.

The Media Infotainment Complex is busy covering some violent protesters – the minority – who broke some windows somewhere else but of course garner all the headlines. Where we are the protesters are all peacefully chanting slogans and bobbing their signs high up in the air even as Bikers for Trump supporters, beefy guys in black leather jackets with Harley Davidson decals and more tattoos than skin, walk past slowly, glowering at us.

This is a great country. In so many nations around the world, supporters of the ruling party and members of the opposition cannot occupy the same geographical place without grave violence erupting. Although as the day progresses, tension mounts and the threat of violence seems to grow along with the afternoon shadows, I will only witness one incident that could have been deadly a few hours hence.

But now, there is a long, long queue because the secret service is taking forever to let people in one by one, making us go through metal scanners, unpacking our bags item by item. The secret service guy even opens my lipstick! There are rumors all day long that they are turning away protesters and preventing larger signs from getting through but I did not personally witness any such incident. I just wished the American people could toyi-toyi at protests. That would really animate this crowd and keep us going. The sniper shooters dressed in black pacing atop the National Archives opposite us make it seem like this is just a movie. If it is, who wrote this terrifying script?

Hours later, we gather into small groups to brave the streets to return to the metro station in case we meet marauding groups of alcohol-fuelled Trump supporters. The streets are fine but when we descend into the metro station, there is a huge commotion and dozens of police. On the tracks, there is a stationary train and a black woman sitting on the floor of the car with her hands in the air. At the other end of the car are two black men surrounded by burly officers, barking into walkie talkies.

A large crowd of protesters blocks the car door and begins to clap and chant, “Let them go, let them go, let them go!” A woman next to us explains that when the train had pulled into the station, two Trump supporters, identified by their red MAGA caps, rushed out of the car and shouted to the police that there was a black man with a gun inside. The police tackled the men but no gun was found. The protester, a 30-something white lady, says bleakly, “That was tantamount to a death sentence.” Meanwhile, those two Trump supporters had long disappeared but considering how often police escalate situations involving unarmed black males who end up shot to death, we can only tut-tut sympathetically.

On the crowded train back to Virginia, full of Trump protesters and supporters

squashed together, a middle-aged Trump supporter in his 50s, a kindly-looking man wearing an ill-fitting suit, looks at our signs, slowly taking them in. As the stations pass by and the train begins to empty out, he says to me, "It's time to unify now."

"Unify behind or against Trump, sir?" I ask.

"We have to get behind him now. He's our president and we all have to work together."

"Did you vote for him, sir?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"I think he's a good man." His wife bows her head and then turns to look out the window at the darkening winter landscape.

I am trying to keep the conversation polite as everyone says one must engage with the other side but at that point one of my fellow protesters could not contain herself, "A good man?" she almost chokes. Then she launched into Trump's long history of exploiting small contractors who worked for his businesses, his venal cabinet picks, general Republican Party malfeasance when it comes to the potential privatization of social security supported by Trump's VP, Mike Pence who also embodies a clear and present threat to LGBTQI rights...

The man is glazing over and looks thoroughly uncomfortable. I cut her off and just say, "Sir, if you voted for him, please hold him accountable. If you think he is a good man, please make sure his actions are good. I come from a Third World dictatorship, I know what that means and sadly, I see Trump exhibiting the same type of corruption, nepotism and authoritarianism typical of such states." When we disembark, I wave at his wife and say, "Get home safe."

I wonder what that couple is thinking now, ten days in to his contentious presidency. Do we have the same definition of "good"? Do they think it's good for Trump to build a wall on the Mexican border and block Muslims from entering the country and install his white nationalist advisor Steve Bannon on the National Security Council?

Many millions of Americans and millions more around the world do not think he is a good man. Quite the opposite. Thus far, Trump has established a new record. Never has a US president evoked so many millions of people to come out and protest against him in so short a time. He should boast about that. It's actually true. DJT, the protest machine!

Saturday 21 January, 2017: The Women's March, New York chapter. Four hundred thousand marchers took to the streets in New York. All I can say is that there were thousands and thousands of people enraged that the NYPD wouldn't let us come right up to Trump Tower. Despite the ubiquitous presence of small children, several protesters lifted up their middle finger a block away from Trump's tower and later

on, I heard that some protesters did break through the barricades to plant disparaging placards at the base of the Trump building.

Five hundred thousand women and supporters (men and children) flocked to D.C. to stand up for human rights and women's rights. Crowd scientists (apparently an actual job) said it was three times bigger than Trump's inaugural crowds. Trump should own this and be proud of these stats: 673 to 700 marches took place in 60 to 75 different countries [around the world](#) including Paradise Bay, Antarctica, Cape Town, South Africa and New Delhi, India. It is estimated that 3.5 to 5 million people took part worldwide. I won't bother to cite my sources here because the current president is fact-allergic but believe me, I did ask my BFF Google for this info and found that different sources gave different figures hence the ranges above. But whatever way you look at it, impressive numbers so Congratulations, Mr. Trump! That is a lot of people who came out to protest against you and everything you stand for!

In the days since the inauguration, "liberal snowflakes" - a Trump supporter insult used for progressives perhaps because we have such delicate sensibilities but sounds rather lovely and lacey - walk around New York and wonder how it is that someone who hails from this multicultural city of such religious, cultural, racial, sexual, ethnic diversity can possibly hold such hateful views. New York City speaks [800 languages](#)! Some languages that are no longer spoken anywhere else in the world are spoken here yet the man occupying the White House speaks a limited English consisting of fatuous stock phrases and six oft-repeated adjectives and can only spew prejudice and odium.

I feel like crying when I walk into a bodega and see the hard-working Spanish-speaking migrants who keep this city running. I order a café con leche, leave a \$6 tip. I don't know how to apologise for how they're being treated as a political football by a man whose hotels and casinos and golf courses cannot function without them. I see a woman in a hijab and want to tell her to never listen to a thing that this administration says. But instead I put in a call to Mayor Bill de Blasio's office as I head uptown on Broadway towards Little India.

"Hello, I am a New York City tax payer. Why are my tax dollars being used to pay for Melania Trump's security to a tune of half a million dollars per day? She should move to D.C. and if not, her husband should foot the bill for her security. Who has ever heard of a First Lady who doesn't accompany her husband to the White House?" Then I sign the [petition](#).

But finally, I am done with my anti-Trump errand of the day and I turn east towards [Kalustyan's](#), the kind of store you can only find in a great city like this one

with its diverse selection of foodstuffs from almost every region of the world. I wonder again if Donald Trump has ever taken the subway, or chatted with the people staffing every corner bodega, or visited a shop in Chinatown. He seems to only have photo ops in gilded rooms and on gliding escalators. If he had ever ventured down from his tower, wouldn't he have learned so much more about the world here in these streets. But I am not going to think about him any more until my next protest, petition, phone call to a government official. For now, we are going to buy imli, sweet and sour tamarind that is the best way to end any meal.

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