

Timothy Snyder's Lesson #10 in his book, *On Tyranny*, seems especially relevant right now. "Believe in Truth" is something that we must consider particularly at this time. Contrary to the rhetoric that has come out of the White House these past three and a half years, there is not "an alternative truth." Facts are facts. So, when Donald Trump spends months trying to convince the American public that the coronavirus issue was a "hoax," many people believed him. Others knew that he was wrong, but attributed it to ignorance.

And now, after nearly 200,000 Americans have died of this virus, voice recordings of Donald Trump over several hours of conversations with journalist Bob Woodward have made it clear that he did know the consequences of this devastating pandemic all along. He was just plain lying to the people. So, worse than our earlier estimation that he is particularly stupid, we have now heard—in his own voice—that he is just an unbelievably irresponsible, self-absorbed criminal. And, if we as a country cannot recognize this after all that he has said and done—and not done, in the case of actions that were necessary to be taken—we are poor excuses to be called citizens of this country.

Truth isn't always pleasant. There are times when it is not easy, comfortable, or fun to tell the truth. Many of us learn this lesson at a very young age. Sometimes, it is a traumatic moment. We have all heard or read of a child who took something from a store and was made to return the item and admit the guilt. Others among us heard it at home regularly. "Tell the truth." And, if we learn it well from people who care about us, it is something that we never forget. Hopefully, it is also a guide for us through the years as we conduct our personal and public lives.

For whatever reason, Donald Trump apparently never learned this lesson. He has regularly lied to the American people, and his followers have excused him, denied the facts that were borne out in recorded speeches, and claimed that truth could be any number of things.

Timothy Snyder begins his short essay on truth like this: "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle. The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding lights."

Wake up, people. Reclaim our country from the mire and muck that has characterized the Trump years. And, believe in truth.