Words Do Indeed Matter

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We keep hearing that words matter. So what is the problem with having a president who is uninformed about critical issues, won’t listen, incessantly lies and does everything to put the emphasis on his own political successes rather than the security of the nation? When confronted with a serious health crisis, as we are today, we won’t be able to know whether the story is complete and accurate, that all is being done and that our country is safe.

I raise this issue not as an anti-Trump partisan but as a citizen worried about our wellbeing and a scholar of rhetoric who studies the impact of language. After listening to Donald Trump at his February 25th press conference, I was not reassured. Although surrounded by experts, all of whom seemed more like window dressing, playing a subordinate role, the President was incoherent and did not seem like a leader in full command of the situation.

Since his election in 2016 I have written dozens of op-eds arguing that a large number of Trump supporters will continue to ignore and tolerate
his lies until they feel tangible consequence of those lies. In his press conference the President lied about the coronavirus threat, contradicted his CDC experts as well as what he himself said, and blamed the Democrats and the media for what he alleged was an overreaction to this crisis.

Let me be very clear: I don’t wish anyone to experience pain. I truly hope, therefore, coronavirus won’t be one of the consequences I alluded to in my op-eds. If it is, that will be a horrible price to pay for blindly following the most dangerous President in American history.

Words matter is far more than a cliché.

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