I am a 68 year old white male of privilege, who has observed the best and worst of the United States over the course of my lifetime. Yet never have I been so worried and scared about where our country and democratic republic are headed.

As a communication scholar and teacher since 1974, it makes me physically ill witnessing how our President is using his rhetorical skills and media experience—as a reality television host—for such evil and unsavory purposes. Trump’s absurd and staged photo op on Tuesday,
combined with his contradictory actions (using the military and tear gas to remove peaceful protestors so he could walk to a church) and declaration of war against American citizens are just the most recent examples.

While it may sound absurd, I am convinced that President Trump actually can carry out a national coup via rhetoric—something I never could have imagined. The consequences of rhetoric may be even greater than many of us who study communication have ever thought. In the words of novelist Kurt Vonnegut, referring to the power of theater, “we are what we pretend to be."

_Rick Cherwitz_
_Austin, TX_