

JOUR 608 - Monthly Essay #1

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Woodward and Trump: The Deadliest Duo

Bob Woodward was a notorious author and reporter for *The Washington Post*. In December of 2019, Woodward claims he received an “out of the blue” phone call from former President Donald Trump, that he needed to “unburden himself” from information dealing with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Associated Press). Woodward was in the process of writing another book, “*Rage*,” and looked to Trump for context. Woodward and Trump met for 18 recorded interviews from December 2019 to July 2020, as the COVID pandemic was quickly destroying the everyday lives of many (Cillizza). While Trump misinformed the media, Woodward was only taking notes.

In the interviews, Trump discussed many things with Woodward. Especially informing him of how COVID is transmitted through air droplets, how citizens are not taking it seriously enough, and how he is purposely downplaying its effects in public eye (Cillizza). Not only was Trump undermining the situation in its early, most reversible stage, but he was continuously mocking mask wearers, promoting hydroxychloroquine for treatment despite FDA revocation, and suggesting people “shine a bright light inside their bodies” or drink disinfectant to avoid contagion (Cillizza). Trump stressed to Woodward that this was “deadly stuff” while simultaneously telling the public it was no worse than a common flu (Associated Press).

While Trump fed the nation false information about a deadly virus, Woodward kept his mouth shut. Woodward had plans to release a book in September 2020 that was to include the private conversations he had with Trump. Woodward claimed he needed time to be sure what Trump was saying was true, but why would he want to wait to find out? How many lives could

have been saved if Woodward had taken that information straight to the press, into *The Washington Post*?

This was not Woodward's first press interaction with a president. Woodward's reporting for *The Post* during the Nixon administration encouraged Nixon to resign. His mission then was to find out, "What did he know and when did he know it?" (Cillizza). This time was different. He knew what Trump knew, when he knew it, and exactly how he was manipulating the whole country. Yet, still did not release the information when it was most needed. Woodward revealed over a year later what Trump had told him in his book, "*Rage*."

After the debut of the book, Woodward and Trump received a lot of backlash. Both men stood strong in their defense, seemingly blaming one another for the lack of communicating information about COVID. Trump's reasoning for downplaying the virus was to avoid "panic" (Cillizza). Trump defended himself claiming Woodward should have gone to "authorities" if what he was saying was "so bad" (Cillizza). Trump intentionally downplayed the effects of COVID to the public and media and then when he was called out for it, downplayed what he said in interviews with Woodward. Woodward was too interested in personal gain from the book and knew this information being included would make it more desirable. Both men, in my opinion, are disgusting.

When it comes to Woodward, his decision to hold the information until his book was published is not justified. At all. As an accredited reporter, bringing hard information like that to the public should have been his first instinct. He was not being responsible for withholding information and I really do think he knew exactly what he was doing. He didn't need "time" to fact check the president, he needed time to finish his book. He needed the publicity. He needed

the money. And, he needed more time to feed his ego by continuing meetings and private conversations with Trump.

Woodward was most likely going through the individual versus community paradigm (He didn't choose community). Like I said, I think he knew exactly what he was doing in this situation. He knew the COVID information from Trump was true long before he might like to admit it. However, I think he also knew that his findings would infiltrate the media quickly, allowing other reporters and companies to get their word in on it to. He probably also knew that, upon outing this information, Trump would likely stop meeting with him for the interviews. Woodward obviously cared more about getting the context for his book to finish and sell it, rather than telling the public that the president is lying to them and that their lives are at risk.

Unfortunately, Woodward chose himself, the individual, and continues to defend his position. I do not agree nor respect his decision and I think it's quite selfish. Woodward is in a position that requires him to be transparent, honest, and serve the public interest. Claiming at the time of the interviews, "the issue was no longer of public health but politics," (Associated Press). Proving further that COVID has never been about the people or their health. Rather, unjustly used for political and personal gain for the elites.

Sources:

Cillizza, Chris. "Analysis: Someone Needs to Remind Donald Trump That Bob Woodward Isn't President of the United States." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 11 Sept. 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/10/politics/trump-bob-woodward-rage/index.html>.

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