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Ignoring the President

Barack Obama and the Postrhetorical Presidency

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On November 20, 2014, President Barack Obama addressed the nation about the controversial new immigration policy that one commentator called, "the biggest piece of immigration reform since Obama took office and . . . the boldest use of his executive power to date." Immigration policy had been on the nation's agenda for the past several years, and opinion polls repeatedly showed that Americans considered immigration reform to be a pressing issue facing the nation. With a presidential address scheduled announcing a key policy change on an issue requiring urgent action, we would expect that television network news organizations, in their role as watchdogs over the government, would be poised to offer their viewers not only the address, but also insightful commentary from their veteran political correspondents as well as rebuttals and extensions from the two major parties. But they did not. That night, the Americans who were eager to see news about the president's reforms turned their televisions to the Spanish-language channel Univision and to all-news channels such as Fox News and CNN, because ABC, NBC, and CBS chose to show their viewers not the president's address, but *Grey's Anatomy*, *The Biggest Loser*, and, of course, *The Big Bang Theory*.[1]

Why would television networks choose to ignore a major policy announcement made by the president of the United States? Several explanations are possible. For example, some have explained that

the decision was based upon economic considerations: the networks couldn't afford to give their precious airtime to the president during November Sweeps Week. Some believed more conspiratorial explanations: the Obama administration prevented the networks from carrying the president's speech because Obama's new immigration plan is part of a plot to destroy America. Still others may believe that the decision was simply prudent: since presidential rhetoric doesn't matter much, networks can easily, and perhaps wisely, ignore presidential speech making, especially when such speeches interfere with popular programming.[2]

I argue that the decision to ignore the president on November 20, 2014, is an artifact of the postrhetorical presidency and signals a major shift in the relationship between the presidency and the press. Scholars of presidential leadership have traditionally worked within the paradigm of the rhetorical presidency, which is an institutional argument about the way that presidents have sought to lead the public by "going over the heads of Congress" to speak directly to the people. The rhetorical presidency model made good sense within the traditional media market of the twentieth century, but it makes little sense within the new media market of the new millennium. If during the era of the rhetorical presidency presidents upset the balance and separation of powers by using traditional news media to speak directly to the people in an effort to get the people to put pressure on Congress to enact the president's agenda, then during the era of the postrhetorical presidency presidents use social media to go over the heads of Congress and around the news filter to speak directly to supporters. The era of the rhetorical presidency was characterized by a relationship between the presidency and the press that was reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and stable; the era of the postrhetorical presidency is characterized by a relationship between the presidency and the press that is independent, competitive, and unstable. Like the rhetorical presidency model of presidential leadership, the postrhetorical presidency model is grounded in an institutional argument: the relationship between the press and the president that characterized the era of the rhetorical presidency has fundamentally changed. In this chapter, I attempt to make sense of that institutional change. While, as Stephen Hartnett and I have argued, the postrhetorical presidency began with the Bush administration, I believe that

it flourished with the Obama administration's expert use of social and new media.[3]

Understanding the postrhetorical presidency helps us to make sense of the shift from columns to characters. In considering the implications of this shift I argue that while the postrhetorical presidency enabled the Obama administration to disseminate and control its message, it likely also prevented the press from acting as a watchdog over the government. In pursuit of this thesis, I first describe the reciprocally dependent relationship between the press and the president that characterized the rhetorical presidency (a context within which the networks could not have ignored the president's speech) before describing how the Obama administration managed the rollout of the immigration speech announcement, and finally, I analyze the features of the postrhetorical presidency. The immigration speech thus provides us with an excellent example of the way the relationship between the press and the president has changed with the shift from columns to characters.

The Reciprocal Relationship between the Press and the President

Perhaps the dirtiest insult in the early republic was to accuse a statesman of ambition. Ambition meant being self-serving, conniving, and most certainly not fit for leadership.[4] Rather than risk the semblance of ambition, leaders of the founding generation sought to cultivate, like Cincinnatus, disinterest in governing: one governed because one was called to serve his fellows by his fellows; one risked reputation and financial status to govern; one never sought power, but only begrudgingly accepted it because one's primary concern was the public good; and one gave power away as quickly as one could. Such a one never made speeches to gain office. To do so would be to give the lie to one's performance in emulation of Cincinnatus. Rather, one's friends wrote letters to other friends, urging them to urge you to lead; political power was thus left to be a negotiation among the nation's wealthy elite. And so after serving, one would occasionally retire to one's estate to rest until called again to serve.

The twin pressures of soldiers returning home at the conclusion of the War of 1812 and westward expansion forced states to remove

their restrictive property qualifications for voting and extend the right of suffrage to all white males in the 1820s. One effect of the new voters was the rise of political parties to organize political opinion through party newspapers such as the *United States Telegraph* and the *Washington Globe* between 1824 and 1828. A second effect of the increase in voters was that politicians no longer aspired to Cincinnatus-like disinterest, but instead actively courted voters with election-day barbecues, promises of political spoils, and well-organized political campaigns. Political candidates even occasionally made speeches to the public in the nineteenth century. However, political scientists such as Jeffrey Tulis do not detect the emergence of the rhetorical presidency until Teddy Roosevelt or perhaps Woodrow Wilson. By the turn of the twentieth century, presidents used then-emergent mass media in the form of newspapers, phonograph records, and radio to go over the heads of Congress to speak directly to the people. According to Tulis, the rhetorical presidency was a "second constitution" that forever changed the relationship between the branches of government as well as the relationship between the president and the people. Mass media helped to elevate the president to the center of America's political system, which, of course, was never the intention of constitutional architect James Madison.[5]

The era of the rhetorical presidency, roughly the entirety of the twentieth century, was the halcyon days of the relationship between the press and the president. By that I do not mean that the press and the president had a happy relationship, or that either side of the relationship was perfectly satisfied. I mean that each side needed the other and, as such, the relationship between the press and the presidency was reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and stable. Without the cooperation of the press there would be no rhetorical presidency; likewise, without the cooperation of the White House there would be little news of the president for the press to cover. The press generally acted as an information conduit between presidents and the public, and presidents generally gave the press information, access, and interviews in return for the press's disseminating information on their behalf.

We can say that the relationship between the presidency and the press during the era of the rhetorical presidency was reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and stable without approaching it uncritically.

Indeed, there is much to criticize in the partnership that resulted in what Daniel Boorstin famously described as news reporting dominated by the pseudoevent in American politics. A pseudoevent, according to Boorstin, was an event like an interview or photo opportunity or press conference that was "planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. Therefore, its occurrence [was] arranged for the convenience of the reporting or reproducing media." News reporting dominated by pseudoevents required an immense amount of cooperation—and trust—between the presidency and the press. The president and his staff cooperated to provide the pseudoevents for media consumption, and the media, in turn, provided the conduit to the mass public for the pseudoevents to be broadcast. Indeed, according to Jeffrey Tulis, "The modern mass media . . . facilitated the development of the rhetorical presidency by giving the president the means to communicate directly and instantaneously to a large national audience, and by reinforcing the shift from written message to verbal dramatic performance." To understand the rhetorical presidency, therefore, is to understand how the press and the president cooperated to produce the news. During the era of the rhetorical presidency the press elevated the president to the center of the nation's political imagination by ceaselessly covering presidential pseudoevents and allowing the president to speak to the nation largely unfiltered. In return, the press gained access to the president and content for its news reports.[6]

The rhetorical presidency was beneficial for the president because the relationship enabled the media, and particularly the White House press corps, to elevate the president to the center of the nation's political imagination, decentering Congress in the process. There is, of course, a chicken-and-egg problem in arguing whether the press caused the president to decenter Congress or whether the press's paying more attention to the president and less attention to Congress was an effect of the rising importance of the president relative to Congress. Nevertheless, it is clear, as Tulis notes, "no other institution or personality is given as much attention by television or newspapers. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, newspaper coverage of Congress exceeded that of the president."[7]

For example, "no ruler or chief executive of any country in the world is as thoroughly and consistently covered by the press as the

President of the US," reported *Life* magazine in 1951. "About a dozen reporters do full-time duty at the White House and often more than 200 show up for his weekly press conference. Harry Truman keeps the regulars very busy, starting to make news at 7:00 a.m. when he goes for his walk, and keeps at it until well past midnight."[8]

In the mid-twentieth century President Truman found the press useful and so gave it information and access. Indeed, how could a president not give the press access? By 1969 "at the height of their dominance, the combined audience for the three [network] newscasts accounted for three-fourths of all American households."[9] During the twentieth century the power of the press matched the power of the president, which led to a reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and stable partnership between the two. In short, the two needed one another, and this relationship was thought to benefit the public good. For example, in April 1961, just after the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, President John F. Kennedy argued that "without debate, without criticism, no Administration and no country can succeed—and no republic can survive. That . . . is why our press was protected by the First Amendment—the only business in America specifically protected by the Constitution—not primarily to amuse and entertain, not to emphasize the trivial and the sentimental, not to simply "give the public what it wants"—but to inform, to arouse, to reflect, to state our dangers and our opportunities, to indicate our crises and our choices, to lead, mold, educate and sometimes even anger public opinion." And so the press did.[10]

The press enlarged the power of the president's bully pulpit to be sure, but post-Watergate–era media became increasingly antagonistic toward presidential candidates and presidents. The beginning of the end of the rhetorical presidency was first, perhaps, cable's twenty-four-hour news cycle, which required new news every thirty minutes, even if there was nothing new to say. Then, in addition to "horserace reporting"—in which the press focused more on who is ahead and who is behind than it did on policy platforms and issues—in 1992 we saw the rise of fact-check journalism, in which reporters took nothing candidates or presidents said as true, which threatened the positive working relationship between the press and the president. And then finally, the emergence of the Internet, with its bottom up information dissemination, meant that

anyone and everyone could be a reporter and a news network (so long as they had an audience), which threatened the press's exclusive power to disseminate the news.[11] At the close of the twentieth century the president could no longer count on the press to help him disseminate his message. For example, in 1968 the average duration of a candidate's sound bite on network news broadcasts was over sixty seconds long; by 2004 the average sound bite was a mere 7.7 seconds. "Like any period of tumultuous change," President Obama's former communications director Anita Dunn explained to Reid Cherlin in Rolling Stone, "it's not a happy one. . . . This idea that somehow there's a bully pulpit that can be used effectively to communicate with everybody in this country at the same time and get them all wrapped around one issue—it's very much an idea whose time has passed."[12]

Today we are in the era of the postrhetorical presidency. If the rhetorical presidency was characterized by a reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and stable relationship between the press and the president, then the postrhetorical presidency is characterized by an independent, competitive, and unstable relationship. For example, let's consider how the press and the president handled the news of President Obama's November 20, 2014, immigration speech.

The Immigration Speech Roll-Out, November 19, 2014

President Obama's new immigration policy was controversial: the president planned to announce on November 20, 2014, that he was going to act unilaterally to protect five million undocumented immigrants from deportation. It was a bold step to resolve a seemingly intractable impasse between Obama and a Republican-controlled Congress. The White House sought to manage the news of President Obama's upcoming immigration speech carefully in order to present its case for immigration reform in as unfiltered a way as possible: on November 19, 2014, at 11:59 a.m. eastern time, the White House posted a one-minute video of President Obama with a caption that read, "It's time to fix our broken immigration system. Tomorrow night, President Obama will address the nation on new common sense steps he's taking to fix as much of it as he can. Tune in tomorrow

at 8 p.m. ET."[13] Almost an hour later, at 12:51 p.m., Barack Obama's personal Facebook page (run by Organizing for Action) shared the White House's video. At the time this book went to press, the video had been viewed 4,366,904 times and shared more than 58,000 times from Barack Obama's two Facebook accounts alone.

At 12:04 p.m. the White House tweeted President Obama's video and speech announcement, linking to the White House Facebook post. The White House tweet was retweeted 1,064 times. At 1:00 p.m., in addition to a page explaining the history of immigration reform, data infographics, a petition and pledge to watch the speech, and so on linked by the original Facebook post, the White House blog also posted Obama's video along with content that readers could use to learn more about Obama's positions, stay informed of future action, and commit to watching the speech and spreading the news to their friends and followers on their social networks. At 1:08 p.m. Barack Obama's personal Twitter account (also run by Organizing for Action) tweeted a link to the White House blog post. It was retweeted 1,261 times. The hashtags #immigration and #immigrationaction trended on Twitter throughout the next twenty-four hours, and there was a massive spike in Google searches for the phrase *immigration reform*.[14]

At 1:03 p.m. the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee sent via its email list a "breaking news alert" to its supporters informing them of President Obama's planned speech and urging them to sign a petition or donate to help the cause.[15] Emails issued forth from Organizing for Action, the White House, Moveon.org, and Democratic National Committee headquarters and were signed by Jim Messina, Abby Witt, Astrid Silva, Eden James, Jon Carson, Helen Chavez, and even Barack Obama himself. The emails continued throughout the next forty-eight hours, reminding supporters to watch the speech, tell their friends, and take action.

And finally, at 1:12 p.m., White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest held a press briefing with members of the White House press corps. Earnest began, "As you saw just a little over an hour ago, the White House posted a video to the White House Facebook page, where the President announced that he is going to deliver an address to the nation tomorrow night where he will be laying out the details of his executive action to repair our broken immigration system."

Fox News White House correspondent Wendell Goler interrupted Earnest by asking, "Is that a thank-you to Zuckerberg? Was that a thank-you to Zuckerberg, announcing it [on Facebook]?" Earnest responded that announcing the speech thus gave President Obama the opportunity "to reach hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. In under an hour, the video reached more than 1.2 million users on Facebook; 227,000 people have viewed it and another 12,000 people have shared it. So this is a pretty effective way of the President communicating with the American public." At the conclusion of the press briefing, *National Journal* White House correspondent George Condon followed up on the method of announcement: "You said, announcing this on Facebook was effective because he reached 1.5 million people. You believe that . . . you reached more people than if you had announced it to the wires, the networks and the press corps?" Press Secretary Earnest responded, "In the first hour. Pretty impressive, George, right? The good news is that the wires and the networks and the press corps are all on Facebook. And I noticed that even one of the networks, shortly after the video was posted to Facebook, actually broadcast it on their network. So the good news, George, is that we don't have to choose." Indeed, the first to tweet the news of Obama's speech with the #immigrationaction hashtag was *Roll Call* managing editor Cameron Easley, who tweeted the news just six minutes after the Facebook post, at 12:05 p.m. Easley confirmed that he had learned of President Obama's planned speech from the White House Facebook page.[16]

Perhaps the White House did not "have to choose" between breaking the news of the president's speech on social media or through traditional media, but broadcasters did have a choice about whether to preempt their prime-time programming to show the speech. At 8:00 p.m. on November 20, 2014, President Obama addressed the nation on immigration reform to a television viewing audience of about 12.4 million, which was about a third of the size of his State of the Union address of the previous January. CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and Univision carried the speech, but the traditional broadcast networks did not (although some local affiliates did). Over on social media President Obama's speech caused the hashtags #immigration and #immigrationaction to trend on Twitter and elicited as many as 9,580 tweets per minute by the conclusion of the speech,

which means that discussion of the speech dominated Twitter for that period of time.[17]

The Independent Relationship between the Press and the Presidency

While some decried the "Network News' Shameful Decision to Snub Obama's Immigration Address," as it turns out the Obama administration did not actually make a formal request to the networks to preempt their scheduled programming, although it did ask Univision to do so.[18] One version of the story of what transpired on November 19 is that the Obama administration "put out feelers" to the networks to see if they would run his speech and, finding little interest, decided to announce the speech via social media and not request the network airtime. Another version of the story is that the networks feared that the speech was "too political" to warrant disrupting scheduled programming and so refused.[19]

Whether the Obama administration snubbed the press by making its own announcement or whether the press snubbed the Obama administration by refusing to preempt their popular programming matters little. What matters is that the story of the immigration speech rollout demonstrates the independent, competitive, and unstable relationship between the press and the president that characterizes the postrhetorical presidency. Rather than cooperate to disseminate information to the public, it is clear that the White House and the press now compete for audience attention. It is clear, in other words, that the institutional relationship that facilitated the rhetorical presidency is broken and that the rhetorical presidency is dead.

Scholars such as Susan Herbst and Stephen Heidt have recently argued that the rhetorical presidency model has not withstood the test of time and that, in particular, the model suffers from changes wrought by new media. As I explain below, and as we saw with the example of the immigration speech rollout, new media have transformed how presidential rhetoric functions. According to Herbst, media "now wreak havoc with the text of a presidential speech" by endlessly slicing it up into sounds bites and by reconstructing and recirculating texts in ways that are beyond the control of the president. Herbst argues that presidents can no longer count on a stable

audience, or even knowing "where the audience might be located. . . . [Jeffrey] Tulis has us sitting still, listening to the president speak from the back of a train car long ago, or on our couches in rapt attention, half a century back. These days, however, few are rapt." Further, in today's media environment it is difficult to tell who is speaking; indeed, "statements on behalf of the president can be made by anyone (whether they are legitimate and approved is another story), [and] presidential rhetoric can be hacked up and revised."[20]

Likewise, Stephen Heidt argues that the new media environment means that presidents now face the "utter fragmentation" of the electorate: "this altered scene poses a challenge for presidents and critics because presidential messages are more fragmented than ever, audience reception more partial, and the persuasive task of presidential speech near impossible."[21] We can think of these critiques of how the rhetorical presidency functions within the new media environment of the twenty-first century as being characterized by fragmented texts, unstable audiences, and phantom authors. If these critiques are accurate, and it appears that they are, then any president would have difficulty reaching the public, especially if media no longer willingly help the president to disseminate his (or someday her) messages.

The postrhetorical presidency emerged within this new media context in an attempt to overcome the obstacles of fragmentation and the impossibility of presidential leadership. As George Edwards noted in the previous chapter, "Technological developments such as email, the ease of uploading videos and photos via YouTube and Flickr, and the growth of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have fundamentally changed the relationship among the president, the media, and the public. Reporters are no longer the only—or even necessarily the main—conduit through which news flows. Now the White House has the potential to bypass the press and communicate directly and appealingly with the public."[22] President Obama admitted as much in July 2015, when he told Jon Stewart, "It's tough to get everybody's attention focused in the same way [as it used to be] and so, what that means is that on big tough issues, sometimes it's hard to get the entire nation's attention focused on it and we've been operating on soundbites, but look, part of my job and part of the job of everybody in the White House is, how do we adapt to this new

environment? How are we more nimble? How are we dealing with social media? How do we deal more effectively?"

From Obama's perspective then, the postrhetorical presidency emerged as a way to address the problem of fragmented media audiences of the twenty-first century. Of course there is more to the story of the emergence of the postrhetorical presidency than Obama's neutral characterization would suggest. In fact, the postrhetorical presidency is a fundamental part of the permanent campaign and the hyperrhetorical practices of presidential public relations.[23] We can better understand the postrhetorical presidency by examining how Obama's campaign team handled media during the 2008 and 2012 election campaign cycles. I argue that we can trace Obama's enactment of the postrhetorical presidency in the case of the immigration speech to his presidential campaign communications practices, which were characterized by (1) strict message control, (2) going around the news filter by speaking directly to supporters, and (3) using social media to create intimacy between the president and his followers and counting on them to spread messages virally, knowing that messages that spread from friends are more persuasive than messages that come from campaigns, media, or the administration.

The increasing antagonism between the media and political candidates in the post-Watergate era was characterized by decreasing airtime for candidates, increased attention to the election horserace, process stories over substance stories, and feeding frenzies about private issues. In response, postrhetorical candidates have sought ever greater control over their campaign messages. "It was like the Wild West out there," explained Obama's 2008 chief communications officer Anita Dunn on the media's failure to report on substantive issues: "Part of the reputation we got for being such control freaks was because we simply were trying to control the things we could control." Obama's strategy for dealing with the media in the 2008 election campaign was "to force the media to actually cover the campaign on our terms. We had a reputation, to some extent deserved, for a level of discipline. . . . Part of that was the decision we made that we would force the coverage to our campaign events, to the things the campaign did, and we would not talk about anything else." Such campaign discipline, as Dunn noted, "was a source of

great conflict between us and our press corps. They complained continually about accessibility."[24]

In the 2012 reelection campaign, according to Deputy Campaign Manager Stephanie Cutter, Obama likewise "used every communication tool on the campaign to communicate our message in a very disciplined way. We weren't out to win a news cycle, unless it fit into our message. If it didn't fit into our message, we were going to communicate what we wanted to communicate in different modes of communication." The Obama campaign refused to allow the press to dictate the tempo of the news and denied it the framing and priming functions that have made it so powerful by essentially ignoring and sidestepping traditional news media. By the 2012 election Obama's communications team had perfected the direct communication strategies that they had begun to develop during the 2008 campaign. By 2012, as Cutter noted, the Obama campaign attempted to control its message by using "different modes of communication" to go around the news filter entirely. The need for strict message control is, of course, not limited to the 2008 and 2012 elections. Indeed, the Obama administration's use of postrhetorical communication techniques is a direct consequence of its continued desire "to control the things we could control."[25]

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Obama's 2008 campaign was its massive scale and its ability to use its size to create its own communication network, which it used to control its message. Not only did Obama hire "by far the largest full-time paid staff in presidential campaign history," but his estimated six million unpaid volunteers, his five million social media followers, and his "13-million member" email list not only dwarfed that of opponent Senator John McCain, but also easily made candidate Barack Obama the most connected person in the world in 2008. As Chief Communications Officer Anita Dunn explained, the campaign used its massive reach to communicate its most important news announcements—withdrawing from the public finance system, selecting Joe Biden as the vice-presidential nominee, and choosing Invesco Field for Obama's nomination acceptance speech—directly to supporters who had signed up for text and email messages—before releasing the information through traditional news media. Obama perfected the direct communication strategy that would become the signature technique

of the postrhetorical presidency during the 2008 campaign by sending out "1 billion emails, including 10,000 unique messages targeted at specific segments of their 13-million member list."[26]

By 2012, President Obama had expanded his network with thirty million more Facebook followers and twenty-two million more twitter followers than he had in 2008. "Given our challenges in dealing with the [traditional news] media," recalled Deputy Campaign Manager Stephanie Cutter, "we saw an opportunity to go around that filter and directly to our supporters and those that we needed to persuade, which was a much more valuable communication to them than reading something in a newspaper." Yet, according to Reid Cherlin in *Rolling Stone*, while Obama's direct communication strategies were "a clever ploy to get the supporters to sign up for text alerts," they were "also a clear 'fuck you' to the press, a very public way of cutting them out of the relationship between Obama and the voters." Indeed, according to Anita Dunn, "the campaign went out of its way to let the press know we were communicating around them."[27]

Once in office, Obama converted "the President's bully pulpit into a social pulpit," according to public relations specialist Monte Lutz. Obama's communications team crafted messages that were "designed to be taken up and spread by others . . . harnessing the power of public engagement to influence the conversation across various spheres of cross-influence." Obama had learned of the power of his increasingly massive social media network during the 2012 campaign, and, according to Stephanie Cutter, one of the key strategies of the reelection campaign was to count on that network to spread messages virally. "We had 33 million people on Facebook following Barack Obama," explained Cutter: "Those 33 million were friends with 90 percent of Facebook users in the United States, more than 90 percent. So we could communicate with 90 percent of Facebook users in this country, which in sum total is more than the people that voted for us." The campaign had found that supporters trusted messages that they received from their friends via social networks more than they trusted messages coming from campaigns directly, from traditional media, or from other sources. Cutter explained that the networking power of social media enabled the campaign to run "ward races online among Facebook friends, online followers, [and]

YouTube." Essentially, the massive Obama reelection campaign used social networking to run a "very localized, personalized" campaign, which "proved to be very effective, not just in getting people to vote for us but getting people to work for us to get that vote out."[28]

Cultivating intimacy, rather than mere information dissemination, between the president and the people is the third key strategy of the postrhetorical presidency. Obama's reelection networking strategy worked because "people really want to feel like they're part of a community," explained 2008 Democratic National Committee director of communications Karen Finney; "engaging people, and making them feel like they're getting a little bit of an inside look into the campaign or they're really a part of something bigger will make you far more successful." Obama's supporters felt more connected to Obama through social media and so were willing to pass along their "friend" Barack Obama's news and information to their other friends, which, of course, enabled Obama's campaign to spread virally rather than relying on traditional news streams. Obama's postrhetorical media strategies take advantage of voters' expectations for online content "to be delivered in an unprecedented niche, tailored, authentic, and interactive format. A format in which their favorite stars share every aspect of their life," according to political consultant Vincent Harris. Social media audiences, says Harris, have an "expectation of transparency in the highest form," and the postrhetorical presidency cultivates parasocial relationships between the president and the people, circumventing traditional media in the process. Did President Obama gain from cultivating intimate relationships with Americans through social media? Perhaps. Did traditional media lose from Obama's cultivating intimate relationships with Americans through social media? Most certainly.[29]

Conclusion

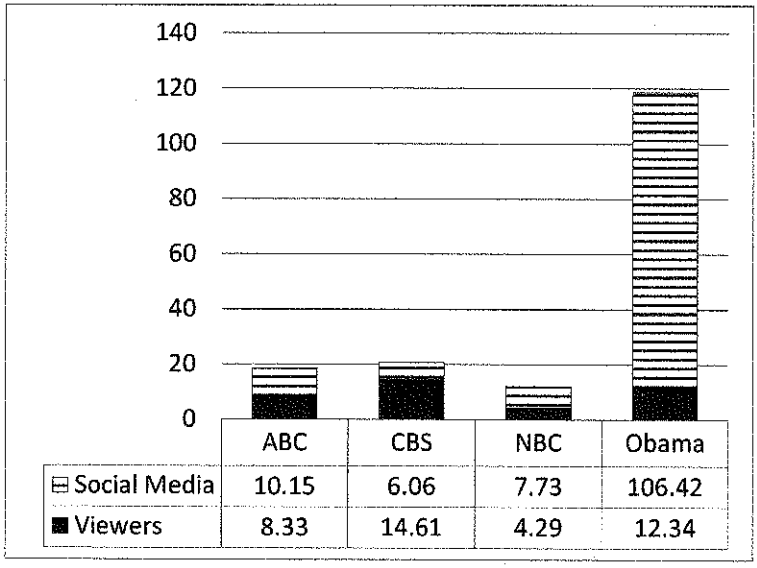
In considering how the relationship between the press and the presidency has changed with the shift from columns to characters, I have argued that we have entered into the era of the postrhetorical presidency. Like the rhetorical presidency, the postrhetorical presidency is a historical condition, an artifact of the evolution of media technology. Whereas the rhetorical presidency was characterized by

a reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and stable relationship between the press and the president, the postrhetorical presidency is an independent, competitive, and unstable relationship. As we saw with the example of President Obama's November 20, 2014, immigration speech rollout, his enactment of the postrhetorical presidency relied upon strict message control, speaking directly to supporters, and counting on the president's "friends" and "followers" to circulate his messages throughout their networks. Obama's postrhetorical media strategies developed during his successful 2008 presidential campaign and were perfected through, as he admitted in 2015, his more "nimble" use of social media to get his message out to the public once he was in office.

Traditional media have repeatedly complained that the Obama administration's media tactics were so restrictive as to border on pathology and have sought to bring the executive branch back into its previous reciprocal relationship by expressing outrage over what some call a war on journalism and by disruptive strategies such as not making airtime available for President Obama's immigration speech. In November 2013 the Associated Press, ABC News, Fox News, the *New York Times*, and thirty-four other news organizations delivered a letter to the White House accusing the Obama administration of "arbitrary restraint and unwarranted interference on legitimate newsgathering activities." Obama's postrhetorical presidency prevented "government transparency," they argued, and was a "major break from how previous administrations have worked with the press." That major break, of course, was the shift from the rhetorical to the postrhetorical presidency. "The theme that emerges from these clashes between the White House and the press corps is powerlessness," wrote Erik Wemple. "When talking about loss of access, reporters commonly cite tradition and how things operated under previous administrations. They mention precedents and courtesies and the public's right to know. It's all another way of saying that the White House is obligated to do essentially whatever it pleases when it comes to media access. Don't want to answer questions, Mr. President? Okay." Indeed, the good news for the Obama administration—as Press Secretary Josh Earnest pointed out during his November 19, 2014, press briefing—was that it was no longer reliant upon traditional news media. In fact, Obama's executive

branch had a larger share of the media audience than the traditional media did.[30] By my count President Obama had a potential audience of about 119 million viewers on Thursday, November 20, 2014, at 8:00 p.m., compared to the networks' potential audience of about 51 million viewers. Furthermore, as Earnest so earnestly explained, the press watches the White House Facebook page and reports what is posted there, so there seemed to be little incentive for the Obama administration to have cooperated more fully with the press.

This means, ultimately, that traditional news media can no longer count on being the first to know, which threatens their ability to provide news to their audiences. Whither the watchdog function of the press described by JFK? It does not look good for traditional news media. Perhaps there will be millions of watchdogs who will post information about politics, but who will have direct access to question leaders? Politicians may increasingly speak to supporters or targeted groups rather than the entire nation—as President Obama did when he asked Univision to preempt its programming on November 20, 2014, but not the US networks.[31] "Whenever I get together with former White House reporters to discuss old times," explained veteran



	ABC	CBS	NBC	Obama
Social Media	10.15	6.06	7.73	106.42
Viewers	8.33	14.61	4.29	12.34

Fig. 8.1. President Obama's media audience compared to network media audience, 8:00 p.m., November 20, 2014.

White House correspondent Helen Thomas, "we realize that we had the advantage of close proximity to the president that may never happen again. It seems unlikely that the White House will return to the days when President Harry S. Truman took his morning strolls down Pennsylvania Avenue at dawn with a couple of reporters and photographers in tow." Despite Thomas's pessimism, it is difficult to predict if the postrhetorical presidency is unique to this moment or if every president will have the same (or more) direct access to supporters through social media.[32]

Certainly some politicians will have the capability to "go around the filter," but not all. The incumbent advantage is now not just dollars raised and name recognition, but also email databases and Facebook and Twitter followers; the incumbent advantage is audience. At the same time, there is the potential for nonestablishment candidates to break through into the public conversation in the same way that YouTube videos or memes go viral. And, finally, social media corporations largely cooperated with the Obama administration, but they may also decide that they want more access to the executive branch in the future and begin to ask for a more balanced, reciprocal relationship.[33]

The shift from columns to characters is thus the shift from the rhetorical presidency to the postrhetorical presidency. It is a historical condition in which the president has used social media to build as large a network audience as the traditional news media (or larger), which means that the relationship between the press and the president is no longer reciprocal and cooperative. The postrhetorical relationship between the press and the president means that media may no longer have the privileged ability "to inform, to arouse, to reflect, to state our dangers and our opportunities, to indicate our crises and our choices, to lead, mold, educate and sometimes even anger public opinion."

Postscript

Many writers in this book, including me, have suggested that Obama was the nation's first social media president. Many also argued that Obama used social media and digital technology to go around the media and communicate directly with the people, much to reporters'

dismay. Following him into office, of course, is Donald Trump, who is likely to take Obama's "go around the filter" impulse even further. While President Obama did stage many events and make his own news sometimes, such as in the announcement of proposed immigration reform that I described in this chapter, he still had a mostly viable relationship with the media that included more or less regular press conferences and a willingness to sit for interviews with both national and local media outlets. Indeed, Martha Kumar's first chapter in this book details the Obama press relationship in full. Subsequent writers, especially Martin, Smith, Edwards, and me, have demonstrated how the forty-fourth president used digital technology to engage the rhetorical presidency in ways that were quite different from those of his predecessors in office.

However, Donald Trump's postrhetorical impulses seem even stronger than were President Obama's, at least if Trump governs as he tended to campaign. Obama went around the press, but his rhetoric did not tend to disparage reporters in any kind of overt way. Trump, on the other hand, ran for president by naming media, especially the so-called mainstream media, as corrupt—part of the system of Washington elites who deserved to be disbelieved and distrusted. This, in turn, suggested that there was no need to use the filter because it was dishonest anyway. This gave Trump cover for using his own Twitter feed and speeches as vehicles for saying things other candidates couldn't get away with while advancing a discourse with the media that was uncooperative and combative. Whether Trump will continue with this postrhetorical strategy of media disengagement and disparagement will be telling in terms of how transparent his administration is as well as what kind of relationship he has with the press, the people, and the office of the presidency itself.[34]

Notes

1. Quotation from Lauren Walker, "Where Can I Watch Obama's Immigration Speech," *Newsweek*, November 20, 2014, http://www.newsweek.com/where-can-i-watch-obamas-immigration-speech-285890; Zachary M. Seward, "What the Major US Networks Put on TV Instead of Obama's Immigration Speech," *Quartz*, November 20, 2014, http://qz.com/300357/what-the-major-us-networks-put-on-tv-instead-of-obamas-immigration-speech/. In July 2014, Gallup found that 17 percent of Americans thought that immigration was the most important issue facing the nation: "One

in Six Say Immigration Most Important US Problem," Gallup, Politics, July 16, 2014, http://www.gallup.com/poll/173306/one-six-say-immigration-important-problem.aspx.

2. "The major broadcast networks generally carry presidential speeches on matters of national security and other important issues. But there can be a reluctance in executive suites if an anticipated address is seen as heavily political in nature. It is not clear if that's the reasoning here. CBS News, through a spokeswoman, said it declined to comment on editorial decisions. ABC News also declined comment, and NBC News did not have an immediate response to a query." David Bauder, "Major American TV Networks Did Not Air Obama Speech on Immigration," Global News, National, November 21, 2014, http://globalnews.ca/news/1685269/major-american-tv-networks-did-not-air-obama-speech-on-immigration/.

Why did the networks ignore Obama's speech? "In part because the White House did not give them advanced notice, and in part because the major news networks are in the business of making money. . . . As a business decision, this seems like a no-brainer. Ratings will be much higher carrying 'popular shows' than another groan-inducing and 'prime time' presidential address." Daniel Doherty, "Wow: Four Networks to Pass on Obama's Historic Amnesty Address," Townhall, Tipsheet, November 20, 2014, http://townhall.com/tipsheet/danieldoherty/2014/11/20/wow-four-networks-to-ignore-obamas-prime-time-address-n1921508.

For an example of a conspiracy explanation, consider: "Combine this with the Ferguson decision and you have not only cover for Obama's illegal activities, but a continued effort by this administration to engage in inciting insurrection among the people of America." Tim Brown, "Media Blackout & Ferguson Converge on Obama's Amnesty for Illegals Address," Freedom Outpost, November 20, 2014, http://freedomoutpost.com/2014/11/media-blackout-ferguson-converge-obamas-amnesty-illegals-address/#Gaak8qQBzCu0trPd.99. Consider also: "They're acting like it was the networks's [*sic*] decision, but we all know that they would only do whatever Obama wants them to do on such an important announcement, so we all know he told them not to air it because most Americans are opposed to it." Darby Crash, "STATE-RUN MEDIA: Obama Tells Networks Not to Air Amnesty Announcement," PatDollard.com, November 19, 2014, http://patdollard.com/2014/11/state-run-media-obama-tells-networks-not-to-air-amnesty-announcement/#QUCuH4XzYeTXM6b1.99, accessed August 12, 2015.

I imagine, though I did not ask, that interference with programming is what George Edwards III might say is the reason that the networks didn't air the speech. According to Jaime Fuller: "As the White House is very aware of, Americans stopped paying attention to presidential primetime addresses long before the glut of options provided by Netflix, HBOGo and Hulu arrived on the scene. By 2006, back when cable was the only competitor that network television truly had to worry about, the viewership of presidential addresses had plummeted." Jaime Fuller, "Why the Major Networks Didn't Give President Obama Primetime Real Estate for His Immigration Speech," *Washington Post*, November 21, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/11/20/why-the-networks-arent-giving-president-obama-primetime-real-estate-for-his-immigration-speech/.

3. The postrhetorical presidency, first theorized by Stephen Hartnett and Jennifer Mercieca in their 2007 analysis of President George W. Bush, is "marked by a president who, like all presidents before him, seeks to define the bounds of political discourse, but who does not do so through the traditional means of eloquence, logic,

pathos, or narrative storytelling, but by marshaling ubiquitous public chatter, waves of disinformation, and cascades of confusion-causing misdirection. Post-rhetorical presidential discourse attempts to confuse public opinion, prevent citizen action, and frustrate citizen deliberation." Stephen John Hartnett and Jennifer Rose Mercieca, "'A Discovered Dissembler Can Achieve Nothing Great'; or, Four Theses on the Death of Presidential Rhetoric in an Age of Empire," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 2007): 600.

In ibid., Stephen Hartnett and I concluded that Bush's postrhetorical discourse attempted to "confuse public opinion, prevent citizen action, and frustrate citizen deliberation," which may have been true in the case of the Bush administration's Iraq War discourse, but I now think does not accurately describe all aspects of postrhetorical political discourse.

4. Alexander Hamilton wrote: "A dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidden appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues, and ending tyrants." Publius, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 1.

5. Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Jennifer Rose Mercieca, *Founding Fictions* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), especially 147–202; Jeffery K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 4.

6. Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 11; Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 186.

7. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 186.

8. "Season in the Sun," *Life*, April 9, 1951, 59, regarding Harry Truman and a trip to Key West with "29 reporters, photographers and radio men."

9. Shanto Iyengar, *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 51. Earlier, Iyengar wrote: "The preoccupation with media imagery is hardly surprising, given that, for most Americans, the [mass] media are their only contact with the world of public affairs. On the flip side, from the perspective of the public, events not covered by the news media make no greater impression than the proverbial tree falling in the forest. For the public, what's covered in the news is all there is to know" (ibid., 2).

10. President John F. Kennedy, "Address before the American Newspaper Publishers Association, April 27, 1961," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, John F. Kennedy Speeches, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/American-Newspaper-Publishers-Association_19610427.aspx.

11. "In the 2004 campaign, we witnessed the advent of blogs and their impact on [both] how voters got and shared information and how the press got their information about candidates. That was the beginning of the journalism paradigm being somewhat reversed. [In the past] the big media folks set the pace and tempo of the coverage and the discussion and the debate. And campaigns played along with that with full recognition of it. [Then] a very top-heavy system started to crumble. A lot of power began to come from the bottom up." Kevin Madden, senior advisor to Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign, in *Electing the President, 2012: The Insiders' View*, edited by Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 55.

Indeed, according to Todd Purdum, "It's easy to see why Obama wants to pick his own shots. He faces the most hyperkinetic, souped-up, tricked-out, trivialized, and combative media environment any president has ever experienced. The long-building trend toward coverage of the presidency and politics as pure sport has reached absurd levels." Todd Purdum, "Washington, We Have a Problem," *Vanity Fair*, Hive, September 1, 2010, http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2010/09/broken-washington-201009.

12. Iyengar, *Media Politics*, 76; Reid Cherlin, "The Presidency and the Press," *Rolling Stone*, August 4, 2014, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-presidency-and-the-press-20140804#ixzz30MRfqP2y.

13. The White House, video, Facebook, November 19, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10152967942944238&set=vb.63811549237.

14. "Google Trends—Web Search Interest—Worldwide, 2004–Present," Google Trends, https://www.google.com/trends/explore?date=2014-01-01%202014-12-31&q=immigration%20reform.

15. I'm grateful to Robin Bedenbaugh, Zoë Hess Carney, Pamela Matthews, Rita Shah, and Barbara Sharf for their research support.

16. "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, 11/19/2014," White House, Briefing Room, November 19, 2014, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/19/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-11192014; Cameron Easley, "Obama to Announce #immigrationaction Thursday at 8 p.m. ET," Twitter, November 19, 2014, https://twitter.com/CamRollCall/status/535131870204526592. Thank you, Olivier Knox, for helping me to identify George Condon as the person asking the question.

17. Univision (4.8 million viewers), Fox (4.153 million), MSNBC (1.763 million), CNN (1.652 million). Believing that Obama's speech was important for its audience to see, Univision delayed its broadcast of the Latin Grammy Awards, a large ratings draw for the network (about 10 million viewers for the previous several years). Matt Wilstein, "Univision Dominates Obama Immigration Speech Ratings," Mediaite, November 21, 2014, http://www.mediaite.com/tv/univision-dominates-obama-immigration-speech-ratings/. Obama's largest ratings to date were the 56.5 million people who watched his speech on the targeted killing of Osama Bin Laden. Brian Stelter, "Obama's TV Audience Was His Largest," *New York Times*, Television, May 3, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/04/arts/television/bin-laden-speech-drew-obamas-largest-audience-as-president.html?_r=0.

Visual of the number #immigration hashtag tweets: "#Immigration: Mentions of Pres. Obama's Speech, EST," Twitter Reverb, November 21, 2014, http://reverb.guru/view/781664283926065652. Archived tweets using #immigrationaction: Twitter Search for #immigrationaction, https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=#immigrationaction since:2014-11-19 until:2014-11-21&src=typd, accessed August 12, 2015. Geotagged #immigration tweets globally: "#Immigration: The President's Speech," CartoDB, http://srogers.cartodb.com/viz/aef7d30e-7120–11e4-a4d7–0e9d821ea90d/embed_map, accessed August 12, 2015.

18. "Is the new network standard that if a president announces a primetime address but the opposing party doesn't agree with the contents of the speech, networks won't air the event because it's too "political"? That's absurd and reeks of a cop-out. In exchange for using the public airwaves for free, and generating enormous profits off them, television broadcast networks in America agree to set aside time to fulfill their public interest obligation. Tonight's brief, 10 to 15 minute address about immigration

reform ought to be one of those times." Eric Boehlert, "Network News' Shameful Decision to Snub Obama's Immigration Address," Media Matters for America, Blog, November 20, 2014, http://mediamatters.org/blog/2014/11/20/network-news-shameful-decision-to-snub-obamas-i/201649.

19. Brian Stelter, "Broadcast Networks Opt Out of Obama Immigration Speech—Except for Univision," CNN, Media, November 19, 2014, http://money.cnn.com/2014/11/19/media/networks-and-obama-speech/index.html.

"A network insider tells Playbook, 'There was agreement among the broadcast networks that this was overtly political. The White House has tried to make a comparison to a time that all the networks carried President Bush in prime time, also related to immigration [2006]. But that was a bipartisan announcement, and this is an overtly political move by the White House." Mike Allen, "Why the Nets Stiffed Obama . . . ," *Politico*, Playbook, November 20, 2014, http://www.politico.com/playbook/1114/playbook16177.html.

20. Susan Herbst, "The Rhetorical Presidency and the Contemporary Media Environment," *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society* 19 (2007): 2–3, 335–43, 440.

21. Stephen Heidt, "The Presidency as Pastiche: Atomization, Circulation, and Rhetorical Instability," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 15, no. 4 (2012): 623–34.

22. George C. Edwards III, "Organizing for (In)action: The Obama Presidency and the Vanishing Online Vanguard," chapter 7, this volume.

23. Sid Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign: Inside the World of Elite Political Operations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980); John J. DiIulio Jr., "The Hyper-Rhetorical Presidency," *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society* 19, nos. 2–3 (2007): 315–24.

24. Anita Dunn, in Kathleen Hall Jamieson, ed., *Electing the President, 2008: The Insiders' View* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 141, 146.

25. Stephanie Cutter. See Kathleen Hall Jamieson, ed., *Electing the President, 2012: The Insiders' View* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 67.

26. Brian Mooney, "Obama's Paid Staff Dwarfing McCain's: Democrat Targets 50 States as Rival Focuses on Tossups," Boston.com, July 20, 2008, http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/07/20/obamas_paid_staff_dwarfing_mccains/?page=1; Victoria Chang, "Obama and the Power of Social Media and Technology," *European Business Review*, May–June 2010, 16; Monte Lutz, *The Social Pulpit: Barack Obama's Social Media Toolkit* (Chicago: Edelman—Digital Public Affairs, 2009) 5, http://http://cyber.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.harvard.edu/files/Social%20Pulpit%20-%20Barack%20Obamas%20Social%20Media%20Toolkit%201.09.pdf. Anita Dunn commented: "One of the things that we did was communicate, by and large, most of our news to our supporters," as quoted in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 141.

27. Micah L. Sifry, "Presidential Campaign 2012, by the Numbers," Personal Democracy Media, TechPresident, November 26, 2012, http://techpresident.com/news/23178/presidential-campaign-2012-numbers; Stephanie Cutter, in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2012*, 66. Dunn is quoted in Cherlin, "Presidency and the Press."

28. Lutz, *Social Pulpit*, 3–4; Cutter, in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2012*, 66–67 Stephanie Cutter also remarked: "People trust their information when it's coming from a Facebook friend much more than if it's me on TV saying something" (Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2012*, 67).

29. Karen Finney, in Jamieson, *Electing the President, 2008*, 164; Vincent Harris, "TV-ing the Web: The GOP's Coming Problem Is More Than Ethnic Diversity," Medium,

July 28, 2015, https://medium.com/@vincentrharris/tv-ing-the-web-the-gop-s-coming-problem-is-more-than-ethnic-diversity-a29d30186f75#.txr0fi9f6.

According to Bruce Gronbeck, "If 'instrumental functions' are thought of as ways in which additional behaviors (voting, legislating, thinking) are generated by pieces of communication, then 'consummatory functions' are embodied in those communication processes which produce end-states or 'products' that go beyond (or stop short of) voting and electing per se. That is, campaigning creates second-level or metapolitical images, personae, myths, associations, and social-psychological reactions which may even be detached or at least distinct from particular candidates, issues, and offices. Simply put, one may (and most probably do) 'use' a presidential campaign for some things other than selecting Presidents and ordering priorities." Bruce E. Gronbeck, "The Functions of Presidential Campaigning," *Communication Monographs* 45, no. 4:271. Gronbeck defines "Para-social Interaction" as "providing persons with 'messages' and 'sources'—via radio, television, newspapers, brochures—with which to 'interact,' as when people 'argue' with their television sets' projected personae" (272).

According to Susan Herbst, at the close of the twentieth century lack of intimacy between the president and the people had become a problem for the rhetorical presidency: "But the truth is that even the 'rhetorical president' who has left the ceremonial isolation of George Washington behind remains distant from the audience. Conversation, intimacy, and friendship with the president are simply not possible. I am not sure how presidents might insinuate themselves with more power into our households; the likes of Dr. Phil do it through the topics they pursue. But presidents are doomed to failure, in the contemporary arena of speech and persuasion, unless they adapt to the intimate nature of contemporary media. So far, we see little creativity from presidents in this area, most likely because they feel it will compromise their dignity as leaders. Regardless of their triumphs or failures, there is a culture clash between what presidents can offer and what audiences seem to desire. Until a president can both understand this desire for intimacy and figure out how—in normal times, not crises—to use the media to achieve it, presidential speech will not be a compelling form of American public rhetoric." Herbst, "Rhetorical Presidency," 341.

"That's a good thing," Democratic strategist Joe Trippi said in the November 11, 2008, *New York Times*. "This medium demands authenticity, and television for the most part demanded fake. Authenticity is something politicians haven't been used to." Joe Trippi, "How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics," *New York Times*, Bits, November 11, 2008, http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/.

30. Catherine Taibi, "Journalists Protest Restrictions on Photographing Obama, Compare White House to Soviet Union," *Huffington Post*, Media, November 21, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/21/white-house-photographers-protest-restrictions_n_4317284.html?utm_hp_ref=media; Erik Wemple, "White House Press Corps, Please Keep the Complaints Coming," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2013/02/20/white-house-press-corps-please-keep-the-complaints-coming/.

Then *New York Times* editor-in-chief Jill Abramson commented, "This is the most secretive White House that, at least as a journalist, I have ever dealt with." "Jill Abramson Talks to John Seigenthaler—Al Jazeera America," Al Jazeera America, Interview Files,

January 21, 2014, http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/talk-to-al-jazeera/interviews-and-more/2014/1/21/jill-abramson-talkstojohnseigenthaler.html.

31. Noah Rothman wrote: "There is one tiny exception to the broadcast networks passing on the opportunity to carry Obama's speech, however. While none of the major broadcast networks will cover Obama's speech live, there is one network that will: Univision. And Obama's address just happens to air right before the Latin Grammy Awards. . . . Surely, this is not about favoritism, though. Univision's lead anchor, Jorge Ramos, does seem like an impartial actor without a political ax to grind." Noah Rothman, "Broadcast Networks Won't Carry Obama's Immigration Address . . . with One Big Exception," Hot Air, November 19, 2014, http://hotair.com/archives/2014/11/19/yawn-broadcast-networks-pass-on-carrying-obamas-prime-time-immigration-address/.

According to Juliet Eilperin, "Paulette Aniskoff, head of the White House Office of Public Engagement . . . had journeyed from Washington to the offices of the entertainment company Live Nation for a strategy session on how YouTube and Vine stars could use their digital celebrity to promote some of the Obama administration's key policies. . . . Barack Obama rose to prominence as a politician who could deliver broad, sweeping speeches with universal themes, and he has leveraged the opportunities of the digital age to maximum political advantage. But often, this now means speaking narrowly to his base voters or to groups disconnected from the mainstream political process." Juliet Eilperin, "Here's How the First President of the Social Media Age Has Chosen to Connect with Americans," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2015/05/26/heres-how-the-first-president-of-the-social-media-age-has-chosen-to-connect-with-americans/.

32. On May 18, President Obama established a new Twitter account, @POTUS, which should transfer to the next occupant of the White House and will include the benefit of a built-in audience. President Obama, "Hello, Twitter! It's Barack. Really! Six Years In, They're Finally Giving Me My Own Account," Twitter, May 18, 2015, https://twitter.com/POTUS/status/600324682190053376. President Obama set the record for the quickest Twitter user to reach one million followers, achieving that number within less than five hours. Dan Thorne, "President Obama Joins Twitter with @POTUS Account, Breaks Fastest Million Follower Count Record," Guinness World Records, May 19, 2015, http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2015/5/president-obama-joins-twitter-with-potus-account-breaks-fastest-million-followe-379128. Obama's record was eclipsed by Caitlyn Jenner, who reached a million followers in only four hours and three minutes on June 1, 2015.

33. Traditional media may also enable the power of new media organizations such as BuzzFeed by covering their Obama HealthCare video, for example. Jess Duda, "BuzzFeed's Record-Breaking Obama Video Due To Earned Media Not Social," MediaShift, March 5, 2015, http://mediashift.org/2015/03/buzzfeeds-record-breaking-obama-video-due-to-earned-media-not-social/.

34. Jennifer Mercieca, "The Rhetorical Brilliance of Trump the Demagogue," The Conversation, December 11 2015, https://theconversation.com/the-rhetorical-brilliance-of-trump-the-demagogue-51984; Jennifer Mercieca, "How Donald Trump Gets Away With Saying Things Other Candidates Can't," The Conversation," March 8, 2016, https://theconversation.com/how-donald-trump-gets-away-with-saying-things-other-candidates-cant-55615.