

Trump picks Steve Bannon as senior advisor

Here's what you need to know about the man who went from Breitbart News chairman to Donald Trump's campaign CEO before his appointment as chief White House strategist and senior counselor.

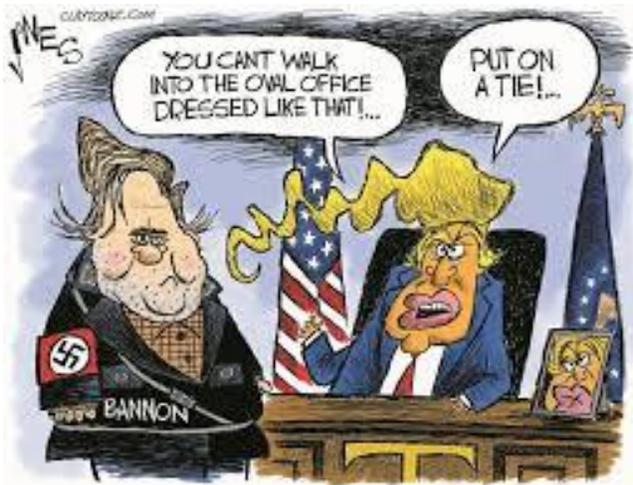


If you'd never heard of Stephen K. Bannon before Tuesday, you have now.

All the world is suddenly abuzz with news that [President-elect Donald Trump has named Bannon](#), formerly executive chairman at the right-wing website Breitbart News, as his chief White House strategist and senior counselor.

Alt-right “conservatives” and white supremacists are jubilant; the rest of the world, including many Republicans, is nearly apoplectic. Even Glenn Beck, who seems finally to have found the right meds, says Bannon is a “[nightmare](#)” and once compared him to Nazi propagandist [Joseph Goebbels](#). Suffice it to say, there’s no love lost between Beck and the Breitbart Boys.

Between such virulent reactions and selective quotes from Bannon’s body of work, including a Sirius XM radio show that immediately preceded Beck’s, a Bannon narrative has emerged: He’s a racist, xenophobic, misogynist, anti-Semitic nationalist — very much, in other words, like his boss, the soon-to-be president of the United States.



[\[Trump’s campaign made it safe to hate again. Will he turn that around?\]](#)

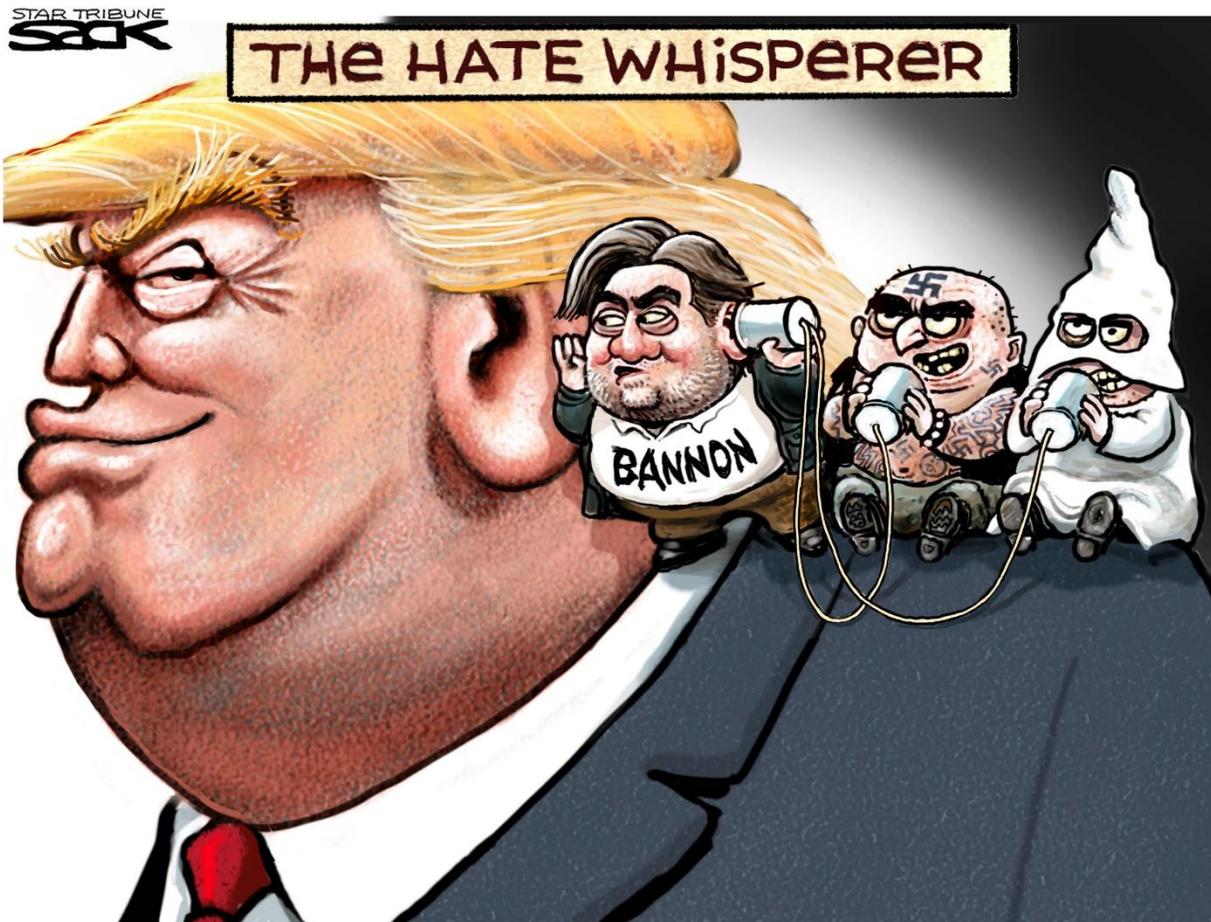
Already, some reporters seem to be backing away from such specific and explicit characterizations, noting that it’s unclear whether Bannon himself is all of these things or whether his association with those who are, via Breitbart postings, inferentially makes him so.

It’s an interesting difference with a possible distinction.

I’ve never met Bannon. If he’s charming, his apparent efforts to conceal it are effective. Photos of him show a disheveled, shaggy-haired man in need of a shave who appears to have slept in his clothes, possibly on a sidewalk grate.

Not that we should judge people by their looks, but we do — until there's reason not to. Thus far, except for a few narrative-affirming anecdotes by people who claim bad experiences with him — and résumé items that provoke cognitive dissonance — Bannon is inscrutable.

The operative question for any thinking person is: If Bannon is any of those things mentioned above, what would it mean for the country, our policies, the nation's temperament and that most sacred of American pursuits — unity?



As children walk out of schools and protesters stage daily rallies, while women plot to march on Washington the day after Inauguration Day, unity seems an improbable goal.

But what if Bannon isn't all those things? Are we even allowed to wonder? Once a narrative is launched, it's nearly heretical to question it.

I'm not defending; I'm just asking. Is it possible to allow white supremacists and woman-haters to traffic on your website and still be considered something less awful? I asked a few people who have known him well for some time if there's more to Bannon than meets the eye. There usually is, isn't there?

[\[I told conservatives to work for Trump. One talk with his team changed my mind.\]](#)

A few words used to describe him, irrespective of his website's fan club or the virtual company he keeps, include: "gentleman," "strategist," "always polite," "brilliant," "fighter," "activist," "articulate," as well as "I don't trust him."

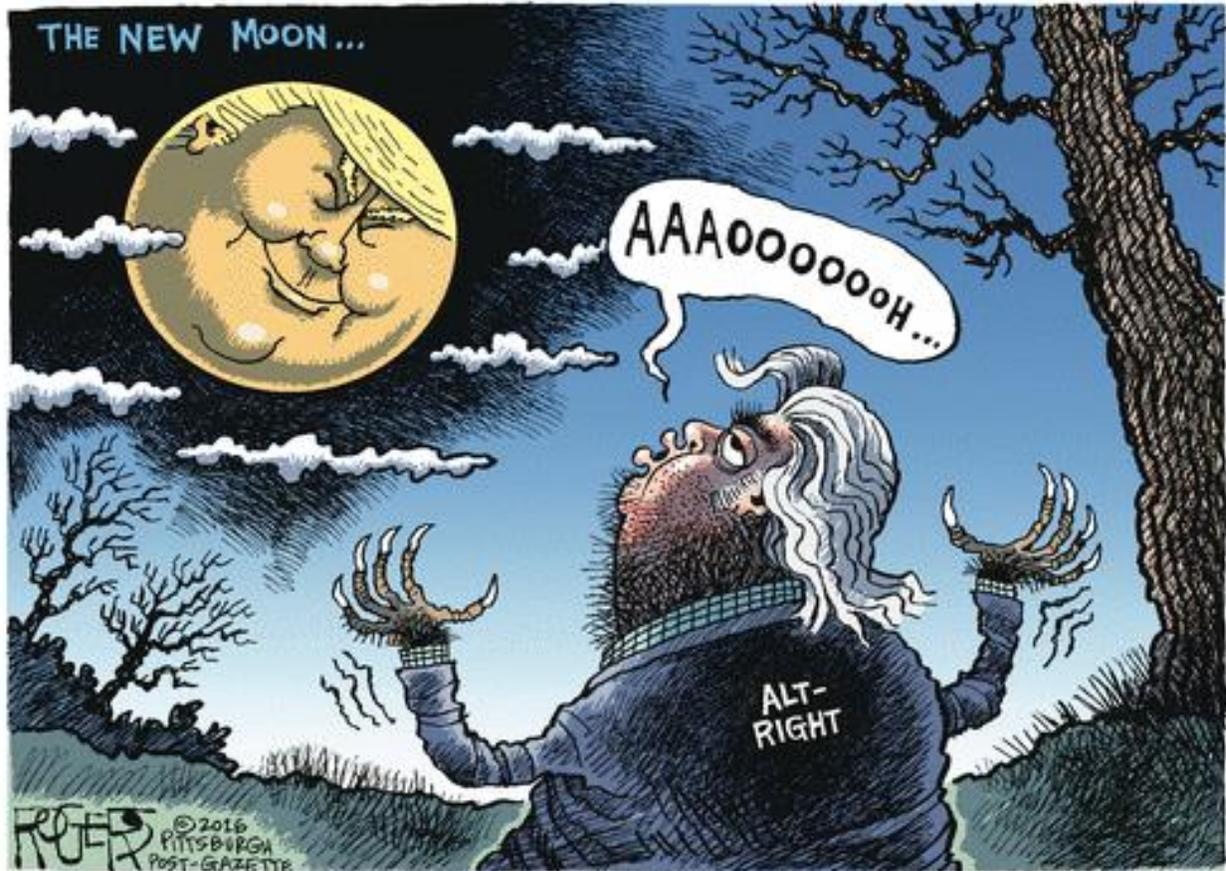
One person who has known and worked with him the past 15 years said that when she reads about Bannon in the newspaper, she thinks she must be reading about someone else. "He was never like that with me. I only knew him to be a passionate fighter. He's all about freedom." Constitutionally speaking, according to original intent, she clarified.

In the résumé column, [Bannon is a former Goldman Sachs banker](#) who holds an MBA from Harvard Business School. He's also a documentarian with eight films — some would say right-wing propaganda movies — to his credit, including one about Ronald Reagan confronting communism, "[In the Face of Evil](#)," that highlights the markers of totalitarian states, chiefly the repression of free speech (he should know?) and religion. Another was produced in partnership with its subject, [Sarah Palin](#), to rebrand her following her tragic experience in the national spotlight.

Bannon, who is Catholic, is ardent about religious liberty, as Trump has promised to be. But Trump has also promised to clamp down on the media, which would have to include Breitbart, which invites the worst sorts of expression. [One recent headline](#) that has women ripping their hair out: "Birth Control Makes Women Unattractive and Crazy." They should probably have read the story, which was a cheeky dissertation by British journalist Milo Yiannopoulos, a self-proclaimed "dangerous faggot," who, among other things, is never to be taken seriously. Bannon may or may not be like "Breitbart people," but he has been willing to strategically encourage people's hate as a way of inciting them to action. How these methods will manifest

themselves in the White House remains to be seen. But we can uncomfortably imagine that Trump under Bannon's direction will do whatever it takes to get what he wants.

Good luck, everybody



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