

2006

Pluto's newly discovered moons are officially named Nix and Hydra.



1957

Ellen Fairclough is sworn in as Canada's first female Cabinet Minister.

1898

The United States captures Guam from Spain.

1798

Irish Rebellion of 1798: The British Army defeats Irish rebels at the Battle of Vinegar Hill.

# The Perils of Having a Brazilian World Cup Baby



VANESSA BARBARA

Sao Paulo | Brazil

People are given time off from work when the national team is playing so that they can go home and blow horns for three hours straight. Media coverage becomes even more soccer-oriented than usual: Topics like why Brazil's mascot (Canarinho Pistola, whose name roughly translates as "easily pissed-off canary") is better than FIFA's official 2018 one (Zabivaka, a soccer-playing wolf) are suddenly deemed newsworthy. Politics grinds almost to a halt, even though every World Cup year is also a major election year. For a month, everything happens against a backdrop of soccer-related euphoria.

That worries me because my daughter is due to be born on June 22, the day Brazil plays Costa Rica. It's true that the exact date cannot be predicted, but she'll certainly arrive sometime during the tournament. And everybody knows it's easier to give birth on your own (with the help of some YouTube instructional videos) than it is to get the attention of any Brazilian during the World Cup — this applies to taxi drivers, to the staff in the hospital and even to the baby herself.

I know this because I was born during Brazil's game against the Soviet Union in the 1982 World Cup, in Spain. It was an arduous childbirth — and it didn't help matters that it coincided with an arduous match, making it the worst timing ever.

That day, my mother started to feel mild contractions in the morning and went to the hospital around noon, driven by my father and grandfather. After filling out admissions paperwork, she casually suggested that the two of them should go home because everything would probably take some time. She didn't even have the chance to repeat these words before they were gone; the first match of the day, Italy versus Poland, had already begun, and it would be followed by Brazil versus the USSR at 4 p.m. My grandmother was mortified when she saw the two men coming home alone, but she couldn't persuade them to go back.

While Italy and Poland faced off in a tedious and ultimately scoreless match in the city of Vigo, my mom dressed in a hospital gown and laid back on a table, where apparently, a team of nurses helped break her water. (She's not sure of this, since nobody said anything about the procedure, but as soon as she got up, there was a puddle on the floor.) They then took her to a small room surrounded by glass windows. She settled in, and the nurses left to go about their work, pausing periodically in a TV room nearby, where the Brazil versus USSR match was about to begin.

Those first few hours didn't go smoothly. It was my mother's first time going through normal labour — my older brother was born via a speedy C-section right after she ate eight slices of pizza — and she wasn't quite prepared for what to expect. As the pain got more intense, she tried to breathe through it and imagined she was somewhere else.

At the Ramón Sánchez Pizjuán Stadium, in Seville, things weren't going well either. Local fans, who'd started out rooting for Brazil, changed their minds at the 17-minute mark when the referee failed to award a penalty to the

Soviets after one of our players pulled down one of their forwards as he was about to shoot. Spanish fans booed loudly and started to shout "Fuera Brasil!" ("Out Brazil!")

As the pain became overwhelming, "I started to flail my arms and legs awkwardly," my mom told me later. Brazil's national team seemed to follow similar tactics, running aimlessly around the field and misplacing even the easiest passes. They also collided countless times with the photographers gathered around the pitch. Everything was falling apart. That year, Brazil had put together one of our best teams in history, but come game day, the players were acting as if they'd been taken by surprise by a sudden increase of prostaglandins and a baffling cervical dilation.

At the 34-minute mark, the Soviets took one lazy shot at the goal, which our goalkeeper let slip through his hands with equal laziness. The score was now 1-0, them. In São Paulo, my mom — scared and alone and epidural-less — was in despair. Unfortunately, the women in my family are very restrained — I'm trying to correct this terrible flaw for the next generation — so she didn't scream. She just feverishly hoped that someone would appear to take care of her.

But the second half had just begun in Seville, and finally, things were starting to look auspicious: Brazil went on the attack and local fans resumed their cheering. "I really don't know what time it was, but somebody in the TV room finally saw me floundering and came to help," my mom said.

Nobody told her anything about how dilated she was (nor did they tell her the score), but they did put her on the gynaecological table, where two nurses covered her knees with a blue cloth. The obstetrician told her to push, but by then she was too exhausted to even breathe. She got an episiotomy. One of the nurses put her hands on my mother's belly and started to help her.

I like to think that I was born at the exact moment when Doctor Sócrates — one of our most beloved players, a midfielder who was also a political activist and had a bachelor's degree in medicine — dribbled past two Soviets, stabilized the ball as if preparing a patient for a surgery and shot it into the corner of the net. By then, my head had already emerged — or so I imagine — but at 7.5 pounds and 18 inches, I had to really stretch to see into the TV room and watch the Doctor's feat, and as a result, I made it the rest of the way into the world (and immediately became a fan of Corinthians, the team for which he played.) Nobody heard me cry, because they were too busy celebrating.

"It's a little girl," the nurses announced. Doctor Sócrates marked the occasion by holding his fists up high in a gesture of victory.

The nurses cleaned me off, wrapped me up and showed me to my mother as if I were the original Jules Rimet Trophy. My mother's first impressions of me were that of a cute, if very hairy, little baby. But I was born with jaundice and had to be quickly taken to the nursery for phototherapy. As my mother delivered the placenta and nurses sutured the cut, she heard some other shouts that could have been reactions to Brazil's second and winning goal. Or not. It's impossible to know for sure the chronology of that afternoon's events.

All we know is that my father and grandfather came back after the end of the match and they were both very pleased with the efforts of our national team.

(Vanessa Barbara, a contributing opinion writer, is the editor of the literary website *A Hortaliça* and the author of two novels and two nonfiction books in Portuguese)



JOEL INDRUPATI

# Politics Today: The Twisting of Truth

A US State Department spokeswoman cited the D-Day invasion as an example of America's 'very strong relationship' with Germany. And she was immediately ridiculed on social media.

Her words, as Trump spokesperson, showed not only a lack of knowledge but also a careless application, of whatever she knew or misunderstood, to current US government policies.

Actually, on D-Day, 6 June 1944, during the Second World War, an amphibious assault was launched by the allied forces — on Germany.

And these Normandy landings — which refer to the simultaneous landing of US, British, and Canadian forces, from air and from sea, on five separate beachheads in Normandy, France — will remain well-known for their significant contribution towards the ending of WW II. Not towards stronger US-Germany Relations.

Maybe, this is a poor example. But, the lack of knowledge, and the distortion of facts, within the words of our political leaders, their spokespersons, and their speech writers, is a disturbing trend.

If they do not know what they are talking about, they could be leading their parties, their governments, and their nations, into a future that has no respect for truth.

"In his first 10 months, Trump told nearly six times as many falsehoods as Obama did during his entire presidency" ('Trump's Lies vs. Obama's', The New York Times, 14 December 2017).

In fact, as per The Washington Post's 'The Fact Checker's database' that analyses, categorizes and tracks every suspect statement uttered by the US president, President Trump has made 3,001 false or misleading claims as of April 2018 (The Washington Post, May 1, 2018).

Politifact, a nonpartisan fact-checking organization said that it rates 69% of 562 statements of President Trump as 'mostly false', 'false' or 'pants on fire' while it rates 26% of 599 statements of former President Obama in the same way (Why Donald Trump can't kill the truth, TIME, 11 June 2018).

And here is what ABC News website said about Trump's White House speech given on Friday: "his impromptu press conference on the North Lawn might be remembered most for the sheer numbers of mistruths, misleading statements and factual errors he uttered. It was remarkable. He seemed emboldened to say what he wanted, regardless whether it was true. Reporters were fact-checking him in real time, but he never backed down. He just repeated himself" (Fact Check Friday: Trump's impromptu performance packed with falsehoods. ABC News, 15 June 2018).

The acute deficiency of truth in the words of political leaders, their spokespersons and their speechwriters, is not endemic to one particular nation. It is a rising global phenomenon.

India's *atnews.in* website says that India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a series of claims throughout 2017, which were either untrue or partially true. They listed ten major ones on their website (Half-truths and whole lies — ten times PM Modi misled the nation in 2017, *atnews.in*, 10 Jan 2018).

This year too, in an election rally in Karnataka State in India, Modi made false claims, gave wrong dates, and spread misinformation on India's military history (Dear PM Modi, You Got India's Military History Wrong!, YouTube Video by The Quint, Published: 7 May 2018).

India's opposition leader Rahul Gandhi too is accused of falsehoods. He had once blamed Modi and Modi's BJP party for insulting Kerala pride by not inviting the then Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy for a major event. But it turned out that the CM's office had already said he was unavailable.

And, more recently, Rahul Gandhi spread half-truths about the founders of Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Ford and Honda.

Politics is often accepted as a profession built on lies. But we should not forget that if 'truth' is pushed aside, it could be disastrous for all, in the long run.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



I have spent much of my life working in GOP politics. I have always believed that both parties were two of the most important institutions to the advancement of human freedom and dignity in the history of the world. Today the GOP has become a danger to our democracy and values.

@SteveSchmidtSES

02



Lots of Fake News today. I mocked a liberal who attempted to politicize children as opposed to discussing the real issue which is fixing a broken immigration system. It's offensive that the MSM doesn't want to talk about the fact these policies were started under Obama.

@CLewandowski\_

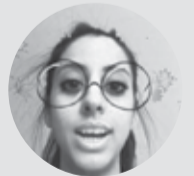
03



You think any of these people care about family separation? If they did, they'd be upset about the collapse of the American family, which is measurable and real. They're not. They welcome that collapse, because strong families are an impediment to their political power.

@TuckerCarlson

04



Trump never advocated to separate small children from their parents. Unless he did and I'm missing something. Families get separated all the time, whether while being smuggled into the country or deported. I honestly see this family-separation outcry as an emotional distraction.

@PardesSeleh

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