



Susceptible to misinformation? It's your own fault!

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"You are not entitled to your opinion. You are entitled to your informed opinion. No one is entitled to be ignorant." — Harlan Ellison

I love that quote. Here's the deal.

If I vote based on disinformation, it's my fault. If I take a position based on a misinterpretation, it's my fault. If I make a decision based on misinformation, it's my fault. If I take action based on a misconception, it's my fault.

Should people be distorting the truth or purposefully slanting their take on it? Of course not. Should they be called out? Of course they should. Are they going to continue to engage in these deceptive practices? Absolutely.

Blaming others when you didn't do your due diligence is dishonest, disingenuous, and deceitful.

Most Americans have the tools at their disposal to separate the wheat from the chaff and it doesn't require that much time or effort to check the veracity of any given assertion. All that's required is the will to determine the actual facts.

Recently, for example, Trump claimed that Harris used AI to enhance the size of the crowd that greeted her when she arrived at the Detroit Airport. Of course, many of Trump's supporters take everything he says at face value, so they believed him without feeling the need to verify this ludicrous allegation.

What followed was an avalanche of idiotic memes that further confused those who seem incapable of thinking for themselves.

By-the-way, those who followed up quickly found that around 15,000 supporters were indeed there to meet Harris on the tarmac. This was easily authenticated from multiple sources.

If you believed the AI nonsense, you have no one to blame but yourself. Start doing your homework and exercise those critical thinking skills before they atrophy even more from lack of use.

Likewise, we all need to recognize that we don't think rationally when we're emotionally invested in the information we consume on an ongoing basis. Many human beings tend to lose all sense of perspective as their passion increases for a given idea (or person). Winning the argument becomes more important than getting to the truth.

They start seeing the world as "us vs. them" - or worse - "good vs. evil." Eventually they view themselves as morally superior to their perceived adversaries – a belief which they think justifies whatever is necessary to advance their cause.

More importantly, they honestly don't realize how ignorant and dangerous they are. They push back instinctively, without thinking, convinced that the end justifies the means. Beware of

anyone who is willing to “temporarily” suspend ethical or legal safeguards in pursuit of a “greater good.”

Try not to be one of those misguided fanatics.

“Think before you speak. Read before you think.” — Fran Lebowitz

One last point.

In my graduate classes, I obviously require a lot of reading. And I purposefully mix a few “bad” articles in with the “good” just to see if students can discern the difference. Based on 30+ years of doing this consistently, I can state unequivocally that today’s students, as a general cohort, are not as good as their predecessors at distinguishing between the two categories.

There are obviously many factors contributing to this reality, but since these students represent our future, this is a trend that should concern us all. For my part, I constantly encourage students to think for themselves, speak their truth, and live out loud.

But it’s going to take a collective effort to get doing your own research and engaging in critical thinking back to being the norm rather than the exception.

Obviously, we have our work cut out for us, both individually and collectively.

One final quote; another personal favorite:

“Anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that ‘my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.’” — Isaac Asimov



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