

Fact or Fiction?

Letter to the Editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 04.14.22

We are entitled to our opinions. Opinions have more meaning when based on facts, not misinformation. The goal of some organizations is to have people question the truth based on misinformation like: Who won the 2020 election? Was Jan. 6 an insurrection? Do vaccines work? Is climate change real? Misinformation is a threat to our society and democracy, public health, national security, trust in media, science, government, and religious institutions.

Fox News is vastly influential, commanding huge audiences in primetime with hosts Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity. Being popular doesn't make them accurate. Calling something "woke" is not an argument. Responding to criticism of something someone said or did by launching into a rant about "cancel culture" isn't an explanation. Calling a trans person's hiring "[identity politics](#)" doesn't tell an audience what makes the person unqualified. Fox hides behind filler words without offering facts to support their position.

People are unaware of our own vulnerability to misinformation. It is designed to provoke an emotional response that conforms to our existing worldview. We give more weight to content that frightens or outrages us.

When a news statement is presented as factual, we believe it is accurate. Lawyers for Fox News said, "The 'general tenor' of the show should then inform a viewer that [Carlson] is not 'stating actual facts' about the topics he discusses and is instead engaging in 'exaggeration.'"

Misinformation leads to confusion about what is true, doubt about accurate news and reliance on falsehoods. The Russians learned this decades ago. Conviction is not the goal of disinformation; instilling doubt, and, for Fox News, ratings, is the goal.

Orwell made clear in his novel "1984" that corrosion of democracy is the distortion of truth and facts in favor of a particular agenda.

We can handle the truth!

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