

Alexis Young

Professor Mary Hays

Rhet 105

May 1, 2017

About 1426

Who's Responsible for America's Tension? A Battle between Fake and Real News

The election of America's 45th President, Donald Trump, took many by surprise all around the globe. In his first week as president, Trump managed to sign several executive orders that has questioned both the morals and objectives he has in store for this nation. The temporary travel ban excluded Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and other countries from entering the US for a 90 day period. This controversial ban has become the topic of fake news postings throughout the country by way of social media.

Many people have chosen to voice their opinions, regarding the immigration ban, through popular social media websites such as, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat. However, the opinions of these users are used to misinform the public and persuade them based on their own biased statements. A Facebook user, Tom Collier, recently posted a picture of a child detained in handcuffs titled, "Detained at Dulles. I feel so much safer now" (LaCripia, n.p.). Based on the attention this topic is receiving, the speaker uses this posting in order to sarcastically express his disapproval for the travel ban and persuade others to follow suit. In reference to his ethos appeal, Tom Collier, does not hold any credibility under the circumstance that he has no factual evidence regarding the real nature of the picture, making his post, merely, a statement that addresses the cruelty behind the travel ban. Tom Collier's status as a civilian makes his post easily accessible to other civilians on Facebook, potentially building a sense of comradery amongst his friends or other viewers. Ultimately, persuading others to recognize the ridiculousness of the ban and its effects on those who belong to a certain country. The absence of credibility, or appeal to ethos, is

a commonality amongst fake news postings, but, ironically, these postings are still spreading and influencing the way we view a variety of issues.

To those who are unaware of his sarcastic tone, this photo could be mistaken as a sign of support in favor of the immigration ban. The lack of awareness for Collier's true motive is what fuels the role of fake news in our society. For instance, Collier mentioned that he "... felt so much safer now" (LaCripia, n.p.), as if those feelings were not existent before Trump's temporary travel ban. Tom Collier appeals to pathos is evident through his diction. His diction not only highlights his sarcastic tone in reference to the ban, but also strategically appeals to the emotions of his audience. His use of short and fragmented sentences help in emphasizing his claim and is effective in gaining the reader's attention, despite the inaccurate information. These short and fragmented sentences mimic the action of someone who is angry or lost for words. Being that a child in handcuffs can be upsetting to anyone, Tom Collier utilized sentence variations to depict his response to the picture as well as the response of others viewing this post. In addition to his sentence variation, the photo itself contributes to Collier's appeal to pathos. To those who may have deemed it as a false portrayal or even those who thought it was truthful, the picture of a child being detained has the potential to make anyone emotional. The fact that it was a younger child in the picture, people may have put their children, siblings, or friends into the child's predicament and sympathized with his situation. This play on emotions persuaded the public to become interested in the post despite their view on the topic. Their interest, ultimately, brought attention to his opinion and entertained his conflicting logic. Despite Tom Collier's lack of credibility and appeal to logos, his ability to attract the attention of his audience with his syntax and play on their emotions resulted in the mass distribution of the picture.

Of course, with most fake news sources, the truth soon surfaces. In reference to Collier's statement, an article published by *CNN*'s Holly Yan identified the 8 year-old boy as a student of Latonia Elementary School who was handcuffed, along with a 9-year-old girl, in order to restrain their ADHD outburst. There is an ongoing investigation involving the officer, Deputy Kevin

Summer, to determine the justification of his actions. Although the verdict of Deputy Kevin Summer's action has not been released, Yan provides evidence in attempts to rid the case of being an immigration arrest and persuade her audience to contest the actions of Deputy Kevin Summers (Yan, n.p.).

In contrast to Tom Collier, Holly Yan's testament of events carries a significant amount of credibility, alluding to her ethos appeal. Including accounts from the mother of the boy, Deputy Kevin Summer, Latonia Elementary School, and Kenton County Police Sheriff, Holly Yan provides a detailed explanation of the case from all people involved, while supporting it with evidence. By including all the witnesses, not just a few, Yan suppresses her bias opinions and focuses on the case as a whole, providing a logos appeal. There was also a video that detailed the series of events that took place in the classroom of Latonia Elementary School that evening. Being able to provide visual evidence, Holly Yan gave the readers a sense of validity in relation to her other forms of evidence, persuading the audience through another means of logos.

Yan then uses Kentucky's state laws in order to educate her audience on the nature behind this controversial issue. Amongst the laws she provided in her article she states, "Kentucky's school personnel are prohibited from using restraints, especially mechanical restraints, to punish children or as a way to force behavior compliance (Yan, n.p.)." Another one of Kentucky's state laws Yan addresses is, "State law prohibits the physical restraints of students and requires officers to do yearly training (Yan, n.p.)." Being that the nature of these laws are quite similar, Holly uses them in order to place emphasize the lack of reasoning, or logic, that Deputy Kevin Summers had in regards to violating these laws, especially since yearly training is required.

In addition to her logos appeals, Yan uses several appeals to pathos in order to illustrate the boy's emotional state after being handcuffed. Through the visual evidence provided, the audience hears the boy saying, "Ow, that hurts", in which Holly later goes on to describing as a cry (Yan, n.p.). The use of the word cry portrays that the boy was in some sort of physical pain as

well as promoting a sense of helplessness. In relation to the idea of pain, Holly Yan describes this sort of behavior as a form of punishment and notes that, according to the boy's parent, he now is “traumatized” and “suffers” from this incident (Yan, n.p.). All these descriptive words promote a feeling of pity for the young boy’s situation, ultimately, leading the audience to question the actions of the deputy through pathos appeals.

Who’s responsible for America’s tension? Although, without Donald Trump’s immigration ban this particular issue may not have surfaced, the possibility of fake news influencing the minds of our nation is immense. Fake news articles have become a prominent source of misinformation amongst Americans and have affected the opinions we share from politics to celebrity controversy in the media. Becoming informed and being aware of false information can lead to a greater understanding of, not only our country’s ideals but, our own personal beliefs. A president is only granted the opportunity to serve two terms, but we are guaranteed a lifetime of tension if we don’t challenge the information that we receive.

Many blame this surge of fake news on the popularity that social media has in today’s society, especially in regards to politics. However, according to a study conducted by Stanford University, “social media was an important but not dominant source of news... television, it turns out, remains the go-to place for political news” (Crawford, n.p.). Even if someone relied on Facebook or social media outlets to gain political information, Crawford argues that the fake news story would have to be heavily persuasive to change their mind on a political matter (Crawford, n.p.). In relation to Tom Collier’s Facebook posting, even though it caught the attention of some civilians, it's likely that their opinions regarding the immigration ban remained the same. The power of fake news is still prevalent amongst our society, but it is beginning to take other forms of media. This makes it even more important that we not only pay close attention to the information we receive, but where we receive it from.

Works Cited

Crawford, Krysten. "Stanford Examines Fake News and 2016 Presidential Election". *Stanford U*, 18 Jan 2017, news.stanford.edu/2017/01/18/stanford-study-examines-fake-news-2016-presidential-election/. Accessed 1 May 2017.

LaCapria, Kim. "A Dulles Boy." *Snopes*. <http://www.snopes.com/small-child-handcuffed-at-dulles/>. Accessed 1 February 2017.

Yan, Holly. "School Resource Officer Sued For Allegedly Handcuffing Children With ADHD." *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/04/us/aclu-disabled-students-handcuffed-lawsuit/index.html>. Accessed 10 February 2017