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Two Lies, and Maybe a Truth

As young people grow up in America today, we begin to notice the larger divide between generations. Social justice issues such as LGBTQ+ rights, gender and racial equality, and classism seem to be at an all-time high, with incredible differences and opinions coming from young and old. The majority of sensitive topics and general current events are covered in the news. With paper news, the internet, and word of mouth, it is nearly impossible to avoid the reality. But with the rise of “fake news,” no one knows if their main source of information is true. This increase in fake articles is doing more damage than just confusion, but physical violence as well. Social justice issues are very sensitive subjects for anyone, so these mix-ups are causing misunderstanding and pain for many.

We can look at a more emotional effect of fake news. Over the course of the recent election of Donald Trump, the world has viewed, in awe, the opinions of disagreeing politicians. Some people have very negative views of these critics, so citizens are rarely surprised when personal, racist comments are made. A Snopes article involving a racist remark made to Representative John Lewis by a Trump team member, Representative Chris Collins, reminds us that even the most powerful politicians do not hold back when it comes to issues like racism, and we believe it (Fact Check). When the

public thinks that professionals will stoop to the level to racism, they lose faith and trust in who is making decisions. Not only does the public feel sadness for Lewis, but disappointment and anger towards Collins, possibly sabotaging his career. Fake news brings up the strongest emotions in everybody, even though those details are unreal. These false rumors will, no doubt, influence the way people view news in the future. Without trust in the media and skepticism floating around, legitimacy suffers.

Not only does fake news induce emotional struggle, but it can induce a physical response. With such high emotions, it is not surprising when people act with words and violence. In an article from the New York Times, a professor at Dartmouth talks about how as more the United States splits in political view, so does the relationship with his friends. He notices a divide with politics always being brought up. With such high emotions without moderators, his social group has room from their emotions to come out through words (Taub). With such heavy arguments, fake news can totally creep in, altering everyone's reality. If someone is spilling lies, then their opinions may totally be different if the same person heard real information. But words often do way less damage than physical violence. The story of "Pizzagate" is the perfect example of this. A Wikipedia article explains the story of Pizzagate, as rumors that a restaurant was running a sex trafficking ring spread, threatening the lives of the owners. This story was false, but the public failed to see. The article mentions customers firing rifles in the restaurant and scaring the owners with a knife. Since the subject of the assumed trafficking sparked such emotion, the poor owners were in trouble (Fakes News). Fake news affects more than just politics, but the lives of ordinary people just trying to make a living.

Fake news can have an incredible effect on the people reading it. Millions of people can be ready a source and having trust in the information, even though it could be completely wrong. As we have witnessed, fake news is creating a divide between the government, friends, and business owners, making people even resort to violence. It is important that as the country moves along with a shift in politics, it must do the same with news sources. The 2016 Election has divided the nation, but brought people together to fight for social justice issues that they believe in.

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