

# MEDIA MISHAPS

Written by: Daniel Willen

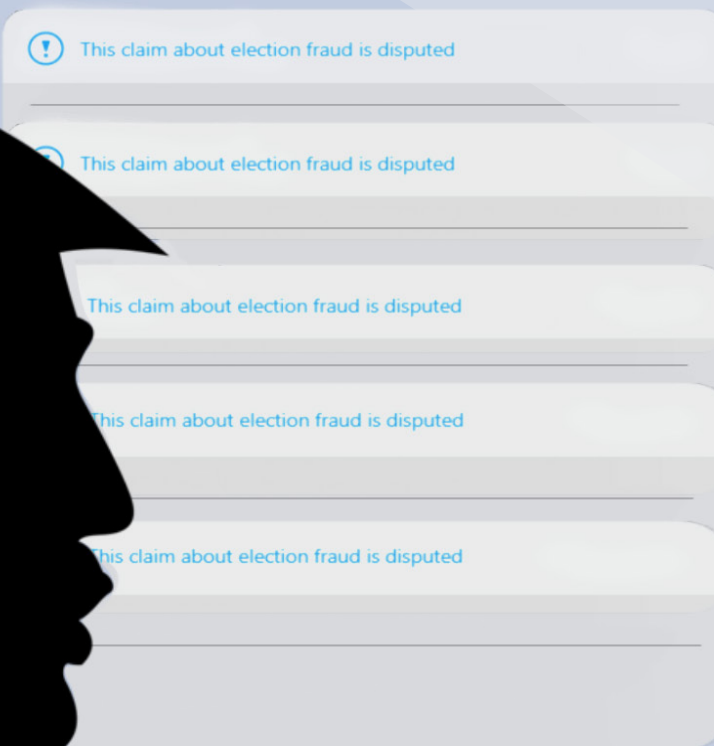
Designed by: Rhiannon Johnston

Print media has always been popular. In ancient Rome, the “Acta Diurna,” translating roughly into Daily Public Records, transcribed official messages and matters of public interest onto a slab of stone, which was placed in a town square or market. With the invention of the printing press nearly 600 years ago came a plethora of newspapers, which would

come to play an increasingly prominent role in the way people lived their lives. The first American newspaper was a Boston publication by the name of “Publick Occurrences,” published in 1690, much to the enthusiasm of colonists. Funnily enough, it was shut down less than a week later by the governor of Massachusetts, deeming any nonofficial press

as a source of “disobedience and heresy and . . . libels against the best government [that of Great Britain and the English Monarchy].”

The print medium has come a long way since then. The magazine that you are reading right now, the Aerial, stands as a testament to that fact. In looking to the past, it is clear to see that



the state of distrust surrounding popular media is not unfounded, it is not new, not topical. But the technological advancements of the 21st century have put mainstream media, from new-age social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (a domicile that has become disturbingly synonymous with the rise of “Trumpism”) to established news sources like CNN to Fox News, in such a uniquely powerful position over the American people to dictate what is newsworthy. What can be criticized, and what can’t? Appropriate action can only stem forth from appropriate context and information, honest information that, in theory, should be disseminated through popular media. So, where have the lines been blurred? How has the contemporary news cycle which affects so many people’s lives driven away people from all different walks of life, and how can the damages of misinformation, which is destroying the health of our communities, be reconciled with?

### **Democracy and Reliable Press--Mutually Inclusive, or Not?**

Question: How many Americans do you think could recite every Amendment of the Constitution, if asked upon? Certainly not many, maybe a well-versed lawyer, or a dedicated political scientist. How many Americans, for that matter, could even tell you how many Amendments there are listed in the Constitution (there are 27)? Even so, most everybody knows the First Amendment. It entails you, among other freedoms, the right to free speech and perhaps just as importantly, freedom

of the press. It is so irrevocably integral to the idea of democracy that the Founding Fathers listed it before the right to bear arms, the right to never be subject to unlawful search or seizure, and the right to a fair and speedy trial should you ever be accused of a crime.

However, nearly 250 years later, the relationship between people and the news they consume, an entity that is upheld solely by the First Amendment, is frayed to such an extent that one must ask the question: how has modern society been allowed to become so dangerously susceptible to the intrusions of misinformation and political or corporate “spin,” and what can this tell us about the condition of our rights as American citizens?

In order to contextually understand the current state of modern media and the way it shapes the lives of most Americans, we must delve deeper into research on how people perceive the media. According to a study done by the Pew Research Center in the spring of 2020, just under 10% of U.S. adults say that they have “a great deal” of confidence that journalists work in the best interest of the public. On the flip side, about 19% of adults surveyed say they have “very little to no” confidence that news media workers are acting with their interests in mind. Although these figures might indicate a sort of “vocal minority” that we see dominate the political hemisphere of the modern world, when put into perspective, this means that more than 1 in 4 Americans subscribe to either an extreme trust or distrust of the media. In contrast,

## **OVER 54 PERCENT OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC HAS EITHER FAIRLY LITTLE OR NO TRUST IN THE MEDIA.**

In an age where access to information is more prevalent than ever, so is skepticism to the information being presented. Why is this?

### **Getting Away from Big Media**

In order to gain a better understanding of the fragile dichotomy between news and the way it affects the lives of normal people, I talked to social media page, The Normal. The Normal, or @TheNormalNews on Instagram, is a social media driven news page dedicated to providing those disenfranchised with quippy, often disingenuous news sources that dominate the modern world.

When glancing through The Normal’s Instagram page, you will see a few things. First, there is very little to do with the owner of the page. In classic journalistic premise, my fascination to learn about the man behind the page lingered closely behind my every swipe and save. There is no biography listed anywhere on the page, no selfies or snapshots or plugs, which we as avid consumers of social buzz have become so accustomed to seeing. For some this might immediately raise a red flag (after all, the entire premise of media distrust revolves largely around the fact that people struggle to trust the people behind the byline, and how can you trust someone you know nothing about?).

I soon learned that the primary focus of The Normal, to provide reliable news to those who have been disenfranchised by modern media in all its facets, ties closely to the increasingly complex political environment in America. When asked what spawned his interest in new-form media and thus the creation of The Normal, Drew (the founder of The Normal) stated, "The Normal's page was really spawned after my interest in news and media crossed paths with the entrance of politics into the "mainstream" culture of the U.S. (specifically leading up to and post-2016 election). I let my engagement with politics boil and simmer sporadically for a few years until I found that simply switching between CNN and Fox News and reading news snippets on social media wasn't cutting it for me -- it was too noisy and divisive. Sure, noisy and divisive content draws a lot of eyes and ears but sooner or later (I assumed) people will become fatigued and seek alternatives, which is how I found myself feeling eventually... mildly annoyed by current choices in news and with a lingering interest in trying it out for myself (started the page in 2018)."

The Normal News has a modest but substantial social media following of 16.4 thousand followers. This certainly isn't chump change, but still it can't hold a candle to well-established news sources like Fox News and CNN (Fox alone garnered an average of 2.5 million daily viewers in 2019.) With such a powerful position in regards to handling the information that affects the lives of normal people, media conglomerates have shifted from accurately reporting unbiased news to instead catching

people's eyes with attention-grabbing headlines, then trying to tell people what they should think in regards to the happenings of the world. Even so, many are being driven to more non-traditional forms of modern media due to the increasingly prevalent nature of misinformation and corporate spin involved in the task of disseminating information.

**"PEOPLE ARE SKEPTICAL OF ESTABLISHED NEWS SOURCES BECAUSE PEOPLE'S MINDS ARE BEING TRAINED TO SEE THE WORLD IN A SPECIFIC MANNER THROUGH REPETITIVE NARRATIVES AND MESSAGING."**

A news source like Fox and CNN plays on these repetitive narratives and if they make a deviation from said narrative, it results in backlash because some readers/viewers have a hard time accepting realities over comforting lies/narratives."

Big News isn't going anywhere. Well-established news conglomerates like CNN and Fox News, with their deeply-rooted foundations in cable TV and other forms of traditional media, will likely continue to bring in substantial amounts of viewers with often harmful articles. So what is there to be done?

For those bedridden by overwhelming amounts of divisive news, you might be tempted to stay on the couch eating chocolate cherry nut truffle ice cream, cancelling your internet subscription and opting instead to watch Shrek 2 on Blu-ray. But, we cannot help mend the current state of political discourse, without actively cultivating and becoming a part of the process by which we consume and process media.

When asked to give advice to those who feel a serious need to disconnect themselves from the divisive news cycle that harms the wellbeing of potentially millions of American's, Drew from The Normal said, "If someone really wishes to free themselves from their current tangled world of news, then I suggest they mentally/emotionally audit themselves to assure they have the curiosity and patience to seek out new information from differing perspectives and outlets...It's hard to point to a specific page or outlet that people should follow without coming off as biased. But if I were to do so, I'd say follow

**@THENORMALNEWS**

on Instagram!"

Search 11:40 PM 6%

< thenormalnews ...



2,811 Posts 16.4K Followers 42 Following

The Normal Media

★ Unbiased news.

Follow Message Email



Polls



Politics



Science



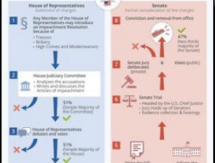
Pop Cult...



Trump has been impeached again



Scientists witness death of a galaxy for the first time



Scientists witness death of a galaxy for the first time

