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Make them prove it

America has been a tabloid kind of nation for a while now. Tabloid-style news gets attention over in-depth news that reports what is actually happening.

In the past, news racks were full of periodicals with come-on cover stories such as "I Married an Alien." Sure, they were fun to read but most people took those stories with a huge grain of salt. These days tabloid stories embrace our celebrity culture—those types of magazines herald breathless headlines that ramp up our curiosity about this or that A-, B-, C- and D-List names. We are never so engaged as when we are faced with a story about our favorite famous person.

Tabloid-type news invaded mainstream media and any number of Websites. The First Amendment allows anyone to write and publish anything they wish, regardless of how incredulous it is.

Last week the president-elect, without evidence, said that there were 3 million illegal votes cast in last month's presidential election. Some may think that if he said it, it must be true. The problem with that is that every news outlet reported his statement; to be fair, most of those outlets added that it was an unfounded and unverified allegation. But that won't matter to a large portion of the citizenry.

editorial

A reasonable person can read an outlandish story in a supermarket tabloid, roll their eyes and move on. But when outlandish stories are spread by government leaders and media outlets, many reasonable people would give that story some credence.

It is human nature to believe what one reads or hears on the news. An old saw says "You can't believe everything you read." That adage seems to have lost some of its power in our current climate.

The antidote to fake news is education. It is important for our schools to prepare our high school students for college and a career. That calls for instruction in skills. We must not, ever, lose sight of the fact that education must continue—or return—an element of developing critical thinking. Some of us learn that if an offer is too good to be true, it probably is. The flip side is that if something sounds too outrageous, it, too, is probably false.

In math and science classes students are asked to show their work to prove how they came to the answer.

We should expect nothing less from our leaders—political, media or otherwise. If they make a statement that seems too far out, we should ask them to show us their work—prove it.

—LAZ

Fake news vs. junk news

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

The big "fake news" stories of 2016 were the polls. Most showed Donald Trump losing big in November, thus cable news ran countless renditions of the many ways Trump could not possibly win the necessary Electoral College vote. Getting the story utterly wrong should result in hand-wringing, hair-pulling and painful introspection in my profession; instead many in the news business have turned their hungry eyes on "fake news" disseminated on Facebook and Google.

That's right. After a year of getting the story consistently wrong, journalism gurus are pointing to phony stories not produced by the mainstream media. After the election, The New York Times ran a piece about Election Day titled "The Hoaxes, Fake News and Misinformation We Saw on Election Day." An example from the piece: A GOP mayor in Georgia tweeted that Republicans vote on Tuesday, 11/8, but Democrats vote on Wednesday, 11/9. Hello, Gray Lady; it was a joke. How desperate do you have to be to include that tweet as an example of misinformation?

"Fake stories and memes that crop up during live news events have been a problem on social media for years, but a wild election season has highlighted the news media's slow response to them," the Times' story began. Slow response? Au contraire, the media have been too quick to seize upon every little speck of dirt one can find surfing social media. Back in the day, TV news looked to newspapers for good stories; now producers troll Twitter for what they call "content."

Trump could spin out days' worth of free TV time from a single tweet—two days on the tweet itself followed

guest column

by two days on Trump's failure to react appropriately. ("We wouldn't even be discussing this," some droll expert would assert, if Trump had walked back his original offense.) Journalists always have been overly concerned with what people say as opposed to what they do. Trump understood how to exploit that preoccupation by mining the public's contempt for the media.

Yes, I know that there are real "fake news" stories—such as the one about the armed man, who fired off a round or two before he was arrested, who went to a D.C. pizzeria to investigate a bogus story about Hillary Clinton. Kudos to the good reporting that took apart the bogus "pizzagate" story. Thing is, for days before that incident, cable news was buzzing about "fake news" and the election -- as if hard-to-swallow conspiracy theories swayed those voters who had not decided between Clinton and Trump.

Methinks "fake news" would not be a ubiquitous story if Clinton had won the White House. It certainly wasn't news when Donald Trump won the GOP primary. "Fake news" got big when voters acted in a way that did not confirm the mainstream media's preconceptions.

There seems to be a cautionary tale in these "fake news" stories, as in: If only voters had heeded "real" news, then Trump would not be president-elect. But really, journalists have only themselves to blame for handing the reins of reportage to amateurs. If a candidate's remarks on social media confirmed the biases of most of the journalism class, then it was a cable news story. 2016 was the year of empty-calorie reportage. Fake news, bad. Junk news, our bad.

(Creators Syndicate)



What Donald Trump should read

By MICHAEL GERSON

Whatever his other considerable achievements, our president-elect is not known for his broad reading in American history. But Donald Trump is about to enter that history. And in the spirit of new beginnings, he might view this as an opportunity to accumulate some inspiration, both for his inaugural address and his manner of governing.

If you were to recommend three American texts for our president-elect to read and ponder before taking the oath of office, what would they be?

There are, of course, so many possibilities that any proposed list is almost entirely subjective. In a casual survey of friends, I got strong options by Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan.

But since I get to choose, here are my selections:

First, Martin Luther King's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Written in 1963 from solitary confinement, it was a response to local white clergymen who had condemned protests and accused King of being an outside agitator.

For King, no one is an outsider when it comes to confronting injustice because "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." King based a vision of human dignity on moral law, which takes precedence over unjust human laws. And King urges—actually demands—that white America see events from a different perspective. "When you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will ... when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters ... then you will understand why we find it difficult

other views

to wait."

The lessons here? The limits of "law and order," set at the boundaries of conscience; the importance of protest in a

free society; the need for empathy as the basis for justice.

Second, I'd propose Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech to Congress in 1941. America had not yet been attacked at Pearl Harbor. But Roosevelt knew that the country would eventually be engulfed by the disorders of the world. So he set out to overcome isolationist sentiment and build public support for military aid to a beleaguered Britain.

In his view, America opposes "any attempt to lock us in behind an ancient Chinese wall." Instead, "the future and the safety of our country and of our democracy are overwhelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders." The engagement and sacrifice of Americans, he realized, had to be rooted in an "unshakable belief in the manner of life which they are defending." And so he set out the goals of "freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world ... freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world ... freedom from want ... freedom from fear."

That theory of America's global role has been embraced by Democratic and Republican presidents since World War II, helping defend the American people from grave dangers and stabilizing large por-

tions of the world.

It is the great power of historical texts that they speak to us differently, in different times. We read certain speeches and documents again and again. But then, in a new light, they speak across the years, as close as a voice over your shoulder.

This is true of my third choice: George Washington's "Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island." Washington was responding to a letter of thanks from representatives of the largest Jewish community in colonial America.

"It is now no more that toleration is spoken of," replied Washington, "as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens."

Washington continued: "May the Children of the Stock of Abraham who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

This is the proper response to anger and division. We are not a nation that grants tolerance; we are a nation that recognizes inherent rights, held equally by all the Children of Abraham, and everyone else. And when we come back to our deepest values, as we always do, there shall be none to make them afraid.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

We should be taking care of us first

Listening to any apostle of the refugees flooding our country, one learns that they want every American to invite these folks into their homes as guests for however long it takes for them to get settled here and find a job. The refugees, they argue, should be first in line to take any available jobs no matter the consequences to U.S. citizens or those who arrived by lawful immigration procedures. There's a whole lot more, too, that we're expected to give so that these folks feel welcome and warm here.

Now, these folks are refugees for a reason; in the example of Aleppo, came apart and their government turned on them because their menfolk were shooting at an entrenched dictator, trying to overthrow the government. Why they did not make an effort to stop the madness of attacking a madman before it began is explained usually by "enshallah" (God's will) then waiting for us to save them.

These days they want a safe haven and the best place for that is Canada, Western Europe or the U.S. Point in fact is they really do not want to be anywhere but home in that part of the Middle East, Pakistan or from wherever they have fled. It can be predicted that they most likely will not seek to integrate with we hearthens here, will not work at learning our language, will not adopt our customs or live by our sectarian laws.

The war-torn among them will most often keep their heads down and make an effort to keep from getting deported due to bad behaviors. However, what's become more and more common, in the places where they've relocated, is that the small children brought with them and

those born here are far too often radicalized by Muslim terrorists, mainly ISIS and al-Qaeda leadership, after which they buy guns and make bombs to settle imaginary wrongs on innocent Americans.

Almost every day in the American media there is an article by one of the bleeding heart refugees' apostles. It tells of how the refugees in their homes are so wonderful that you, Mr. and Ms. America, just must open your doors and embrace them. They never say that when those who've invited them in or brought them here from afar, and tire of their different ways of doing things and foreign-minded demands, sooner or later to rise, that these folks will be turned loose on the rest of us to pay

the price of supporting them after their sponsors walk away.

Meanwhile, how is it that more of us are not doing anything about the huge and growing number of Americans with children who are without employment, any means of self-support and homeless? These are the American people inside our borders for whom help and sustenance should first be directed. In any kind of a moral universe, our own must be assisted before we go running around the planet to relocate those persons who really don't want to be here and are a danger to the all the rest of us. Finally here, and perhaps most telling, our state and national coffers are nearly empty, the people refuse more taxes, the U.S. Congress only supports warring overseas, and America's corporations get a free ride with no social responsibility.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly in the *Keizertimes*.)



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