

# Zuckerberg: 'Crazy' to say Facebook influenced election

By BARBARA ORTUTAY  
AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK — Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg says the idea that fake news spread on Facebook influenced the outcome of the U.S. election is “crazy.”

Still, the majority of Americans (six in 10) say they get at least some news from social media, mostly Facebook, according to the Pew Research Center.

While a lot of this news comes from established outlets — whether CNN or BuzzFeed News, misinformation spreads on Facebook just as information does, shared by users, recommended by software and amplified by both.

Sources of spurious information have ranged from news articles produced by “content farms” for the sole purpose of getting clicks, to “hyperpartisan” sites from both sides of the political spectrum, churning out stories that are misleading at best.

Case in point: “FBI AGENT SUSPECTED IN HILLARY EMAIL LEAKS FOUND DEAD IN APPARENT MURDER-SUICIDE” — a fabricated headline from a fake news site called the Denver Guardian, was shared thousands of times in the days leading up to the election.

Is it possible that voters were swayed for or against a candidate, much like those same people might buy a product after seeing an ad on Facebook?

Zuckerberg says voters deserve more credit.

During an interview Thursday with “The Facebook Effect” author David Kirkpatrick, Zuckerberg said idea that people voted the way they did because of bogus information on Facebook shows a “profound lack of empathy” for supporters of Donald Trump.

“Voters make decisions based on their lived experience,” he said.

Given the acerbic political contest from which the country just emerged, when countless longtime friends, even family, were unfriended, many are left to wonder if there would be an alternative American history being written today if it were not for Facebook, Twitter and the like.

This, after all, was the first truly social media election, playing out on Twitter and Facebook as much or more than it did on major networks, in living rooms and around water-coolers.

But isn't social media just a reflection of our world as it exists? Has Facebook become an easy scapegoat when the answer is far more complex?

While Pew found that many believe political discussions on social media to be “uniquely angry and disrespectful,” a comparable number have the same impression of face-to-face conversations when it comes to Democrats, the GOP, or another party.

### FILTER BUBBLE?

When it comes to Facebook users, Zuckerberg said almost everyone has friends on the “other side.” Even if 90 percent of your friends are Democrats, for example, 10 percent will be Republican. Still, that's not a very big number, and the idea of a “filter bubble” — that social media allows people to surround themselves only with the people and ideas with whom they agree, has been a hot topic this election cycle.

“By far the biggest filter in the system is not that the content isn't there, that you don't have friends who support the other candidate or that are of another religion,” Zuckerberg said. “But it's that you just don't click on it. You actually tune it out when you see it. I don't know what to do about that.”

### A DIFFICULT LINE

Facebook has long denied that it's a publisher or a media company, or that it acts remotely like either. Its cheery slogan — to make the world more “open and connected”

— seemingly invites a broad range of viewpoints, diverse, lively discussion and the free flow of information, rather than censorship.

But it could also make clamping down on fake news difficult. At a time when everyone seems entitled, not just to their own opinions, but to their own facts, one person's misleading headline might be another person's heartfelt truth.

“We take misinformation on Facebook very seriously,” Adam Mosseri, the executive in charge of Facebook's news feed, said in a statement to the tech blog TechCrunch this week. “We value authentic communication, and hear consistently from those who use Facebook that they prefer not to see misinformation.”

Facebook acknowledges that it has more work to do, and it seems to be putting a lot of faith in the power of data, artificial intelligence and algorithms as the solution.

Over the summer, Facebook fired the small group of journalists in charge of its “trending” items and replaced them with an algorithm. The catalyst appeared to be a report in a tech blog, based on an anonymous source, that the editors routinely suppressed conservative viewpoints.

Subsequently, fake stories ahead of the election began to trend.

## Glitch made it appear some users had died

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Some Facebook users received an unsettling shock Friday, when an unexplained glitch caused the social networking service to post a notice that implied they were dead.

A number of Facebook users reported that their profile page on the social network was topped with a message that referred to them by name — as if they were gone — while linking to a feature that “memorializes” the page of someone who has died. The message said Facebook hoped the users' loved ones would find comfort in seeing posts that others shared about them.

Even Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's page had the death notice for a short time on Friday. But messages had disappeared by midday California time.

“This was a terrible error that we have now fixed,” Facebook said. The company declined to say what caused the problem. “We are very sorry that this happened and we worked as quickly as possible to fix it.”

# Dear Candidates: Here's what girls and young women think

Associated Press

For many girls and young women across America and beyond, there was a hope this week that they would see history made with the first woman elected president of the United States. Now, for some, there are tears and disappointment — but a desire, too, to reach out.

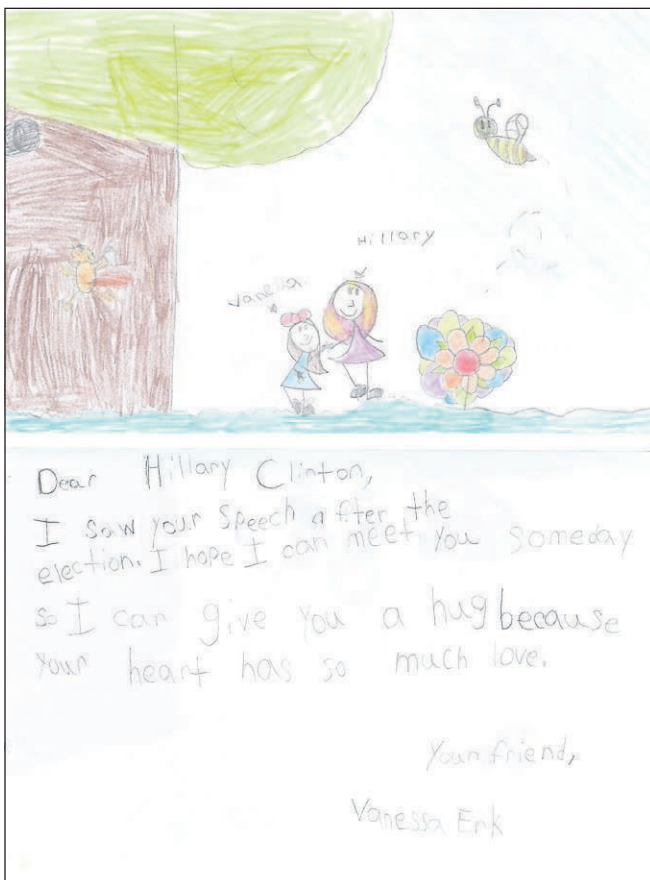
“To all of the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams,” Democrat Hillary Clinton said in her concession speech after Republican Donald Trump was declared the president-elect.

This week, a number of girls have pulled out their pencils and keyboards to write letters and blog posts — not just to Clinton but also to Trump, whose sometimes harsh remarks about women throughout the campaign did not go unnoticed.

Here are some excerpts, first from letters to Clinton and the rest addressed to Trump. The Associated Press obtained permission from parents and the young authors to share these words, along with drawings and photographs.

**Grace Songer, 13, Cold Spring, Kentucky:**

“Dear Secretary Clinton . Thank you for allowing me to say I remember when, for the first time, a woman was nominated as a major party candidate for president. . Thank you for planting seeds in a garden that will flourish from this day on, maintained by all of the independent women in our country and the world. One day our time will come, and I hope you look back on this and feel happy that you started, not a revolution, but a revelation, that we will carry on centu-



This photo provided by her family shows a drawing and letter that 6-year-old Vanessa Erk of Stoneham, Mass., wrote to Hillary Clinton after she lost the presidential race to Donald Trump.

ries after 2016.”

**Kaia James, 10, Orlando, Florida:**

“I won't let this election bring me down. ... So please, don't worry — I will finish what you started.

“There are so many girls like me ready to speak out and fight. You have fought for us and now it is our turn to fight for you.

“It's not over yet. We're only getting started.”

**Jules Spector, 16, New York City:**

“We all woke up this morning with the sun — or the clouds, if you were on the East Coast — and the Earth was still turning on its axis. Thus, I have the opportunity to say that the revolution starts today. ... Thank you,

Hillary, for uniting so many women and men across the country. Thank you for inspiring me to become a leader.”

**Amaya Johnson, 12, Lansing, Michigan:**

“You inspired me to look past the sexism in this world and stand tall and proud as a female who is equal. ... While we might not have won, remember to keep your chin up.”

**Hannah Alper, 13, Toronto, Canada:**

“I watched (Secretary Clinton) make her concession speech. It was hard to watch and it was clear that it was hard for her to make. But there she was — strong, inspiring and full of poise

— just as she had been throughout the campaign. ... Yesterday, today and tomorrow, I'm With Her.”

**Kayla Blas, age 16, Pendleton, New York:**

“President Elect Trump, Congratulations! I truly believe you are the right person for the job!

“Today Republicans are given an extreme stereotype. If you're a Republican, you're a bigot, you are against gay rights, you're a racist, you don't believe in a woman's right to choose and you're extremely religious and want to impose it on everyone else. Well, I'm a young Republican and I do not exactly share those qualities. ...

“As a high school junior and a student council member for the past three years, I am excited about your presidency. My father is a retired City of Buffalo Firefighter and my mother is a small business owner in healthcare. I have seen the struggles they've had to overcome with the poor state of our economy, and with your election I look with excitement towards the future. I feel the tides now are turning and JFK's famous quote “What can

you do for your country' is hopefully going to be echoed in households. I feel you will put people back to work and that is always a good thing. ...

“I feel that your victory will return our country back to the basic principles it was founded on which is all men and women are created free and equal and possess the same inherent, natural rights. We will once again become a land of opportunity. Your acceptance speech the other night was the start of the unity we need. I am feeling positive with your leadership. America will soon be viewed by other countries again as ‘Supreme.’”

**Juna Skrami, 21, Loyola University student, Chicago:**

“Dear Mr. Trump, You have instilled a fear in me that you will never be able to understand. I am an immigrant and I am a woman — two of the many groups of people you have attacked and degraded. ... Chicago fell silent the morning (after the election). . The city seemed to be in mourning. It is still gloomy and there is still a lot of fear within most of us, but I have hope. I have hope that we can all come together in this time of need. I have hope

that we can be joined by our similarities, and that we can look past our differences. And lastly, I even have hope for you. I hope that you can begin to see the pain and the fear that you are responsible for, and I hope you can grow from it. You have four years. Please fix what you started.”

**Sakeena Ahmed, 9, Oak Brook, Illinois:**

“Dear Mr. Donald Trump, Hi!! I am a 4th grade Muslim girl. ... You said you want to make America great again. Can you show me?! Don't we all have the same plan? We all just want to live in peace and not war! ... You are saying we are mean and cruel, but we are not! We are nice and giving! You are saying we are terrorists. We definitely don't do anything that you say. ... My only wish for you (is) to be good. And I hope this letter does make you good.”

**Sophie Hoerst, 7, Mount Holly, North Carolina:**

“Please don't build a wall separating Mexico and America. Please be the most kind person you can be. ... Please be a good president and make the choices you think are best for all Americans.”

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