

## Fox News, OAN & Newsmax Are 'Killing People'; Facebook Is Just a Multiplier

When President Biden said Facebook was "killing people," I think we all understood what he meant, though he was forced to elaborate the next day.

My first reaction was that social media like Facebook and Twitter are only multipliers of the disinformation being broadcast by Fox News hosts, One America News (OAN), Newsmax and other right-wing media. They are the ones providing the fake news and disinformation about Covid-19 and the vaccines.

One thing I have observed about my emails from right-wing readers is that they rarely speak for themselves, especially in their social media posts. Rather, they retweet and "like" memes, and repeat what they heard on Fox News, et al. They can't, it seems, think for themselves, only parrot what others tell them that resonates with their inner and often unspoken beliefs and biases.

One term for this phenomenon is "confirmation bias," which Wikipedia defines as "the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's

prior beliefs or values." I realize that confirmation bias exists on both sides of the political divide. What makes it toxic is when those beliefs or values are rooted in demonstrably untrue facts. As both sides like to say in attacking the other, "You have a right to your own opinions, but not to your own facts."

In that regard, you might ask why the *Washington Post* and mainstream media have sections or segments on fact-checking, but I don't recall such a segment on Fox.

The dominant tactic we're seeing in Republican circles is the use of "wedge issues" to stir the anger and fear of its base. Think "critical race theory" or "Black Lives Matter" or "radical socialist agenda."

Let's look, for example, at critical race theory, a college-level course of study which is not taught in K-12. The allegation that it *is* taught in K-12 as a way of attacking the dominant caste (as Isabel Wilkerson calls white Americans in her bestseller *Caste*) is a great way of turning out voters to oust any school board member who would be so

audacious as to defend the teaching (or even mention) of racism in our schools.

Wilkerson does a great job in *Caste* of comparing America's systemic racism to the caste system of India and the Nazi demonization of non-Aryan races.

One comparison that relates to the debate over critical race theory is how Germany deals with its Nazi past versus how Republicans would like us to deal with our history of slavery, Jim Crow, and systemic racism. In Germany today school children are required to learn about Nazism and how it developed. They are even required to visit a concentration camp. There are monuments that educate about the horrors of the holocaust. Displaying the swastika is illegal. There are no statues of Nazis.

Not so in America. The rebel flag of the Confederacy is a staple of white supremacists, who fight to maintain that legacy. I'm not saying that displaying that flag should be banned legally — that would violate the First Amendment — but I am saying that we should recognize it for what it is, an expression of anti-minority hatred and fear.

The quote that keeps coming to mind is Winston Churchill's 1948 para-

phrasing of George Santayana, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." Germany lives by that lesson, but not us. Not surprisingly, Fox News, for example, ignored the centenary of the Tulsa massacre.

The Supreme Court has in the past upheld white supremacy and could do so again. The Dred Scott decision stated that the Bill of Rights didn't apply to Black people. In 1883 the Court upheld Alabama's law banning interracial marriage. The Court didn't reverse that ruling until 1967.

That same year the Supreme Court struck down the 1875 Civil Rights Act. The 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision endorsed the "separate but equal" doctrine, not reversed until the 1954 Brown decision. Today's conservative majority Court could "Make America Great Again" by upholding those new state laws promoting voter suppression.

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Talking Turkey



By Jim Smith