

Fake News Blues

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Transcript of Event

HOSTED BY: Journalism Program
University of Delaware

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Place: Mitchell Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE

MS. GUMP Hi. I'm Deborah Gump. I'm Director of the journalism program here at the University of Delaware and welcome to a conversation about fake news and the incredible challenge that presents to truth in a world of alternative facts. But first, let me ask you a question. Which of these headlines do you think is over a fake story? Now, you don't have to actually answer or raise your hand because we deal with a lot of students and we know that can be challenging as well. But, just ask yourself, which one of these is the fake headline. Well, as you've probably figured out by now they're all; it's a fake question because they're all fake. The first one came from a spate this summer in which a whole bunch of celebrities had really bad transportation and the cars were breaking down all across the country. The other ones come from let's see, BuzzFeed's, BuzzFeed's list of the top 50 fake headlines of 2016. The fact is a lot of us are bothered by the phrase fake news because we don't know what that means. We function better if we share common definitions. So, what does fake mean? Does it mean it's a fairytale? Do we just make it up? Is there an approach that you don't like about it? Do you just don't like the facts that are presented. The fact is fake news has been with us for a very long time. Back in 1835 The Sun had an amazing story about a telescope that could see details on the moon that were never seen before. And on day four man-bats were introduced from the lunar surface. It wasn't uncovered as a hoax until six weeks later and The Sun never did run a correction. A few years later the New York Herald had a terrifying story of all the zoo animals getting themselves freed, rampaging through the streets. At the end of the story, however, they said, and in the equivalent of J-K, just kidding, we just made all of this up, but that didn't stop New Yorkers from looking themselves in their apartments, heading for the piers to escape by ferry, and in fact, some were picking up their shotguns and rifles and heading toward the park to protect the city against rampaging elephants. Today, however, it's never been more

widespread. The Stanford study found that in the last three months of the campaign there were 30 million fake, fake – say that ten times – fake Facebook stories that were circulated in favor of Donald Trump and eight million in favor of Hillary Clinton. The question of whether anyone believes them is a study that’s being done at a lot of places. BuzzFeed commissioned one study that said 75 percent of people believed fake stories. The Pew Center had a study that said that only two people in ten are positive that they can spot a fake story. That’s just four out of ten. Two in ten have shared fake stories whether they knew it or not, but luckily, we have a great panel tonight. Chuck Lewis, who is a UD grad by the way, was founder of the Center for Public Integrity and now he’s the executive editor of the Investigative Reporting Workshop. We’ve asked everyone for a bit of truth. His truth is that his family’s connection to the Deer Park Tavern goes back a very long way. His great, great grandfather owned it in the 1880’s. Nicole Dobo is staff writer and social media editor at the Hechinger Report which focuses on education. Her bit of truth is that she really likes to hike in out of the way places and one day she found herself on a trail with a grizzly that looked much like this one. They both lived. Leon Tucker is Director of Communications from the Delaware Department of Labor. When he was a young reported in Nashville doing some advance work on a fight at a local hotel he stumbled across Don King and he says you haven’t lived until Don King announces your name the way only Don King can announce it. And Jason Levine is editorial board editor and sports editor at the News Journal. When he was a kid he was friends with this guy. Are you still friends?

MR. LEVINE One Facebook.

MS. GUMP Oh, good, Facebook friends. Hope it’s a real friendship.

Nancy Karabjanian is Director of the UD Center of Political Communication. Her truth is that her mother was born in jail because her father was sheriff of Atlantic County, New

Jersey. And, for me, if I were to say it, I once had the luck of talking to Winston Groom, author Forrest Gump and if you find me after the event I will tell you exactly how and why Forrest Gump got his name. So, at this point, I give it over to you, Nancy.

MS. KARABJANIAN I want to let you know we do have microphones for our audience and we're going to be engaging you throughout this conversation. So, if you have a question make sure that we see you, make a motion, and someone will come to you and when appropriate I will come to you for that comment or question. Also, remember to try to keep it topic specific so that we can stay on track and get some good information about fake news. All right, everyone's been introduced but there's one thing I think we have to do and that is gather your definitions of what is fake news because the President says one thing but we have items that are truly fabricated stories. Jason, what would you consider to be the true distinction of what we should be talking about in reference to fake news tonight.

MR. LEVINE Quite simply, it's fiction versus non-fiction.

MS. KARABJANIAN Leon?

MR. TUCKER It's just not true.

MS. KARABJANIAN Okay. Ask a journalist a question and then you get a really simple answer. Nicole?

MS. DOBO Right, I, I agree with the other panelists and you would think this is simple but it's not anymore.

MR. LEWIS I'm the caboose here. Yes.

MS. KARABJANIAN Okay. But, Chuck, let me stick with you for a moment because I think that as you hear accusations against the New York Times or CNN that they are fake news, the more we hear this does it become more of a truth.

MR. LEWIS Well, sadly it does. We saw that if you recall in the Iraq war;

935 statements by the top eight officials about weapons of mass destruction and it turned out there weren't any. So, it is true, if you repeat something enough times people will think it's true and there have been, I think there have been a number of clinical studies to that effect. But, the bottom line is, yes, and if you have thousands and tens of thousands of them swirling around you can imagine the deadly affect. And that's rather notable when democracy is all about information and truth for the voters and the public. So, it's a really; obviously, that's why we're all here tonight, it's very serious.

MS. KARABJANIAN Well, clearly the people who are interested in the topic show that we are –

MR. LEWIS Yeah.

MS. KARABJANIAN – at a crisis point of people –

MR. LEWIS Yeah.

MS. KARABJANIAN – understanding this. Time Magazine actually came out front with this and they asked a really tough question. Is truth dead. You know? And in that very same article they said the President peddles falsehoods and asks what reality will eventually be created. Let me put this to you, Leon. You know, is truth dead? Are we in trouble?

MR. TUCKER You know, I know that this is being taped but I'm just going to say it's a damn shame that we have to ask ourselves that question today. Is truth dead? I mean, the reality of it is life and how we see the world on our own, I mean, it's true, and I mean that's the fundamental thing is if you can see it and you can, you know, experience it that's truth. But nowadays that's not good enough for folks and that really bothers me that we would even have to beg the question of whether or not truth is alive or dead because people choose not to trust themselves and to trust their intelligence to see for themselves what is right, what is wrong, what is true, what is fiction; prosecute it

for themselves. So, yeah, it really makes me mad to even have to consider this as a legitimate question these days. So, I mean, if you see passion or hear passion in my voice regarding that, I mean, it's there because this question speaks directly to the future of my children and the fact that they have to compete with a populace or a society that has, that entertains the definition of an alternative truth. I mean, that really scares me and it angers me.

MS. KARABJANIAN Jason, how do you insulate the pages of the paper to make sure that the truth is always paramount?

MR. LEVINE Well, when you're talking about opinion pages I think that there's more of a challenge than ever. We get letters to the editor via email, via snail mail that espouse some of these alternative facts. And, it's disturbing because you can tell the letter writer has completely bought into it and the fact that we don't run that letter means that we are conspiring to coverup the truth when in fact we're doing just the opposite. It's, it's, I guess to Leon's point, I totally, I can commiserate but I see it so much now, it's not that I'm blinded to it but nothing surprises me, nothing that, that people put forth on social media, letters to the editor, story comments, nothing surprises me which is very sad.

MS. KARABJANIAN You brought up social media. Nicole, you had mentioned that we were in a, I believe you said perfect storm with this election and mainly because of social media. So, is this beyond our control at this point?

MS. DOBO I hope not. Right? That's my optimistic answer. Social media allows lies to spread like wildfire and the really bad part, the scary part is there are fewer firefighters' journalists in local communities there to put out the fires. And that's, that's what troubles me. You know, it used to be that people could agree on a certain set of facts that they read in their morning papers and then have debates about

public policy. But when they can't even agree on the basic facts, and when you hear people saying, well, that's not actually true because my opinion is X, Y, Z where do you even go from there? How do you have an intelligent discussion about public policy when that's happening?

MS. KARABJANIAN Chuck, you mentioned the weapons of mass destruction. You have a quote in your book and its, you quote George Orwell. "The nature of political speech is to make lies sound truthful."

MR. LEWIS Yeah, he was ahead of his time. Well, no, it is, and of course lies go back centuries. It was not even in the last century where this was a problem. It was always a thing for warfare, for example. And so, you would always deflect and basically disguise your actions and it would be often with false statements. Even during the Iraq war for a few days, we had the Office for Strategic Influence which was propaganda that was actually not true that the US was putting out and there was such a furor and even the President, George W. Bush objected to it and shut it down, told Rumsfeld to stop doing it. But, this has always been a problem. It is timeless and ageless. The problem now is the media, now we have hundreds and hundreds of millions of websites and social media and all of these other things and we've developed echo chambers with the two parties in America having their own realities or their own efforts to tell their best story, and somewhere long ago we had started to splinter the truth and it's my truth and your truth whether we want to acknowledge it or not. It's not, that's not the case but that's how it is seen by adherents to those particular views and it's really –

MS. KARABJANIAN In some way –

MR. LEWIS – out of control.

MS. KARABJANIAN – we can possibly trace it back to that which makes us

laugh. And the vision of satire, Leon, I can't wait for Saturday Night Live to come back live.

MR. TUCKER Yeah.

MS. KARABJANIAN I admit that. I love John Oliver and I enjoy The Daily Show. I enjoy them all but is there a negative push beyond that?

MR. TUCKER Yeah, I mean, it's really, you're playing with fire. How many people watch Family Guy? Anybody?

MS. KARABJANIAN Family Guy?

MR. TUCKER There was a scene in Family Guy where there's a, it was the apocalypse and there was a man who was selling tumbleweed. And, in this scene everybody's running for their lives and there's this guy who was selling tumbleweed who was driving a Ferrari and he has these two beautiful women and he's like, ya'll laughed at me, ya'll laughed at me. And he drives away. But he was right. And the reason why I bring this up is because I was, I had gotten into many conversations and confrontations with friends on social media when I would talk to them about how dangerous it was for these fake stories that were being presented as satire would show up on social media. And I know everybody in this room likes The Onion and it's fine but there was a pivotal moment where it really struck me as this is dangerous. There was a cartoon that, I don't know for what reason, I don't know what point they were making but it depicted all of these different religious spiritual figures and they were in these compromising sexual positions. And I just found that to be so horrible and offensive and when I had articulate that, you know, this is a problem and this was very hurtful someone had commented that, oh, it's just all in fun. And, couple that with the fact that you have these stories out there that are depicting celebrities as dead and this stuff is flying around and it stops becoming funny because there was the potential for people to

be hurt. And this was, you know, several years ago. Fast forward to 2016 people are wondering what happened with the election. Now, you know, I respect the President of the United States. That is the President of the United States. I respect the office but I am not going to pretend that this election was not influenced by fake news, stories that are not true, stories that presented one idea as entertainment. I think the media really needs to take responsibility here and when I say media I mean not just newspapers and television but entertainment. I mean, I would give Saturday Night Live a lot of credit for getting Donald Trump elected. I mean, they gave him free air time. You know, satire, fake news, you know, all of these things that are made up. It is dangerous. It is playing with fire and the consequence is what we saw in the 2016 election.

MS. KARABJANIAN Jason and Nicole, you're both, you know, I, most of my career has been in journalism. The black and white world. Fact not true. I mean, there were only two parameters. Grey areas frighten me and we're in a really –

MR. LEVINE But that's, that's what the world is. That's the problem as I see it actually is social media propagates this notion that there is right and there is wrong. You are a republican, you are a democrat. You are a conservative, you are a liberal. The whole world is grey areas and it's very easy to sit there on your computer, on your phone and read stories that you philosophically agree with because the algorithms are feeding them to you when in fact you really need to be challenging yourself to think beyond what your opinion already is. And that's what we're, that's where we really struggle. I was talking to somebody earlier today, the notion of legislators working across the aisle it doesn't happen publicly anymore because you're not supposed to do that. You're either supposed to be on this side or on this side. That has to change.

MR. TUCKER And you know what else? We've made it too easy, we've

made it too easy for people to get quote unquote information. I mean, it used to be you, you know, actually go and get a paper and sit down and read it and have a conversation, a difference of opinion and the facts will come out in the conversation. Now it's in your face, you don't have to read it. It's a compelling photo, compelling headline. Jason, did you see this?

MR. LEVINE Um-hum.

MR. TUCKER And Jason, oh my gosh, didn't read it. Next person, next person and then you've got that wildfire. You know, I'm not saying that we need to, you know, blowup the internet and, you know, force people to read newspapers anymore, sorry bro. I'm not saying we need to do that. But we need to, people need to, they need to expect more of each other. You know, when we're looking at news, and I hate to have to put news in quotation marks here, but when we're looking for information we have to be smart enough to prosecute what we read now. It almost has to condition folks of the future, you know, our children, to let them know that the stuff you're seeing on the internet is not, it's not always real. I mean –

MS. KARABJANIAN But, it is a gullible public. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about that. The public is gullible. War of the worlds, let's just go back to that. People believed that Martians were invading New Jersey because they heard it on the radio.

MR. LEVINE But I think, I'm not sure gullible is the right word. I think something else points and others the torrent of information, you know, we used to be standing under a little leaky ceiling and now we're standing under Niagara Falls. So, it's not necessarily gullible, it's just this huge flow, constant, 24/7 that it's how do we expect the public to discern among those 50 stories they see, 49 might be complete BS, there's one nugget of truth. I don't necessarily think it's gullibility, I think it's just over exposed and what are we supposed to do besides just get rid of our phone to walk away.

MS. KARABJANIAN Which we know can't happen, right Nicole?

MS. DOBO No. And, I, I would respectfully disagree with Jason's point.

I think that we have seen study after study that has shown that people are unable to pick out what's real and what's not. There was a Stanford University Study late last year that found 93 percent of college students they surveyed could not flag a lobbyist website as a biased source of information. Folks, that is a 911 emergency. I mean, these are college students, right? And it's a lobbyist website and they're looking at it and they can't even see, okay, this has a point of view. This is a biased source of information. And, you know, solving that problem isn't a matter of just making a little checklist for students; does it have a byline, is it written by a journalist. Teaching students is, this goes back to just critical thinking skills that we all need to exercise and I don't know the solution for it. If you do, come tell me after the panel.

MR. TUCKER I think we miss an opportunity, if I may, Nancy –

MS. KARABJANIAN Um-hum.

MR. TUCKER – as journalists. You know, my background is in newspaper journalism and I would always seek out ways to educate the public about what it is we did. And, I think we miss a real opportunity to educate folks about, you know, the importance of journalism, what is journalism, what's the difference between a column and a news story. You'd be surprised how many people will go to the opinion page and see that as the news.

MR. LEVINE When we just, really, really quickly when we endorsed for any of the elections in the last year I can't count the number of letters and comments and emails that we got from people saying newspapers aren't supposed to endorse. Well, no, we're the editorial, we're the opinion section. We've been doing it for hundreds of years. So, you're absolutely right. People don't understand it but we're not

teaching it.

MR. TUCKER And maybe that's part of the solution, Nicky. You know, maybe the answer is we have to find a way to, you know, say all right, time out everybody. Especially with fake news being the buzzword and everybody's got their eye on it, and the President's talking about it. Maybe we just call a timeout and just use this opportunity to educate people about really, really this is what credible information is. And this is what opinion or fake news is. You know, not that opinion and fake news is one in the same.

MS. KARABJANIAN Just like a magician, I happen to have someone who's in a classroom teaching. If Lea Welding [phonetic spelling]? And if we could get the microphone over to her. Lea is a Conrad School of Science history and economics and civics teacher. She deals with 9th and 11th graders. So, she is seeing this on a full-time basis. What do you see in the classroom? Do you see that students are as gullible as we're presenting them to be, that they along with many adults just believe what's in front of them?

MS. WELDING I would like to say no but yes, they are. And I wouldn't necessarily say that it's because they're quote gullible but we talked about, I liked how you said it used to be a drip of the news that we would get but now all students have to do is unfollow. And so, they can choose who they want to follow, what news organizations they want to see. They don't have to read a whole paper. They can just read from these people that they agree with that confirm their belief and never actually question another perspective. So, I don't know necessarily if it's always a gullible issue which I think does play, I think it's critical thinking, it's reading past a headline, but I also think it's because, you know, they just target the information they agree with because they don't want the other perspective a lot of times.

MS. KARABJANIAN Do they react and take it in and just, or do they move on very quickly to the next thing?

MS. WELDING It depends on the headline. Sometimes they move on and sometimes it comes into the classroom and you will see students get upset and say, you know, that's not true and another student gets upset and says well I read it here and it becomes personal a lot of times because they don't have the skillsets yet to disagree on a non-personal level about political issues. And so, there's a lot of firefighting just in how you disagree with each other before I can even get into the issue of fake news. And so that's one of the issues that we see. But, additionally when you're in a teacher perspective you have parents that are reading it that believe it and so when you come in as an educator and you say, you know, this is not credible, you know, they you're indoctrinating students. And that's something you have to be careful of as well because that makes it difficult from our perspective to actually teach the skills if the parents don't actually agree that the issue exists.

MS. KARABJANIAN Have you had any success in trying to reverse this trend before the echo chamber becomes so concrete that it can't be broken?

MS. WELDING I hope so. I've done a lot of my class with just identifying techniques that could be considered propaganda based. You've got glittering generalities and gripping headlines. And my biggest lesson, I think actually somebody said it, is everything is a shade of grey. There is no black and white, and so, if somebody is saying that it's this and nothing else. Your warning signs should go up, and you know, you should think critically, question it. And, I try and provide strategies and we discuss it and we debate it. And, I want my kids to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Like, you should be uncomfortable when you talk about these things because they're challenging. And that's okay.

MS. KARABJANIAN This, this wasn't your first election in the classroom?

MS. WELDING No.

MS. KARABJANIAN What was different? I know we all know what we saw and felt was different but it's interesting to think what is different for a 15-year-old.

MS. WELDING It's like nothing I've ever seen before. It, it was social media. It was not a fun election to teach and I love government. If you ask my students they think I'm a little overboard with government and politics. I, I got tired of it because they couldn't even discuss it in a positive manner. They couldn't even see the other aisle and they would come in everyday with fake news and we'd spend half the time trying to talk about what is a credible source, how do you know a headline. What are some of the issues here. What's the bias? And so, it made it really frustrating and it felt like we spent more time trying to just determine what was legitimate news and actually having them develop their own political viewpoints. So, it was a little challenging.

MS. KARABJANIAN Thank you.

MS. WELDING Um-hum.

MS. KARABJANIAN Chuck, when you listen to the hearings on the Russian involvement and you hear the testimony that the amount of influence that has been put on promoting fake news, but also that there's been testimony that it's not just the bizarre – aliens landing in Indiana, bats flying around on the moon – that its real events that are being used and then altered to become fake. And, if we look at the New Yorker cartoon, sometimes it's not just the facts that matter, it's the loudest person in the room. As my father used to say, I was always, if I were wrong I was wrong at the top of my voice so I felt that was a plus. I still think I'm that way a little bit. This is a danger, is it not, because it's going to take the grey area and put it through Vaseline where we're not even going to be able to see the colors.

MR. LEWIS Well, yeah, now everyone has their own view of the world individually or they're in groups sometimes and they have blinders and they don't want to see the fact, I mean, literally they're ideologically or otherwise politically closeminded and the other problem, present company excluded our wonderful teacher here teaching civics, it's well known that civics has not been taught substantially enough. Many people, Sandra Day O'Connor and many others have gone on about this correctly. And it's all about math and science, and I think the literacy issue about civics itself, when 40 percent don't know the name of the Vice President we have a problem. And, I have a friend who is a Pulitzer Prize Winner for the Los Angeles Times who created a group called the News Literacy Project teaching high schoolers across the U.S. how to know what's true and what's not true. News literacy itself, to my knowledge, is not heavily taught throughout the schools which is not unrelated to civics. And if you're just going to teach science and math don't be shocked when the public has no idea what the hell's going on. To me, I mean, this is not unrelated. So, I think we've brought this on ourselves to a large extent, and it's time we recognize the seriousness of the problem we have. It's rather substantial.

MS. KARABJANIAN We're living in a post-Kardashian world.

MR. LEWIS Or something.

MS. KARABJANIAN Yeah, I'm afraid. When we, you know, Jason, I have a family member who said to me nobody is calling any of this out. That just proves the echo chamber is there because I see the calling out, I see the fact checking, I see the Washington Post today had a headline referencing lying. It doesn't matte then does it how loud you may shout? If people don't want the information they're not going to get it.

MR. LEVINE The New York Times, I think was about six weeks ago, actually started using lie, conjugating the word lie in their stories and it was very

noticeable because we'd had a discussion in our newsroom regarding editorials, you know, can we say the President's lying? Well, the New York Times went ahead and did it but they've backtracked since then. They're not using the word lie anymore. Now I forgot the question.

MS. KARABJANIAN Does it, how do we see through to find the shades because it doesn't matter how loudly we shout that yes this is wrong, this is a lie, because the echo chamber exists.

MR. LEVINE There was, we have CNN on one of our big monitors in the newsroom and it was on constantly, it's on constantly anyways, but throughout the campaign you look up and it was Donald Trump all of the time. A lot of people said oh my God, look at all the publicity they're getting and yada, yada, yada. They were calling him out, maybe not as effectively as the Washington Post or the New York Times from a journalistic standpoint, but its beating your head against a brick wall. He was just louder. I mean, so the whole notion of the media not going for the truth, it's not necessarily that, it's you have a personality that has totally sunk his teeth into the social media fabric that we now have in this country and those teeth aren't letting go. And the media have to figure out, okay, are we going to just continue to plug away, dig up these stories day after day that 20 years might have led to impeachment proceedings or a resignation, but now just, you know, off into the dust? Or –

MS. KARABJANIAN Well, it's the news cycle, isn't it? The news cycle's too quick. It doesn't –

MS. DOBO He took advantage of the weakness of the media right now. We, as journalists have a public responsibility and I think that too many times we're failing and we are going after clicks, we're chasing things that play well on social media, and I think he played the media, you know? That's just, unfortunately I think that

happened.

MR. TUCKER You're absolutely right. I mean, and this is why the media needs to stand up and take responsibility. They created this monster.

MS. DOBO I don't know if I'd go quite that far.

MR. LEWIS You know –

MR. LEWIS I mean, it has, it has been pretty much documented that Trump got four to five billion dollars' worth of free media –

MR. TUCKER Right.

MS. DOBO That much?

MR. TUCKER And that is the point.

MS. DOBO Okay.

MR. LEWIS We had the first billion-dollar campaign from traditional spending plus like a Super Pac or dark money assistance. That was actually Hillary Clinton. The actual fundraising was less for Trump but then he had all this other free media and he had it for a very long time, for a year and a half or a year and three-quarters, and there is no precedent in U.S. history for a reality TV 16 years on prime time and oh, by the way, billionaire who gets four to five billion dollars in free media. That is not unrelated to everything we're saying here. We had a bizarre phenomenon that we had never had before and gosh maybe with some luck we won't ever have again. But, just an observation. Yeah.

MS. KARABJANIAN Let me bring up another favorite issue from within the Trump Administration because a lot of people made fun of the term alternative facts but it we're talking about people's perspectives there's a little bit of truth in that is there not? Facts can be interpreted, you can interpret statistics in a different way, you can also glean what you want from facts depending upon your –

MR. LEWIS Well –

MS. KARABJANIAN – position in the chamber.

MR. LEWIS – when you have two photos of an inauguration crowd –

MS. KARABJANIAN Yes, I get that.

MR. LEWIS – and one has hardly any people and the other one has over a million people –

MS. KARABJANIAN And, it wasn't raining.

MR. LEWIS – there's no alternative fact there, I'm sorry. I'm an old-fashioned guy. I, that's kind of –

MS. KARABJANIAN But, you nodded a little. I mean, you can –

MR. LEVINE Well, the keyword is interpret, but yeah, that's absolutely correct. I mean, if the, if it's in a photo what are you going to, I mean, now it could be photoshopped. We don't know but yeah, I think there's, what we've seen is not, the word subtlety doesn't exist anymore when it comes to – and, Nicole's absolutely right. The media, and the media's been buying into Donald Trump and his style since he came onto the scene in New York City. Jimmy Breslin died a couple of weeks ago and the Daily News linked up all of his old columns about Donald Trump. And in 1988 he was writing about the charisma that this guy brought. Just the newsroom was, when he would call the newsroom was just excited. And so, it's, this is not a new, I don't think Donald Trump stole on this skill. He's developed it. We in the media were completely broadsided by it.

MR. TUCKER Well, I –

MS. DOBO I, I, oh sorry.

MR. TUCKER No, please, Nicole.

MS. KARABJANIAN We don't have to be polite. Jump in.

MS. DOBO I, I – all right. I was just going to say, you know, we as journalists always have, we have this responsibility to the public. I'm going to take the Secretary of Education nominee who is now the Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, right? In the pages and pages of written testimony that she provided along with her confirmation hearing there was this, she wrote in there that 90 percent of students from these virtual charter schools were graduating. That was a lie. That was not true. It was something like 40 percent. We need more boots on the ground, reporters who are reading documents, reading papers, finding those things and getting back to the basics instead of going out and chasing, you know, let's write another story about how she talked about grizzly bears in the confirmation hearing was not funny. I mean, it was funny.

MR. LEVINE But, I would –

MS. DOBO But, if, you know –

MR. LEVINE – I would say to that that with DeVos and with some of these other appointments that we've seen, the national media has been very strong in trying to put forth the facts. Here is what this person said and here's what the reality is. The question is how do we gain any traction with the public at large. That's what we're, that's what we're failing to do.

MS. DOBO I think that's fair, yeah.

MR. TUCKER Do you mean before or after Trump? Has it always been this way?

MR. LEVINE No. I think it's more a product of; I think Trump has exacerbated it but I think the whole product of when blogs came in and social media started to evolve it's just all of the voices.

MR. TUCKER Um-hum.

MR. LEVINE If you want to be a journalist you can call yourself a journalist and just tap something out on your phone.

MS. KARABJANIAN But, the legit journalists I think for the bulk of this process of this election and the evolution of fake news were too busy chasing the next deadline. We're too focused on getting the information, getting the confirmed sources, and figured fake news isn't my problem. And now it's landed square right in the middle of their lives and it is a problem because the trust, do you agree, is eroded?

MR. LEWIS It has eroded but I want to just give the press some credit here. The Times and the Post and PolitiFact, which won a Pulitzer Prize a few years ago, found in the last presidential election that Trump, they have six categories of types of prevarication and the most hilarious one is pants on fire, why? And, that's the worst obviously. And, Trump had a hundred of these roughly and Hillary Clinton had ten. Other's including the New York Times and lots of places had similar findings. It was not close. It was lopsided with false statements. I think what most alarms me about the last year is that that was irrelevant to the public.

MS. DOBO Um-hum.

MR. LEWIS That just astonishes me. I don't remember a time in my life when facts didn't matter. Period. And that's what we just lived through.

MR. TUCKER Well, talk about; here's why it was irrelevant, it was because this is what was available. This kind of content dominated, it really ruled the day. I mean, wherever you looked it was this kind of sensationalist material that people were gobbling up. And, you know, I'm not going to apologize, but the fact of the matter is, is, like Nicole said, I mean, I think the media was taken advantage of during desperate times in that, you know, this is what was driving clicks, this is what was driving revenues, this is what was driving eyeballs, you know? And if I'm chopping down a tree

in my front yard and I've got a crowd and I love it and I keep chopping, well guess what, when the tree falls on my house it's my responsibility to fix it. And this is where I believe the media needs to come in and take responsibility for the monster that it created and help turn this thing around. And there are a lot of journalist who will disagree but you know what, I've been doing journalism for over 25 years and I'm the most fundamental of fundamental journalists and I respect the craft enough to say, you know what, if I'm in it my responsibility, we need to have a stake in changing this thing. And I think that needs to happen now if we're going to have a shot at bringing back credible journalism.

MS. KARABJANIAN Let me put it out there, if anyone in our audience has a question? We have a question right here. And then we'll come back there to you. So, we'll take two audience questions right now.

QUESTION Oh, okay. Hi. I'm Jenny Lamb, I'm a faculty member in the Communication Department. I wanted to ask, I'm trying to find a little bit of hope in all of this. I think were some problems with journalism, there were problems with journalism before Trump. This has sort of exacerbated it. And I'm wondering if you have any sense that this is enough of a crisis that it can help us to sort of tweak journalism to improve. So, particularly I'm thinking the funding model for journalism has become very problematic because of, you know, the classified ads being taken away and advertising going online and being much cheaper there, so is there the hope of an alternative model? Is that discussion happening in newsrooms?

MR. LEVINE Well, the New York Times has seen an incredible jump in digital subscriptions to the point where now their revenue model is subscription based, it's not ad based anymore. And I think that's where the rest of the industry is going to go. That is the one glimmer of hope, is that people are seeking out what they consider to be professional journalism. Our; to Leon's point, we have to not only do professional

journalism, we have to sell it to them and say, look we are your source for information on X, Y, and Z; please subscribe. That's the challenge but that is; I think the hope is that we're just talking about this now. The fact that there's conversations happening all over the place no matter which way you feel I think that's a positive.

MS. KARABJANIAN Question in the back right there?

QUESTION Yeah, I'd; you've talked a lot about, what's that? You've talked a lot about the role of social media and technology. Smart phones have only been around ten years. It's only been ubiquitous with log ban for about six or seven years. So, people are using it but they really haven't leveraged [indiscernible] to know how to use it well. And I think there'll be some development of people to know how to sort this out, you know? So, I keep hearing the role of journalism is being key but I think the role of journalism is probably to set the ethical standards that as the rest of society comes in and begins to learn how to use this technology we are seeing in social media now publications coming out for the first time showing that it's building a lot of social capital. Things that Putnam said were gone when you go bowling alone and some of those things. So, it's changing. We're adapting. We're learning how to use this and I guess what I'm looking for is how do we steer that knowing that we are going to adapt the way we use this technology as we begin this counter mobilization against fake news that will drive and direct it a little bit and I'm just trying to understand that process and where journalism fits in. I think it has a critical role but like any reasonable mobilization it's an institutional field. What are those institution [indiscernible]?

MS. KARABJANIAN So, you're asking about the integrity of the industry and I think that lands squarely on your lap, Chuck.

MR. LEWIS Thank you. Well, I'm; first of all, back, just to follow along with what you said but what you said earlier. There's 60 million unique visitors now to

the Washington Post. That's partly because Bezos with Amazon now owns it and they know how to use the web to reach the public in a more aggressive way. Same with the Times. They're not doing as well but they're doing very well as well. That, they used to have ten million, both those papers, five or ten million. So, they're, this whole thing that we all have just lived through has actually driven up interest in actual legitimate news which I actually think is exciting. Social media on the other hand, I don't know how you regulate that exactly. It's not regulated. That's part of the problem and we now have a Federal Communication Commission that wants to regulate everything less than the last administration in terms of public speeches in the last two weeks. So, I don't look for social media to, honestly being candid, to right itself but what I do see is Americans who care about facts, actually the good old-fashioned facts, actually and now are increasingly starting to realize where those are, and I think that is inspiring actually. I'm excited about that.

MS. KARABJANIAN Well, you know, when yellow journalism started becoming a matter of concern one of the very first parts of our society to stand up at the end of the 1800's and take a stand against yellow journalism, a way to educate people against it was the libraries of our country. So, we're joined now by Lauren Wallace. She is a first-year experienced leader and a student success librarian right here at the University of Delaware. If we can get Lauren the microphone? Lauren, what are you seeing from the students on our campus because when they're doing research for a paper the internet is an open tundra for them.

MS. WALLACE Yeah, exactly. And, I see, you know, this kind of flat landscape where everything online looks the same. A New York Times page might not look much different than an organization's webpage. So, they don't have the context clues that we used to have of holding a newspaper physically in your hand. So, I think

it's a much more challenging environment for them. But I am seeing, I'm very heartened to see, especially this year, renewed interest in really taking a critical eye to what's going on in the news. So, I do see that.

MS. KARABJANIAN Can you explain to us the graphic that we're showing? This is a webpage from our library here at the University of Delaware. It's a resource for anybody really that's put out by the National Library Association. It says it there in very small print that I can't read from here.

MS. WALLACE Yeah. So, this is a whole guide that we put together about fake news and it goes over a few different ways to deal with it. And the reason we created this was because, as the panel has discussed, we're in such an overwhelming environment right now. I like the idea of the drip versus the Niagara Falls and the issue that we're not just dealing with fake news, we're dealing with just this torrential onslaught of news stories in general that sound six months ago would have been unimaginable. So, what we're trying to do here is give our students some options for having some tools and strategies, some sort of concrete ways to think about how they're going to approach interacting with news in an online environment. So, we go through some tools that will help them determine kind of the veracity of news stories like Snopes and PolitiFact. Then we've got some things about evaluating images and video and social media posts. And we've also got some resources for teachers and I think those will be useful at the secondary level as well as at the college level. But that graphic that's front and center there is from the International Federation of Library Associations.

MS. KARABJANIAN You can read the small print.

MS. WALLACE Yeah. And it is actually, they want it to be used and remixed and put out there so it's available for download. They put it in like 30 different languages. So, it's a really great resource and since this screenshot I put a link on

there where you can download it use it digitally or in print. So, I think it's a really great straightforward kind of way to help our students think through how they're going to deal with news in an online context.

QUESTION [Indiscernible]?

MS. WALLACE Yes.

QUESTION [Indiscernible].

MS. WALLACE No, it's public and I don't think anything on here is locked down. It's all open, so.

MS. KARABJANIAN And, we will be providing the PowerPoint and the notes that go with it on our website, PRSA website, and the journalism department's website after our program. What's the one takeaway that you hope your first-year students get from your conversations?

MS. WALLACE So, I mean, I always want them to be tenacious. You know, we used to be able to lean on things like knowing that news organizations hired professional journalists and knowing they had a certain level of credibility or having name recognition for a publication and saying I trust everything from X publication. And, it's just not possible to do that anymore. So, every interaction with an individual story in an online news environment requires some digging into the author's credentials, their point of view, the reputation of the publication, and then gathering alternative viewpoints as well. So, I want them to do that digging and I know they're capable of it and I think if it hasn't been done in the past it's because of this feeling of being overwhelmed. So, I hope our guide and other guides like it, there's a lot of information like this out there, can help our students –

MS. KARABJANIAN And, none of it is fake, right?

MS. WALLACE Yeah, we're librarians. Can help our students' kind of feel

like they have the tools to approach online news in an informed way.

MS. KARABJANIAN So, again, this guide is available through the university library. Thank you so much.

MR. TUCKER You know, Nancy?

MS. KARABJANIAN Yes.

MR. TUCKER And I, I believe the children are our future, I really do. Teach them well, let them lead the way.

MS. KARABJANIAN Somebody get him a mike.

MR. TUCKER And I'm glad that we have a, we have educators here who are mindful enough to teach this valuable lesson to young people. But, you know, I'm 42 years old and my friends are the biggest offenders of the dissemination of fake news. It's amazing. So, we really need to figure out a way to get this in their hands. So, kids, young people take this to your parents. You know, have this open conversation because they need it, they need it worse than you. I would like to address one, quickly, the –

MS. KARABJANIAN Um-hum.

MR. TUCKER – the issue of, you know, taking control, the yellow journalism and the library stepping up and being the ones who, you know, brought people back. Somebody needs, some industry, some group needs to stand up and be that group that says we're going to take credible journalism back. And I think the big question is, you know, who does that? I personally believe that there's an opportunity for the mainstream media to lead the way and I do believe that there is an opportunity to strategize between the mainstream media and the social media industry to bring us back to where we need to be.

MS. KARABJANIAN Well, you know, we have a Good Housekeeping Seal of

approval on whether or not you're buying a laundry detergent. You almost wish we would have the same but as we've learned from the studies, people don't pay attention until it's at their own personal crisis. I have fallen victim to it. I have a child living in D.C. There was the story about the D.C. girl, teenage kidnappings and the way the headline was written I immediately went to mommy panic and I took the story at face value until I paused before I forwarded it to my daughter and read it very carefully to realize what it was. But it got me. It click-baited me. And I took it.

MR. TUCKER The great Nancy –

MS. KARABJANIAN And I just, it's distressing –

MR. TUCKER – Karabjanian?

MS. KARABJANIAN – that I fell for it.

MR. LEVINE I, I think that we, I think it's, it's a little naïve for us to think that journalism and social media are as, are intertwined because journalism has tried to leverage, journalism tried to leverage social media but social media is a big monster on its own. And so, journalism isn't going to, I don't think we can look at social media and go, come on guys start telling the truth. Social media doesn't need us. We need to figure out how to make that, how to switch that around.

MS. KARABJANIAN Nicole, before I put Leon in the hot seat, do you have anything you want to add at this point?

MS. DOBO I do, actually. I see Ken Grant that's sitting right here videotaping us and we're talking about the Good Housekeeping Seal. You know, he's an independent guy out there. He's done FOIA requests. He's made some lasting change in the city of Wilmington and he doesn't have a Housekeeping Seal of Approval, right? But I can read his stuff and know he's credible and that he does good work because I have the literacy skills, right? So, I'm sort of a free speech absolutist

because I think, you know, we have people like the internet, to see a hopeful point, has given us a, you know, forum to people it can which is, you know, a positive.

MS. KARABJANIAN All right. There's two camps and we are co-sponsored in this event with the Public Relations Society of America. You have evolved from the world of daily journalism to being a spokesperson for a government agency, a government department, the Department of Labor. You're facing your own particular communication issues at the moment. But, let's put that aside. Part of your job is to craft the story, correct?

MR. TUCKER Um-hum. Control the message.

MS. KARABJANIAN Control the message. Is that, I, I, I'm just going to turn it to you because I really like you and I'm going to be careful with what I, my words are.

MR. TUCKER Right. And I use control the message because I have an agenda. Okay? My agenda is to preserve the reputation of the Department of Labor. My agenda is to control any negative information that may get out about the Department of Labor. However, my job is also to tell the truth. My job is also to be as accurate and as transparent as possible. But as we craft that message, and as I craft this message, I still realize that there is a danger associated with the message that I'm crafting and the kind of access that I have to people and the public because when I push that message out its going to be pushed out to other people. And more people. And more people. So, like Ken, I have a reputation that I, that I love and that I cherish. I have a career that I want to maintain. And the consequences associated with me not being accurate and fair in how I craft my message, there are consequences that a lot of these fake news sites and a lot of these messengers will put out that they don't observe. So, there is great power in reporting, which is what I do as a communications director but at the end of the day somebody like me, I'm all about controlling my message. Unfortunately,

there are people out there who craft their message and they control their message and the message is inaccurate.

MR. LEWIS Present company excluded. In 1960, the year Kennedy and Nixon ran against each other, the number of public relations folks and journalists, it was a one to one correlation, the same number. Today it's five to one public relations over journalists. And, not all of them have your high standards, Leon, is all I can say. There have been studies in North America, Europe, and Australia in the last ten years that 50 percent or more of news stories actually came from public relations folks, not from actual journalists and they just ran it because they lost 20,000 journalists –

MR. TUCKER Um-hum.

MR. LEWIS – in this country alone. So, that is, generally speaking, a problem when –

MR. TUCKER Yes.

MR. LEWIS – information is not derived from folks whose job it is to go out and find those facts –

MR. TUCKER Um-hum.

MR. LEWIS – with a clean slate. And so, that's another factor in all of this grey.

MR. TUCKER It's a business model now.

MR. LEWIS Yeah.

MR. TUCKER I mean, it has a term. It's called contributed content.

MS. DOBO Um-hum.

MR. TUCKER You know, contributed content, I mean, we've accepted that.

MS. DOBO That's right.

MR. TUCKER Right, we've accepted that as fair game for what we put in

our news reports.

MR. LEWIS And readers don't distinguish.

MR. TUCKER That's not good.

MS. DOBO They do not.

MR. TUCKER That's not good.

MS. KARABJANIAN Can I, just, just how difficult it is for you as a to-the-core journalist to manage the message, to manage the agenda. That must be very hard.

MR. TUCKER No, it's not hard. I mean, if its, if you're telling the truth – I'll give you an example. The Department of Labor got hacked two weeks ago, okay? And some of you may know that, you know, we're in, you know, this place where we're trying to get the information out. It's so easy to spin a story. It's so easy to put out information, misinformation to get, to keep people calm and to keep them at bay. But we decided to be upfront about what happened. We decided to be upfront about the fact that we had a vulnerability in, well, we didn't, it's a long story. Please. There was a vulnerability that was exploited and it compromised peoples' personal information. We felt that it was important to let people know that right away. And we used every means, medium possible to do that because we wanted to tell the truth. And if you are okay and you are committed to being open, honest and transparent it's not hard. You know, you may have something bad that happened in your agency, in your organization but you know what, it happened and you'll get through it. You just got to tell the truth.

MS. KARABJANIAN Well, there are ways that things are changing and I want to put up the controversial headline situation from the City of Wilmington. Now, when the City of Wilmington reran a Delaware Online story the headline was changed and all sides apologized. All sides admit they'd done it before. All sides talked about how this was terrible but I don't know if this means it's not going to happen again. I have to think

that if I were in a position of being a spokesperson for the mayor of Wilmington I would have liked to recraft that headline as well. What would you have done?

MR. TUCKER Well, ask yourself, I mean really. Are those headlines inaccurate?

MS. KARABJANIAN No.

MR. TUCKER End of discussion. I mean, it, and this goes back to the perspective part.

MR. LEVINE I don't think it's the end of the discussion, Leon.

MR. TUCKER No, you are [indiscernible].

MR. LEVINE I have an issue. If that message from the City of Wilmington doesn't have a link to the News Journal content they can say whatever they want. That's their Facebook post. But for them to repurpose somebody else's content that is created with journalistic objectivity that, that crosses the line.

MS. DOBO I, I agree with Jason and –

MR. TUCKER Hold on, hold on –

MR. LEVINE And, and –

MS. DOBO – I back you up. Yeah, I agree with Jason.

MR. TUCKER I'm not, I'm not –

MS. KARABJANIAN I have to give Leon credit. He's very brave to sit here –

MR. TUCKER I'm about to run –

MS. KARABJANIAN – and he's losing his microphone.

MS. DOBO Surrounded by journalists over here.

MR. TUCKER No, I apologize because I thought, I thought –

MS. KARABJANIAN Just get that back on your mike though. We won't be able to hear you.

MR. TUCKER [Indiscernible] both Delaware Online stories. I see one was

–

MS. DOBO That's the problem.

MR. TUCKER My glasses.

MR. LEVINE Yeah. Yeah. That's a big problem.

MS. DOBO As somebody that manages social media websites, right?

The mayor's staff, and I should let Jason tell this. This is your publication.

MS. KARABJANIAN I think it's probably best not to –

MS. DOBO The mayor's staff got in there and they changed the headline and then sent it out. They didn't like the News Journal's headline so the mayor's staff clicked on a couple of things and changed the headline and then sent it out.

MR. TUCKER Yeah, no, no, no. That's not good.

MS. DOBO It's just –

MR. TUCKER Please. Go – I was going to say, can I get a hug from, you know, we –

MS. KARABJANIAN Fist bump it out, right? We're good, we're good. But, I can see the lie, can you not? I mean, it's easy enough to do. You have a message to get out there.

MR. LEVINE Let me say this on the record.

MS. KARABJANIAN It's not going to stop.

MR. LEVINE The mayor's office, it, I got the apology, you know, before I knew what had happened. And the apology email was incredibly sincere and I mean, it was, I have never gotten an apology like that from anybody in government before. So, I was, I was very, I appreciated that because they appreciated the seriousness and the precedent that can be set by doing something like that. If only everybody in government

felt that way we'd be in, we might be in better shape.

MS. KARABJANIAN So there's always going to be the world of the Chuck Todd's and the Sean Spicer's but whether or not they get along as well as they do within the state of Delaware is another story.

MR. LEVINE Well, Delaware, Delaware is just its own, yeah.

MS. KARABJANIAN But, we can say that with a smile. You know part of this is the issue with being able to find out where the reality is –

MR. LEVINE Um-hum.

MS. KARABJANIAN – and for that we're joined at this point by Jared Bates of Wilmington University. Jared, if we can get you a microphone? He's a digital forensics expert and can help us to understand just how very dangerous all of this is becoming. Do we, can we trust what we see anymore?

MR. BATES I wish I could say that there's a plugin you could put in your browser that would identify fake news but I'm unaware of one. I do like Lauren's page with the advice and check your sources. You know, to Leon's point, you talked about you used to have a newspaper in your hands and you could talk to your friends. You have to put the effort in to find out if it is valid news or its not valid news. And to Jason's point about the information overload, a lot of people aren't willing to put in the time and there's so much information out there, it's just easy like the high school teacher mentioned to those stories match my beliefs so we can continue on and keep doing it.

MS. KARABJANIAN So, how easy is it for a story to be manipulated once it's out there digitally?

MR. BATES It's so –

MS. KARABJANIAN Whether it be with likes or shares or impressions or headlines?

MR. BATES It's extremely easy. I remember, most of you have probably read Fahrenheit 451? My big thing when I was reading that book is once all the books are gone and everything's digital you can just manipulate history and change it and how do you verify what was written so many times before. To your point about how it is propagated, as a hacker they can control hundreds of thousands of computers and people can rent those botnets. So, I could rent 20,000 computers to like a story and then everyone else sees that it's been liked 20,000 and then they like it because it fits their point of view and they don't want to put effort in to verify that it's the source. And it just propagates from there.

MS. KARABJANIAN Do you have any advice for us as consumers?

MR. BATES Just follow Lauren's page and the advice that's given on there. I mean, that's, that's pretty much –

MS. KARABJANIAN All right.

MR. BATES – all you can do is just follow your gut and be willing to set your opinions aside.

MS. KARABJANIAN Thank you. So, technology is definitely blurring the lines. There's also a tone, no shift. Am I correct in that especially this post-election life? We are in a post-truth world and there seems to be this, in fact today there's a study that came out that men are more aggressive towards women in negotiation sessions than they were prior to the election, from the Wharton School I believe. Wow. We, we're headed toward a dangerous trajectory.

MR. LEWIS Well, no, we are. I mean, even the idea of saying the words post-truth society is, and I, it's, it's – well, to a journalist its antithetical to imagine even that concept. But, and as a journalist I don't think we are in one, we should not be in one. We have people who have people who have trouble with this concept. That's how

I view it. There are facts. There are truths. And, they're unequivocal in many cases and we have folks who would like to sidestep that reality and twist it to their own means. And, there's a, there, you know, I hate to quote this quote because it has all kinds of ramifications but I remember the phrase Barry Goldwater had, eternal vigilance. I think eternal vigilance on your information, where it came from. Literacy essentially. I think if there was ever a time to watch and closely look at where something came from, we're in that moment. It doesn't mean that facts have disappeared. It means that we have folks masquerading as truth-tellers and obviously, they're not.

MS. KARABJANIAN Nicole, how difficult is it – it's my impression that you don't have a newsroom to report to because you're an online mostly –

MR. LEVINE Does your editor know that? No.

MS. KARABJANIAN – journalist. A lot of your work is done independently. How does that change the work?

MS. DOBO Yeah. So, we do have a newsroom. We are different and we're the same in a lot of ways. So, we do a lot of the good old fashioned, you know, we are out doing, you know, days of reporting. It's very slow cooked journalism. To, it's old fashioned in a way. But then we're also modern in a way that we have a website, we don't have a publication we own. We don't want, we don't have a printing press. But we, we have a model where we partner with a legacy, you know, newspaper like the Washington Post or the New York Times or even smaller papers and they publish our work. And that's our public service, is we, you know, as journalists we're cutback. One of the places where they went was education beat. People who covered education were among the first to go because it wasn't seen as, you know, vital. I disagree completely. I think it's a really important beat. And so, we have a website where we publish our work. We have newsletters. We, you know, social media accounts. So, I

guess to answer your question, I think we're a mix. We're old and new.

MS. KARABJANIAN Jason, when we think about the future here in a post-truth world, one of the dangers is that we're all just going to become numb to it. Or at least consumers may. Is there a point that we're going to get to, much like 9/11 was a point where people went back to print newspapers because they wanted that paper every day after two days with no internet at least here on the Mid-Atlantic region, at least that was my reality, what will be the tipping point that will get us there again to be as Chuck says and as Leon and Nicole have both said, that we honor the truth and that we're looking for the integrity of the journalism?

MR. LEVINE Wow. God, I can think of a lot of things and they're all really depressing. You know, I, I don't know that there, the only tipping point that can happen is that we keep having this conversation. I think we're already sort of past the point of, I think we already have, I don't know how you phrase it, but this, but this sort of culture of every bit of information I'm going to consume. I'm just going to consume it. I'm not going to, I'm not going to be active about verifying it. I'm just going to consume it in that post-truth world. I think it's already here. I don't know what's going to, I mean, here's the thing that concerns me in this sort of conundrum where I am. The New York Times and or the Washington Post or whoever, Time, Newsweek whatever, can dig up something that is hard evidence of a crime committed by the President, Vice-President, I don't care who it is. The response from a lot of the American people is going to be, wow, that's really, that's really, really a problem and really a threat to our democracy. But the response from another huge portion of the American people is going to be, well that's the media. They're just making it up. Where do we, how, there's no tipping point in getting those people back unless, I don't know, Armageddon happens? I don't know. I mean, it's –

MR. TUCKER Yeah. Close, I think –

MR. LEVINE Yeah.

MR. TUCKER – Armageddon is a –

MS. DOBO Well, I mean –

MR. TUCKER – quite – really, I mean, what, what to me the tipping point is when you impact someone personally.

MS. DOBO Um-hum.

MR. TUCKER And there's one thing in this world that hits everybody the same way and that's your pocketbook. And, a good example of what created this – because fake news and, you know, this whole phenomenon of satire versus what's real and what's not. It's been around for a long, long, long, long time. But people started to pay attention to it and folks started to be outraged by it after the 2016 election because it impacted them. You know, I would liken this to the great recession. Poverty has been a problem for people of color for decades, forever.

MR. LEVINE Centuries.

MR. TUCKER But man oh man, when other people lost their money in the stock market and they were going to the Food Bank of Delaware – where are you at Kim – because they couldn't afford to go to the grocery store, now it was a crisis. And it went from Wall Street to Main Street. You know, I was eating baloney sandwiches for dinner when I was a kid. I mean, this was not something new. So, when the great recession happened it hit people that way so now the economy was an issue that everybody had to pay attention to. Fake news and the dissemination of all of this fake, this false information is a problem now because it impacted folks in a huge way. We've just got to get everybody else to feel the pain. The young people out there who are throwing this stuff around. The folks, you know, my friends who are throwing this stuff

around. It hasn't hit them yet because they didn't care about the 2016 election, I hate to say.

MS. KARABJANIAN We have a question down here in the front if we can get a microphone over here? And if you have a question we'll take – there's several questions over on the far side as well if we can get mikes over there.

QUESTION Hi, Nancy. I'm Sam Waltz –

MS. KARABJANIAN Yeah, good to see you.

QUESTION – and I've had a foot in both camps as Leon has for close to a half century. I drew my first paycheck as a reporter 51 years ago as a teenager and yet even today I continue as a publisher of a business publication, the Delaware Business Times. One of the questions you ask that we kind of moved past is, is this a new thing, this whole fake news thing. And, I just wanted to kind of speak to that in a way that may even provoke a little bit. But this stuff has been around since the beginning of time. I stand here as a Vietnam-era veteran who dropped out of college and enlisted after the Gulf of Tonkin incident that manipulated the expansion of the war. Millions of people went to serve to fight the communists. Thousands more went to Canada to avoid serving. So, you had millions of lives being disrupted. You know, we go back even to World War II when, when FDR and Pearl Harbor, you know, was in effect manipulated and some of that story is still coming out. There was a new book that came out a couple of months ago. I've got to ask where has the press been to just now be crying fake news? Just in the last administration. Now, let me just say, I'm a lifelong Democrat. I've, and I've always supported the Democratic Party. But the last administration we watched Barack Obama stand and say if you like your healthcare you can keep your plan, if you like your doctor you can keep – we all knew he was lying. Hillary came out about Benghazi and said no, it was Muslim film critics who did, who

saw a film on the internet they didn't like. This kind of stuff has been going on for years and yet we have this new meme that is all about fake news although as though Trump has started it.

MS. KARABJANIAN Right, we have the person in the White House using the term. Thank you. Let me let Chuck respond to that and then we're going to go over here because I think we have some students in our audience with some questions.

MR. LEWIS No, your point's well taken and I sort of suggested this earlier. When you look at just national security, war type stuff, it goes back thousands of years. It's not even just the last century where different countries or societies used information deliberately to mislead the enemy. I mean, so, there have been all kinds of examples not, including Tolkien is a classic case, but there are many of them. And so, no, we have had numerous instances of this and by either administration in the case of the U.S. it's not one party or the other. There's a long history of misleading the public deliberately. That's true. I think what is worrisome now is the, the sheer volume of things that are false via social media and everything else. It's now, no one quite knows what to believe it seems. At the same time, I will note that at the current moment the polling regarding our incumbent president is 60 to 30 against him in his first just roughly 100 hundred days, not quite a hundred days. So, information does matter and it does affect attitudes. That is actually a legitimate function in democracy. So, I think we just have to, you know, take a deep breath and move on in a way.

MS. KARABJANIAN Information does matter.

MR. LEWIS All right, yeah.

MS. KARABJANIAN That's my takeaway.

MR. LEWIS Yeah, it does.

MS. KARABJANIAN Thank you. We have a student over on this side with a

question.

QUESTION Good evening. My name is Eden Nagusa and I'm a political science student here at the University. So, while on the campaign trail candidate Trump promised to make strict libel laws that would make public figures to more easily sue against unfavorable news. He said, and I quote, we can sue and make lots of money. Now, as President Trump he refuses to attend the White House Correspondents Dinner and employs his Twitter account to assist his war on the press. How, if at all, may he bring change to the freedom of the press and how can we keep our press accountable to the truth?

MS. KARABJANIAN Who would like to field that?

MR. LEVINE Well, I mean, first of all, he's going to have to build; he, he can't change the law without Congress. And they're having a hard-enough time

AUDIENCE MEMBER Microphone please. We can't hear you.

MR. LEVINE Well, the microphone is the –

MS. KARABJANIAN I think that we can hear you.

MR. LEVINE What I was going to say – my daughter teaches me to project.

MS. KARABJANIAN Leon's happy to give it up for a few minutes.

MR. LEVINE Yes. Trump can't change the law. That's not to say we shouldn't be concerned about anybody who talks like that but he would need a Congressional, a big Congressional push to do that and I don't really see that with the midterms in 2018, I don't really see a lot of momentum toward further attacking the press coming out of Congress. What was your other, what was your other point? I'm sorry.

QUESTION [Indiscernible].

MS. KARABJANIAN His war on the press.

MR. LEVINE I mean, I think, I think what we're doing is the best, is the best defense which is to keep practicing great journalism and to cast the brightest spotlight on those who are doing the best journalism. And when I say the best journalism I don't mean just anti-Trump journalism, I mean just great journalism in general. Where, you know, discovering wrongdoing at any government level. Discovering wrongdoing in business. Disseminating great stories. That's, that's great journalism and we're having the conversation right now. It's going on around the country. We need to keep having that conversation.

MS. KARABJANIAN As we wrap things up I have time for a couple of more questions from the audience. But before we get there I want to ask – let me put this to Nicole. You know there was the time when, you know, you had your Stephen Glass and your Janet Cooke and your Jayson Blair and the price to pay for cooking a story was the end of your career.

MS. DOBO Um-hum.

MS. KARABJANIAN It was over.

MS. DOBO Um.

MS. KARABJANIAN It doesn't seem to matter anymore. We; everything is getting cooked.

MS. DOBO Yeah, that, that's scary to me. It, it's up to the public I think to hold journalists accountable. It's up to ourselves to hold ourselves accountable and people should be fired if they make up things. If they make up lies. But if they're employed by a publication that doesn't care about the facts their employer is not going to hold them responsible. So, I think we need to hold them responsible. Don't click. Don't share. Don't buy advertisements on their publication. Don't support it. And I

think we also have a responsibility to not just say, oh that's Uncle Bob sharing this story, I really don't want to have that discussion. I think, have the discussion, you know? If you see someone sharing something fake speak up. You know, explain to them why it's not real, you know? I feel like when I started my career in journalism that was around the time of Jayson Blair, right? So that was very much in my mind as a young journalist. The, you know, the consequences of making things up is the death penalty. You're over. And, you know, it's not, it doesn't seem to be the case anymore and I think that's frightening.

MS. KARABJANIAN So we have time, we'll, if we can go here to the middle I think your hand has been up for a while and then we'll go over to the side here and that will be our last question. And if you could just ask it quickly as we're running low on time.

QUESTION Okay. As far as unnamed sources in a story, that always turns me off to any validity of the source or whatever. I just completed my thesis last year and every fact in quotation had to be cited. Why can't journalists be held to this higher standard?

MS. KARABJANIAN I'm going to let you take that one.

MR. LEWIS Thanks. No, it's a great question. I think, and the journalists particularly in Washington do overdo what you're referring to. On the other hand, with national security issues – I'm not defending it – but national security issues you'll end up with a briefing with the Secretary of State or the head of the CIA or somebody and they will explain a situation and then go on the record for what's the public part and then go off otherwise. And sometimes the only way you can tell the basic information is to do an unnamed source. It's been going on – I'm not saying it's great, but if it means not knowing anything or knowing some scintilla of what's going on and that's the price, I

think it's, to me it's a question of degree. If it's all the time it's dangerous but I think it's necessary in some types of reporting at least in my experience. I generally am an old-fashioned document guy. I don't do this but it is necessary occasionally.

MS. KARABJANIAN We have a question in the far corner over on that side of the hall if you can get there. No, we're, we're recording so I'd like to have it on microphone if you wouldn't mind.

QUESTION We've noticed that there's been an increase in activism. A lot of people going to Town Meetings, Town Halls, getting in front of people. Is there a role the activist and the journalist can play to disseminate, to bring out the truth because it appears that as Leon mentioned when you go to their wallet and they weren't getting healthcare they went and talked to their congressman? Is there a role that we can now promote and bring the activist to the fore with you journalists to get the truth out?

MS. KARABJANIAN Take it, Leon.

MR. TUCKER Well, I think, I think activism is a relative term in that folks should take control of their own destiny when it comes to this. I mean, I think everybody has a role to play in dealing with this problem that we have with fake news and I do believe activism is a role and is a vehicle that we can use to get there. But I think their roles is different than what the journalist and the media's roles is and the role of the consumer is also different. But if we can all agree that there's a problem, it impacts me, and there needs to be some sort of a change and based on my role and my position in the grand scheme of the issue if we can work as hard as we can to address that issue I think we'll have some huge degree of success. But I think what we have to do is identify our role in this and be active about fixing it because my role in this is different as a communications director at a government agency is different than your role as a consumer of information.

MR. LEWIS Very briefly, there are a couple, there are several examples in Britain and in the U.S. where citizens, just plain folks who had computers and cared about the world jumped in. There was a coup in Thailand, a woman who had a cooking blog told the world, oh and just a citizen, hey, by there's a coup d'état here. No one else knew it. The British subway bombing back around '06 or so and all of the media was kept above ground. All, below the ground all the folks had their cell phones, citizens, and there are many, many cases of this. The hurricane down in Florida, people, FEMA records, Federal Emergency Management records, everyone, this is pretty funny, everyone wanted to know how much insurance money went to their neighbors. And so, everyone glommed onto these records. USA Today or, you know, Gannett didn't have the people, the reporters to do all the work so they asked the public to assist and suddenly they had hundreds and hundreds of citizens throwing out information and finding stuff and telling them. So, I think there are cases now where collaboration with the public and journalists is incredibly valuable and useful and I think it's going to increase and in many ways it's necessary I think.

MS. KARABJANIAN Before we turn it over to Deborah Gump again, let me just ask you, do you think that this crisis is going to lead – and obviously, I have a bias here, I'm in my own echo chamber – to an increase in journalism education to train more journalists to go out there to bring the truth?

MR. LEWIS Yeah, you're asking her?

MS. KARABJANIAN I'm asking you.

MR. LEWIS Oh, no, journalism schools as far as I know enrollment is up everywhere. Just like the New York Times and the Washington Post circulation is through the roof. That's why I actually –

MS. KARABJANIAN So the pendulum is swinging?

MR. LEWIS – is – well, because people are worried about the fate of our country and information matters. I think –

QUESTION Where are they going to get jobs?

MS. DOBO Places like the Hechinger Report. I mean, we're hiring. We're –

MR. LEWIS There's 120 non-profits. I started the second one in the U.S. in '89. It was the second one. Now it's 120 and they're growing all over the world.

MS. GUMP Yes, students are getting jobs. Good jobs. So, as Nancy said earlier, this PowerPoint chock full of links and other links that we have not shown you will be on all of our websites sometime tomorrow we hope. This has been absolutely fascinating and I want to thank all of you for [indiscernible]. Thank you very much.

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