

# Millennials will be the leaders in educating a media savvy society

When Donald Trump was elected in November of 2016, he did so with the help of fake news. If you listen to Trump, fake news is a term he used that refers to news outlets he disagrees with like CNN.

I'm talking about a different type of fake news than what Trump talks about. I'm referring to literal fake news. Stories that are unsourced, on unreliable websites or blogs and sometimes come from foreign powers with the intent of misinforming the American public.

Disinformation is one of the biggest issues the media and its consumers are dealing with today. There will likely be false news stories as long as the internet exists – anyone with a professional looking blog can fool people into thinking their words are fact.

So, how do we solve this fake news problem? The best course of action is educating ourselves how to spot a false story, and millennials will be key in the process.

Millennials take a lot of criticism, but like it or not, our privileged-avocado-eating-safe-space searching generation are the leaders of the future as well as the matriarchs and patriarchs of the next generation and our future, future leaders. It will be our generation's job to teach our kids how to spot a lie parading as news, and we might be the best suited generation to do so.

For millennials, the Internet has been as much of our childhood as television was for baby boomers. We grew up with it.

As we matured, so did the Internet, going from something that was only accessed from a bulky computer at home to something so accessible that we carry it around in our pockets on our phones. It makes sense that millennials be the generation that plays a key role in nipping fake news in the bud. As a society we're getting our news from the Internet and social media more and more because its convenience and accessibility.

A Stanford Study showed 13.8 percent of people got their news from social media leading up to the 2016 election while just 8 percent relied on print media as their main source of news and 6% percent relied on radio.

As people begin to be more reliant on social media, where stories from reliable and unreliable outlets alike are shared by our friends and family, it is up to us to be able to spot falsities and be vigilant when we do. Being vigilant means telling our friends and family that an article they shared may not be true and show them how to properly check the article for accuracy.

Before millennials can teach the generation that follows us how to spot fake news, we need to learn to do it as a society by reading our news with a questioning eye. This means looking at stories on our social media timelines to see if they are from reliable outlets. Checking to ensure that the story uses quotes from experts and even checking for things as simple as a date and a byline at the top of the article.

Once we can spot fake news as a society, it will be up to the eration how to know what makes a story reliable.

Teaching children at a young age to be cognizant that not everything that they see online is true will be critical. Of course, our kids won't be reading stories about the latest news on developing issues from around the world, but it will still be important to plant the seed in their mind that not everything is true just because someone wrote it. If we can

plant that idea in our kids' minds before they turn 10, the next step will be even easier. Teaching the youth of America how to check an article's reliability will have to continue into the nation's elementary schools and junior high schools. Again, millennials will play a big role in this as many of us will be teachers and administrators in our school systems by that time.

When I was in elementary school, we would have days when we read the newspaper to learn about current events. In junior high, we would have to find an article and write a report on it. These lessons were important because they got me and many others interested in what was going on in the world around us.

These lessons could be tweaked to keep kids reading while also teaching them what a real news source looks like. For instance, instead of writing a weekly report on an article from a newspaper or the internet, students could be presented with five articles, two or three of which are real, and pick out the fake stories and explain why they're not reliable.

If we're able to properly train the youth of America to spot unreliable sources, then we can phase out this fake news phenomenon. It will also result in a better informed populace which strengthens our democracy. The process won't happen overnight, it will take years and maybe even decades, and millennials will have to be at the head of the initiative to eliminate fake news from our daily lives.

It starts with millennials. We have to first make sure we're as media savvy as we are internet savvy, then we can teach the generations that follow to question the source of their news so they can teach the generations that follow them.