

How right wing media amplifies Trump's war on truth

by Svante Myrick,

President Trump [lies constantly](#) to the American public. It's damaging our democracy and undermining Americans' future.

Consider Social Security. It is an [efficiently run program](#) of earned benefits that protects workers in retirement. In his recent speech to Congress, Trump promoted the Elon Musk-created lie that Social Security is paying benefits to people who are hundreds of years old. This seems designed to create a bogus justification for cutting a lifeline that prevents millions of older and disabled Americans from falling into poverty.

Scientific research also saves lives. But that hasn't kept Trump from targeting it with lies. Trump [claimed](#) that the government spent \$8 million "for making mice transgender," to which he added, "This is real." No, it is not real. Medical researchers studying cancer and asthma use mice that have been genetically altered to make testing more relevant to humans. These are known as [transgenic mice](#). Trump's lie was, as Rolling Stone magazine [put it](#), "designed to go viral in the right-wing misinformation machine."

This machine is years in the making. In the 1980s, right-wing donors [began](#) pouring money into still-ongoing efforts to convince conservative Americans [not to trust mainstream media](#). In the 1990s, radio personalities like Rush Limbaugh [proved](#) there was big money to be made from promoting right-wing bombast.

This century, the Fox News juggernaut launched by [Rupert Murdoch](#) and political operative Roger Ailes changed the media and political landscape with this highly profitable strategy.

Not surprisingly, a steady diet of misinformation and disinformation is unhealthy for a person's relation to the truth. People who rely on right-wing media sources are [twice as likely](#) to believe — wrongly — that immigrants commit more crime than people born in the U.S. or that Trump won the 2020 election.

Fox's success has generated imitators and competitors like One America News Network, Real America's Voice, and a spate of online personalities who openly promote racism, antisemitism, white nationalism and Christian nationalism.

Conservative Christian media, meanwhile, has become a public relations vehicle for the "anointed" Trump, who [told Congress](#) that God had saved him so that he could save America. Trump's implicit message — opposing him is opposing God — is made [explicit](#) by religious-right media [figures](#).

Twenty years or so into the social media age, we know that algorithms can promote [online radicalization](#) and [introduce young people](#) to hateful content. A [report](#) by the pro-democracy group Issue One found that social media “accelerates polarization, amplifies extremism and challenges the rule of law.” It warned of the consequences of “a generation being raised in a ‘post-truth’ environment.”

It’s only been a couple of years since Musk bought Twitter and, under the pretense of free speech, made X a [thriving home](#) for neo-Nazi and other destructive content. Now it’s Musk’s personal weapon, and federal judges targeted for daring to rule that he and his DOGE team must abide by the law are [facing threats](#).

All this explains why The New Republic editor Michael Tomasky [concluded](#) that Trump’s victory was made possible by the consistent diet of “slanted and distorted” information from the right-wing media machine, which “sets the news agenda in this country.”

Fox News’s Jesse Watters recently [talked](#) about how the machine works: “We are waging a 21st Century information warfare campaign against the left ... It’s like grassroots guerrilla warfare. Someone says something on social media, Musk retweets it, Rogan podcasts it, Fox broadcasts it, and by the time it reaches everybody, millions of people have seen it.”

In this universe, whatever lines exist between MAGA, right-wing media and far-right racists are too thin and blurry for comfort. They all work together to create the alternative universe inhabited by many of Trump’s supporters.

That’s how we end up with a State Department official with a vile history of [racist behavior and rhetoric](#) and a Defense Department official with what Mother Jones magazine [calls](#) “a long history of bigoted, xenophobic and deliberately provocative s—posting,” which includes promoting conspiracy theories and political slogans [associated with neo-Nazis](#).

And that’s how we end up with a president who lies to build power — a go-to tactic for authoritarian leaders — and a movement and political party filled with people who either believe his lies or don’t care that he’s lying as long as he’s attacking the people they see as their enemies.

Americans and people around the world are now experiencing the disastrous consequences of our becoming a “post-truth” society. There is no quick or easy way to reverse the damage, but it must be done.

We may not control the platforms, but the technologies deployed by the far right are also available to Americans who are dismayed at the dismantling of our democratic system. Let’s use them, strategically, relentlessly and as loudly as possible.

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