

COVER STORY: AN EDITORIAL ON EDUCATION

How We Got Here: American Education and the Abandonment of Truth

by Sam Lundry

Democracy Dies in Darkness” is the motto recently adopted by The Washington Post after repeated attacks by those in political power on the efficacy and integrity of an independent media. Regardless of political beliefs or party affiliation, most agree we are living in extraordinary times.

Never before in modern American history have we dealt so confrontationally with the ideas of truth and fact in a discussion on the merit of what is inherently right and wrong.

The current administration has, time and time again, attempted to skew the very institutions that bring us facts in a further attempt to delegitimize those organizations who report things they don't like. Among this debate over fact and fiction, valid questions arise: How did we get to a situation in which people begin to question respected media organizations who, throughout the history of this country (The New York Times was founded in 1851), have proven to

be extremely reliable sources of factual information? Further, how can it be that a generation of young people struggle so much with determining what is true and what is not?

Essential to understanding how we've arrived at this vital crossroads between fact and fiction is understanding that this isn't a new phenomenon. Donald Trump did not invent the idea of “fake news,” although he may have invented the punchline. There have been those who have consistently attempted to delegitimize those in power or those reporting on those in power for decades, and these attempts cross party and ideological lines.

The “birther” movement attempted to delegitimize the policies of President Barack Obama by suggesting he was born in another country. While this was fueled by a general dislike of Obama's policies and a healthy dose of racism (those purveying the myth assumed, whether subconsciously or not, that

since the President was not white he mustn't have been born in America), the movement gained traction. In a similar light, conspiracy theorists asserted that the attacks on September 11, 2001 were orchestrated by the Bush Administration in order to create an excuse to invade countries in the Middle East. Regardless of your views on the efficacy of the US invasion, there is no evidence to suggest this happened. Yet there are still those today who subscribe to this belief.

At the root of this problem, and to many we face in the world today, is education. Similar to attempts in delegitimizing the media and Presidential administrations, attempts have been made for decades to delegitimize public schools and public school teachers. There are still those who seek to delegitimize what is taught in science class (i.e. the scientific fact of evolution is still criticized by those who wish to teach a different worldview with zero scientific backing) and still those who, if given the opportunity, would get

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rid of English and history classes all together.

It is frustrating to observe those who claim that a curriculum based heavily in math and science education teaches critical thinking. While it's true that STEM subjects can teach one certain critical thinking skills, those skills are restricted to their academic fields. If we truly wish to cultivate a generation of kids who know how to assess sources and research effectively to determine fact from falsehood and to make conscious and informed decisions at the voting booth, learning how to solve six different math theorems in an attempt to teach critical thinking by means of selective usage will not translate into benefits outside of math class. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) is the new education buzzword, often used to slash funding and delegitimize education in the liberal arts: English, history, composition, literature, speech and debate, and social studies.

No doubt, careers in STEM fields are in demand and an educated workforce to meet this demand is necessary, but liberal arts courses teach not only empathy, but also teach kids to debate issues like adults by citing reliable sources and relying on factual information to back up their beliefs. Schools should be havens for intellectual curiosity and ideological diversity, but teachers should have the right to point out to students when they are off track. It's because of this that we are seeing a generation of kids with the inability to question what they read and hear on television or on their cell phones. In truth, we're raising a generation of illiterate kids. Sure, they can recite their ABC's and read out of a book, but they can't comprehend, question, discuss, and research what they read. They simply lack the skills.

Behind the campaign to delegitimize and undermine public schools is, as always, a host of big-money interests and lobbyist groups. Just weeks ago, the Iowa Legislature voted to cut collective

bargaining rights of Iowa's 35,000 public school teachers and countless other public employees. Behind the bill was the Iowa branch of Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political advocacy group funded by the billionaires David and Charles Koch.

Teachers, just like public schools, are absolutely essential to the success of this state and this country moving forward. We are entrusting our future in the hands of these institutions, we should be expanding access to a quality public education with quality public school teachers, not discouraging it.

Our best and brightest kids should be able to pursue a career in educating the youth of tomorrow without worry of not being able to make ends meet on a teacher's salary. When we truly value the merits of an education rooted in the liberal arts, we all benefit. Fake news and attempts to delegitimize the media stand no chance when the electorate is educated in rooting out falsehood.

Iowa schools and their twisted systems

by Lily Feldman

For once in Iowa's history, the state is making headlines for its recent policy changes. About three weeks ago, Governor Terry Branstad, and other Iowa legislatures, proposed a monetary cut on the three public universities: Iowa State, The University of Iowa, and The University of Northern Iowa. This drawback of funds consisted of these schools losing \$18 million dollars overall. University of Iowa and Iowa State each lost \$8 million on scholarships and University of Northern Iowa lost about \$2 million. The scholarship cuts were finalized up until March 1, and up until that day, thousands of Iowa applicants lost their scholarship money; this enraged many families.

The scholarships these universities pro-

vided were granted to students whose parents previously attended the school. Many people grew concerned with this sudden announcement. The House Speaker, Linda Upmeyer (R-Clear Lake) called this move by the universities, "Politics at its worst." She continued on with, "It's very disappointing that the University of Iowa is choosing to play politics with scholarships and the lives of parents and students." As many know, college requires myriads of funds accumulated over several years. Removing these funds for families who relied on the extra help, forces these people to reconsider their college options.

On March 1, The University of Iowa reinstated their legacy scholarships. This grant given back to students now car-

ries a heavier load for future hawkeye applicants. The university, with now \$8 million less, has to raise the tuition. Researchers are suggesting a five thousand dollar increase on the current tuition. This will create some interesting statistics for future years at this university. Perhaps, the number of applicants will decrease or the school might become more selective.

The relieved parents are still discontent with the university and are now suing the school. This national headline proves how different the future of American education will be. With all these new changes, there will be more schools with funding drawbacks across various states.