972 - Mini Dossier : Immigration and Misinformation

DOCUMENT 1 : published on Cartoon Movement , August 7ᵗʰ 2024

DOCUMENT 2 :

'Racism is embedded in our society': how attacks on immigrants in Ohio highlight US disinformation crisis

Donald Trump's 'pet eating' conspiracy shows how falsehoods driven by political bias are spread

	In recent weeks, racist conspiracy theories about immigrants have dominated the election cycle. High-ranking Republicans have spread <u>unsubstantiated</u> rumors about Black and brown migrants, <u>tapping into</u> anxieties that immigrants are responsible for increased crime in US cities.
5	During last week's presidential debate, Donald Trump echoed a <u>baseless</u> claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were eating pets. "In Springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in. They're eating the cats. They're eating the pets of the people that live there," the Republican nominee said. And in response to a question about high costs of living, Trump alluded to viral rumors that members of a Venezuelan gang were taking over a Colorado apartment complex. "You look at Aurora in Colorado. They are taking over the towns. They're taking over buildings. They're going in violently." Both claims are completely untrue.
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	Experts argue that the spread of such disinformation amplifies existing xenophobic beliefs as a means of political gain. "It's so dangerous when people with a platform are repeating these very fabricated rumors," said Gladis Ibarra, co-executive director of the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition. "These are part of a large coordinated strategy to continue to demonize our immigrant neighbors. It's <u>undermining the values of</u> our nation and historically what people have said this nation stands for."
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	Misinformation (inaccurate information that is spread unknowingly) and **disinformation** (false information that is meant to mislead) are widely shared via social media platforms, despite a push for fact checking and accuracy since the 2016 presidential election. The phenomenon of inaccurate news still occurs at alarming rates as people's online algorithms are largely driven by their <u>political biases</u>,
20	according to Jeffrey Layne Blevins, a journalism professor at the University of Cincinnati. "[The algorithm] is merely designed to keep users engaged," Blevins said, referring to metrics such as how long a person looks at content or shares it in their feed. "And what tends to engage most people? Things that outrage them or piss them off."
	Blevins added that rightwing figures share disinformation in hopes of "outraging people on the political

25	right", especially during an election cycle. Such content is accepted as truth by those online who already share rightwing beliefs themselves. "It creates **an echo chamber**," he said. "When public figures who share your political beliefs post content like this – people are more likely to accept it <u>at face value</u>."
30	Republicans at all levels of government have linked immigrants to instances of violent crime, including drug smuggling and assault. During his campaign for the 2016 presidential election, Trump claimed Mexicans crossing the US southern border were "rapists", "bringing drugs, bringing crime". He began the construction of a wall along the border – among other anti-immigrant policies – to deter "large sacks of drugs [from being thrown] over". During this election cycle, Trump has said that undocumented people are "animals" who are "poisoning the blood of our country", despite immigrants being significantly less likely to commit crimes than US-born citizens.
35	The demonization of immigrants is a repeated move by lawmakers to secure votes, said Germán Cadenas, an associate professor at Rutgers University who specializes in the psychology of immigration. "Immigration is really not as divisive as some politicians are trying to make it out to be," he said, as 64% of Americans believe immigration is beneficial for the country. "It's a tactic that has been used historically to mobilize voters who feel threatened."
40	For centuries, Cadenas said, politicians built policy around the stereotype that immigrants are a "threat" to US identity and safety. Anti-immigration laws such as the **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882** and the **1924 Immigration Act** were among the first to <u>curtail US immigration</u> based on nationality. The Chinese Exclusion Act came largely after high-ranking union members warned of a "Chinese invasion" that would steal white, American jobs. Similarly, US senators advised their fellow legislators to "shut the door" on immigrants as a migrating population would "<u>encroach upon</u> the reserve and virgin resources" of the US, before the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act.
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50	Fast forward to the early 2000s, as states such as **Arizona passed laws** allowing local law enforcement to target anyone they believed was in the country without documentation. Arizona Republicans called arriving undocumented people an "invasion that must be stopped" and a "national security threat", a political tactic to encourage support of the controversial bill.
	Politicians also attempt to <u>etch out</u> a voting bloc by passing anti-immigrant policies. "Historically, these stereotypes, these falsehoods, have [then] been used to mobilize voters to elect policymakers who are going to make anti-immigrant laws and policies."

Gloria Oladipo, *The Guardian*, September 18, 2024

DOCUMENT 1

1. Describe the cartoon as precisely as possible.
2. What event does this cartoon refer to ?
3. In your opinion, what issues does the cartoonist raise thanks to this cartoon ?

DOCUMENT 2

1. <u>Vocabulary</u>
    → Look for meaning of the underlined words.
2. <u>Culture</u>
    → Explain the highlighted terms in your own words. Do some research if necessary.
3. <u>Comprehension</u>
    1. According to Document 2, how do today's politicians use misinformation and disinformation ?
    2. According to Document 2, is racism embedded in American society ?