

The worst fakes, deceit and conspiracy theories of the 2020 campaign

Angie Drobnic Holan, Politifact, 2020 October 10

Most weeks, I keep this newsletter focused on public policy, elected officials and the hottest topics of U.S. politics. But PolitiFact also specializes in debunking hoaxes and misinformation on the internet and social media. (We fact-check in partnership with Facebook, and you can [read more about that program here.](#))

PolitiFact's misinformation beat means we're fact-checking some of the most inaccurate and outrageous messaging on the internet. Halloween — and the end of the 2020 campaign — seemed like the perfect time to share some of this fact-checking of extreme content. You may find it eye-opening as to just how bad things are in some corners of the web.

So consider yourself warned! There's spooky, unsettling content ahead! It's the best of the worst, it's all false, and it is definitely not for the faint of heart.

Happy Halloween, and Happy Fact-checking!

False claims that celebrities and politicians are pedophiles

We've fact-checked many claims that prominent politicians and celebrities are molesting children. For evidence, these claims weirdly point to photos or video that show normal, everyday activity, not acts of pedophilia. People who participate in the [QAnon](#) conspiracy movement tend to push these claims.

We have found no evidence that Joe Biden is a pedophile. [That's Pants on Fire.](#)

Photos that supposedly support the claim are taken out of context or have been directly contradicted by those involved. Nor is there evidence that his son Hunter

Biden raped children in China; only the darkest corners of the internet [promote the idea](#). Also, Barack Obama and actor George Clooney [did not get together on a boat](#) to touch a young girl inappropriately.

The online furniture store Wayfair is [not engaged](#) in child sex trafficking, and the state of California has not [legalized pedophilia](#).

Internet hoaxsters [altered a photo](#) of a painting shown in a magazine profile of Lynn Forester de Rothschild, who runs a private investment firm. The painting in her home depicts horses, specifically "Five Brood Mares at the Duke of Cumberland's Stud Farm." It is not a painting of the devil eating people.

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False claims about the coronavirus, its origins and cures

We've fact-checked many claims that the coronavirus was purposefully unleashed on the world, or conversely that it's a simple ailment that common household items can cure.

A repeated claim we've fact-checked is that the virus was created in a lab. [This is not true](#); scientists have shared the genetic blueprint of the virus and documented that it is naturally occurring, most likely originating in bats.

No books or TV shows accurately predicted the onset of the coronavirus, either. The book "End of Days" by Sylvia Browne [didn't predict it](#), despite internet claims that it did. Nor did "The Simpsons" predict it. An image from the TV show [was altered](#) to read "corona virus" instead of "apocalypse meow."

Then there are claims about cures for the coronavirus and COVID-19.

UV radiation cannot be “administered into the body” to cure it. In fact, [it could be harmful](#). Before President Trump ever mentioned disinfectants, we debunked the dangerous claim that drinking bleach could cure COVID-19. [It can't](#). [Gargling with salt water](#) won't cure you, but it probably won't hurt you. [Cocaine won't cure you](#), either, but you might end up with a drug problem.

False claims that you will be microchipped

We know of no person or institution advocating that people be implanted with microchips to contain the coronavirus.

Yet we've documented and debunked claims that the [Democratic Party](#) wants people microchipped and then forced to take vaccines. Also, it's false that [Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation](#) want people microchipped. Nor is financier [George Soros](#) pushing microchips.

"The fear of insertion of tracking chips and other things like that into our bodies has been a longstanding bogeyman for theorists," said Mark Fenster, a University of Florida law professor who has written extensively about conspiracy theories.

"There is a lot of tracking that goes on, but the suggestion that it's being used in this manner and this way seems absurd. This comes from the stream of conspiracy theories of the last 50 years. It has nothing to do with science and everything to do with conspiracy theories."

False claims about death

Claims about death and killing people tend to be scary. They're not always factual.

Coronavirus patients are not being [cremated alive](#) in China, despite what a popular video claims. Speaking of cremation, a Michigan funeral home worker was not [“cremated by mistake”](#) while taking a nap.

If you sit up too quickly in the night, it will not cause [“sudden death.”](#) As a general rule, COVID-19 doesn't cause [sudden death](#), either.

Finally, the Navy SEALs [weren't murdered](#) for covering up the “fact” that Osama bin Laden is still alive. The SEALs are alive and bin Laden is dead. This is the

conspiracy theory President Trump recently retweeted; NBC News' Savannah Guthrie confronted him on it at a town hall and told him it made him look like ["someone's crazy uncle."](#)

Halloween is not canceled!

Last but not least, a Facebook post claimed, "CDC just cancelled Halloween for kids, but BLM & Antifa riots and protests... they are of course fine. This 2 standards of 'covid safety' is ridiculous."

This is [False!](#) Halloween is not canceled. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a [page](#) on its website dedicated to the holidays. But it is not publishing any decrees there — just advice.