

Perspective

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Feeding two birds with one scone

There are various trends at work in America that defy my understanding, further cementing my growing belief that rational life is disappearing, either within America or my aging mind—your pick. Here are a few of those disturbing trends. First....

TIK TOK: I read that there's this 17-year-old girl, Charli D'Amello, who recently started posting dancing moves to popular songs (usually rap) on the video sharing platform TIK TOK. She's become very popular now having 131 million TIK TOK, 45 million Instagram, and 9.6 million You Tube followers.

Which currently ranks second to the podcast: "Tuscola: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow—The Dance Version."

Last year she made \$17.5 million from her videos, which is more than the CEOs of Exxon Mobile, McDonald's, Starbucks and Delta Air Lines made. But I've watched those CEOs dance videos and they stink.

Charli got her older sister, Dixie, dancing around and just goofing off until she made \$10 million. They make money by serving as "Influencers" for the businesses sponsoring ads or products on their short

little videos. As I understand the term, an Influencer is someone who influences another person into buying something. I think we used to call these folks a "salesman," then "salesperson," then "whatchamacallit" but now influencer.

TIK TOK is owned by the Chinese company Byte Dance and boasts a following of over 1 billion users. It is a controversial company, accused of causing addiction, using pornography, promoting excessive dancing, engaging in data harvesting by an enemy nation, and, did I mention, praising our Tuscola podcast—the dance version? Its main subscribers are generation Z youngsters, being our last generation since Z is the last letter in the alphabet. Are we done? Then there's...

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: I've been criticizing the emergence of political correctness or PC for four decades in my articles. The term's not new. "Political Correctness" was first found in the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary following the Russian Revolution of 1917, and referred to faithful adherence to the Communist Manifesto. If you didn't adhere to the communist catechism, well, you were canceled. Literally.

I'm just sayin'

By Mike Carroll
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Today, conservatives use the term PC to criticize the free speech control efforts of woke liberals who use language to gain and control power. As George Orwell prophesied in his novel "1984," whoever controls language controls power. This power politics lesson has not been lost on woke movements trying to change our culture, our thinking, our attitudes and beliefs, by using whatever means are available to them—from shaming, blaming and shunning, to being fired, canceled, even prosecuted—to control what words, terms and concepts can and cannot be used.

It's deadly serious stuff—just ask those Russians protestors of the war with Ukraine. Putin has even banned the word "war" from describing his "special military exercise" in the Ukraine. Commies from Russia to China really have this PC word and thought control stuff down pat.

Sometimes, the extension of PC thought control gets downright silly like the University of California's new "Inclusive Language Guide" which recommends avoiding "metaphors" which often "introduce unneeded baggage."

Here's an example they gave. Don't say "I'm killing two birds with one stone" because this metaphor is a "hurtful image" that might "trigger" anxiety and fear in sensitive souls. Instead, say "I'm feeding two birds with one scone." (I'm not making this up.) Then there's...

VIRTUAL REALITY: It seems the line between real reality and unreal virtual reality is blurring. To the point, SpaceX chief Elon Musk recently argued that he thinks all of life is a digital computer simulation—we're characters trapped inside some space alien's video game.

Musk's logic is based upon the rate of improvement in digital technology—from Pong or PAC

MAN to today's 3-D virtual reality headsets. Musk argues that eventually virtual reality will be indistinguishable from reality.

Of course, Musk might simply be high in hash heaven as he's no stranger to toking on Whacky tabacky.

But, disturbingly, other visionaries, such as popular astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, argue there is "better than 50-50 odds" that a "simulation hypothesis is correct. He finds the concept that we're all trapped in a digital matrix a "creepy concept" but can't summon a strong argument against the simulation hypothesis.

But I can. I cling to Woody Allen's observation that reality's not much, but it's still the best place to get a steak. That's my strong argument against the simulation hypothesis and will remain so until such time that I can put on some computer headgear and sense I'm eating a great steak when I'm really just chomping my gums on air. And there's our...

MODERN MILITARY: Under President Biden's mandate to focus on equity, inclusion and diversity, our modern military—according to critics—is more concerned

about social issues than protecting us through projecting brute skill and lethal power.

Given our disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, our relative impotence in the face of China's military-muscle-flexing in the Pacific Rim and limited response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, many fans of the America as the defender of freedom and democracy—the "shining city on the hill"—are concerned.

Me too. So I recently interviewed Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper, Commander of Burpelson Air Base, a Strategic Air Command, asking if this concern was justified. "General, is our fixation on the social goals of diversity, inclusion and equity diverting attention from our military's sole mission of national safety through projecting lethal power?"

General Ripper, took a long draw on his cigar, gave me a weird little grin, rubbed the .30 caliber machine gun he had cradled on his desk, and answered that "yes," he thought we could simultaneously engage in social engineering and killing efficiency.

"Just think of it as feeding two birds with one scone" he said.

mike carroll

Better politics, smarter government: Honoring exceptional Illinois leadership

By John T. Shaw

It is often dispiriting to follow national and international news. There is the seemingly endless pandemic, war raging in Ukraine, soaring inflation in America, fierce partisan battles in Washington, and the still-smoldering embers from the attempted insurrection last year that could have upended our democracy.

Without ignoring the turbulence disrupting the country and the world, it is important to appreciate positive things that are happening in our communities and to celebrate the leaders who are striving mightily — although sometimes quietly — to advance

the public good.

Last year, the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute and former Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar launched the Simon-Edgar Statesmanship Award to honor exceptional leadership in Illinois by state and local government officials. The award is presented annually to leaders who display unusual vision, courage, compassion, civility, effectiveness and bipartisanship in their work for their communities and for Illinois.

The nomination process for this year's Simon-Edgar Award opened on April 1 and we are accepting nominations until June 1. To nominate a candidate or

candidates, please write a brief letter describing how the person has displayed the qualities of statesmanship outlined above. Please send an email to PaulSimonInstitute@siu.edu or send your letter to Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, Southern Illinois University, Mail Code 4429, 1231 Lincoln Drive, Carbondale, IL, 62901-4304. The recipient of the 2022 Simon-Edgar Award will be announced in early August.

Gov. Edgar and I are eager to receive and review nominations about inspiring leaders in Illinois — mayors who are crafting imaginative plans for their cities and making hard decisions to re-

alize their aspirations, city council members who are preparing constructive long-term strategies for their communities, and state legislators and constitutional officers who are willing to break from party orthodoxy to advance solutions that improve the lives of fellow Illinoisans.

For our inaugural award last year, we selected 11 Republican members of the Illinois General Assembly who supported a critical budget package in July 2017, breaking from their party in the interest of fiscal solvency for Illinois. That budget ended a two-year fiscal stalemate that tarnished Illinois' reputation, damaged

schools, battered the state's credit rating, and led to about \$15 billion in unpaid bills. The budget that emerged allowed Illinois to avoid further downgrading of its debt. It also ensured that Illinois state government would resume regular operations. The 2017 budget paved the way for subsequent fiscal progress in the state as reflected in upgrades to Illinois' credit by several rating agencies.

Last year, political, academic and business leaders, as well as interested Illinoisians, submitted dozens of nominations of mayors, city and county officials and state legislators for

the inaugural Simon-Edgar Award.

These nominations were inspiring and confirm that statesmanship is alive and well in the Prairie State. I am confident that the nominations we receive this year will identify exceptional leaders who are improving Illinois and give us all reason to be hopeful about the future.

John T. Shaw is the director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois Carbondale. Shaw's monthly column explores how Illinois can work toward better politics and smarter government. Editor's Note: This op-ed was distributed by Capitol News Illinois on behalf of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own.

Facebook's fake me looks just like me

I finally made it into the fake Facebook club. Somebody stole my profile picture and set up a new account using my name. They then sent friend requests to my friends.

I read that last year, in just a few months, Facebook shut down more than a billion fake accounts. There are reportedly 35,000 people globally who work for Facebook to combat this problem, and they shut down millions of accounts every week.

I'm not sure how I feel about this. Billions of people have had their names and photos used for fake accounts and they're just now getting around to me? That's like starting with dinosaurs and then moving on to elephants and whales. Eventually, they get to horses and zebras and lions and monkeys. After that, they make their way to dogs and cats before moving on to squirrels, possums, rats and mice.

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter
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After a billion tries, all they're left with are maggots, lice and cockroaches. That's where I am on the priority list of people to fake.

For those who make these fake accounts, there are a billion other people they would rather be than to be me.

After a few friends messaged me to let me know that my account got cloned, I searched for the new me. I found the account and checked it out.

Turns out, the guy looks just like me. And, incredibly, his

wife looks exactly like my wife. It's uncanny.

I checked out his friend list and it only had six names, all people I know. Really, folks? I appear to make a new Facebook account and only six people want to be my friend? These six are now my new best friends.

Of course, a lot of Facebook users are wise to the game and know not to accept a friend request from someone they're already friends with. If you get such a request and you're unsure whether it's legit, send the

person a private message and ask them.

So why do people make fake accounts? While I'd like to think that they're just envious and want to be me, we know that isn't true. Nobody wants to be me. Unless they see a picture of my wife. Then who wouldn't want to be me?

Some fake accounts try to scam your friends. They might ask for money or try to sell a product. Some are pushing dubious websites, and they think you're more likely to click on a link if it comes from someone you know and trust. Cloning my profile assumes a lot about the trust my friends have in me.

Some fake accounts are set up to push fake news and political points of view. They're used to spread political misinformation. That makes me a prime target for cloning because my friends are already conditioned to be skeptical of anything I post.

The joke's on these spammers because they obviously don't know my level of influence. My friends are less likely to believe something if I post it. They know I only post the truth even if I have to make it up as I go.

There are obvious issues with fake Facebook accounts, but one oft-overlooked problem is the authenticity of Facebook's reach. There are reportedly 3.9 billion Facebook accounts and around 2.9 billion active users. How many of those are fake?

According to The New York Times, Facebook says about 5 percent of its accounts are fake. How do they know? What if it's more like 10 percent or 20 percent?

There are real consequences to fake accounts and the fake news they spread. I recall a comment thread last year from a friend that made some ugly statements that cracked

relationships. Turns out, it was a fake account driving a wedge between real people. It makes you wonder how much of the political divide in this country was created by bad actors using fake social media accounts.

It's good to be skeptical and do a little research on your own. Especially if you see it on my account, real or not.

In all seriousness, I don't try to lead people astray. But I'm not responsible for what you believe even if you believe something I told you. People need to take responsibility for their own beliefs. That's more important knowing that there are millions, perhaps a billion, fake accounts out there vying for your attention.

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