The Role of “Fake News” in U.S. History

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November 4, 2021
John Adams and Boston Gazette

Spent the Remainder of the Evening and supped with Mr. Otis, in Company with Mr. Adams, Mr. Wm. Davis, and Mr. Jno. Gill. The Evening spent in preparing for the Next Days Newspaper - a curious Employment. Cooking up Paragraphs, Articles, Occurences, &c. -- working the political Engine! Otis talks all. He grows the most talkative Man alive. No other Gentleman in Company can find a Space to put in a Word -- as Dr. Swift expressed it, he leaves no Elbow Room. There is much Sense, Knowledge, and Spirit and Humour in his Conversation. But he grows narrative, like an old Man. Abounds with Stories. (Diary of John Adams, September 3, 1769)
Guiding questions

*How can an understanding of news from the past help shape media literacy today?*

*How have journalism and news media shaped US history?*
Media literacy strategy: Discourse analysis

• What is notable about this artifact (image/text)?

• What compositional elements do you notice?

• What seems to be the message?

• How does media impact/reflect public opinion?
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The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the 29th Regt. Boston: Engrav’d Printed & Sold by Paul Revere, 1770
The Boston Gazette, and Country Journal. Monday, March 12, 1770
A few minutes after nine o'clock four youths, named Edward Archbald, William Merchant, Francis Archbald, and John Leech, jun., came down Cornhill together, and separating at Doctor Loring's corner, the two former were passing the narrow alley leading by Mr. Murray's barrack in which was a soldier brandishing a broad sword of an uncommon size against the walls, out of which he struck fire plentifully. A person of mean countenance, armed with a large cudgel bore him company. Edward Archbald admonished Mr. Merchant to take care of the sword, on which the soldier turned round and struck Archbald on the arm, then pushed at Merchant and pierced through his clothes inside the arm close to the armpit and grazed the skin. Merchant then struck the soldier with a short stick he had; and the other person ran to the barrack and brought with him two soldiers, one armed with a pair of tongs, the other with a shovel. He with the tongs pursued Archbald back through the alley, collared and laid him over the head with the tongs. The noise brought people together; and John Hicks, a young lad, coming up, knocked the soldier down but let him get up again; and more lads gathering, drove them back to the barrack where the boys stood some time as it were to keep them in. In less than a minute ten or twelve of them came out with drawn cutlasses, clubs, and bayonets and set upon the unarmed boys and young folk who stood them a little while but, finding the inequality of their equipment, dispersed.

On hearing the noise, one Samuel Atwood came up to see what was the matter; and entering the alley from dock square, heard the latter part of the combat; and when the boys had dispersed he met the ten or twelve soldiers aforesaid rushing down the alley towards the square and asked them if they intended to murder people? They answered Yes, by G-d, root and branch! With that one of them struck Mr. Atwood with a club which was repeated by another; and being unarmed, he turned to go off and received a wound on the left shoulder which reached the bone and gave him much pain. Retreating a few steps, Mr. Atwood met two officers and said, gentlemen, what is the matter They answered, you'll see by and by. Immediately after, those heroes appeared in the square, asking where were the boogers? where were the cowards? But notwithstanding their fierceness to naked men, one of them advanced towards a youth.
The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the 29th Regt.

Boston: Engrav’d Printed & Sold by Paul Revere, 1770
"A general attack was made on the men by a great number of heavy clubs and snowballs being thrown at them, by which all our lives were in imminent danger. . ." (Captain Thomas Preston)
Media literacy strategy: Sourcing

1. Where was this piece of information first published? Who created it?
2. What do you think the main purpose is (to persuade, inform, distort, entertain, sell, publicize)?
3. What is the overall tone? Is the language neutral or do you detect some bias?
4. What specific claims are made?
The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a Party of the 29th Regt. Boston: Engrav’d Printed & Sold by Paul Revere, 1770
W.L. Champney's
Massacre Print, 1856

Afro-American Monument.[detail: Christopher [sic] Attucks, the First to Shed Blood and That His Own for American Independence]. Chicago: Goes Lithograph Company; B.F. Hammond, c1897.
Frank Leslie's illustrated Newspaper, November 19, 1859
The Harpers' Ferry Difficulties.

Ossawattimico Brown stands at the head and front of these difficulties. He has been the chief instigator, and upon him rests the greater share of the blame, for practically putting into effect this insurrection. But back of him stands another cause, the foundation upon which all these things rest. It is the present Administration which has been so meekly truckling to the slave power. Had it stood up manfully in defence of the Constitution when violated in Kansas, by Southern mobs, had it not winked at the unlawful usurpation of power and might, had it not privately sanctioned the stuffing of ballot-boxes, forgery and murders in that Territory, by the Congos slave power, this man would never have been driven to the course he has just.
The Anti-Slavery Bugle, New-Lisbon, Ohio, November 10, 1860
Lincoln, newspapers, and public sentiment

Abraham Lincoln, U.S. President. Seated portrait, holding glasses and newspaper, Aug. 9, 1863, LC-DIG-ppmsca-1920
During the Civil War

appeared in the New York World and Journal of Commerce:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, MAY 17, 1864.
Fellow-Citizens of the United States:

In all seasons of exigency, it becomes a nation carefully to scrutinize its line of conduct, humbly to approach the Throne of Grace, and meekly to implore forgiveness, wisdom, and guidance.

For reasons known only to Him it has been decreed that this country should be the scene of unparalleled outrage, and this nation the monumental sufferer of the nineteenth century. With a heavy heart, but an undiminished confidence in our cause, I approach the performance of a duty rendered imperative by my sense of weakness before the Almighty and of justice to the people.

In view, however, of the situation in Virginia, the disaster at Red River, the delay at Charleston, and the general state of the country, I, Abraham Lincoln, do hereby recommend that Thursday, the 26th day of May, A. D., 1864, be solemnly set apart throughout these United States, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer.

Deeming, furthermore, that the present condition of public affairs presents an extraordinary occasion, and in view of the pending expiration of the service of (100,000) one hundred thousand of our troops, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and the laws, have thought fit to call forth, and hereby do call forth, the citizens of the United States between the ages of (18) eighteen and (45) forty-five years, to the aggregate number of (400,000) four hundred thousand, in order to suppress the existing rebellious combinations, and to cause...
Guiding Questions

How can an understanding of news from the past help shape media literacy today?

How have journalism and news media shaped US history?
"Fake News" in North Carolina's White Supremacy Campaign of 1898
White Supremacy Campaign
Democratic Party leader Furnifold Simmons, orator Charles Aycock, and newspaper editor Josephus Daniels.

Daniels saw the White Supremacy Campaign as the combined efforts of "men who could write, men who could speak, and men who could ride."
Historical Overview


- Why did Democratic leaders wage a white supremacy campaign?
- What were the goals and tactics used in the white supremacy campaign?
- Who were the targets of the white supremacy campaign?
- What were the effects of the white supremacy campaign?
- What does the white supremacy campaign indicate about race and class divisions in North Carolina?
Break Out Session
Suggested Topics

- Complete student assignment 1 or 2 and discuss what you would like students to notice about the cartoons (1898) from the Raleigh News & Observer.
- Discuss how the assignments could be modified for specific course needs.
Student Assignment 1 | White Supremacy Campaign

With (or without) a partner: View the Democratic cartoons from the North Carolina white supremacy campaign of 1898 published in the newspaper the Raleigh *News & Observer*. Determine the message of the cartoons. In determining the message, consider the depiction and placement of the figures in the cartoon, the significance of any objects in the cartoon, and any text associated with the cartoon. Choose one cartoon that you think encapsulates something important about the Democratic message in the campaign of 1898. Be prepared to point to specific aspects of the cartoon (figures, objects, and text) to explain the Democratic message.
Student Assignment 2 | White Supremacy Campaign

With (or without) a partner: View the Democratic cartoons from the North Carolina white supremacy campaign of 1898 published in the newspaper the Raleigh News & Observer. Consider the depiction and placement of the figures in the cartoon, the significance of any objects in the cartoon, and any text associated with the cartoon. Identify one recurring message in the cartoons. Be prepared to point to specific examples in several different cartoons (including figures, objects, and text) that contribute to the recurring message.
Cartoons from the Raleigh News & Observer during the White Supremacy Campaign
Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
NEGRO ROAD OVERSEER IN CRAVEN COUNTY.

Scene on the Road where White Men Are Working the Public Roads Under a Negro Overseer.

Craven is not the only County in Eastern North Carolina under Fusion Government where Negro Road Overseers Have Been Appointed Over White Men.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
White Girls Proving Witness Tickets Before a Negro Deputy Clerk of the Court.

AND THIS OCCURRED IN WAKE COUNTY: AT JULY 1888 TERM OF WAKE SUPERIOR COURT TWO LITTLE WHITE GIRLS, MISS HATTIE WILLIAMS, AGED ELEVEN YEARS, AND MISS ANNIE V. BROWNING, AGED FOURTEEN YEARS, WITNESSES IN CASE OF STATE VS. BROWNING, HAD TO PROVE THEIR WITNESS TICKETS BEFORE ANDREW J. ROGERS, NEGRO DEPUTY CLERK OF WAKE SUPERIOR COURT.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
WHY THE WHITES ARE UNHAPPY

POST OFFICE

McKinley has filled the post offices with Negro Postmasters and in some instances ladies do not find it agreeable to call for their mail.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
A serious question... how long will this last?

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
Scene on the Atlantic and N.C. Railroad.

What occurred when Negro troops were travelling on that Railroad under Republican management.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
A tree is known by its fruit.

Tree of Fusion

Tree of Democracy

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
They can't wash it out.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
On the 8th of November these shackles will be broken.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
"These bones will rise again.

But they won't vote in North Carolina this year.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
A FRUIT THAT WE ALL LIKE.

We will Pluck it on the 8th.

WHITE SUPREMACY PLUM.

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
Good Morning! Have you voted the White Man’s Ticket?

Source: Raleigh News & Observer (1898)
Terror, Massacre, & Coup d'Etat
Historical Overview | Terror, Massacre, & Coup d'Etat
“Where are the white men and the shotguns!... It is time for the oft quoted shotgun to play a part, and an active one, in the elections… It has reached the point where blood letting is needed for the hearts of the common man and when the depletion commences let it be thorough! Solomon says, ‘There is a Time to Kill”… We are aflame with anger here.”—Rebecca Cameron to Alfred Waddell (1898)

“You are Anglo-Saxons. You are armed and prepared, and you will do your duty. If you find the Negro out voting, tell him to leave the polls, and if he refuses, kill him, shoot him down in his tracks. We shall win tomorrow if we have to do it with guns.”—Alfred Waddell (1898)

“Before we allow the Negroes to control this state as they do now, we will kill enough of them that there will not be enough left to bury them.”—W. W. Kitchin (1898)
A TOUCHING APPEAL TO WHITE MEN OF N. C.

By S. J. Hartsell, a Populist of Cabarrus who has Felt the Sting of Fusion.

Last May His Daughter was Murdered by Two Negro Brutes—Asserts That Fusion Votes Tend to Make the Negro do Such Deeds.

The people of North Carolina are aroused to the importance and necessity of overthrowing negro supremacy and fusion misgovernment. In every quarter of the state, populists, who left the democratic party with honest convictions, have discovered their error and are returning to the democratic fold.

The most touching incident of this campaign is the return of Mr. S. J. Hartsell, one of the best and most respected citizens of Cabarrus county. In May last the yong daughter of Mr. Hartsell was made the victim of two negro beasts, who brutally took her life. The white men of Cabarrus soon swung the wretches to convenient limbs, but the great crime can never be avenged. The frequent occurrences of such crimes in the state by the low class of negroes, has aroused the manhood of the white men of the state. Encouraged by their ascendancy, as a result of fusion rule, the criminal class of negroes have stopped at nothing. The sorrow and grief of a crushed home brought Mr. Hartsell to a full realization of this fact. This gentleman, who has been an honest populist and fusionist, announces his return to the democratic party in a letter to Mr. A. B. Young, the chairman of the democratic executive committee of Cabarrus county.

Mr. Hartsell calls on the white men of the state to band together and destroy the fusion party of the black faces. It is a call of an outraged citizen who has felt the pangs of sorrow. It is a call that every white man should heed. The following is the letter from Mr. Hartsell to Chairman Young:

Mr. A. B. YOUNG, Chairman
County Democratic Committee, Concord, N. C.:

Dear Sir:—My daughter, Emmie, was outraged and murdered at our home, near Concord, on Sunday afternoon, May 29, 1898, by two negroes, while I and others of my family were at church worshipping God. The two negroes, Joe Kizer and Tom Johnson, who did these crimes, were quickly hung to death that Sunday night by white men of Cabarrus, as they ought to have been. For several years I have voted the populist and fusion tickets, because I thought I was doing in this way the best I could for the state. Nobody can know as I now know how wrong I was in voting these tickets, and now I have to suffer for it. I am sure that such votes tend to make the negro do such deeds, because when white men vote and electioneer with the negro he feels that the office he has elected and the political parties winning elections with him, and by his vote, will protect him in anything he does. And I now appeal to the white men of North Carolina to vote for the protection of our mothers, wives and daughters. Use this letter as you please.

Yours truly,

SAMUEL J. HARTSELL.

Concord, N. C., October 1, 1898.
Historical Overview | Terror, Massacre, & Coup d'Etat

Red Shirts in Laurinburg (1898)
Historical Overview | Terror, Massacre, & Coup d'Etat

Commemorative postcard of destroyed Wilmington Record office (1898)
Break Out Session
Suggested Topics

- Complete the student assignment 1 or 2 and discuss what you would like students to notice about the article in the Raleigh News & Observer and/or the letter of the unsigned black resident of Wilmington.
- Discuss how the assignments could be modified for specific course needs.
"A Day of Blood at Wilmington," Raleigh News & Observer, November 11, 1898
"I call on you the head of the American Nation to help these humble subjects. We are loyal we go when duty calls us. And are we to die like rats in a trap? With no place to seek redress or to go with our Greiveances? Can we call on any other Nation for help? Why do you forsake the Negro?... Will you for God sake in your next message to Congress give us some releif If you send us all to Africa on we will be willing or a number of us will gladly go. Is this the land of the free and the home of the brave? How can the Negro Sing My Country tis of Thee? For Humanity's sake help us. For Christ sake do. We the Negro can do nothing but pray. There seems to be no help for us.... To day we are mourners in a strange land with no protection near. God help us. Do something to alleviate our sorrows if you please. I cannot sign my name and live. But every word of this is true. The laws of our state is no good for the negro anyhow. Yours in much distress."—Unsigned to President William McKinley (1898)
Student Assignment 1 | Terror, Massacre, & Coup d'Etat

Read the following account of the events at Wilmington on November 10, 1898: "A Day of Blood at Wilmington," published in the Raleigh News & Observer, the following day. Discuss the following questions:

- How does the description of the events differ from other historical accounts?
- Who did the writer blame for the violence?
- What did the writer see as the cause of the violence?
- Why did the writer describe Wilmington in this way?
- In what ways might the account be unreliable?
Read the following account of the events at Wilmington on November 10, 1898: "A Day of Blood at Wilmington," published in the Raleigh *News & Observer*, the following day, and the unsigned letter to President McKinley, from a black resident of Wilmington. Discuss the following questions:

- How do the descriptions of the events at Wilmington differ?
- Which account is more reliable? Why?
What was the role of newspapers in the terror, massacre, and coup d'etat in North Carolina in 1898?
White Supremacy Campaign

“[R]acist appeals were the hammer they needed to shatter the fragile alliance between poor whites and blacks… At the center of their strategy lay the gifts and assets of Daniels, editor and publisher of *The News and Observer*. He would spearhead a propaganda effort that would incite white citizens into a furor that led to electoral fraud and mass murder. It used sexualized images of black men and their supposedly uncontrollable lust for white women. Newspaper stories and stump speeches warned of ‘black beats’ who threatened the flower of Southern womanhood. The Democrats did not rely solely upon newspapers, however, but deployed a statewide campaign of stump speakers, torchlight parades and physical intimidation.”—Tyson, "Ghosts of 1898" (2006)
1907 — “Young People’s History of North Carolina” by Daniel Harvey Hill refers to the election of Daniel Russell, the Fusionist governor, and then notes that “in the second year of Russell’s term, the Democrats elected a majority in the Legislature and the State returned in part to Democratic control.”

1916 — “A Child’s History of North Carolina” by W.C. Allen instructs that the Fusion legislature “put the city largely under negro rule. ... The government of the city was badly carried on, and lawlessness prevailed.” The account says that blacks fired on whites, and whites returned the fire, killing several. “After the riot was over the incompetent negro and white officers of the city were forced to resign, one by one, and competent white men chosen in their places ... a conservative board of aldermen [was] installed, negro policemen discharged ... Thus the revolution was at an end. Since that time Wilmington has greatly prospered.”

1933 — “The Story of North Carolina” by Alex Mathews with Walter Clinton Jackson teaches: “There were many Negro office-holders in the eastern part of the state, some of whom were poorly fitted for their tasks. This naturally aroused ill feeling between the races.”

1940 — “North Carolina for Boys and Girls” by Sarah William Ashe and Orina Kidd Garber (1940) says that under the Fusion government “negroes could hold office. The days of the Carpetbaggers seemed about to return. But the people of North Carolina remembered those terrible days too well to allow them to return.”

Source: Tyson, "Ghosts of 1898" (2006)