

# Salt of the Street Judicial Branch

## Court of Opinion

### **Dissenting or Concurring Opinion:** **Personal Responsibility in Consumption** **of Media**

In this weeks' episode Colin and I briefly touched on hearings before congress of the heads of social media companies. When large events like this happen and are broadcasted live it is very common for me to tune into CSPAN and listen myself so as to 'hear it from the horses' mouth'. This ensures for me that none of the information I take from the hearing is skewed by anything other than my personal bias, something I do my best to set aside when taking in any information. In these hearings officials from Twitter, Google and Facebook testified in front of congress for several hours under oath. The video on the CSPAN website has a run time of three hours and seven minutes of which I feel confident in saying I listened to two and half hours of. The representatives sent from said companies answered questions about Russian influence in the election which was executed using their platforms in the process. The General Counsel of Facebook, Colin Stretch, revealed during the hearings that The Kremlin spent \$100,000 on 3,000 ads on Facebook (Washington Post) and nearly \$300,000 on ads on Twitter (San Diego Union Tribune) that was initially thought to have reached 10 million people, but after further research it was found that over 140 million people may have seen the Kremlin funded ads. I am not happy about ANY money being spent by any foreign countries

in efforts to influence our election or any facet of our country, and I do not believe that the money spent by the Kremlin in an effort to have an effect on the outcome of our election fulfilled its purpose. While I would be among the first to admit that the massive influx of cash running through our country causes problems that can and cannot be foreseen, I do not believe the money spent on ads by foreign countries is the core of this matter but only an indication of the true plague in our country. The problem I see in these numbers is the relatively small amount of money it took for a foreign power to reach up to 44% of the American population. Among the many questions asked to the social media representatives, several were regarding what the officials perceived their role to be in disseminating this misinformation to the public and in turn ensuring that we were not taken advantage of. The idea that the media and information you consume is not YOUR responsibility is wrong and in my opinion is the patient zero of this conundrum. On a conservative estimate, I would say that I cross check 70% of the articles I read with an article from an alternative source to try and make sure that the information in the article is true and corroborated with another legitimate source - unlike The Fire and The Fury, as Colin and I discussed - this is a VITAL part of being informed. Not only cross checking sources but if possible to check with a source that lies on the opposite side of the political aisle. Part of the terror of identity politics is the partisanship that is intensified because of

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it, which as its nature drives the masses further and further into the political corners that they call home and disallows the generations raised in said climate to see the value in even listening to someone with ideals separate from their own. The beauty I see in the intense amount of media that I consume on a daily basis is the variation of the hosts and opinions that are displayed on them, and that's the same beauty that I found in the conversations I had with Colin that led to this podcast. I suppose the base idea that I have behind any media that you consume is that you have to take it in objectively to be able to see the underlying bias within it and to be able to see the merit in the information and the way in which it is presented. The ability to see merit in ideals opposite of yours or understand how someone could arrive at them is the first step away from identity politics and back to a world where objective conversations can be had and ideas larger than one person can be discussed. It's the only way that problems like immigration and gun violence in our country can be solved. It is up to you to inform yourself and disseminate the truth from the fake news, because no one will do it for you. Do yourself and the rest of the country a favor and do your part. Inform yourself not just with information that confirms your feelings and makes you feel comfortable, but also with information that makes you feel nervous and defensive and makes you think and begin to understand those around you that are different. Technology has changed the way we take in our information and the people leading this country do not have the comprehension or

expertise with it that the generations coming up do, so do not allow them to falsely influence you that the internet should be a place of 100% safety and that you should not be responsible for ensuring the facts you take in are just that, facts. It has been true since before the internet and will continue to be even more true after its invention that you cannot believe everything that you read or hear.

### References:

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