

DEEP DIVE

QANON

THERE ARE SOME THINGS GOING ON IN OUR ONLINE SOCIAL COMMUNITIES WE'RE ALL A PART OF THAT WE NEED TO ADDRESS:

Buzzfeed's Stephanie McNeal makes a clear statement in her article "The Era Of Influencers Being Apolitical Online Is Over."* It makes sense, at some point, if you are consistently putting your life out to the public, the public is going to want to know where you stand on issues important to them. (BuzzfeedNews).

That said, the political campaigns themselves have not quite figured out how to optimize influencers in their advertising mix. Though the trend is coming, says Digiday...

We have less and less space to passively take in what's on our feeds - lest we get caught up in a false reality.

So, QAnon:

If you are unfamiliar with what this conspiracy is all about and how it has permeated the culture, I recommend the episodes from podcasts , [Endless Thread](#) from WBUR & [Today, Explained](#) , from Vox (in 2018!!!).



There is genuine concern for the power of influencers here, as views that are 'political' (masks, QAnon) can be hurtful, like [QAnon-ers attacking Chrissie Tiegen](#) after her pregnancy tragedy. (Insider) Or dangerous - actually dangerous. Not dangerous-to-your-brand dangerous, many experts and officials have warned ([ABCNews](#)).

QAnon is dangerous and has infected all social channels of influencers over the last 3+ years. Here is some more information of how the QAnon conspiracy has been spreading over social channels - and influencers (InsideHook):

- A popular hashtag, “#savethechildren,” is not what you think. And it has preyed on moms online - some influencers themselves - drawing them into the wild world of the conspiracy. (Vox)
- Wired doesn't think Facebook 'shutting down' QAnon on their platform (which they did not fully do) will truly work. (Wired)
- They also have a good article concerning how we talk about QAnon.
- Similar actions by Twitter in July were not effective (Washington Post)
- Etsy is removing all QAnon related products from the platform. (Insider)
- CNN explains how the conspiracy has spread globally. (CNN)
- Bloomberg's Stephen Mihm looks at QAnon through a lens of US History, and how conspiratorial ideas have a history of being absorbed. (Bloomberg)
 - Social media has a role in speeding up this process, as we passively take in information, soaking in loose-fact headlines and content without thinking.

We're connected. For better or, sadly, worse.

Taking our roles in how these social platforms' influence those around us, and our roles in perpetuating that influence are serious business. They connect people in the best ways (dog videos) - but are too often used to bring us together in the worst ways:

- A shockingly well-coordinated attack by a militia in Michigan. (Mashable)
- Facebook, so often the poor actor in these situations - alerted the FBI of the Militia 6 months ago -and had concerns about several more in Michigan dating back to August (Yahoo/Bloomberg)
- “The Squad” voiced confusion over just how sincere Twitter's concern over death threats and calls for bodily harm on the platform after the dear leader's Covid diagnosis. They noted that they had experienced countless such threats over the past several years - with little action (The Hill)
- This is not limited to the United States. You'll recall Facebook's role in a genocide in Myanmar (NYT). According to Time Magazine, they are still not doing enough. (TIME)
- They haven't figure out how to curb that kind of violence. I'll let the Vice headline do the work:
- “Hate Speech on Facebook Is Pushing Ethiopia Dangerously Close to a Genocide” (Vice)
- These issues of hate speech perpetuating violence are widespread through the world, with scholarly articles being published concerning countries such as Slovakia, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Austria (Bloomberg) to name a few.

***This newsletter was published before the January 6th riots but you can add that to the list as well.**