Should We Trust Wikipedia?

DE Brown  April 06, 2015

Award winning CBS journalist claims Wikipedia has a history of deliberately manipulating the information sponsored by special interest groups. (Newswire.net -- April 6, 2015) -- Emmy award-winning CBS News journalist Sharyl Attkinson warns that the information we consider the truth because we find it in online encyclopedia, such as Wikipedia, could be intentionally edited towards a ‘different version of the truth’ under the sponsorship of corporations, organizations or individuals.

During her TEDx speech at the University of Nevada, Attkinson revealed the method of misinforming that consistently influences our opinions. The scary truth behind deliberate misinformation is that this is not quite illegal, and there is a huge internet campaign behind it. If you decide to “do a little research on the Internet”, the search engines will drive you to a sponsored result. This illusion of having a non-biased opinion verified by Google the topic, for example, could draw you on a bunch of web pages sponsored by the very one you think you are checking.

“What if all isn’t what it seems? What if the reality you find was false?,” said Attkinson claiming that carefully constructed narrative by unseen special interests is designed to manipulate our opinion.

“A ‘Truman Show’ as alternate reality all around you,” Attkinson said.

Explaining the ‘Astroturf’ methods, Attkinson claims that there is an “entirely industry build around it in Washington.”

What is Astroturf?

“It’s a perversion of grassroots, as a fake grassroots. Astroturf is when political, corporative or other special interests disguise themselves and publish blogs, start Facebook and Twitter accounts, publish ads, letters to the editor, or simply post comments online,” Attkinson explained.

“The whole point of Astroturf is to try to get the impression there’s wide-spread support for or against the agenda where there’s not!” said Attkinson. She cited the example of the spin given to changing the name of the ‘Washington Redskins’. She pointed out that most of the media, online and mainstream, made us believe that the majority of Americans finds it offensive and want to be changed.

“But what if I told you 71 percent of Americans say the name should not be changed, that is more than two thirds,” she said.

“Astroturf seeks to controversialize those who disagree with them. They attack news organizations that publish stories they don’t like, ‘whistleblowers’ who tell the truth, politicians who dare to ask tough questions, and journalists who have the ‘audacity’ to report all that,” Attkinson said.

Calling Wikipedia the “Astroturfs dreams come true,” Atkinsson said that it is quite opposite from a free encyclopedia that anyone can edit. In fact, behind Wikipedia are the editors who work on behalf interests groups who pay them to do so. “They forbid and reverse the edits, they go against their agenda, they skew and delete information in blatant violation of Wikipedia’s own established policies,” she said.

“In 2012, famed author Philip Roth, tried to correct a major fact error about the inspiration behind one of his book’s character cited on a Wikipedia page. But no matter how hard he tried, Wikipedia’s editors wouldn’t allow it. They kept reverting the edits back to the false information. When Roth finally reached a person at Wikipedia, which is not an easy task, and tried to find out what was going wrong, they told him he is not considered a credible source on himself.”

Attkinson continued describing a huge scandal that later happened when some Wikipedia officials were caught offering the PR service to skew and edit information on behalf of publicity-seeking clients who are willing to pay.
“You may never fully trust what you read on Wikipedia, again, nor should you,” Atkinson concluded.

CBS News investigative correspondent Sharyl Attkisson has reached an agreement to resign from CBS News ahead of her contract’s expiration.

Attkisson, who has been with CBS News for two decades, had grown frustrated with what she saw as the network’s liberal bias, an outsize influence by the network’s corporate partners and a lack of dedication to investigative reporting, several sources said. She increasingly felt that her work was no longer supported and that it was a struggle to get her reporting on air, Politico.com reported.

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