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## “End of Decade” Stories Illustrate How Media Perpetuates False Narratives

As we leave behind 2019, and move into 2020, we have witnessed multiple media stories that December 31, 2019 was “the last day of the decade,” and today — January 1, 2020 — marks the first day of a “new” decade.

This false narrative, while not as important as other false narratives that the media perpetuates, almost incessantly, is an illustration of how false information is regularly disseminated by newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the Internet, either maliciously or innocently. In some cases, journalists deliberately promote stories that are either slanted or outright lies, and in other cases, they just lazily repeat false information, without bothering to more closely examine what they have been told.



First, let us look at this mantra that 2019 was the last year of the decade, and 2020 marks the opening of a new decade.

A decade is 10 years, by definition. As such, a decade is not completed until 10 years have passed. Likewise, a century is not completed until 100 years have been finished, and a millennium is not in the books until 1,000 years have ended.

For example, the First Century needed 100 years to complete, as is the case with all centuries. The First Century began with the year one. *It did not begin with the year zero, a year that did not exist.* In theory, then, the year one began on January 1, A.D. 1, and the first year of the first century ended at the end of the day on December 31, A.D. 1. The next day, then, January 1, began the second year of the First Century, or the first day of the year two.

This is why the First Century did not end with the conclusion of the year 99, as that would be one year short of 100. The Second Century commenced, then, with the year 101, not the year 100. Carrying this out over the centuries, the Twenty First-Century began on January 1, 2001, *not January 1, 2000.*

Because of this, the “millennium” we are now in did not begin until January 1, 2001, as well.

Yet, the false statements that years ending in nine (one year short of ten, obviously) conclude decades, centuries, or millenniums, are perpetuated in story after story. But no matter how many times such misinformation is repeated, it is still not true. Two plus two is still going to equal four, no matter how many misinformed individuals argue that it equals five.

Which brings us to an important question: Just how much information has been put out in the past 10



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years is also bogus?

The short answer is a lot. Obviously, we cannot cite all of the false information during that time period, because we have not seen it all, and the volume of false information is so large that it would take at least one book, and probably several, books, to properly document it all.

Let us take one example from 2017 that we can expect to be repeated this presidential election year by politicians and reporters, some maliciously, and others lazily: Trump's supposed defense of neo-Nazis and White nationalists in the Charlottesville episode. In August 2017, a violent confrontation took place at Emancipation Park in Charlottesville, Virginia, between opposing extremist factions. Three individuals died, and 38 were injured.

In announcing his bid for president, former Vice President Joe Biden said that President Donald Trump's response was that there were "some very fine people on both sides." According to Biden, this meant that Trump "assigned a moral equivalence between those spreading hate and those with the courage to stand against it."

It is not unusual for an unprincipled politician to distort the words of his opponent, so as to gain maximum advantage. But what is disturbing here is that the media did not do its job, and point out that Biden's version was so out of context as to change what Trump actually did say.

In response to some reporters, Trump commented on the tragic events. "You had some very bad people in that group, but you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides."

Trump noted that there were some present simply to protest the removal of the statue of Robert E. Lee, but additionally "you had people — and you had many people — *and I'm not talking about the neo-Nazis and the White nationalists, because they should be condemned totally* — but you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and White nationalists." (Emphasis added.)

Trump also noted that there were some "fine people" in the other group (which favored the removal of the Lee statue), "But you also had troublemakers, and you see them come with the black outfits and with the helmets and with the baseball bats. You had a lot of bad people in the other group." It should be noted that the "bad people" Trump was referring to were Antifa-types, who are definitely "bad people."

Yet, over the past few years, it has been repeated so often that Trump called neo-Nazis and White nationalists "fine people," that many Americans wrongly believe that he did.

This is why it is important to point out the media's failure to correct the popular misconception that we have just begun a "new" decade. Either the media knows the difference, and does not care, or they are just as uninformed as everyone else who thinks we have begun a new decade. Either way, false information is disseminated. While the decades misconception may be relatively unimportant, one should remember that just because something is asserted as a fact, it does not make it a fact.

*Photo: AndreyPopov/iStock/Getty Images Plus*

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