



## Facebook Fraud: Ex-workers Admit They Censored Conservative News

A number of former Facebook employees have admitted they regularly censored conservative news, denying its placement in the site's "Trending Topics" section regardless of its popularity. Moreover, company management actually ordered that relatively unpopular stories be listed as trending if it deemed them "important."



One of social media's selling points is that it's a democratic arena in which "the people" determine what's seen and heard. Yet the revelations by the ex-employees, provided to news organ Gizmodo.com, inform that this is a sham, an illusion. In reality, "Facebook's news section operates like a traditional newsroom, reflecting the biases of its workers and the institutional imperatives of the corporation," [writes](#) Gizmodo. This amounts to deception, as Facebook claims that its trending module lists topics based on popularity, not political correctness.

Not surprisingly, Facebook has denied the allegations, saying it has "rigorous guidelines" that "do not permit the suppression of political perspectives. Nor do they permit the prioritization of one viewpoint over another or one news outlet over another. These guidelines do not prohibit any news outlet from appearing in Trending Topics," [reports USA Today](#). Yet this rings hollow. The paper also tells us, "Facebook relies on automated systems to identify what's popular. A team of curators then refine the list." "Refine" is the key word. If Facebook really wanted to eliminate human bias, why allow "refinement," which could be nothing here but a euphemism for subjectivity? Why not just present what's popular, period? As TechCrunch's Josh Constine [put it](#), "Facebook's biggest problem may have been not realizing humans have biases — including political ones."

And individual bias — exercised by those given the power to "refine" — is the main problem, according to the Gizmodo report. As a former curator said, "Depending on who was on shift, things would be blacklisted or trending.... I'd come on shift and I'd discover that CPAC or Mitt Romney or Glenn Beck or popular conservative topics wouldn't be trending because either the curator didn't recognize the news topic or it was like they had a bias against Ted Cruz." "It wasn't trending news at all," he added. "It was an opinion."

This is no surprise, as tech workers are notoriously left-wing. With respect to political donations, 97 percent of Twitter employees' "spending went to Democrats. At Microsoft, that number was more than



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70 percent and at Facebook it was 68 percent. Apple employee political expenditures tipped the scales at almost 93 percent in favor of Democrats," [reported](#) the *Washington Post* in February.

And Facebook's trending news team fits this liberal profile. As Gizmodo tells us, it's a small group of young journalists, known as "news curators," who are "primarily educated at [liberal] Ivy League or private East Coast universities." (Note, a Harvard professor just [urged liberals to treat evangelical Christians like Nazis](#).)

And since people are generally blind to their biases, it's not surprising those biases are evident even in defenses of Facebook. For example, *The Guardian* interviewed an ex-Facebook curator who challenged Gizmodo's report and related, [writes](#) the paper, "that newsworthiness was determined by how often a story appeared on a list of trusted news outlets including this publication, the New York Times and the BBC." But "trusted" by whom? *The Guardian* is hardcore left-wing, with the *Times* and BBC sharing that bent. And it follows that if left-wing sites are the yardstick for Facebook's "trending" news, the section will have a left-wing bias.

Yet not all Facebook fudging can be chalked up to individual curators with too much latitude and liberal attitude. As Gizmodo also informs:

When users weren't reading stories that management viewed as important, several former workers said, curators were told to put them in the trending news feed anyway. Several former curators described using something called an "injection tool" to push topics into the trending module that weren't organically being shared or discussed enough to warrant inclusion — putting the headlines in front of thousands of readers rather than allowing stories to surface on their own. In some cases, after a topic was injected, it actually became the number one trending news topic on Facebook.

And with Facebook boasting 167 million users in the United States alone, it's no stretch to say that its trending-news section can influence public perceptions — and elections.

That major social media is a bit like professional wrestling circa 1980 — obviously fake but still claiming authenticity — comes as no shock to astute observers. It was [revealed](#) earlier this year that (97 percent liberal) Twitter has been blacklisting conservative users and "shadowbanning" them. Related, though it's a search engine and not social media, is Google's 2015 [announcement](#) that it was likely no longer going to rank sites based on popularity, but "truth" content — as, of course, determined by the young techies at Google.

Returning to Facebook, we here at *The New American* (TNA) have our own experience to relate. Our website features Facebook's "Like" button at the top of every article (it's common to news sites today); this indicates how many Facebook users read and "liked" the article. Well, for more than a year and only ending approximately a year ago, the likes at TNA articles would accumulate — and then suddenly disappear. One of my most popular articles reached 30,000 likes, and then, lo and behold, the next time I checked it, the reading was zero.

One might consider this a glitch, but it occurred consistently to TNA articles, and I never observed the phenomenon at a mainstream media site. Likes, likes, and more likes — and then "Poof!" back to zero.

Why does this matter? Since likes indicate readership level, as well as reader affection, they're a good metric for popularity. And studies have shown that people are influenced by what's popular. Create the illusion that an article is barely read and its content is more likely to be dismissed as a fringe view.

And generally speaking, what UCLA political science professor Tim Groseclose [said](#) in his 2011 book



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*Left Turn* about left-wing mainstream-media bias can be said about social-media bias as well. To wit: It “makes us more liberal, which makes us less able to detect the bias, which allows the media to get away with more bias, which makes us even more liberal.”

Of course, all this controversy could be avoided if Facebook would just fire the news curators, live up to its claims, and present what’s popular without the bias rebranded as “refinement.” Barring that, maybe it should rebrand itself Fraudbook.



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