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Assignment # 3: Racist Propaganda



Introduction:

The controversy surrounding this piece of racist propaganda is the idea that people of African descent are violent, untrustworthy, physically and mentally inferior. The racist ideals that were abided by during the segregationist eras were used to diminish the human nature of people of African descent to justify and secure the “supremacy” of the white race. Currently the racial divide between people of African descent and the white race is increasing, and can be seen through the unlawful killings of people of African descent by white police officers. As time has progressed the mistreatment of people of African descent has continued to increase because of racial ideals, much like the piece of racist propaganda that I have presented above.

History and Background:

This particular piece of propaganda was developed and began circulating the internet in 2014, which is only 3 years ago. During this time there was a surge in Stop and Frisk practices, police brutality, and unlawful killings that mainly affected the African American communities.

People of African descent have been disproportionately targeted by police officers, which often ends in brutalization or murder of people of African descent. In the past few years people like Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sean Bell, Sandra Bland and many others fell victim to police brutality with each case resulting in murder. The police officers often used the defense that they were afraid for their lives, and felt threatened by the “violent nature” that they feel while interacting with people of African descent. Misconceptions about the nature of people of African descent as well as racist propaganda, are used to create false ideas surrounding racial groups that create fear, racial divides and justify the mistreatment and brutalization people of African descent face.

Brief Profile of the main Participants:

The main participants in this controversy are The White Aryan Resistance organization (WAR) and the Southern Poverty Law Center. The White Aryan Resistance is an organization based on neo-Nazi and white supremacist values. The WAR organization was founded in 1983 by Tom Metzger, who is known as one of the most prominent figures of the Ku Klux Klan organization. His leadership role as a Grand Dragon, which is the highest ranking Klansman in a specific state, helped him form the White Aryan Resistance, and gain a large amount of followers. The vision of this organization is to increase and enforce “the separation of races, to avoid the dangers of multiculturalism and racial identity”. The White Aryan Resistance has a history of using their platform as an organization to influence and fuel their members to hate other races.

Members of The White Aryan Resistance were responsible for the murder of an Ethiopian Graduate student in Portland Oregon named, Mulugeta Seraw on November 13th, 1988. The death of Seraw was seen as a hate crime committed by affiliates of the WAR

organization. All three men who took part in killing Seraw were found guilty, and the jury awarded 12.5 million dollars to the Seraw family. Although the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League won a multimillion dollar case against the WAR organization, this group of neo-Nazis have still been responsible for many other hate crimes. Currently the WAR organization shares their views via many different channels specifically their website Resist.com. It was on this website that the developer of the racist propaganda presented above got his start. The developer is a man named Nick Bougas, but who prefers to go by A. Wyatt Man (a pun for A White Man). Bougas is a political cartoonist that is best known for his art which specifically depicts racist values/ beliefs along with white supremacy. His art became popular after being found on the white supremacist website Resist.com, which was founded by the White Aryan Resistance.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is an organization that was developed to fight against racial injustice, hate and bigotry. This organization was founded by two civil rights lawyers named Morris Dees and Joseph Levin Jr. in 1971. Both of these lawyers came together to develop an organization that could make sure that the promises of the civil rights movements became a reality for minority groups. The SPLC was established to fight against the hierarchical structures and laws such as Jim Crow that sought to keep people of African descent excluded from well-paying jobs, affordable/ livable housing, and a proper education in non-segregated schools. Since the early 1970s, The SPLC has devoted their time and efforts to combat the racial injustices that minority groups are subjected to at the hands of hate groups.

In order to fight hate groups The SPLC has taken up court cases where they felt the crimes committed were racially motivated. The SPLC were also involved in a significant amount

of cases where hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan and The White Aryan Resistance were charged with murder of people of African descent. Some of these cases were Donald v. United Klans of America in 1984 and the 1988 case of Berhanu v. Metzger. In 1981 the Southern Poverty Law Center took on the case of Michael Donald, who was wrongfully lynched by the Ku Klux Klan in Mobile, Alabama. The SPLC won the case and was able to attain a \$7 million settlement for Michael's mother from the United Klans of America, which ultimately resulted in the forced bankruptcy of the Klan. Not to long after The SPLC won this case, they fought and won a case against members of The White Aryan Resistance who were accused of killing an Ethiopian Graduate Student. The student named Mulugeta Seraw was bludgeoned to death with a bat, and died leaving behind a son and other family members. The SPLC was able to convict the members of the WAR, and also get a settlement of 12.5 million dollars awarded to Seraw's estate. Since winning these cases Dees and Levin continued to involve themselves in cases where their client's civil rights were violated, especially if they were victims of hate crimes. Levin and Dees spent a significant amount of time fighting racial injustices, and the SPLC continues to fight for those same injustices until this day.

Main Body of the Report:

Analysis of Propaganda:

Language wise the piece of propaganda I chose bluntly shows that this document is an example of propaganda that generates fear, builds a specific mental image and creates a false dilemma. The phrase that is used on the illustration to influence the viewers is "...Around Blacks ...Never Relax!" This statement is a clear imperative sentence that directs the reader to have a "fight or flight" reaction when a person of African descent is in their presence. Not only will viewers of this document begin to fear people of African descent, but they will also create a

negative idea in their minds regarding the behavior and nature of them as well. The developer of this document uses many cues to push his agenda of increasing racial divide. Creating racial divide increases the likelihood of dilemmas or situations where racial issues can arise because of false pretenses. As you can see in the document above Bougas uses bold wording to show the serious nature of this document. He also underlines and places an exclamation mark after the words “Never Relax” to show urgency. The goal of this document is to instill a sense of fear/anxiety about people of African descent into the viewer/ reader of this document, which will increase the already growing racial divide.

Aesthetically wise this piece of propaganda is very effective in delivering the message that it is made to convey. The picture or caricature was created using only Black and White colors which gives the picture a really grim and dark feel to it. The words used within the document are bold, black, and worded really clearly. The caricature is drawn to mimic the negative stereotypes used in minstrelsy shows that were, and still are used to oppress people of African descent. In the picture the character is drawn dark skin with big white lips, a large nose with wide nostrils, a bald head that is shape similarly to a monkey/primate, wild mischievous eyes, large grimacing teeth and most interestingly holding a knife as if he is ready to attack anyone at any time. Using only two colors heightens the urgency to separate black from white, while also influencing the viewer to think that the segregation of people of African descent from white people is justified.

How and why the “experts” differ

The experts in this controversy are The White Aryan Resistance and The Southern Poverty Law Center. These two organizations differ in visions because they feel differently about the equal treatment of all races. Historically speaking the WAR organization has advocated for

separation of races, and the supremacy of the white race. Their thoughts are based on hateful and extremist views that aim to assert fear through acts of violence and even murder. According to the Resist.com website, this organization seeks to provide education on the dangers of the intermingling of races, while focusing on how to push their agenda of using fear to protect the white race against other races. They see committing acts of violence against non-white people as a way to show their devotion to the cause. This group strongly believes that the introduction of multiculturalism is a direct threat to their way of life, and their race. Ideas like social justice, racial justice and civil rights for all undermine the principles that these white people feel should be upheld. The main goal of this organization is to secure the supremacy and reign of all white people, who identify with the views that races should be kept separate and white people are supreme to all other people.

On the other hand The SPLC seeks to create environments where people of all races can come together, and break down social and racial divides. This organization has developed various resources such as the: Teaching Tolerance project, which “combats prejudice among our nation’s youth while promoting equality, inclusiveness and equitable learning environments in the classroom.” The SPLC also has established the Teaching Tolerance Magazine and Tolerance.org that provides educators with a way to appropriately address racial issues within the classroom, while also teaching the importance of respecting diversity within academics settings. Both of these resources assist educators with dealing with racial issues that may arise, and teach them how to prepare and handle situations that may occur sporadically in the classroom setting. Another initiative that the SPLC has developed is the Mix it Up lunch day, where young students are encouraged to sit with someone new, and participate in activities that will create

conversations and build relationships. All of these program listed above are some of the ways that the SPLC stresses the importance of accepting racial differences, and respecting different cultures.

The SPLC differs from the WAR organization because they promote inclusiveness, and seek to bring people of different races together so they can see past color. They target people of all ages, and more specifically children in the school systems to open their mind to racial equality at a young age. Both of these organizations are similar in the way that they have very distinct and strong opinions regarding race. On one hand the WAR organizations seeks to keep people separate, and to continue the reign of white supremacy. On the other hand the SPLC aims to bring people together starting from adolescence so that racial divides slowly decline.

Political and Ideological Motivation

The technical language that is related to this controversy can be found on the websites of the main participants. Language regarding race is worded very professionally and succinctly in each websites vision / mission statement. The WAR organization has values that directly align with Nick Bougas, who is the developer of the image above. The mission statement reads as “White Aryan Resistance is an educational repository on the benefits of racial separation, highlighting the dangers of multiculturalism and promoting racial identity and a territorial imperative.” As you can see by reading this quote, the major goal of the WAR organization is to keep races separate, and by doing so decreasing the likelihood of any kind of interracial relationships. Organizations like WAR use racist propaganda to support and strengthen their initiatives of using hate, violence, extremism and acts of aggression to secure the supremacy of the white race. The language used on the website is not hostile but shows that the White Aryan Resistance is against the intermingling of races because they see it as a dangerous act.

The SPLC firmly believes in teaching racial tolerance, fighting against extremist groups and seeking justice for those who have been victims of hate crimes or racial prejudices. They monitor and expose the activities of hate groups such as the: Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazi movement, racist skinheads, and black separatists. While fighting against the prevalence of these hate groups, the SPLC has created initiatives within their organization to focus on a wide spectrum of social and racial issues. Some of these issues are economic justice, criminal justice reform, immigrant justice, LGBTQ rights, and hate & extremism. In order to combat these major issues that affect underprivileged minority groups, the SPLC established programs such as the Teaching Tolerance project which is “dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation’s children.” The major goal of this organization is to promote racial equality, and the intermingling of people with various ethnic backgrounds so that social and racial boundaries can be crossed and ultimately broken down.

Conclusion:

Racist Propaganda such as the one that I provided above are very difficult to improve because they use strong language and visuals. My suggestion for this document is to completely delete it from data bases if possible, because there is no real way to say “Around Blacks Never Relax” without being highly offensive and creating an uproar in communities of African descent. This document introduces serious racial stereotypes to the viewer, and also persuades them to live in fear of people of African descent. Propaganda such as this effectively produces negative messages, as well as misconceptions about the nature of specific groups of people. If my employer was to ask me to try and make this document more reader friendly, I would probably be severely penalized for my resistance, and insolence because I would refuse to work on this

document. As a young woman of African descent, I made the conscious decision long ago not to condone racism of any kind because it goes against my moral code, values and beliefs.

On the other hand, there are some people who have no experience dealing with people of African descent, and may take this piece of propaganda as a factual document. My advice for people who aren't capable of detecting the distortions of truth is to ignore documents like this, and seek the truth for yourself. Do research on people of African descent, specifically topics like Slavery, The Harlem Renaissance, The Civil Rights Movement and Tulsa's Black Wall Street. I would encourage people to stop listening to dictators with skewed perceptions of the world, and take the initiative to find out the truth.

In 2017 the internet can be used to access databases and scholarly articles that can provide facts for inquiring minds. Pieces of propaganda like the one that I provided above are blatant forms of agenda pushing, and can be easily debunked if people would just seek out knowledge instead of listening and believing in the viewpoints of others. The internet is a tool that can be used in many different ways, but one immutable fact about this innovation is that it will provide users with knowledge that they can interpret how they please. My advice to internet users is to do research, and don't let one person's values become your values. Propaganda is plentiful, and I know that it may be difficult to decipher fact from opinion, but there are credible sources out there. Don't let a racist ideal determine how you live out the quality of your life, and who you choose to interact with.

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