Current Events Questions

Should social media platforms actively remove posts with misinformation?

If removed, how is it decided what should be removed?

Does this violate freedom of speech?

Imagine you have started the next social media platform, competing with Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and others. Come up with a name of your platform. Create a policy on handling misinformation that may be harmful to the public.

Company Name

Removing Posts Policy

Facebook, Twitter pledge to fight fake news. We users must hold them to it | Opinion
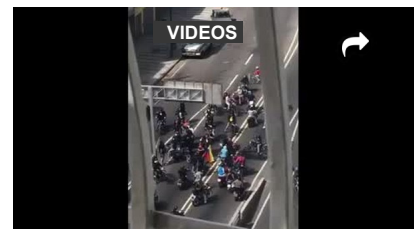
BY ANDRES OPPENHEIMER

MAY 13, 2020 03:44 PM , UPDATED MAY 13, 2020 08:40 PM

Social-media platforms are taking steps to remove harmful fake-news items, especially about the coronavirus, from their sites. DENIS CHARLET *GETTY IMAGES*

Pro-government groups beat up woman in Venezuela

At long last, after years of foot-dragging, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter are taking their first serious steps to combat the pandemic of fake news. They are far from sufficient, but we should applaud them anyway — and demand that they do much more.

This week, Twitter announced that it will add warning labels on some tweets with false or misleading information about the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it could eventually do the same

with fake news on other topics. YouTube had announced earlier that it would take similar steps.

On May 7, Facebook took an even bolder step. The company, which also owns Instagram, effectively launched its independent content oversight board by announcing its first 20 members. The board will have a $130 million budget and will be able to make binding decisions to remove specific fake news items from Facebook and Instagram.

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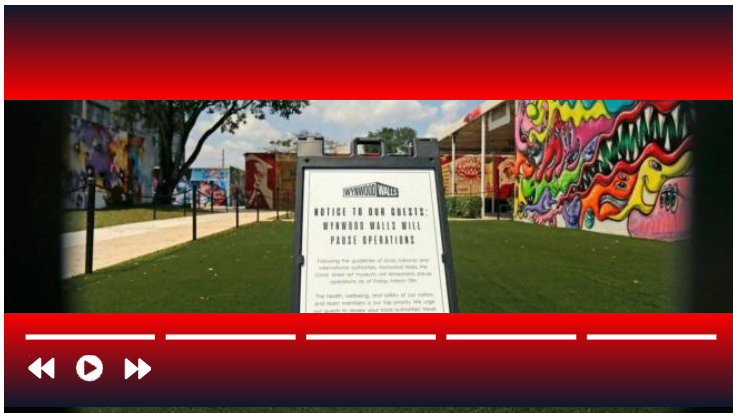
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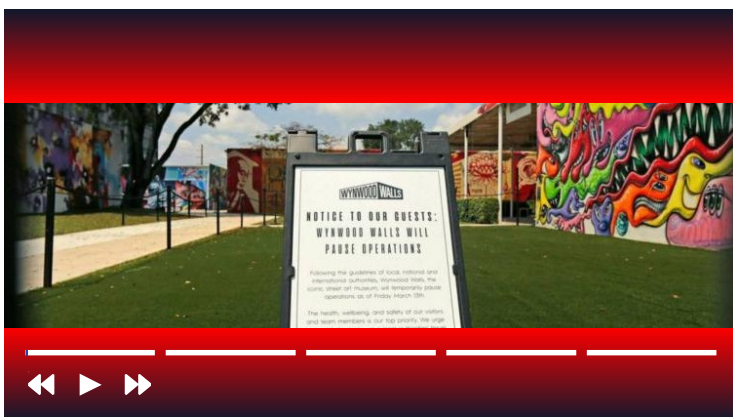
Is it really time to reopen amid coronavirus? Miami business leaders take it slowly

The members of this new board include many well-known human-rights and press-freedom advocates. The board will be chaired by Catalina Botero, the former special rapporteur of freedom of expression of the Organization of American States; Columbia University professor Jamal Greene; Stanford University professor Michael W. McConnell; and former Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

Pro-government protesters storm Venezuelan National Assembly

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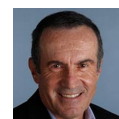
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Andres Oppenheimer is a syndicated columnist, and anchor of the TV Show "Oppenheimer Presenta." He is a member of the Miami Herald team that won the 1987 Pulitzer Prize.

In an extended interview, I asked Botero why we should trust Facebook. The company's founder Mark Zuckerberg has admitted several times that Facebook was not doing enough to eliminate fake news, then went on with business as usual.

Botero responded that the board will be an autonomous institution, and that Facebook won't be able to fire its members.

The new content oversight board will "act as a Supreme Court" that decides on the removal of potentially harmful fake news. Its rulings on removal will be mandatory, Botero told me.

She refused to talk about specific cases, such as when President Donald Trump suggested that injecting disinfectant may cure COVID-19. But, in general, if a nation's leader recommends something that could do harm, including inciting hate crimes, the board's rulings to remove such statements will be binding, she said.

I asked her what will happen with fake-news items that do not cause "damage." For instance, Trump has claimed, without evidence, that the pandemic originated from a lab in China — a statement disputed by U.S. intelligence agencies and top U.S. government infectious-disease experts, but that could be interpreted as doing no "harm" to the public's health.

In general, when there is no potential harm involved, the board will be able to make "recommendations" to Facebook on such cases, she said. For instance, the board can recommend that Facebook put a label on a specific news item, alerting readers that it contains disputed information. It can also recommend that it be accompanied with a link to proven information from a respected news organization.

Such board "recommendations" won't be mandatory, but they will be made public. That will put pressure on Facebook to put a label on such news items — or explain why it failed to do so, she said.

Asked whether the new Facebook board will be able to remove false political advertising or news in time for the November elections, Botero said that, "We will be working at full speed" to achieve that goal. But she cautioned that the board is still in its organizing stages and that, "I can't guarantee it."

I find it hard to understand why it took so long for Facebook, which first announced this board in 2018, to set it in motion. Facebook was a major publisher of fake news in the 2016 presidential race, and we're only six months away from the next one.

Still, it's a step in the right direction. It may be better to have an independent supervisory board than to leave decisions about fake news in the hands of Facebook, YouTube or Twitter CEOs, who always have an eye on their companies' bottom line.

We should all applaud these first effective steps by these social-media platforms. But we also must put pressure on them to extend these measures to fake news on other topics beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. They have made billions by spreading false information in recent years, and it's time for them to take the lead in the fight against it.

Don't miss the "Oppenheimer Presenta" TV show at 8 p.m. E.T. Sunday on CNN en Español. Twitter: @oppenheimera