

## BREAK THE FAKE: SPOTTING HATE PROPAGANDA

Hate propaganda can sometimes be disguised as a reasonable argument. But if you learn to spot these signs, you'll recognize hate messages whether they're in a post, an article, a video or a meme.

What do we mean by *propaganda*?

- Propaganda tries to get you to believe in an idea or to feel a certain way.
- Propaganda convinces you by provoking your emotions instead of making a logical argument.

Not all propaganda is bad! It can inspire positive emotions like love, pride and empathy. It can persuade us to do things like putting on seatbelts or brushing our teeth.

*Hate propaganda* is different: it tries to make us fear and distrust another group of people.

“The propagandist’s purpose is to make one set of people forget that certain other sets of people are human.” Aldous Huxley

Here are some of the signs that something is hate propaganda:

- **Othering** is acting like a certain group of people are all the same, exaggerating the ways that the “Other” members in a group are different from us, and even acting like they aren’t really human. This makes it harder for us to feel empathy for them.
- The goal of hate propaganda is to **justify using violence** against the Other. Sometimes it does this openly, but usually it will suggest it in a less obvious way.
- One of the ways hate propaganda does this is showing the Other as **secret enemies** of our group. Sometimes the Other is shown as being

manipulated by another, even more evil group. Other times the Other is shown as being in control of media, government or education to explain how they’re able to keep what they’re doing a secret. (Almost every *real* conspiracy in modern history was actually exposed by the news media or by researchers.)

- Claiming to be **victims of the Other** is another way that hate groups try to manipulate us. Since we all sometimes feel like the world is against us, it can be very effective to tell us that our problems are somebody else’s fault.
- Another kind of victimhood is the idea that our group has fallen from its **glorious past**. This is more than just thinking of the past fondly or with nostalgia. Hate groups try to make you believe that it is only by defeating and destroying the Other that this glorious past can be regained.
- Hate propaganda may try also to convince us that your group can’t co-exist with the Other, that **conflict is inevitable**. If you believe that your existence is at stake, then anything you do to protect yourself is justified.

This doesn’t mean we can’t talk about difficult or controversial issues. But if we want to have meaningful conversations and debate difficult subjects, we need to know the difference between arguments based on reason and those based on hate propaganda.

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