The Freedom to Receive Accurate Information

Julia Sadoski, age 17

Le Mars Community High School, Grade 12

"I've had enough of someone else's propaganda.…I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole." (Malcolm X). Misinformation and propaganda are major issues around the globe and distort reality, ensuing chaos. They cause confusion and restlessness in individuals. Misinformation can be spread about events, certain groups of people, or different countries. This leads to hatred and dehumanization between people and nations. Disinformation is spread in the mainstream media as well as on social media platforms, newspapers, in speeches of popular figureheads, and on the radio. Individuals should have the freedom to receive accurate and truthful information because it could help bring peace and good decision-making, unify individuals and groups of people, and help families make the best decisions for themselves and loved ones.

Propaganda is defined as: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view. Propaganda has been used throughout history to dehumanize individuals or mold certain opinions. Propaganda and misinformation have been used for hundreds of years. In the sixth century, propaganda was used to get rid of emperor Justinian. In the 1500's, the catholic church used the printing press to guilt individuals into giving money by purchasing indulgences. In the 1900's, Hitler and his nazis used propaganda to convince the poeple that Jews were subhuman and responsible for Germany's problems. This led to the mass execution and violence towards a specific group of people. Misinformation was spread in movies and throughout newspapers. Because of misinformation, hatred was aroused in people. Today, the governments of North Korea and China use censorship to control information that people have access to. This limits their perception and controls their

opinions on other countries. Misinformation is spread on social media and mainstream news networks around the United States today. Skepticism and doubt result.

First, spreading accurate information, facts, and news would aid in bringing peace and would help individuals make healthy decisions for themselves. Inaccurate information could lead to wars and hatred between others if it is not stopped. Additionally, misinformation about certain things, such as sicknesses or security, can cause worry and instill fear within individuals. Because individuals are constantly fed the wrong information, consequences have resulted . An example would be a speech given in 1994 by the chief executive officer of a populare tobacco company. James W Johnston claimed that "Cigarette smoking is no more addictive than coffee, tea, or Twinkies." This was a faulty claim as cigarettes contain large amounts of nicotine and other harmful substances that coffee, tea, and Twinkies lack. If truthful information was spread about cigarette smoking, many individuals would have most likely avoided tobacco products and fewer deaths would have resulted from this substance. For example, Tobacco ads are placed in magazines that are aimed towards younger audiences. Social media influencers have become ambassadors to promote the harmful product. Tobacco ads also make smoking seem appealing to various ages of individuals. However, the outcomes are treacherous with half a million deaths annually that are related to smoking cigarettes. This is why I believe people should have the freedom to receive the truth and not a facade of what is right.

Second, speaking the truth would unify people. Hitler lied about the Jewish population, blaming them for Germany's loss in World War I. Jews were used as a scapegoat, in order to escape the reality of Germany's weakened state. This caused discrepancies among the people and shame was brought to the Jewish population. If Hitler's propaganda wasn't smeared down the throats of the German population, millions of lives would have been spared and the people would

not be disunified from each other. The people's opinions were shaped to hate the Jews, thus they did. Currently, there is a separation between news networks. Individuals with a liberal viewpoint watch more liberal news networks. Individuals with a conservative viewpoint watch conservative news networks. Some facts and information are spread differently on both media platforms. However, I believe that the news should be the news no matter what viewpoint an individual has. Facts should not be spread to soothe a person's opinions on a certain topic. It should be spread truthfully and accurately. But because there is a divide, disunity and resentment between the both sides increases. The news needs to be the news and not altered in ways to benefit a certain viewpoint.

Third, by people receiving accurate information, they would be able to make the best decisions for themselves and their families. Today, millions of foreigners are urged to come to the United States. However, many are turned away at the border or killed in the transferring process. If national leaders gave the correct information about the crisis, many deaths could be avoided. If people knew the truth, there would not be so much confusion and individuals would be able to make good judgments for themselves and their families.

Furthermore, I believe that this is a huge global issue that needs to be addressed. Millions of individuals live their life disoriented because of the lies and altered truths they are fed. People die because of propaganda or live in poor conditions. In order to stop this ongoing spiral of misinformation, I believe that people should simply care for one another's well being. They should want to do what is right and to spread the right kinds of information. I believe that people should maintain their right to free speech but their speech should not be to confuse and ensnare others. The truth should be displayed bluntly by world leaders and the media, instead of being sugar coated to alter opinions. I believe it is a right for individuals to receive accurate

information in order for them to live in peace and make healthy decisions, live in unity with

others, and make the foremost choices for themselves and their loved ones.