

# How to Rewrite History in Two Generations or Less

I'm Christopher Rence, CEO of SAVARTUS Inc. I have been a part of the data and technology revolution for the past 35+ years. I hold several related patents and written a book about technological intersections and their effect on the digital landscape and human perception.

Let's talk about reality: AI, machine learning, and deepfake technology represent a growing arsenal of tools that can be used to rewrite history. From yesterday's news to events occurring hundreds of years ago, these tools can nefariously reshape people's perception of what actually occurred, fundamentally changing the narrative. When you factor in news cycles shifting at breakneck speeds, a general lack of media literacy, and the human inclination to trust (sometimes to a fault), you're looking at an equation with potentially devastating consequences.

The saying "don't believe everything you read online" has been around for a long time, yet its wisdom has never been more critical. Wars have been started, won, and lost based on rumors or false data. Lives have been destroyed by misrepresented facts or planted information.

Research using AI-generated fake headlines found that Generation Z is the most vulnerable generation to misinformation. As those who grew up entirely online show the weakest ability to distinguish fact from fiction, our collective grasp on historical truth is deteriorating generationally. ([Source](#))

## The Mechanics of Modern Manipulation

Consider this scenario: Using AI to flood social media sites with falsified evidence claiming that the moon landing never happened. Images can be faked, data can be falsified, and if this "information" reaches enough people, seeds of doubt can be planted. From there, it's entirely plausible that history is rewritten and the "truth" is changed—potentially forever.

The threat extends beyond simple misinformation. Modern AI tools can infiltrate systems and alter data without leaving forensic fingerprints. Consider the millions of reported and unreported hacks, the unauthorized access to live systems, backup data that has been compromised and encrypted. The equation has changed: I no longer need to steal your data—I can simply change it.

Now layer in social media platforms with their own editorial biases, news organizations with varying standards of verification, and processes being bypassed in the name of politics, whitewashing, revenge, or simple spite. Some actors operate purely to prove they can breach these systems. This creates a perfect storm for narrative manipulation at scale.

## Case Studies: When Misinformation Becomes Reality

The following examples demonstrate how misinformation spreads in the modern digital ecosystem and the real-world consequences that follow:

## **1. Pizzagate Conspiracy (2016, USA)**

A baseless conspiracy theory claimed that a pizza restaurant in Washington, D.C. (Comet Ping Pong) was harboring child sex slaves linked to Hillary Clinton and Democratic elites, based on misinterpreted leaked emails. Social media, especially Facebook groups and Twitter (now X), rapidly amplified the rumor through viral posts. Despite efforts to debunk the claims in real time, the hashtag #Pizzagate spread like wildfire through right-wing audiences, eventually reaching millions of people.

This led many to believe in a nonexistent pedophile ring, culminating in real-world violence: an armed man "investigated" the site by firing shots inside the restaurant. Though no one was injured, he was arrested and sentenced to four years in prison. This event highlighted how online echo chambers can normalize extreme false narratives.

## **2. 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Misinformation**

During the election, pro-Donald Trump fake stories (such as "Pope Francis endorses Trump") outnumbered pro-Clinton ones and were shared over 30 million times on Facebook alone. Many originated from fake news sites in places like Veles, Macedonia, designed primarily for ad revenue. Platform algorithms rewarded sensational content, spreading it virally without verification, leading approximately half of exposed users to believe the falsehoods.

This shifted narratives around candidate legitimacy, potentially influencing voter perceptions and turnout. Studies estimate it may have swayed opinions in key swing states.

## **3. Hurricane Sandy Fake Images (2012, USA)**

As Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast, thousands of doctored or out-of-context images circulated on Twitter—sharks swimming in flooded streets, fabricated storm damage. Over 10,000 unique tweets contained fakes, with 86% being retweets. ([Source](#)) Social media's real-time sharing amplified these without verification checks, leading the public to overestimate the disaster's scale or believe in exaggerated threats.

This distorted emergency responses and eroded public trust in official updates, as people shared and believed visuals that fueled panic rather than informed preparation.

## **4. Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar (2017-2018)**

Facebook was heavily used to spread dehumanizing propaganda against the Rohingya Muslim minority, including false claims of them being terrorists or invaders, often via coordinated accounts and viral posts. With limited content moderation in local languages, this misinformation reached millions, normalizing hate speech and shifting the narrative to portray the Rohingya as existential threats.

It contributed to widespread belief in these falsehoods among the Buddhist majority, exacerbating ethnic violence, forcing the mass displacement of over 700,000 people, and contributing to what the UN investigated as potential genocide.

## **5. 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and January 6 Capitol Riot**

Misinformation campaigns on platforms like Twitter (X) and Facebook falsely claimed widespread voter fraud in the election won by Joe Biden, including baseless stories about rigged voting machines and voter fraud. These claims spread through echo chambers, amplified by influencers and algorithms, leading millions to believe the election was "stolen."

This fundamentally altered the narrative around democratic integrity, culminating in the January 6, 2021, Capitol attack by supporters aiming to overturn the results. The assault resulted in deaths, injuries, and over 1,000 arrests.

## **6. 2018 Brazilian Presidential Election**

During Jair Bolsonaro's campaign, coordinated disinformation on Twitter (X) and WhatsApp spread false attacks on opponents, including claims of electoral fraud and candidate corruption. Hyperpartisan networks virally shared these narratives, polarizing users and leading many to doubt the validity of the electoral process.

This shifted public narratives toward distrust in democratic institutions, contributing to Bolsonaro's electoral victory and ongoing political instability in Brazil.

## **Conclusion**

These cases reveal consistent patterns: algorithmic amplification prioritizes engagement over accuracy, echo chambers reinforce false beliefs, and the speed of digital communication outpaces existing verification processes. The result is a landscape where truth becomes increasingly difficult to discern, and history itself becomes malleable in the hands of those with the tools and motivation to reshape it.

The question is no longer whether history can be rewritten through digital manipulation—these examples prove it already is. The question is what we do about it.