

Case Study: Hate Group Propaganda

Flipping between Facebook and Twitter, Colton was catching up on friends, sports, celebrities, and world events. He does this nearly every night before going to bed, making up the majority of his screen time each day. As he continues to scroll, Colton comes across a series of posts from an old friend from middle school who has moved away and hasn't spoken to in a long time. This friend, named Richard, shared a video online called "Adolf Hitler: The greatest story never told!", with a quick post above the video reading, "This video is long (about 6 and a half hrs), but why is this not being taught in school? We only get one side of every story! Do your own research...teach yourself"

Colton, while not friends with Richard, was interested in exactly what he was talking about so he clicked the video and started to listen. Over the next week, he broke up the 6-plus hour "documentary" about Adolf Hitler until he finished at the end of the week. Colton began to talk about this documentary at school, referencing that the holocaust did not kill anything nearly close to 6 million Jews, and that Hitler's image seems to be changed over time and everyone might now know the entire story.

Once he completed, he revisited Richard's page to read more about what was being said. He was redirected to others that Richard promoted, reading blogs, looking at memes, and watching short videos all related to the original film he watched. These new pieces of information were all leading him to believe that Jews were the reason for this change in narrative, and that them and African Americans are threatening his culture. Colton, being raised a devout Christian, began to feel threatened due to his "culture being threatened" by these groups. He continued to fall down a rabbit hole of information that slowly was changing his perspective into society as a whole.

Over the next few months, Colton began to become more hostile at school, on the sport fields, and online toward people of color and members of other religious beliefs.

Colton was soon arrested for threatening someone on Twitter that he was going to assault them if they spoke to him at school the next day because of their race and sexual orientation.