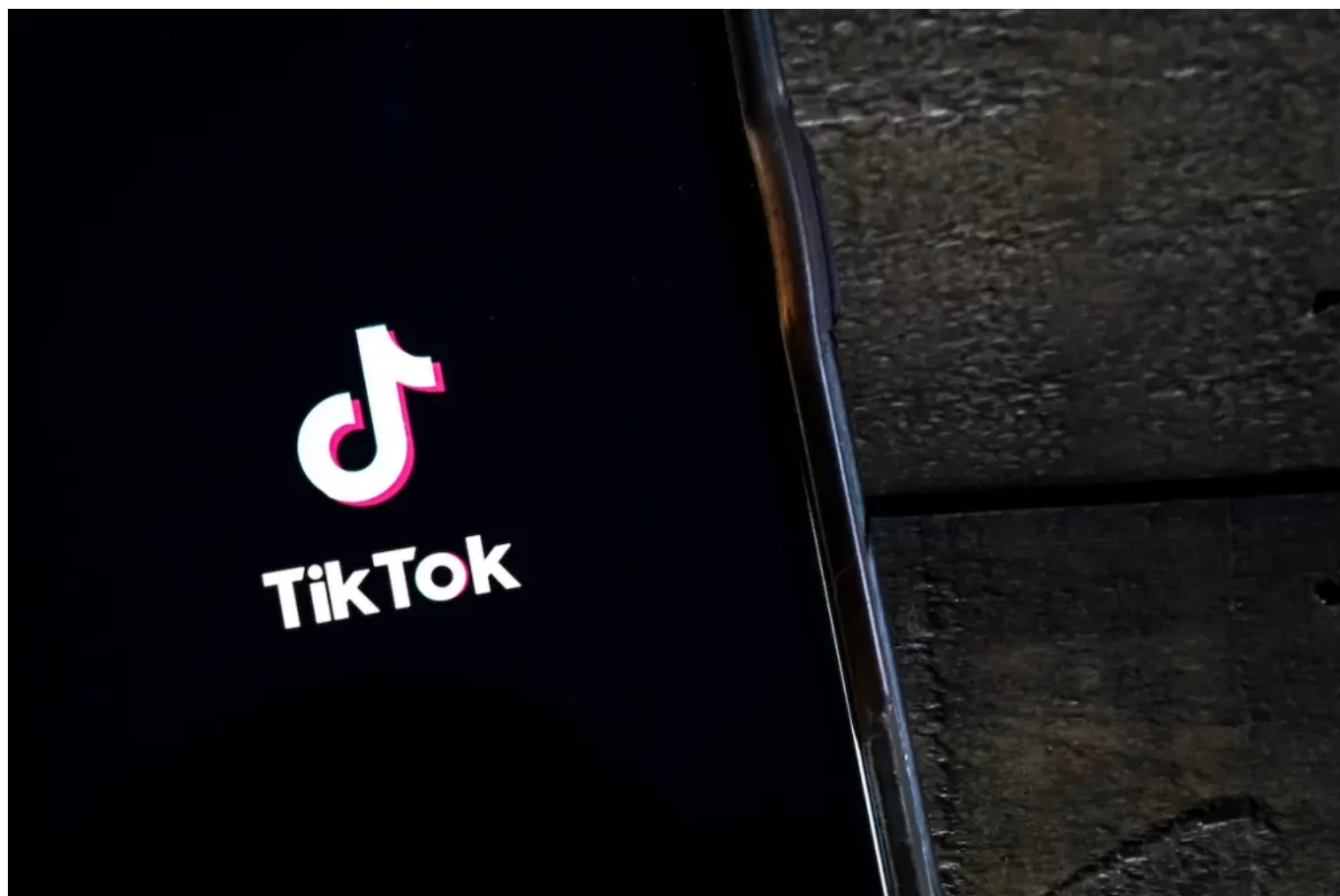


# TikTok, Bin Laden, and the Problem of Social Media



by Roger L. Simon

Twenty-two years out from 9/11, and Osama bin Laden is back as the new Che Guevara. Pretty soon, he'll be on T-shirts across the country worn by people who don't have the faintest idea who he really was.

This is the power of TikTok, that gift from communist China that keeps on giving. Somehow, a letter from Binny popped up after all these years and our "well-educated youth" glommed on to it as if it were the second coming of the Sermon on the Mount.

Not surprisingly, [TikTok removed the letter](#) and banned videos supporting it—the "optics" weren't great, and they probably

feared backlash—but the damage was done. Young brains were infected by what seemed to them accurate, even inspirational, rhetoric, although it had no context.

It referred to events that occurred before they were born and were usually little discussed in any depth in school.

Most social media has no context—and that's the problem.

This is true despite the yeoman efforts of folks such as [Catturd](#) to justify all they write on Twitter/X. The overwhelming majority of posts on the platform aren't faintly like that. Catturd is the exception that proves the proverbial rule.

Social media in general is a new, unfortunate form of cultural cancer that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been smart enough to exploit, as have many others known and unknown.

This includes our federal government that has been shown to have used it covertly for propaganda purposes.

On balance, it does far more damage than it does good. It separates us, rather than unites us. We live in a world of Facebook clubs, not human clubs, which makes us all the more prey to that propaganda.

The TikTok generation has been born into this alienated environment and knows nothing else. Most of their lives are lived online in short bursts that undermine their ability to think.

Essentially, they get thought injections, ideas pushed into their brains so quickly that they're embedded long before they can be considered. What results can veer to the catastrophic.

A recent example of how things get dangerously misconstrued—Twitter/X seems almost set up for it—is a retweet by the platform's owner, Elon Musk himself.

From Fox Business: "The billionaire [Tesla CEO](#), who is feuding with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) over its claims of rampant anti-Semitism on X, appeared to respond with agreement

to a post that claimed Jewish communities have spread 'hatred against whites.'"

"You have said the actual truth," Mr. Musk wrote on Nov. 15.

"The ADL unjustly attacks the majority of the West, despite the majority of the West supporting the Jewish people and Israel," he continued in another post.

"This is because they cannot, by their own tenets, criticize the minority groups who are their primary threat," he wrote, apparently referring to Palestinians and Arabs who have called for Jihad against Israel.

This has caused advertisers such as Disney, Apple, and IBM—all heavily embedded with China, it's worth noting—to leave X.

Nevertheless, I'm Jewish and happen to agree with Mr. Musk if only regarding the ADL. Many of us do. The ADL lives far in the past with its ludicrous views on anti-Semitism as the product of some mythological white bigots. The KKK hardly exists anymore, but it acts as if they're out there still burning crosses.

The real causes of the horrifying growth of our modern variety of anti-Semitism couldn't be more obvious. Look out the door.

But Mr. Musk's very brief—in that sense, typical of the inherent shoot-from-the-hip sloppiness of ADD-infused social media—discussion of the subject enabled it to be easily distorted on his platform into a smear of all Jews—and it was.

Frankly, I don't know a single Jew personally who agrees with the tired ADL anymore. I suppose their fundraisers do—or pretend they do—and maybe a few with nostalgia for simpler days. But that's about it.

I added this about Mr. Musk and X to demonstrate it's not just TikTok—bad as it is, and it's probably the worst—but all social media.

Mr. Musk's idea that X—formerly Twitter, as it's said ad nauseum—could be a new form of town square is living in dreamland. Our country isn't even close to being capable of such a thing at this point given what has become of our educational system.

The young are so miseducated and/or propagandized that they don't have nearly the background necessary to reason together on X or anywhere else. Even [school debates](#)—once a great civics educator with students taking opposite sides of the issues—have turned into purveyors of the same rancid propaganda.

(In full disclosure, for reasons completely unknown to me, I am still banned by X. I tried a couple of times to correct this, but to no avail. Now I no longer care.)

So back to what to do, not just about that Chinese-import TikTok (as many know, it's carefully censored in China but not here) but all social media.

I come from the blog generation, when posts were vastly more extensive, and the writers were able to explain the context of their views. Sometimes, I have nostalgia for it. But those days appear to be gone, except in places such as the opinion section of The Epoch Times, for which I am grateful. Podcasts also provide context.

But how to avoid those constant propagandistic “thought injections” into the minds of our young people on the dominant outlets? They feed the most malign conformity, and I doubt it's entirely unrelated that the average American IQ has been going down for some time.

As one who still thinks of himself as something close to a free speech absolutist, it's extremely difficult for me to advocate censorship of any kind. I want to believe that the answer to false speech is more true speech.

But is this actually speech at all? Sometimes, it's more like one person shouting “fire” in a crowded theater after another,

not to mention levels of [thought control hitherto unimagined](#). The greater problem of social media is for the young. Those of us who remember an era pre-smartphone at least have some memories of a more human reality to hold on to.

We can't rely on government to fix this, nor should we. But those of us who are parents have a tremendous responsibility.

Until they're 16, we must deny our children the opportunity to use their phones or computers to go on the internet. This will create civil wars in the house, undoubtedly, but it's a form of tough love for both our kids and the society at large that must be done.

We also must talk to them about what they're learning in school and hearing from their friends who are online, so they at least hear a counterargument that they're not getting from those friends or from the school.

Although both of these things take near-constant attention, they're imperative. And I have seen positive results from this in several families.

I can think of no other way at this point, other than the total reform of our educational system, which is of course necessary.

As for TikTok, would you allow Chinese spies in your kid's bedroom? That's what it is. Ban it.

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