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False reporting in July 27, 2020 fact check

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>
To: truthometer@politifact.com

Thu, Jul 30, 2020 at 12:06 AM

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

Back in April 2019 PolitiFact published an ["In Context" item](#) centered on President Trump's "fine people on both sides" remark associated with protests and counterprotests in Charlottesville.

Unfortunately, that item failed to prevent a mistake in [a July 27, 2020 fact check](#) of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, despite the latter article listing the former article as one of its sources.

The July 2020 fact check states:

As president in 2017, Trump [said](#) there were "very fine people, on both sides," in reference to neo-Nazis and counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Va.

Readers would conclude Trump was saying there were very fine people among the neo-Nazis.

In context, however, Trump stated plainly he was not classing neo-Nazis or white nationalists as fine people. Instead, Trump said "And you had people -- and I'm not talking about the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists -- because they should be condemned totally. But you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and white nationalists. Okay?"

Trump: "Excuse me, excuse me. They didn't put themselves -- and you had some very bad people in that group, but you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides. You had people in that group. Excuse me, excuse me. I saw the same pictures as you did. You had people in that group that were there to protest the taking down of, to them, a very, very important statue and the renaming of a park from Robert E. Lee to another name."

Reporter: "George Washington and Robert E. Lee are not the same."

Trump: "George Washington was a slave owner. Was George Washington a slave owner? So will George Washington now lose his status? Are we going to take down -- excuse me, are we going to take down statues to George Washington? How about Thomas Jefferson? What do you think of Thomas Jefferson? You like him?"

Reporter: "I do love Thomas Jefferson."

Trump: "Okay, good. Are we going to take down the statue? Because he was a major slave owner. Now, are we going to take down his statue?"

"So you know what, it's fine. You're changing history. You're changing culture. And you had people -- and I'm not talking about the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists -- because they should be condemned totally. But you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and white nationalists. Okay? And the press has treated them absolutely unfairly."

Where the context shows clear evidence Trump was not talking about neo-Nazis, it is not the place of the fact checker to instruct readers that Trump was talking about neo-Nazis regardless of what the context shows.

Please fix this false and misleading reporting in accordance with your stated policies on open and honest corrections.

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Sincerely,

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