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News Item

The epistemic tragedy of coronavirus misinformation | Columbia Journalism Review

By Jon Allsop
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> **Yesterday, four of the most powerful men on earth**—Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook; Jeff Bezos, of Amazon; Tim Cook, of Apple; and Sundar Pichai, of Alphabet, which owns Google and YouTube—were dragged to Capitol Hill (well, a videoconference) to answer to a subcommittee of the House of Representatives. As well as allegations of monopolistic practices, abuses of privacy, and political bias, lawmakers asked about the spread of misinformation on social media, including content related to COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat who chairs the subcommittee, grilled Zuckerberg on a nonsense-stuffed COVID video that went massively viral earlier this week before Facebook pulled it down. Cicilline accused Facebook of exploiting such harmful content to juice engagement. Zuckerberg denied this. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican, also asked about the incident. He described a claim from the video as "a legitimate matter of discussion," and wanted to know why Facebook had punished Donald Trump, Jr., for sharing it. Zuckerberg gently replied that *Twitter*, not Facebook, had acted against Trump, Jr. So such hearings go.
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