

LOG OUT PODCAST FACT CHECK

EPISODE: #020: The Business Behind Rage Bait: Renée DiResta on Who Profits From Outrage and How to Spot Propaganda

Claim 1: Renée DiResta claimed when X revealed where accounts were based, many provocative, monetized MAGA influencers turned out to be posting from countries including Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, India, and Eastern Europe — **TRUE**

When X rolled out its “About this account” location feature in November 2025, users found that dozens of high-engagement MAGA-branded accounts presenting as American patriots were listed as based overseas. Reported examples included a roughly 390,000-follower account in Eastern Europe, a large Ivanka Trump fan account in Nigeria, and accounts in India, Bangladesh, and Thailand, while viral posts also named Kenya and Pakistan. Some account owners blamed VPNs or bugs, and X acknowledged early accuracy issues with the feature, so individual listings are worth treating with some caution.

Source: [X's new location transparency feature unleashes questions about origins of MAGA accounts - nbcnews.com](#)

Source: [Full List of MAGA Accounts on X Exposed As Being Based Outside US - newsweek.com](#)

Claim 2: Siara Singleton and Renée DiResta claimed Alex Jones used the “crisis actors” label against Sandy Hook families and got in serious trouble for it — **TRUE**

Jones told his audience for years that the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting was staged and that grieving parents were hired actors. Juries in Texas and Connecticut later ordered him to pay the families close to \$1 billion combined in defamation damages, and he conceded under oath in 2022 that the shooting was real.

Source: [Jury orders Alex Jones to pay nearly \\$1 billion in Sandy Hook defamation trial - axios.com](#)

Claim 3: Renée DiResta claimed Facebook changed its monetization program within roughly the last year and a half in a way that rewards engagement-driven posts — **TRUE**

Meta announced Facebook Content Monetization on October 2, 2024, merging in-stream ads, Ads on Reels, and the Performance Bonus into one program that

pays for text and photo posts in addition to video. Earnings are based on the engagement, views, and plays a post receives. The beta launched closer to two years before this recording, with wider enrollment through 2025, so her timeline is slightly compressed and the substance holds.

Source: [Earn Money from More of your Content: Introducing Facebook's New Monetization Program - creators.facebook.com](https://creators.facebook.com/earn-money-from-more-of-your-content-introducing-facebooks-new-monetization-program)

Claim 4: Renée DiResta claimed Elon Musk announced that X took down a Chinese network of 200,000 fake accounts, about 200 of which were posting against AI data centers while the rest amplified them — **PARTIALLY TRUE**

The numbers are right. X's Safety team disclosed on August 28, 2026 that it had found a bot farm of roughly 200,000 suspected Chinese inauthentic accounts, including 200 posting about data centers, electricity prices, and grid strain. The announcement came from X's Global Government Affairs account rather than from Musk himself, and X called the accounts suspected Chinese operations without establishing state direction. X also did not say what the remaining accounts were doing, so the idea that they existed to amplify the 200 posters is her read of how these networks typically work.



Source: [X busts 200,000-strong Chinese bot farm, including accounts making](https://www.busts.com/x-busts-200000-strong-chinese-bot-farm-including-accounts-making)

[claims about AI data centers and electricity - tomshardware.com](#)

Claim 5: Renée DiResta claimed OpenAI disclosed the same data center campaign months earlier, in July, and reported that it got almost no engagement —

PARTIALLY TRUE

OpenAI's report came out on June 10, 2026, a month earlier than she said. It described banning a likely China-origin cluster of ChatGPT accounts that produced content criticizing US data centers, rated the threat as low, and noted that most of the posts drew little or no engagement. Researchers who compared the two disclosures found that the accounts X announced in August had already been highlighted in OpenAI's June report.

Source: [How X turned old bot data into a story about a national threat from China - san.com](#)

Claim 6: Renée DiResta claimed Bangladesh-based operators are running Facebook pages that pose as American state pages and push anti-data-center content to earn money — **TRUE**

A May 2026 investigation documented a Facebook spam network run from Bangladesh that posted AI-generated “life in [state]” content with recurring anti-data-center, anti-tax, and anti-Chinese-import themes aimed at rural American audiences, and several of the accounts appeared to be receiving Facebook payouts. We could not independently verify her comparison that these pages drew more engagement than the Chinese network X disclosed.

Source: [Life in <U.S. state>, according to spammers from Bangladesh - conspirator0.com](#)

Claim 7: Renée DiResta claimed Anthropic announced several new state-linked takedowns in the past week, with Russia among them — **TRUE**

Anthropic published its September 2026 threat intelligence report on September 10, covering misuse it disrupted between December 2025 and August 2026. The influence operations section details nine cases, originating in Russia, Iran, Turkey, and across the Gulf, South Asia, Africa, and Europe, in which actors used Claude to build fake profiles and news sites.

Source: [Countering misuse of AI: September 2026 - anthropic.com](#)

Claim 8: Renée DiResta claimed Platforms stopped sharing detailed takedown data with outside researchers, and X's announcement gave the public nothing it could check — **TRUE**

X's disclosure included no account list, technical indicators, creation dates, posting history, or engagement figures. Clemson researcher Darren Linvill described it as X's first public acknowledgment of a foreign influence takedown in years, which stands apart from Twitter's earlier practice of publishing takedown datasets for researchers.

Source: [X says it found a 200,000-account China-linked network targeting the U.S. AI data-center debate - mlq.ai](#)

Claim 9: Siara Singleton and Renée DiResta claimed X and Meta both use Community Notes, with Meta's version running on Threads and Instagram — **TRUE**

Meta ended third-party fact-checking in the US and began testing Community Notes on March 18, 2025, using the open-source algorithm X built. The program runs on Facebook as well as Instagram and Threads.

Source: [Testing Begins for Community Notes on Facebook, Instagram and Threads - about.fb.com](#)

Claim 10: Renée DiResta claimed She has participated in Community Notes since 2022, when the program was still called Birdwatch — **TRUE**

Twitter launched Birdwatch in January 2021 and rebranded it as Community Notes in November 2022, shortly after Musk's acquisition, so joining in 2022 places her in the Birdwatch era. The program was first rolled out by Twitter, before the company became X.

Source: [Community Notes - wikipedia.org](#)

Claim 11: Renée DiResta claimed A note is published only when raters who usually disagree with each other agree that it is helpful, based on rating history rather than political identity — **TRUE**

Meta's documentation says the system looks for agreement among contributors who normally disagree on note ratings, and that this is based only on their rating history. X's program uses the same bridging-based approach.

Source: [Community Notes: A New Way to Add Context to Posts - transparency.meta.com](https://transparency.meta.com)

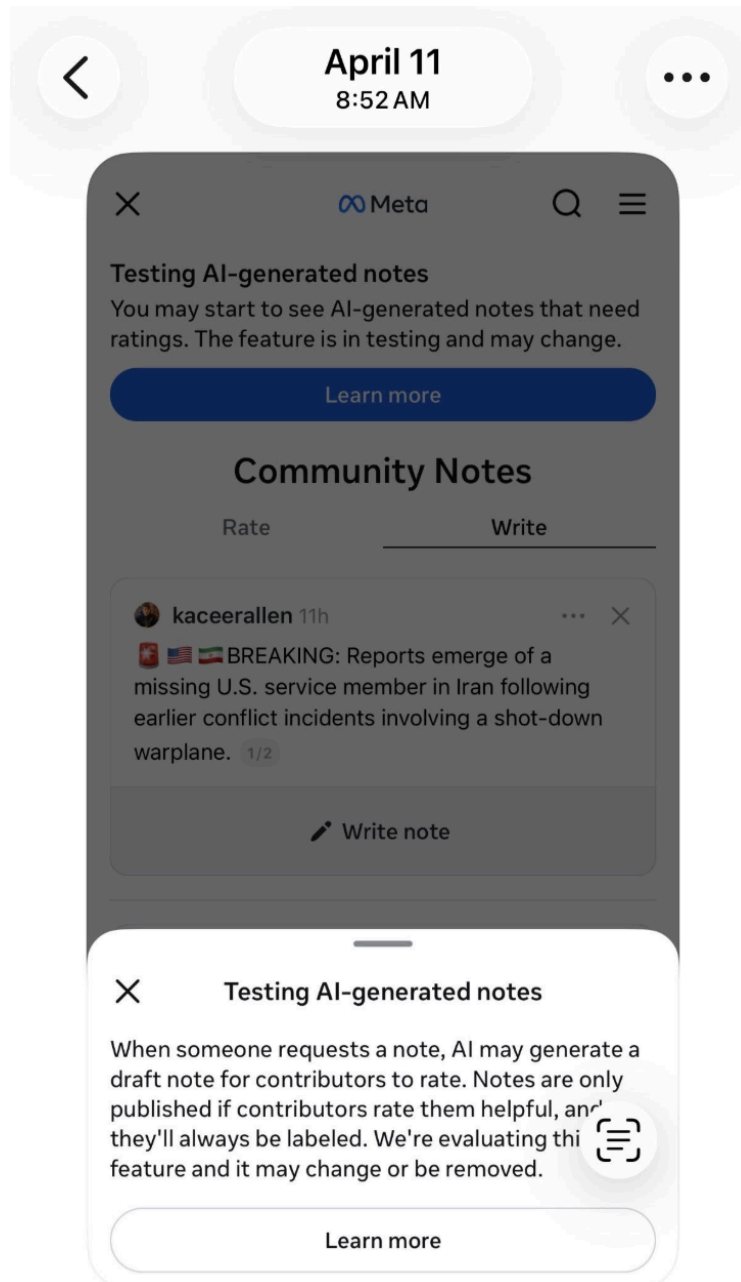
Claim 12: Renée DiResta claimed Most submitted community notes never get even one rating — **MOSTLY TRUE**

Her larger point is accurate, since very few notes ever appear. On X, 87.7% of posts with a proposed note stayed in “Needs More Ratings” between 2021 and 2025, and only 8.3% of notes were published. Meta has reported that about 6% of its notes are published. Those unpublished notes typically received some ratings, only not enough to reach a verdict, so “never even one rating” overstates the problem.

Source: [Community Notes are Vulnerable to Rater Bias and Manipulation - arxiv.org](https://arxiv.org)

Claim 13: Meta AI generates Community Notes because Meta has had trouble getting enough people to write them, and human contributors then rate those AI-written notes — **TRUE**

Meta appears to be testing AI-generated Community Notes. In the contributor interface, Meta states: “When someone requests a note, AI may generate a draft note for contributors to rate,” and says the notes are only published if contributors rate them helpful. We could not find public Meta documentation describing this test, but the feature is confirmed by Renée DiResta’s contributor account and the screenshot provided below.



Source: Screenshot from Meta Community Notes contributor interface, provided by Renée DiResta

[Meta Community Notes documentation - meta.com](https://meta.com/docs/community-notes)

Claim 14: Renée DiResta claimed Musk bought Twitter in 2022, monetized posting about a year later, and tied payouts to engagement from paying verified users — **TRUE**

Musk took over in October 2022, and X launched its Creator Ads Revenue

Sharing program on July 13, 2023. Musk said payouts depended on how many ads were shown to other verified users, and eligibility required a paid subscription.

Source: [Twitter creator ads revenue sharing program - socialsamosa.com](https://socialsamosa.com/twitter-creator-ads-revenue-sharing-program/)

Claim 15: Renée DiResta claimed Nikita Bier was behind the location feature and has since left X, and a proposed region-based payout change was walked back — **TRUE**

Bier stepped down as X's head of product in August 2026 and stayed on as an adviser. He was closely associated with the "About this account" feature that displayed accounts' countries of origin. X also withdrew a proposed change that would have weighted creator payouts toward local impressions after backlash.

Source: [X Product Chief Nikita Bier Steps Down After One Year - dataconomy.com](https://dataconomy.com/x-product-chief-nikita-bier-steps-down-after-one-year/)

Source: [Nikita Bier Leaves X Product Chief Role and Remains as Company Adviser - mezha.net](https://mezha.net/nikita-bier-leaves-x-product-chief-role-and-remains-as-company-adviser/)

Claim 16: Renée DiResta claimed She published a Carnegie white paper the day before with Rachel Kleinfeld and Margot Treadwell on how experts should engage on social media — **TRUE**

Carnegie published "How to Engage with New Media: A Strategic Guide for Nonprofit Organizations" by DiResta, Kleinfeld, and Treadwell on September 9, 2026.

Source: [How to Engage with New Media: A Strategic Guide for Nonprofit Organizations - carnegieendowment.org](https://carnegieendowment.org/how-to-engage-with-new-media-a-strategic-guide-for-nonprofit-organizations/)

Claim 17: Renée DiResta claimed She helped build MySky, a Bluesky feed with sliders that shows users why each post appears — **TRUE**

MySky was built by DiResta and Jonathan Stray of UC Berkeley's Center for Human-Compatible AI. Users can log in with a Bluesky account and adjust how heavily the feed weighs engagement against a "constructiveness" score, and the tool explains the ranking choices that are normally hidden.

Source: [Meet the algorithm you can actually control and understand - newpublic.substack.com](https://newpublic.substack.com/meet-the-algorithm-you-can-actually-control-and-understand/)

Claim 18: Renée DiResta claimed The Stanford Internet Observatory was shut down after claims that it mass-censored conservatives, following Jim Jordan's subpoenas and a lawsuit from Stephen Miller — **TRUE**

Jordan's House subcommittee subpoenaed Stanford over SIO's work in 2023, and America First Legal, the group Stephen Miller founded, sued SIO researchers that same year. Reporting in June 2024 described the lab as being dismantled after lawsuits had cost Stanford millions, though Stanford said some of its work would continue under new leadership. The "22 million tweets" figure she references came from a mischaracterization of an Election Integrity Partnership report.

Source: [The Stanford Internet Observatory is being dismantled - platformer.news](#)

Claim 19: Renée DiResta claimed "Parasocial media" is danah boyd's term for what social media has become — **TRUE**

danah boyd argued in a 2026 essay that most users now scroll rather than post, and that the content they see is strategically produced and algorithmically curated, which is why she proposes calling these platforms parasocial media.

Source: [Social Media Is Now Parasocial Media, danah boyd, 2026 - jmason.ie](#)