

Fact Unchecked

By Ben F. Locke

My mom still isn't vaccinated yet. If you talk to her, she'll swear to you that she's gonna get it but she's not. She has this fear, this theory, that the vaccine will implant a chip inside her and that the chip has the mark of the Beast, ya know, like in the Bible. She saw some video on her Facebook feed about it so it must be true. But don't tell her I told you this. She'd be so embarrassed to have people know this. Yet here I am, embarrassed at how easily she was convinced of this misinformation. She had COVID. She'll tell you it was just a contagious fever that she got, and that my dad got, and my brother, grandma and grandpa got. Total coincidence though, except it's not. I look at her and I can't help asking myself, "How did we get here?" How did we get so distrusting of facts and research while we cling to conspiracy, clutch to the latest news of what a friend of a friend's cousin's baby momma once heard from her friend who used to be a doctor or at least was in medical school or at least believes he was because he binged 3 seasons of Grey's Anatomy once. I just can't seem to wrap my brain around how we as a society can be so gullible. How we continuously fail to read or double check or Google or ask Alexa or think critically. I just want to shake my mom sometimes and scream, "Do you hear yourself?" I just want to grab America, shake it up and scream, "Do you see yourself?" It's terrifying seeing smart, college educated, well-rounded adults falling victim to the mania. I think of how their decisions don't just affect them but those around them, like how since my parents don't seem to see a need in getting vaccinated, neither do my high risk grandparents or my two year old niece. But it only takes one. One article, one photo, one report, one person to completely change everything you ever believed in. I once thought my mother was flawless. Her word was absolute truth. I would go to her for everything. She was my protector, my teacher, my nurturer. As I got older, I began to realize that some of her teachings were just as false as the false prophets she follows. As we get older, we gain more and more information and perspective. We allow ourselves to take a step back and see things for what they are, see people for who they are. However, more information doesn't always mean more answers. The more I see my mom, the more I'm left with questions. The

more I see how badly people will ignore facts to support their own agenda leaves me hopeless. The more I fight for my rights, for justice, for humanity, my sanity, the more I ask, "Is this worth it?" Should existing be this hard? Why not join the blissfully ignorant? Deep down, I want to be just as naive as everyone else. I want to believe what I want to believe. That my mom will get vaccinated, that my dad will accept my sexuality, that I actually get along with all my siblings, that my grandpa isn't dying, that living in this Black, Queer body doesn't put a huge target on my back, that my college debt will go away, that I can trust white people, that politicians care about the people, that I love my body, that I'm not scared of the future, that people aren't racist or sexist or homophobic or transphobic or straight up hateful, they're just misinformed. There's just been a communication issue. As soon as people know better, they'll do better. Simple. Yes, I think I'll just believe that. The world will be better. We'll all be better. I think I saw a BuzzFeed article about it. So that's what I choose to believe and no, I'm not checking my sources.