

Anatomy of a Fake Hate Crime

Introduction

In 2021, Renay Gedeon publicly opposed the possible cancellation of the Howell Melonfest because, as a vendor, she depended on the event for income. You may recall that Howell leaders were considering cancelling Melonfest that year due to the inclusion of “drag queen bingo” at this family friendly event. However, Gedeon’s situation took a controversial turn when she claimed that her farm had been vandalized due to her support of including drag queen bingo at Melonfest. Desiring to maximize media attention, she framed this vandalism as a racist hate crime, used her story to gain sympathy, and asked for donations to repair the damage to her farm.

While eager to report Gedeon’s version of the story, the media failed to report the whole story. As it turned out Gedeon did not own a farm. The so-called vandalism to her farm was a ruse. Gedeon used this ruse in an attempt to fraudulently raise money to repair her non-existent farm. Importantly, not one single media outlet ever informed the public that, because of her fraud, Gedeon eventually pleaded guilty to filing a False Report of a Misdemeanor.

Background

A few months ago, during a meeting of the Livingston County Board of Commissioners, a citizen asserted a fake hate crime was perpetrated in Green Oak Township a few years ago. This caught my attention, as I had previously investigated and authored a report about a fake hate crime perpetrated near Hartland Township, which is in my County Commission District.¹

Being curious, I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request for the police incident report associated with the Green Oak Township incident. Over the years I have observed it is best to corroborate any potentially controversial allegation by reviewing primary source information.

I was not surprised to learn that, like the Hartland Township “hate crime victim,” the Green Oak Township “hate crime victim” had a casual relationship with the truth. In both instances local law enforcement thoroughly documented each “victim’s” fabrications and distortions. And in both instances the (fake) news media, without doing any of their own fact-checking, accepted each “victim’s” story as the truth and published stories slandering an entire county as racist.

This report analyzes the Green Oak Township fake hate crime and reveals the complicity of the news media as they used this fake vandalism to promote their leftist narrative that citizens of Livingston County are racist.

¹ Nakagiri, Wes. “Made for News Media Hate Crime,” *CommissionerWes.com*, <https://commissionerwes.com/made-for-news-media-hate-crime/>

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The data is clear our county does not have a hate-crime problem, it has a media-amplified, leftist-generated hate hoax problem.

Incident Overview

The information presented herein was compiled from publicly available documents, including the police incident report.²

At 10:30 PM on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, Renay Gedeon reported that her home had been vandalized. "KKK" was spray painted on Gedeon's garage door on the east side of her house. "KK" and "QUE" were spray painted on the south side of Gedeon's house.³

While investigating, police learned via a Renay Gedeon Facebook post that a GoFundMe account was established to raise money to pay for damages to Gedeon's home and farm. This post led police to believe her farm was in another area, or that Gedeon had not yet informed police about the damage to her farm. The incident report stated:

Social media also revealed that there was a GoFundMe account set up for the family by Catherine Cooke. There was a comment thread from a Facebook mom to mom forum where Cooke makes an offer to Renay Gedeon to set up the GoFundMe. The GoFundMe stated, "They spray painted KKK and QUE on the siding and garage doors, drove down the gate and destroyed part of their greenhouse." It also stated, "Funds raised will help with the damaged gate, greenhouse, graffiti, cameras for the property and loss of produce."⁴

The police asked Gedeon about the location of her farm. The police thought there may be evidence at the farm that could be connected to her home being vandalized. The incident report stated:

After speaking with Renay over the course of two days, I received conflicting statements from her as to the location of her farm. It was expressed to her that the farm could yield evidence and be connected to her home being vandalized. Renay ultimately admitted that she had lied about having a farm. When confronted with the GoFundMe, Renay advised that she wasn't going to take any money from it

² "Incident Case Number: 21-00911," *Green Oak Township Police*, printed on March 20, 2025, at 09:00:21, Disclaimer: The information contained within this report is reflective of the investigation at the date and time of its printing.

³ Ibid, page 6

⁴ Ibid, page 11

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(the fundraiser was active up until confronted about it). Renay stated she didn't know there was a GoFundMe until after it was created; this was disproven through an interview with the GoFundMe creator, Catherine Cooke, who provided me the Facebook Messenger conversation showing where Renay approved the GoFundMe before it was published.⁵

To summarize, Gedeon used this incident to attempt to raise money to pay for damages to a non-existent farm. As discussed later in this report, this fraud ultimately led the Livingston County Prosecutor's Office to charge her with the felony of Attempted False Pretenses of \$1,000.00 or more, but less than \$20,000.00⁶. In the end, to avoid a possible felony conviction, Gedeon pleaded guilty on May 31, 2022, to filing a False Report of a Misdemeanor. This crime is a misdemeanor. She was ordered to pay fines and costs of \$775.00."⁷

Had Gedeon not accepted the plea deal she could have faced far greater consequences. Michigan Compiled Laws, MCL 750.218, Section 218 (4) provides for a punishment of imprisonment for not more than 5 years or a fine of not more than \$10,000.00 or 3 times the value, whichever is greater, or both imprisonment and a fine.⁸

Where is Gedeon's Farm?

Let us now delve into the details of the investigation. Police interviewed Gedeon on August 11, 2021. Gedeon provided the police with her version of what happened. Police logged the entry below into their incident report.

I greeted Renay, offering my apologies for what happened to her home. She was eager to tell me her belief that the spray painting was done in retaliation for her interview with WHMI News the previous week where she publicly supported keeping drag queen bingo at the Melonfest. I asked Renay what she believed the "QUE" was supposed to mean, and Renay confidently replied, "queer." Renay theorized that she had interrupted the culprits, so the words weren't finished. She told me that she had gotten in from work and was getting ready for a shower when her dogs "went nuts". Renay said she went outside to see what caused her dogs to bark and discovered the damage. I advised Renay I was conducting the criminal investigation into the incident and inquired where the farm was and whether she'd reported it. She told me she didn't need a report for the farm. I questioned not needing a report for the farm and was told by Renay that her landlord was filing a homeowners claim for it. I asked if she was sure she didn't need a report, and she said she was. I told her I needed to see the farm as it related to the graffiti done on

⁵ Ibid, page 11

⁶ Ibid, page 46

⁷ Ibid, page 47

⁸ The Michigan Penal Code, Act 328 of 1931, MCL Section 750.218, <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Laws/MCL?objectName=mcl-750-218>

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her home. She told me it was on Bishop Rd but couldn't tell me the address. She stated the farm is a few acres of land that she leases from a guy named Fred Smolter. I asked her if she could describe where on Bishop it was. Renay said "it's not too far down." Renay was advised we'd be in the area checking for the silver van near her home and the farm. She thanked us for our work, and we left the area to locate the farm.⁹

Police attempted to locate the farm by driving the area on Bishop Road, examining a Google Earth image of the area, checking township and county records for the landlord's name, speaking with several residents that live on Bishop Road, and searching Google and Facebook. The police were unsuccessful in locating the farm.¹⁰

Police Continue Searching for the Farm

The next day, August 12, 2021, police spoke with Monee Phipps, the Market Master for the Brighton Farmers Market, and Colleen Monroe, the Market Master for the Howell Farmers Market. The incident report indicates that the police were looking for leads as to the whereabouts of Gedeon's farm.

While the two Market Masters were unable to provide the location of the farm, they did provide the police with useful background information. This excerpt from the incident report summarizes the discussion between police and the Brighton Market Master.

I spoke with the market master's for Brighton and Howell Farmer's Markets. I was advised by the Brighton market master, Monee Phipps, that she was scheduled to go view Gedeon's Farm on Wednesday morning, 8/11/2021, but was cancelled "at about midnight" when Renay texted her photographs of the home and said she couldn't make it for the inspection. I asked Phipps if she had an address for where Gedeon's farm was located. Phipps said the Gedeon's were secretive about the location of the farm and only described it to her as by "JC Penney" (JC Penney is located very close to Bishop Rd). Phipps was supposed to meet the Gedeon's at their home and follow them to the location of the farm. Phipps said Renay and her husband had been allowed back to the market this year "on probation". She told me that they were asked not to return the previous season due to Michael Gedeon being rude to Phipps and their continued tardiness which is against the rules. Phipps advised that the Howell Farmer's Market master, Colleen Monroe, may have information for where the farm is because Monroe's children had helped Renay with a harvest in a previous season.¹¹

⁹ "Incident Case Number: 21-00911," *Green Oak Township Police*, page 11, printed on March 20, 2025, at 09:00:21, Disclaimer: The information contained within this report is reflective of the investigation at the date and time of its printing.

¹⁰ Ibid, page 12

¹¹ Ibid, page 12

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This next excerpt from the incident report summarizes the discussion between police and the Howell Market Master.

I next spoke with Colleen Monroe who advised she had never been to Gedeon's Farm. She advised that at one-point Renay had arranged for assistance from Monroe in a harvest, but Renay cancelled on them. Monroe said she had been told by others she doesn't have a farm. Monroe said she had been shown pictures of Renay's car at Eastern Market buying from there, so it was believed by them that Renay resells produce she has not personally grown. Monroe said there is one or two sellers at her market (Gedeon's being one of them) who aren't believed to have their own farm, but she doesn't worry about it because they are "such small operations" compared to all the other legitimate farms that participate in her market. I discussed with Monroe the importance of the farm as it relates to the investigation of the vandalism of her home, the GoFundMe, and people on various Facebook pages questioning the farm and wanting to help. Monroe offered to call Gedeon to see if she could get information on where the farm is or any pictures of the damages.¹²

Summarizing, the discussions with the Market Masters heightened police suspicions that Gedeon may have lied about damage to the farm as well as about having a farm. Furthermore, these discussions likely put police on notice that Gedeon has a casual relationship with the truth as she apparently saw no problem with selling "home grown produce" that she likely purchased elsewhere. These suspicions were well-founded as later that day (August 12) Gedeon confessed to police that she lied about having a farm.

Gedeon's Multiple Lies About Her Farm

Police conducted a follow up interview with Gedeon on August 12, 2021. Gedeon had called to let the police know that everything was "fine with the farm and taken care of." After police advised her that they could not locate her farm on Bishop Road, Gedeon told police that she must have been confused and she meant to say her farm was on Rushton Road, not Bishop Road. However, Gedeon could not provide police with an address or cross street. Gedeon went on to inform police that she would call later and provide the address.¹³

About ten minutes later Gedeon called back and provided an address at 6864 Six Mile Road, however she did not know the city. Later in the conversation she confessed that there was not a farm.¹⁴

¹² Ibid, page 12

¹³ Ibid, page 13

¹⁴ Ibid, page 13

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To summarize, during the period of August 11 – 12, 2025, Gedeon lied to police not just once, but three times regarding her non-existent farm. This raised questions about the source of damage to her home.

Did Gedeon Spray Paint Her Own House?

On August 12, less than two days after Renay Gedeon reported vandalism to her non-existent farm, police became suspicious that she may have been involved in vandalizing her own home.¹⁵

Prior to presenting Renay Gedeon with their suspicion, police were already aware of the following:

- Gedeon lied multiple times regarding the location of her non-existent farm.
- Gedeon confessed that she did not own a farm.
- Gedeon was using a GoFundMe page to fraudulently raise money to repair damage to her non-existent farm.
- Gedeon and her husband were “on probation” at the Brighton Farmers Market.
- Gedeon was the subject of fraud allegations for selling produce she purchased while claiming she grew it on her own farm.

This excerpt from the incident report describes what happened when police asked Renay Gedeon who spray painted her house.

I asked Renay who spray painted her house. After a brief silence, she said she didn't know. I told her that it was convenient that her farm was to be inspected by Monee Phipps for Farmer's Market purposes on Wednesday, but her home was damaged late Tuesday night, so she couldn't do the inspection for the farm that she knew didn't exist. She said Phipps was a liar and reiterated that she didn't spray paint her home. I told her that she might not have done it but that didn't mean that she didn't have her husband or son do it. Our conversation ended as Renay gave the phone to Michael who raised his voice at me, claiming that I was calling him a racist. He continued to talk over me and ranted about how they never made a claim about a farm to us. He said the business is in his name and uses the Marcy address for it. He said his son lives in Fowlerville and he (Michael) was at work so there was no way they could've done the damage to their home. I advised them I would contact them if I needed anything further from them.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid, page 13

¹⁶ Ibid, page 13

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Another Gedeon Lie - The GoFundMe Swindle

A friend of Renay Gedeon established a GoFundMe page the day after the “crime,” thus enabling Gedeon to raise money to repair the damage to her non-existent farm. In other words, Gedeon was attempting to profit from her fraudulent farm damage.

These three excerpts from the incident report illustrate how the GoFundMe page was problematic for Gedeon.

The GoFundMe stated, "They spray painted KKK and QUE on the siding and garage doors, drove down the gate and destroyed part of their greenhouse." It also stated, "Funds raised will help with the damaged gate, greenhouse, graffiti, cameras for the property and loss of produce."¹⁷

I [the police officer] told Renay that not having the farm would be problematic for her GoFundMe as that describes there being damage to a farm that she doesn't have. She quickly replied that they decided they weren't taking the money from GoFundMe yesterday (Tuesday 8/11/2021). I told her that the fundraiser was still active as her and I were speaking. Renay then told me that she didn't know about the GoFundMe until yesterday afternoon as she didn't ask for it or set it up.¹⁸

When confronted with the GoFundMe, Renay advised that she wasn't going to take any money from it (the fundraiser was active up until confronted about it). Renay stated she didn't know there was a GoFundMe until after it was created; this was disproven through an interview with the GoFundMe creator, Catherine Cooke, who provided me the Facebook Messenger conversation showing where Renay approved the GoFundMe before it was published.¹⁹

Media Analysis - Overview

Just like national fake news media, Livingston County media reports news with a left of center bias. The media displayed this bias as they covered the Gedeon incident. Gedeon's fake farm vandalism provided the media with an opportunity to reinforce their left-wing political narrative that racism is woven into the fabric of our community.

While the media was quick to report this incident as a racist hate crime, they have yet to inform the public that Gedeon fabricated the farm vandalism story and then attempted to profit from it. Yes, the media quickly covered this fake incident the day after it occurred. However, as of the publication date of this report, the fake news media has not informed the public that the farm

¹⁷ Ibid, page 11

¹⁸ Ibid, page 13

¹⁹ Ibid, page 11

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vandalism was fake and that Gedeon paid \$775.00 in fines and costs after pleading guilty to the crime of filing a False Report of a Misdemeanor.

The media acted more like stenographers for Renay Gedeon rather than investigative journalists interested in finding the truth. In the eyes of the media, their job was done once they were able to publish sensational headlines alleging racism in Livingston County. The media achieved their political goal of repeating their left-wing narrative that Livingston County citizens are racist.

Jon Arking Believes You are a Racist

Jon Arking was the WHMI News Director at the time of the Gedeon incident. Arking is better known as Jon King. It is not surprising that someone in the fake news business uses a fake name.²⁰ As a cohost of a WHMI morning show, Arking interviewed Renay Gedeon the day after she reported the vandalism to her home and non-existent farm. During the interview Arking made clear his strongly held point of view that racism is embedded into our county. Below I have transcribed the diatribe Arking made at about six minutes and thirty-six seconds into the interview.

I mean first of all, I, you know we are, we are, devastated along with you and I think like I said, I, me personally, I just, I am outraged by this. This is completely unacceptable and I, I guess this stands as a, a absolute you know testament to, it is a physical testament to the fact that for those in this community who say that this is no longer here that this kind of racism and hatred and intolerance is something that's in our past and we don't, I, I say this is proof positive that, that is an absolutely incorrect wrong statement. It is here it is still happening this, these sorts of intolerant behaviors are well within this community and it is time, well past time for us as a community to simply stand up and say no more no more of this.²¹

This transcription is somewhat choppy as Arking was in a highly agitated state when he revealed his true thoughts about citizens of our community. To gain an accurate transcription I had to listen to his emotionally-charged rant several times due to his stammering and stuttering. Arking's contemporaneous and unscripted comments authentically show his contempt for our community. A link to Arking's audio recording is included in the footnotes. It is recommended that you listen to the recording to obtain the full impact of Arking's statement and his passion for his vitriolic views.

Arking's rant is proof positive that he believes that you, as a Livingston County citizen, either practice or condone racism. Arking, just like many other leftists in Livingston County, believe that

²⁰ Arking, Jonathan. "Jonathan Arking - Biography." *Jewage.org*. Accessed June 3, 2025.

https://www.jewage.org/wiki/en/Article:Jonathan_Arking_-_Biography.

²¹"Local Farmer Renay Gedeon on Racist Graffiti." *WHMI*, Air Date: August 11, 2021, <https://www.whmi.com/programming/podcast/6702>

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the racist hate of former KKK leader Robert Miles (D)²² still prevails in our community. Hateful leftists like Arking cling to their narrative that our community is racist, even though Robert Miles (D) passed away over 30 years ago. Their hate is so intense that the leftists are blinded to the fact that hate crime statistics published by the State of Michigan show our county has the lowest anti-black hate crime rate when compared to our neighboring counties.²³ It is noteworthy our county's anti-black hate crime rate is lower than that of the leftist strongholds of Washtenaw, Ingham, and Genesee Counties. Perhaps Livingston leftists ought to invest their time in changing the behavior of their brethren in neighboring counties.

Conceivably Arking's diatribe helped WHMI management conclude that Jon Arking was insanely biased and needed to be terminated. Less than six months after he made this rant, Arking was forced out as WHMI News Director. Arking discussed his forced departure in an interview with Michigan Public Radio. When asked about WHMI management forcing him out Arking stated, "I was told that, well, there's a perception that I am biased."²⁴

USA Today Spread Gedeon Lie Nationwide

But Jon Arking is not the only member of the media to spread the hoaxes and hatred of the left.

Gannett Company, Inc. used its national reach to spread the Gedeon lie across the United States of America. Gannett is a publicly traded American media holding company headquartered in Tysons Corner, Virginia, near McLean in Greater Washington DC. It is the largest U.S. newspaper publisher as measured by total daily circulation.²⁵ Gannett publishes *USA Today*, one of the largest national newspapers in the United States. Closer to home Gannett also publishes the *Livingston Daily*, as well as the *Detroit Free Press*, and the *Lansing State Journal*.

Gannett propagated the lie using *USA Today*, its well-known national newspaper. Originally published in the *Livingston Daily*,²⁶ Gannett republished the Gedeon fake hate crime story in subdomain publications posted on *USA Today's* website.

²² In 1968 Miles was a Campaign Manager for avowed segregationist Governor George Wallace (D). UPI Archives. "Former KKK leader Robert Miles dead at 67." *UPI*, published on August 18, 1992,

<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/08/18/Former-KKK-leader-Robert-Miles-dead-at-67/7854714110400/>

²³ "Reports: Livingston ranks lowest for bias/hate crimes in region over past decade," *Livingston Post*, published December 10, 2024, <https://thelivingstonpost.com/reports-livingston-ranks-lowest-for-bias-hate-crimes-in-region-over-past-decade/>

²⁴ Harlow, Elizabeth, "Livingston broadcaster discusses "forced departure" from radio station." *Stateside, Michigan Public Radio*, published February 1, 2022, at 11:24 PM EST, <https://www.michiganpublic.org/show/stateside/2022-02-01/livingston-broadcaster-discusses-forced-departure-from-radio-station>

²⁵ "Gannett Company, Inc." *Library of Congress*, Accessed on June 24, 2025, <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0016970/>

²⁶ Daugherty, Kayla, "Brighton-area home vandalized with 'KKK' graffiti after owner's comments on Melon Fest." *Livingston Daily*, Updated on August 11, 2021, 4:13 pm ET. <https://www.livingstondaily.com/story/news/local/2021/08/11/green-oak-township-home-tagged-words-kkk-and-que-melon-farmer/5567877001/>

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Gannett echoed the Gedeon lie as they republished their story an additional 75 times in publications owned by *USA Today*. I conducted an internet search to document media publications reporting on the Gedeon hoax. Including the republished Gannett stories, my search revealed a total of 84 Gedeon-related stories. Links to these stories are provided in Appendix A.

Importantly, it bears mentioning again that none of these 84 instances revealed the conclusion of Gedeon's tall tale — her conviction and sentence. Because it fit the media narrative that citizens of Livingston County are racist, journalists accepted Gedeon's tale at face value. The media was so certain of their "facts" they opted for no follow up. Thus, in large part due to Gannett and *USA Today*, our citizens were portrayed nationwide as racist.

It is noteworthy our county's anti-black hate crime rate is lower than that of the leftist strongholds of Washtenaw, Ingham, and Genesee Counties. Perhaps Livingston leftists ought to invest their time in changing the behavior of their brethren in neighboring counties.

Gannett circulated their incorrect local story to a nationwide audience of readers who were primarily interested in sports and movies. It is not clear why Gannett targeted this specific audience.

Here is an explanation of how Gannett and *USA Today* targeted these sports and entertainment enthusiasts. *USA Today* publishes on their webpages articles they believe are of interest to a variety of sports fans. These fan groups include people interested in NFL football, college athletics, NBA basketball, golf, professional soccer, mixed martial arts, professional wrestling, draft picks, rookies, LeBron James, sports betting, and Super Bowl advertisements. Targeted groups also include people interested in sports in general, news in general, and movies and entertainment.

As an example, Figure 1 shows a screenshot of a brownswire.usatoday.com webpage as it displays the fake news story about Renay Gedeon. This specific *USA Today* webpage is targeted at Cleveland Browns football fans.

This "spectacular" story made great "click bait," likely earning additional revenue for the media company. Unfortunately, this "click bait" came from an untruthful source, who turned out to be the perpetrator of a heinous racial hoax.

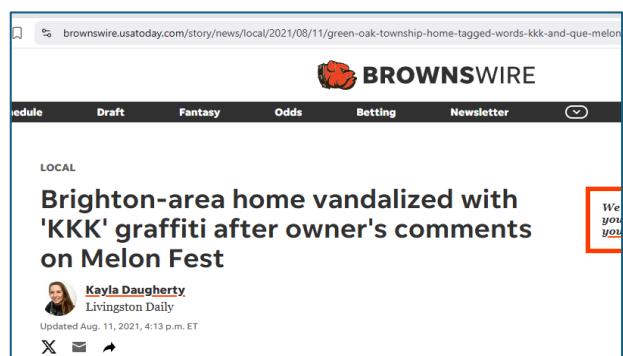


Figure 1 Screenshot of USA Today publication brownswire.usatoday.com accessed on 6/25/25

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Did *USA Today* publish fake news because it inadvertently failed to do its due diligence and fact-checking? Or perhaps this left-leaning media organization deliberately chose to publish this uncorroborated story because it fit their leftist narrative that America is racist. Whatever their motivation, *USA Today* contributed to the leftist narrative that our citizens are racist.

Gannett Companies Recycle and Circulate Another Lie

Obsessed with the media narrative that Livingston County is racist county, the *Livingston Daily* recycled Gedeon's hoax in another article. On July 25, 2024, the *Livingston Daily* published an article citing the Gedeon hoax as a true hate crime that occurred in our county.²⁷ Titled, *Timeline: Livingston County's complicated history with race*, Reporter Tess Ware (She/Her) and Editor Cassandra Lybrink jointly authored this article. The inclusion of the Gedeon hoax in this article is inexcusable given that Gedeon pleaded guilty and was criminally convicted of filing a False Report of a Misdemeanor more than two years prior to the Ware/Lybrink article. Readers should be rightly concerned that Ware and Lybrink may have included other fake information in this and other stories.

The falsehoods in the Ware/Lybrink article were significantly amplified when Gannett circulated the piece through 75 more of its publications. Gannett and *USA Today* used the same 75 publications that it used to republish and spread the original Gedeon hoax. See Appendix A for a list of these publications.

Was this an oversight of journalistic fact-checking and editorial standards? Does Gannett have procedures that should have prevented such blatant misinformation from spreading? Or, was the inclusion of false information a deliberate act driven by media bias?

How the Media Assists the Hate Hoaxers

By not publishing the final result of the Gedeon investigation — a criminal conviction and fine for falsely reporting a crime — the media, at the very least, committed journalistic malpractice. Was this mere negligence or something more malicious?

Perhaps the media organizations were too lazy to do any fact-checking or follow up on the Gedeon story. It appears that the media took Gedeon's story at face value without asking any critical questions or determining if Gedeon had a motive to lie about her situation. But a simple Freedom of Information Act request of the police department, or some old-fashioned shoe leather investigative work would have exposed the truth.

²⁷ Ware, Tess and Lybrink, Cassandra, "Timeline: Livingston County's complicated history with race," *Livingston Daily*, published July 25, 2024, 4:09 am ET, accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.livingstondaily.com/story/news/local/community/livingston-county/2024/07/25/timeline-livingston-countys-complicated-history-with-race/74510078007/>

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Or maybe the media engaged in malicious behavior. With their left-wing bias it is not beyond belief that the media saw this as an opportunity to push their narrative that our community members are racists. Just reviewing Jon Arking's rant reveals the depth of their own hateful bias. The initial stories provided great public sympathy for Gedeon and likely generated a bunch of "clicks" for the media companies. After pushing their biased narrative, what incentive did the media have to investigate this story any further? Additionally, we do not really know if the media was unaware of the truth or knew of the truth but chose to suppress it by not publishing a follow up story. However, what we do know is that even today the media continues to tout Gedeon's hoax as true to push their incessant false narrative of rampant racism in Livingston County.²⁸

This type of journalistic misbehavior incentivizes other hate hoaxers to ply their trade in our county. In fact less than two years after Renay Gedeon's hoax our citizens were smeared again with Julie Ohashi's hoax. The media's role in the Ohashi hoax was more egregious than their role in the Gedeon hoax. Within a few months after Ohashi's alleged hate crime, I provided media outlets with my written analysis²⁹ exposing her hoax, backed up by that police report and body camera video. The result — no reply from the media.

In both instances the media was complicit in the smear as they publicly presented each hoax as the truth. In the case of the Ohashi hoax, the media's lies along with their fawning coverage of Ohashi as a "hate crime victim" helped propel her into the public limelight as a leader of a so-called anti-hate group. Had the media called her out for her deception it is possible that our citizens might have been spared from Ohashi's divisive race-baiting antics which have recently targeted the City of Howell.

In less than a two-year span Livingston County citizens were victimized by two hate hoaxes. The data is clear, our county does not have a hate-crime problem, it has a media-amplified, leftist-generated hate hoax problem. Absent an increase in journalistic ethics, this problem is likely to continue.

²⁸ On July 25, 2024, two years after Gedeon was convicted, the Livingston Daily published an article citing the Gedeon hoax as a hate crime that occurred in our county. For more detail see footnote 27.

²⁹ Nakagiri, Wes. "Made for News Media Hate Crime," *CommissionerWes.com*, <https://commissionerwes.com/made-for-news-media-hate-crime/>

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More About Gedeon

Renay Gedeon is not an average apolitical citizen. The yard sign in Figure 2 shows her to be a Democrat. That this yard sign was proudly displayed at her home in 2021, a year when Elissa Slotkin (D) was not even up for election, indicates Gedeon to be a staunch Democrat. Also, the police report shows Gedeon was in communication with local Democrats both prior to and during her hoax. Of note, the police report showed Gedeon communicated with Christina Kafkakis (D), a candidate for County Commissioner, Mona Shand, a staffer for Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin, as well as directly with Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin (D) herself.



Figure 2: Spray Painted Home, source <https://www.whmi.com/news/article/local-farmers-home-vandalized-with-racist-graffiti>

About the Author

Livingston County Commissioner Wes Nakagiri (R) serves the citizens of District 4. His district is comprised of Hartland Township and a portion of Oceola Township. Serving in his fourth term, Nakagiri is passionate about delivering effective and efficient government for our citizens. During his tenure, Livingston County has been recognized for having the lowest county property tax rate in Michigan, the best Crime Grade rating of A+, and is in the top 5% nationally for Healthy Community ranking.

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Appendix A – Links to Articles About the Gedeon Hoax

Summary

There were 84 articles published about the Gedeon hoax. None of these articles revealed that Renay Gedeon ultimately pleaded guilty to the crime of filing a False Report of a Misdemeanor. However, one article, Number 6 below, reported when a felony charge was made against Gedeon for Attempted False Pretenses, also known as Fraud, Swindle, or Confidence Game. This WHMI article was published on March 23, 2022, about a month after the felony charge was made.³⁰

As was previously mentioned, on July 25, 2024, the Livingston Daily published another article citing the Gedeon hoax as a true hate crime that occurred in our county.³¹ Titled, “Timeline: Livingston County’s complicated history with race,” Reporter Tess Ware (She/Her) and Editor Cassandra Lybrink jointly authored this article. The inclusion of the Gedeon hoax in this article is inexcusable given that Gedeon pleaded guilty and was criminally convicted of filing a False Report of a Misdemeanor more than two years prior to the Ware/Lybrink article. The falsehoods in the Ware/Lybrink article were significantly magnified when Gannett again circulated the piece through 75 of its publications.

The Ware/Lybrink tale was initially published in the Livingston Daily. Gannett republished and circulated the Ware/Lybrink fable using the same 75 publications that it used to spread the original Gedeon hoax (see articles 9 through 84).³²

Lansing City Pulse

1. <https://www.lansingcitypulse.com/stories/howell-melon-fest-controversy-continues-without-drag-queen-bingo,17866>

Newsweek

2. <https://www.newsweek.com/farmer-believes-racist-graffiti-sprayed-home-connected-radio-show-comment-1618493>

³⁰ Jon Arking separated from WHMI on January 28, 2022. He was not the WHMI News Director at the time Article #6 was published.

³¹ Ware, Tess and Lybrink, Cassandra, “Timeline: Livingston County’s complicated history with race,” *Livingston Daily*, published July 25, 2024, 4:09 am ET, accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.livingstondaily.com/story/news/local/community/livingston-county/2024/07/25/timeline-livingston-countys-complicated-history-with-race/74510078007/>

³² The original Ware/Lybrink article was republished in 75 Gannett media outlets. Here is a link showing the Ware/Lybrink article as displayed in brownswire.usatoday.com. <https://brownswire.usatoday.com/story/news/local/community/livingston-county/2024/07/25/timeline-livingston-countys-complicated-history-with-race/74510078007/>. To view the other 74 Gannett media outlets replace “brownswire” with the name of the desired media outlet shown in articles 9 – 84.

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WHMI

3. <https://www.whmi.com/news/article/gedeon-farms-racist-graffiti-go-fund-me-lianne-cooke>
4. <https://www.whmi.com/news/article/local-farmers-home-vandalized-with-racist-graffiti>
5. <https://www.whmi.com/programming/podcast/6702>
6. <https://www.whmi.com/news/article/renay-gedeon-farm-charged-green-oak-racist-graffiti>

WLNS

7. <https://www.wlns.com/news/michigan/farmers-near-howell-have-home-vandalized-with-racist-graffiti/>

Gannett

8. <https://www.livingstondaily.com/story/news/local/2021/08/11/green-oak-township-home-tagged-words-kkk-and-que-melon-farmer/5567877001/>
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