Social Media's Influence

A thought that crossed my mind on Christmas Eve, while walking through the Christmas Village here in Philadelphia, was the notion of **social media's influence on the masses.** I was enjoying my time photographing, watching ice skaters, and taking in the sights and smells of the holiday season when a huge group of protesters gathered and marched around the village, exclaiming, *"Nothing merry, nothing jolly!"*

Critical Thinkers Are the Future

I have no problem with peaceful protests and protesters; it is a fundamental right of **freedom of speech** under the First Amendment of the Constitution. However, I can't help but consider the power of social media and how it shapes reality. *Could we even consider the election of Trump in 2016 as a result of social media's influence?*

If Twitter did not exist, would Trump have been elected?

In this modern digital age, **narratives displayed on screens control the masses.** People often don't critically consider the information they consume, as it's easy to become emotionally charged by the ideas spread online.

Be Skeptical About Hearsay

Imagine a viral news article claiming that a police officer murdered an innocent youth in your neighborhood. This devastating news spreads, and people become extremely emotional, hostile, and perhaps even violent. An uprising erupts in the streets, and the city is damaged. But the next day, we discover the story was false and never actually happened.

*"Believe none of what you hear, and only half of what you see." — **Benjamin Franklin***

What Is the Solution?

In the future, **artificial intelligence and confirming the validity of information** may play a critical role in this digital landscape. But a simple solution for now? *Delete all your social media accounts* and avoid consuming media on any platform. Another fun thought:

Just assume all social media users are bot accounts.

Disconnect from the shadows and enter the light. Spend less time indoors behind a screen, and more time outside under the sun. Focus on spreading kindness in your local community and making a tangible impact in the real world.

I believe the future depends on **critical thinkers**—people who think outside the box. Don't get caught up in groupthink and hive minds online. *Be fearless going forward.* Go off the grid!