

Good News! What's That?

Just about every news source we can find tells us the world is in terrible shape. But is it? We never hear the good news. Without it, everything looks bad. Find the home site of author Bill Allin at [http: billallin.com](http://billallin.com)

Times have not become more violent. They have just become more televised.

- Marilyn Manson

I am not one who believes that musicians and other entertainers should not express their opinions publicly, no matter the form of their entertainment or the issue under discussion. Though I do not listen to the music of Marilyn Manson or appreciate his onstage antics, he is an intelligent man with insights into human nature that go far beyond those of the average person.

Is there more violence in the world today than in the past or is there simply far greater coverage by television networks of tragedies around the world?

Let's begin with wars. The United Nations states that there are fewer wars going on in the world today than ever before in human history. We normally have between 27 and 32 wars ongoing in the world at any given time. We have 24 at the moment. One measurement of what constitutes a war is that more than 10,000 people have died in a partisan conflict (that is, not plain genocide).

Most wars today take place in poorer countries--that is, the general population suffers from poor nutrition and education is not free and widespread among all socioeconomic classes. Many of today's wars are taking place in countries that are either Muslim states or where the population is primarily Muslim. This is mere coincidence because Islam spreads faster among very poor people. Although violence is preached in some mosques, it is also taught (and has been in the past for two millennia) from Christian pulpits.

Studies have verified that war takes place less frequently in countries where the general population has a higher level of education. Violence may be recorded in higher numbers in better educated populations, but that's because much of it goes unrecorded in poorer countries where the general level of education is lower.

Small efforts are taking place in many poor countries where teachers from rich countries volunteer to teach kids who might otherwise receive no education. Governments in rich countries spend far more money in developing resources in poor countries so that their own corporations can exploit those resources than they do in teaching the children of the countries. We could raise the level of general education in the world if governments were more interested in making peace than in developing industries that thrive in war conditions.

Television news teams and news organizations in general love to broadcast records of violence. In Afghanistan, for example, each time a soldier from NATO is killed or injured, it hits the news of the soldier's native country, though almost no news of rebuilding of infrastructure and education systems ever gets air time.

In the news business, no news is bad news. News about violence is much easier to find than news about good events that happen. People who do good works under tough circumstances tend to stay below the news radar because news reporters have too often in the past brought them unpleasant backlashes resulting from exposure. Good news, no matter how welcome by viewers, is harder to find than bad news.

News networks have conditioned us to believe that we want to know bad news. They compete with each other not to show us the good things that happen in our neighbourhoods and our countries, but how tragedy wreaks havoc with lives, families and futures. Tragedy inevitably involves violence in the news business.

Now that half the people in developed countries get their news from the internet, the same sources of news that supply our television stations give us the same goods on their web sites. It's easier for us to read from a network news site than it is to seek out news sources that are more impartial and that provide information about good stuff.

Even without trying, someone who wants to avoid violent and partisan news can't help learning the latest escapades of Britney Spears, for example. But if Muslims in a community work together to raise money to help

rebuild a Jewish synagogue that has been damaged by bigotted and violent vandals, few will learn about it.

Whatever sources we use to learn about what is happening in the world, we should keep in mind that they are partisan and they present highly editorialized material. We can also remember that their bias is toward bad news, not good news.

Good news is out there. We need to find it. If that's too hard, we should make some good news ourselves.

Bill Allin

Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems, a book about how, what and when to teach children what they need to know to lead balanced and confident adult lives that are not poisoned by biased media.

Learn more at <http://billallin.com>

Author: builder

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