

Who Can You Trust?

How pervasive are lies in our society? This article explains where the truth is and how to get more of it. Find the home site of author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

The truth is the kindest thing we can give folks in the end.

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, American author and slavery abolitionist (1811-1896)

Surely truth is all around us. Our newspapers as well as our radio and television newscasts are filled with truth. Actually, they are filled with facts, many of which have been edited to give the one-sided impression to readers and viewers that the media owners want us to believe. Beyond that they express opinion, often supported by nothing more than fictional "information."

We elect politicians to work on our behalf, to represent us in the governments of our country, our state or province and our municipality, then to return to us the truth about what is going on at their respective legislative levels. But bridges collapse due to neglect, people get fired or resign regularly for corruption or unacceptable social behaviour and some corporations become obscenely wealthy from government contracts.

Sometimes our political leaders distort the facts enough--then preach them as truth--that we support going to war over them. Osama bin Laden is still at large in Afghanistan's eastern mountains and Iraq is anything but a settled democracy. So much for the truth about weapons of mass destruction (other than the ones the United States gave to Saddam to use against Iran) and the rapid disappearance of the Taliban.

Television brings us truth in its documentaries. Sometimes. Again, producers edit the facts to convey the impressions they want us to believe. For example, how many well fed people have you seen in documentaries filmed in Africa? When they conduct campaigns--such as about global warming--opposing points of view rarely receive due consideration so that we can get a balanced collection of information on which to base an informed opinion ourselves.

Mostly they give a one-sided opinion, albeit with an overload of facts to support their opinion, and leave us to believe it's the only conclusion possible.

Fortunately we have our places of worship to turn to as refuge from the onslaught of hype and distorted facts. Then again, no two churches, mosques, synagogues or temples preach similar versions of truth about their respective religions. And opinions vary within each about what is right and what is not, though the minorities are usually silenced quickly.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the quote that began this article, was one of the most influential authors--mostly through her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*--who moved governments on both sides of the Atlantic to abolish slavery. (Her sister was the motivator who encouraged Harriet to write a novel because of her "talent with a pen.") Yet even she has been accused of wanting to keep freed slaves poor and submissive, like Uncle Tom.

Mrs. Stowe submitted that truth is the kindest thing we can give to people. With the amount of lies, propaganda, distorted facts and opinions masquerading as facts that surround us, we must wonder if we could recognize truth if it jumped up and slapped us in the face.

Even at the most personal level we have come to believe that "white lies" are acceptable in certain situations in order to be tactful or polite. Women apparently don't want to know the truth about their new dress or weight gain or hair style any more than men want to know about their personalities, their neatness or their future job prospects.

Do we deserve the truth?

Do you deserve the truth from others? Do you want the truth?

Do you tell the truth at all times? If not, you have no right to expect it from others. And--count on it--you won't get the truth from them..

In a world where everyone's wrong, it's hard to know who or what might be right.

Let's start a revolution. Let begin telling the truth, as best we can, as best we know it. Like the domino effect of people smiling at each other--very effective, by the way, as lots of research shows--we may find others doing the same.

Imagine a world where you could trust others to tell the truth. Imagine being able to believe what you heard or read. It could happen.

Bill Allin

***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems*, a guidebook for parents and teachers who want to begin programs of truth-telling with the children they teach so that they will grow into a world they can trust.**

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

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