

DARING to DREAM

**A HANDBOOK FOR HOPE
IN THE TIME OF TRUMP**



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IN THE TIME OF TRUMP**



Angelo Bolotta



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To Alissa, Alanna, and Mara

My wish is that each one of you experience the peaceful joy that comes with seeking truth and doing justice. In our artificially complicated world, there can be no greater gift than the satisfaction that comes from the realization that what you have done has made a difference in the lives of others. Know that your love and support have greatly helped me to become the person that I am today. In the life journey before you, remember to stay on the high road, regardless of the immediate cost. Believe me when I tell you that you will never regret it, when looking back.

To my many colleagues, students, and friends

Thank you for your support and encouragement throughout the years. Know that I learned much from our encounters and the honest sharing of ideas. This dialogue has been so important in shaping the contents of this handbook.

To young dreamers everywhere

Thank you for daring to dream. Thank you for recognizing that much can be changed for the better. Do not be disillusioned. Continue to dream in glorious colour. Stay focused on the prize and do not be afraid to work hard to make it happen. It might take longer than you expect. But then, evolution has long produced more lasting results than revolution. Do not let power and privilege crush or manipulate your dreams. All real power is latent. As any honest leader will tell you, the minute you have to resort to force, you have effectively lost power, not gained it. Never be afraid to speak truth to power and justice to privilege.

Preface

I vividly remember the events of October 1962, as if it were only yesterday. I remember almost two weeks of escalating tensions, bringing the world again to the brink of war. I did not understand exactly what was going on, but it became abundantly clear that what was happening, in the adult world, was not good.

I remember running home from school terrified one afternoon, while repeatedly looking up to the sky to see if Russian missiles were going to rain down on me, before I could make it safely home. I imagined pointed ballistic missiles striking me right on the top of my head. I was only eleven, so I did not have a grasp of adult realities like nuclear Armageddon and the material permanence of death.

I remember going through ‘civil defence’ drills in elementary school which consisted mainly of one thing: In the event of a nuclear attack, we were instructed to hide under our desks and pray silently. Only silent prayer was allowed because we had to listen for further instructions from our teachers. Much as I trusted the Sisters of St. Joseph, who ran our school, I was not totally convinced of the soundness of this defensive strategy, based on what my elders had told me about the bombardments they experienced during World War Two. These new bombs were supposed to be much more accurate, powerful, and deadly!

I was a new Canadian, having immigrated to Canada from Southern Italy, with my mother, seven years earlier. I was happy in my new home. We had many relatives in America. I remember being riveted to the flickering, second-hand television set that my father had brought home one day. We lived in the basement of my father’s barbershop. Unlike some of my American relatives, we did not have a bomb shelter and we did not have the room to build one. Every inch of basement was already occupied.

My father had spent twelve years serving his country during various wars—starting in North Africa and ending with World War Two. Each time he completed his obligatory military service, a new conflict would break out and he would be recalled to active duty. He did not talk much about his experiences of being under bombardment by enemy forces, but it did not take a rocket scientist to figure out that these new Russian missiles would be very different.

I remember watching flickering images of the youthful American president and a much older and meaner looking leader of the communist Soviet Union. They were playing a deadly game of nuclear chicken. It was not difficult to interpret the adult words we overheard, the fear on their faces, and the abrupt silence once we came into the room. The issue was the placement of Russian nuclear missiles in Cuba, a stone's throw from the United States. The communist dictator of Cuba had requested these nuclear missiles to deter further aggression from the Americans.

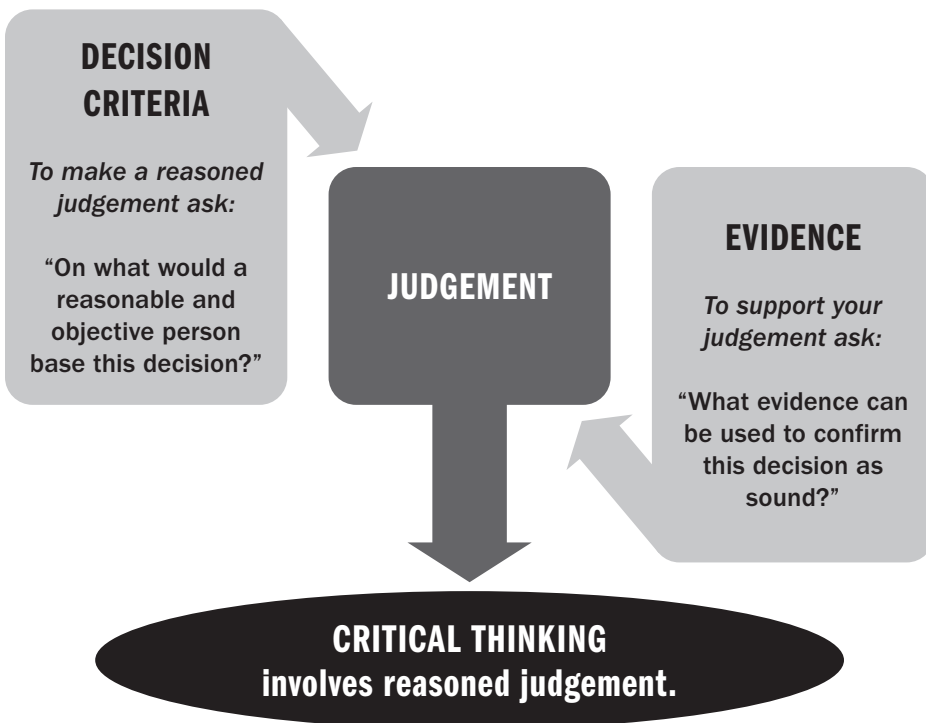
The Cuban Missile Crisis was eventually averted when the Soviet Union backed down on its plan to bring missiles to Cuba, so as not to confront an American naval blockade. In the end, reason prevailed over emotion and hard cold facts triumphed over conflicting ideology and escalating rhetoric. The cold war between democratic and communist ideals continued but never again escalated to this breaking point. This, of course, is my adult understanding of what transpired, based on subsequent experienced knowledge, careful reflection, and emotion-free hindsight. My understanding at the time was that the Russians had changed their minds and no missiles would be coming at me, for the time being.

Fast forwarding to the present day, I see in my two adult daughters many of the fears, anxieties, and tensions I experienced about the fate of humankind on our planet. This anxiety has increased exponentially since Donald Trump acquired the mantle of leadership in America.

My daughters live in a world of renewed hostility. Russia's 'strongman for life' becomes bolder each time international protocols are successfully abused. The unstable dictator of North Korea is flaunting his newly acquired capacity to fire missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. He has threatened to use them against the United States. The American president has responded with equally aggressive rhetoric. A new game of nuclear chicken appears to have emerged. My daughters live in fear that, this time, logic and reason may not prevail. They fear the doomsday clock is rapidly approaching midnight.

I cannot allay my daughters' fears, any more than my parents were able to protect me from "God-less communists bent on world domination." But, I can focus their critical thinking to help my daughters sort through the hype, misinformation, and loaded rhetoric, often prevailing in today's post-modern, digital world. In fact, it has become increasingly more important to process information carefully in our digital age.

Critical thinking may help uncover concealed realities about our human journey on this planet. This careful, probing, and thorough kind of thinking may help my daughters to read between the lines of the various media messages they are constantly being presented. This too is a kind of bombardment that requires careful consideration. Critical thinking will help people become more effective truth seekers, in an increasingly more complex and convoluted political world. My focus will not be on what to think, but rather, on how to think to become a discerning and contributing citizen locally, nationally, and globally.



Reasoned judgement requires choosing appropriate criteria to base your decision and solid evidence to support it. Complex and important decisions require sound critical thinking skills.

By sharing these reflections, I hope to pass on the experiences of my life journey to help illuminate the way forward. I hope to help my daughters to make more informed decisions, to keep their sense of humour, and to become more discerning truth seekers in an increasingly more politicized world. I hope to help them temper fear with logical and reasoned optimism, and to help them realize that the light at the end of a long dark tunnel need not be a fast approaching train.

The following pages do not reflect the results of exhaustive empirical research and strict academic analysis. Rather, the contents represent a personal, reflective, and hopefully humorous account. My hope is based on the experience charged belief that there is more good than evil in our world, and that benevolence will invariably prevail over malevolence. As an educator and lifelong learner, I have relished my calling as a voice of hope and promise, enabling young people to recognize opportunity, even when it comes cleverly disguised as an unsolvable problem or a difficult crisis.

In responding to my daughters' fears, I am simultaneously speaking to all those who share their concerns and reluctance to assume the responsibility of moving our troubled world forward and leaving it in a better state for future generations. Mistakes can be painful, but they can also trigger learning and growth, as long as discernment, honesty, and altruism prevail over their opposites.

—AUGUST 20, 2017

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CHAPTER ONE

ONE CIRCUS DIES, A NEW CIRCUS BEGINS— LONG LIVE ‘THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH’



IN JANUARY OF 2017, just as Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey officially announced the winding down of their 146-year-old circus business, with great fanfare, the most televised circus in American history moved into Washington, D.C. The first act of this new circus occurred only one day after the inauguration of the new president, ring master and principal performer. In a bold-faced lie, newly appointed White House press secretary Sean Spicer angrily denied all evidence to the contrary and proclaimed the honest truth to be that the Trump inauguration received “the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe.”

Without substantiation, it was implied that conspirators had posted doctored aerial photos of the Trump inauguration and the record setting 2009 inauguration of president Obama. ‘Discerning’ Americans were expected to believe that the National Park Service must have ‘doctored’ photographs to make the new president look bad. Logically, a feeble rationale could be fabricated to explain this alleged conspiratorial behaviour. The National Park Service could be accused of opposing the new president because it was feared that he planned to allow the desecration of America’s national parklands to extract natural resources and to better exploit the parklands’ previously untapped economic potential.

For example, instead of wasting money looking after a huge and dangerous hole in the ground, why not convert the Grand Canyon into the world’s largest and most profitable landfill project? This would simultaneously promote capitalism, create jobs, and address the environmental problem of what to do with the tons of garbage generated in America every day. It could be argued that the National Park Service had a vested interest in conspiring to maintain the status quo, and therefore, stood in the way of “making America great again.”

“There are no facts only interpretations.”

“All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.”

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

According to Sean Spicer, the truth demonstrated by comparing two inauguration crowd photos was actually ‘fake news’ created by the *Fake News Media*, with the explicit intent to deceive the gullible American public. Luckily, the new president’s legion of supporters was not that gullible, leaving only Trump’s critics mired in the gullible camp. This was a slap in the face to honest and respected professional journalists everywhere.

Trump is reported to have gotten directly involved in demanding the removal of the Park Service photos and the name of the employee posting them.

In the coming days, ‘Fake News’ would come to be defined as any media messaging that did not wholeheartedly endorse and support the new president, his musings, or his *agenda de jour*. Interestingly, I found no evidence to corroborate Sean Spicer’s interpretation of the facts in the crowd size debate. At least not from traditionally reliable news services, with stellar reputations for reporting truthfully. Therefore, any conspiracy would have had to be widespread and masterfully executed. It is a fascinating insight into the human condition to observe how people often see in others the very faults they choose to ignore in themselves.

At the risk of sounding Freudian, this pattern of behaviour can either be intentional or subconscious. The deliberate act often reveals an arrogant narcissist in denial. The more unintentional behaviour may reflect insecurity or ignorance.

In any event, neither cause is indicative of quality character traits. Should a narcissist occasionally recognize small personal faults, he will usually take great comfort in finding those same traits to exist in others, in what is often determined to be a much higher degree. So, chronic liars will see many others as bold-faced manipulators of the truth, while rationalizing their own actions as little white lies made necessary by difficult circumstances.

Perhaps the most cynical and manipulative use of fault finding is the deliberate accusation of rivals and critics as demonstrating the very behaviour being used and concealed by the accuser. Regrettably, this practice has become more prevalent in recent times and its frequency of occurrence can further obscure the truth and erode trust. Trump has shown himself to be a master of this technique.

This underhanded technique has been deviously perfected to maximize distraction. In our post-modern digital age, crafty manipulators expertly do the very thing that they accuse their enemies and rivals of doing. They are banking on the fact that the disillusioned and the ignorant will be easy to persuade.



Figure 1.1: Trump's Inauguration Day in 2017 (right) compared to Obama's record breaking Inauguration Day in 2009. (left: Emily Barnes / Stinger / Getty Images, right: Lucas Jackson—Pool / Getty Images).

Notwithstanding the artistic breakthrough called Photoshop®, where digital photographic images can be easily manipulated or enhanced, the difference in crowd size between these two National Park Service photos indicates an overwhelming 1:3 ratio. This is not even close to comparable. Any doctoring of the original image would not require this much exaggeration to make the desired point.

To claim the 2017 inauguration as “the largest audience ever” requires the liberal use of what Trump surrogates (and well paid staffers) subsequently began calling “alternative facts.” During a January 22 interview on *Meet the Press*, Kellyanne Conway (an advisor to the new president) defended the White House press secretary’s obviously false statements as providing the American people with “alternative facts.” This became the new term for favoured falsehoods. Under scathing attack from veteran journalists, Conway later clarified her choice of words to mean “additional facts and alternative information.” This confirms that there are many ways for a wordsmith to frame a lie.

Given improved technology and millions more people living on our planet in 2017, compared to 2009, it would be difficult to refute the potential for a larger audience around the globe. But potential does not constitute reality. Just

like alternative facts, alternative information, and alternative ‘truths’ do not constitute an objective reality. For example, using a high-powered magnifying glass, I am alternatively able to detect two portly figures, in the 2017 photo. These figures bear a striking resemblance to Jimmy Hoffa and Elvis Presley. But still, I cannot confirm or deny their support of the Trump presidency.

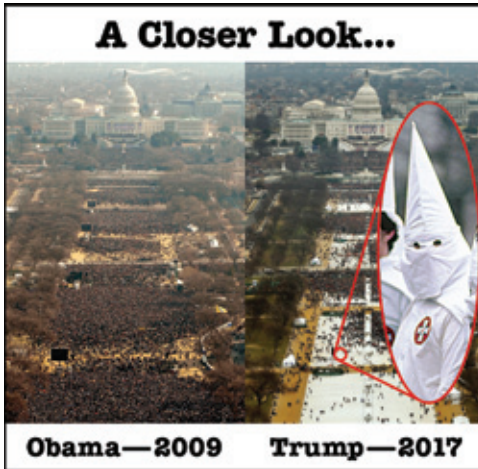


Figure 1.2: Adaptation of a popular meme circulating the Internet following the ridiculous crowd size debate. (left: Emily Barnes / Stringer / Getty Images, right: Lucas Jackson—Pool / Getty Images, inset: age fotostock / Alamy Stock Photo).

Equally tongue-in-cheek, others have discovered a sea of supporters proudly wearing their white hooded robes. Unfortunately, without enhancing the original photo, the legion of white robed supporters become invisible against the white floor they are standing on. Coincidence? I think not! This white floor mat was meant to deliberately conceal crowd size—an obvious conspiracy to discredit the new president and his loyal staff.

If nothing more, this crowd size discrepancy and the controversy generated is a clear indicator that what we

have taken for granted for many years now needs closer examination and more focused reflection. The escalating politicization of official messaging may have finally crossed into blatantly dishonest and overtly manipulative territory.

“The press doesn’t stop publishing, by the way, in a fascist escalation; it simply watches what it says. That too can be an incremental process, and the pace at which the free press polices itself depends on how journalists are targeted.”

—NAOMI WOLF

When is the truth no longer the truth?

How can thinking be manipulated to confuse or conceal the truth?

When is an alternate truth more reliable than the actual truth?

Who ultimately gets to define truth?

Does winning an election allow the victor to selectively redefine the truth?

What role do evidence, logic and reason have in the truth-seeking process?

The more we ask ourselves these critical questions the more we can break free from the manipulation and trickery of those who would sabotage or exploit our democratic, economic, and social freedoms and dreams for their own personal gain. Perhaps the

“The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.”

—HANNAH ARENDT

most sinister and cynical of exploiters are those of wealth and privilege who cavalierly profess that simply by enabling their personal goals to come to fruition, automatically the dreams of millions of others will be made possible.

That the successful Trump campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again” resonated with a large number of disenchanted and disillusioned Americans confirms a sad reality. The poor health of the American Dream is a matter of undeniable public record. This malaise is both chronic and acute. It has been a long time in the making and has the potential to be fatal. If left untreated, or if many citizens continue to pretend that nothing is really wrong, fatality can be the eventual outcome.

Those in positions of power and privilege may have a vested interest in keeping the myth of the American Dream alive, simply to keep those being disadvantaged loyal to the cause. A disillusioned, disenfranchised, and explicitly marginalized majority will eventually cease to buy the hype that the American Dream is alive and well.

For proud Americans to turn to a politically inexperienced, cynical, anti-establishment candidate, claiming that America is broken and only he can fix it, reveals the limited options available to voters in 2016. The logic used by Trump to court working class and ethnic votes is remarkable, especially in light of his condescending treatment of visible minorities and his propensity to profit from the employment of vastly underpaid foreign workers, at the expense of American jobs.

On both occasions, the eventually successful candidate apparently failed to complete his train of thought. In these impromptu departures from the scripted speech, Trump failed to share one final detail: “What have you got to lose? Well, vote for me and I will show you what you have left to lose.”

“You’re living in poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed—what the hell have you got to lose?”

—DONALD TRUMP

AUGUST 19, 2016 IN

DIMONDALE, MICHIGAN

“Our government has totally failed our African American friends, our Hispanic friends and the people of our country. Period. The Democrats have failed completely in the inner cities. For those hurting the most who have been failed and failed by their politician—year after year, failure after failure, worse numbers after worse numbers. Poverty. Rejection. Horrible education. No housing, no homes, no ownership. Crime at levels that nobody has seen. You can go to war zones in countries that we are fighting and it’s safer than living in some of our inner cities that are run by the Democrats. And I ask you this, I ask you this—crime, all of the problems—to the African Americans, who I employ so many, so many people, to the Hispanics, tremendous people: What the hell do you have to lose? Give me a chance. I’ll straighten it out. I’ll straighten it out. What do you have to lose?”

—DONALD TRUMP

AUGUST 22, 2016 IN AKRON, OHIO

Trump’s contempt for America’s current reality is nothing short of alarming. “I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn’t lose voters,” he proudly boasted during a campaign rally in Sioux Center, Iowa in January of 2016. This cavalier statement may have confirmed the loyalty he sensed from his hard-core supporters, but it simultaneously called to question whether he could comport himself in a ‘presidential’ manner. In retrospect, it reflected an accurate assessment of the degree to which an increasingly large number of Americans had grown disillusioned with their politicians, and how desperate they were for any alternative.

Trump’s propensity to use such a violent metaphor betrayed his insensitivity to the issue of escalating gun violence in America. If this was just an attempt at humour, then at very least, it showed poor taste and an alarming tendency to carelessly use suggestive and dangerous hyperbole in his messaging. In reality, since his support base was not appreciably diminished after the comment, then he was absolutely correct in his assessment of the widespread disillusionment of American voters.

Not surprisingly, while in office, Trump’s propensity to court violent rhetoric did not waver. On July 28, 2017, while speaking to a group of law enforcement

officials in Long Island, New York he openly encouraged officers, “don’t be too nice” with the suspects and thugs being arrested. In damage control mode, after the backlash, he later claimed this to be a joke. Given serious concerns across America regarding the excessive use of force by some police officers, sometimes leading to the death of their suspects, it is unconscionable for a president to truthfully consider this a laughing matter.

Any president who claims for himself the right to say and do anything he wants, regardless of appropriateness or consequences, empowers his electorate to behave in similar fashion. This can only create problems for America down the road. In one year, America has already become a much meaner and more cynical place. In addition, instead of improving active listening skills, Americans have shown a marked tendency to ignore and dismiss those with different views, without bothering to listen, let alone investing sufficient time to reflect on the significance of what is actually being said. This growing political intolerance can also impede the process of discernment and truth seeking.

“The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.”

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

During Trump’s tumultuous first year as President of the United States (POTUS), he has revealed an aggressively contrarian spirit. When strongly advised not to do something by his closest advisors, he often did the very thing he was being warned against, sometimes just to prove that he, and only he, could pull it off successfully. Orchestrating the firing of FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe, two days prior to his official retirement—so as to jeopardize his pension—cannot be seen as anything less than a cold-hearted, partisan, and vindictive move to punish McCabe and intimidate other civil servants by publicly demonstrating the foolishness of provoking the wrath of this POTUS. Too often, truth can be forced to the periphery by political expediency. In the crafty world of Donald Trump, accusing rivals of the very trickery you are engaging in serves to confuse gullible onlookers. And so, accusing reliable sources of providing ‘fake’ news while your own supporters promote a narrative of favourable lies and deceit is considered an act of genius, because people of questionable intellect would be fooled into thinking exactly the way you wanted.

An Experience Worth Noting: Conveniently Fabricating Truth to Suit the Occasion

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Figure 1.3: The village of Carpanzano, Cosenza in August of 2003. (Photo courtesy of the author).

While growing up in my village, there was an illustrious citizen whom villagers often referred to as “the guy who became a lunatic to avoid going to war.” Carpanzano, the village of my birth, was nestled securely on an ancient volcanic plug in the mountains of Calabria, on the way to the vast plateau and forests of La Sila. Since the middle

ages, peasant farmers and well-to-do landowners lived together in this small village. Carpanzano was originally settled by people from the Cosenza area, who were fleeing Saracen raiders and Norman invaders.

If memory serves correctly, this particular citizen was nicknamed *Rico the Fox*. He came from a family of peasant farmers who worked the fields owned by wealthy landlords. As share croppers, each year his family was required to divide their harvest into thirds. One third would be used to pay taxes, one third would go to the landlords, and the remaining third would be what his family was left to live on. They were also bee keepers, known for producing a honey of superior quality. Rico was a close friend and schoolmate of my uncle (zio) Antonio. As neither classmate could be even remotely considered a scholar, they often skipped school together. They were both drafted into the Italian army, just as the Second World War effort was beginning a steady decline.

Almost immediately, Rico began acting out in public. Instead of helping his family with the daily chores of subsistence farming, he would climb trees around the village and scream out obscenities, for no apparent reason, like a crazy person. Ultimately, he was declared unfit for military service. Along with his steady companion, a goat he proudly introduced as his “fiancé,” he was often seen dancing down the streets of the village after receiving his exemption from military service. For all intents and purposes, Rico did avoid going to war by altering the truth.

My uncle, on the other hand, was drafted into the army and eventually sent

to the Russian front for combat duty. On the bitterly cold train ride to the Russian front, zio Antonio suffered a severe case of frostbite. As a result, the index finger on his right hand was permanently deformed and immobile. This complication may have saved his life, because he was declared unfit for duty and sent home. The rest of his battalion fought the Russian army and most were killed.

Rico's troubles really began after the war had ended. With peace having been finally restored, government authorities could now devote more time and resources to the provision of social services. In his case, the authorities wanted Rico placed in an insane asylum. It was reasoned that he would be better cared for in an institution and not present an additional burden to his poor family. Given the sad state of mental asylums in Italy, this represented a tragic turn of events for Rico. All of a sudden, going to war might not have been the worst thing.

What was now needed was a small miracle. He had to be declared sane to avoid being institutionalized. He had always insisted on his complete sanity. This was a key part of his public persona during the war years. As he saw it, insane people are often the last to see themselves for what they are. But the villagers were never quite sure of his state of mind. He did have an explosive temper and this often got him into trouble. Villagers liked to tease and mock him to try to solicit the volcanic eruption of his volatile temperament. Without television, this passed as affordable entertainment.

Some local children and teens went out of their way to steal figs from his family's prized fig tree. This tree was easily accessible from the roadway, so a quick getaway was possible. They took great delight to see him chasing after them wielding a big stick and swearing profusely. One day he boldly put up a large sign on the fig tree that proclaimed: "Be warned! One of these figs has been poisoned." This proved an effective deterrent because many villagers were not completely sure of his actual state of mind.

As his public behaviour calmed down, he was eventually declared sane. This was met with a small celebration among friends and relatives. However, this new truth also proved problematic. Local youths again started to raid the family's fig tree. Once again, he put up a large sign to warn that one of his prized figs had been poisoned. But this time the theft continued unabated. In fact, one local smartass put up a counter sign indicating that, "Now, two figs have been poisoned." Ultimately, sanity prevailed and the poisoned fig strategy/bluff was abandoned by all sides.



Figure 1.4: Things may not always be as the mind perceives them. This interesting three-dimensional artwork, winner of the 2014 Venice Chalk Festival, in Florida, was photographed in 2015.

And so, in life, all human beings have occasion to interpret, embellish, and outright fabricate what passes for ‘truth’. In truth, we all see the world from our own personal frame of reference or experience base. When we do this, it can say more about ourselves than it actually says about the world we perceive around us. Some fabrications result from unintentional misinterpretations of facts and realities. These can be considered the result of human misperception. Others are deliberate misrepresentations intended to deceive. Each ‘new’ truth we fabricate can bring about its own set of complications or consequences. The more a ‘new’ truth is riddled with inaccuracies and inconsistencies, the more the complications and unintended consequences it can generate. Often, one false statement can easily generate the need for additional misrepresentations of the truth, down the road, to help sustain or re-work the original.

Humans are regularly challenged to build a perceived truth around them. This truth influences the way they see and respond to the world. In turn, this professed truth influences how the world sees each builder. A person of integrity mindfully avoids convenient fabrications because of the debilitating effects on the fabricator. Such a person prefers the most accurate and morally responsible representations of reality possible.

A person of keen intellect avoids truth fabrication because of its proclivity towards escalating recurrence. This leaves only self-serving persons of limited integrity and limited intellectual capacity to embrace truth fabrication as a convenient way to influence others. The most callous of these self-serving individuals have no moral qualms about weaseling out of what was actually said earlier as “your misunderstanding (and therefore, fabrication) of what was actually said and meant.”

One benefit of telling the least adulterated truth is that you do not have to worry as much about remembering the specific particulars you have told others. But do not expect that the truth will always “set you free” as the Bible (John 8: 32) proclaims. In reality, the truth can also be inconvenient. It can create a moral imperative to take action to help ensure that least adulterated truths prevail over the injustices created by those fabricating convenient (and often self-serving) alternative truths.

The Trump experience provides Americans with a challenging test of their discernment and resolve. The *Washington Post* has tracked and documented 2,001 false or misleading claims during his first year (355 days) in office. This represents a staggering 5.6 questionable claims per day directly made by the American president. Half of these questionable claims included statements that were found to be false once the facts were actually checked. Regrettably, this pattern has had minimal negative impact on the size of his core support base.

Ironically, Trump used convenient fabrications to avoid the military draft and going to war. Yet today, he insists on questioning the patriotism of professional football players who dare to protest that “Black Lives Matter” during the playing of the pre-game national anthem. Some might see this as hypocritical. Now, what does this actually say about Trump, and what does this say about those who perceive hypocrisy?

The Parable of the Self-Absorbed Circus Impresario

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Fact finding and truth seeking are essentials for living in our post-modern digital age, where information is exchanged instantaneously, truth has become subjective, and alternate facts have been lauded as ‘objective’ realities for ‘discerning’ minds. The following parable helps reveal some of the dangers.

The Greatest Circus, Ever!



Figure 1.5: By editorial cartoonist Paul Sharp. (Courtesy of CartoonStock.com).

Trump's Budget at Work

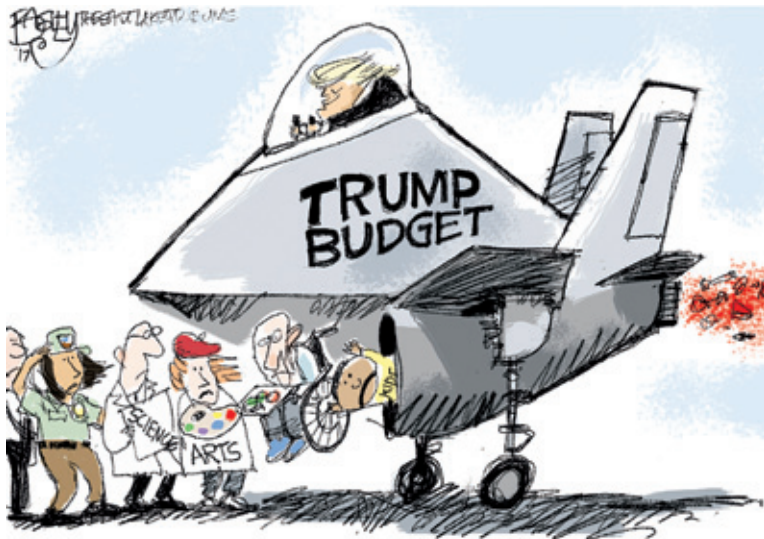


Figure 1.6: By editorial cartoonist Pat Bagley. (Courtesy of Cagle Cartoons).

A billionaire misogynist spent his charmed life wrapped up in himself. He loved himself so much that he felt the world was God's gift to him. He travelled all over the land looking for the most powerful spotlight to shine on himself. This would allow everyone and everything to bask in his presence.

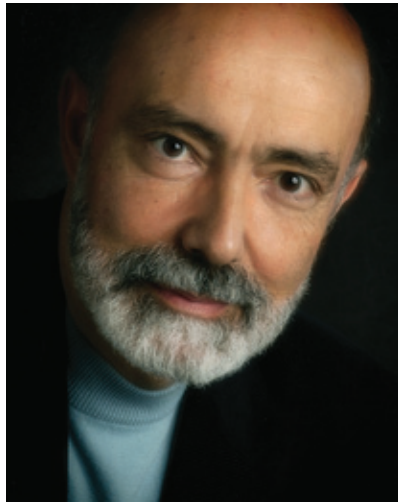
He finally decided to take over the greatest circus in the land, with the brightest spotlight in the world. He hired and fired staff until he found people that would follow his strict instructions, including staying totally out of the spotlight. In fact, he was the only one allowed under the bright light. This, he explained, "was to prevent others from hurting their eyes."

As a marketing genius, he charged no admission into "the peoples' circus," only a stiff exit fee. He saw it as a great public service to offer people a nice diversion from their ho-hum lives. As ringmaster, he told great stories (mostly whoppers) about his courage and genius. As a magician, he used scantily clad female assistants, which he personally certified as 'solid 9s' after thorough manipulation. This was something he felt entitled to do given his celebrity status. While the audience was distracted by fireworks and colourful puffs of smoke, the assistants picked their pockets clean. With no money to pay the exit fees, they became a captive audience.

After all the smoke finally cleared, the audience got to see the magician make an illegal immigrant disappear. As a daredevil, he had himself shot out of a cannon to soar through the air, free as a bird. He found this so exhilarating that he flew several times a show. In fact, he loved flying so much that he started to grow bright orange feathers. He even started to tweet constantly like a songbird. As a birdman, he tweeted day and night. Occasionally his tweets even made sense. This left his captive audience longing for the day he would finally decide to flock off.

He finally did leave the peoples' circus one day, but not without a final surprise. While people were distracted by the noisy circus, HUGE budget cuts were quietly administered to public schools, healthcare, the arts, scientific research, and the environment. In the end, somebody had to pay for the greatest circus ever!

About the Author



Born in the village of Carpanzano in Calabria, Italy in 1951, **Angelo Bolotta** emigrated to Canada in 1955. He graduated from the University of Toronto with an Honours B.A. in economic geography in 1973, and a Bachelor of Education (in geography and economics) in 1974. He also obtained a Master of Education in Curriculum and Assessment in 1988 from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Angelo is a career educator, curriculum leader, administrator, consultant, university instructor and author with over 40 years of experience in public education. He started teaching with the Toronto Catholic District School Board in 1974, and retired in 2009, after serving his last 18 years as a secondary school principal and curriculum leader. He continued his teaching career as an instructor and supervisor with Niagara University from 2007–2014. In 2012, Angelo received the Chief Justices' Award, from the Ontario Justice Education Network in recognition of his “significant contribution to the establishment of a civil society through education and dialogue.” Angelo is the author of numerous textbooks and educational publications about civics, Canadian history, economics, the immigrant experience, and student assessment.