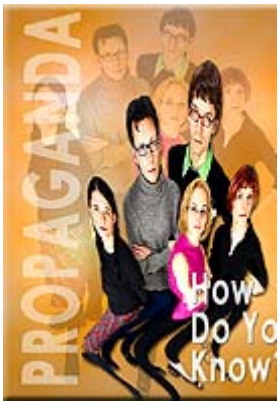
HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU ARE BEING SPUN?

PROPAGANDA VS PERSUASION: PART I OF III

By Laura Dawn Lewis



FORWARD:

NOVEMBER 29, 2003, Portland, OR.: This is the first of the three-part series covering propaganda and the tools employed by it. This will not be an easy essay to read; many will be infuriated. Infuriation toward differing presentations of facts, objectives or motivation is a byproduct of propaganda with its built-in denial and refusal to acknowledge, consider or accept.

Propaganda currently is entrenched in US policy and public opinion, accepted as fact and evident through nearly every area of social concern from foreign policy, health care and conservation to the Gay Rights movement. One spends hours sifting through messages to distinguish propaganda from reality. Once one element uncovers, three more challenges pile atop. Superior propaganda entrenches itself within society's minds, self-perpetuating through acceptance and shared argument as those succumbing defend it even when they may suspect it. It is an art form and science based on agendas that rely on viral and repetitive perpetuation by the masses. Through its very nature, it supplies its own defense often built on illogical exceptions; those whom buy in, passionately defend it.

To control a population's opinion, those driving any agenda need only control directly or through influence 25% of the media, education, cultural sources like film, books and music and other sources of accredited information. For example, Rupert Murdoch, (News Corp: *FOX, 20th Century FOX, TV Guide, New York Post and others*) at this time controls all satellite transmissions to the world's media except one. If the FCC rulings proceed without reversal and Murdoch is allowed to buy this last line of satellite transmission, he will own them all. The consequences of one man controlling 100% of all satellite news media transmissions and 100% of the news distributed by this vehicle worldwide are yet to be determined; yet such power over the information available cannot be ignored and News Corps' properties continue to gain in influence and importance as evident by the current war in Iraq and the US's new sights on Iran.

The complexity of propaganda's entrenchment unfolds as those whom normally wouldn't support the agenda, become its advocates and defenders based upon the information they receive. A conspiracy is not necessary; the majority become the unknowing administrators. Propaganda becomes self-fulfilling.

THE MOTIVATION FOR THIS SERIES

Since 9-11, like many I received a wake-up call. At that time I started paying close attention to the media. One thing that continues to nag is the fact we've had very little investigation into 9-11. Think about that. Normally in a plane crash we reconstruct the

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whole thing, even if the evidence is at the bottom of a lake. It's been two years. Where are the follow-up reports? A docu-movie was presented that was hailed as improbable by engineering experts, yet no further investigation? The questions were buried and never addressed. The largest attack on American soil occurred and we promptly destroyed the evidence by melting it down and shipping it overseas? And why the gag orders on the crews working at ground zero? This lack of protocol and many, many strange occurrences since, including inconsistencies in our reporting and several disturbing social trends, raised the red flags in my mind. The hatred of Americans turning on each other further alarmed me; a phenomenon played throughout international history where the common thread inevitably is propaganda.

"*How does one take an educated population of basically good people and turn them against their principles, while at the same time motivating them to actively participate, promote and defend atrocities?*"

This question first haunted me when I began researching the Holocaust in 1977. For the past twenty-five years I've studied mob and crowd psychology, marketing and propaganda. One of the promises I made to myself was that if ever saw something happening like what happened in Germany, I would do what I could to stop it. While I was busy studying history, I failed to notice reality; like most Americans I didn't question what we were fed. September 11th made me aware of this as I dug deeper. Upon doing so, I realized how pervasive propaganda is today in America, and how as the Germans once did, Americans blindly follow the same path built on the power of brilliantly executed propaganda. What happened in Germany is happening, only this time it is the American people funding it, defending it and believing it. Unbelievable…another tactic of propaganda: a big lie is easier to accept than a little lie.

I don't expect the majority of Americans to accept what is written in this 3-part essay. That will come with time. Each of us must discover for ourselves or we'll never be convinced. What follows is a process that ultimately redefines reality and produces a period of anger, confusion and disgust. This is a personal journey everyone will eventually take, and history shows eventually everyone does.

What I do hope is that by pointing out some of the tactics and through examples, Americans will begin to question critically what we're fed and perhaps research some of the examples presented. What I hope is that if people know what to look for, we'll begin to see. Once we begin to see, the propaganda loses its effect. Propaganda can only work on a population that refuses to question, remains apathetic, distracted or self-absorbed and self-righteous by setting aside its core values in favor of the values espoused by the agenda. Propaganda's potency faces destruction one heart and one mind at a time, and it's that destruction I hope to instigate with this series. -*Laura Dawn Lewis*

PART I

PROPAGANDA VS PERSUASION

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Part 1 of 3

The differences illustrating persuasion and propaganda revel within shades of gray. Persuasion uses facts, quantifiable and verifiable coupled with emotion, generally fear, guilt, humor or curiosity. It weighs heavily upon opinion, but this opinion is discernable from fact. Through these tactics, persuasion makes its point. Both sides of an issue define the facts presented within persuasion equally. Dissention does not exist concerning factual credibility. Its goal is to persuade you in one direction or another as it rallies emotion and appeals to common sense, law or desire.

Well known examples exist, the most prominent being the anti-smoking campaigns. Whether you smoke or not, no person can argue the fact that smoking destroys your health, is annoying to people that don't smoke, causes birth defects and a host of other diseases. Hedonistic, it is habit benefiting only those whom enjoy the habit and those who manufacture the tool of enjoyment. Quantifiable and scientific research confirms the dangers of smoking; even people that smoke will agree without argument.

Arriving at this point, where society agrees on the dangers of smoking occurred over 30 years and required defeating a slick propaganda campaign designed to distract, deny, confuse and assure. Persuasion utilized a consistent, repetitive campaign of the same message, "Smoking kills. People that smoke are killing themselves. To smoke is bad for your health." These statements were substantiated by scientific research, yet the Tobacco industry created its own junk science to counter and continued to overwhelm the message with irrelevant details and distraction. Though it took 30-years, persuasion eventually won. Truth always does. Persuasion is rooted in truth; Propaganda is rooted in a self-fulfilling agenda, junk science, distortions and half-truths. The Tobacco war is a classic example of persuasion ultimately overcoming propaganda.

FUNDAMENTAL DISTINCTIONS

When a message addresses the habit, issue or action, it is persuasion. When it attacks the person, glorifies harmful behaviors or ideas, it is propaganda. People who smoke are not bad. Smoking, the action is bad. When movies portray only villains or downtrodden as smokers, while the statistics for society do not mirror its characterization, this is propaganda and falls under two strategies, characterization and transfer.

Characterization illustrates the most easily identified form of propaganda. When in response to an argument a commentator refers to someone as "right-wing", "liberal" or "fanatical", characterization manifests and propaganda reveals itself. The commentator cannot argue the point or based upon an agenda he may be aware of or not, he does not want you to consider the other argument. Rather he chooses to discredit the person or source material instead. Through characterization, he discredits the argument for the majority of those reading, listening or watching. The commentator, through careful cultivation of image, negates others solely upon his perceived expertise, warranted or not. Reputation creates a comfort cell around those whom command and distribute popular opinion. It doesn't mean the commentator is right; it only means most fail to question. This acceptance leads one down the path of least resistance and propaganda perpetuates.

Characterization has a flip side when it is used as packaging. Sometimes referred to as advertising slogans, this type of characterization teeters on the edge of persuasion. What defines propaganda is the facts. A favorite example is the O'Reilly Factor's slogan, the "The No Spin Zone". The irony to anyone watching with an understanding of propaganda is that commentator

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Bill O'Reilly is a master at characterization, filibustering and deflection. Brilliant in his ability to use facial expressions, voice inflection and verbal characterizations, he easily discredits people and bolsters his followers. Occasionally his tactics deem appropriate. Occasionally a few minutes of research exposes his characterization as just that. Propaganda banks on the fact that fewer than 10% of those watching, whom fundamentally agree with the argument, will actually dig deeper. Characterization's power breeds as viewers or readers proceed to compound its stereotype through dissemination to others. In time, a characterization once seen as racist or demeaning enters the common consciousness as accepted and appropriate.

PROPAGANDA'S PENDULUM OF EQUALITY:

Propaganda distorts society's illusion of reality to fulfill its purpose. At times it empowers one segment of society with supernatural or God given rights, placing one group of people within disdain as the Jews, mentally ill, persons of color, homosexuals, communists, Catholics, gypsies and handicapped in Nazi Germany faced. Propaganda plays both sides and often elevates others to superhuman and righteous status, as was the case in Germany with its aspirations of a master Aryan race during the early parts of the last century, and is the case in Israel present day. In both examples, a group of people decides they are more deserving of life and possibly endowed with extraordinary blessings, powers, superior intellect or some other distinguishing factor. Concurrently they must dehumanize and rid their world of persons differing or seen as a threat. The differing are vilified, chastised and often turned into the reason for the continued assault, a form of self-justification for continued persecution as evident in Nazi Europe and the Middle East today.

"We have to control them because they aren't (smart enough, righteous enough, strong enough…*fill in the blank*) to take care of themselves. Their (brain, upbringing, culture…*fill in the blank*) is inferior to ours. How can we be expected to live with these people? They will contaminate our (race, children, country…*fill in the blank*)"

> Consider this. If some type of racial, ethnic, religious or cultural superiority did exist, the United States could not exist. If one group of people were incapable of living with another group of people, the United States wouldn't exist. Every race, culture, faith and country has people in the United States. In each group, some are successes and some are failures. In each group some are righteous and law abiding and some are criminals. No studies show any group superior to another. All studies show is that each group has its own challenges and advantages. For example, if you're white, you tend to get sunburned a lot quicker than someone of color. Darker skin is an advantage in a sunny climate. It is neither a disadvantage nor advantage in an overcast climate. Does this mean to have darker skin is to be racially superior? No, it just means people of darker skin usually age better with fewer sun-caused wrinkles and have fewer instances of skin cancer because they don't spend time and money tanning!

Though claiming racial superiority, faith superiority or any other elitism is easy to spot, it is rarely recognized. Like a frog boiling to death one degree at a time, the idea becomes accepted through repetition, obfuscation, euphemisms, junk science and extreme public pressure. Before the average person realizes it, he or she begins spouting the propaganda with conviction and belief, defending it ardently when questioned or confronted. Viral in nature, the ideas spread and dissention is silenced or eliminated.

With propaganda, the pendulum swings both ways, with neither side being justice, logical or humane. The commonality shared: propaganda and the distortion of reality to both sides of the

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pendulum presses forth an agenda that rarely benefits society as a whole, yet provides absolution for those promoting it and a sense of acceptance and a greater purpose for those espousing it.

Looking at the cigarette example in modern times, propaganda's objective is to equate bad, evil or undesirable characters with cigarettes; subconsciously people begin to equate those that smoke as bad people. In the beginning its objective married health and vitality with smoking and the people who smoked as hip; the pendulum effectively swings back. Symbols of health and youth populated the ads and message. Both instances are propaganda because facts support neither conclusively. The tactic, of placing symbols in proximity of the message or messenger is called transference. Transference is a classic propaganda technique. Transference creates consent through proximity of visual or auditory clues. Innuendo and implied consent, this is one of the reasons corporations will not allow photos or publicity near or in their stores or locations, whether for a product they carry or a cause. Simply putting the company in the picture or using its logo implies consent, support and approval. Politicians love transference, consider kissing and holding a baby.

REWRITING HISTORY TO FIT THE AGENDA

Propaganda assumes its full power convincing people to do, support or advocate something their principles, morality, values or common sense would otherwise prevent if they had the full story. Operating within convenient truths, half-truths and outright lies, propaganda in effect convinces each to abandon his values and faith, subsidizing morality through exception. Like persuasion, propaganda uses facts; the difference between the two falls upon these facts, easily challenged by historical data, though often revised, rewritten or discounted to parallel the objective. Discovering revision is a task in itself.

The most egregious yet brilliant example of recently revised history concerns the rewriting of the *The Scofield Study Bible*[1] (also known as The Scofield Reference Bible) beginning in 1908 and drastically altered from 1962 through today. This book is the primary source of study and inspiration for a large portion of America's 70-million evangelical Christians. Prior to 1908, bibles did not include or reference today's agenda; Palestine and the Holy Land are referred to as Palestine and a number of other names, but never as Israel. The Israelites are mentioned within a few passages. This began to change and accelerate with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and by 1962, *The Oxford Press* effectively rewrote hundreds of pages of footnotes establishing the current state of Israel as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. As the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, it earned the protection of Christians adhering to this bible as their study manual. Through viral sharing, others accepted the idea without question.

What makes this brilliant is within the rewriting; the Oxford Press added what can be considered an eleventh commandment, subtly making it a sin to criticize Israel in anyway, regardless of its policies. This is why evangelical Christians consider it a sin to "*Go against the State of Israel*" and will angrily and at times viciously accost verbally or physically anyone whom criticizes the

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[1] **"The Source of Our War Problem: Why Judeo-Christians Do Not Demand Peace,"**
This special report explores how a convicted serial forger was used to falsify and corrupt the Christian Bible. The report details the role of the Oxford University Press owned Scofield Bible in controlling Christian thought, effectively creating Christian Zionism from the ranks of the emerging evangelicalism, and how it was then transformed into radical anti-Islamic bias. This report compares several successive editions of the Scofield Reference Bible since 1908, to demonstrate a political bias inserted between the lines of the respected King James Edition. Available Through We Hold these Truths at: http://www.whtt.org/bookstore.htm. Published Fall 2002, $6.00

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state's policies. It is also the source of a deepening chasm existing within Christianity today: Christian Zionists led by Pat Robertson, Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell and others on one side, and non-Zionists led by the Catholic Church with fundamental portions of the Lutheran, Presbyterian and additional denominational and selected non-denominational churches on the other. Judaism is experiencing the same issues and struggling with its own chasm between Torah Faithful Jewry and Talmudic inspired Zionism.

By subtly changing the source of values and morality, facts and opinions in the *Scofield Study Bible*, these new entries become real, accepted and defended. After all, the bible says so. Its teachings are the only bible teachings most evangelical Christians have known. To know differently, one needs to devote serious time to researching and cross-referencing the Bibles and Torahs of the late 20th Century with those created prior. Upon doing this, the manipulation is clear and the propaganda is exposed.

Today tens of thousands of Christians derive their inspiration and justification from *The Scofield Study Bible* and use its teachings to defend and support polices they denounce in the United States but support and defend vehemently in the Middle East including apartheid, ethnic cleansing, murder, white slavery, state funded abortion, homosexuality, racism and segregation. Though strong advocates against these policies in America, in the Middle East they are seen as justifiable and necessary. To not support them or to try to point out these policies are hypocrisy considering the foundations of the faith is to "*Go against the State of Israel,*" and sin. In reality, each of these policies is fundamentally in opposition to beliefs and values of Christianity, Judaism and Islam...a fact that reaches irrelevancy in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, as it is now understood by them.

"*How does one take an educated population of basically good people and turn them against their principles, while at the same time motivating them to actively participate, promote and defend atrocities?*"

This illustrates a point and provides one of many answers to the complex question above.

Effective propaganda can cause a person to abandon his faith and morals by espousing what common sense and humanity consider an abomination. Nazi Germany is one example of this. Propaganda becomes the justification through repetition, causing people to alter their beliefs in favor of another's agenda, generally to their own detriment and to the detriment of mankind. For those doubting this, simply replace common slogans or accusations against the Palestinians, Muslims or Arabs with the words "Israeli" or "African American", "Asian" or any other ethnic group or faith. Suddenly the persecution becomes racist, simply by switching words.

Reversing the reference illustrates a powerful anti-propaganda tool, basically putting the issue on the other foot to look at it from both sides. Through reversal, crimes against humanity and reason become clear as propaganda is revealed through a simple slight of words. Racism is racism. Oppression is oppression. Neither allows for selectivity in its targets or absolution of another. Propaganda props one group of people up above others and convinces those buying it to empower the favored group while dehumanizing the target.

Propaganda thrives upon a collective conscience and cognitive dissonance, the practice of creating confusion through misinformation or sullying of facts with irrelevant details. One is left defending the inconsequential, while the real agenda gains strength and further displaces objection. Propaganda depends upon society's laziness, apathy and distraction by lesser issues

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like bills or the day-to-day with the willingness to accept spoken explanation rather than engage in research, reason and question. It requires society place me above we or us. It requires society remain mired in an illusion of powerlessness. By its very nature, propaganda demands each feel he or she cannot make a difference; yet history has proven it is the common man with conviction by which change occurs.

KEEPING PROPAGANDA AT BAY

Education and critical thinking continue as propaganda's most ardent threats, which is why those in positions of power and influence are targeted unmercifully through defamation and characterization. When a conquering country takes over another, the first order of business is to disarm the population. The second necessity is rounding up the leaders and influencers: Clergy, Teachers, Intellectuals, Artists and anyone else whom assists in determining public opinion. Once rounded up, they are imprisoned, exiled or killed. Stalin began his wave of terror in this fashion and ultimately thirty-million people, seen as threats to the agenda, were slaughtered.

Public characterization accomplishes this in times where no invasion exists. Banning books, censoring media either intentionally or through the omission of key facts and persecuting those with a different opinion illustrate methods used to squash any information contrary to the party line from reaching the masses. Ergo, education is key, specifically history and current events. Once one gets past the propaganda the facts never hold up. Critical thinking occurs once one stops and compares the facts to principles and morality; at this time one sees the lie.

DEFINING YOUR VALUES

A famous line in a Country Western song states, "*You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything*." The song refers to values and the necessity for every man and woman to define who and what he/she stands for.

Values define what you are willing or unwilling to do. In most instances, values are imparted by the family and faith, and to a lesser extent by the state. The attacking of core faith values gives credence to the idea that those in power, though legislation and shaming, effectively silence voices of dissent by ridiculing the principles of individuals. Values have been under attack in the United States, specifically over the last 30 years. The euphemism is to keep one's statements "Politically Correct" and in so doing, many people have been ridiculed for holding onto ideas engendered within their faith.

Through humiliation or public ridicule, those whom uphold the ideas of their faith and principles are often referred to as close-minded, anti-something, rightwing, leftwing, ultra-conservative or ultra-liberal. The mudslinging is equally appropriated to both sides, liberal or conservative. Public pressure forces the acceptance of ideas a person may consider fundamentally wrong. Suddenly as an individual, one feels threatened simply for upholding his or her principles. We saw this happen in the United States earlier this year. People objecting to the invasion of Iraq were targeted physically, emotionally and mentally. By objecting to public policy many Americans found themselves referred to as anti-American and unpatriotic for doing the one thing most patriotic: objecting to a pre-emptive strike policy directly against the principles and values defined in the US Constitution. Watching a country turn on its own is terrifying; it is also a sure sign the population is being manipulated making objection imperative.

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Accept public opinion or live as in exile. This is the perceived price of going against propaganda. Fit in or move on. Using peer pressure to force policy is an example of Bandwagon, another key tool of propaganda.

"*If everyone jumped off a cliff, then would you?*" Every American's mother has spouted this statement in one form or another, usually to remind us of the dangers of giving into peer pressure. Propaganda prefers each not recall her words or realize the public isn't necessarily right; the public just makes one feel wrong because it appears the rest of the world is against you.

Consider slavery, segregation or apartheid. At one time a person who spoke against slavery remained ostracized from society. To be an abolitionist in the 19th Century was to be radical. Today, people who speak against apartheid and ethnic cleansing in the Middle East receive the same treatment. Speak of the horrors of apartheid and ethnic cleansing in any other part of the world and the whole world joins in condemnation. Speak of it in the Middle East, and one becomes condemned.

Double standards for the same situation; the values those of condemning come with footnotes and exceptions, exposing the ideas as false values dependent upon public acceptance rather than morality. Propaganda produces the displacement of values through exclusion and acceptance of contingencies. It takes morality and adds a 'but'. Challenging that 'but' creates the heroes we aspire to like Dr. Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Desmond Tutu and even Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.

THE EMOTIONS OF PROPAGANDA

Guilt, shame and fear continue to be propagandas most powerful motivators. Guilt takes hold by consistently reminding of past trespasses and making it a crime to not hold guilt or to challenge accepted facts based upon previous propaganda or supposition.

Shame manifests in the targeting those whom question and making them outcasts.

But fear is its most powerful tool. Passing legislation limiting society's ability to live anonymously or to usurp power from the people as *The Patriot Act* has done is one example. The government used fear to convince Americans it is in their best interests to relinquish their rights, including the values and principles the United States is founded on. Rather than be protected from terrorists, Americans now find themselves needing to be protected from their own government: absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And still people out of fear defend it and honestly believe the government is a better nanny than their own common sense. Challenge the idea and you will be targeted. Don't do what we say and you will lose everything. Fail to allow us to take care of you and you will be alone and in danger. Don't buy our line and the boogieman will bomb your city. Still don't believe us? Then we'll threaten you, your family, take your money and your career and perhaps even kill you to shut you up. This is how fear works and these are the messages journalists, leaders and those objecting to public policy hear from our government and special interests, today. Fear works for a while, but never indefinitely.

To a lesser extent propaganda uses humor. Humor is used to create an everyman image of the idea or group and lower defenses. It often, when used for propaganda, contains humorous dehumanization or characterizations of those whom disagree or the group the propagandists decide are a threat. When humor is used, it generally has a mean-spirited undertone, yet it is effective because it creates outcasts of those whom object to this and of those depicted. When

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directed at the persona of the propagandists, it also removes anger or fear to a group by painting them as harmless, loveable and endearing. It is human nature to empathize with one who can laugh at his fallibility.

CONCLUSION

The most famous accepted examples of propaganda are Nazi Germany from 1922-1945 and the McCarthy hearings of the 1950's. Today it is the US government's spin on the Invasion of Iraq, the Middle East and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Propaganda can be seen everywhere from the Gay Rights movement to the abortion issue and the increasing levies for new taxes.

Does this mean propaganda is never truthful? Propaganda always as a nugget of truth somewhere, and it is this nugget the distortions are built on. It is the job of every adult with an IQ over 80 to separate the fact from fiction once propaganda is recognized. Propaganda works solely when society refuses to do its homework and define its values. Without values, society operates on a tightrope without the benchmark of measurements necessary to determine right and wrong. Ultimately, propaganda only works when people are too afraid, apathetic or distracted to think. It only works if society allows it. <End part I>

COMING SOON: PROPAGANDA PART II
Examples of its use today in the media and court of public opinion with *Nine Primary Strategies of Propaganda*

- Repetition
- Euphemizing
- Transfer
- Bandwagon
- Testimonial
- Characterization
- Fear
- Omission
- Victimization and Martyrdom

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