

BELIEVING BALD-FACE LIES

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We just finished another presidential election year. Never have there been more lies told by so many candidates at the federal, state, and local levels. Not the usual lies—the ones that candidates tell about themselves and their opponent. There is nothing new about that. The bald-face lies, the kinds of falsehoods that every sentient person knows is an obvious lie.

The most disturbing aspect of this phenomenon is that it works; importantly, it is not confined to the political world. How is it possible to believe something that is manifestly false? Similarly, what motivates inveterate liars?

Recently, the Drudge Report, a once popular news aggregate website, ran a headline on the front page saying, “Tucker Carlson Claims Abortion Causes Hurricanes?”

After checking the story, which was published by Mediaite, a left-wing outlet that seeks to discredit conservative voices, and reading what Carlson actually said, it was clear as a bell that he was mocking those who say hurricanes are caused by global warming. He said, sarcastically, “No, it’s probably abortion.” Any fair-minded person would conclude that what Carlson said was in jest, but that’s not what was reported.

Throughout this past year, reporters, media commentators and politicians said over and over again that late-term abortions were not legal under *Roe v. Wade*, and that it was simply not true that in some states there is no legal requirement mandating that medical personnel attend to babies who survive a botched abortion. As we, and others, pointed out, this was utterly false. The pro-abortion side simply lied.

In October, we had a chance to fact check a “fact checker” at

the *New York Times* and found that the reporter left out the second part of a sentence from a Minnesota bill that she quoted. She did so purposely so as to make her point. Had she included the entire sentence, her position would have been proven wrong.

After we took Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the cleaners for mocking the Eucharist, her press secretary said that the woman who feigned taking Communion (a Dorito was placed on her tongue by Whitmer) was not kneeling. That was a lie. She was not sitting on a couch, as they contended—she was kneeling. The picture proves it.

After President Biden called Trump supporters “garbage,” White House staff tried to alter his words. When the truth came out, the White House press secretary still said he never said such a thing, even though he was captured on tape saying exactly that.

Why do these people lie when it is 100 percent certain that they have? Because they can get away with it.

To be sure, when presented with the evidence, most people are instantly persuaded. But not all. There are those who, upon hearing prominent persons deny that what they said is a lie, are puzzled. They are no longer sure. That plays to the advantage of the liar because doubt has been instilled in their mind. In short, liars count on uncertainty—it mitigates the damage done.

Why do people not trust their senses? Why are they unsure even when the facts are stacked against the liars?

There have been plenty of psychological studies done on groupthink. Solomon Asch learned in the 1950s that group size has a significant impact on our tendency to conform. His experiments showed that approximately a third of the people are inclined to doubt their own conclusions if surrounded mostly by people who have reached a different conclusion.

Conformity triumphs over truth.

Daniel Kahneman found that groupthink occurs when people are presented with a perspective that is contrary to theirs and they buckle. Why don't they standfast? They want to avoid conflict. Their desire for harmony overrides their willingness to express an independent thought.

This is the psychological variant of the political reality found in Washington D.C. "If you want to get along, go along."

The price that people pay for suppressing their conscience is evidently worth it. They reason that when in doubt, go with the flow. Unfortunately, this plays into the hands of those who intentionally seek to distort the truth—their goal is to escape the consequences of their lies. Regrettably, having succeeded in blunting the worst outcome, they are inspired to continue lying. They can always count on the doubters.

The Communists in the last century liked to hold elections—even though they meant nothing—because they wanted to forge a sense of unity. They believed that if the people went through the motions and voted, it would convince them that they have a say in government. For some, it worked.

Elite decision-makers in the democracies also want to get the masses onboard, so when their lies are challenged, they double-down with more lies. By planting the seeds of doubt, they can't be held accountable.

To lie is not to make a mistake. We mistakenly say something when we don't have all the facts. To lie presumes we know the truth and choose not to acknowledge it. It's even more diabolical when it is done to manipulate the public for self-serving purposes.