

# Dick the Butcher, Revisited

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*"The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."*

— Henry VI, Part 2, Act IV, Scene 2.

**I** can't believe what's happening," lamented my old friend, Mike. "It's terrible!"

Mike (not his real name; his real name is Michael) is my old Army buddy who is now retired and lives in Florida. We were best buddies 50 years ago, barracks-mates serving the First Cavalry Division, and we've kept in touch, despite the separate paths of our lives and careers.

"What? What's so terrible?" I asked.

"Why, the unending attacks on my heroes. You can't even express yourself anymore without some jerk suing you! I thought this country guaranteed free speech without the threat of persecution. I tell ya, we're going down the drain!" (The faint sound of Maria Bartiromo could be heard in the background during our call.)

Clearly an unappreciated lecture on the difference between free speech versus fraud, libel, and slander would only increase his suffering. But I couldn't help drawing him out about his heroes.

"Who are we talking about here?"

"My journalists, leaders, patriots seeking freedom!" he blurted.

Knowing Mike's preferred source of news, I can agree Mike is right: It's been a terrible spring for liars.

Terrible.

Fakes, pretenders, phonies, hypocrites, swindlers, and deceivers have not done well. And, real-

ly, it's so unfair. Mike was promised so much by the hustlers who benefit from his confidence that it's an insult to his amygdala to watch them burn.

My final question before moving on was, "So what do you think led to this downfall?"

With immediate fire, he responded, "It's you damn lawyers and your judges. You hate these people."

I admit to feeling a burst of pride. The Rule of Law—which is sputtering around with a warning light on the dash—still has a few drops of gas in the tank.

But so many of us are inextricably addicted to the cocaine rush of our favorite liars. They make us feel better. They let us sleep at night in the comfort of our imagined universe. They create enemies that are so easy to hate. They keep us increasingly warm in the frying pan of confirmation bias. Mmm, please don't wake me up—this water's getting warmer!

Hanging out with our friends in that parallel universe (a.k.a. "Hoaxatopia"), we live in a world of false consensus, because everyone that we like believes the same lies we do! And face it, we love feeling this way. In Hoaxatopia, there's no need for evidence. Here, empathy is for suckers. It's a lot easier to get a good night's sleep when you don't have to engage in empathy for whiners who expect fair treatment or equal protection under the law. And creating enemies to absorb blame and absolve us from our own guilt and shame renders immediate absolutism.

This rocks!

In this world, if someone doesn't agree with you, they are either misinformed, uninformed, or simply biased against reality. Our beliefs become so engrained that we begin to engage in what psychologists call "naïve realism." Our world is the truth—we simply can't imagine that we might be

misinformed. Because we're not!

But I remind you, the best way to challenge such demagogues, fakes, and pretenders is to require proof in a court of law. It is the only door left in America that leads to a room which requires you to prove or defend the facts you use to attack others. And indeed, in the past six months or so, a lot of people who lied for fame (and a lot of profit) had to give some of it back.

Examples abound:

- **Steve Bannon:** The former chief White House strategist was sentenced to four months in prison for contempt. He was pardoned by Trump for his involvement in the "We Build the Wall" swindle, which resulted in a four-year prison term for his colleague, Brian Kolfage.

- **Fox News:** Intentional lying led to a voluntary transfer of \$787.5 million to avoid a jury's consideration of the breathtaking expanse of lies and libelous accusations intended to "keep their audience happy," even though internal communications completely exposed the intentional nature of the lies.

- **Mike Lindell:** I don't care how snugly Mike Lindell's pillows are, Mike will not sleep well after being hit with a \$5 million arbitration award (an arbitration he insisted upon) when it was proved his claim that China interfered with the 2020 election was not supported by data, which he dared anyone to challenge.

- **Tucker Carlson:** Fox News host, who regularly espoused virulently racist conspiracy theories, elevated white nationalism, and brazenly lied on the nightly airwaves, was suddenly fired. Carlson's plethora of private texts were a clear foundation for the evidence demonstrating Fox's duplicity and knowledge that the allegations they repeatedly asserted were false.

- **January 6 Raiders:** Despite

the lies they were told to justify their destructive attack on the U.S. Capitol, approximately 1,000 people have been charged (as of March 2023). 541 of those have already pled guilty (several hundred to felonies). Neither Hoaxatopia (nor their cheerleader) ever came to their rescue.

- **Disbarred Lawyers:** More than 111 lawyers related to the Trump administration have been investigated and 17 sanctioned thus far for filing false claims related to the election lawsuits.

Many of us became lawyers because we wanted to make a difference. Perhaps our dreams were irrational, and still are, but so many millions of citizens still believe in an American Dream that renders justice fairly, that compensates wrongs, and punishes those who have unfairly taken advantage of others. I still believe it should, and I won't ever stop, although I do experience some exasperation from time to time.

But bad men everywhere know that the Rule of Law stands in their way. Law is a powerful anti-toxin to the lies and manipulation that profit these bad men. One such bad man was Shakespeare's villainous character, Dick the Butcher. Dick was the right-hand man of Jack Cade, who led a rebellion against King Henry.

For society to fall, they must kill its protectors.

Truth is not malleable. It is the indispensable cornerstone of our quest for justice.

Perhaps if Shakespeare updated his play today, Dick the Butcher might change to Dick the My Pillow guy.

Keep the faith. <sup>AL</sup>