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## Gary Webb: Do What He Did

By [Al Giordano](#),

Posted on Wed Dec 15th, 2004 at 06:47:24 PM EST

LACANDON JUNGLE, CHIAPAS, MEXICO, DECEMBER 15, 2004: I keep imagining the last moments of Gary's life. He is looking down the barrel of a gun. His eyes are puffy from the swell of too many tears. The moving van is coming to his house near Sacramento, a place he never wanted to be in the first place, to which he was exiled years ago for the crime of telling a powerful but uncomfortable truth. Everyone he has ever trusted or loved has abandoned him: By that I mean everyone, including you and me. What he is about to do requires the utmost in courage: to pull the trigger and plunge into the unknown, perhaps into nothingness, never to write or report or tell his truth to the post-human mortals who couldn't handle his truth anyway.

The hand on the trigger at that moment – his – is not the first, nor is he acting alone. Gary had to wait in line and take a number behind all those who set his suicide in motion years ago. It was a miracle he didn't do this back when San Jose Mercury News editor Jerry Ceppos, now 58 and vice president of the Knight-Ridder news company, cocked the shotgun and pulled the trigger on the most authentic journalistic career of the late 20th Century. That was the day that the bullet flew out of the cartridge and, as if in very slow motion, took years to reach Gary's head...

Gary never wrote with mere ink or pixels. Gary opened up a vein every time he sat down to tell us a new truth and he signed his byline, always, in blood. If you think that his suicide did not send as powerful a message as the stories he investigated and penned in life, think again: Gary was The Last North American Career Journalist. He presided over a transitional era and his death marks the end of that era. Fellow and sister journalists: The canary has died in the coal mine. Run out of that mine now, and seek alternate routes to truth-telling. There is no longer room for us inside the corporate machine.

All over the world he is mourned today. The compañeros here in Chiapas came to me last night. "You knew him. He worked for you. Did he ever come here? Did he know about us?" As they peppered me with questions I retreated far into myself. Time and space stopped, as it has before in this deep green tropical jungle. I could see it – the bullet (two bullets say the coroner: Gary was nothing if not thorough and persistent; imagine for a moment what strength it took to get off the second round) off in the distance

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somewhere over California, those bullets, the first one fired by that traitor-to-journalism-and-truth Jerry Ceppos in San Jose, those bullets that came out the other side of Gary's cranium in Sacramento last week and took a southern turn toward me. And when they are done with me they will come for you. I could see and hear them heading my way last night and so today I type these words in a hurry so as to shoot back before my brains, too, are splattered on the page of history.

To be an Authentic Journalist in 2004 is to be a soldier at war. When a hero dies in battle first we must drape the coffin, sound the slow, sad bugle song of Taps, and remember this great man who died fighting for all of us. Among the soldiers I have known in my foxhole, there were none finer, more effective in a firefight, than Gary. He was a god among insects, and a particularly important god among gods (shortly before his death, Gary told our colleague Bill Conroy that he had applied for a reporter's job at the San Antonio Express-News and that the newspaper never even acknowledged his application: In the immortal words of Jonathan Swift, "When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that all the dunces are in confederacy against him.")

In our own network of Authentic Journalists Gary was the leader of a certain tendency: those who believe that a journalist reports the facts, only the facts, and lets the chips fall where they may. The last time I saw him face-to-face, alive, was on a rooftop in Isla Mujeres, Mexico, in February 2003, when he held the late (and also suicided) Abbie Hoffman's cane in hand and his words rang out over the Caribbean and into the ears of our original group of 50 journalists. His voice thundered: "A journalist is, by definition, a revolutionary."

Gary had just agreed to take the helm of Narco News for six weeks so that I, exhausted, could get some rest: really, he did this to help prevent my own coming to that same final conclusion that Gary came to last week. He was to work side by side with Luis Gómez, Dan Feder, and the rest of our then-fledgling army of truth-tellers and steer the S.S. Narco News through the next battles. I agreed to pay him a thousand dollars – a bargain! - for this mission, and then he got on an airplane and headed back to Siberia, um, I mean Sacramento.

Three weeks passed and Gary had not yet begun with Narco News. I spoke with him various times on the telephone. He cited "relationship problems" which had besieged him upon his return to California. After those three weeks when Narco News was dark and mute, we had another conversation and agreed that this was not his hour to lead the project. I agreed to pay him the thousand bucks anyway, because in my world your word is your bond, especially in the business of truth-telling, where great writers like Gary are more often abused and ripped-off by editors and publishers than not.

As an example of how a journalist today is a soldier at war and often suffers a kind of post-trauma from the abuse at the hands of the Jerry Cepposes of the industry, Gary contacted me the following week, accusing me of breaking my word; of having not wired him the money I had promised him. I checked with

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my treasurer who said she had indeed wired the money as soon as I ordered it. We got on the phone with Gary's bank. After some back and forth Gary sent me an email apologizing for the confusion: the money had been deposited in his savings account instead of his checking account. Another small problem had been solved, but the memory of the kind of post-traumatic stress that a journalist in Gringolandia suffers stayed with me. It caused me to remember that prior to ducking South of the Border in 1997, I, too, had grown accustomed to being ripped off in every deal with an industry driven not by truth but by capital.

The last time I heard from Gary was in July 2004. He had contacted Luis Gómez in Bolivia, confessing that he wanted to attend the Narco News J-School again at the end of that month, but had lost his job and didn't have the money to attend. I contacted Gary and offered to pay his room, his board, and his roundtrip flight from Miami to Cochabamba if he could cover the costs of getting to and from Miami. He agreed. A week or so prior to the beginning of school he contacted me again, to say that a roundtrip ticket Sacramento to Miami would cost him \$430 and could I cover half of it? Money was already scarce (I would take a ten thousand dollar bath, out of my own pocket, from this year's J-School when all was said and done). I researched other options: If he flew from San Francisco the cost would have been half of the cost from Sacramento. A Greyhound bus would be about twenty bucks for the three-hour trip: would he be willing to do that? Gary didn't respond immediately. I should have, in retrospect, considered that a danger sign. I asked Gómez to contact him, find out what was going on. In the end, Gary said he couldn't attend the J-School.

Hindsight is 20-20, especially when it regards the suicide of a friend. Today I kick and recriminate myself: I should have done more to insist that he get to Bolivia. I should have done more to make it possible. If he had made it to Bolivia would his life have taken a better turn in recent months? Could that have prevented, or delayed, his death at 49? It very well could have. I let him down. And in doing so, I lost a Most Valuable Player on this team, a friend, and a hero.

When a friend commits the final act, we tend to say to ourselves: But why didn't he reach out for help? How come he never said anything to me? In this case, I was only seven hours away from him when he pulled that trigger. He had no way of knowing that, but I was there, on the West Coast, behind enemy lines for a week. I could have taken him by the hand and led him to a happier country, to a place where authoritarian flames are not rising up into the dark night, where people are still human, where relationships are not so twisted by capital and its discontents, and where mediocrity is not the rule. He could have thrived down here. I kick myself three times again. If only he had come down here. If only he had asked for help. If only... if, if, if....

I know, kind reader, you are thinking similar thoughts. If only! If only! Why didn't he tell us? Why did he have to die alone?

Well, listen the fuck up, everybody. Especially those of you from the J-School

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who shared this network with Gary and me and scores of others: Society doesn't allow us to talk about suicide. Fuck society. I'm going to talk about it now.

Have you ever told a friend that you were thinking of killing yourself? Do you know what happens when you do? You will be told, "get a therapist." You will be accused of blackmail. People will view it as "not normal," and look for easy answers: substance abuse? Mental "disorders"? What does the DSM-IV book have to say in diagnosing you? The great majority of people panic at the mere suggestion of suicide: They want to wash their hands of your pain, and turn you over to the psychiatric "authorities." If you confess suicidal ideations in the United States, you can be committed to an asylum against your will. You can't trust anybody. And that, of course, compounds your sense of isolation, the sad understanding that nobody, absolutely nobody, is there for you or cares enough to help as you define the exact help you seek. The moment you confess you are thinking of suicide, you become an enemy to the illusions of peace of mind that others cling to desperately.

I know something about suicide. It is never a solitary crime. As Antonin Artaud once wrote about Vincent Van Gogh taking his own life: "Van Gogh was suicided by society." I know a lot about suicide and the kind of people who choose it. Gary is not the first, nor, I fear, the last, friend and colleague to apparently choose that route. And nothing can be done to bring him back. But wake the fuck up and look around you. In this network, I know at least two journalists who have been seriously considering suicide in recent weeks. They've gone beyond mere "ideations" to having an actual plan. Ironically, both have chosen the same route Gary chose: A gunshot to the head. They have each figured out how to get the gun. They have a plan that will work if they choose it. And I have spent much of the past two months trying to talk them both down from the ledge.

Yes, motherfuckers, I know something about suicide. I have thought about it every day since I was 23 years old, when I began to see my pal Abbie slip into his depths. Twenty-one years is a long time to decide each day not to kill myself. I have made the decision thousands of times. So far, the coin has not once flipped tails.

Suicide is always an alteration of the social order; an assault on "normal" life, whatever that is, and the assumptions that prop up the big lies that deform our cultures. A suicide is insupportable for those who live careful, comfortable and cowardly lives although they, on some level, also detest things as they are. Suicide, when committed by the courageous, is a form of speech, a protest, as much as that of the self-immolating monks of Vietnam or the suicide bombers of postmodern times.

In 1989, my mentor Abbie Hoffman, knowledgeable in pharmacology, downed 120 phenobarbitols with a glass of Glenlivet, a dosage that would stop the beating heart of any man or woman. A lot of people still don't believe it. That Abbie would kill himself fucks with their views of "reality." But I tell you: He did it! He left a fucking note! Just because the note was so private and personal that you've never seen it (and probably never will) can't be the

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pretext to disbelieve. Believe it, kids. Abbie, like Gary, dedicated his life to telling the truth. That is the common factor in every fallen comrade I have known who made that final choice: to be a truth-seeker and truth-teller and to love intensely among a society of liars and deceivers unworthy of our love.

Let me tell you about some other lost friends of mine. Ellen Frank was a brilliant writer in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Ellen, like Gary, dedicated her life to telling the truth. The anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s would not have been as strong without her. She had written for the New York Times and other large publications as a freelancer. Her final published piece was an homage, published in The Nation, to her late childhood friend Gilda Radner who died of breast cancer. One fine New England day Ellen drove her car to a place where nobody would likely see it. She connected a hose to the exhaust pipe, stuck it in the rolled up car window, and sat there, behind the steering wheel, until she drifted into her final sleep.

Jeff Buckley was a singer-songwriter with a voice of five octaves and the big heart of an authentic revolutionary. Jeff, like Gary, dedicated his life to telling the truth. His death by drowning in the Mississippi River in 1997 was pronounced "accidental." Don't believe it! I was one of the last humans to see Jeff in New York City, on his way to the airport, to Memphis, where he was late in recording an album for Sony. The music company had fucked with him and his ability to tell the truth as he saw it. They wouldn't let him choose his own producer. They imposed one on him: wanting to exploit his talent commercially, in violation of Jeff's own vision. Some months later, on the night before he was to begin recording at the gunpoint of a contract with Sony, as his bandmates were arriving by airplane, Jeff, drunk on wine, on the banks of the river where signs shout that the currents are dangerous and do not swim there, Jeff entered the river with his boots on: With his fucking boots on! He was last heard singing "Wanna whole lotta love" and then he sung no more.

Gary Reiter was my doctor when I lived in Gringolandia. A former Deadhead, he was in the closet about his psychedelic experiences. He lived in fear of losing his medical license. In fact, a mutual friend told me, he had problems with the medical board of overseers and was at risk of losing it all. His marriage fell apart in one of those ways that emasculates a man's sense of his very self, and this man who had saved so many lives as a healer could not save his own. Like Abbie, like Ellen, like Jeff, like his tocayo Webb, he lived and loved with a special intensity. He was not a journalist. But he loved people with the same intensity as any revolutionary and humanist. Last year, I learned from a mutual friend, that with surgical precision my doctor took a knife to his own flesh and cut himself down.

I could go on and on – "all the friends I ever had are gone" - but I want to get to my point: In every single one of these cases their deaths were preceded by a combination of economic troubles and isolation from the ones they loved, who could not find the support or community to be able to love somebody as intense as a hero.

Do you want to know how to kill an Authentic Journalist or a revolutionary?

Do you want to know how to provoke a truth-seeker and truth-teller into taking his or her own life? Play a con game on him and her: that's how. Tell her you love her. Tell him you love him. Tell him and her that you're different than all the dishonest people out there. Take the steps to show him and her that you are different, that you are like him and her, a truth-seeker and truth-teller. Get him or her to drop his or her guard, to open up. He or she will love you more intensely and generously than you have ever known. There is nothing he or she won't do for you, so happy to feel, for the first time in probably a long time, that he is loved, that she is not alone. And then, when he or she are at their softest and most tender point, lightly drop the hint that it's all been a lie. Reveal that you have successfully deceived him or her, in the very exact ways that you promised him or her with gooey eyes and poetic tones that you would never, ever, do to him or her.

Wanna see a truth-teller blow his or her brains out like Gary did, like at least two good journalist friends of mine are contemplating right now? Gain his and her trust, and then pull the trigger of deception: Make him and her doubt his and her own prowess as a truth-detector. Remind him and her that they are freaks of nature: truth-tellers in a world of liars, and that you are so smart – aren't you cute and proud of yourself? - that you alone were able to deceive him and her.

That's the first part: The suicides I have known have almost all been about love promised and not delivered. Let me be very clear: It is not the fault of the lover who could not love him or her enough. It is the fault of the entire community and culture for being unable and unwilling to support revolutionary love. The suicides I have known have mostly been in Gringolandia, where there is no support for love, where "the problem club" recruits daily, where the "self help" and addictionology industries prey on weak gringo minds selling the bullshit that a human being is a nation-state, that the human has "borders" or "boundaries" and has to "set those boundaries." The "professionals" who peddle those inhuman theories have their fingers on the trigger, too.

There, in the United States, where, red state or blue state, it's the same fucking fascism of cars and auto insurance, of illness and health insurance, of jobs at alienated labor, of "educations" that teach nothing except what must later be unlearned, or of unemployment, ignorance, illness, homelessness or prison, it is forbidden to love a revolutionary. If you do, if you are sincere at it, you will receive no support from your "friends" or "community." If you love someone like Gary, like Abbie, like Ellen, like Jeff, someone intense and truth-telling and truth-seeking, you, too, will become isolated. You cannot find support. He or she is too overwhelming for you to handle by yourself, but nobody will help you. In fact, they may hypocritically blame you after he or she has checked out. They... the people who are really to blame, will turn on you for having followed their advice, and they will blame you. Think about that.

A hero simply loves more and gives more than an ordinary man or woman: and so do those who choose to love him and her while suffering the slings and arrows of the problem club and the jealous non-support of the slow class

all around them. That's the first part of the story.

But there is a second part, beyond the impossibility of loving a true revolutionary under capitalism. There is something else that assures a suicide when combined with deception and it is very much related to capitalism: The person looking down the barrel of the gun must lose his or her sense of place. That usually happens economically: the loss of a job or income, the loss of a home. Did the press reports say that moving men found Gary Webb's note on the door? Moving men? Is this adding up for you yet, kids?

Of the two journalists I know who are standing at the ledge today, contemplating the leap into the abyss, they still have their homes (although one is afraid to be alone there, an indication of being close to committing the act). They still have the money to get them to next month's rent, but the money is running out. And so the hourglass is emptying, the sand is pouring down. They talk each other down off the ledge because nobody else will allow them to speak of the unspeakable act that awaits them, that awaited Gary and so many other truth-tellers.

So, here's my advice for you if you worry that another truth-teller is about to bite down on the gun barrel: don't you dare tell him or her to get a therapist. For all you know, he or she already has one but can't even tell you that because it will harm your faith in him or her, and cause society to paint him or her as a freak. Don't do it. Therapists lose patients, too. Just ask one. They don't have the answers. Those who tell you they do are dangerous. Chances are that your suicidal friend has thought about turning himself or herself in to the therapeutic authorities already and have their own reasons for either doing it or not doing it.

So what can you do? Well, what could we have done for Gary? Just two things: Send him money or give him love and attention as he defines his desires: not as you define "what is good for him or her," but as he or she defines it.

The death of Gary brings our network of journalists into crisis. We were not there for him. We did not know how to be there for him. I failed. And so did you. Gary, it's true, failed to ask for help, but remember also that Gary and Gary alone kept himself on the playing field since the day that corporate bitch Jerry Ceppos pulled the trigger. Through sheer force of his own strong character, Gary lived to fight almost another decade, but not quite.

I ask the compañeros here in Chiapas – they loved Gary, too - what I should do now: What can be done? I can't bring Gary back and neither can you. Not even the compañeros, with all the revolutionary magic and ancient knowledge they can muster, can bring back Gary Webb: although they could have, as they brought me back seven years ago, if only we and I had cared enough about Gary to drag him by the hand to them, to have been alert that when he lost his job he was at risk, to have paid enough attention to have seen him sinking toward the grave, to have supported anybody who still loved him intimately to be able to stick with him, to have raised him the money so that

he would not have lost his sense of place.

The compañeros gave me the answer to my question. What to do about the early death of Gary Webb? Their answer was so simple, so clear, that I kick myself for not having realized it immediately.

The answer: "Do what he did. Do what Gary would have done today if he were still alive."

In other words, Gary's final words to the J-School also bring the answer: "A journalist is, by definition, a revolutionary." Do what Gary did: Authentic Journalism.

I know some Authentic Journalists who are Authentic Revolutionaries who, as I have been buried in my own problems, I have not paid enough attention to their problems. And neither have you. At least a dozen of them are at the same high risk that Gary was at in recent months. They need money. They need a sense of place. And they need love as they define it. And those who love them, if they have anyone, need support, because the most courageous thing that a human being can do is to be willing to love a revolutionary who loves too intensely for most mortals to handle.

I am going to walk back into the jungle now, to the place where in 1988 I found my vocation as a writer, and the place to where I returned some years ago to fulfill my destiny as a revolutionary. And while there, I will take inventory of every Authentic Journalist that I still want to be part of this project and network. Some have frankly already proved unworthy or dishonest and I will weed those I cannot forgive from my revolutionary garden: The network of truth-seekers and truth-tellers is only as honest as its most dishonest link. The rest of you, I will try to bring in closer. And for the rest of this year, I will be contacting you one by one, to start anew, with Gary's memory walking by our side.

In the meantime, to all the Authentic Journalists in this network, I insist: If you find yourself where Gary found himself, contemplating and planning your early check-out from this miserable species of liars, contact me immediately. I will not tell you to "get a therapist." I will not have you committed to an institution. I will not pathologize your pain. I'm not a gringo anymore, not in that way anyway. I spit on that culture now. It's no longer just the government or economic system of that country to which I pledge my eternal hatred: It is the culture itself that must be destroyed and replaced. And Authentic Journalism gives us the tools to do just that. If you are an Authentic Journalist, we need you now more than ever.

Authentic Journalist: If you need money or a place to stand on this earth, I will do my best to help you find it. I've raised money before and soon I will raise it again. Nobody in this network goes hungry or homeless anymore. Got it? We can forgive ourselves for Gary's death, but now, having received his last desperate message from the isolated place where we allowed him to be cast adrift, we will not be able to forgive ourselves for the next one.



Likewise, if you love any member of my family of Authentic Journalists, but don't know how to love him or her, or want support, mi email box es tu email box. It bothers me, today, that I don't know the name of anyone who was that close to Gary. Being there for him would have meant being there for anyone who he let inside his beautiful, romantic, truth-telling vision for humankind. To you, I apologize for not having seen this one coming. To those of you who similarly love my "kids" or my surviving professors, my door is open. You are not alone.

If you don't know what to do without Gary here, listen to the compañeros: Do what he did. Do Authentic Journalism. Put all the other bullshit matters aside and just do it. Don't wait for orders from headquarters or permission from me. Use the NarcoSphere to publish it yourself. If you don't know how, ask Dan Feder – [webmaster@narconews.com](mailto:webmaster@narconews.com) - or Andrew Grice – [info@authenticjournalism.org](mailto:info@authenticjournalism.org) - how to do it, or how, if you are not a journalist, ask them how you can help those who are.

Gary has delivered us a wake up call.

Wake the fuck up.

Gary Webb is gone, poof! Nothin's gonna bring him back. I can't fucking take it. But I have to take it. And in order to keep from blowing my own brains out, I'm going to make some changes around here. I may have to cut some of you from the roster: If you've betrayed me or this project, if you've accepted our camaraderie and generosity, and have promised but not delivered, or if I have caught you in a big lie, self-proclaimed truth-teller, either wise up and explain to me why I should ever trust you again, or start packing your bags and stay far away from me and from this project. I repeat: a network based on honesty is only as strong as its most dishonest link. I'm not going to play with colleagues who don't give and keep their word anymore. Most of you have nothing to worry about. Those who do – you probably know who you are – have precious few days left to change course or be left behind.

I'm going back into the jungle now, where I have a sense of place, where I am loved as I wish to be loved, and when I return it will be with the beginnings of a plan for how the Authentic Journalism renaissance can continue without Gary, but also with Gary more present, through his memory, than we were able to have him present before.

In the meantime, put the weekend of May 1, 2005 on your calendar: That is when, by invitation, we will meet for a weekend of remembering Gary Webb, his work, and his legacy, in Puerto Escondido, Mexico, a place that Gary once told me was his favorite beach on earth because he could body surf there without a surfboard. Gary didn't need a surfboard. Dammit, he was our surfboard. He carried us through the first wave and kept us all from plunging into the undertow. Now, we must surf this dangerous sea of lies and liars without him. The next wave is coming.

Gary Webb: Do what he did...

Or offer more support to those who do.

[Gary Webb: Do What He Did](#) | 7 comments (7 topical, 0 hidden)

Display:

**a little help, please** (4.00 / 1) (#1)

by Gabriel Magee on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 08:32:32 AM EST

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Al- we have never spoken before, but i have been reading narco news since its begining, or close to it, i found it through links at mike rupperts FTW, which i got to thanks to an article in Maximum Rock and Roll. This is the first time i have ever tried to contact you directly, but i have been listening to you for years, i hope that this reaches you. i want you to know personally that what you wrote, what i read today touched me very deeply. when i read this-

"Do you want to know how to kill an Authentic Journalist or a revolutionary? Do you want to know how to provoke a truth-seeker and truth-teller into taking his or her own life? Play a con game on him and her: that's how. Tell her you love her. Tell him you love him. Tell him and her that you're different than all the dishonest people out there. Take the steps to show him and her that you are different, that you are like him and her, a truth-seeker and truth-teller. Get him or her to drop his or her guard, to open up. He or she will love you more intensely and generously than you have ever known. There is nothing he or she won't do for you, so happy to feel, for the first time in probably a long time, that he is loved, that she is not alone. And then, when he or she are at their softest and most tender point, lightly drop the hint that it's all been a lie. Reveal that you have successfully deceived him or her, in the very exact ways that you promised him or her with gooey eyes and poetic tones that you would never, ever, do to him or her."

i felt like you were writing it to me, this is what happened to me, a women did this to me, whether she meant to or not. it doesn't matter, what matters is that i realize that i am a truth-seeker. i am what you are talking about. but i'm not a journalist, i am a grad student at Trinity College in Dublin working on my masters in philosophy, i have resigned myself to a life in academia because i never wanted to become a corporate whore and i worked long enough with my back and hands to know that i didn't want to do that all my life. but i know i don't really fit in. in truth, i never really have, everything i've ever been a part of, i have done so on the fringe, never fully committing. i've always been on the outside looking in, just as i have been standing outside the circle as the fire began to build here at narconews, always watching, never participating, until i finally decided to make a donation this year, so that i could have my own co-publishers account. yet still, i have been hesitant,

not really feeling that i had anything to contribute.

i am tired of living life this way. when i first read "Dark Alliance" it blew my head of my shoulders. I can remember recieving that book as well as dan russell's "Drug War" for christmas while a student in college. i was outraged, a fire burned inside me, i tried to tell people about these things i had learned, but not too many people cared and so the fire died down, and i went about my life, went back to my studies, slowly accepting that i must earn a PhD, so that i won't have to break my back everyday and just scrape by, or compromise all my beliefs and take on a "real job". Becoming a professor seemed like the only option and so i decided to come to Trinity College, without even really thinking about it. because of it, the women i loved betrayed me. although i suppose in a way i betrayed her too, sacrificed her in order to come here. I felt the pain you wrote about Al, i know what it is to sleep with a loaded gun under the bed, but i survived.

When i read those words today, i realized that i am a truth seeker, i realized, maybe for the first time, that there is an alternative. but, i don't know what to do now. i want to commit, i want to be a part of what you are doing, because i think it is right and because what you wrote about gary webb was about me too. but i just don't know what to do or how to do it. I feel like i am wasting my time here researching democratic theory and participatory democracy, when i could be out there, living it. You've re-lit the fire inside me, i don't want it to go out, but i am asking for some guidance, for a little help.

**Free Speakership** ([none / 0](#)) (#3)

by Al Giordano on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 12:19:37 PM EST

([User Info](#))

Gabe writes:

*i felt like you were writing it to me, this is what happened to me, a women did this to me, whether she meant to or not. it doesn't matter, what matters is that i realize that i am a truth-seeker. i am what you are talking about. but i'm not a journalist...*

Welcome aboard, Gabe. Glad to have you here.

Reading your well-written words, I feel I should clarify a subtle but important point in my own thinking about these subjects that are so primal and haunt the borders of life and death itself: What matters is not what "people do to us," but, rather, our individual responses. More often than not, we choose our own feelings. I always say this about Free Speech: there is no speech that offends - it is we, as individuals, who choose to feel offended or not. The same is true with insults.

It is a basic cognitive-behavioral precept that we do have power over our own responses to what others do. It's more difficult, especially for Truth-Tellers, if we're deceived or betrayed, but in the end we choose

to feel that way or not. It's a particularly hard one for Truth-Tellers because we hold truth and honesty so high, and go to great lengths and depths to hold ourselves to that standard, that we start to lose respect for those - and I am speaking of a majority of people, sadly - who do not have that capacity for 100 percent honesty and truth. And we start to lose respect for ourselves when we get "tricked" because we doubt we can trust anyone.

Still, in the end, it's useless to blame anyone else or "what they did to me" because we do have power over ourselves and our own responses. It's what I call "victim thinking," which is all the rage in the developed world, to focus on an external person or circumstances to place blame when it is we who choose to feel whatever it is we feel in response. It often gets in the way of our being better warriors ourselves.

The problem is that strong people are so strong 99 percent of the time that they have little experience in managing how to deal with certain large disappointments during that 1 percent of the time that they are weak or tired or confused. A person who is confused most of the time, frankly, copes with confusion better than those gods and goddesses who are so reliably strong and courageous for everybody else. They carry those burdens for society and for us all. We get used to them holding up the sky. Too often we turn on them when they have to lay down their huge burden for a spell. "But we relied on you to hold up the sky!" Yeah, well, maybe if more people did the holding up the ones that do it wouldn't hit those points of collapse.

So, to answer your question: What can you do? You can start by continuing to comment here, by offering response, questions, corrections, new information to the reports of others (like Bill Conroy's excellent investigative report today). Journalists are so used to getting little to no response that they lose contact with the readers, they even forget that there are readers, they start to think that the only people who read their work are the editors. Well, here in the NarcoSphere, there is no editor. The reader is, in fact, the editor!

At some point a topic will interest you enough to motivate you to write your own report or blog entry on it. You'll know when that happens. When it does, just do it. If you have questions about how to go about it, post those questions here for other journalists to answer. The NarcoSphere is a resource where the journalist and the reader meet, where the electronic curtain begins to dissolve, and there is no more ridiculous defining of "who is a journalist" and "who is not a journalist."

The Authentic Journalism renaissance will triumph on the day that every human being and reader considers him and herself to be a journalist, and every journalist considers him and herself to be a reader and a human being. It's an important shift in the power dynamic.

A journalist is not a journalist because he or she gets paid, or published by a Commercial Media. A journalist is someone who investigates the facts and then tells a story. Every person does that kind of work every day. "How was your day at work, dear?" "Oh, the most interesting thing happened, let me tell you about it." That, too, is journalism. It's just that the professional gatekeepers who want "journalism" to be the work of an upper caste of over-educated, sexually-frustrated, socially-hostile, suit-and-tied wage slaves and eunuchs in cubicles have so far successfully convinced the rest of the humans that what they do is different from what any other storyteller who seeks truth does every day.

So, the first step, I think, is to start thinking of yourself as a journalist, a citizen-journalist, an Authentic Journalist. After all, you are already the copublisher of an international newspaper with a wide readership. You have the title already. Run with it! The rest will flow from there.

[ [Parent](#) ]

**I Walk With You** ([none / 0](#)) (#2)

by Tarik Abdelazim on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 12:10:47 PM EST  
([User Info](#)) <http://www.modocpress.com>

Whether deep in the jungle or lost in the byzantine maze of urbania, i am close to you. Don't relent, Al. Blaze white hot in this dim hour. And when you care, do it dangerously--for there is no safety in loving truth this much.

Peace, in solidarity, and always inspired.  
tarik abdelazim

--

Tarik Abdelazim [www.modocpress.com](http://www.modocpress.com)

**Burn baby, burn...** ([3.00 / 1](#)) (#4)

by Teo Ballve on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 02:16:40 PM EST  
([User Info](#)) <http://www.nacla.org>

I feel educated by everyone's comments regarding Gary. For sure, a great man. I never met him, but even just reading the comments I am inspired. I can only imagine what he was in person. I express my deepest love and solidarity for him, all who knew him and the entire authentic community.

Reading about him I was reminded of a few lines written by Jack Kerouac

in *On the Road* about his friend Neal Cassady.

*"The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"*

--

Viva los auténticos! VIVA!!!

**whew! well spoke once again Al...** ([none / 0](#)) (#5)

by Judith Gips on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 02:42:03 PM EST

([User Info](#))

not much I can add except to thank Al for getting as real as it gets with this. I'm breathless and speechless and proud to be associated with you, once again.

never give up, nevder give in...but I don't really need to tell you that, so I'll shut up for now.

ever, your Comadre

**alliances light and dark** ([none / 0](#)) (#6)

by Charles Faris on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 05:10:42 PM EST

([User Info](#)) <http://homepage.mac.com/chasbaudelaire/iblog/B1541229392/index.html>

al...

your commentary on the need for real love and fair economy jibes very well with my own particular set of mystical and practical observations of how universe works. the obvious observation that since we are not in point of practical or mystical fact autonomous, our laws and customs and laanguages and daily habits should not be based on the premise that we are, an observation so obvious that we swim in it like fish...as oblivious to it as we are to the air that we breath (wanna wake someone up? try holding your hands over their mouth and nose), got me to thinking about all of the relationships we have to recognize and cultivate in our lives in order to remain standing, the recognition and cultivation of what don juan would call allies, human as well as otherwise; and then there i was with "dark alliances", and it was full circle, and it was obvious that anyone who is involved in exposing these sorts of dark alliances to the light of day, all authentic journalists then, and all authentic human beings in my book; anyone involved in battling these dark alliances is

going to need a double share of light alliances, because the dark motherfuckers don't mess around. it's like dolphins and sharks out there.

any authentic journalists, any authentic humans, please feel free always to ask this dolphin to help in any way that he can to help you to stay afloat. i'm always good for at least some words and affection, and the name of someone else who might be able to help in some other way. to all those of you who share my quest for truth, please raise a glass of your favorite poison and join me in offering a salut to gary webb and all of our other fallen comrades, famous and anonymous alike, over all the centuries that humankind has strived to live in truth and authenticity: "salut to you our truth-seeking brothers and sisters...your sacrifices were not in vain, and we shall remain connected to you in death as we were in life, striving always to recognize and cultivate light alliances anywhere and everywhere, as we strive also to expose dark alliances wherever they may form."

--

"i always have a wonderful time, wherever i am, whoever i'm with."

### **Stan Gotlieb Remembers Gary** ([none / 0](#)) (#7)

by Al Giordano on Thu Dec 16th, 2004 at 06:04:10 PM EST  
([User Info](#))

Stan Gotlieb, professor at the 2003 Narco News J-School, sent me this remembrance of Gary Webb and asked me to publish it here...

*On a sunny morning in "downtown" Isla Mujeres, Diana and I, both suffering from severe respiratory infections, crawled out of our motel room and went to breakfast. We had attended the session of the Journalism School that Gary took part in at the school's Merida hotel the previous week, during an international conference on drug law reform, and been much impressed. Now, the gang was in Isla, but we had been hard-pressed to join them much, feeling as we did.*

*As we sat down, Gary sauntered in, asked if he might join us, and we spent more than an hour together, relating mostly around our common bonds to California's San Joaquin Valley (he in Sacramento at the top end; ourselves just south of Fresno in the center): its politics and changing culture, and the persons and issues involved. It turned out that Gary was working as an investigator for one of the state Assembly persons representing "our" area (we don't live there much, preferring our home in Oaxaca). Later, we discovered that he had had a hand in exposing a financial scandal involving a major computer systems supplier and an overpriced state contract for which no bidders had been solicited. We knew he had been pretty*

*beat up on for his work at the Mercury News, and we were delighted that he had managed to end up with a job that not only paid well and was "flexible", but also allowed him to continue to do "the work". After the School ended, and we all went our separate ways, we never saw Gary again.*

*Nobody can really know another person's demons. I'm saddened that his got the better of him. We have all lost one of the few things we can't afford to lose: a man who speaks truth to power, no matter what the consequences.*

Thanks, Stan.

[Gary Webb: Do What He Did](#) | 7 comments (7 topical, 0 hidden)

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